

PhD Thesis
On
Female Health And Islām: Evaluating And
Designing Health Messages



Submitted By
Nasima Khanam
Registration Number 85/ 2007-08
Department of Islāmīc Studies
University of Dhaka
Bangladesh
April, 2010

Supervised by
Professor A.N.M Raisuddin
Department of Islāmīc Studies
University of Dhaka
Bangladesh

RB

613.0424
KHE

PhD Thesis On
Female Health And Islām: Evaluating And Designing Health Messages



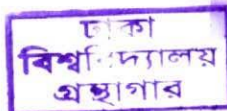
Submitted By
Nasima Khanam
Registration Number 85/ 2007-08
Department of Islāmīc Studies
University of Dhaka
Bangladesh.
April, 2010

448937

Dhaka University Library



448937

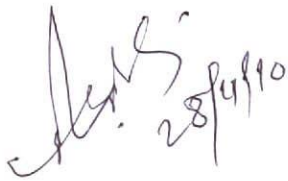


Supervised by
Professor A.N.M Raisuddin
Department of Islāmīc Studies
University of Dhaka
Bangladesh.

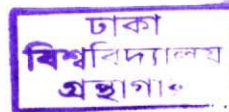
Supervisor's Certificate

This is to certify that Nasima Khanam, registration number 85/ 2007-08 , Department of Islāmic Studies, University of Dhaka, has completed her Ph.D research work under my supervision. The title of her dissertation is “Female Health and Islām: Evaluating and Designing Health Messages”, which is relating to reproductive health issues of female. She carried out her research successfully and her work is an exclusive one in this field and may contribute in improving the life of women.

I do therefore; recommend the submission of the aforementioned thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



448937



Professor A.N.M Raisuddin

Professor, Department of Islāmic Studies

Dhaka University

Bangladesh

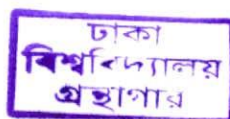
Acknowledgements

First of all, with full submission to Allāh, I am thankful to Him for His unceasing aid and relentless mercy bestowed on me for completing this dissertation. I wish to offer my sincere thanks to my supervisor Professor A.N.M Raisuddin, for his expert supervision, sustained interest, patience and encouragement throughout the work. Special thanks to my brother, Professor Muhammad Mahmud Khan, Chairman, Department of Health System Management, University of Tulane, Louisiana, USA, who took the hardship to go through my writing on health issues and helped me like an unofficial co-guide. May Allāh give him the best reward.

As this dissertation is relating to women's reproductive health from Islāmic perspective, I have consulted the following Professionals from whom I received instant assistance through advice, suggestions, books and articles. I extend my profound honor and gratitude to all of them. They are: Dr. Muhammad Kamal, Associate Professor, Department of Arabic & Islāmic Studies, Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, Australia; Prof. Sheikh Nazrul Islām, Department of Nutrition, Dhaka University, Bangladesh; Prof. Syed Kamaluddin Ahmed, Professor and Head, Department of Psychiatry, Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital, Bangladesh; Dr. Ahmed A. Munib, Consultant Psychiatrist, Armadale-Kelmscott Memorial Hospital, Australia; Prof. M.Q.K Talukder; Prof. M.A. Majid, Professor of Surgery, former Pro-VC, BSMMU, Bangladesh; Dr. Asif Mohammed Zaman, Honorary Research Fellow, University of Melbourne, Australia; Maulana Abdus Shahid Nasim, Director, Moududi Research Academy; Masudur Rahman Khan Sadi, Mechanical Engineer, Siemens; Taufiq Hasan, Ph.D student, University of Texas, Dallas.

448937

Special appreciation for my parents and parents in laws, whose support and supplication encouraged me for accomplishing the research work. My deep gratitude and thanks to my



List of Abbreviations

ANC	Ante Natal Checkup
(A)	Alaihimussslām
BF	Breast feeding
BBF	Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation
BNWLA	Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association
BDHS	Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey
BMI	Body Mass Index
CIO	The Central Office of Information
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FC	Female Circumcision
GMT	Greenwich Mean Time
ICDDR,B	International centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research
IIIT	International Institute of Islamic Thought
IUMS	International Union for Muslim Scholars
HPSP	Bangladesh Health and Population Sector Program
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCCM	Egypt's National Council for Motherhood and Childhood
NIPORT	National Institute of Population Research and Training
PNG	Papua New Guine
PNC	Post Natal Checkup
PAA	Population association Of America
(S º)	Sallallahu alihi Wasallam
(R)	Radiallāhu ‘Anhu, Radiallāhu ‘Anha

UNO	United Nations Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Transliteration

English

Arabic

A/a/ā	ا
B/b	ب
T/t	ت
Th/th	ث
J/j	ج
H / ḥ	ح
Kh/kh	خ
D/d	د
<u>Dh/dh</u>	ذ
R/r	ر
Z/z	ز
S/s	س
<u>Sh/sh</u>	ش
Ṣ ṣ	ص
Ḍ ḍ	ض
Ṭ ṭ	ط
Ẓ ẓ	ظ
	ع
<u>Gh/gh</u>	غ
F/f	ف
Q/q	ق
K/k	ك
L/l	ل
M/m	م
N/n	ن
H/h	ه

W/w	و
Y/y	ی
Y/y	ی

Long Vowels

Ā ā

Ī ī

Ū ū

Ē ē

Table of contents	
Supervisor's certificate	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Abbreviations	v
Transliteration	vii
Abstract	xiii
Chap 1 Introduction	1-5
Chap 2 Literature Review	6-44
2.1 Woman's life cycle (a short description)	7
2.2 Utilization of health care services	16
2.3 Health status of women	19
2.4 Breastfeeding	26
2.6 Selective abortion and female infanticide	32
2.7 Violence against women	36
2.8 Violence against women in Bangladesh- at a glance	42
Chap 3 Evaluations of Health Messages from Islāmic Perspective	45 -94
3.1 Encouraging breast-feeding from Islamic perspective	47
3.2 Messages on promoting breast feeding	52
3.2.1 Practice of exclusive breastfeeding for six months	52
3.2.2 Give colostrum to baby as soon as the baby is born	59
3.3 Expectant mothers should take plenty of water, vegetables, fruits and milk for proper nutrition	61
3.4 Messages related to stopping violence against women	67
3.4.1 Reasons of violence	69

3.4.1 Reasons of violence	69
3.4.2 Nature of violence	70
3.4.2.1 Physical and mental abuse of wife: an analysis from the Qurān and Hadith	71
A. Clarification of the words Qwwam, Faddala, Qānitat, and Nushūz	72
B. A meticulous analysis of the word Daraba	79
C. Wife beating is not allowed in Islam	81
3.4.2.2 Dowry or Jawtuk	85
3.4.2.3 Female genital mutilation	90
3.4.2.4 Other forms of violence	94
<u>Chap 4 New Health and Health Related Messages from Islāmic Perspective 96-192</u>	
4.1 Islam can play a positive role in woman's health and wellbeing	98
4.2 Messages on healthcare delivery system in Islāmic World	103
4.2.1 Financial source and type of health care in the hospitals in Islamic world and Zakat charity and Waqf can be contributed for maternal and female health	103
4.2.2 Medical ethics in the Islāmic world ensures woman's health care and her access to physicians	105
4.2.3 Prominent medieval physicians were specialists in maternal and female health	107
4.2.4 A comparison between maternal health status in medieval time and in west in 17- 20th century	110
4.3 Islāmic messages addressing female health: from conception to birth	113
4.3.1 The verses on embryo and pregnancy: an analysis	113
4.3.2 The Holy Quran encourages caring for expectant mother and new mother	116
4.3.3 Duties of Muslims towards maternal health	120

4.4 Islāmic messages on highlighting status of mothers	123
4.5 Islāmic messages on preventing selective abortions and female infanticide	128
4.5.1 Female babies are glad tidings from Allāh	129
4.5.2 The Holy Qurān reforms the human attitude and behavior regarding female infanticide	130
4.5.3 Moral approach of the Qurān on this issue	132
4.5.4 Economic approach of the Quran on this issue	133
4.5.5 Lack of knowledge and understanding towards a female child	134
4.5.6 The examples of females who were prominent in Islamic history	136
4.6 New messages to prevent social deprivation and violence against women	142
4.6.1 Messages on women's status	143
4.6.2 Messages on women's attribute	147
4.6.3 Messages on men's role in society	148
4.6.4 Messages on promoting women's decision-making related to family finances	152
4.6.5 Messages to prevent misconception about women's role in society	154
4.6.6 Messages on rights of women	157
4.7 Messages related to proper use of divorce	162
4.7.1 Verses on divorce	163
4.7.2 Procedure of divorce	166
4.7.3 The additional conditions for the husband for utterance of divorce to be valid	168
4.7.4 The wife can seek divorce from her husband	168
4.7.5 Some other rules from the Qurān to be followed by the husband during the process of divorce	169

4.7.6 Invalidity of three Talaq at a time	170
4.7.7 Justice and good conduct towards wife are enjoined during the process of divorce	171
4.8 Messages related to prevent misuse of polygamy	175
4.8.1 The verse on polygamy	175
4.8.2 The Holy Qurān prevents men to marry women for lusts and whims	175
4.8.3 Verses on orphan and the case of polygamy and women	177
4.8.4 Some remarkable facts of verse 4:3	180
4.9 Misapplication of Fatwa causes damage to female health and well-being	182
Chap 5 Conclusions and Future Direction	192-222
5.1 Evaluation of existing messages from Islāmic perspective	192
5.2 Designing new health and health related messages from Islāmic perspective	197 ✓
5.3 Key findings	211
5.4 Future direction	211
Bibliography	219

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to evaluate, analyze and modify a number of existing health related messages concerning women's health and wellbeing from Islāmic perspective. A key contribution of this research is the design of new health messages where existing messages were not found or not adequate to address the problems in an effective manner. Since one of the most important periods that affects life-time health and wellbeing of women is the reproductive age period, special emphasis has been placed on the issues related to reproductive age group. Analysis based on the Qurān and the Sunnah demonstrates that improving overall health and well-being of women is a priority in Islām and therefore a number of health messages can be developed based on Islāmic teachings. Therefore in this research existing messages have been modified and some new health messages were created from Islāmic perspective.

If the medical science based health messages are supported by messages based on religious teachings, it is likely that combined effects of the messages will be much better than the medical science related messages alone. Surprisingly, female health related literature from a religious perspective is hard to find as the Islamic scholars and Muslim health professionals have not given much attention to this issue.

Some specific issues on female health are addressed here as it is not possible to include all the health concerns and health-related problems of women in one dissertation. The social, cultural, economic or religious factors affecting health and wellbeing of women are critically analyzed through detailed discussion and the existing messages are evaluated for appropriateness,

effectiveness and adequacy. If the messages¹ are found to be deficient or not effective or not targeted enough for the population in Muslim communities, new messages were designed. A number of health concerns are not addressed by health education messages currently being used. In those cases, completely new messages were developed in the light of Qurān and Sunnah. The issues addressed in this dissertation are breast feeding, health status of women, oppression and violence against women and female circumcision etc. For creating new health messages from Islāmic perspective, the issues selected are Islam can play a positive role in woman's health and wellbeing, messages on healthcare delivery system in Islāmic World, messages addressing female health: from conception to birth, status of mother, selective abortions, divorce, polygamy and misapplication of Fatwa etc.

This research has developed a number of new messages but it was not possible to test the effectiveness and acceptability of the messages in the real world. Health education specialist should evaluate these new messages to determine their effectiveness. Since the messages are

¹ In this thesis, the term “health message” is used to include research and analysis for identifying and designing relevant information in order to encourage desirable behavior change to improve population health and social wellbeing. In the past few years, rather than using the term “health messages”, the international organizations are using the term “Behavior change communication” (BCC). Therefore, health messages convey health information and scientific knowledge on health through strategic use of communication methods to promote positive health outcomes. The dissertation emphasizes the development of appropriate messages, taking into account the target audience. In that sense, “health message” development is a necessary activity for behavior change communication (BCC) strategy but the BCC is wider than the development of audience-specific, appropriate and timely health information, which is the principal objective of “health messages”.

Behavior Change Communication and Reproductive Health

<http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Training/bccrh.htm>

Behavior change communication (BCC) is the strategic use of communication to promote positive health outcomes, based on proven theories and models of behavior change. BCC employs a systematic process beginning with formative research and behavior analysis, followed by communication planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Audiences are carefully segmented, messages and materials are pre-tested, and both mass media and interpersonal channels are used to achieve defined behavioral objectives.

Centre for Global Health Communication and Marketing

http://www.globalhealthcommunication.org/tools/strategy/behavior_change_communication

based on Islāmic teachings, it is hoped that these messages will be more effective in improving the health and wellbeing of women in developing countries in the Islāmic world.

To elucidate, some examples of designed and new health messages along with existing messages are cited below.

“Practice exclusive breastfeeding for six months”. “Give colostrum (pre-milk) to baby as soon as the baby is born”. (Existing health messages of WHO on breast feeding)

Designed messages after evaluating from Islamic perspective are: According to the Holy Qurān mothers should breastfeed their babies for whole two years.

Colostrum (pre-milk) is created by Allāh which is highly nutritious and protects the baby from many illnesses. So babies should be fed colostrum as soon as the baby is born.

Existing health message on violence against women is - "Stop domestic violence against women", which is "Paribarik nirjatan bondho koro"- in Bengali. The designed messages are:

Prophet (ﷺ) never hit a woman. So, husbands should not beat their wives.

Allāh and His Rasul strongly condemned wife beating. So, is wife beating a proper solution for marital discord?

Existing health related message on Jawtuk is: "Stop violence against women for Jawtuk (dowry)". In Bengali, "Jawtuk er jonno nari nirjatan bandho koro". The designed messages from Islāmic perspective are: Asking for Jawtuk is a great sin in Islām.

On your marriage day, ask for Allāh's mercy by paying the Mahr.

Taking Jawtuk is like a crime in Islām.

The health messages on the subheading " New Health and Health Related Messages from Islāmic Perspective "are given below. These are new messages created by the researcher as no effective messages were found. Some of them are-

Muslims should redouble their efforts in acquiring knowledge and skills; Islām encourages research and development in health, wellbeing and illness. Can we be good Muslims if we ignore an important tenant of Islām?

Allah encourages all efforts for gaining knowledge. Then what prevents Muslims from doing research in health and hygiene and to adopt technology? Otherwise, ignorance will keep the society dependent on others in the contemporary world.

Social welfare and development is strongly recommended by the Qurān. Accordingly the Muslims and the Muslim health professionals should come forward to work together for women's health. Improving maternal mortality and morbidity should be considered as a duty of medical professionals in Islām.

Pregnancy of a woman is cited in the Qurān as an evidence of existence of Allāh. Does it not encourage Muslims and Muslim professionals to learn about Allāh, embryology and obstetrics?

Know the danger signs of maternal complications for the sake of Islām and ensure health care for women to reduce maternal mortality. Otherwise the whole society will be answerable to Allāh.

On polygamy and Fatwa-

Justice and impartiality towards wives are indispensable for practicing polygamy. This is why monogamy is encouraged in the Qurān.

Fatwa is an opinion of an established Islāmic scholar. Punishing by Fatwa is not allowed, only the Islāmic court has the power to declare the punishment and state has the authority to implement the law.

False accusation is forbidden by Allah. So, one should not oppress women through false accusation.

Hence the issue of maternal health and women's health is very important in Islām (4:1), but we

Chapter One

Introduction

The human being is the best creation of Allāh. Even though men and women are both part of the human race, they have different biological development and emotional dynamics. As a result, they have different roles and status within the family and the society. It is important to note that every human being is indebted to a woman who conceives, carries through the pain and joy of pregnancy and ultimately gives birth to child to keep the continuity of the race. The fact is reinforced in a verse of the Holy Qurān “Be careful of your duty towards the wombs (that bore you)...”¹ Thus women health and indisposition need to be researched as a high priority. In fact, health is a state of physical, psychological, social and of course spiritual well-being according to World Health Organization.² This involves more than just the absence of diseases. A healthy woman not only feels sound physically but also acquires a positive outlook about life and gets along well with rest of her surroundings.

Approaches to improve health in general and female health in particular range from simple health education messages to very specific clinical procedures. Since the issues related to female health are so wide, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive evaluation of all health messages in this research study. To focus the study on specific health concerns of women in developing world, this research will address some specific health messages and evaluate these from the perspective of Islamic practices and laws. The emphasis will be to design or recast the messages to demonstrate the importance of the practices from Islamic point of view. If health messages are communicated to emphasize its acceptability from Islamic perspective, the

¹ 4:1

² WHO, Definition of Health, <http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>, 20-4-2010.

messages will become more acceptable in Islamic societies. This study will make an attempt to identify a limited number of health messages for evaluation from Islamic perspective.

To achieve and maintain good health, people must have basic knowledge about the human body and how it functions. Only with such knowledge can they determine what will or what will not help or hurt their health. Therefore, learning about health should be a fundamental part of every person's education. Current knowledge about health, together with good living habits, can help almost everyone maintain good health and improve the quality of life.¹

Health is man's most valuable possession because it influences all the activities. It is the solid foundation on which a man's happiness rests. Health is a resource in which the whole community has a stake and it is desirable to maintain and promote it.²

Islam does encourage people including women to achieve good health. The teachings of Islam are in harmony with human nature. Once it is practiced by humankind, it prepares them to fulfill their duties and responsibilities towards all, themselves and the society. Even though the Qurān and Sunnah's purpose is not to provide detailed analysis of each and every aspects of human health and wellbeing, given the objective of Islam, we can say without any hesitation that the teachings of Islam will be fully consistent with effective and scientifically valid health messages and interventions both in the short term and in the long term. To examine this consistency more rigorously, select health messages and practices developed by clinical practitioners and other scientists will be evaluated using the concepts, ideas, practices, opinions contained in the Qurān and Sunnah.

¹ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, Volume 9, H, World Book Inc. (A Scott Fetzer Company Chicago, London, Sydney, Toronto). p 123

² S. Dheer, Dr. Mitra Basu *Introduction to Health Education*, (FriendsPublications,6, Mukherjee Tower, Mukherjee Nagar, Com. Complex, Delhi-110009, India). P 4

To understand the importance of examining female health, it may be useful to describe gender differences in life cycle and health. A female's life cycle is different from a male. In the stages of life as infant, adolescence and puberty, marriage, motherhood, middle age, old age etc she faces multiple forms of changes, problems, and threats. Even her family often discriminates her from birth. She is more likely to be malnourished, experiences higher incidences of diseases and infections compared to male member. Family and society deprive her from education and medical care. In addition, technological development brings new threats to her life. Today, modern technology allows identification of the sex of the fetus and societies where social value attached to women are considered low, a higher proportion of female fetus are being aborted. Such selective abortion is not only debases our moral and ethical values; it creates a society with lop-sided male to female ratio at birth and lop-sided male to female ratio as adults. It should be noted that these practices are not related to any religion per se, but religion can play an important role in reversing this trend for the betterment of human life and society.

The factors that encourage higher rates of abortions of female fetus, lower nutritional and health status of women and girls are quite complex and cannot be explained purely from social, cultural or economic circumstances. Whatever are the underlying causes from a wider perspective, it is clear that the proximate cause of lower demand for female in the society is the low social value assigned to female children and adults. Female infanticide in pre Islamic Arab world was an extreme example of sex selection and preference. The practices and behaviors should not be viewed simply as lack of knowledge or social customs. The peculiar behavior pattern is often triggered or encouraged by "real" underlying concerns and conditions. Even though the female infanticide in pre-Islamic Arab world can be explained by low social status of women, breakdown of law and order, insecurity faced by families with young women, etc., a new social breakdown

order can effectively change these cruel practices. We all know that Islam strongly condemned such practices and declared such behavior as unacceptable and morally corrupt as the Qurān says, “ When the female (infant) buried alive, is questioned for what crime she was killed”.¹ The new social order created by Islam eliminated this problem within a short period of time, indicating that even the age-old social practices can be changed with religious and moral superiority.

Therefore, for many other social problems and concerns of today, it will be useful to examine carefully how Islam can help in changing the social and cultural practices. In an article in 1986, one renowned demographer Caldwell concluded that the Islamic countries were most backward in terms of health of infants and children.² He argued that lack of education of women, low value of women in the society, were the major reasons for such poor health status of children in the Islamic world. If this thesis is true, it is unfortunate that Islam, which effectively prevented the age-old infanticide in Arabia, is now being used to suppress the women with significant negative impact on health of men, women and children.

Health practices and educational messages have been developed to deal with the multiple of problems women face. At each stage in her life cycle, female population face unique problems and threats; and age or context specific messages are designed to improve their health and well being. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the specific health messages and changes in behavior proposed by these messages through rigorous analyses of scientific findings from the perspective of Islamic code of conduct.

Depending on the life cycle of woman, the messages will differ. Socio-cultural practices also change due to technological development, but “core” human relationships, the minimum set of

¹ 81:8-9

² Caldwell, John C, *Routes to Low Mortality in Poor Countries*, Population and Development Review, Vol.12, No. 2. Pg 209(June 1986), 171-220.

knowledge, social practices, etc to maintain social harmony, individual and social development, individual and collective spiritual needs, and remains constant. Constant core values do not imply a single, rigid socio-cultural pattern. A number of patterns can logically be consistent with the “core”. Variations among population groups in terms of culture, language, differences in practices have been explicitly recognized in the Qurān as well. As the Qurān says, “O mankind! We have created you all from a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know each other....”¹ In that sense, this study is not an attempt to propose a single mode of life but the emphasis is on contemporary female health concerns which can be addressed, analyzed and evaluated from religious perspective.

The advantages of such an approach may be valuable and significant for current day. At least one-fifth of human population is Muslim. Devising the messages and social behavior changes based on the Qurān and Sunnah may be appealing to a significant proportion of the population of the Islamic world. Some social practices are justified by using religious instructions although religion may have nothing to do with it. A number of health practices, social norms, cultural practices are also identified as detrimental to female’s health and well being. For that, explicit identification of some important health messages linked to her infant and reproductive age, will be collected and presented for this research.

Women population of the Islamic world is suffering from a host of health problems, although both men and women have poor health conditions in most of the Islamic countries. So, the discrimination against women (in favor of men) has negatively affected the health of women and children and at the same time, the health of men also suffered. In that sense, this type of discrimination is purely irrational, without any specific group benefiting from the discriminatory practices.

¹ 49:13

Chapter Two

Literature review

As mentioned in chapter one, the purpose of this research is to identify important health concerns of female and the role of health education or health message in alleviating the health concerns. The focus is on the social, economic and cultural determinants of health problems or concerns over the life cycle of the female population. In all societies, gender discrimination appears to be common and religion and religious beliefs may have contributed towards aggravating the gender discrimination. Some of the pre Islāmic religions considered women as impure, inferior to men, and lacking some basic human qualities. In Buddhist culture, women were considered inferior to men and full of sin. In Hinduism, she was not allowed to read Vedas, remarry after the death of her husband, nor inherit assets from him. In the Judaeo-Christian scripture, in the Bible (in Genesis), the women's head cover is declared as the symbol of servitude to men (not God) and she (i.e. all women) is held responsible for original sin as Adam was tempted by Eve and because of the original sin she suffers in pregnancy and child birth as punishment.¹

Such widespread belief system may have created the social and cultural practices of discrimination and violence against women. In this research, it is assumed that irrespective of current social, cultural or economic causes of gender discrimination and poor health outcomes of women, health and social messages based on Islāmic teachings can be used effectively to change the age old practices of men and women in the society, especially for, Islāmic societies like Bangladesh.

¹Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997), pp 31,34

The identification of gender discrimination and health status of women is the first step in understanding the role religion played, directly and indirectly, in creating the poor health outcomes for women. For this reason, the literature review will examine, discuss and evaluate the determinants of poor health status of female around the world, especially in developing countries of the world.

To structure the literature review, this chapter has been divided into six subsections-

Section 2.1 will have a short description on women's life cycle from infancy to reproductive age.

Section 2.2 will provide the information on utilization of health care services in Bangladesh and

India. 2.3 will present the health status of women. 2.4 will provide information on breastfeeding.

2.5 is about son preference. 2.6 is about violence against women.

2.1 Woman's life cycle (a short description)

From infancy to adulthood

The developing baby inside the mother's womb is called an embryo and it is called fetus from eight weeks onward. Fetus means young one. Infancy is the phase of life from the time of birth through the finishing point of one year of age. A variety of interrelated factors, such as genetics, nutrition and environment etc, influence the growth and development progress of a male or female infant. "The 1st 2 years of life, characterized by rapid physical and social growth and development and years in which many changes that affect feeding and nutrients intake occur." Infants' sufficient nutrient intake affects their interaction with environment. Social and psychological development also occurs. They are attached with their parents and learn to interact with other people in their environment and consequently they achieve a sense of self. Their sense of security is optimized when their needs are met in immediate and loving manner.¹

¹Krause and Mahan, *Life Span Nutrition; Food, Nutrition and Diet therapy*; 7th edition, (Philadelphia: W.B Saunders Company, Philadelphia PA 19105, USA, 1984), pp 273-74

The growth of an infant is very rapid during the first year of life than ever again and the course of development in the first year is remarkable. During the 1st year of life, the most nutrients needed by the infant, in proportion to body weight, is more than double that of the adult. An infant's birth weight may triple at the end of the 1st year.¹ During infancy, mother's breast milk is the perfect food for him/her. The full term baby is capable of sucking and swallowing at birth. The benefits of breast milk for the baby have got extensive and far-reaching effect. In the first few days after birth, the mother and the baby begin to get to know each other. It is recommended to the mother to keep her baby close to her as much as she can. The infant will be reassured this way by the warmth of her skin and the familiar sound of her voice.² The above recommendations can be fulfilled by breast feeding.

The human milk is the only food naturally designed for the baby and contains the right amount of nutrients according to baby's need and it also contains over 200 components. This is also easily digested and absorbed and less likely to cause stomach upsets and diarrhea. The first few days after the birth of the baby, a special yellowish fluid, the pre-milk, produced in mother's breast which is known as colostrum. Colostrum contains all the food the baby needs, as well as antibodies which pass the mother's own resistance to certain infections on to the baby. It is called as first natural vaccination for the baby. The breast fed infants are less likely to have respiratory infections, meningitis, urinary tract infection, appendicitis, allergy, sudden infant death syndrome, esophageal and gastric lesions etc. The milk composition also changes as the

¹ Sharon Ruby Rolfes, Linda Kelly DeBruyne, Eleanor Noss Whitney, *Life span Nutrition Conception Through Life*, 2nd edition, (Belmont: Wadsworth publishing Company, Belmont, California, USA ,1998) pp156-157

² NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK,2005-6) pp 66-7

baby grows and contains growth factors and hormones to assist the infant's development. Breast feeding helps to protect baby from infection because antibodies from the mother are passed into the milk. Even poor iron status of the mother does not reduce the iron concentration of breast milk. The baby will be less vulnerable to coughs and colds and other infections than bottle fed babies. Human milk boosts cognitive development, and visual development. Children and adults breastfed as infants have a decreased risk of childhood lymphoma, leukemia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes mellitus, chronic liver disease, ulcerative colitis, childhood obesity, Crohn's disease, and celiac disease. "Although breast milk is not a panacea, it has been called a 'broad spectrum medicine' and a 'low cost intervention with immediate cost savings.'^{1,2}

Even the baby has an acute sense of smell and they can distinguish their mothers from anyone else. So the mother can reassure the baby by her presence. It is important for the infant to hear the mother's voice and feel secure, even at this early stage in life. The stimulation baby gets from the mother, by chatting, touching and playing, are essential for future physical and emotional development. (Guide to Pregnancy and early Parenthood).

Thus breast feeding not only contributes in physical growth and development but also plays a vital role in social and psychological development of an infant.

"The time for one year of age until puberty is often referred to as the 'latent' or 'quiescent' period of growth, in contrast to the dramatic changes in growth and development that occur in infancy and adolescence."³ The growth rate becomes slow as the child enters the second year of

¹ Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinics Of North America, *Breastfeeding*, vol 29.number 1. March 2002

² NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK,2005-6) p 67

³ Krause and Mahan, *Life Span Nutrition; Food, Nutrition and Diet Therapy*; 7th edition, (Philadelphia: W.B Saunders Company, Philadelphia PA 19105, USA,1984)p 292

life, but development continues to steps forward rapidly. As a child is growing and developing bones, teeth, muscles and blood they need more nutritious food in proportion to their weight than do adults. The brain and central nervous system of a male or female child mature at a tremendous/incredible rapidity. The need of vitamin and minerals for children increases with their ages. A balanced diet will meet the needs of the nutrients except iron. Iron deficiency is a major problem worldwide. It is more among the girls in developing countries.¹

Recommended energy for children (male/female)²

Age (yrs)	Kcalories, daily mean	Kcalories, range
1-3	1300	900-1800
4-6	1700	1300-2300
7-10	2400	1650-3300

Reproductive age and major health concern:-

Adolescence is the period of psychological, social and physical transition between childhood and adulthood i.e. womanhood. At this age ovaries produce more estrogens and progesterone (hormone). Uterus and ovaries are enlarged and monthly menstruation starts. Nutritional insufficiency in childhood may diminish a person's or female's body size and such deficiencies during adolescence can retard growth and delay sexual maturation. The need of energy and

¹ Krause and Mahan, *Life Span Nutrition; Food, Nutrition and Diet Therapy*; 7th edition, (Philadelphia: W.B Saunders Company, Philadelphia PA 19105, USA, 1984) p 294

² Source: *Food & Nutrition Board, National Research Council: Recommended Dietary Allowances*, 9th edition, Washington D.C, National Academy of Sciences, 1980. *ibid* p 294-295

nutrient are greater during adolescence than any other time of life, with the exception of pregnancy and lactation. The first twelve years of her life, her body's main focus is on its own growth and maintenance. Nutrition plays an important role in man's fertility and possible genetic contributions he makes to his children. But the health of the woman's body before conception influences her fertility, the health of the baby she may later conceive and bear, and her own health at all times and later of in her life. So an adolescent girl should be prepared for physical, mental and emotional many changes that to come.

An active adolescent girl may need 2200 kcalories a day. The minerals like calcium and micronutrient like iron are greatly needed by female adolescents. The consumption of milk by girls is declined at their teens so the calcium needed for their bone density cannot be met. Moreover, women have much greater bone losses than man in later life. Intake of calcium and sport activities during adolescence builds strong bones. Iron status is most affected during four times of life of a female: in infancy, during growth spurts, during the female reproductive years and in pregnancy. So, iron needs increase in female adolescents as they start to menstruate. Normally a girl may have her first menstrual period (menarche) at the age of 12 or 13.¹ Sometimes she suffers from premenstrual syndrome which includes headache, asthma, bloating, pain and more exotic problems as recurrent herpes or hives; from psychological aspect it may include lethargy, tension, irritability, depression and feelings of aggression. In all more than 300 different symptoms have been attributed to PMS. These problems are treated by medicine, diet programs, and exercise.² In some cultures women are not treated well during menstruation and deprived of health care and victim of discrimination. At that time they are considered as impure

¹ Sharon Ruby Rolfes, Linda Kelly DeBruyne, Eleanor Noss Whitney, *Life span Nutrition Conception Through Life*, 2nd edition, (Belmont: Wadsworth publishing Company, Belmont, California, USA ,1998) pp 280-81

² *The New Complete Medical and Health Encyclopedia*, Edit. Richard J.Wagman, M.D, F. A.C.P; (Chicago: Ferguson Publishing Company Chicago,1997) p 44

and for adolescent girls they are often forced to stay in a dark and unhygienic room. They are not allowed to lead a normal life.¹

Womanhood is an important period of life as other stages of her life. The needs of a pre-pregnant woman differ from those of a man, from those of an expecting and lactating woman, and from those of women after the childbearing years. During the reproductive age her body releases mature ova for reproduction. "During pregnancy, a woman's body becomes an environment that nurtures the development of another human being. This is life's cycle- from infancy to childhood to adolescence to pregnancy, returning to pregnancy. Each of these phases of life is vital to the cycle's continuation. Men and women leave the cycle only after the reproductive years are over, when they begin their journeys into later life."²

The table (A1) below shows the energy, nutrients etc needed by a female at her various stages of life-

¹ IEM unit, *Gender, Women Empowerment and Development*, (Dhaka: Dept of Family Planning, Azimpur; Dhaka, UNFPA, Nov. 2005), p 40

² Sharon Ruby Rolfes, Linda Kelly DeBruyne, Eleanor Noss Whitney, *Life span Nutrition Conception Through Life*, 2nd edition, (Belmont: Wadsworth publishing Company, Belmont, California, USA ,1998) p 33, 35

RECOMMENDED DIETARY ALLOWANCES¹

	Non-pregnant females				Preg-nancy	Lac-tation
Age	11-14 yrs	15-18 yrs	19- 22 yrs	23-50 yrs		
Energy(k calorie)	2200(1500-3000)	2100(1200-3000)	2100(1700-2500)	2000(1600-2400)	+300	+500
Protein (gm)	46	46	44	44	+30	+20
Iron (mg)	18	18	18	18	30-60	30-60
Iodine(µg)	150	150	150	150	+25	+50
Calcium (mg)	1200	1200	800	800	+400	+400
Vitamin A(µg)	800	800	800	800	+200	+400

A whole new life begins at fertilization or conception (the union of the male spermatozoon and the female ovum). An expectant mother's body changes dramatically during pregnancy. Her breast enlarges to prepare milk, her uterus and its supporting muscle increase in size and strength. Her blood volume increases by 50% to carry the extra nutrients and other materials to placenta (the organ that develops inside the uterus early in pregnancy, in which maternal and fetal blood circulate in close proximity so that materials can be exchanged between them). Maternal nutrition plays vital role for the development of placenta and as a consequence the development of the baby in the womb. So, good nutrition is a must during pregnancy and later. In contrast, malnutrition interferes in many ways. Malnutrition includes both under nutrition and over nutrition, and both can have adverse effect on pregnancy. Malnutrition may influence the fertility of a women, the implantation of zygote, placental development, fetal growth retardation, birth defects, spontaneous abortion and still birth, premature birth, and low birth weight.²

¹ Food and Nutrition Board, National Research Council: *Recommended Dietary Allowances*. Washington D.C., National Academy of Sciences, 1980 <http://www.google.com.bd/search?sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&q=Food+and+Nutrition+Board,+National+Research+Council:+Recommended+Dietary+Allowances.>

² Sharon Ruby Rolfes, Linda Kelly DeBruyne, Eleanor Noss Whitney, *Life span Nutrition Conception Through Life*,

“Pregnant women throughout Africa, Asia and Middle East are barred by taboo from eating a variety of foods including eggs, milk, and sometimes even fruits and vegetables”.¹

“Pregnant women throughout Africa, Asia and Middle East are barred by taboo from eating a variety of foods including eggs, milk, and sometimes even fruits and vegetables”. The expectant mother should maintain a healthy body weight, choose a diet adequate in nutrition (this includes fruits, vegetables, thick lentils (dal) one cup, some nuts, small fishes, eggs, fish or meat, one glass of milk and plenty of water. These types of food ensure the supply of iron, calcium and etc. Foods must be cooked by iodized salt), adequate sleep and rest (eight to ten hours sleep at night and again rest for one to two hours during day time), maintain cleanliness and hygiene, to perform light exercise. It is also found that prayer is useful as it brings physical and psychological benefits and gives mental peace to keep away oneself from worry and to be Joyful.²

There are some common minor problems. They are nausea and morning sickness, backache, constipation, muscle cramp, faintness, headaches, indigestion and heartburns, itching, nose bleeds, piles, sleeplessness, stretch marks, swollen ankles and feet, bleeding gums, varicose veins etc.³

There are some life-threatening maternal conditions which need to be supervised by health professionals in an urgent basis. These dangerous conditions are- swelling of feet, headache, visual disturbance and convulsion & high blood pressure, (these may be the signs of pre-eclampsia),

2nd edition, (Belmont: Wadsworth publishing Company, Belmont, California, USA, 1998) pp 90-91

¹ Jacobson Jodi L., *Women's Health: The Price of Poverty*, in *The Health of Woman A Global Perspective* edit Marge Kobolinsky, Judith Timyan, Jill Gay (Boulder: West view press Inc. 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado, USA 1993) p 20

² Choudhury Dr. Sameena, *Reproductive Health Problems of Women*, (Dhaka: Jonantik, Shahbag, Dhaka, Bangladesh 2001) pp 89-91

³ NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK, 2005-6) p104-105

convulsions/ eclampsia, tetanus, vaginal bleeding, malpresentation of the baby, retained placenta ,obstructed/ prolonged labor ,excessive bleeding after the birth of the baby, fever and vaginal discharge. Some of these complications are prevalent in adolescent mothers.¹ Sometimes pregnancy ends with a miscarriage or with the death of the baby. Even ‘ectopic’ or ‘tubal pregnancy’ may take place when the fertilized egg gets stuck in the fallopian tube and cannot move down to the uterus. Here the woman needs an operation to remove the fertilized egg in an urgent basis.²

Antenatal care i.e. health checkups is must during pregnancy to avoid adverse pregnancy outcomes and risks in delivery. The Bangladesh Maternal Health Strategy recommends at least three visits during pregnancy. The first visit is to be made after getting pregnant, the second one is in between the fifth and seventh months of pregnancy, and the third visit should be in the ninth month of pregnancy. During the visits height and weight are measured, heart and lungs are checked, blood and urine tests are done from time to time, baby’ growth will be checked etc.

Additional visits are to be made if any problems or danger signs arise.³The energy, food and nutrients need are raised in a lactating woman. Table (A1) gives an idea of the higher need of food and energy of a mother as she produces milk for the baby. Breastfeeding is important for better health of both the mother and the infant.

¹ National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11 , Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005)pp 147-48

² NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK,2005-6) p104-105,

³National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11 , Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005) pp 137-38

2.2 Utilization of health care services

Access to antenatal care (ANC) is important to avoid adverse pregnancy outcomes and risks in delivery. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends at least four antenatal care visits to a medically trained provider during pregnancy. A comparison of the 2004 and 2007 BDHS surveys shows that more women are obtaining antenatal care. BDHS findings show that urban women are more than 2.5 times as likely as rural women to get antenatal visits. There are differences in antenatal or prenatal care coverage among subgroups of Bangladesh. Young mothers often receive this care more than older mother and for lower-order births than higher order births. Prenatal care also increases with the level of mother's education. About 82% of mothers with secondary education received prenatal care from a medically trained provider compared with only 28.7 % of mothers with no education.¹

The use of antenatal care also varies by income and wealth status of households. The women from the highest wealth quintile households seek antenatal care at a much higher rate than the women from the lowest quintile. 86.4% of women in the highest economic status receive antenatal care 41.6% of women from the poorest category receive it.²

Median number of antenatal visits by women is 3.7 in 2007 survey and it was 2.7 in 2004. 72% women reported that they did not seek antenatal care as it was not needed. 7% mentioned that they did not know about antenatal care at all. The other reasons mentioned for not seeking care

¹National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 9 , Maternal and Newborn Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)pp110-112

² National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 9 , Maternal and Newborn Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009), Table 9.1,p110

are: 25% thought that it was expensive, 5% not permitted to go outside of house, 3% for religious reasons, etc. If we consider the opinions of the women themselves, only 3% explicitly mentioned “religion” as the barrier. However an additional 5% cited that they could not seek antenatal care as they are not allowed to go out.¹ Not being able to go out may also be related to religious restrictions indirectly. If we add both these aspects, religion can explain only about 8% of women not seeking antenatal care (ANC).

Tetanus Toxoid vaccinations are given to pregnant women for the prevention of infant tetanus, which is one of the principal causes of death among infants in developing countries. Two doses are recommended for expectant mothers. In Bangladesh, 90.2% of women are receiving two or more TT injection. Tetanus Toxoid vaccination has relationship with women’s education and wealth but it is not that strong. It is 80% with women with no education and 97 % with those with higher education.² The report shows that relatively large number of women taking TT injection and apparently does not show any relationship with religion.

Safe delivery is an important aspect of safe motherhood. Safe delivery can reduce the risks of complications and infections that may cause death or serious illness to the mother, the baby or both. The place of delivery and assistance during delivery are very important for protecting the health of the mother (see table 9.6). About 85% of women in Bangladesh give birth at home while only 7.1% delivered in a public health facility and 7.6% delivered in a private facility. So, 15% of births in Bangladesh take place at a health facility. it was 4% In the 1993-94 BDHS and 9% in the BDHS 2004 i.e. it is increased by 6%. Women with secondary or higher education are more likely to select a modern health care facility for the delivery of the babies. Approximately

¹ Ibid, Table 9.1,p111-112

²National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 9 , Maternal and Newborn Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)Table 9.5,pp115-116

43% of these women go to health care facilities during delivery. Again, medical care facility chosen by the mothers as the place of delivery is higher among women from higher wealth index. The women who received Antenatal care (ANC) are more likely to avail delivery facilities.¹ Postnatal care (PNC) is also vital factor of safe motherhood. About 30% of women received PNC. The percentage is higher in urban areas than rural areas. The PNC or postnatal care availed by women is directly proportionate to education and wealth quintile.²

A study from International Food Policy Research Institute explores a link between women's status and children's nutrition in three developing regions: South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and Caribbean. The research defines women's status as women's power relative to men. Women with low status have less power over household resources, less access to information and health services, stretched time constraints, poorer mental health, and low self esteem. These factors are considered to be linked to women's own nutritional status and the quality of care they receive and in turn, to children's birth weight and the quality of care they receive.³

It is found that a large group of women are deprived of health facility during delivery. The reasons are complex. Poverty and illiteracy are two main reasons. In some cultures birth process is considered impure and such belief system may affect the choice of healthcare providers and health facilities for delivery care. In conclusion, women's lack of access to antenatal care, delivery facilities etc in Bangladesh and in other countries in this region, is due to poverty, economic, social rather than religious reasons. In brief, a woman's low status in the family and

¹ National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 9, Maternal and Newborn Health, (Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates & Macro International 2009) Table 9.6, p117

² Ibid, Table 9.8.1, p120-21

³ Lisa C. Smith, Usha Ramakrishnan, Aida Ndiaye, Lawrence Haddad, & Reynaldo Martorell, , *The Importance of Women's Status for Child Nutrition in Developing Countries*; (IFPRI 2033 K Street N.W. Washington DC 2006-1002 USA, 2003)

society has direct link with less access to information and healthcare, low self esteem, etc and less utilization of ANC, delivery care and PNC. Religious impact on low use of ANC is probably no more than 8%. Although, religion is not a very important factor, religion and religious beliefs can be used to encourage women to seek ANC, PNC and other preventive health care services.

2.3 Health status of women

Every minute an expectant mother dies from complicity of pregnancy in the world. The fear of such death in developing countries is 100 times more than in developed societies of the world. In fact, maternal mortality rate is considered as an indicator for development of a country. In year 2000, India was at the top of the list in terms of number of maternal deaths (1,36,000) followed by Nigeria (37,000), Pakistan (26,000), The Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia (24,000), United Republic of Tanzania (21000), Afghanistan (20,000), Bangladesh (16,000), Angola, China, Kenya (11,000each), Indonesia and Uganda (10,000each). The BMMS report shows that maternal mortality in Bangladesh is still quite high at about 320 per 100000 live births. The rate of maternal mortality in Bangladesh is five times than that of Vietnam and Srilanka, and ten times of Malaysia's.¹ A research on women, done in Indian district shows that the issue of maternal health is the most deserted catastrophe of women in Jhabua district. It is tied with ignorance, illiteracy, striking poverty, BMI, superstition etc.²

"It is only since the late 1980s that complications of pregnancy and childbirth have received

¹ IEM unit, *Gender, Women Empowerment and Development*, (Dhaka: Dept of Family Planning, Azimpur; Dhaka, UNFPA, Nov. 2005) p 28, 59

² Pradesh, Taneja PV; Saxena M, Nutritional anthropometry of Bhil women in Jhabua district of Madhya Indian, *Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*. 1998 Apr; 35(4):98-102.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/Organizations/healthnet/SAsia/suchana/0500/h078.html> Document Number: 281302
www.impact-international.org.

concreted attention in the international health field, even though they are the single largest of premature death and disability among women of reproductive age. The 'Safe Motherhood Initiative', which focuses on maternal deaths, was launched in 1987". It is noteworthy that the reasons of maternal mortality are consistent throughout the world. 'In most countries, 75-80% of maternal deaths are due to direct causes, principally five major direct causes hemorrhage, sepsis, unsafe abortion, hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, and obstructed labor".¹

Poverty and status of women are the root causes of the problem of high maternal mortality and are linked to underlying and immediate causes of death. 33% of the population lives below poverty line.² So, this 33% are in risk for health including the women in reproductive age.

From the above information it is clear that maternal mortality is still a challenge for developing countries in the 21st century when most of it is preventable. Religion and socio-cultural practices contribute in negligence and discriminatory behavior towards women and gender disparity affect even the access of women to healthcare and nutrition.

The health and family planning programme of Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the last two decades as evident from the decline in fertility rate, infant and child mortality rates. The reduction in maternal mortality in the past 15 years is 22%, right on target towards Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of a 75% reduction between 1990 and 2015¹. However, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) is still high (320 per 100,000).³

¹ Maine, Deborah and McGinn, Therese, *Maternal Mortality and Morbidity*, In *Women and Health*, ed. Goldman and Hatch, (San Diego: Academia Press, 525 B street, Suite 1900, San Diego, California, 92101-9495 USA, 2000) p 396, 399

² United Nations population fund, Bangladesh, http://www.unfpa-bangladesh.org/php/thematic_motherhood.php, 19-4-2010

³ Safe motherhood, United Nations population fund, Bangladesh, http://www.unfpa-bangladesh.org/php/thematic_motherhood.php, 19-4-2010

Mortality estimates by UN MDG regions in year 2000

Maternal mortality Ratio ¹

Region	Maternal mortality: Maternal death per 1000000 live births	No. of maternal death	Life time risk of maternal death 1 in
World total	400	529,000	74
Developed region	20	2,500	2,800
Developing region	440	527,000	61
Africa	830	251,000	20
Asia	330	253,000	94
Eastern Asia	55	11,000	840
South central Asia	520	207,000	46
South eastern Asia	210	25,000	140
Western Asia	190	9,800	120

Bangladesh Maternal Health Services and Maternal Mortality Survey, 2001, report shows that in

the life-threatening complications, the husband makes the decision in two out of three cases.²

¹Maternal Mortality in 2000: Estimates, developed by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO, Geneva, 2004, http://books.google.com.bd/books?id=2valPKR-7v4C&pg=PT14&lpg=PT14&dq=Maternal+Mortality+in+2000:+Estimates&source=bl&ots=xg8DsWLaVL&sig=B046NrcyngIvnQqmvV7Ygu_QfGw&hl=en&ei=8wRfSrPGN9OJtgfM9bWCDQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6, accessed 16-7-09

² BDHS 2001, National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), ORC Macro International, Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2001, (Dhaka: & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2000)

This is a reflection of a patriarchal society and may be an attempt to establish superiority of men in the family. Although, male domination is widespread in the world and appears to be prevalent in almost all societies, irrespective of geographic location, religion, economic development, etc., religion might have contributed for this attitude.

Women are often victims of negligence and discrimination which results in the deprivation of medical care. Deaths of women within the household due to lack of access to care are often taken as internal family affairs.¹ The tragic story of maternal death does not have an end with the fatality of the mother. The 600 thousands mothers die per year and they leave behind 1 million orphan children. Thus maternal death is a social problem as well. The underlying reasons for maternal deaths are-less value assigned to women, less education, malnutrition, discrimination and financial dependence.²

From above discussion it can be added that higher rate of maternal complications and death are due to lack of knowledge about health, lack of seeking health care, poverty, education and even negligence and discrimination towards them. Even the existing health messages The health of the child and the mother should receive the highest priority(slogan- World health day2005) , Take good care of pregnant women to reduce maternal and infant deaths(World Population day 2004) -are not that much effective for reducing maternal deaths. These various/ multiple reasons of maternal deaths can be addressed by religion of Islām as Islām strongly asks for education, alleviation of poverty and gender equity.

Another measure of health status assessment is the Body Mass Index or BMI (Body Mass Index, calculated as by dividing weight in kg by square of height in meters. This is the most widely

¹ Gender, Women Empowerment and Development, IEM unit, Dept of Family Planning , Azimpur, Dhaka, UNFPA, Nov. 2005) pp 59-60

² Choudhury, Dr. Samina, *Reproductive Health Problems of Women*, (Dhaka: Janantik, Aziz cooperative Market, Shahbag, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2002) P135

accepted measure of adult nutrition). In a poor developing country, proportion of women below certain low-cutoff level of BMI reflects the health status of women in the society. A cutoff point of 18.5 has been used in Bangladesh to define thinness or acute under nutrition. Low BMI women are often vulnerable to obstructed labor, which is one of the causes of maternal death.¹

In South Asia, women of reproductive age, suffer more from malnutrition than other regions of the world as indicated by low BMI values. In India, 36% of women have low BMI.² In Bangladesh, more than 50% of women of reproductive age suffer from under nutrition and the rate is higher than any other developing countries. The prevalence of low BMI among women in Bangladesh is 37% in rural areas and 25% in urban areas. Clearly, place of residence has some impact on low BMI of women, probably because place of residence and economic and social conditions are correlated. Studies also found that better educational status of women reduces the prevalence of low BMI. Higher wealth status also lowers the rate of low BMI among women.³

Birth weight of the baby is affected by mother's diet from birth to pregnancy and her body composition at the time of formation of the embryo. "Mothers in deprived socio-economic conditions frequently have low birth weight infants. Physically demanding work during pregnancy also contributes to poor fetal growth".⁴ Low birth weight babies are born at the highest rate in South Asia compared to all other places of the world. Low birth weights of babies

¹ National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11 , Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005) chap 11,pg 182,

² Srinivasan Soundarajan , Palamiyan Di Murugesan ,*High risk of Low birth Weight Children and Nutritional Status of Mothers in India*, 1998-1999, http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/237_filename_mm2000.pdf, accessed 16-7-09

³ National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11 , Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005) chap 11,p182-83

⁴ WHO,UNICEF,Department of Reproductive Health and Research, *Low Birth Weight, Country Regional and Global Estimates*; (New York, United Nations Children's Fund and World Health Organization, 2004.)

are also related to the low BMI of women.¹

The situation is quite similar in India in terms of maternal nutrition and low birth weight.

According to above information, economic and social condition, less education and lower wealth status of women are the main causes of low BMI.

Iron deficiency is much greater in the Indian Subcontinent compared to even other poor countries in the world, including Sub-Sahara Africa. Iron is the only nutrient for which supplements are recommended during pregnancy as a balanced diet alone cannot meet the need of iron supply of a pregnant woman. "In pregnancy, iron deficiency anemia is defined as a hemoglobin value below 11g/dl during the first and third trimesters and below 10.5g/dl during the second trimester."² Anemia may lead to maternal complications like hemorrhage during delivery.³ According to World Health Organization's estimation, 58% of women in developing countries are anemic basically due to iron deficiency. Iron deficiency anemia had a significant impact on the health of the fetus as well as that of mother. Anemia is connected with increased preterm labor (28.2%), preeclampsia (31.2%), and maternal sepsis and it is also responsible for 40%- 60% deaths in non industrialized countries.⁴ About 20% of maternal deaths are accounted in Africa and Asia for these two reasons.

¹ Osmani, Siddiq and Sen, Amartya *The Hidden Penalties of Gender Inequality: Fetal Origins of Ill-health; Economics and Human Biology* 1 (2003), 105-121, pg110-111, www.elsevier.com/locate/ehb, 18-7-09

² Sharon Ruby Rolfes, Linda Kelly DeBruyne, Eleanor Noss Whitney, *Life span Nutrition Conception Through Life*, 2nd edition, (Belmont: Wadsworth publishing Company, Belmont, California, USA, 1998)p

³ Fraser William D & Kramer Michael S, Labor and Delivery, in *Women & Health*, edit. Goldman and Hatch, (Sandiego: Academia Press 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-9495 USA, 2000) p183

⁴ Iron Polymaltose and Treating Iron deficiency Anemia in Pregnant Woman, http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/548571_2 18-7-09

Maternal health: Prevalence of anemia among pregnant women (%)¹

South Asia	78
East and South East Asia	35
Sub-Saharan Africa	43
Middle East/ North Africa	38
Latin America/ Caribbean	37
<u>Developing countries</u>	<u>52</u>

Anemia in pregnancy not only leads to maternal death but also disability, premature births, low birth weight and fetal impairment. The resultant reduction in women's productivity places an economic burden on their families, communities and societies.²

In Bangladesh, BDHS 2004 report shows that women suffer from other micronutrient deficiency e.g. iron and iodine. 50% of the pregnant women, age group 15- 49 suffer from iron deficiency and malnutrition. Intake of iron supplements by women is higher in highest wealth index and lower in lower wealth index. It is observed that iron intake have direct relationship with education. The percentage of women receiving iron supplementation is higher in urban areas than in rural areas.³

High prevalence rate of anemia among women is a serious problem for a society. In most of the cases women do not know about the foods and vegetables with relatively high iron content. In

¹ Osmani, Siddiq, and Sen, Amartya; Source: UNDP (1984), in *The Hidden Penalties of Gender Inequality: Fetal origins of Ill-health*; Economics and Human Biology 1(2003) 105-121, www.elsevier.com/locate/ehb s

² Nutritional Anemia in Pregnancy

http://www.populationaction.org/Publications/Reports/A_World_of_Difference/Nutritional_Anemia_in_Pregnancy.shtml 16-7 09

³ National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11, Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women, (Dhaka: & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005) Maternal and Child Health chap 10, pg140-41

fact, a number of food items with high iron content are relatively low cost and affordable even for the poor. **Therefore, iron deficiency is mainly due to lack of knowledge rather than lack of economic resources. The important question for us is to analyze the role religion plays in affecting educational status of women. When Islām emphasizes education and knowledge for all, it will be interesting to analyze how and why women in Islāmic countries remain illiterate and devoid of significant life cycle related knowledge.**

It is mentioned before that a (which is relevant again for this section) study from International Food policy Research Institute explores a link between women's status and children's nutrition in three developing regions: South Asia, Sub-Sahara Africa, Latin America and Caribbean. The research defines women's status as women's power relative to men. Women with low status have less power over household resources, less access to information and health services, stretched time constraints, poorer mental health, and low self esteem. These factors are considered to be linked to women's own nutritional status and the quality of care they receive and in turn, to children's birth weight and the quality of care they receive. The report also shows that, in South Asia, if the status of women is improved her nutritional status (BMI), prenatal and birthing care etc will also improve.¹

2.4 Breastfeeding

UNICEF and WHO recommend that children be fed colostrum or premilk immediately after birth and they also recommend for exclusive breastfeeding (BF) for first six months of life. It is also recommended to continue breastfeeding (BF) up to two years or beyond with

¹Smith Lisa C., et.al. *The Importance of Women's Status for Child Nutrition in Developing Countries*; (Washington DC:2033 K Street N.W. Washington DC 2006-1002 USA, IFPRI 2003)

complimentary food. ¹ If every baby were exclusively breastfed from birth for 6 months, an estimated 1.5 million lives would be saved each year. Not just saved but enhanced, because breastmilk is the perfect food for a baby's first six months of life - no manufactured product can equal it. ²

During infancy, mother's breast milk is the perfect food for him/her. The full term baby is capable of sucking and swallowing at birth. The benefits of breast milk create extensive and far-reaching effects for the babies. In the first few days after birth, the mother and the baby begin to get to know each other. It is recommended to the mother to keep her baby close to her as much as she can. The infant will be reassured this way by the warmth of her skin and the familiar sound of her voice.³ Breastfeeding is one of the most important mechanisms of fulfilling the above recommendation.

The human milk is the only food naturally designed for the baby and contains the right amount of nutrients according to baby's need and contains over 200 components required for balanced development of an infant. Breast milk is also easily digested and absorbed and less likely to cause stomach upsets and diarrhea. The first few days after the birth of the baby, a special yellowish fluid, the pre-milk, is produced in mother's breast which is also known as colostrum. Colostrum contains all the food the baby needs, as well as antibodies which pass the mother's own resistance against certain infections on to the baby. It is called as first natural vaccination for the baby. The breast fed infants are less likely to have respiratory infections, meningitis, urinary tract infection, appendicitis, allergy, sudden infant death syndrome, esophageal and

¹ Exclusive breastfeeding, WHO, http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/exclusive_breastfeeding/en/index.htm , 19-4-2010

² Breastfeeding, the best start to life, UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/programme/breastfeeding/>

³ NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK, 2005-6) p

gastric lesions etc. The milk composition also changes as the baby grows and contains growth factors and hormones to assist the infant's development. Breast feeding helps to protect baby from infection because antibodies from the mother are passed into the milk. Even poor iron status of the mother does not reduce the iron concentration of breast milk. The baby will be less vulnerable to coughs and colds and other infections than bottle fed babies. Human milk boosts cognitive development, and visual development. Children and adults breastfed as infants have a decreased risk of childhood lymphoma, leukemia, multiple sclerosis, diabetes mellitus, chronic liver disease, ulcerative colitis, childhood obesity, Crohn's disease, and celiac disease. "Although breast milk is not a panacea, it has been called a 'broad spectrum medicine' and a 'low cost intervention with immediate cost savings' ".^{1, 2}

Even the baby has an acute sense of smell and they can distinguish their mothers from anyone else. So the mother can reassure the baby by her presence. It is important for the infant to hear the mother's voice and feel secure, even at this early stage in life. The stimulation baby gets from the mother, by chatting, touching and playing, are essential for future physical and emotional development.³ Thus breast feeding not only contributes in physical growth and development but also plays a vital role in social and psychological development of an infant.

In Bangladesh, almost 98% are breastfed according to Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007 report. The report was based on children from different divisions of Bangladesh by background characteristics. On average, 92.2% of children were fed colostrums or pre-milk but the percentage varies depending upon mother's education, wealth index, place of delivery, and assistance at delivery. The percentage becomes higher according to higher level of

¹ *Breastfeeding*, volume 29, number 1. Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinics Of North America, March 2002

² NHS, *The Pregnancy Book* (London: The Central Office of Information, for the Department of Health, London PO Box 777 UK,2005-6)p 66-8,

³ Boots, *Guide to Pregnancy and Early Parenthood*, p48, www.boots.co.uk

characteristics.¹Table (A2) Breastfeeding in Bangladesh²

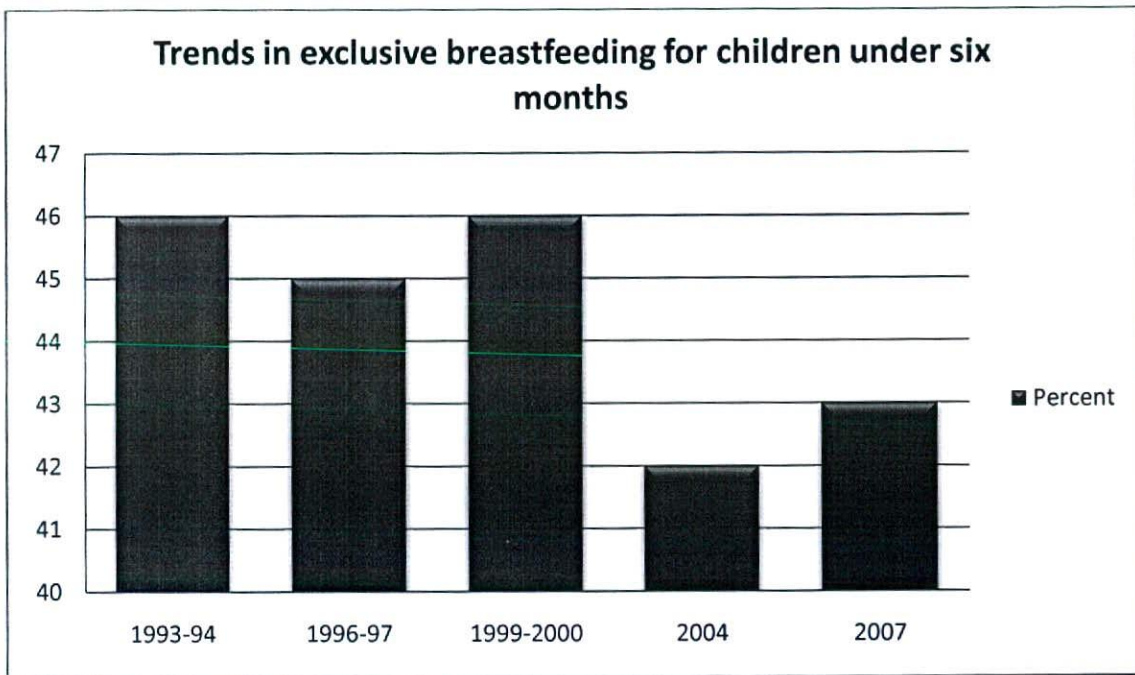
Background Characteristics	%ever breastfed	within 1 hr of birth	within 1 day of birth	% who received colostrum	Number of children
Sex					
Male	97.9	24.1	83.3	87.2	3559
female	98.4	23.3	82.8	86.9	3442
Residence					
Urban	97.9	22.2	83.2	89	1392
rural	98.2	24.1	83.0	86.6	5610
Mother's education					
no education	97.9	19.8	80.3	82.9	2688
primary incomplete	98.6	21.4	84.1	85.9	1499
primary complete	97.9	26	84.8	86	661
secondary incomplete	98.2	29	85	92.3	1678
secondary complete or higher	98.3	31.6	86.1	97.1	475
Assistance at delivery					
Medically trained	96.4	31.5	83.1	93	924
Traditional birth attendant	98.3	26.3	84.3	87.8	964
Other	98.5	21.8	82.7	85.8	5049
No one	95.5	23.8	86.3	84.3	61
Place of delivery					
Health facility	95.7	29.6	80.5	92.7	651
At home	98.4	23.0	83.3	86.4	6295
other	96.6	31.9	83.9	87.6	53
Wealth index					
Lowest	98.1	16.8	81	80.2	1791
Second	98.4	23.2	81.4	86.4	1444
Middle	98.1	24.4	83.3	89.1	1381
Fourth	98.3	29.7	85.9	90.4	1243
highest	97.7	28	84.9	92.5	1142
Total	98.1	23.7	83	87	7002

The percentage of infants under six months under exclusive breast feeding remained at the same 45% level since 1993-1994. In 2004 survey in Bangladesh, it shows a slight drop to 42% in the

¹National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 9 , Maternal and Newborn Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009) p151

² National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004*, chap 11 , Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005)Source: Table 11.1,Chap11, pg166.

2004 and 43% in 2007. So, there is no significant change in last 14 years. In different divisions of Bangladesh, the average duration of exclusive breast feeding among Bangladeshi babies is 3.3 months. It is 2.6 months with higher education (secondary complete or higher) and 1.2 months with lowest education (no education). It is interesting to note that, the median duration of breastfeeding is higher in mothers with no education (33.9 months) or primary education (35.1 months) compared to mothers with secondary education or more (31.1 months). It is lower for the highest wealth quintals. It is almost same for urban and rural mothers.¹



From the survey, it is clear that the duration of exclusive breast feeding is more than 3 months, which is quite low. 43% of infants (of less than 6 months of age) are exclusively breastfed i.e., 57% are not exclusively breast fed and the percentage has dropped in recent years. But 98% infants are breastfed with other drinks and foods. It can be said that higher economic status and

¹National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007*, chap 10, Child Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)pp154-156

education does not have positive effect on breast feeding in Bangladesh. Poverty and low income probably explains high prevalence of breast feeding but lack of knowledge and awareness probably is the reason for introducing supplemental food at an early age. The study from IFPRI warns that improving women's economic and educational status can lead to reduced breastfeeding, which is harmful to child nutrition. Efforts to improve women's status, therefore, must be accompanied by efforts to protect support, and promote breastfeeding".¹In the United States percentage of mothers breast feeding their infants is lower than the rates in developing countries. For example, during 1986-88, the rate of breastfeeding in USA was only 54%, although it increased to about 67% during 1999-2001. If we consider duration of breastfeeding, only about a third (34.6%) of mothers, in 1986-88 and about half (48.4%) in 1999-2001 of the mothers breastfed their babies, for three months. It is interesting to note that breast feeding increases with education among US mothers. 81% of mothers with bachelors degree breastfeed their babies while the rate is about 47% for mothers with no high school level education.²

It is clear from the above discussion that, the percentage of BF varies from country to country. In developing countries Breastfeeding is inversely related with wealth and education. Poverty is clearly a factor in the decision of breastfeeding as poor households may consider breastfeeding as cost free. Mothers with higher education do not have higher rate of BF. This may be explained by cultural and social practices and economic considerations. It is important to note that breastfeeding does not seem to have any relationship with religion or religious beliefs. Within the same society, where the religion of the mothers is the same, widely different prevalence of

¹ Lisa C. Smith, Usha Ramakrishnan, Aida Ndiaye, Lawrence Haddad, and Reynaldo Martorell, *The importance of Women's Status for Child Nutrition in Developing Countries*, Abstract 131(International Food Policy Research Institute, IFPRI • 2033 K STREET, N.W. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006-1002 USA, 2003)
T: +1-202-862-5600 • F: +1-202-467-4439 • ifpri@cgiar.org • www.ifpri.org 21-7-07

² Health United States 2006, US Department of Health and Human Services, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Washington D.C. 2006.

breastfeeding is observed. Again, despite the lack of relationship between religion and breastfeeding practices, this does not necessarily mean that religion cannot play an important role in improving the practice of breastfeeding. If properly informed, the religion might have strong role in encouraging breast feeding and exclusive breast feeding.

2.6 Selective abortion and female infanticide

Son preference is the desire of the parents to have high proportions of sons as compared to daughters. This may affect child mortality, sex ratio, and total fertility. In many developing societies, when the parents are old, sons are considered important source of security. The reason is that women have little or limited economic independence and in many cases cannot inherit or retain inherited properties. Parents have to pay a dowry during the daughter's marriage, which is expensive, and women have less opportunity to earn money. Miller in her study, "The Endangered Sex" (1981) emphasized the socio-cultural discrimination against female children as the main reason for female mortality. Miller called this as "extended infanticide" where life sustaining inputs like food, nutrition, health care were denied to the girl child. The son preference is so strong in some parts of India that the daughters must suffer from their logical point of view.¹

Although the social and economic factors generate son preference, changing the sex ratio at birth remained difficult as the sex of the fetus remained unknown to most parents. In recent years, ultrasound and other advanced medical technology have been used to find the sex of the fetus and therefore, a significant additional dimension has been added with the age-old son preference. Son preference has remained very strong in South and East Asia, including India, China, and

¹ Miller, Barbara D, *Population Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Mar., 1984), Population Investigation Committee
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2174368>

Korea. As there is strong son preference, female fetuses are now at a much higher risk of being aborted after the ultrasound check. "Parvati, a mother of two daughters in Bangalore, says, 'It is better to spend 500 rupees (\$10) now, than raise 500,000 rupees later for dowry.'¹ The reason of such decision can be explained in a simple manner as daughters are linked with double loss, for her food and other costs for upbringing and the burden of expenses during her marriage. The sex determination is like a business in all parts of India and it is growing vigorously." "This perverse use of technology is encouraged and boosted by money-minded practitioners who are out to make Indian women 'male producing machines'" (Patel, 1989). In 1993, a BBC documentary highlighted the way in which greedy doctors misused the technology by offering services at the customers' doorsteps by driving around with a portable ultrasound machine in their car.²

Amartya Sen (the Noble Laureate) in his article 'More than 100 Million Women are Missing' argued that 11% of women are mysteriously missing from the population in Asia and Africa. These numbers tell, "quietly a terrible story of inequality and neglect leading to excess mortality of women"³.

Son preference has led to significant decline in the sex ratio at birth, i.e., the female to male ratio at birth has declined over the years. The important causes of decline in sex ratio in India are- to escape from the dowry problem, ensuring old age security by preferential treatment of sons, use of pre-natal diagnostic technology to identify female fetuses and aborting them, etc. Existing state laws, policies and programs fail to comprehensively deal with the issues of girls and women's survival.⁴

¹ Action Aid India, 2001, *Tackling Gender Issues*, www.actionaidindia.org

² Lives at Risk: Declining Child Sex Ratios in India p22, www.sasnet.lu.se/EASASpapers/11Hatti_Sekher.pdf, 27-7-09

³ Sen, Amartya, *More than 100 Million Women are Missing*, New York review Books, 1990

⁴ Acharya, Arun Kumar, UNAM, Mexico, *Gender Preference and India's Missing Girls: Evidence from some of India*, paper presented in 2004 Population association Of America (PAA), Boston, USA. April'04

The table below shows the sex ratio at birth in different Indian States. Note that the sex ratios vary from 797 female per 1000 males in Punjab to 964 in Chhattisgarh. The worst sex ratio at birth states are Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana and Delhi.

**Sex ratio (females per 1,000 males) at birth
India and bigger states, 2002-2004¹**

India/bigger states	Sex ratio
INDIA	882
Andhra Pradesh	916
Assam	915
Bihar	863
Chhattisgarh	964
Delhi	835
Gujarat	855
Haryana	821
Himachal Pradesh	851
Jammu & Kashmir	816
Jharkhand	865
Karnataka	923
Kerala	889
Madhya Pradesh	916
Maharashtra	878
Orissa	944
Punjab	797
Rajasthan	838
Tamil Nadu	946
Uttar Pradesh	859
West Bengal	931

Sex selective abortion also takes place in China and Republic of Korea and such practices have resulted in abnormally high sex ratios at birth. For girls who have elder sisters, are found to have greater mortality. The researchers opined that perhaps the second or higher order daughters are less valued than first born daughters and these phenomena are found in China, India and Bangladesh. Gender related differences resulting excess female mortality but the parents sometimes do not do it consciously. May be child rearing customs is associated with deeply

¹ Report no. 1 of 2006, Sample Registration System Statistical Report 2004, Statement 16, page 34.

rooted cultural or religious beliefs.¹ In Bangladesh, sex selective abortions are not recorded but frequent pregnancy for the hope of male child is taking place and it is like a curse and health hazards for women. Female babies do not have same status in the society. On the other hand, the woman is often accused if she delivers only female babies. In addition, infertility becomes the curse for the woman only, though man plays a vital role for the sex of the baby or infertility. Even women with severe health problems do not have the option to use contraception. Sometimes the picture is opposite. She may be forced to have an abortion, to use contraception, to make her barren. The decision making process in this regard is a monopoly of the husband.² Studies had been done in the communities of higher female mortality. Clearly the reason is not biological but attributed to gender inequity. Less access to feeding and health care i.e. less and lower quality of food and they brought to the health centers for treatment less often than boys and at a later stage. "When household resources are limited, some parents make what they perceive to be an economically rational decision: they invest in the child most likely to yield the highest return. Evidence from Matlab, Bangladesh supports this view." (Koenig and D'Souza 1983). There, gender disparity in feeding began during the time of supplementary food which is costly. At that time boys fed with better quality food in good amount than girls thus they showed a higher level of malnutrition. Data of two demographic birth reports on Matlab indicate that, between the ages of one and four years female mortality exceeded male mortality by 59 to 77 percent.³

¹ Choe, Minja Kim, Steele, Fiona Alison, Kim, Seung Kwon; Son Preference, Family Building and Child Mortality in *Too Young to Die: Genes or Gender*, (New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, United Nations, New York, 1998) pp 209, 215-16,

² Gender, Women Empowerment and Development, IEM unit, Dept of Family Planning, Azimpur, Dhaka, UNFPA, Nov. 2005), pg 10-11

³ Freeman, Lynn P. and Maine, Deborah, Women's Mortality: A Legacy of Neglect, in *The Health of Women a Global Perspective*, edit. Marge Koblinksky (Boulder: West view Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado

The health message-*Chele hok meye hok duti santan e jotheshto*: two children are enough whether male or female. This message has been developed for lowering the rate of fertility and for population control. As a result, it does not have any impact on sex selective abortions or gender discrimination. Hence, the society is in need to have a clear and balanced message to counteract the occurrence of son preference.

In conclusion, it can be said that, the basic reasons of son preference are social, economical and indirectly religious. Parents view their male child as a future earning member for the family and a support for their old age. Male child are regarded as assets worthy of short- and long-term investment. Appropriate interpretation of Islām may play a strong role to deal the problem of son preference.

2.7 Violence against women

“Violence against women is perhaps the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. It is also a profound health problem sapping women’s physical and emotional vitality and undermining their confidence- both vital to achieving widely held goals for human progress, especially in the developing world.” The health consequences of such violence are immense. Battered women are four to five times more likely to require psychiatric treatment and five times more likely to attempt suicide than non-battered women. Women who are victims of violence, suffer major depressions, or go for substance abuse. In United States, the greatest single cause of injury to women is battery. In developing countries, data shows that there is always a link between violence and health. In Lima, Peru, one out of every three women for

emergency treatment is victims of domestic violence (Byerly 1984). A case study under UN, on wife abuse in China shows that domestic violence is the cause of 6% of serious injuries and death in Shanghai (Wu Han 1986). In urban areas of Papua New Guinea, 18% of the wives had received hospital treatment for injuries inflicted by their husbands. As Christine Bradley (1988) of the country's law-reform committee observes, "In PNG, where many women have enlarged spleens due to malaria, a single blow can kill them." There is a profound relationship between domestic violence and murder. In Bangladesh, killing of wives by husbands accounts for 50 % of all murders (Stewart 1989). Almost three fourths of women murdered in Papua New Guinea, are killed by their husbands.¹

Furthermore, female genital mutilation or female circumcision is still practiced in parts of Africa, and the Middle East. It is a life threatening operation and according to the World Health Organization, more than eighty-four million women alive today have undergone this sexual surgery in Africa alone. "The practice is present among several religious groups: Christians, Muslims, Ethiopian Jews (the Falasha) and indigenous African religions, although it is not the majority practice of any one religion." It is mainly practiced on minor female children who often have no say on this issue. The patriarchal attitude of men reflects in the practice of FC, a means to reduce sexual desire and curtail promiscuity, thus ensuring the fidelity of the wife etc and also support the secondary status of women. The practice has been widely recognized as a violation of human rights in several United Nations conference documents, and started working to stop the practice. A recent study in Cairo observed a direct connection between patriarchal views and

¹Heise, Lori; Violence Against Women: The Missing Agenda, in *The Health Of Women: A Global Perspective*, edit Koblinsky Marge, Timyan Judith and Jill Gay ((Boulder: West view Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, USA, 1993) pp 171-75

favorable attitudes about FC.^{1, 2}

FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women. It is nearly always carried out on minors and is a violation of the rights of children. The practice also violates a person's rights to health, security and physical integrity, the right to be free from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and the right to life when the procedure results in death.³

The key facts presented by WHO are cited below

- Female genital mutilation (FGM) includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM.
- In Africa, about three million girls are at risk for FGM annually.
- The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women.
- Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later, potential childbirth complications and newborn deaths.
- It is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15 years.

¹ Heise Lori, The Violence against women: the Missing Agenda in *The Health of Women A Global Perspective*, Koblinsky Marge, Timyan Judith and Jill Gay ((Boulder: West view Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, USA, 1993) pp179-80

² *Female circumcision/ FGM*, Susan Izett and Nahid Toubia, chap 32, , in *Women and Health*, edit Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Deigo, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000) pg 404-7

³ WHO report, Female genital mutilation, May 2008, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

The immediate health consequences of FGM can include severe pain, shock, hemorrhage (bleeding), tetanus or sepsis (bacterial infection), urine retention, open sores in the genital region and injury to nearby genital tissue. Long-term health problems are: recurrent bladder and urinary tract infections; cysts; infertility; the need for later surgeries. For example, the FGM procedure that seals or narrows a vaginal opening is surgically changed to allow for sexual intercourse and childbirth, and sometimes stitched close again afterwards; an increased risk of childbirth complications and newborn deaths. It is also found in literature that key reasons for practicing FC are -patriarchal view of men, to reduce sexual desire of women and curtail promiscuity and secondary status of women.¹

The UNICEF reported that FGM is discriminatory and violates the rights to equal opportunities, health, and freedom from violence, injury, abuse, torture and cruel or inhuman and degrading treatment, protection from harmful traditional practices, and to make decisions concerning reproduction. These rights are protected in international law.²

In India, feminist movements have focused their energies to stop domestic violence (Ghandi and Shah, 1992, chap 3; Mies, 1986). Wife beating was not considered a crime until 1983. The most publicized attacks have been the so called 'dowry murders' carried out in both India and Bangladesh. In this respect young women are battered and murdered because the husbands and the members of their families are not satisfied with the money and the goods their wives brought to the marriage. "The dowry is being seen as a 'get rich quick' by prospective husbands". Many are willingly burned to death or forced to death but an accident from kerosene stove during

¹ WHO report, Female genital mutilation, May 2008, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

² http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_genitalmutilation.html

cooking is often blamed.¹

BDHS report 2007 shows the reasons for spousal violence and most widely accepted reason for wife beating among women in Bangladesh is disobeying elders followed by arguing with her husband. Other reasons are financial crisis, wife neglected household chores, wife neglected children, refused sex, disobeyed husband, dowry issue, envy, food crisis etc. Generally poverty, having less education, having more children, husband married more than once are linked with increased risk of domestic violence.²

A survey was conducted to examine the relationships among gender, caste, and economic inequalities and marital violence among women in rural South India. Thirty-four percent of 397 women reported having ever been hit, forced to have sex by their husbands, or both. Women belonging to lower caste, poorer households, having greater economic autonomy, and whose husbands consumed alcohol were more likely to report violence. In multivariate analyses, indicators of women's economic autonomy and husbands' alcohol consumption were significantly associated with violence, independent of caste and economic status, which highlights the need to address the links between gender inequalities and marital violence.³

A physical battering can include pushing, punching, slapping, kicking, hair pulling, stabbing, shooting, dragging or throwing acid or boiling water, burning etc.⁴ Domestic violence also

¹Heise Lori, The Violence against women: the Missing Agenda in *The Health of Women A Global Perspective*, Koblinsky Marge, Timyan Judith and Jill Gay ((Boulder: West view Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, USA, 1993) pp 174-75

²National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, chap 14, Domestic violence Health*,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)pp 190,205, 212: WHO 2005b

³Krishnan S, *Gender, caste, and economic inequalities and marital violence in rural South India* Popline Document Number: 281336:, Source citation: Health Care for Women International, 2005;26:87-99 .<http://www.popline.org/docs/1539/281336.html>, 27-7-09

⁴ National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, chap 14, Domestic violence Health*,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)p201

causes psychological distress and trauma. Emotional violence or abuse takes place more often than physical abuse and probably has the longest lasting effects (In sickness and in Health, The University of Melbourne, Key centre For Women's Health In Society).

"For centuries women's experiences of sexual, physical and psychological violence from male partners have been fostered by cultural norms and expectations. However variety of strategies has emerged worldwide to promote social change, beginning with recognition that the status of women needs to be improved and women need more control over their bodies." ¹

The underlying reasons often cited in the literature for violence against women are:

Unequal authority and status due to historical, cultural, economic and religious reasons,

Difference in physical structure and emotional attributes between men and women,

Higher social status and supremacy of men because of their involvement in income earning activities, a number of world religions consider men as "human" and women as less than human.

Less opportunity for women to express opinion in the issue of use and distribution of wealth

Superstition and misconceptions about religions and interpretation of religious texts restricts her freedom and advancement.

Poverty and intra-household disparity in the distribution of food and other items²

In Bangladesh domestic violence or violence against women is a public health problem. 66.8% of women are verbally abused by their husbands and 23.7 % by other members. 50.8% are victim of physical violence by husbands and 2.1% by other family members. Physical violence like

¹ Brenda A. Miller and William R. Downs; Violence against Women, in *Women and Health* edit. Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Diego, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000) p529

² Department of Family Planning, Government of Bangladesh *Information on Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Gender*, Bengali (Dhaka: IEM Unit, Azimpur, Dhaka, 2004)p 48

hitting is mostly done by hands (85.4%) and followed by sticks (63.5%), kicking 51% or all at a time. 20% of pregnant women are battered by their husbands and 13.7% by other family members.¹

2.8 Violence against women in Bangladesh- at a glance²

Stage	form of violence/ torture
Childhood	Physical and mental torture, beating sister/sister in law, sexual abuse, discriminatory behavior in terms of medical care, food, too much duty, deprived from education.
Adolescence	Adolescence marriage, to force them to obey harmful rules in the name of religion and culture, to make them sex workers and use them in pornography, to isolate them in a unhygienic room during menstruation, sexual harassment, committing suicide for social reasons etc.
Reproductive age and pregnancy	Wife beating, acid throwing, burning or killing wife, dowry related violence and murder, women trafficking, to force them to be a sex worker, forced marriage with old man, forced pregnancy

¹ Bhuiy Abbas, Sharmin Tamanna, Hanif S.M.A, *Nature of domestic violence against women in a rural area of Bangladesh: Implication of preventive interventions*, Social and Behavioral Science Unit,(Dhaka: ICDDR,B, Centre for Health and Population Research, GPO box 1000, 2003)

² Department of Family Planning, Government of Bangladesh *Information on Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Gender*, Bengali (Dhaka: IEM Unit, Azimpur, Dhaka, 2004)p 50

	for male child, abusive behavior if she gives birth to a female child, unwanted pregnancy, to use harmful contraception or not allowing to take contraception, forced abortion and unsafe abortion, rape, sexually harassed women are under threat, punishment for only female adulterer, false accusation, victim of Fatwa, forcing the bride's family to give dowry, deprived of her maintenance and Mahr, threat for divorce, divorce for invalid reasons, remarry by Hila marriage, to send them to parents' place, oppression for polygamy of the husband, sexual harassment in working place etc.
Old age	Physical and emotional abuse, deprived of decision making, possession of wealth and health care, restrictions on social relations, oppression of widows etc.

Source-IEM Unit, Department of Family Planning, Ministry of Health, GOB, 2004.

Violence against women in Bangladesh: complaints recorded by Bangladesh National Woman lawyers Association, from 2001-2005

Type of complaints	No. of Women				
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Polygamy	108	178	178	133	135
Mahr	142	235	345	220	256
Dowry	249	346	486	879	440
Talaq	98	148	165	197	172
Maintenance	338	603	789	749	829
Property	66	104	168	105	76
Rape	7	46	72	68	41
Others	283	513	640	605	604
Total	1291	2173	2843	2956	2553

According to resource centre of BNWLA, the victims of fatwa are 10 in 2002, 27 in 2003, 32 in 2004 and 46 in 2005.¹

¹ Bangladesh National Woman's Lawyers Association, An Annual Research Report ; Violence Against Women in Bangladesh 2005 (Dhaka: Monico Mina Tower, 48/3, West Agargaon, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh, 2006)p 56

Chapter Three

Evaluation of Health Related Messages from Islāmic Perspective

In the literature review section, we have discussed a number of health or health-related problems faced by female population at different stages of their life cycle. The underlying reasons for poor health and the interventions or mechanisms for improving health and wellbeing have been widely discussed in the literature. In developed countries of the world, infant deaths have declined to less than four per thousand live births but in developing countries it has remained about 80 on the average. What is interesting is the direct relationship observed between female mortality (measured by life expectancy at birth) and infant mortality in general; the lower is the life expectancy of female population, the higher is the infant death rates across different countries of the world.¹

According to the scientific literature, many of the premature infant and female deaths can be prevented easily using low-cost, quite simple health practices and health interventions. Therefore, a significant proportion of female and infant premature deaths can be prevented if the population becomes more aware of a number of health practices. For this reason, health knowledge and communication has become an integral part of health sector development. The Bangladesh Health and Population Sector Program (HPSP) of Ministry of Health have also adopted health communication as one of the basic component of health sector strategy to improve the health status of population. Unfortunately, many of the messages have failed to

¹ Population Program and Reproductive Health including family planning program in Bangladesh. www.unescap.org/esid/.../population/.../Bangladesh_country_report.doc, 3-9-2010

reach the population, especially the female population, in an effective manner. In the Islāmic world, men often view these scientific messages with suspicion.

The methodology of scientific research is such that the conclusions are derived without any reference to spiritual and religious aspects. As a consequence, most of the scientific messages are communicated in a “value-neutral” manner without any reference to religious underpinnings of the messages. In a traditional, conservative Islāmic society, the messages, if consistent with religious teachings and practices, would likely to become more readily acceptable if they are rephrased to incorporate religion-based phrases and wordings. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to evaluate various health related messages targeted towards the female population from the perspective of Islāmic teachings and practices.

In general, the evaluation of each of the messages will follow the following step-by-step methodology. The first stage may be termed as the direct evaluation, i.e., is this message directly mentioned in Islāmic writings and practices? The second stage analysis is to evaluate the messages for consistency with Islāmic teachings and practices in absence of any direct indication in Islāmic sources. Finally, if the messages are found to be not fully consistent or clearly inconsistent, suggestions to change the wording of the message will be derived so that the message would become consistent with Islāmic teachings and practices. Alternative wordings for other messages will also be proposed so that Islāmic underpinnings of the messages are made explicit and apparent.

✓ To start the analysis of the health messages targeted towards women, we can review the messages related to infant care and infant health. Mother is the principal care giver of infants and a number of messages are developed by behavioral change and communication experts. The principal messages related to breast feeding of infants are as follows:

1. Breast-feed your baby to ensure balanced development of the infant as well as to protect the baby from infectious diseases.
2. Practice exclusive breast feeding for six months.
3. Give colostrum to baby as soon as the baby is born etc.

3.1 Encouraging breast-feeding from Islamic perspective

Message here is “Breast-feed your baby to ensure balanced development of the infant as well as to protect the baby from infectious diseases” and is encouraging the mothers to initiate and continue with breast feeding of the infant. Modernization and women’s participation in income earning activities may discourage breast-feeding. For a working mother, breast-feeding the baby may become quite inconvenient due to time constraint and higher income may encourage adoption of baby formula. It has been demonstrated by scientific studies that breast-fed babies are healthier than the bottle-fed babies. Even in mental and psychological development, breast-feeding appears to have significant advantage. Therefore, encouraging mothers to breast-feed their babies is an important public health message.

If we analyze the message on breast-feeding, it is clear that the message emphasized two important aspects or benefits of breast-feeding: (1) Balanced development of the infant and (2) Protection from infectious diseases. The second aspect of the message is easy to comprehend and even the poor, illiterate mothers will be able to understand this potential benefit of breast-feeding. The first aspect, however, is relatively vague and “balanced development” may convey very different messages to mothers belonging to various socioeconomic categories. Despite this

vagueness, since the message talks about “development”, a term indicating improvement or movement towards the “positive” direction, mothers will still get the idea that breast-feeding is good for the health and wellbeing of the infant.

Is there any contradiction between this message and the teachings of Islām?

Breastfeeding was widely practiced in the Islāmic societies. Even in the pre-Islāmic Arab society, it was a custom to handover the baby to a foster mother or a wet nurse. The foster mothers usually lived in relatively remote agricultural and non-commercial localities. The commercial centers in the trade-route saw flow of many traders and visitors from all over the region and the world and the continuous flow of traders from distant places also brought many diseases unknown to the communities. The commercial centers also became quite polluted. Such an environment was usually fatal for infants and in pre-Islāmic Arab society the tradition of handing over the infant to the foster mother was developed so that the infant can develop in a relatively safe and clean environment. One of the requirements of a potential foster mother is the ability to breast-feed the infant. Therefore, breast-feeding was considered essential in the proper development of the infant, even though pastoral population in Arabia usually kept livestock for milk and meat. Despite the ample availability of milk in the local communities, the emphasis on breast-feeding in foster-mother selection indicates the importance pre-Islāmic community assigned to breast-feeding.

“It was the custom of all the great families of Arab towns to send their sons, soon after their birth, into the desert, to be suckled and weaned and spend part of their childhood amongst one of the Bedouin tribes. Nor had Mecca any reason for being an exception, since epidemics were not infrequent and the rate of infant mortality was high. But it was not only the desert's fresh air that they wished their sons to imbibe. That was for their bodies, but desert had also its bounty for

souls.....So, the bond with the desert had to be renewed in every generation- fresh air for the breast, pure Arabic for the tongue, freedom for the soul..."¹

Our Prophet (ﷺ) was breastfed by Lady Halima (R) who was his foster mother. He lost his own mother at the age of six. Narrated from Abu Tofael (R) that during his Prophethood, whenever Halima came to visit him he stood up and spread his own robe for her to sit with him, which *Rasulullah* (ﷺ) exclusively did for his foster mother.² 'Our Prophet loved his foster mother Halima like his own mother and always remembered her for her kindnesses. Many years later there was a drought in the territory of the Bani Hawazin. Rains failed and many cattle died for want of water and grass. There was much hardship among the people. In this distress, Halima (R) came to our Prophet (ﷺ). He spoke to his wife Khadizah (R) and she gave her one camel, forty sheep, and food. When the Prophet was king at Medina, Halima (R) came once to see him. The Prophet cried, 'My mother, my mother' and embraces her with joy. He spread his own mantle on the ground for her to sit upon. Both she and her husband became Muslims after Muhammad (ﷺ) had become Prophet. Halima's name is honored among the Muslims to this day.'³

'Our Prophet loved his foster mother Halima like his own mother and always remembered her

¹ Lings Martin, *Muhammad his life based on the earliest sources*, (New Delhi, London: Published jointly by Vikash Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 5 Ansari Road, New Delhi 110002; The Islāmic Text Society, 66, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A3LH, 1983), pg 23.

² Sunan Abu Daud, in Rahe Amal 1st part, Nadavi Allama Jalil Ahsan, trans.A B M A Khaleq Majumdar,(Dhaka: Murad Publications, 332, Chantek, Jatra Bari, Dhaka 1204, Bangladesh 2002) p 126

³ Durrani F. K. Khan, *The Great Prophet: a Short Life of the Founder of Islām* (Kissinger Publishing, 2004, ISBN 0766191249, 9780766191242
http://books.google.com/books?id=KDoE7ZfGQxQC&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=prophet+haleema+mantle&source=bl&ots=e4TgDkRCTx&sig=7CAW7I41tj7idyDakcZ8RWQ_mdQ&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result),pg 40.

for her kindnesses. Many years later there was a drought in the territory of the Bani Hawazin. Rains failed and many cattle died for want of water and grass. There was much hardship among the people. In this distress, Halima came to our Prophet. He spoke to his wife Khadizah and she gave her one camel, forty sheep, and food. When the Prophet was king at Medina, Halima came once to see him. The Prophet cried, 'My mother, my mother' and embraces her with joy. He spread his own mantle on the ground for her to sit upon. Both she and her husband became Muslims after Muhammad had become Prophet. Halima's name is honored among the Muslims to this day.' ¹

Here Halima (R) was highly honored only for the reason that she breastfed the Prophet (ﷺ) at his infancy and took care of him when he was young. The respect shown by the Prophet (ﷺ) to Halima is an indication of importance of "motherhood" as well as breast-feeding. In the Holy Qurān,² it describes about the forbidden categories of women for marriage, which includes foster mother and foster sister. The milk ties establishes through breast feeding which is highlighted in the Qurān in several places in different form.

In the Holy Qurān ³ it is mentioned, "The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child. An heir shall be chargeable in the same

¹ The Great Prophet: a Short Life of the Founder of Islam , F. K. Khan Durrani, pg 40, Kissinger Publishing, 2004, ISBN 0766191249, 9780766191242
s http://books.google.com/books?id=KDoE7ZfGQxQC&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=prophet+haleema+mantle&source=bl&ots=e4TgDkRCTx&sig=7CAW7I41tj7idyDakcZ8RWQ_mdQ&hl=en&sa=X&oi=book_result&resnum=1&ct=result

² 4:23

³ 2:233

way. If they both decide on separation by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If you decide on a foster mother for your offspring there is no blame on you, provided you pay (the mother) what you offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allāh and know that Allāh sees well what you do.” Clearly, a father must pay his divorced wife money for breastfeeding their child. This should not be interpreted as a market relationship but rather to emphasize the importance of breast-feeding and mother’s role in the life of an infant. The same verse also mentions the right of the divorced mother to nurse her baby and to counsel each other, in a fair way, for sake of the child’s future. Even if the father dies, his heir should support both the lactating mother and the baby for the whole two years. If there is no heir, the government is responsible for her full support.¹

If foster mother is necessary, that is also allowed in Islām. She will be considered as the baby’s second legal mother and her children will rank as brothers and sisters to the baby. All these examples show the importance Islām assigns to breastfeeding. There is a Hadith, reported by Muslim, which suggests that the nursing mothers should avoid pregnancy as it may affect the ability of the mother to breast-feed the infant.² It is, of course, a wise and practical suggestion for women to maintain the health and well-being of both the mother and the infant.

Narrated from Anās Ibn Malik (R), Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) exempted pregnant and nursing mother from fasting.³ The reason is simple. The pregnant and nursing mothers need food and drink frequently for keeping good health. The status of exemption is a recommendation that is to

¹ Albar Dr. Mohammad Ali, *Contemporary topic in Islāmic Medicine*, (Jeddah : Saudi Publishing House, Jeddah, 1995), pg 111.

² Al Qaradawi Dr. Yusuf, *The Lawful and Prohibited in Islām*, (Egypt : El-Falah, 24 El-Tairan St, Nasr City, Cairo, Egypt, 1997) pg 263

³ Jame-Al Tirmidhi, Vol 2, Section 21, Hadith no 665, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Islāmic Centre, Kataban Masjid Centre, Dhaka 1000, 1996), pp 60-62

permit those ladies to break their fast for the well being of the mother and the baby.

In conclusion we can say that Islām puts great emphasis on breast feeding and offers practical suggestion to protect the health of the mother and the baby. From above discussion it is clear that Islām permits contraception during lactation period, full maintenance of the mother and baby from the husband, exemption from fasting which not only helps in protecting health but also ensures continued breast feeding. The Qurān recommendations for breastfeeding, suggestions of removing the potential barriers to breastfeeding even for cases involving divorce and death/illness of mother clearly indicates the emphasis Islām places on breastfeeding of infants. From practical point of view, Islām provides wise solutions to the problem and highlights the role of both men and women in the process. In an Islāmic society, messages on breastfeeding can be modified to link these with the Qurānic messages and Hadith on breastfeeding.

3.2 Messages on promoting breast feeding

3.2.1 Practice of exclusive breastfeeding for six months

It is an important health message¹ targeted towards mothers for the care of infant is to breastfeed the baby (boy/girl) for six months exclusively. This message is not gender specific implying that exclusive breast-feeding is desirable for all infants, irrespective of the gender of the infant. Purpose of this message is to encourage breastfeeding and to continue exclusive breastfeeding for six months. This message does not clearly indicate the total length of breastfeeding but it implies that supplementary food can be given to infants after six months with breastfeeding. The message also tells the mothers that breast-milk should be enough for the development of the

¹ UNICEF & WHO's message, UNICEF & WHO message; National Institute of Population and Training (NIPORT), Mitra & Associates, & Macro International. 2009. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007. Dhaka, Bangladesh and Calverton, Maryland, USA: National Institute of Population and Training, Mitra & Associates, & Macro International. p149

infant during the first six months of life and mothers should not try to supplement breast-milk with other food items. When other food items are introduced or formula milk is given, the baby may not demand food for a longer period of time, giving a false impression that breast milk was not enough to meet the needs of the infant. To clearly contradict this practice of introducing other food items early in life, this message says that breast milk is enough for an infant and infant's growth and development will not be hampered by practicing exclusive breast-feeding for six months.

Let us now evaluate this message from Islāmic perspective. Since the message mentions exclusive breastfeeding, it is important to determine if Islām directly or indirectly suggests anything on exclusiveness. We have already discussed the importance Islām assigns on breastfeeding. If there is any indication about the duration of breast-feeding in Islāmic teachings, that duration can also be used in revising the message so that it can be made more acceptable to religious Muslim men and women of the country.

Psychologist John Bowlby¹ believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous impact that continues throughout life. According to Bowlby, attachment also serves to keep the infant close to the mother, thus improving the child's chances of survival. The fundamental theme of attachment theory is that infants establish a sense of security whose mothers are obtainable and responsive to their infant's needs. The infant knows

¹ A theory advanced in 1951 by the English psychiatrist (Edward) John (Mostyn) Bowlby (1907–90) according to which an infant has an inborn biological need for close contact with its mother (or other main carer), a normal bond developing within the first 6 months of life through the mother's responsiveness to these needs, and maternal deprivation during this critical period having adverse effects on psychological development . attachment theory <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O87-attachmenttheory.htm>

that the mother or caregiver is reliable, which creates a protected and secured support for the child to explore the world. What happens to children who do not form secure attachments? Research suggests that failure to form secure attachments with mothers early in life can have a negative impact on behavior in later childhood and throughout the life.¹

In fact attachment theory, in other words, suggests women to breast feed their infants. It has short term and long term benefits for human development not only in terms of nutrition but for health and well-being of the future life of the child. Only through breast feeding a mother may show her tremendous love, affection, closeness, responsiveness, availability towards her child which may make the child a sustainable balanced person.

In surah Baqarah, Allāh says² ‘ The mother shall give suckle their offspring for whole two years.....there is no blame on them, if you decide on a foster mother for your offspring.....but fear Allāh and know that Allāh sees well what you do.”

In this verse, mother has been instructed to give suckle for two years. From this verse, we can imply that the total length of breast-feeding should be two years. Two years is longer than the six month exclusive breast-feeding mentioned in the health message. However, this verse does not say that the breast-feeding should be exclusive over this two year period. Two year probably reflects recommended duration of breast-feeding from Islāmic point of view.

The second part of the verse starts with the statement that there is “no blame” if foster mother is chosen. Clearly the preference is for the biological mother to breastfeed but if she cannot nurse the baby as for remarrying to another man or in discord with the husband or lacks milk in her breast or for any other reason then they can decide on a wet nurse. Here the focus is on breastfeeding either by the mother or the wet nurse and not to give suckles to an infant will be

¹ Attachment theory,; An overview of Attachment theory, Kendra Van Wagner;
<http://psychology.about.com/od/loveandattraction/a/attachment01.htm>

² 2:233

considered blameworthy. Similar information is also found in the Qurān ¹where it is mentioned that breast feeding should be for two years and the case of divorce here is divorce by repudiation. The husband and wife would remain in the same house after divorce during the waiting period for breastfeeding the baby. The mother will be paid for nursing the baby. The situation is also suitable for reconciliation which will have positive effects on the future of the baby. In addition, the verse also includes that, breastfeeding is socially valuable activity.

In the verse (2:233), the word “Yurdhina” is used which means to give suckle. If it is a binding command the Arabic word should be “Irdhiu”, which is “Amr” or definite command, that makes a saying definite demand, as it is found in “Aqimus Salāh” means “establish prayer”, which is undoubtedly obligatory according to the portion of the verse. The Qurān also suggests for a foster mother so that the baby is not deprived from the breast milk which is essential for physical and mental growth. In verse (2:233), it asks to fear Allāh as He sees everything, this may indicate not to look for a foster mother if there is no valid reason. This may be one of the possible indications to emphasize breastfeeding among other subtle indications as the verse deals with divorced wife, maintenance of the child, relationship between father and the child and the father and the child’s mother.

In surah Luqman ²it says, “And we have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents: his mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain, and he is not weaned before he is two years of age....” This verse is talking about suckling a baby for two years. The Arabic word Fisāl means

¹ 65 : 6-7

² 31:14

to separate. That is to separate the baby from the mother after two years. In surah Ahkaf¹, “In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give birth to him and her bearing and his suckling period took thirty months.” From Surah Baqarah, and Surah Ahkaf, Ali ibn Abu Talib (RA) deduced that the shortest period of pregnancy to bring a viable child is six months.²

So this verse again shows that the suckling time is two years. The renowned Andalusian jurist Ibn Hazm said, “A mother should nurse her baby even if she was the daughter of the king. She is not exempted from the duty unless she is incapable of nursing.”³ (4:23), (22:2). (28:7, 12) verses also say about breast feeding. Al Qurān⁴ vividly describes the dreadful day of Qiamah i.e the last day or the day of destruction when the nursing mother shall forget her suckling baby. On that day an important task like breastfeeding shall not be performed. This metaphor is used to express the extreme terror of the last day. In Surah 28, it tells the story of Moses (A) and in verse 7 and 12. It shows how Allāh arranged his mother to breast feed him by returning baby Musa to her mother's lap so that he might suckle at the mother's breast and fulfill his nutritional and psychological needs.

Al Bazzar recounts that a man was circumambulating the Kaba carrying his mother. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him “Have you repaid her?” The man said, “No. not even for one of her moans (i.e one of the moans of labor, delivery, nursing and so on)”.⁵

During the reign of second Khalifa 'Umar ibn Al khattab (R), every Muslim in the community

¹ 46:15

² Albar Dr. M. Ali, *Contemporary Topics in Islāmic Medicine*, (Jeddah :Saudi Publishing House, Jeddah, 1995) pg 105,

³ Albar, Dr. M. Ali, *Contemporary Topics in Islāmic Medicine*, (Jeddah :Saudi Publishing House, Jeddah 1995), p 105

⁴ 22:2

⁵ Qaradawi Yusuf Al *The Status of Women in Islām* , http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm

was getting social security benefits from Baitulmal, the government treasury, except the new born babies until they were weaned. When 'Umar noted that mothers tended to wean their babies too early to get the benefit of social security, he cried, "How many young Muslims soul you have deprived from their food, O 'Umar!" He then ordered that every new born should get the subsidy from the day he is born.¹

Once a woman was brought to Prophet (ﷺ) who got death penalty for her crime. He conversed with her and found that she was expecting. So Prophet (ﷺ) delayed her punishment until the birth of the baby. She came back with her new born baby for the punishment. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) asked her to breastfeed her until the baby would be dependent on solid food.²

This means punishment was delayed for an expecting or lactating woman. Here the Prophet (ﷺ) delayed the punishment for many reasons. One of them is to let the baby to get his mother and mother's breast for his survival. Actually he removed a barrier for breast feeding a baby.

The physician Ibn-Al Quff, in his books "Al Jami", described breast feeding and its benefits, how to nurse the baby etc.³

The following information are found from Quran and Sunnah

Breast milk is a sign of Allāh

It also elevates the status of mother in the Qurān and Sunnah

Islam encourages breastfeeding

The Holy Quran emphasizes on breastfeeding

¹ Albar Dr. M. Ali ,*Contemporary Topics in Islāmic Medicine*, (Jeddah :Saudi Publishing House, Jeddah, 1995), pg105

² Moududi, Syed Abul Ala, Taffhimul Quran, Volume 9, trans. Talib Abdul Mannan, (Dhaka: Adhunil Prakashani, 25Shirishdas lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka 1100, 2002) p95

³ <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>, date 3.12. 2007

Holy Quran encourages breastfeeding even in the case of divorce

If the father dies the father's family will support the divorced lactating mother

Breastfeeding is socially valuable activity

Holy Quran encourages Breastfeeding for two years of time

Islām gives great value to the practice of breastfeeding and the Qurān encourages human being in an appealing language to breastfeed the baby boy or girl without discrimination for two years. So breastfeeding is extremely important as it is explicitly mentioned in the Qurān in at least eight places for eleven times, in (2:233) it is repeated three times and in (65:6) twice. , But the duration of two years of breastfeeding is not obligatory but a strong recommendation for mothers.

Using the verses from the Qurān and the teachings of the Prophet (ﷺ), we can rewrite the messages as:

Allāh wants all mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Mother's milk is a sign of Allāh. Thus mothers should breastfeed their babies as it helps in a baby's proper development and growth and improves the chance of survival.

The Holy Qurān strongly recommends the mothers to breastfeed their babies for two whole years. This creates attachment between the mother and the baby which aids in the improvement of physical, psychological development and socialization skills.

According to the Holy Qurān mothers should breastfeed their babies for whole two years.

Allāh wants all mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Mother's milk is a sign of Allāh. Thus mothers should breastfeed their babies as it helps in

a baby's proper development and growth and improves the chance of survival.

3.2.2 Give colostrum to baby as soon as the baby is born ¹

This message is targeted to the mothers of new born babies. The colostrum or the pre-milk is the yellowish fluid which flows from the mother's breast as soon as the baby is born. This contains all the food the baby needs as well as antibodies which pass the mother's own resistance against certain infections on to the baby.

It is considered as first vaccine in the baby's life.²Allāh the best Creator, Sustainer and Planner provides this for the infant as soon as it is born.

As colostrum plays an important role in the life of an infant's as breast milk, so it is consistent with the teaching of Islām. The Qurān has discussion on breast feeding in different places. But what does the Qurān say about colostrum? During the revelation of the Qurān, human physiology or any other branch of science was not well developed. Whenever Allāh desired according to His wisdom, He gave subtle indication which are still being discovered by profound thinking and rigorous research. In addition, the language of the Qurān is very rich. Such is the story of Musa (A) in Surah al Qasās.

Pharaoh was unjust and arrogant. He broke up his people into sections and oppressed a small group among them. He killed their sons at birth and kept alive their girls. The Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelites babies. Moses was saved from them, and his mother nursed the infant at her breast herself. But when the danger of discovery was imminent, she put him into a chest or

¹ UNICEF & WHO message; National Institute of Population and Training (NIPORT), Mitra & Associates, & Macro International. 2009. Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007. Dhaka, Bangladesh and Calverton, Maryland, USA: National Institute of Population and Training, Mitra & Associates, & Macro International. p149

² Chowdhury Dr. Samina, *Reproductive Health Problems of Women*, (Dhaka: Janantik, Aziz Co-operative Market, Shahbag, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2002), p 161

basket and floated him on the river Nile. It flowed by the king's palace, and the chest with the baby was picked up as related further on. The mother had no cause to fear or grieve afterwards, as the child grew up under her tender care and became afterwards one of the Prophets of Allāh.¹

“So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: Suckle (your child) but when you have a fears about him cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to you, and We shall make him one of our messenger.”²

The Qurān portrays here a unique scene which highlights an invaluable injunction, to suckle the new born. If the verse is critically analyzed, Allāh used the word *Ardhi'hi* which denotes a binding command. Baby Moses was fed by his mother as soon as he was born. The first milk he drank is scientifically known as colostrum in medical science. Here Allāh planned to save the baby and fed him the unique liquid, transmitted from his mother's breast.

“Studies in Bangladesh have shown that until recently colostrum, by tradition, was largely discarded by mothers like in many other developing countries.³ Any misconception or social taboos can be wiped away by teaching of Islām. The strong recommendation for breastfeeding in the Qurān includes feeding the baby the colostrum. In the above verse, Allāh commanded Musa (A)'s mother to feed him by first milk or colostrum, which was essential for baby Musa and thus encourages all mothers to feed their baby with colostrum.

The designed health message is

Allāh created Colostrum which is highly nutritious for newborns which protects the baby

¹ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qurān, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, (Maryland :Amana Publication Brentwood, Maryland, USA 1989), p

² 28:7

³ Talukder Prof. M Q-K, *Benefit, Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding*, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation, Dhaka, August 2002) p 2.

from many illnesses. So, babies should be fed colostrum after birth.

3.3 Expectant mothers should take plenty of water, vegetables, fruits and milk for proper nutrition

This health message is targeted to the expectant mothers. This message should also make husband and family members aware of the added nutritional needs of pregnancy. The emphasis of this message is the diet of an expectant mother which is very important for her and the unborn baby. It is seen in the literature review that the baby gets nourishment from the mother through the umbilical cord. At this time the mother should take varieties of foods in larger amounts. The balanced diet will prevent nutritional deficiency of mother and the baby.

A human body needs a variety of food items including starchy staple, fish, meat, water, vegetables, fruits, milk etc. for maintaining proper nutritional status. A pregnant woman needs all the food items required for human nutrition but certain types of food items become relatively more important for ensuring proper growth and development of the embryo. This message, developed for the context of Bangladesh, emphasize selected food items due to low consumption of the items by women in general. The idea is to encourage consumption of larger than normal quantities of food items that can provide important nutrients to expectant mothers without overloading the body with calories and fats.

Now, does Islām talk about the diet of an expectant mother? The answer is no, not directly. The Qurān is not a book on nutrition and health science, but its teachings include health, hygiene and nutrition. Let us consider the verses from the Qurān that directly deals with food and diet:

“Eat of the good things We have provided for your sustenance, but commit no excess therein, lest my wrath come upon you.”

“They ask you what is lawful to them (as food). Say lawful unto you are (all) good things good and pure.”¹

“Eat and drink but waste not by excess, for Allāh loves not the wasters.”²

Water is the best drink and the resource of life. The Qurān says that Allāh has created every living thing from water.

“We made from water every living thing”³

Human body consists of more than 70% of water and the unborn baby floats in a watery fluid in the womb of the mother. The mother has to take plenty of water to keep the fluid balance right. Surah says, “Have you observed the water which you drink? Is it you shed it from the rain cloud or are we the shedder? If We willed, We verily could make it bitter. Why then, give you not thanks?”⁴ Pure and clean water is a blessing from Allāh and we keep the balance of body water by drinking it. A number of Ahadith are mentioned about drinking water by Muhammad (ﷺ) in the Sahih alBukhārī in the chapter of drink. Sahih Al Bukhari.⁵

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) always gave thanks to Allāh while he drank pure, cool water. It was narrated from Ayesha (R) that they used to fill their stomachs with two black things, dates and water, before the death of Prophet Muhāmmad (ﷺ).⁶

Certain types of fruits and vegetables are mentioned in the Holy Qurān,

“And from the fruit of the date palm and the vine you get out wholesome drink, and food; behold

¹ 5:4

² 7:31

³ 21:30

⁴ 56: 68

⁵ *Sahih Bukhari*, Bengali translation, 5th volume, trans. Huq Muhammad Mozammel Mawlana et al, ed. Musa Mawlana Muhammad, Huq Muhammad Muzammel (Dhaka :Adhunik Prakashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Bangla Bazaar, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh) , pp 262,263,264

⁶ Ibid, p197

in this also a sign for those who are wise.”

Surah Tin starts with the verse “By the fig and the olive!”¹ In surah Yusuf ²it says “... the people will have abundant water, and in which they will press (juice and oil)”. Another verse ³talks about garlic, onion, cucumber etc. In the Qurān⁴ it also says, “A sign for them is the earth that is dead. We do give it life, and produce grain there from of which you do eat.” The Qurān also says, “It is He who has spread out this earth for His creatures: Wherein are fruit and sheathed palm trees, husked grain and scented herb. Then which of the favors of your Lord will you deny?” ⁵Similar thing is mentioned in a verse and at the ending Allāh says, “Behold in these things there are signs for people who believe.” ⁶ The book “Scientific Indications and the Holy Qurān” comments on the fruits that are mentioned in the above verse, their benefits, use in human life etc.

“Fruits are low in calorie, high in vitamins and minerals and fiber and sugar is fructose not sucrose. Fruit and vegetable must be an essential part of our daily diet.” ⁷It is found in the Hadith that Prophet (ﷺ) loved to take fruits. In the Sahihain it is narrated that Abdullah bin Jafar (R) said, “I saw the messenger of Allāh eating cucumber with ripe dates.” In Sunan Abu Dawud it is mentioned that he used to break his fast on some dates.” In the book “Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet (ﷺ)”⁸, it says that dates are very beneficial fruit for the body. Allāh has sworn by the ‘Tin’ or fig for its benefits and uses. It provides good nourishment for the body and good for

¹ 95:1

² 12:49

³ 2:61

⁴ 36: 33

⁵ 55:11-13

⁶ 6:99

⁷ Islāmic Medicine <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im6.html>, 2. 12. 2007

⁸ Al-Jauziyah, Imam Ibn Al-Qaiyim translated by Jalal Abualrub, ed. Abdul Rahman Abdullah, *Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet (ﷺ)*, (Riyadh : Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1999) pp 271-2

different internal organs.¹ In Sahih al Bukhari, Kitab Al At'ema or the Chapter on Food, it is found that he liked to take cucumber and similar types of vegetables which are juicy, dates, water etc.²

This eating habit of the Prophet is not an example only for men but for females as well. It is also true that types of fruits and vegetables will vary from place to place but the focus should be on the balanced diet. So fruits and vegetables are to be added in an expectant mothers' diet. In Hadith also Prophet (ﷺ), encouraged people to feed their wives, children and other members of the family. In Sahih alBukhāri(1295) and Sahih al Muslim(1628) it is narrated from Sad bin Abi waqqas (R) that the Messenger of Allāh said to him, "You will never spend anything seeking the face of Allāh thereby, but you will be rewarded for it, even (the food) that you put in your wife's mouth." In SahihBukhāri(55) and Muslim (1002) it is narrated from Abu Sa'id al Khudri (R), that the Prophet said, "When a man spends on his family, hoping for reward, that is (counted as) an act of charity for him."s

The Holy Qurān gives a picturesque view of the pain of childbirth and the nourishment of a new mother. In Surah Maryam, verse 22-26, it is mentioned about Maryam (A) during the birth of Prophet Isa (A) while she was alone. There, Allāh encouraged her to take nutritious fruits like fresh ripe dates and spring water, just after the childbirth. That helped her to regain the energy she lost during rigorous labor pain and birth process. "So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish) 'Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten

¹ Al-Jauziyah, Imam Ibn Al-Qaiyim translated by Jalal Abualrub, ed. Abdul Rahman Abdullah, *Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet* (ﷺ), (Riyadh :Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1999) p 259

² . Sahih AlBukhāri, 5th volume, trans. Huq Muhammad Mozammel Mawlana et al, ed. Musa Mawlana Muhammad, Huq Muhammad Muzammel (Dhaka:Adhunil Prakashani, 25, shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100)pp 194, 197, 200

and out of sight! But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm tree): Grieve not! For your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you: And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm tree. It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So, eat and drink and cool (your) eye....."¹ The Qurān also reads, ""When she (Maryam) was delivered, she said: O my Lord behold! I am delivered of a female child"- and Allāh knew best what she brought forth- Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: to the care of Zakariyā was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said, 'O Mary! Whence this (comes) to you'. She said,' From Allāh: For Allāh provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure'."²

It is an exemplary verse about nutrition for all the expectant and new mothers. The superstition on intake of nutritious food for mothers is invalidated by the verse.

Milk is natural for the body and is a source of calcium and is an important drink for mother to be and the baby. Expectant mothers need extra calcium for her and the growing embryo. It is a very important food item for her nutrition as it contains high quality animal protein, important vitamins, calcium that is essential for bones and teeth. In the Qurān Allāh says, "And in cattle (too) you have an instructive example, from within their bodies we produce (milk) for you to drink; there are in them numerous other benefits for you..."³ In order to emphasize the importance of milk as a drink, it has also been mentioned as the drink of paradise in the Holy Qurān.⁴

¹ 19:22-26.

² 3:36-37

³ 36:71-73

⁴ 47:15

There are many Hadiths on drinking milk by the Prophet (ﷺ). It was considered one of the best foods in Arab society, where intensive crop cultivation was not possible due to lack of rain. In the Sunah it is narrated that, “Whoever Allāh gives some type of food, let him supplicate, ‘O Allāh! Bless it for us and grant us what is better.’ Whoever Allāh grants some milk, let him say, ‘O Allāh bless it for us and grant us more of it, for I do not know of a more complete food or drink than milk.’”¹ There are a number of Ahadith or sayings of the Prophet (sm) in Kitābul Ashribah or the Chapter on Drink in the Sahih Al Bukhārī which talks about milk. In a Hadith, Muhammad (ﷺ) was appreciated by Jibrail (A) as he preferred milk while he was offered wine and milk by the angel. The Angel commented by praising Allāh that he (the Prophet) had chosen a natural thing. This shows the goodness of milk and evil effect of wine for mankind.² In addition the messenger of Allāh exempted expectant and lactating mother from fasting Which proves that how Islām cares for the nutrition and wellbeing of woman and infant. Narrated Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas (R) that Allah's Apostle said, "You will be rewarded for whatever you spend for Allah's sake even if it were a morsel which you put in your wife's mouth."³

Based on the above discussions, messages from Islāmic perspective could be:

Our beloved Prophet (ﷺ) said that there is no food or drink more complete than milk. So, expectant mothers should drink plenty of milk for the sake of the baby and the mother.

The Holy Qurān encourages taking varieties of fruits and vegetables. So, it is our

¹ Al-Jauziyah, Imam Ibn Al-Qaiyim translated by Jalal Abualrub, Edited by Abdul Rahman Abdullah, *Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet (ﷺ)*, (Riyadh :Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1999) .p 334

² *Sahih Bukhari*, Bengali translation, 5th volume, Hadith no5167, (Dhaka: Adhunik Prakashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Bangla bazar, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh1982). p 252

³ Bukhari Volume 1, Book 2,

Number53:<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/search.html>

responsibility to encourage including fruits and vegetables in the daily meals of expectant mothers and mothers for a balanced diet.

Maryam (A) was one of the best women in the world. Allah provided her with different types of fruits and vegetables.

According to Hadith whatever the husband feeds his wife will be regarded as Sadaqa. So, husbands should be careful about the diet of mothers and expectant mothers.

3.4 Messages related to stopping violence against women

It is a health message targeted to men and women of the society. The form of violence and domestic violence against women varies from place to place as it is prevalent in all societies and cultures, both developed and developing. So this health message is targeted to all people of the world. From literature review, it is found that women suffer from physical and mental illness due to violence in general and domestic violence in particular. "A review of diverse culture suggests that gender- based violence is a pervasive, global issue that contributes to preventable morbidity and and mortality of women everywhere. ¹ It causes murder or even suicide and death of a woman. So this message is very important for the health and well-being of women.

Islām is a religion of peace and harmony and against any form of violence and oppression. Islām condemns any form of violence including domestic violence and under no circumstances it is allowed or encouraged. So this health message is consistent with Islām. There are some verses which condemns violence and oppression.

¹ Miller A. Brenda, Downs R. William: Violence against women, in *Women and Health*, edit. Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Deigo, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000) p529

In Surah Māidah, Allāh says, “O believers! Stand out firmly for Allāh as witness to fair dealings, and let not the hatred of others to make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is next to piety and fear Allāh...”¹

In the Qurān, it is said, “The blame is only against those who oppress men with wrong doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice: for such there will be a penalty grievous.”² In Al –i-Imrān, verse 57, it says,”.... But Allāh loves not those who do wrong.”³ In the last two verses, the word Zulm is used in Arabic, which means wrong, injustice, inequity, unfairness, oppression, suppression, tyranny etc. So in one word, Zulm is against the spirit of Islām as it is based on balance and justice. Allāh says, “We surely sent our messengers with clear proof and revealed with them books and the balance (justice), so that people may deal with justice....”⁴ and again He says,” Allāh commands justice and fairness..”⁵

It is evident from the Qurān that mission of the Prophets was to establish justice in the society and to wipe out injustice, oppression and violence in any form. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) never hit women or children. Even he never scolded men or women for any reason; rather he handled the situation in different way without resorting to physical punishment or violence. Narrated from Ayesha (R), “The Messenger of Allāh never did hit any of his wives or any of his servants. Never did he hit anything with his hand, but for God’s sake, or for stopping maharim (prohibition), for (in this case) his revenge is for Allāh (not for himself).”⁶

It is also narrated from Abdullāh ibn Umar (R) that Rasulullah (ﷺ) said that aggressor will be

¹ 5:8

² 42:42

³ 2:57

⁴ 57:25

⁵ 16: 90

⁶ Muslim, Book of virtues, no4296, http://www.iiu.edu.my/deed/hadith/muslim/032_smt.html

covered with darkness for his violent act on the Day of Judgment.¹

From literature review, we learnt that women are oppressed and victim to violence within the family. The husband or his family, the family members of women take part in violence against her. There are two important aspects of violence against women we should consider: the forms/nature of violence and the underlying causes of violence against women. To analyze violence against women, we need to consider both the causes of violence and nature of violence from the point of view of Islāmic teaching.

3.4.1 Reasons of violence

The reasons often cited in the literature for oppression and violence against women are given below-

Unequal authority and status of man and woman due to historical, cultural, economic and religious reasons.

Difference between men and women in terms of physical structure and emotional attributes

Higher social status and supremacy of men because of their involvement in income earning activities. A number of world religions consider men as “human” and women as less than human.

Less opportunity for women to express opinion on the issue of use and distribution of wealth

Superstition and misconceptions about religions and interpretation of religious texts restricts her freedom and advancement.

Poverty and intra-household disparity in the distribution of food and other items.²

Although some of the reasons are interrelated, these are the principal factors encouraging

1 Sahih al Bukhari, in Rahe Amal 2nd part, Nadavi Allama Jalil Ahsan, trans. ABMA Khaleq Majumder (Dhaka: Murad Publications, 332 Chantek, Jatrabari, Dhaka 1204, 1997) p31

² Department of Family Planning, Government of Bangladesh *Information on Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Gender*, Bengali (Dhaka: IEM Unit, Azimpur, Dhaka, 2004) p 48

violence, deprivation and domestic violence. These underlying reasons are so common around the world; violence against women appears to be a global phenomenon. It happens in the most developed countries of the world as well as in the least developed countries. However, self-interest of the beneficiaries and preservation of status-quo often encourages misinterpretation of religious texts to justify the current practice. Therefore, each of the above reasons for violence against women from the perspective of Islām should be examined and new messages need to develop as existing messages do not cover these reasons. As the next chapter is for designing new messages so the messages are given there after examining each of the underlying reasons.

3.4.2 Nature of violence

Women are suffering from physical and mental torture for various reasons. In fact, the forms of violence is need to be addressed separately as the reasons are manifold and it may not be possible to fully cover them in the list of underlying reasons as mentioned above. She suffers from torture and violence for marriage at early age, husband's marriage without her consent, deprived of decision making, marital discord, physical weakness, son preference, less access for contraception, aborting female child, polygamy of the husband, misuse of divorce, economically deprived, deprived from education, too much work and responsibility. Jawtuk etc. All these issues bring misfortune for her i.e. physical and mental abuse. As a result she suffers from physical illness as well as mental illness like depression etc which makes her incapable of playing her proper role in the family and the society.

The forms/ nature of domestic violence and other form of oppression and violence are--

Physical and mental abuse, sex selective abortions, female genital mutilation, killing or burning the wife/ woman ,Sexual assault, to force them to be a sex worker, oppression for misuse of divorce, oppression for maintenance, punishment by Fatwa , misuse of polygamy of the husband, Jawtuk etc. Here abuse of wife, female genital mutilation and Jawtuk are mainly discussed. Some of them are analyzed in the next chapter as for designing new health messages.

3.4.2.1 Physical and mental abuse of wife: an analysis from the Qurān and Hadith

BDHS report 2007 shows the reasons for spousal violence and most widely accepted reason for wife beating among women in Bangladesh Is disobeying elders followed by arguing with her husband. Other reasons are financial crisis, wife neglected household chores, wife neglected children, refused sex, disobeyed husband, dowry issue, envy, food crisis etc. Generally poverty, having less education, having more children, husband married more than once are linked with increased risk of domestic violence.¹

We learned earlier that any form of violence is not allowed in Islām. Though some people may think that to beat their wife, is granted by the Qurān, as it is found in the translation of 4:34, one of the most abused verses in the Holy Book. This verse should be compared with other verses related to behavior, attitude towards women, purpose and value of family and its responsibility.

If there is a serious discord between husband and wife, as for example, husband becomes suspicious of his wife's disloyalty, then according to 4:34 he can take three steps.

¹National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, chap 14, Domestic violence Health*,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)pp 190,205, 212: WHO 2005b

“Men are the *Qwwamuna* of women, because Allāh has given the one more (*faddala*) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient (*Qānitāt*), and guard in absence what Allāh would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill conduct (*Nushūz*), admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) *D araba* them but if they return to *obedience* (Ta'a) seek not against them means (of annoyance) For Allāh is Most High, Great.”¹

The most translations of the Qurān, like The Holy Qurān by Abdulah Yusuf Ali, The Message of the Qurān by Muhammad Asad, The Meaning of the Glorious Qurān by Mermaduke Pickthal, The Qurānul Karim (in Bengali) by Islāmic foundation, Bangladesh, Tafhimul Qurān by Abul Ala Moududi, all translated *D araba* as to beat. That is why this verse has become a weapon to torture a wife physically. For hundreds of years men has got a power to correct the women by light beating! “Many non-Muslims in the west, as well as many Muslims around the world, sadly, understand this verse to condone the kind of wife abuse that is meant by the term domestic violence, where one spouse will physically or verbally abuse the other.”

A. Clarification of the words *Qwwam*, *Faddala*, *Qānitāt*, and *Nushūz*

Before proceeding for the issue of domestic violence like wife beating a number of words in the verse should be clarified through rigorous analysis. The Arabic words to be elucidated are *Qwwam*, *Faddala*, *Qānitāt*, *Nushūz*, *D araba*, and *Ata'a* etc.

Let us consider the word *Qwwam*. This word is used in the Book in different ways and there is

¹ 4:34

no way to translate it as leader of women¹ as some scholars did.

The Qurān says, "Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) (Qwwamaa) between those (extremes)".²

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly (Qwwameena) for justice, as witnesses to Allāh, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allāh can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts) lest you swerve, and if you distort justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allāh is well acquainted with all that you do".³

Both of the verses show that Qwwam is the person, male/female, who is firm in bearing responsibility towards Allāh and his fellow beings without discrimination whether in spending goods or for justice.

The word *Nushūz* means animosity, antipathy, dissonance, discord.⁴ The word *Nushūz* is also used for males as The Qurān reads-

"And if a wife has reason to fear ill treatment (*Nushūz*) from her husband, or that he might turn away from her..."⁵.

But the term is defined differently for males and females. When it is applied to wife, it is usually specified as 'disobedience to the husband', with the use of *Ata'a* that follows. Others stated that the verse suggests that the wife must obey the husband. However, since the Qurān uses

¹ Al Kurānul Karim, Bengali Translation of Qurān, (Dhaka :Islāmic Foundation Printing Press, Baitul Mukarram, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Nov, 1986) p124

² 25:67

³ 4:135

⁴ *The Hans Wehr Dictionary Of Modern Arabic* ed. JM.Cowan, 3rd Edition, (New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc. N.Y 14850, 1976) p 966,

⁵ 4:128

Nushūz for both male and female, it cannot mean 'disobedience to the husband'¹ In this regard researcher suggests considering *Nushūz* a 'marital problem'. Otherwise big problem will arise to explain the word *Nushūz*. As the verse 1:128 implies that a wife when husband causes a problem in the marriage, his wife can beat him! At this situation, the husband would invoke the verse 4:34 to beat her. Consequently, there would be a continuous clash between spouses. The word *Ata'a* also should be well explained. It has got several meanings such as obey, comply, comply with, accommodate, and give into etc. Then the portions of the verse convey that when the wife is accommodative then, seek not (he) any means against her.

Qānitat, the root word is *Qanata*, (*Qunuut*) means to be obedient, submissive, humble. *Qunuut* means obedience to God, humility before God, devoutness, piety etc.²

The word *Qānitat*, in the verse often assumed to mean obedient to the husband. This word is used in the Holy Qurān regarding both male³ and female.⁴ This word denotes a quality of a believer towards Allāh and obedient to Allāh and co-operative to each other. This word does not mean obedience between created beings which *Ta'a* indicates. The Qurān does not ask woman to obey their husband. It never mentions that obedience to their husband is a characteristic of the better woman⁵, nor is it a prerequisite for women to enter the community of Islām (in the bayah of the women⁶).⁷ It concludes that a husband cannot ask for absolute obedience from his wife.

The word *Faddala* has come from the root word *Fadala* which means grace, mercy, surplus, be

¹ . Wadud Amina , *Qurān and Woman* ,(New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999), p 75.

² The Hans Wehr Dictionary Of Modern Arabic ed. JM.Cowan, 3rd Edition, (New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc. N.Y 14850, 1976) p792

³ 2:238, 3:17, 33:35

⁴ 4:34, 33:34, 66:5, 66:12

⁵ 66:5

⁶ 60:12

⁷ Wadud Amina , *Qurān and Woman* ,(New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999), p 77

in excess, to be excellent, superior, to prefer, to give preference etc. This word has repeatedly been used in the Qurān in different form. Some examples are cited here-

"We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea...and conferred (*Faddalnahum*) on them special favors, above a great part of our creation".¹

"We did bestow (*Faddalna*) on some prophets more gifts than on others: and We gave to Dawud the Psalms."² Same thing also mentioned in other place of the Qurān.³

Although the Qurān prefers some Prophets over others but it also declares that there is no distinction between them as the Qurān reads, "The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to Him from His Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in Allāh, His Angels, His Books, and His Messengers. "We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers'. And they say: 'We hear and obey:'..."⁴ So, preference here is relative not absolute.

"But you turned back thereafter; had it not been for the grace and mercy (Fadlu) of Allāh to you had surely been among the lost."⁵

"..... And gardens of vines and fields sown with corn ... watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent (*nufaddilu*) than others to eat, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand."⁶ Here one food is preferred over other.

"We gave knowledge to Dawud and Solaiman; and they both said, 'Praise be to Allāh, Who has favored us above (*Faddalnaa*) many of His servants who believe!' And Solaiman was Dawud's heir. He said, 'O you people! We have been taught the speech of birds and on us bestowed (a

¹ 17:70

² 17:55

³ 2:253; 6:86

⁴ 2:285

⁵ 2:64

⁶ 13:4

little) of all things: this is indeed grace (*Fadlu*) manifest (from Allāh)."¹ Thus Dawud and Solaiman were blessed with highest knowledge i.e wisdom that was reflected in their decisions and judgments and understanding that enabled them to fulfill their mission in life. They were both the prophets of Allāh and upright men. Solaiman was a king like his father. But he also received spiritual insight and prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son. They credited Allāh for all these achievements.²

"Such is the bounty (*Fadl*) of Allāh, which He bestows on whom He wills and Allāh is the Lord of the highest bounty (*Fadl*)."³

In fact the word *Faddala* is used many times in the Qurān. It indicates the blessings of Allāh which are given to mankind. *Faddala*, therefore a neutral term, which in this context indicates that men are in charge of women because they have been blessed with the ability to spend in support of their wives. It does not indicate that all men have superiority over all women.⁴

As Allāh gives *Faddala* , according to His will, to human being, so it is not an acquired virtue. Even if it is an acquired one, people cannot be boastful or claim for higher status for it as it is against the spirit of Islām. The Qurān declares, "...Allāh does not love the boastful."⁵ So, *Fadl* should make a man more God conscious.

This *Faddala* cannot be fully understood if the word *Darajah* is not explained as the word is used for man-woman relationship in the Quran.⁶ *Darajah* is something that is earned and acquired with responsibility or be granted by good deeds.

¹ 27:15

² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf , *The Holy Qurān , Text, Translation, and Commentary*, 27: 15-16(Maryland :Amana Publication Brentwood, Maryland, USA 1989), p 941

³ 62:4

⁴ Al Badawi Dr. Jamal ,*Islāmic Teaching Course* ,volume 3,(Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997) p 112

⁵ 57: 23

⁶ 2:228

"....Allāh Has granted a grade higher (*Darajah*) to those who strive and fight with their wealth and persons than to those who sit (at home).Unto all (in faith) has Allāh promised good: but those who strive and fight has He distinguished above (*Faddala*) those who sit (at home) by a special reward- Ranks (*Drajin*) specially bestowed by Him and forgiveness and mercy.....¹

"Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allāh's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank (*Daraja*) in the sight of Allāh: they are the people who will achieve (salvation)."²

"But such as comes to him as believers who have worked righteous deeds, for them are ranks exalted-".³

"Allāh will raise up, to high ranks (*Darajah*), those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And Allāh is well-acquainted with all you do."⁴. Here *Darajah* is bestowed on the basis of knowledge.

"Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of your Lord? It is He who portion out between them their livelihood in the life of this world: and We raise some of them above others in ranks (*Darajah*), so that some may command work from others. But the Mercy of your Lord is better than the (wealth) which they amass".⁵ The distinction or *Darajah* here is in terms of social and economic aspects. "It is also clear, however, that wealth is not a 'real' distinguishing characteristic, but a functional distinction apparent to humankind and valued within society."⁶

The term *Darajah*, in mentioned verses are not associated with gender. Any person may achieve this 'high rank' by Allāh's grace or performing some deeds.

¹ 4:95-6

² 9:21

³ 20:75

⁴ 58:11

⁵ 43:32

⁶ Wadud Amina, *Qurān and Woman*, (New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999) p 68

But the verse below distinguishes a *Darajah* between men and women.

“Divorced woman shall wait keeping themselves apart three (monthly) courses. And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal that which Allāh has created in their wombs, if they are believers in Allāh and the Last day. And their husbands have the better rights to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in a just manner. And men are a degree above (*Darajah*) them and Allāh is Mighty, Wise.”¹

"This verse has been taken to mean that a *Darajah* exists between all men and all women, in every context. However the context of the discussion is clearly with regard to divorce: men have an advantage over women. In the Qurān the advantage men have is that of being individually able to pronounce divorce against their wives without arbitration or assistance. Divorce is granted to a woman, on the other hand, only after intervention of an authority (for example judge). Considering the details given, *Darajah* in this verse must be restricted to the subject at hand. To attribute an unrestricted value to one gender over another contradicts the equity established throughout the Qurān with regard to the individual: each Nafs shall have in accordance to what it earns."²

"It is He Who has made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He has raised you in ranks (*Darajah*) over others: that He may try you in the gifts He has given you: for Your Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."³

This verse clearly shows that any human who has raised rank (*Darajah*) is not his own **credit**, but is a **gift** and form of **trial** from Allāh. Secondly all human beings are the **agents** of Allāh,

¹ 2:228

² Wadud Amina, *Qurān and Woman*, (New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999) p 68-9

³ 6:165

whether male or female. So, how come a subject of trial explained as a sign for higher rank for a human being?

B. A meticulous analysis of the word *D araba*:

Many questions will arise with issue of wife beating. If a husband beats his wife does he keep its limitation e.g. with a toothbrush or a meswak? Does he beat to rectify her as the third step prescribed by the Qurān? Is not beating or hitting someone a source of humiliation and pain? Can physical chastisement be a solution to marital discord? Is it not against human dignity and human right? What about the mental state/damage of the wife who is being abused? Will parents' conflict and violent relation not certainly cause psychological damage to the child if they have one? If husband is declared as Qwwam (in charge of woman, maintainer etc) by the Qurān ¹ then how come he beats his wife? And is it not against the foundation of marriage and family in Islām, which are found in "compassion, love, kindness, cooperation, dignity"² etc?

Indeed, *D araba* is one of the words which have a longer list of meanings in the dictionary.

According to Lisan al Arab and Lanes's lexicon, *D araba* does not necessarily indicate force or violence. ³ The word *D araba* and its derivatives make seventeen subtle and slight degree of deference in meaning, in the holy Qurān. This word is appeared in the Qurān in numerous verses.

Some examples will clarify this-

"Allāh *propounds* (*D araba*)(to you) the parable..."⁴

"When you *travel through* (*D araba*) the earth. "¹

¹ 4:34

² 30:21

³ Wadud Amina, *Qurān and Woman*, (New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999) p 75

⁴ 16:75,76, 112, 66:11

"...they should *draw their veils* (*D araba*) over their bosomsand that they should not *strike their feet*(*D araba*) so as to draw attention to their hidden ornaments"...² "Then We *covered* (*D araba*) their ears, for a number of years, in the cave"³

"... Travel by night with my *servants* and *srike a dry path* (*D araba*) for them...." 20:77

"God does not disdain to *use the similitude* (*D araba*) of things, lowest as well as highest...."

2:26

"...So a wall *shall be erected* (*D araba*) between them, with a gate therein." 57:13

Disgrace *covers them* (*D araba*) like (a tent).....3:112

" O you who attain to faith! When you *go abroad* (*D araba*) in the cause of God, investigate carefully...." 4:94

In this regard, Dr. Abdul Hamid Abu Solayman, an eminent Islāmic scholar wrote in the paper, "Marital Discord: Recapturing the Full Islāmic Spirit of Human Dignity" which presents a rigorous analysis of the word *D araba* and he did a research on this important verse, based on the perspective of the Islāmic value of human dignity. The root verb *D araba* has several allegorical connotations that are found in the Holy Qurān. It can mean to isolate, to separate, to exclude, to move away etc. So, as the third step to correct an unruly wife, a husband will do *D araba*, which means to move away, to depart, to separate i.e. he will move away from house. If all these fails, the couple may adopt the fourth step, prescribed by the Qurān. This matter then

¹ 4:101

² 24:31

³ 18:11

has to be handled by the guardians. “If you fear a breach in between them two, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers, if they wish for peace, Allāh will cause their reconciliation for Allāh has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.”¹

It is interesting to mention here that the Qurān does not use the word *D araba* to denote physical punishment except in the case of prophet Ayyub (A). It uses the word *Jalada* (to lash, to whip, to flog) as in the Quran², to declare the physical punishment for sex offence. Exceptionally the word *D araba* is used in the Qurān where Ayyub (A) took a vow to strike his wife as she annoyed him while he was enduring a prolonged and severe ailment and adversity. Afterwards he chastised her as a symbolic manifestation of his vow, without inflicting any injury or disgrace on her. The family and human relation are important topic of the Qurān. Accordingly, no verdict/ system should be allowed to destroy the foundation of the family relationship in Islām, which is mainly built upon the concept of “repose, affection, compassion, cooperation”, as the Qurān says, “And among his signs is this, that he created for you, your mates out of your kinds, that you may dwell in peace and tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect”.³ If any comments on the Qurān are apparently in contradiction with basic human rights, responsibilities and family bondage should be scrutinized carefully.

C. Wife beating is not allowed in Islam

It is obvious that, physical chastisement cannot be a solution of marital discord rather it will be more serious and eventually the fourth step to restore marriage will surely be a failure.

Prophet (ﷺ) was known as the living Qurān. The Qurān adds, “Indeed, in the Messenger of

¹ 4:35

² 24:2

³ 30:21

Allāh, you have for you an excellent model (Uswatun hasanah)...”¹. This Holy Book also says, “We sent you (Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the universe.”² If we look into Prophet (ﷺ)’s life, he never hit anyone, any women, any child. He intensely detested the idea of beating one’s wife, and said on more than one occasion, “Could any of you beat his wife as he would beat a slave, and then lie with her in the evening?” (Bhukhari, Muslim). According to another saying, he forbade the beating of any women with the words, “Never beat God’s handmaidens.”³ Dr. Abu Solayman, says that the verb *D araba* is consistent with the Prophets practice as it is narrated that he moved away from his wives when they rebelled after their demands for a better standard of living were denied. The Prophet (ﷺ) separated from them for a month and gave them a chance to choose either to accept the standard of living he could afford, and so to stay together or to be released from the marriage contract and separate with dignity. This is mentioned in the Holy Qurān.⁴ Then the wives realized their error and accepted Prophet’s offer. Dr. Solayman argued that if there had been a divine ordinance of physical discipline as a remedy, the Prophet would have been the first to take note of it and put it into practice. So, the word *D araba*, has clear interpretation from the Prophet’s practice which was to seclude, to move away and to distance himself from them. “That is consistent, on the one hand, with the psychological nature of the matter, and on the other hand, with the common understanding of the various Qurānic usages of the root verb *D araba* and its abstractions, derivatives, and figurative.”⁵. Thus the Qurān strongly

¹ 33:21

² 21:107

³ Ibn Majah, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Hibban Abu Daud, and Hakim etc in Asad Muhammad, *The Message of the Qurān*, (Gibraltar: Dar al Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) p109

⁴ 33:28-29

⁵ Solayman Abdul Hamid Abu , *Marital Discord: Recapturing the Full Islāmic Spirit of Human Dignity*, (London,

protects her from emotional and physical abuse. The Holy Qurān emphasizes on good treatment of women and depicts a clear picture of man –woman relationship. Let us consider the following verses-

“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take part of the dower you have given them- except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If you take a dislike to them it may be that you dislike a thing, and Allāh brings about through it a great deal of good.”¹

“A divorce is only permissible twice; after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness....”²

“ When you divorce women, and they fulfill the term of their (iddah), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to injure them(or) to take undue advantage....”³

“And among His signs is this that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are signs for those who reflect.”⁴

"It is you who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature in order that he might dwell with her with tranquility....." ⁵

These above verses shows the basic elements on which the relationship between man and woman is founded i.e. love, mercy, mutual respect, cooperation, care etc. And also disapproves

Washington, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, London, Washington, p.o box 669, Herdon, VA 22070, USA, 2003) occasional papers series ii, p15-21

¹ 4:19

² 2:229

³ 2:231

⁴ 30:21

⁵ 7:189

the ill treatment or hurting the woman even during the process of divorce, and the verse ¹ prohibits forced marriage.

Even from some other verses we find the following facts:

If a husband suspects his wife of adultery, he is said to take an oath against his wife rather to torture her or doing violence against her. "²

If a husband takes an oath it removes the effect if it is done in anger.³

The Qur'ān⁴ also prohibits deliberately causing a wife suspense or insecurity.

The Qur'ān enjoins humankind to fulfill oath, commitments and verbal agreements.⁵ Anyone who violates the limits of Allāh is called as transgressors in the Qurān.

The Qurān also demonstrates/ presents the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife etc in a society. They are, "protecting friends of one another" as the Holy Book reads, "The believers men and women, are protectors, one of another, they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey Allāh and His Apostle, on them Allah pour His mercy: for Allāh is Exalted in power, Wise." ⁶

In addition Prophet (ﷺ) strongly opposed the wife abuse and he never hit a woman or child in his life which was mentioned before. He said, "The most perfect of the believers is the best of you in character, and the best of you are those among you who are best to their wives." (At- Tirmidhi). He also said, "Be kind to women- you have rights over them your wives and they have rights over you."⁷ In Bukhāri it is mentioned, "The strong man is not the one who can use the force of

¹ 4:19

² 4:15

³ 5:92

⁴ 4:29

⁵ 17:90-91

⁶ 9:71

⁷ Sarwar Ghulam, *Islām: Beliefs and Teachings*, (London :The Muslim Educational Trust, 130 Stroud green Rd,

physical strength, but the one who controls his anger.”

Marriage should be seen as a partnership of man and woman who are of equal status. Neither of them is better than other. In some areas, such as physical differences, emotional, financial issues etc are to be dealt with great care and consultation. Marriage in Islām creates a violence free environment, to draw peace, tranquility, happiness and to recharge one’s vigor/ vitality. Thus there is no place for domestic violence in the family or society. The messages are-

Prophet (ﷺ) is the best role model and he never hit a woman. So, husbands should follow his Sunnah and not beat their wives.

Allāh and His Rasul (ﷺ) strongly condemn wife beating. So, how can you beat your wife?

The Qurān strongly recommends for reconciliation within the family. Therefore at the time of discord between husband and wife, one should move away from the place and thus create the way for reconciliation.

The Qurān and Hadith enjoin for building good families. Thus any form of violence and oppression towards your wife is not allowed in Islām.

Family ties in Islām are based on 'love, mercy and compassion'. So/As a result there is no place for violence against women.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) commanded Muslims not to beat their wives.

3.4.2.2 Dowry or Jawtuk

“On the Indian subcontinent, tradition has combined with greed to forge a particularly deadly

other Muslim communities in South Asia. The question is why do we see the practice of Jawtuk in South Asia when it appears to be not important in other neighboring areas? Although Jawtuk is in practice in Muslim society, it is completely in contradiction with the teachings of the Qurān and Sunnah. Therefore, the message from Islāmic perspective is much stronger than the message cited above. In this message, the society is being told that violence against women for extracting dowry is not acceptable. But, from Islāmic point of view, Jowtuk itself is illegal and so violence against women for extracting Jowtuk would be committing even a higher level sin.

It is found from the literature review that, in this subcontinent, the demand of Jawtuk is related with marriage of a woman. Though men take it as a gain, it is a harmful practice in the name of culture. Jawtuk originated in Hindu society and later became the part of Muslim society.¹ Islām or its culture or teaching does not have any place for Jawtuk.

According to the Qurān, the groom should be capable of maintenance of his wife before marriage. Financially handicapped male adults have been asked to defer marriage until Allāh gives them means out of His grace.² In addition, the groom has to pay 'Mahr' or marriage gift which is mandatory on Muslims. The Qurān says, "And give unto women their marriage portions in the spirit of a gift (Sadaq) their...."³ Here the Sadaq word is used in Arabic which means Mahr or marriage gift. This verse starts with the word 'Atu'(give), which denotes a command from Allāh and this 'Amr' or command makes it an indispensable element/ component of a Muslim's marriage. The Arabic word Nihlah is also used which signifies the giving of something willingly, of one's own accord, without expecting a return for it. ⁴The Mahr may be in cash or

1 Social Science for secondary level, National Education and Text Book Board, Dhaka, p 55

2 24:33.

3 4:4 The Message of the Qurān by Muhammad Asad

4 Zamakhshari, in The Message of the Qurān, (Gibraltar: Dar al Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) p

wealth or gold and it becomes the property of the bride. This is to be fixed on the basis of the social status of the bride and financial position of the groom. "Thus on the very wedding day the wife becomes owner of substantial property..... Thus Mahr enhances to the dignity of women and ensures a great extent continuity of smooth conjugal life."¹

Allāh also says, "And those of whom you seek content (by marrying them), give unto them their portions as a duty"²..... Also in

"O ye who believe! When there come to you believing women refugees, examine (and test) them: Allah knows best as to their Faith: if ye ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers, nor are the (unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them. But pay the Unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower), and there will be no blame on you if ye marry them on payment of their dower to them. But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women: ask for what ye have spent on their dowers, and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you). Such is the command of Allah: He judges (with justice) between you. And Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom."³

And the same thing is mentioned in "But if ye decide to take one wife in place of another, even if ye had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, Take not the least bit of it back: Would ye take it by slander and manifest wrong?"⁴.

From the verses of Mahr' it is evident that there is no chance for demanding Jowtuk rather the bride has the right to claim Mahr from her husband on the wedding day. In all Muslim societies, fixation of Mahr is in practice, but the payment of it to the bride remains rare in this

1 Khan, Muhammad Ferdouse, Consideration of Qurānic Verses on Important topics Concerning Women, , (Dhaka: Ahsania Mission, H19, Rd 12, Dhanmondi RA Dhaka, 1209, Bangladesh, 2005) p45

2 4:24

3 60:10

4 4:20

subcontinent. Consequently the Qurānic injunction is less valued and a practice of Hindu culture has become an integral part of some Muslim marriage. Given the unequal social and economic status of women, the Jawtuk system makes a man and his family greedier and tempts them to extract a huge amount of wealth and resources from the bride's family. There are a number of other negative consequences of the system. First, since it is a transfer of wealth from one family to another, not an internal transfer within the new family, negotiation and bargaining lead to strained relationship between the two families even before the marriage. Second, in any bargaining, the weaker party will lose out and therefore, in many cases, the family of the bride takes quite a large sum of money as debt, lowering the social status of the family even further. Third, the bargaining process degrades women by assigning a money value for accepting her as a bride.

Now the question is why is this practice continued in the Islāmic society even though the religion so explicitly considers the practice illegal? In religious discussions, why is that we rarely hear voices against this practice? The answer is very complex. Though honesty and to achieve moral values are encouraged by Islām, poverty often adversely affect honesty and makes man to have less faith on Allāh and less accountability. In addition corruption is a major problem in these countries which is also banned by Islām. Thus poverty and corruption opens the way for other highly illegal acts. In addition people are not fully aware about Islāmic perspective of Jawtuk, Islāmic teachings in general and its comprehensiveness. Secondly the religious leaders or people who participate in religious discussions, majority of them are men. The patriarchal society has impact on attitude formation of men towards women that influences their religious ideas as well. For hundreds of years the Qurān was interpreted by men and they addressed the women's issues from men's perspective. Thus, women's subjects were either completely ignored or when

addressed, often misinterpreted. As for example, we do not hear strong voice from religious leaders in case of misuse of polygamy, divorce, etc. although many of these practices are the underlying reasons for violence against women. Some reports show that in Bangladesh, women are tortured while they ask for Mahr.¹ Some Muslims may think that offering Jawtuk is consistent with Islām. Others think that Paying Mahr is not that important, rather it is important to write down the amount in the marriage contract. Thus misconception and confusion encircles about Mahr and Jawtuk. Mahr should be well practiced and Jawtuk must be stopped. There is Jawtuk prevention law promulgated in 1980. For this, Islāmic scholars and Imam of the mosques should highlight Mahr and condemn Jawtuk. This way Mahr will be established and curse of Jawtuk can be eradicated from the society.

From the discussions above, we can now deduce a number of messages based on Islāmic teachings: **Pay Mahr to your wife which is an obligatory duty according to Islām.**

Asking for Jawtuk is a great sin in the eye of Allāh. On your marriage day, ask for Allāh's mercy by paying the mahr.

Islāmic teachings consider taking Jawtuk as a crime. Jawtuk is a crime in the Shariah.

Ensure the payment of Mahr as it is the bride's right in Islām.

3.4.2.3 Female genital mutilation

It is mentioned in literature review that female genital mutilation or female circumcision is still practiced in parts of Africa, and the Middle East. It is a life threatening operation and according to the World Health Organization, more than eighty-four million women alive today have undergone this sexual surgery in Africa alone. "The practice is present among several religious

¹ Bangladesh National Woman's Lawyers Association, An Annual Research Report ; Violence Against Women in Bangladesh 2005 (Dhaka: Monico Mina Tower, 48/3, West Agargaon, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh, 2006)p 56

groups: Christians, Muslims, Ethiopian Jews (the Falasha) and indigenous African religions, although it is not the majority practice of any one religion." It is mainly practiced on minor female children who often have no say on this issue. The patriarchal attitude of men reflects in the practice of FC or female circumcision, a means to reduce sexual desire and curtail promiscuity, thus ensuring the fidelity of the wife etc and also support the secondary status of women. The practice has been widely recognized as a violation of human rights in several United Nations conference documents, and started working to stop the practice.^{1, 2}

Prominent Muslim scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi the president of the International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS), says that there is no evidence in the Noble Qur'an confirming the FGM (female genital mutilation) and it is necessary for only males according to the religious and medical evidence.

Dr. Ali Gomaa, the grand mufti of Egypt said "Prophet Muhammad c didn't circumcise his [four] daughters," he added. Mushira Khattab, the Secretary-General of Egypt's National Council for Motherhood and Childhood (NCCM), said that the FGM was a violation of the women's right. The conference called on regional and international parties to acquaint people with the rights sound bases of dealing with women and ending the FGM practice. They also urged educational and media institutions to highlight the harms and its negative consequences in the society.

In cairo, Muslim scholars from around the world have called for banning the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and pressed for a legislation criminalizing the practice. "Female genital

¹ Lori Heise, Violence against Women: The Missing Agenda, in *The Health of Women A Global Perspective*, Edit Marge Koblinsky, (Oxford: Westview Press, Sanfrancisco, Oxford. 1993) p179-80

² Susan Izett and Nahid Toubia, Female Circumcision/ FGM, in *Women and Health*, chap 32, Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Deigo, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000) p 404-7

circumcision is harming women psychologically and physically," the scholars said Thursday, November 23, in a joint statement wrapping up a Cairo-hosted conference on the ugly phenomenon. The FGM, which involves the full or partial removal of the clitoris, is common in many Islamic and African countries. It robs women of sensitivity in their sexual organs. Parents who support the practice argue that it helps prevent promiscuous behavior in their daughters. "The FGM is an old habit practiced by some Muslims in a number of countries with no ground from a Qur'anic text or hadith," added the statement. "The FGM is considered an abuse that requires punishment."

Muslim scholars for decades have emphasized that there is no Islamic basis for the very harmful practice, which causes many deaths among young girls each year. The conference was organized by Egypt's Darul Ifta in cooperation with German human rights group Target. Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, the head of the Al-Azhar mosque, Sunni Islam's top authority, told the conference: "From a religious point of view, I don't find anything that says that circumcision is a must [for women]."¹ It brought together well-known Muslim scholars from 13 Arab, African and European countries, and among them were Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Sheik Muhammad Sayyed Tantawi, and Egypt's grand Mufti Ali Gomma.²

There are some sayings of the Prophet (S) which are interpreted differently by Islāmic scholars. In one of these sayings, Prophet Muhammad(S) says to Umm Atteya, " If you circumcise do not go deep (i.e do not encroach on the clitoris) because it would be useful to the wife and desirable

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6176340.stm>
Last Updated: Friday, 24 November 2006, 12:09 GMT , 9-2-2010

² http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1164267223692&pagename=Zone-English-News/NWELayout Sent: Saturday, November 25, 2006 7:33 AM
Subject: Muslim Scholars for Banning FGM

to the husband."According to the majority of the scholars, the authenticity of the Hadith is doubtful. This view was supported by the recent declaration of the present Sheikh of Al- Azhar, Sheikh Tantawi and also Sheikh Shaltut , a former head of Al- Azhar. Another previous Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Gad El-Haqq, was in favor of the authenticity of these traditions and thus supported circumcision but on the condition that "it should not cut the clitoris or any part of it." "Only a part of the skin of the hood should be removed." "The operator should pay compensation if he removes or injures the clitoris".¹

In 2006, Sheikh Yusuf Al- Qaradawi said which was quoted in BBC news that Islam did not require the practice but some clerics felt it was allowed.² Whether female circumcision is a practice from Sunnah was asked to Adil Salahi, an Islamic scholar and he answered, "Female circumcision is not a Sunnah. There is no basis to consider it as such. Shaikh Muhammad Al-Sabbagh, a reputable Hadith scholar, has verified all the Hadiths that mention this practice and shown that they are all very poor in authenticity. As such, they are unsuitable to be taken as a basis for any action. From another point of view, it has been medically established that this social tradition, which is common in some African countries, is harmful to the girl in childhood and adulthood. As such, it should be avoided by all means. Parents who arrange this to be done to their daughters must not do so, because it exposes their daughters to lasting harm. This is something a parent is forbidden to do to a child".³

448937

¹Female circumcision :http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-HealthScience%2FHSELayout&cid=1157365852965#ixzz0f19PxYTP accessed 9-2-2010

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6176340.stm>
Last Updated: Friday, 24 November 2006, 12:09 GMT , 9-2-2010

³ <http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellit>



From the above discussion it can be said that in Islam circumcision is strongly recommended for men. Female circumcision was practiced in different culture and even among Christians, Jews and Muslims etc. The principal reasons of this practice are- to reduce sexual desire of women and curtail promiscuity, patriarchal view of men and secondary status of women in the society. These are all rejected by Islām. Here the health messages are -

The Hadith on female circumcision does not have proof value and creates debate among Islamic scholars. It violates the basic human right as it is life threatening and brings lifelong sufferings for women.

Islām does not allow any act which is harmful and life threatening for human being. So, female circumcision should not be applied on young girls and women.

Female circumcision is like a crime as it is applied to minor girls which brings them lifelong trauma, severe health consequences and even death.

Patriarchal view, to reduce sexual desire of women and secondary status of women are promoting female circumcision. Islām is against these issues.

3.4.2.4 Other forms of violence

In the same way to kill or burn one's wife is a grave sin in Islām. Even to force them to be a sex worker or to abuse them is harmful for their mental and physical health and it is also considered as serious offence in the eye of Allāh. Humankind, male or female is precious creation of Allāh. They cannot be subject to violence or sex abuse.

Islām is against any form of discrimination though it is practiced in some societies and cultures. The Qurān repeatedly had done psychological approaches to change the human attitude as well

as male's attitude towards women as women of that time were considered as objects of inheritance. It is earlier mentioned that, Qurān has established the fact that they have the same status as a man before Allāh. Then gradually revelation came and declare their rights, financial and non-financial, their position and women were liberated from all sorts of discrimination and violation.

Chapter 4

New Health and Health Related Messages From Islāmic Perspective

The purpose of this chapter is to present some new health messages from Islāmic perspective. A key contribution of this research is the design of new health messages where existing messages were not found or not adequate to address the problems in an effective manner. It is believed that if the medical science based health messages are supported by messages based on religious teachings, it is likely that combined effects of the messages will be much better than the medical science related messages alone. Surprisingly, female health related literature from a religious perspective is hard to find as the Islamic scholars and Muslim health professionals have not given much attention to this issue.

The literature review section indicated that the existing health messages on maternal health and violence against women are not adequate to address the problems in an effective manner. Existing messages for reducing maternal mortality and morbidity are not showing much impact on the outcome. Most empirical studies show that the maternal mortality rate is still very high in Bangladesh and the rate of decline in Maternal Mortality Ratio has been very slow over the last two decades. "The persistence of high levels of maternal mortality is symptomatic of a pervasive neglect of women's most fundamental human rights. Such neglect affects most acutely the poor, the disadvantaged, and the powerless. Maternal death is a tragedy for individual women, for families, and for their communities. Every woman who dies while pregnant, or giving birth, is denied her human right to health just as every death of a newborn baby is an unacceptable death.

This is an issue of social justice as well as a health issue that shows the inequalities between the rich and the poor." ¹

"Stop violence against women"- is a general message to stop violence and oppression against them. It also appears to be unsuccessful probably because a simplistic message like this is unable to address multitude of underlying reasons for violence against women or efficiently tackle the problem in a predominantly Muslim society. It is interesting that an extensive literature search did not find any message to stop sex selective abortions though it is taking place in many countries of the world including India, and it used to be widespread in China and South Korea. In fact abortion itself harms mother's health and it goes without saying that it terminates the baby's life because of the gender of the baby. Discrimination towards female child is a common phenomenon in developing countries. It may not be possible to address these health concerns fully addressed by designing health messages alone, as the problems are huge and economic, social and religious conditions and beliefs interplay to produce these outcomes. However, it can contribute significantly in attacking these problems as Islām is very explicit in declaring that the distinction between good and bad, virtuous and non-virtuous, are not defined by gender or race or economic status but by the goodness of the soul and deeds. In Islām, rights of women in terms of education, healthy life, ownership of property, right to earn a living, right to respectful behavior from the society and family members are strongly emphasized.

For example, the health messages- 'Take good care of pregnant women to reduce maternal and infant deaths', was the slogan adopted for World Population Day 2004; and the other one- 'The

¹ Making Pregnancy Safer: Reduction Of Maternal Mortality

www.wpro.who.int/internet/files/pub/360/115.pdf

health of the child and the mother should receive the highest priority', was the slogan of World Health Day, 2005. It is seen from literature review that every year, sixty million women die from complications related to pregnancy and birth around the world. Half of this number is from South Asia. In Bangladesh, 92% of women deliver at home and only 13% of them receive care from skilled health workers. Only about 8% of pregnancies in Bangladesh go to clinics for the birth of the baby.¹ In most cases, mothers do not get ante natal or post natal checkups, which are essential to reduce maternal mortality and child mortality.

4.1 Islam can play a constructive role in woman's health and wellbeing

Islam is a complete way of life. It covers all the aspects of man and woman.

Now the question is how does Islām view the female health and maternal health?

Islām cares about human health and hygiene, including the health of females. Concern about human health and wellbeing led to the development of Islāmic code on food and drink. For betterment of human health, Islām suggests consumption of pure food and forbids alcohol, any form of intoxicants, pork, smoking etc. "Islām considers the protection and preservation of life of paramount importance..." Five matters are essential in life which is known as purpose of Shariah. They are Integrity of Iman, preservation of life, soundness of mind, legitimacy of offspring, and protection of property.² Islām suggests taking preventive, promotive, and curative measure for health. Protection of life gets the highest priority in Islām.

The Qurān says, "For killing or for spreading mischief in the land- it would be as if he killed all

¹ Family Planning Bureau, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNFPA *Bishsho Jonoshankha Dibosh Upolokhe Bishesh Sancolon*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2005), p 30.

² Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK 2001), p 78.

mankind, if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people.”¹ This is the essence of Islām which is beyond compromise or negotiation. The Qurān also says, “and be not cast by your own hands to ruin.”²

Moreover, this Holy Book declares the husbands as Qwwam, i.e., protectors and maintainers and in charge of women³. So, he is responsible for his wife’s healthcare, nutrition, medical care needs of all stages including pregnancy and lactation periods, two very important periods in a woman’s life. That is why Qurān strongly discourages marriage of a man who is not an earning member of the society. Because such marriages will appear as burdensome, and is likely to create chaos in the family and the society, poverty itself will generate significant health hazards for women and children. Prophet SM himself gave very high importance on health. The Prophet (ﷺ) dealt with health matters in two ways: first by teaching preservation of health and prevention of sickness and second, by strongly recommending the treatment of illness. ..”⁴

There are a number of Ahadith on health issue.

“The one who is fit in himself, secure in his company, and has enough to feed on: has everything.”⁵

“Two inestimable gifts, not utilized by many, are health and leisure.”⁶

“There is nothing wrong with riches, if one has Taqwa (God consciousness), but for the pious

¹ 5:32

² 2:195

³ 4:34

⁴ Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001), p 78.

⁵ Sunan Ibn Majah, 1953, Vol.2:1265—

⁶ Sunan Ibn Majah, 1953, vol. 2:1387

there is nothing better than health.”¹

“Ask Allāh for forgiveness, wellbeing and health. Indeed, no one acquires a better possession after certainty of faith than good health.” [An Nasai]

He asked Muslims to seek treatment for illness.

"Seek treatment: for Allāh has created a cure for every sickness. Some treatments are known and, others are not."²

"Allāh created sickness and cures. There is a cure for every sickness. Seek treatment, but do not use forbidden procedures".³

During Prophet (ﷺ)'s time, the women of Madina, often asked questions to him and had separated gathering with him for learning Islāmic injunctions about health, reproductive health, hygiene etc.[ref.] Even Prophet (ﷺ), shortened his congregational prayer while he heard the cry of a baby to comfort the mothers. He was very much concerned about women and baby. He said, “Perfume, women and prayer are the delights of my eyes.” As we have seen before, he also declared the exemption of pregnant and lactating women from fasting.[see,pg 31] Muhammad (ﷺ), at his farewell address, said that, “O People, just as you regard this month, this day, this city as sacred, so regard the life and property of every Muslim as a sacred trust. Remember that you will indeed appear before Allāh and answer for your actions.”⁴ He also said, “I love women and children most.” Here “love” means also fulfilling the duties towards the beloved ones which Prophet did successfully.

¹ Sunan Ibn Majah, 1953, vol. 2:1396

² Al-Asqalani, Fath al Bari..Al Bukhari, 1988, vol.10:110

³ SahihAl Bukhari,Kitābut Tibb, trans.Mawlana Muhammad Muzammel Huque, et.al. (Dhaka:Adhunik Prakashani, 25,Shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka,1100. Bangladesh, August, 2002)p290

⁴ Sarwar, Ghulam,*Islām Beliefs and Teachings*, (London: The Muslim Educational Trust130, Stroud Green Road, LononN4 3RZ, UK, 2000) p120

Rufaidah, probably the first lady nurse in Islām, used to provide care to the sick and wounded along with other helpers like Umm Atiyah, Umm 'Umarah al-Maziniah, Safiyah bint Abd al-Muttalib. Once Prophet SM treated Sad Ibn Muadh, as he was wounded in the battle field, and sent him under the care of Rufaidah. Ayesha and Fatima also had knowledge of medicine and nursing.¹ It is important to note that, Safiyah, the Prophet's own aunt had knowledge of nursing. Once Muhammad (ﷺ) was asked whether preventative measure and protective medicines would avert what Allāh has destined, he said, "All of these measures, themselves, are part of destiny. So, be treated, and Allāh will cure whomever He wants to cure."² The Qurān says, "Allāh has appointed a measure for all things."³ This includes treatment and its result.⁴ Al-Ghazali said, learning medicine is Fard Kifayah, as it is essential in life. Medicine and arithmetic are at the top of the list of knowledge because of its usefulness and importance in the societal development... And if you ask why I have equated fiqh (the law) with medicine, I will give the edge to fiqh as it is needed by everyone whereas medicine is needed by those who are sick; though medicine is important for health which is necessary for performing one's duties including Allāh's worship."⁵ Adh Dhahabi said, "Medical treatment is Sunnah because the Prophet did it and ordered that it should be done." Al-'Izz Ibn Abd as-Salam adds, "Medicine is like law, it was laid out to bring about the benefits of security and well-being: and to ward off the ills trouble and disease."⁶

To protect the mother's health Prophet SM allowed Azl' (coitus interruptus) as a means of

¹ Anwar al-Jindi, *Al Islām wa Harakat at-Tarikh*, 1980:43, in, Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001) p 81

² Al-Asqalani, *Fath al Bari*, Al Bukhari, 1988, vol.10:111; Hakim Al-Mustadrak, (1342 AH, vol 4:199)

³ 65:3

⁴ Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001), p 81

⁵ Ghazali, *Ihya'* vol. 1:27 and 30; in Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001), p 82.

⁶ *ibid* 82

contraception. He said, "There is nothing in that, whatever is destined will occur".¹ It is evident that the use of technological development and medical care are in harmony with Islām as long as it is not used against the teaching of Islām. It is known from literature review that women suffer from some major and minor problems during pregnancy, delivery and lactation period. Some major problems are life threatening and are often ignored by the family due to poverty, or assigning lower value to life and wellbeing of women or due to lack of medical care and awareness. The cost of such ignorance or *inability* to seek medical attention is very high as it often may mean death of the mother and child.

One of the famous Islamic scholars Dr. Said Ramadan gave an interview in late 60s (Young Pakistan; Sep.17, 1968) and was asked, "Which in your opinion, are the major problems of the Muslim world, the problems upon which the attention of the workers of Islam should be focused, and to the solution of which they should devote all, or the greater part of, their endeavors?" He replied, "I consider three problems to be responsible for the disastrous state of affairs in the Muslim world; first, the failure to distinguish between what God laid down in His Book and the Tradition of His Prophet, and the elaborations derived there from by our legists; second, the plight of womenfolk in Muslim society; and third, the perversion of the meaning of "obedience to those in authority" to denote abject subservience and shameless acquiescence to rulers, regardless of the extent of the wrongs that they might commit and the injustices which they might perpetrate".²

So Islām teaches to provide health care for all people male or female. It is found from literature review that, there are some principal reasons for maternal mortality in a developing world are:

¹ Ibid 204, Jakni, Bukhari wa Muslim, 1967, vol. 2:275; Sunan ibn Majah, 1953, vol. 1:620.

² Ramadan, Said, *Problem Confronting the Muslim World*, Director Islamic Center, Geneva, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Articles/shariah/problem_confronting_the_muslim_world.htm, 30-06-09

pre-eclampsia, convulsions/ eclampsia, malpresentation of the baby, retained placenta, obstructed/ prolonged labor, excessive bleeding, fever and vaginal discharge, violence against women during pregnancy. Since these are the principal reasons of maternal mortality, these should receive the highest priority in all countries, especially in the developing countries of the world. Health interventions should be introduced on an urgent basis. If it is not adopted and provided in a systematic manner, society and state may be considered liable for the hazards to women's life and wellbeing and the state and society will be accountable in the eye of Allāh. The Qurān adds, "Verily never will Allāh change the condition of a people until they change it themselves".¹

4.2 Messages on Healthcare Delivery System in Islāmic World

In Islāmic civilization, we find evidences that hospitals were quite developed with specific distinctiveness such as secular policy related to patients served and provided services to all irrespective of color, race, sex, economic status and religion. Hospitals in Islamic world had separate wards, separate nurses for men and women patients. Rulers and Caliphs of Islāmic Empire were involved in various public welfare services including provision of hospital care.

4.2.1 Financial source and type of health care in the hospitals and Zakat, charity and Waqf can be contributed for maternal and female health

Rulers and Caliphs of Islāmic Empire were involved in public services and built splendid hospitals for the overall wellbeing of the population. Basically they spent money as charity following the teaching of the Qurān and Sunnah as it is a good investment for the Day of

¹ 13:11

Judgment. They established schools, mosques, hospitals carrying their names and to show the people that they cared and took interest in their wellbeing and benefits. "The rulers set aside generous funds to run these hospitals. Also the philanthropists gave generously, thus following their religious beliefs and imitating their rulers. In Islām, there is a special system called Al-Waqf. A person can donate part or all of his /her wealth to charity. The government takes care of such donations, and its revenues help to maintain and build mosques, hospitals, and schools. Another source of funds and an important pillar of Islām is alms-giving or Zakat (2 1/2% of property value). Collected alms go to the state treasury which takes care of charitable organizations. Very few hospitals in the Islāmic era were private. Thus, patients' fees constituted an unimportant source of funding."¹

Harun Al Rashid (786-809 A.D) ordered building a hospital, which was named as the Baghdad hospital. It became an important medical centre and one of its chiefs was Al-Razi (841-926 A.D), an eminent internist. "In 918 A.D., the Caliph Al-Mugtadir built two hospitals in Baghdad. One was on the east side of the city which he named Al-Sayyidah Hospital, after his mother. The other was on the west side which he named, Al- Mugtadiri Hospital, after himself."

During this early date, Muslim physicians set up the earliest dedicated hospitals in the modern sense, known as Bimaristans. These hospitals later functioned as the first public hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and diploma granting medical universities. There were even mobile Bimaristan or hospitals which served the health care needs of the people of villages, cities and borders which are away from capital cities. It was the duty of the state to run the hospitals.²

¹ <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/Islām06.html>

² Peter Barrett (2004), *Science and Theology Since Copernicus: The Search for Understanding*, p. 18, Continuum International Publishing Group, ISBN 056708969X. Ibrahim BB Syed PhD, "Islamic Medicine: 1000 years ahead of its Times", *Journal of the International Society for the History of Islamic Medicine*, 2002(2); 2-9

Another unique feature of medieval Muslim hospitals was the role of female staff, who were rarely employed in ancient and medieval healing temples elsewhere in the world. Medieval Muslim hospitals commonly employed female nurses, including nurses from as far as Sudan, a sign of great breakthrough. Muslim hospitals were also the first to employ female physicians, the most famous being two female physicians from the Banu Zuhri family who served the Almohad ruler Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Mansur in the 12th century.¹

Above information shows that Muslims were concerned about health of the population in general and women and women's health in particular. Many hospitals were established and even named after the name of the king's mother. This may sound inconceivable but the above discussions suggest that women had quite good access to health care during pregnancy and reproductive age in the 10th century! Separate nurses and wards for male and female patients also shows awareness of the Muslims of that time about healthcare needs and health seeking behavior of women, so that services can be delivered to them effectively.

4.2.2 Medical ethics in the Islamic world ensures woman's health care and her access to physicians

The medical profession was well respected in the Islamic world. One of the features in medieval Muslim hospitals that distinguished them from their contemporaries and predecessors was their significantly higher standards of medical ethics. Hospitals in the Islamic world treated patients of all religions, ethnicities, and backgrounds, while the hospitals themselves often employed staff from Christian, Jewish and other minority backgrounds.²

¹ Islamic Culture and the Medical Arts, The Art as a Profession, US National Library of Medicine, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic_medical/islamic_13.html

² Islamic Science, the Scholar and Ethics <http://www.muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=570>, 7-06-

Hynayn Ibn-Ishak, (Joannitius, 809-873A.D.), a renowned physician and philosopher translated in Arabic most of the works of Hippocrates (460-377 BC), Claudius Galen (131-201C.E), and Claudius Ptolemy (85-165CE). The oaths presented by them included swearing by their Gods and to perform the profession with extreme sincerity.¹ During this early period medical profession was considered an occupation especially suited for religious individuals and indicated the religiosity of the persons involved.

Abul Hasan Ahmed Ibn Mohammad Al-Tabari, in 970 A.D.(10th century), the chief physician from Persia, illustrated the Islāmic code of medical ethics, such as personal character of physician, his obligation towards patients, community, colleagues, assistants etc. The physician's obligation towards his patients was written as "He should avoid predicting whether a patient will live or die; only God (Allāh) knows. He ought not to lose his temper when his patient keeps asking questions, but should answer gently and compassionately. He should treat alike the rich and the poor, the master and the servant, the powerful and the powerless, the elite and the illiterate. God will reward him if he helps the needy. The physician should not be late for his rounds or his house calls. He should be punctual and reliable. He should not wrangle about his fees. If the patient is very ill or in an emergency, he should be thankful, no matter how much he is paid. He should not give drugs to a pregnant woman for an abortion unless necessary for the mother's health. If the physician prescribes a drug orally, he should make sure that the patient understands the name correctly, in case he would ask for the wrong drug and get worse instead of better. He should be decent towards women and should not divulge the secrets of his patients".²

09

¹ <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>, Contribution of Islām to Medicine, Ezzat Abouleish, M.D., Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006

² <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>, Contribution of Islām to Medicine, Ezzat Abouleish, M.D., Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D

Islāmic code of medical ethics is drawn at the First International Conference on Islāmic Medicine: Kuwait, January 1981. A few of them are cited below-

I swear by Allāh, the Almighty, to have regard for Him in exercising my profession.

To protect human life in all its stages, and under all circumstances: That I will do my utmost to save it from death, illness, pain and anxiety. To live out my life according to my faith, in private and in public; avoiding anything that might blemish me in the eyes of Allāh, His Messenger, and my fellows in the faith. May Allāh be my witness in this oath.¹ A modern restatement of the Hippocratic Oath, produced in 1947 by World Medical Association which was known as the Declaration of Geneva. An International Code of Medical Ethics was developed based on it. Duties of doctors includes that a doctor must always bear in mind the obligation of preserving human life.² Muslim medical practice even defined clearly physician's obligation towards women patients. This means the medical ethics, either secular or Islāmic includes preservation of female's life as well as mother's life. Accountability towards Allah or God will certainly accelerate the physicians' performance in accomplishing responsibilities towards the patients.

4.2.3 Prominent medieval physicians were specialists in maternal and female health

Medicine and health care were perhaps the highest scientific achievement of the Muslims during the middle ages. The Quran and Hadith encouraged the obtaining of medical knowledge and this motivated Muslim scientists to find the cure and to achieve excellence in the science of

¹ Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK), p 300.

² Ibid pp 296-97

Medicine.

Ibn Sina (980-1037), was so highly regarded in medical field that he was compared to Galen. He was famous for his book, Kitab al- Qanun fial-Tib or Canons of Medicine. The book was like an encyclopedia on diseases, naming their causes, symptoms and suggested treatment.¹ Thus, it can be added that Ibn Sina was also an expert in women's health and their health problems at that time. He suggested the treatment for major and minor health problems including maternal health at his time. In Islāmic history, there were physicians and philosophers who were also experts in obstetrics.

Hynayn Ibn-Ishak, (Joannitius, 809-873A.D.), a renowned physician and philosopher, translated the work of the Greek pioneer in obstetrics, Paul of Aegina, into Arabic. Ali ibn-Al-Abas Al-Majusi (Halle Abbas, died in 994 A.D) was the first to mention in his book (Al Kitab al Malaki, the royal book) that the cause of delivery of the fetus is the uterine contractions.² The Spanish Arab surgeon in Cordova, Abu Al-Qasim AL Zahrawi, (963-1013A.D), is called "the father of surgery". He used to advise the midwives on complicated obstetrics problems as most of the deliveries were performed by midwives at home. he could handle even the obstructed labor cases and introduced the required instruments for dealing with these cases.. Obstructed labor is still (21st century) a leading cause of maternal mortality in developing countries. He described the use of forceps for child birth. Many delicate operations like caesareans were also performed by him. Al-Zahrawi was known in the west as Abul Casis, who was physician, surgeon,

¹ OxfordMedicalschoolGazette, <http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/gazette/previousissues/54vol1/Part5>; [www.history for kids.org/learn/Islām/science/medicine/index.htm](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/Islām/science/medicine/index.htm) date22-2-08

² Ezzat Abouleish, , M.D, *Contribution of Islām to Medicine*, Islāmic Medicine, edited by

Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006 <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>,

cosmetologist, chemist and scientist. He was also known as father of modern surgery and Islām's greatest medieval surgeon, whose wide-ranging medical texts built both Islāmic and European surgical procedure up to the time of Renaissance. His book *Kitab al-Tasrif*, a thirty volume encyclopedia of medical practice is his greatest contribution to medical science. This book also includes orthopedics, ophthalmology, pharmacology, nutrition and he introduced 200 surgical instruments for surgery and at least 26 of them were innovated by Zahrawi. For his outstanding contribution to the field of medicine, his house in Cordoba is preserved by the Spanish Tourist Board. Ibn Zuhr (1091-1161) was a skillful doctor and surgeon. Ibn Zuhr's descendants, included five generations of Spanish physicians, and included two women physicians who served the household of the rulers of Islamic Spain.¹

Delivery by caesarean section was also described in 1010, in the *Book of Kings* by Abul Kashim Al-Firdaws (Speert 1973) and found in the book *Al-Athar Al-Baliyah* by Al-Biruni in 1307A.D (Hitti 1977). Al-Biruni's book is preserved in the library of the University of Edinburgh (Hitti 1977). Physician Ibn-Al-Quff, born in Jordan (1233-1305), presented in his book, "Al-Jami" the observation on embryology. He described in detail not only the growth of fetus but the description of the womb, its three membranes, umbilical cord etc. In 13th century, his findings

¹Ezzat Abouleish, , M.D, *Contribution of Islām to Medicine*, Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006 <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>,

Medieval Medicine, Health and Hygiene

http://www.sfusd.k.12.ca.us./schwww/sch618/Medicine/Medicine_and_Health.html, accessed 19-7 04

were new and accurate, but still considered as fundamental facts for embryology.¹

4.2.4 A comparison between maternal health status in medieval time and in west in 17-20th century

In fact that obstructed labor is still (in 21st century) a leading cause of maternal mortality in developing countries which was successfully handled by physicians of 10th century, indicates that it is not the lack of medical knowledge but social and other barriers of healthcare use that affect maternal mortality. Even books were written by Muslim scholars on embryology and delivery and caesarean section.²

In the 21st century, health and well-being of women and mothers are affected by women's status in the society. For example, in northern Nigeria (where many women are in 'purdah'- i.e. confined to the family house or compound), women must seek the permission of their husbands to travel, even in an emergency. "Physicians in that area tell of numerous women who died or terribly maimed because they developed obstetric complications (such as obstructed labor) when their husbands were away from home."³ In fact misunderstanding of Islām created such situation in Nigeria. As mentioned earlier, Islam values health and life of all individuals equally and protecting and preserving health and well-being of women is as important as that of man.

In Europe as well, maternal mortality was very high (900 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) in 17th and 18th century. United States had similarly high rate of maternal mortality during this era. The maternal mortality ratio was between 400 and 700 per 100,000 live births in

¹ Ezzat Abouleish, , M.D, *Contribution of Islām to Medicine*, Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006 <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>,

² Ezzat Abouleish, , M.D, *Contribution of Islām to Medicine*, Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006 <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>,

³ Maine, Deborah and McGinn, Therese, Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, In Women and Health, ed. Goldman and Hatch, (Sandiego: Academia Press, 525 B street, Suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-9495 USA, 2000) p 400-01

mid 19th century in Europe, a level of maternal mortality ratio very similar to the ratio in the developing world of today! Maternal mortality started to decline rapidly in the United States and Europe after 1930s. Infant and child mortality in the United States and Europe declined dramatically over 1900 to 1930 because of significant improvements in nutrition and sanitation that accompanied broad-based socio-economic development. This period did not see rapid improvements in MMR. The fundamental difference is that, the infant mortality are enormously responsive to environmental factors, but the majority of obstetric complications that cause maternal death cannot be prevented by a high margin simply by advancing women's overall health status, nutrition and hygiene. After 1930 rapid decline in maternal mortality can be explained by the introduction of medical technologies to treat obstetric complications, such as use of antibiotics, to treat infection, safer methods of anesthesia, blood transfusion, and caesarean section etc.¹

Analysis of health systems in Islamic world since 11th century help us to deduce a number of health messages:-

Muslim medical doctors handled effectively obstructed labor in the 10th century. Why do we see so many maternal deaths from obstructed labor in the Muslim world?

The world is moving forward rapidly but are we, the Muslims, moving backward? Otherwise, how can we explain so many maternal deaths from obstructed labor in the 21st century while it was handled effectively by Muslim physicians more than a thousand years back?

Muslims should redouble their efforts in acquiring knowledge and skills; Islām encourages

¹ Maine Deborah, McGinn Therese, Maternal mortality and Morbidity, in *Women and Health*, Edit Marlene Goldman, chap 31, (Academic press, USA, 2000) p 400; Freeman, Lynn P. and Maine, Deborah, Women's Mortality: A Legacy of Neglect, in *The Health of Women: A Global Perspective*, Edit Marge Koblinksky, Chap 7, (Boulder: Westview Press Inc, 5500 central avenue, Boulder, Colorado, USA, 1993) pp 149-50

research and development in health, wellbeing and illness. Can we be good Muslims if we ignore an important tenant of Islām?

Islām encourages all efforts for gaining knowledge. Then what prevents Muslims from doing research in health and hygiene and to adopt technology? Otherwise, ignorance will keep the society dependent on others in the contemporary world.

Social welfare and development is strongly recommended by the Qurān. Accordingly the Muslims and the Muslim health professionals should come forward to work together for women's health. Improving maternal mortality and morbidity should be considered as a duty of medical professionals in Islām.

Muslim professionals could handle obstructed labor in the 10th century. How does the same cause of maternal death exist in the developing Muslim countries in the 21st?

Why is that so many Muslim women in developing countries today die from obstructed labor while it was handled effectively by Muslim professionals more than a thousand years back?.

Islām encourages Muslims to do research in science and technology; including medical sciences. Why are we lagging behind today?

Social welfare and development is strongly recommended by the Qurān. Accordingly the Muslims and the Muslim health professionals should come forward to work together for women's health.

Allah condemned the practice of female infanticide in the age of ignorance. By remaining ignorant about the danger signs of maternal complications and mortality, are we not committing sin in the eye of Allah?

4.3 Islāmic messages addressing female health: from conception to birth

Pregnancy is a very important period of life for women and it is also a period of danger for women's health, wellbeing and even life.

4.3.1 The verses on embryo and pregnancy: an analysis

The Qurān presents verses on human life from embryo to old age as it says, "But let them always remember that if We lengthen a human being's days, We also cause him to decline in his powers (when he grows old): will they not then use their reason?"¹. The Qurān also talks about the development of a human being which obviously includes a woman's development, "What is amiss with you that you cannot look forward to God's majesty, seeing that He has created (every one of) you in successive stages?"² It also encourages us to know about the human body, a marvel of creation in this world, "On the earth are signs for those of assured faith, as also in your own selves (the signs and evidence of Allāh are in all nature and within the body and soul of a man): will you not then see?"³

For highlighting pregnancy, Allāh says, "And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him and his breast feeding lasted for two years."⁴ According to some philologists, the Arabic term *Fisal* defines the entire period of conception, gestation, birth and earliest infancy (Taj Al Arus) that is the period of a child's utter dependence on its mother.⁵

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing, and

¹ 36:68

² 71:14

³ 51: 20-21

⁴ 31:14

⁵ Asad, Muḥammād, *The Message of the Qurān*, note 14, (Gibraltar: Dar Al Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) p 629

He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affection: that you may give thanks (to Allāh)".¹

"Allāh does know what every female (womb) does bear, by how much the wombs fall short..."²

"He created you all from a single person:He makes you in the wombs of your mothers, in stages one after another, in three veils of darkness. Such is Allāh your Lord and Cherisher: to Him belongs all dominion. There is no god but He: then how are you turned away?"³

"O mankind if you have doubt about the resurrection, (consider) that We created you out of dust (for 1st man) then out of sperm, then out of something that clings, then out of a morsel of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, in order that We may manifest (our power) to you; and We cause whom We will to rest in the wombs for an appointed term, then do We bring you out as babies, then foster you that you may reach your age of full strength..."⁴ Doubts concerning one of the basic beliefs of Islām, life after death, are cancelled out meticulously by turning the readers' attention either to their own nature or to the natural world around us. The physical growth of a male or female is a splendid phenomenon, from lifeless matter to seed, fertilized ovum, fetus, child, youth, prime age and death. Here importance is given to Allāh's power of creation, life after death, development of an embryo and its birth, which also includes pregnancy, delivery, human life, and death, and nature all around.⁵ Similar theme is presented in surah Muminun.⁶

¹ 16:78

² 13:8

³ 39:6

⁴ 22: 5

⁵ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Publication Brentwood, Maryland, USA 1989), p 822

⁶ 23:12

"Then We placed him as (a drop of) sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed..."¹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali comments, 'The growth in the fetal stage is silent and unseen. The fetus is protected in the mother's womb like a king in a castle, it is firmly fixed, and gets the protection in the mother's body on which it depends for its own growth until birth'.²

"Have We not created you from a fluid despicable? The which We placed in a place of rest, firmly fixed, for a period (of gestation), determined (according to need)?"³ It shows again the growth of the fetus, and the protection and sustenance which the growing life receives from the life of the mother, the period of gestation are themselves wonders of creations. 'In fact, throughout our prenatal as well as postnatal life there are wonderful and nicely- balanced adjustments of which we are ourselves unconscious. Should we not turn in love and gratitude to Allāh our creator?'.... 'Perhaps the life in the womb, in relation to the life after birth, is an allegory for our probationary life on earth in relation to the eternal life to come. Perhaps, also, our state when we are buried in the tomb suggests an allegory to the life in the womb, in relation to the life in the Hereafter.'⁴

"Read! In the name of your lord and Cherisher, Who created, created man from something that clings..."⁵ -the first revelation contains the information on embryology -indicates pregnancy of a woman and tributes to the unborn baby, pregnancy, delivery etc.

The revelation starts with the word 'Read' to acquire knowledge an imperative word ordering

¹23:13

² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, (Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989) p876

³ 77: 20-22

⁴ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, (Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989) p 1666

⁵ 96:1-2

human being in the name of Al Mighty Allāh, the creator of the humankind and the universe. The next few words indicate the developmental phase of a fetus; which was unknown to scientists of that time. Therefore the combination of the words in the first revelation asks the Muslims to acquire knowledge including the knowledge about human development in mother's womb. An embryo grows in the womb of a female body, and therefore, the verse gives emphasis on acquiring knowledge about motherhood, mother's health, delivery care, and the measures to take to protect the fetus, male or female. Even evidence of existing Creator Allāh, embryology and motherhood are closely interrelated in the Qurān.

4.3.2 The Holy Quran encourages caring for expectant mother and new mother

Isa (A) is mentioned in the Qurān as son of Maryum. She is an example for humankind and the Qurān also gives account of her childbirth. "So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree: she cried (in her anguish) 'Ah! Would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight! But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm tree): Grieve not! For your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you: And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm tree. It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So, eat and drink and cool (your) eye..... "¹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali commented "She was but human and suffered the pangs of an expectant mother, with no one to attend her. The circumstances being peculiar, she had gotten far away from her people" The delivery took place in Bethlehem about six miles south of Jerusalem. It was a remote place. ²

¹ 19:22-26

² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Publication Brentwood, Maryland, USA 1989), pp 748-49

"When she (Maryam) was delivered, she said: O my Lord behold! I am delivered of a female child"- and Allāh knew best what she brought forth- Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: to the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered (her) chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said,; "O Mary! Whence this (comes) to you. She said," From Allāh: For Allāh provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure."¹

A number of important aspects are worth noting in the verses mentioned above:

Allāh mentions about nutrition of a mother to be and new mother i.e. healthy food and drink. Here Allāh provided dates for her which is fibrous and calorie supplier. Furthermore the dates of that area are excellent in quality. From the literature review we have seen that an expectant mother and lactating mother both need extra 500 calories from their daily intake of food and drink. Allāh encouraged Maryum (A), to take nutritious food and drink immediately after birth of Isa (A) as she needed to be strong and healthy and would nurse the baby. This verse invalidates the taboo on the food and drink of mothers that exists as social customs in many countries (see lit. review).

Allāh also uttered enduring words for her emotional support by saying 'cool your eye', and also ensuring her food and fresh fountain water in a remote place. 'Cool your eyes' is an idiom meaning 'comfort yourself and be glad'. The literal meaning is also significant. Abdullah Yusuf Ali commented," She was to cool her eyes (perhaps full of tears) with the fresh water of the rivulet and take comfort that a remarkable baby had been born to her." A question may arise. Does a woman need emotional support during labor, child-birth and afterwards?

In the Book of Medical Science, it is mentioned that continuous emotional support during labor

¹ 3:36-37

has been shown to reduce the rate of cesarean section, forceps delivery, and duration of labor i.e. complicacy in labor.¹ Moreover there are three kinds of post-partum psychiatric disorder; maternity blues, puerperal psychosis and depressive disorders of mild or moderate severity. After delivery of a normal child, between 1/2 -2/3rds of women experience a brief episode of irritability, lability of mood, muddled thinking and tearfulness. 10-15% of recently delivered women may have depressive disorders of mild and moderate severity.² It can be mentioned here that an emotional support always serve like a quick remedy for a sad person. And new mothers may face mental disturbances for her hormonal and other changes during pregnancy and lactation period. She essentially needs extra health care including physical and mental. Here the role of husband and his family and her parent's family is crucial and they need to treat her with compassion and patience. All Muslims should be aware of the above teaching of the Qurān.

So, the new messages about providing care relating to women are-

The Holy Qurān portrays expectant mothers and motherhood with reverence and to create cognizance among Muslims about the obligations towards them. Is this not enough for the Muslim community and the professionals to improve maternal health?

Mother has a high position in Islām. Does it mean only to show verbal honor and doing nothing for her health and well being?

Mother has an honorable position in Islām. Save the mothers. Take preventive and

¹ *Comprehensive Text Book of Psychiatry*, Edit. Kaplan, Harold I. MD, Sadock, Benjamin J. 6th edition, volume 2, (Baltimore: William and Wilkins, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, 1995), pp 1699-1700

² Michael Gelder, Dennis Gath, Richard Mayou, *Concise Oxford Text Book of Psychiatry*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994) p 240-241

curative measure for them during pregnancy and childbirth to reduce mortality.

Establish human rights and women's right in Islām to achieve the right of 'safe motherhood'.

The Qurān declares that to save a person's life is like saving a nation. So, take good care of mothers to reduce maternal deaths and save many nations.

One will be rewarded by Allāh if one saves a life. So, save the lives of mothers and babies by seeking knowledge about maternal health.

The Holy Qurān portrays expectant mothers and motherhood with reverence to create cognizance among Muslims about the obligations towards them. Can we be good Muslims if we ignore the aspects that Allāh has given such a high priority?

Safe motherhood is a fundamental right of a mother. In Islām mother is the most honorable person in the society but in current Muslim societies mother's wellbeing is not even considered as secondary. Are we not then violating one of the basic tenants of Islām?

Rasulullah (ﷺ) said that paradise lies at the feet of your mother. Muslims and Muslim professionals should work hard for safe motherhood program.

The holy Quran declares "Reverence the womb that bore you". This verse makes obligatory for Muslims to honor and to take care of mothers in every aspect.

Holy Qurān and Hadith ask all Muslims, men and women, to seek knowledge and education. If we follow this order from Allāh, women should get educated and women's education will help to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

Women's education will help to reduce maternal mortality. Holy Qurān and Hadith enjoin

all Muslims to seek knowledge and education.

According to Hadith, knowledge is the lost property of Muslims. Hence, know the danger signs of maternal complications for the sake of Islām and ensure health care for women to reduce maternal mortality.

Allah bestowed Maryam (A) with mercy, food and emotional support during the birth of Isa (A). So, Muslims should care for women's health during pregnancy, childbirth and after.

Maryam (A) was sacrificed by her mother for the sake of Allah. She was well accepted by Allāh and He Himself took the responsibility to raise her and of her nutrition at different stages of her life. This certainly teaches Muslims to take care of their women relatives.

Allah sent Angels to speak to Maryam (A) immediately after the birth of Isa (A) and thus He lessened her emotional distress. Hence, Muslims should take care of women's mental health.

The Holy Qurān invalidates the taboo on nutritious foods of mothers. Thus expected mothers and new mothers should be provided by plenty of food and drink for their extra calorie requirements.

Maryam (A) was given sustenance by Allah during her reproductive age which is the preparation time for future pregnancy. So, it is extremely important for the parents to give their daughters nutritious food during her growing age.

4.3.3 Duties of Muslims towards maternal health

"You are the best of the peoples, evolved for mankind , enjoining what is right forbidding what is

wrong, and believing in Allāh.." ¹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali commented on this verse," The logical conclusion to the evolution religious history is a non-sectarian, non-racial, non-doctrinal, universal religion, which Islām claims to be. For Islām is just submission to the will of Allāh". This involves faith; doing right; forbidding wrong and being an example to others to do right and to stop evil , having the power to see the right succeeds, wrong and injustice are defeated." ² Thus enjoining what is good means not only to do good work but also to encourage people to promote social welfare type of work in the society as to prevent higher rate of maternal mortality and morbidity. Muslims cannot be 'the best of the people' if they do not stop the evil in the society like illiteracy, maternal deaths etc.

"If you realize this not ask of those who possess the message." 16;43... Abdullah Yusuf Ali, commented that "those who possess the message" may also mean any men of wisdom, who were qualified to have an opinion in such matters.

It means that Quran encourages learning about necessary relevant things from an expert whether scientific technology, medical care or others.

In early twentieth century, the renowned woman of Bangladesh, Begum Rokeya, had to fight with the then society and so called Islāmic group, for establishing a school for girls. She understood that illiteracy is one of the principal causes of the plight of the Muslim women. She even introduced health care facilities in her school for the students. There was a hostel for the girls where balanced diet was supplied. It is interesting to note that Begum Rokeya worked hard to elevate socio-economic status of women through education while the Alims opposed her as they thought that women's education is not allowed in Islām. Begum Rokeya herself learned

¹ 3:110

² Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Translation, and Commentary*, (Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989) p 151

English and other subjects from her own brother at midnights while everybody was asleep! At that time women were allowed to learn reading Qurān and some Bengali. Sir Syed Ahmed established first Mohammedan Anglo Oriental School in 1857. The syllabus was according to Oxford and Cambridge Colleges. Gradually this school upgraded to a college and later to Aligarh Muslim University for both boys and girls. He also faced vehement opposition and criticism from the people and a group of Alims of the then Indian Sub Continent for establishing that educational institution.¹ So these people, who were assumed to be knowledgeable about the Qurān, could not achieve an open mind and was not concerned about contemporary issues related with socioeconomic development of Muslim society. The problem was not with the Qurān but the crisis in their Islāmic knowledge and minds, which persuaded them to stop constructive acts for improving the status of women and men. Improving the social situation of men and women is in complete agreement with the teachings of Islām.

Based on the Islāmic teachings, the following health messages can be proposed:

Pregnancy of a woman and development of fetus are cited in the Qurān as evidences of existence of Allāh. Shouldn't we be learning more about pregnancy and healthy development of the fetus?

Allāh speaks about mother's diet in the Qurān. Mothers and expectant mothers should be given proper diet during this time for improved maternal health.

Pregnancy of a woman is cited in the Qurān as an evidence of existence of Allāh. Does it not

¹ Rokeya Shondhane, Begum Rokeya and women Education, Hasan Nasima, , (Dhaka :Witness, Dhanmondi Rd 2, Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 1999) p 83-4; Bisho Poristhiti , arthaniti o Islām Bishoik bisleshon, Hannan, Shah Abdul,(Dhaka:Book Master,86/2 Purana paltan Lane, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh,2006) p41; Social Science, for class 9-10, (Dhaka: National Curriculum Text Book Board, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2006) p 59

encourage Muslims and Muslim professionals to learn about Allāh, embryology and obstetrics?

The Qurān asks to give emotional support to expectant mothers. So, mothers should be given proper health care as well as emotional support from family, health experts and society in general.

Maslaha (public interest) is an important way for building a better society. So, Muslims should fight against illiteracy and poor healthcare so as to attain better maternal and fetus health.

4.4 Islāmic messages on highlighting status of mothers

Allāh says in His Book "O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord Who created you from a single entity, created of like nature, His mate, and from them two scattered (like seeds) countless men and women- fear Allāh through whom you demand your mutual rights, and (reverence/take care of the) the wombs (that bore you): for Allāh ever watches over you".¹ The quoted verse is the first verse from surah Al Nisa or 'The women'. It starts with a plead/ request to the unity of mankind, the rights and honor of women and child bearing women, orphans, connotation/ suggestions of family relationship, including an impartial distribution of property after death.² A

¹ 4:1

² Ali,Abdullah Yusuf ,*The Holy Quran ,Translation, and Commentary*,(Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989), p 177-78

community faces various problems if its population is not educated. Development or social progress will be slow and consequently there will be peril in every aspect of human life due to lack of education and knowledge. It is shown in the literature review that maternal mortality rate is directly related with educational attainment of the population, especially with women's education including health education. Change in educational status dramatically changes her socio-economic status, position in family, and health status. Regarding maternal health, education initiates even increased prenatal and post natal visits, delivery care, prerequisites of safe motherhood, and awareness about danger signs of pregnancy and childbirth. The Qurān and Hadith have given great emphasis on seeking knowledge and education by men and women alike. The Qurān also invites people for gaining knowledge by the words, 'insight' (54 times in the Qurān), 'perception' (48 times in the Qurān), 'consider' (48 times in the Qurān), 'contemplate' (122 times in the Qurān), 'remember' (210 times in the Qurān), 'wisdom' (20 times in the Qurān), and also words like 'see', and "does he then not see?" imply analysis and understanding of the Quranic text. ¹

Also 'sign for the intelligent', 'sign of Allāh', 'signs for those who know', 'signs for those who hear', 'sign for those who are wise' 'His signs', ² such expressions of the Quran call for scholarship and reflection.

Thus seeking knowledge is reinforced in the Qurān and Sunnah. The Qurān reads, "Read! In the name of your Lord and Cherisher, who created."³ Here 'Read' means or implies the process of gaining knowledge about Allāh, human being's duties towards Him and the society, and relevant knowledge to conduct the life in this world. Therefore, knowledge in Islām encompasses

¹ Khalid Amar, Utilizing Our Minds, <http://amrkhaled.net/articles/articles77.html>

² 30:21-24

³ 96:1

knowledge about natural phenomena as well as mysteries within oneself, clear information on health, hygiene, safe motherhood etc. will also be part of this overall knowledge that Allāh has commanded us to explore, reflect and understand.

"To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim man and woman."¹ Our Prophet (ﷺ) also said, "The learned are the successors of the Prophets. They leave behind knowledge as inheritance. One who inherits it obtains a great fortune."² Both of the Hadith encourage the facts mentioned above and the latter one considers knowledge as a great fortune. So, it is obvious that lack of knowledge on Islām and worldly affairs bring bad fortune.

Let us see what does the Qurān say about the status of mother-

"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life say not to them word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor".³

"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: show gratitude to Me and your parents: to Me is (your final) goal."⁴

Dr. Yousuf Al Qaradawi added in his book, "The Status of Women in Islām", a list of women who are mentioned in the Qurān as superb examples of good mothers. These mothers had and will continue to have influence in the history of Islām. A chapter entitled 'Immortal mothers' describes these ladies. They are mother of Musa (A) [28:7], mother of Maryam (A) [3:35-6], Maryam (A) [66:12 and more] herself who was Isa (A)'s mother. One of the long surahs is

¹ Mishkat, mentioned in Islām Beliefs and Teachings, Sarwar, Ghulam, (London: The Muslim Educational Trust 130, Stroud Green Rd, London N4 3RZ, UK, 2000) p199

² ibid, Sahih al Bukhari

³ 17:23

⁴ 31:14

named after Maryam (A) to indicate special honor Allāh has granted to Maryam (A). Isa (A) is mentioned in the Qurān as son of Maryam.¹

A man came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said, "O Messenger of Allāh, I want to fight and I want your advice." He asked him, "Do you have a mother?" The man said, "Yes". He said, "Do not leave her because paradise is under her feet."²

A man came to the Prophet asking, "Who is most deserving of my care?" he said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" He said, "Your mother". The man asked, "Then who?" He said, "Your mother". The man asked (fourth time), "Then who?" He said, "Your father."³

Asma'a binte Abu Bakr asked the Prophet (ﷺ) about the relationship to her unbelieving mother who had come to her. He said, "Be on good terms with your mother." Thus Islām recommends Muslims to be good to even unbelieving mother.

Al Bazzar recounts that a man was circumambulating the Kaba carrying his mother. The Prophet (ﷺ) asked him "Have you repaid her?" The man said, "No. not even for one of her moans (i.e one of the moans of labor, delivery, rearing, nursing and so on)".⁴

Muslims cannot be 'the best of the people' if they do not stop the evil in the society like illiteracy, maternal deaths etc. A mother has a high status in a Muslim society, then how is it possible that

¹ Qaradawi Yusuf Al, *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09

² Transmitted by Al- Nasaai, 6/11; Ibn Majah, 1/278 and Al-Hakim, Qaradawi Yusuf Al, *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09

³ Transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurairah, ibid

⁴ Qaradawi Yusuf Al, *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09

people remain indifferent to higher maternal death rate? The statement that "paradise lies at the feet of your mother" appears to have become a mere saying to Muslims. Our actions contradict the notion of equality of men and women; not to mention the special status Allāh has granted to mothers. Without societal actions for the prevention of maternal deaths and wellbeing, no society can claim to be developed and claim to be following the Islāmic instructions on how to treat women and mothers in an Islāmic society.

From the above discussions, we can come up with the following important messages with significant implications for health and wellbeing of women:

The Holy Qurān portrays expectant mothers and motherhood with reverence to create cognizance among Muslims about the obligations towards them. Can we be good Muslims if we ignore the aspects that Allāh has given such a high priority?

Safe motherhood is a fundamental right of a mother. In Islām mother is the most honorable person in the society but in Islāmic societies mother's wellbeing is considered as secondary. Are we not then violating one of the basic tenants of Islām?

Rasulullah (ﷺ) said that paradise lies at the feet of your mother. Muslims and Muslim professionals should work hard for safe motherhood program.

The holy Quran declares "Reverence the womb that bore you". This verse makes obligatory for Muslims to honor and to take care of mothers in every aspect.

4.5 Islāmic messages on preventing selective abortions and female infanticide

Technological development in medical science allows the parents to detect the sex of the fetus today and in many developing societies parents may decide for sex selective abortion. In most of the cases the female fetus is aborted by the parents and this type of selection creates imbalance in the male–female ratio in the community (See literature review, pg). Even in pre-Islāmic Arab society, they buried their daughters alive. The same thing is happening in some parts of the world, in a refined/polished way but nevertheless the outcome is exactly the same. Large number of sex selective abortion is taking place in China and India. Raising children, especially male child, is considered much more profitable for the parents. Poorer parents as well as some richer individuals as well consider raising children as an investment in their future in this world. According to this view, less value is assigned to female infants and if the baby survives, she is to face deprivation in multiple forms. In India female child means the obligatory payment of dowry, a large amount of money payable in the future to the family of bridegroom. In Bangladesh, female feticide is not that common but discrimination against female child in terms of food, health care, medical treatment, vaccination, education, is quite common. In fact, with technological progress and with greater access to ultrasound or other medical technology, it is not unlikely that Bangladesh will also experience sex selection at birth. The male-to-female ratio is already more than 1.0 in Bangladesh, probably indicating informal approaches used for sex selection at birth or at infancy. Health policy makers should adopt health messages immediately to counter this potential crisis. Since Islām directly condemns such practices and given that infanticide has been outlawed so forcefully and directly in Islām, health messages based on Islāmic laws should be very effective in this area.

4.5.1 Female babies are glad tidings from Allāh

The holy Qurān, declares female babies as glad tidings. The verses are as follows:-

“For whenever, any of them is given the glad tidings of (the birth of) a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all people because of the (alleged) evil of the glad tiding which he has received, (and debating within himself:) Shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for it) - or shall he bury it in the dust? Oh evil indeed is whatever they decide!”¹

The above verses show that the societal belief and practice is in conflict with God’s rule. Before the revelation of the Qurān, the Arab people had intense dislike for female babies mainly based on the earthly calculations of costs and benefits. Note that in this verse Allāh has described the birth of a baby girl as a "glad tiding" and thought of burying (killing or destroying) the girl baby as "evil". Nevertheless some ancient laws allowed the father to sell his daughter if he wished, or to hand her over to another man who would either kill her or own her if the father killed the other man's daughter.² These verses succinctly illustrate the mood of a parent uninformed about Allāh's plan in the hereafter and pre-occupied with worldly gains at the birth of a female baby. The verse is also equally clear how terrible this behavior is. People view the female baby as bad sign, as 'evil' but they fail to understand that female babies are actually 'glad tidings', received by the family from god. How unfortunate is he who receives the glad tidings but fails to realize it! Allāh's instruction is very clear in these verses; birth of a baby girl is a glad tiding from Allāh and viewing that in any other way would be a sin and crime.

¹ 16:58-59

²Qaradawi Yusuf Al, *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09

“For (thus it is:) if any of them is given the glad tiding of (birth of) what he so readily attribute to the Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger: “What (am I to have a daughter-) one who is to be reared (only) for the sake of ornaments?”- and their upon he finds himself torn by a vague inner conflict.¹

The above verse discloses one of the worldly reasons for the negative attitude of the parents towards female baby.

They observe that the world around show no respect for women, women are unlikely to be a sign of worldly power and affluence and so they believed that rearing daughters is like spending money on an ornament or a show-piece which does not increase in value nor bring honor and wealth to the family. The Qurān negates this in a firm speech and force us to think about it carefully and to reflect on our conscience/scruples.

The Qurān declares female infant as a glad tiding from Allāh for the parents.

4.5.2 The Holy Qurān reforms the human attitude and behavior regarding female infanticide

However the Qurān appeals to readers to reform human attitude and behavior towards female infants.

In the Arabic verse, Bush-shira word has been used to describe the birth of a female baby. Here the root word is Bashara, meaning, to announce (as good news), to bring news, to rejoice etc and the female child is a glad tiding since the sex of the child ought to make no difference to parental love. The above verses were revealed in late and middle period respectively of Prophet's Makkan life, the language of which continuously motivated and stimulated the Makkan Muslim's conscience and morality. Later in Madani period Allāh revealed more verses to stop

¹ 43:17-18

female infanticide.

The Arabic word 'Bashara' has been used in different forms throughout the holy Qurān in a large number of verses.

"Those who eschew evil and fall not into its worship - and turn to Allāh (in repentance) for them is good news (al-Bushra), so, announce the good news (Fabashir) to My servants".¹

"....But now has come unto you a *bringer of glad tidings* (Basheerun) and a warner and Allāh has power over all things."²

"Yet (withal, O Prophet,) We have sent thee only as a herald of glad tidings (Mubash- shir) and a warner."³

"But give *glad tidings* (Bash-shiri) to those who believe, and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens..."⁴

"That is (the bounty) whereof Allāh gives Glad tidings (Yubash-shiru) to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds..."⁵

"Verily the Qurān does guide to that which is most right, and gives the glad tidings (Yubash-shiru) to the believers who work deeds of righteousness, that they shall have a magnificent reward."⁶

"And He it is Who sends forth the winds as a glad tidings (Bushra) of His coming grace and:(thus ,too)We cause pure water to descend from the skies. So that We may bring dead land to life thereby, and give to drink thereof to many (beings) of Our creation, beasts as well as humans."⁷

¹ 39:17

² 5: 19

³ 25:56

⁴ 2:25

⁵ 42:23

⁶ 17:9

⁷ 25:48-9

So, Bahsara word has been used to denote the glad tidings of paradise, the Prophet's characteristics and responsibility, glad tidings for believers, wind before rain etc. Use of this same positive "phrase" or word for a female child must have been used to discourage female infanticide and to emphasize the fact that birth of a female baby is not a bad sign but a sign of good fortune and happiness. Our heart should be happy to see the arrival of the Allāh-sent glad tidings. Allāh has clearly announced that the parents and all in the society should consider birth of a female baby as a sign of "good-luck" rather than viewing females as burden. In the Qurān, Allāh has made the distinctions between pleasant and unpleasant, good and evil, very clear. Given such direct positive statements on birth of a female in the Qurān, one cannot please Allāh if he/she feels internal conflict and sadness after the birth of a baby girl. In Islām, purpose of our deeds, thought and prayers is to please Allāh and so, how can we be a good servant of Allāh if our feelings are hurt at the birth of a baby girl? In other words, sex selection at birth is clearly contradictory to Allāh's commands and Muslims will be displeasing Allāh (SWT) even when they feel the pain in their hearts at the birth of a baby girl. Selecting female fetus for abortion or destruction will clearly be completely against Islāmic rules and ideals.

Female infanticide or feticide is strongly condemned in Islam as the Quran says, "On that day (Day of Judgment) she will be asked for what crime she was killed?"

4.5.3 Moral approach of the Qurān on this issue

Before these two verses, a verse came in early Makkan period, which reads, "When the female infant buried alive is questioned-for what crime she was killed?"¹ Here Allāh condemned female infanticide in a unique way, to make people aware of enormous crime and He correlated the incident with the Day of Judgment, where He would be the Judge and would ask people to give the full account of their earthly life. After the revelation of the earliest verse on infanticide, the

¹ 81:8-9

The verse mentioned above is an Amr or command from Allāh i.e., an imperative sentence and it came in such a time when Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)'s migration to Madina was near.

“For (thus it is:) if any of them is given the glad tiding of (birth of) what he so readily attribute to the Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger: “What (am I to have a daughter-) one who is to be reared (only) for the sake of ornaments?”- and thereupon he finds himself torn by a vague inner conflict.”¹

The command of Allāh was in the form of a law for the state to be. Furthermore, when believing women came to the Prophet SM for pledge then they were asked not to do certain things and among the forbidden things one was not to commit infanticide.²

The messages in the light of Quran are-

Women are precious creations like men. Allah says that it is wrong to think that they are reared only for wearing ornament.

Male female both are created by Allāh and essential components of the society. So, female feticide is surely a crime and brings disarray and imbalance in the society.

Maryam (A) was sacrificed to Allah by her mother while she was a fetus in her womb. Allah accepted her with satisfaction and said that 'He made her grow in purity and beauty' and made Maryam (A) the mother of miracle child Isa (A). Does not then female feticide mean you are killing future mothers?

4.5.5 Lack of knowledge and understanding towards a female child

In surah 6 Allāh says, “Lost are those who slay their children...”³ and “Even so, in the eyes of

¹ 43:17-18

² 60:12

³ 6:140

most sincere Muslims stopped female infanticide and asked for forgiveness if they did it before. In other place the Qurān declares the acts which are prohibited that includes infanticide. It reads, "Say: ' Come, I will rehearse what Allāh has (really) prohibited you from': join not anything as equal with Him; be good to your parents; kill not your children on a plea of want- We provide sustenance for you and for them- come not near to shameful deeds, whether open or secret; take not life which Allāh has made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus He doth command you, that you may learn wisdom."¹

"Lost are those who slay their children, from folly..."²

Here the health related messages to stop female feticide and infanticide are-

Female feticide is like murder. The Holy Quran declares them as losers who commit this sin.

Prophet said that who reared a female child properly and did not give preference to the male child will be with him in paradise.

4.5.4 Economic approach of the Quran on this issue

As revelation also came in stages, Allāh condemned female infanticide in different verses in different ways. Finally He declared, "Kill not your children (male or female) for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin."³ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, commenting on this verse, wrote, "The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. The crime against children's lives is here characterized as one of the greatest of sins."

¹ 6:151

² 6:140

³ 17:31

most of the pagans their partners made alluring the slaughter of their children...”¹ It means Islām not only prohibits female infanticide but forbids all types of infanticide irrespective of whether the child is a male or female. Before the revelation of the Qurān, in the Arab societies, the women were deprived of the most basic human rights even right to survive that is required for human existence. Female infanticide was widely practiced among some of the Arab tribes. The first and outstanding contribution that Islām made to elevate the social status of the Arab women was to give them the right to live. Islām prohibited this brutal practice and decisively condemned the attitude of the parents to reject their female children. Islām viewed the practice as a transgression, evil act and murder.

Then how far this health message will convince parents to raise a female child, where apparently she is an unprofitable, weak creature? Islām shows a very broad and practical view about this. The Qurān repeatedly says male and female are the creation of God, created from the same source and their basic duties are same apart from some exceptions. Moreover, He created everything in the heaven and the earth (including male or female) for truth and not for sport. He also says, “He creates what He wills. He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan). Or He bestows both male and females, and He leaves barren whom He Wills.”² Here God’s will is told in a lucid language. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Cherisher of the whole universe, the Supreme, the Irresistible, and Selector of sex of the child, hence selective abortion is clearly against His will.

The Qurān does not give the value of a woman or any human in monetary terms. Allāh says,

¹ 6:137

² 42:49-5

“By (the mystery of) the creation of male and female...”¹ this proclaims that creation of male-female has the identical importance. In addition humankind is frequently valued by God in the Qurān and Hadith, by qualities like God fearing, good deeds, and morality. But motherhood has a distinctive place in the teaching of Islām as Allāh declares, “Reverence the womb that bore you.....”² This esteemed motherhood can only be undergone by a daughter, a woman, a female.

4.5.6 The examples of females who were prominent in Islamic history

The Qurān shows how some of the daughters/women were more remarkable in their reputation and contribution than many male children. They are presented as an example for all the believers for all time. They are mother of Musa; Mary, the mother of Isa or Jesus; wife of Pharaoh; mother of Mary, queen of Sheba, all of them achieved elevated position among the believers and are depicted as excellent persons in the Holy Qurān- *where both of the positions were not gender related* (.think and change) Mother of Mary declared her intention to dedicate the baby for the service of God while baby Mary was in her womb i.e. in the form of a fetus. She expected a male baby as only a male could be devoted to Temple service under Mosaic Law at that time. She became sad as she had the baby girl, but Allāh reassured her by saying, “And no wise is the male like the female”³...But she was particularly chosen as a special miracle-child to be the mother of miracle-child Jesus or Isa (A).

"Right graciously did her Lord Accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty, to the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said,'O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?' She said,' From God:

¹ 92:3

² 4:1

³ 3:36

for god provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure." ¹

This verse indicates that Maryam (A), though a female child, grew under Allāh's special protection in purity and beauty. Here *Nabata* is the word Allah has used for her rearing. The root word is '*Nabt*' means germinate, bring forth vegetation, to make something grow, to breed plants etc. Allah has used this word to denote the extra care He took for Maryam (A). The same word is used in many verses of the Quran.

"Glory to Allāh who created in pairs all things that the earth produces (**tunbitu**), as well as their own human kind and other things of which they have no knowledge." ²

"The parable of those who spend their sustenance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: it grows (ambatat) seven ears, and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases and Allah cares for all He knows all things." ³

Food was provided to her miraculously.

"Behold the angel said: 'O Mary! Allāh has chosen you and purified you- chosen you above the women of all nations. O Maryam! Your Lord devoutly, prostrate thyself, and bow down in prayer with those who bow down.'" ⁴

Similarly, wife of Pharaoh is introduced in surah Tahrim as the person who preserved her faith, humility and righteousness. Mary had true faith and guarded her chastity and she is declared as devout (servant).⁵ Abdullah Yusuf Ali in his translation "The Holy Qurān" wrote an excellent/ admirable remark- "The fact that Qanitin (an Arabic word meaning devout) is not here in the

¹ 3:37

² 36:36

³ 2:261

⁴ 3:42

⁵ 66:11-12

feminine gender implies that the highest spiritual dignity is independent of sex. And so we close the lesson of this surah, that while sex is a fact of our physical existence, the sexes should act in harmony and cooperation because in terms of the highest spiritual matters we are all one. 'We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples. Verily this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me and no other.' [21: 91-92]".¹

"There is nothing implied or stated in the Qurān which supports the opinion that males are natural leaders. Even in the context of patriarchal Arabia, the Qurān gives an example of a female ruler. The Qurān refers to her wisdom and independence as a leader".² Even the holy Book exactly narrates her words at the time of embracing Islām, "Knowledge was bestowed on us in advance of this, and we have submitted to Allāh (in Islām)".³ She independently ruled her nation and independently took her spiritual decision.

In surah Duha Allāh said, "And He found you in need, and made you independent".⁴

Prophet was poor and was made independent by the wealth of Khadija (RA). Her wealth was used for the cause of Islām. This devoted and loving wife of Prophet SM looked after family and all other affairs while Prophet was busy in preaching Islām.

"When none believed me, Khadija did. She made me a partner in her wealth." Those are the words of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) about his first wife Khadijatul Kubra.⁵

¹ Ali, Abdullahs Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Translation, and Commentary*, (Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK 1989), p1574

² Wadud, Amina, *Qurān and Woman*, (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York 10016, Oxford, New York, 1999) p89

³ 27:42

⁴ 93:8

⁵ Sarwar, Ghulam, *Islām Beliefs and Teachings*, (London: The Muslim Educational Trust 130, Stroud Green Road, London N4 3RZ, UK, 2000) p142

Let us see what Prophet said about female child. He said, "A Muslim who has two daughters whom he treats well when they accompany him or when he accompanies them is admitted to paradise."¹ In another narration he says, "Whoever sustained and protected two slave girls until they came of age, on the Day of Judgment, he and I will be and then he put his two fingers together."²

Narrated from Abdullah Ibn Abbās (R) that Prophet ((ﷺ)) said that who reared a female child properly and did not give preference to the male child will be with him in paradise.³

Many Muslim women i.e daughters achieved important position in the society and Islāmic history by their talents and contribution. At the time of first revelation of the Qurān in the cave of Hira, Muhammad (ﷺ) was frightened while he met Angel Jibrail. He rushed home with trembling fear and told Khadija what occurred. Khadija, his wife, the daughter of Khuwailid, instantly covered him with a blanket and assured him by her words which were of comfort, support, encouragement and reassurance. Fatimah bint Khattab and her husband was beaten violently by his own brother Umar bin Khattab, for embracing Islām.(Umar (R) accepted Islām shortly after this incident). Abu Jahl, a cruel enemy of Islām, tortured Sumaya (R) so as to Islām would be forsaken by her. But she did not do so and was killed by Abu Jahl thus became the first martyr of Islām. Asma bint Abu Bakr, endangered her life while she helped Muhammad (ﷺ) at the time of

¹ Transmitted by Ibn Abbas, Bukhari, Al Adab al Mufrad, 77; Ibn Abu Shaiba, 8/551; Ibn Majah, 3670 and others.

² Sahih Muslim. on the authority of Anas bin Malik (R), Qaradawi Yusuf Al, *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09

³ Sunan Abu Daud, in Rahe Amal 1st part, Nadavi Allama Jalil Ahsan, trans. A B M A Khaleq Majumdar, (Dhaka: Murad Publications, 332, Chantek, Jatra Bari, Dhaka 1204, Bangladesh 2002) p 143

migration from Makkah to Madina. Ayesha,(R) the daughter of Abu Bakr (R), one of the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ), was a notable commentator on Qurān, one of the key sources of Ahadith, expert in Islāmic law. Abu Musa Ashari (R), distinguished Islāmic scholar, commented on her, as quoted "Whenever we (scholars) had any complex problem pertaining to Islāmic law, we used to go to Ayesha and always found that she had some knowledge of it." Ayesha used to give Fatwas and decisions, on problems or disputes which required solution. Asma bint Yazid, a lady of Madina during Prophet's time, achieved so much knowledge that she became a teacher and many scholars came to her to gain knowledge from her. Women played supportive and important role even in battle fields during prophet's time. The names, Rabia bint Ma'ud, Umm Atiya, Umm Ayman Ayesha, Umayya bint Qais Ghafaria, Umm Saleem, Nusaybah bint Kab, Umm Taher, Hanna bint Jahsh, Safiya bint Abdul Muttalib are mentioned in authentic Prophetic traditions who described how they took part in battles side by side with Muhammad(ﷺ). Umar, the second Khalifa of Islām, appointed Umm Shifa to stay in the market place. Her job may be compared as market inspector, who is responsible to stop corruption or cheating there. ¹

Daughter of Umar (R), Hafsa, one of the wives of Muhammad (ﷺ) played an important role in collection and compilation of the Qurān. Compiled copy of the Qurān which was made during Abu Bakr's time was kept with Hafsa during Khalifah Umar's rule. Umar (R) ruled for ten years.²

The examples of all these women point to the fact that, Islām genuinely took radical steps to lift

¹ Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997) p 54-55.

²Sarwar, Ghulam,, *Islām Beliefs and Teachings*, (London: The Muslim Educational Trust130, Stroud Green Road, LononN4 3RZ, UK, 2000), p 35

the position of a woman. Their faith in Allāh and utmost and sincere effort helped to build a balanced Islāmic society at that time. Without participation of these women, who were one day female infants and were not murdered as a custom, created unmatched history for the world.

After comprehending and realizing these lucid and appealing/ attractive teachings of Islām, the Muslims could not commit the crime like female infanticide. They did understand that female children were like an asset as the male children. They were capable to serve and contribute to the society and family in a brilliant way and a society would surely face devastation without the work and responsibilities performed by women. The Qurān changed the negative attitude and behavior of people towards female infants and women. Thus Islām could successfully stop great crime like female infanticide from the community.

Based on the teachings of Islām, the following health messages can be derived in this specific area:

Female infanticide and feticide is forbidden in Islām. As the Quran says, "When the female (infant) buried alive, is questioned for what crime she was killed."

Male female both are created by Allāh and an essential components of the society. So, female feticide is surely a crime and brings disarray in the society which is beyond recompense.

Maryam was sacrificed to Allah by her mother while she was a fetus in her womb. Allah accepted her with satisfaction and 'He made her grow in purity and beauty' and made Maryam the mother of miracle child Isa. Does not then female feticide is killing of future mothers?

4.6 New messages to prevent social deprivation and violence against women

The underlying reasons of violence are mentioned in previous chapters. They are ¹

- *Unequal authority and status of man and woman due to historical, cultural, economic and religious reasons.
- *Difference between men and women in terms of physical structure and emotional attributes
- *Higher social status and supremacy of men because of their involvement in income earning activities. A number of world religions consider men as “human” and women as less than human.
- * Less opportunity for women to express opinion on the issue of use and distribution of wealth
- *Superstition and misconceptions about religions and interpretation of religious texts restricts her freedom and advancement.
- *Poverty and intra-household disparity in the distribution of food and other items

World Health Organization reports show psychic damages caused to women as the consequences of violence against her. Particularly they show these consequences:

Health Consequences of violence against women are-depression, suicidal attempts, fear, feelings of shame & guilt, anxiety, panic attacks, low self-esteem, sexual dysfunction, eating problems, obsessive-compulsive disorder ,post traumatic stress disorder, abuse of medication, alcohol & drugs.

There is evidence that women have less power than men and bear a higher burden than men. Women life conditions are worse than men's ones. In spite of differences in social class, all women bear a heavy burden of work and responsibilities due to the double role of mother and

¹ ibid p 42

worker.¹

Although some of the above mentioned reasons are interrelated, these are the principal factors encouraging violence, deprivation and domestic violence. These underlying reasons are so common around the world; violence against women appears to be a global phenomenon. It happens in the most developed countries of the world as well as in the least developed countries. However, self-interest of the beneficiaries and preservation of status-quo often encourages misinterpretation of religious texts to justify the current practice. Therefore, we should examine each of the above reasons for violence against women from the perspective of Islām and need to develop new messages as existing messages do not cover them.

4.6.1 Messages on women's status

Women face physical and mental oppression and violence in both Islāmic and non-Islāmic countries. Religion of the population also cannot explain this practice of violence against women. Therefore, due to historical and cultural reasons a number of practices may continue in the society even though religion has explicitly outlawed them. Pre-Islāmic ideas may have initiated or established some of these conditions for violence against women and so it will not be inappropriate to point out how the pre-Islāmic religions may have influenced the mind-set of people in the Muslim world.

In Hindu cultures (dominated by the law of Manu which says “the woman whose mind, speech and body are kept in subjugation acquires high renown in this world and the next”.) the position of women was not much better than any of the other eastern cultures. In fact it was possibly worse as she was denied religious knowledge as they had “no business” with the books of Vedas and the laws derived from it; she was not allowed to re-marry if in case she becomes a widow;

¹ http://www.salutementaledonna.it/who-report_2001.htm

nor inherit from her husband, and sometimes had to enter his pyre to die with him. Women were portrayed as basically inferior to men and full of sin in Buddhist culture – it appears that there was nothing to be dreaded more than the woman. In ancient China, the attitude of the Chinese to their women can be summed up in the words of the 3rd BC poet, Hu Suan, who said, “how sad it is to be a woman, nothing on earth is held so cheap.” Female infanticide was quite common in pre Islāmic Arab society and women were considered as objects of inheritance. The Bible in Genesis (Gen ch 3 v16; ch7 v 189; ch31 v.14.) says that a woman suffers in pregnancy and child-birth because of Eve’s sin in eating from the forbidden tree.¹

The book, "Christianity and Islām: According to the Bible and the Qurān", cites a number of verses from the Bible to indicate how Bible depicts status and roles of women in the society. The Bible asks women to cover their heads not for modesty and fear of God but to demonstrate their subservience to men or the authority of men over them (Corinthians 11:6-10). In the Bible, the idea is that men are created in the image and glory of God and the women are the glory of men. A man can sell his daughter and she is not to go free (Exodus 21:7). Men are only upright but women are not. According to Bible a menstruating woman is highly contagious which can pass to other people by touch and the blood flow is considered to be a sin of which a woman has to repent.²

During the Roman civilization woman was regarded as a slave. The Greeks treated her as a commodity to be bought and sold. In France, in 587 CE, a conference was held to determine the status of women and whether they could be considered human being or not. In England, Henry

¹ Al Badawi Dr. Jamal, *Islāmic Teaching Course*, volume 3, (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada, 1997) p 26

² Al-Moghamis Naser, *Christianity and Islām: According to Bible and the Qurān*, (Riyadh: Dar-us-Salam, Riyadh, 2002. ISBN 9960-861-42-2) pp 48, 51, 58

VII forbade the reading of the Bible by women. Women were treated as second class citizen throughout the middle ages by Catholic Church. Until 1964, male and female students were not given the same rights in the universities of Cambridge and Oxford.¹

The first reason stated above to explain the underlying reasons for violence against women can be explained by using a verse from surah Tawba “The believers, men and women are protectors of one another; they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayer, practice regular charity....”² In one of the verse of holy Qurān, it says, “O mankind! Reverence your Lord who created you from a single soul...”³

The above two verses show that, men and women have similar status (protector) in the society and their basic duties are the same. Even the origin of man and woman is also same, that is soul or ‘Nafs’, which is not specific to any particular gender. The Qurān also declares that all human being are vicegerents of Allāh.⁴ So women are vicegerents of Allāh as well. As a human being, no one is superior in this respect.

The Surah Nur⁵ deal with married couple where husband accuses his wife for adultery but there is no witness. If the husband solemnly bears witness four times by Allāh that he is telling the truth. Fifth time he solemnly invokes the curse of Allāh on him if he tells a lie. Then the Qurān says, “But it would avert the punishment from the wife if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allāh, that (her husband) is telling a lie; and the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly

¹ Sarwar Ghulam, *Islām: Beliefs and Teachings*, (London :The Muslim Educational Trust, 130 Stroud green Rd, London N43RZ UK,2000) p167.

² 9:71

³ 4:1

⁴ 2:30

⁵ 24: 6-9

VII forbade the reading of the Bible by women. Women were treated as second class citizen throughout the middle ages by Catholic Church. Until 1964, male and female students were not given the same rights in the universities of Cambridge and Oxford.¹

The first reason stated above to explain the underlying reasons for violence against women can be explained by using a verse from surah Tawba “The believers, men and women are protectors of one another; they enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil. They observe regular prayer, practice regular charity....”² In one of the verse of holy Qurān, it says, “O mankind! Reverence your Lord who created you from a single soul...”³

The above two verses show that, men and women have similar status (protector) in the society and their basic duties are the same. Even the origin of man and woman is also same, that is soul or ‘Nafs’, which is not specific to any particular gender. The Qurān also declares that all human being are vicegerents of Allāh.⁴ So women are vicegerents of Allāh as well. As a human being, no one is superior in this respect.

The Surah Nur ⁵ deal with married couple where husband accuses his wife for adultery but there is no witness. If the husband solemnly bears witness four times by Allāh that he is telling the truth. Fifth time he solemnly invokes the curse of Allāh on him if he tells a lie. Then the Qurān says, “But it would avert the punishment from the wife if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allāh, that (her husband) is telling a lie; and the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly

¹ Sarwar Ghulam, *Islām: Beliefs and Teachings*, (London :The Muslim Educational Trust, 130 Stroud green Rd, London N43RZ UK,2000) p167.

² 9:71

³ 4:1

⁴ 2:30

⁵ 24: 6-9

invokes the wrath of Allāh on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth.”¹ Here the husband and wife i.e. man and woman has the same authority as the wife can cancel the allegation of adultery brought by her husband. Even a Muslim woman has the authority to divorce her husband according to the Qurān.² According to Islamic scholars, she can go to the court if husband fails to maintain her, deprives her from the Mahr, and oppresses her and so on. The Qurān gives the example of queen of Sheba, who ruled over a nation. “Most Muslims hold leadership as improper for a woman. The Qurān uses no terms that imply that the position of ruler is inappropriate for a woman. On the contrary, the Qurānic story of Bilqis celebrates both her political and religious practices.”³

Finally one of the verses from the Quran is worthy and very relevant here-

"For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's remembrance, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward."⁴ A number of desirable qualities are cited by the Quran mainly to focus on the fact that these virtues are as necessary to women as to men." Both sexes have spiritual as well as human rights and duties in an equal degree, and the future 'reward' of the Hereafter." ⁵

The unequal authority is created by the society which has no basis in Islām.

The health related messages are-

¹ 24:8-9

² 2:229

³ Wadud Amina, *Qurān and Woman*, (New York, Oxford :Oxford University Press, 1999) p 40

⁴ 33:35

⁵ Ali Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qurān*, note no3719, (Islāmīc Propagation Centre International,, 409 Northolt Road, South Harrow, Middlesex HA2 8JQ UK) p1116

According to the Quran, man and woman are the agents of Allāh and protectors of one another. So, unequal authority is created by the society and culture.

Basic duties are same for men and women as the agent of Allāh. Hence dissimilarity in acts and responsibilities among men-women in different/ other spheres does not mean the higher authority and status of men.

4.6.2 Messages on women's attributes

The reason stated above about the violence against women has been dealt by Islām in a realistic way. All mankind is created by Allāh as He says, "We have indeed created human being in the best of moulds."¹ In Arabic verse, 'Taqwim' is used which means mould, symmetry, form, nature, constitution; He gave men and women the purest and best nature. But the difference in physical and psychological aspect, in male and female, is for their role and responsibility in the society and family. The stronger physical structure does not mean that they are at a higher position in the eye of Allāh or in the society or in the family. A male or female may attain higher position according to his/ her Taqwa i.e. God consciousness.² Otherwise, there is no place of hierarchy in Islām.

Allāh created men and women in the best of moulds without showing any preference for any specific gender. The stronger physical structure of men does not mean a higher position in the society.

Man's strong physical structure is bestowed by Allāh and in Allāh's judgment human being can achieve higher position only through Taqwa. Accordingly, man should use this strength for establishing good and to root out evil, to protect his wife and family; not to

¹ 95:4

² 49:13

abuse her.

4.6.3 Messages on men's role in society

Many Muslim men take the opportunity to consider themselves the leader of the family because they are the earners in the family. Misconception and misunderstanding of Qurān, Sunnah and basic teachings of Islām are the root causes for this type of claim by men. To discuss and analyze this reason for violence against women, we need to evaluate and analyze a number of Qurānic verses.

Surah Nisa, verse 34, is one of the most abused or misunderstood verses of the Holy Qurān and contributes to some of the distorted ideas about the position of men and women in the society. The verse says, "Men are *Qwwamuna* over women because Allāh has made the one of them to excel (*Faddala*) the other, and because they spend of their property"¹

The expression *Qwwam* is an intensive form of *Qaim* ('one who is responsible for' or 'takes care of' a thing or a person'). Thus, *Qama ala 'l mar'ah* signifies 'he undertook the maintenance of the woman' or 'he maintained her'. The grammatical form *Qwwam* is more comprehensive than *Qaim*, and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as moral responsibility..."² Abdullah Yusuf Ali comments on (4:34) as, "*Qwwam* means one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests and looks after his affairs: or it may be standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose".³

Many interpreted the above passage as men being superior to women or leader of women by

¹ 4:34

² Asad Muhammad, *The Message of the Qurān*, (Gibraltar: Dar Al Andalus, Gibraltar.) P 109

³ Ali Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Qurān*, note 545, (Islāmic Propagation Centre International., 409 Northolt Road, South Harrow, Middlesex HA2 8JQ UK) p190

using the word *Qwwam*. In the Glorious Qurān, Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthal translated this as “Men are in charge of women.....and because they spend their property”.¹ In ‘The Message of the Qurān’ it is translated as “Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which Allāh has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions...”. Abdullah Yusuf Ali translated the same verse as “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allāh has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means....”

The verse 4:34 is often misinterpreted and this is justified with verse 2:228, which says, “But men have a degree (*Darajah*) over them and Allāh is Exalted in Power, Wise.” The comment of Abdullah Yusuf Ali on the verse ² is worth mentioning. He says, “The difference in economic position between the sexes makes the man’s rights and liabilities a little greater than the woman’s”. Verse 4:34 refers to the duty of a man to maintain the woman, and to a certain difference in nature between the sexes. Subject to this, the sexes are on terms of equality in law, and in certain matters the weaker sex is entitled to a number of “special protections.”

It is obvious that The Qurān enjoins men to bear the financial expenses to run the family. For this he is accountable to Allāh, to his wife, society and state. Islam does not consider a person to have higher status because of economic ‘status’; this will be directly in conflict with Islām's ideals of equality. Rather one may have higher status by achieving *Taqwa* or God consciousness as mentioned before. To elaborate more on the issue, the Qurānic word *Faddala* and *Darajah* need to be analyzed carefully. (to be added more)

In fact the word *Faddala* is used many times in the Qurān. It indicates the blessings of Allāh

¹ Pickthal Mohammad Marmaduke, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qurān An Explanatory Translation*, (London : Al Birr Foundation UK, P.O. Box 12859, London E 10 6UN) p 147

² 2:228

which are given to mankind. *Faddala* is therefore a neutral term which in this context indicates that men are protectors and maintainers of women and the family because they have been blessed with the ability to spend in support of their wives. It does not indicate that all men have natural superiority over all women because of their ability or role as the income earner of the family.

The word *Faddala* has come from the root word *Fadala* which means grace, mercy, surplus, be in excess, to be excellent, superior, to prefer, to give preference etc. This word has repeatedly been used in the Qurān in different form. Some examples are cited here-

“But you turned back thereafter; had it not been for the grace and mercy (*Fadlu*) of Allāh to you had surely been among the lost.”¹

“..... And gardens of vines and fields sown with corn ... watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent (*Nufaddilu*) than others to eat, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand.”²

“Such is the bounty (*Fadl*) of Allāh, which He bestows on whom He will and Allāh is the Lord of the highest bounty (*Fadl*).”³

As Allāh gives *Faddala* to other things or human being, so it is not an acquired virtue. Even if it is an acquired one, people cannot be boastful because of a specific virtue or claim higher status for it as it is against the spirit of Islām. The Qurān declares, “...Allāh does not love the boastful.”

⁴ So, who are bestowed with *Fadl* should be more God conscious.

The word, *Darajah* means something that is earned and acquired with responsibility. In the Qurān⁵, it is given to men and women on the basis of good deeds. Let us see some verses on *Darajah*--

¹ 2:64

² 13:4

³ 62:4

⁴ 57: 23

⁵ 4:32

"Those who believe, and suffer exile and strive with might and main, in Allāh's cause, with their goods and their persons, have the highest rank (*Daraja*) in the sight of Allāh: they are the people who will achieve (salvation)."¹

"But such as comes to him as believers who have worked righteous deeds, for them are ranks (*Darajah*) exalted-"²

"Allāh will raise up, to high ranks (*Darajah*), those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And Allāh is well-acquainted with all you do."³ From above verses and other verses on *Darajah*, it can be deduced that it is bestowed on human being on the basis of righteous deeds, striving in Allāh's cause, knowledge etc. The same word used in 2:228, is gender specific and is related with the case of divorce between husband and wife. The statement is therefore, situational and cannot be generalized. Hence on the basis of one verse one cannot claim that men are placed at higher rank over women for their involvement in earning activities. Does it mean that in families where women are the main earners they will have higher ranks due to economic status?

Logically speaking an earning member like husband must fulfill a number of grave duties towards his family. For example, he has to pay Mahr during marriage (Irrespective of economic status of the bride), maintain his wife, medical expenses during pregnancy, childbirth, any expenses related to her illness, expenses of rearing his children, recreation, maintenance of the wife during waiting period in case of a divorce, financial support to his parents if they are in need etc. On the contrary, if the husband is ill the Quran does not impose any financial responsibility on wife. If the wife pays for the treatment it will be out of her kindness and morality. Thus a person, who has been given such responsibilities, must prove his /her

¹ 9:21

² 20:75

³ 58:11

worthiness in terms of the fulfillment of the responsibilities. It is not clear how the assignment of responsibility makes someone superior in the family! Performing such heavy duties by themselves, are burdensome and without the help and cooperation among family members it will be difficult for one to accomplish Allah's command on the use of financial resources.

Thus the health related messages are-

Money and wealth are blessings and trial from Allāh. One should not claim higher status because of it. All human beings are equal in Allah's judgment and material things cannot be the basis for claiming higher "status" in Islām.

According to Islām, money and wealth are for proper use and for improving well-being of the humanity. Therefore, better earning capacity bestowed on men by Allāh should not be used to abuse their wives.

Allāh has given specific instruction on how to use the money and how important it is to use the money for proper maintenance of the family.

Allāh made obligatory for a man to maintain his family. This is simply defining the social roles of gender in general, not an indication of superiority of men nor does it imply granting permission to use abusive practices by men. The Qur'ān has stated very clearly in many places that "status" of a human being in Islām is defined not by any material wealth or income but by *Taqwa* (God consciousness).

4.6.4 Messages promoting women's decision-making related to family finances

It is true that fewer women are owner of property in the world. So they have less opportunity to express opinions on the issue of wealth and its use. Lack of access to wealth by women is so

pervasive that a new phrase has been introduced in the literature to denote the economic situation of women (Feminization of poverty). In fact many social practices do not let women to express their opinion or raise concerns about societal issues and often deprive them in many ways to own property. The virtues like sacrifice, patience, silence are often taught to females, not to males. So, the societal restrictions make it easy to abuse women by the society in a variety of circumstances. This type of societal pattern is true even in Islāmic countries of the world despite the fact that Islām allows women to own property, to invest in property and business ventures and to buy and sell properties and businesses. She is not obliged to support her family and is not required to spend a single penny for the up keeping of the family when she is richer than the husband. The Qurān gives her the right to have full maintenance from her husband, to have the Mahr or marriage gift, full maintenance during Iddah or waiting period after divorce (almost three months). Islām also gives her the share from her father's property, mother's property and husband's property. But, unfortunately, most of the time in the real world she is deprived of all these rights. Depriving women from these rights granted by Allāh should be considered acts of grave sins but in many Islāmic societies, lack of knowledge about Islām and Islāmic teachings, help perpetuate the pre-Islāmic societal or cultural practices. The following verses of the Holy Qurān clearly instruct women's right to property and ownership of property and right to have full maintenance from her husband-

“Allāh directs you as regards your children's (inheritance); to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half.”¹

“In what you leave, their share is a fourth, if you leave no child; but if you leave a child they get

¹ 4:11

an eighth;.”¹

“And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift...”²

“Let the women live (in waiting period during the process of divorce) in the same style as you live...”³

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women...”⁴

Once, Prophet’s wives claimed for a better maintenance during Madinan period.⁵ The Prophet could not afford it and he explained the reason. Here the claim of better maintenance from the wives of the Prophet SM may be considered as the indication of women’s freedom to express the opinion of women on the issues related to use and distribution of wealth of the family.

Women should be given their financial rights as prescribed in the Qurān. Thus she will attain her freedom to express opinion on wealth issues and it might diminish financial abuse of them.

Islām ensures woman's financial rights. Men and women of the society should be educated on rights and responsibilities toward the family and the society, to help reduce deprivation of women.

4.6.5 Messages to prevent misconception about women's role in society

The reason mentioned above for the violence against women is related to other causes discussed above. However, we can still discuss the issue of misconceptions and misunderstanding of

¹ 4:12

² 4:4

³ 65:6

⁴ 4:34

⁵ 33:28-29

religious teachings and their consequences on gender equality and gender relationship.

Women are often depicted in the literature and in the society as less intelligent, less strong, lacking in spiritual and religious qualities etc. Misinterpretation and misuse of the Qurān and Hadith are often used to provide support for these ideas. Some misogynists used some Hadith to justify their misguided actions and create negative consequences on the status of women in the society. There is a widely referred to sentence often cited as a “Hadith” has been extensively used by common people and frequently referred to in films and literature. This Hadith allegedly says, “Paradise lies at the feet of the husband.” The fact is that there is no Hadith like this and there is even no indication of this even indirectly in any of the Hadith. This is a pure distortion to suppress women of the society. The actual Hadith is, “Paradise lies at the feet of the mother.” The fake Hadith was so popular that it spread in most of the rural areas of Bangladesh. In Afghanistan, during Taliban rule, women education became forbidden in the name of Islām. There is another Hadith which says, “If a woman asks for a divorce, she would be burned in hellfire, even though she fasts in the day and prays in the night forever.”¹ This is a mawdu’ or fabricated Hadith which is in conflict with the Qurān and authentic Hadith.

In the Qurānic verse Allāh says, “....there shall be no sin upon either of them for what the wife may give up (to her husband) in order to free herself.”² All authorities agree in that this verse relates to the unconditional right on the part of the wife to obtain a divorce from her husband; such dissolution of marriage at the wife’s instance is called Khul’. There exist a number of Traditions in support of it. Narrated from Ibn Abbas, Jamila, the wife of Thabit ibn Qays, came

¹ Hadith on Women in Marriage, ed. Tashia Peterson and Zainab Anwar, (Malaysia: Sisters in Islam, Selangor, Malaysia, 2004) www.sisterinislam.org.my

² 2:229

to Prophet (ﷺ) and demanded a divorce from her husband on the ground that, despite of his irreproachable character and behavior, she “disliked him as she would dislike falling into unbelief after having accepted Islām.” Thereupon the Prophet ordained that she should return to Thabit the garden which he has given her as her dower at the time of their wedding, and decreed that the marriage should be dissolved. This Tradition have been recorded by Bukhari, Nasai’, Ibn Majah, and Byhaqi. Similar Traditions on the authority of Aisha are to be found in the Muwatta of Imam Malik, Musnad of Imam Ahmad, Nasai’ and Abu Daud. In accordance with these Traditions, Islāmic law stipulates that whenever a marriage is dissolved at the wife’s instance without any offence on the part of the husband against his marital obligations, the wife is the contract breaking party and must, therefore, return the dower which she received from him at the time of concluding the marriage: and in this event “there shall be no sin upon either of them” if the husband takes back the dower which the wife gives up of her own free will.¹

Among Traditions that degrade women is the well known report in Sahih al Bukhāri which indicates that only a minority of the dwellers of paradise are women since the Prophet (ﷺ) saw that the majority of the dwellers of hell are women. On the other hand, there is another report by Byhaqi that the Prophet (ﷺ) saw that the majority of the dwellers of paradise are women.

According to the scholars of Hadith, if there is a conflict between the reports in Bukhāri or Muslim and other collections of Hadith, the Hadith found in Bukhāri and Muslim should be preferred respectively. But those two are not the only collections of authentic Hadith and Byhaqi is also ranked among the reliable reporters.² These Hadith need balanced interpretation by

¹ Asad Muhammad, *The Message of the Qurān*, (Gibraltar: 3.6 Dar Al Andalus, Gibraltar). P 218

² *Hadith on Women in Marriage*, http://www.epayasia.com.my/sistersinIslām/products.aspx?merc_id=0611ff34-0512-4a98-9fa4-44fb3a9a2519&prod_id=9b5cf6b4-ae23-4245-abd3-45f30201f0a5, 22.3.2009.

Islamic scholars. It is also observed that many statements in Qurān or Hadith in favor of women are often interpreted as mere 'advice' even if they appear to be clear and commanding, while those in favor of men are often interpreted as 'commands' even if there is ambiguity.

Thus the messages from Islamic perspective to prevent misconception of women's role in the society are in below-

There is no teaching of misogyny in the Qurān and Hadith which some people have used as a tool to abuse women. If the Quranic verses and Hadith on women are carefully interpreted it becomes clear that Islām is completely impartial on gender issues.

The Qurānic verses and Hadith on women need unbiased explanation by learned scholars to eliminate misconception and superstition about Islām and woman's status. Pre-Islamic social practices appear to have confused the discussion rather than analyzing gender roles purely from Islāmic perspective.

The correct interpretation of the Qurān and Hadith will ensure women's advancement.

4.6.6 Messages on rights of women

Poverty is one of the reasons creating oppression and violence. Empowerment of women is the best step to eradicate poverty. From the literature review, we learnt that women do not have much opportunity to do a job and some may think that Islām does not encourage this. There is no text in the Holy Qurān or Sunnah that prohibits her from seeking a job or to build a career, as long as it is safe for her. Misconception remains from a misunderstood verse which says, "Stay

in your homes and do not bedeck yourselves as in the days of ignorance"...¹ But this verse is specifically for the wives of the Prophet as it is addressed in the previous verse no 32 and the saying is continued in the next verse. Renowned Islāmic scholar Dr.Jamal Al Badawi Says, "In the ideal Islāmic society it is necessary that women should fill certain posts; it follows therefore that women need to take up such important professions as teaching, medicine and nursing to name just a few."²

Khadijah (R), the first wife of the Prophet (ﷺ), was a rich business woman who had a flourishing business in different areas which can be compared as multinational companies of today. Fatimah (R), Prophet's daughter, had the knowledge of nursing and she nursed our Prophet (ﷺ) in the Battle of Uhud when he was seriously injured. Ayesha (R) was a competent teacher of the Qurān, Sunnah, and Islāmic law and one of the best narrators of Hadith. She reported 2210 Ahadith. She also served as advisor during the rule of the four rightly guided Khalifa.³ If there is a conflict between motherhood and career, the motherhood should take the priority. Part time job or making handicrafts, doing embroidery at home may be suitable for these women. So Islām does not prevent women to do a job rather gives the right to women to develop their talents within Islāmic limits and they are entitled to equal rate of salary with men for similar work. "Islām allows her to work outside the home in an appropriate job which suits her nature, her concern, and her capacity, and which does not crush her femininity".⁴

In the Qurān it says, "They are your garments you are their garments....."⁵.The Qurān also says

¹ 33:33

² Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997), 42

³ Ibid, pp 53-55,

⁴ Qaradawi Yusuf Al *The Status of Women in Islām* , http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed20-5-09

⁵ 2:187

“Let the rich man spend according to his means, and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allāh has given him. Allāh puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him”.¹ Thus women are given their financial rights by the Qurān and it also shows, there is no place for gender disparity in Islām. In addition the verses below shows how women can attain economic empowerment through getting Mahr, maintenance from husband, heir to father, husband and son's property and in some cases brother's property.

"And give the women (on **marriage**) their **Mahr** as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.”²

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of **women**, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means.....”³

"Allah (thus) directs you as regards your **children's (inheritance)**: to the male, a portion equal to that of two females: if only daughters, two or more, their share is two-thirds of the inheritance; if only one, her share is a half”...⁴

Husband's property -“In what your wives leave, your share is a half, if they leave no child; but if they leave a child, ye get a fourth; after payment of legacies and debts. In what **ye leave**; their share is a fourth, if ye leave no child; but if ye leave a child, they get an eighth; after payment of legacies and debts”.⁵

Heir as a Mother- “For parents a sixth share of the **inheritance** to each if the deceased left children; if no children, and the parents are the (only) heirs, the mother has a third; if the deceased left brothers (or sisters), the mother has a sixth. (The distribution in all cases is) after the payment of legacies and debts. Ye know not whether your parents or your children are

¹ 65:7

² 4:4

³ 4:34

⁴ 4:11

⁵ 4:12

nearest to you in benefit. These are settled portions ordained by Allah; and Allah is All-Knowing All-Wise.¹

Maintenance during Iddah- "Let the women live (in 'iddah) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: annoy them not, so as to restrict them. And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense: and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves in difficulties let another **woman** suckle (the child) on the (father's behalf)".²

Maintenance of child after divorce -"The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child nor father on account of his child. An heir shall be chargeable in the same way if they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation There is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring there is no blame on you provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered, on equitable terms. But fear Allah and know that Allah sees well what ye do."³

In the farewell speech at Arafah the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "O People your wives have certain rights over you and you have certain rights over them. Treat them well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers."⁴. The Prophet (ﷺ) also said, "You are obliged to

¹ 4:11

² 65:6

³ 2:233

⁴ Sarwar Ghulam, *Islām Beliefs and Teachings*, (London : The Muslim Educational Trust, 130, Stroud Green Road,

provide them with food and clothes honorably” [Transmitted by Abu Dawud (1905); Ibn Majah (3074)] Dr. Yousof Al Qaradawi says, “Honorably here means what is conventional according to people of faith and honor, without extravagance and meanness.” Prophet (ﷺ) was extremely gentle towards his people, excellent in his conduct towards his wives so that he used to help them with their housekeeping.¹

In Sahih al Bukhāri there is a chapter on Nafaqāt² that is maintaining someone. It is narrated from Sad bin Abi waqqas (R) that the Messenger of Allāh said to him, “.....You will never spend anything seeking the face of Allāh thereby, but you will be rewarded for it, even (the food) that you put in your wife’s mouth.”³ Sahih Bukhāri (55) and Muslim (1002) it is narrated from Abu Sa’id al Khudri(R), that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “When a man spends on his family, hoping for reward, that is (counted as) an act of charity for him.” In Sahih Muslim narrated from Abu Hurairah (R) that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “A dinar which you spend for the sake of Allāh, a dinar which you spend for freeing a slave, a dinar which you give in charity to a poor person and a dinar which you spend on your family- the greatest of these in reward is that which you spend on your family.” One Hadith In Sahih Al Bukhari mentions about Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) how he sold the dates of garden of Banu Nazir and saved some wealth that was equivalent for one year's cost to run his family.⁴ All these show the virtue of spending on one’s wife and children. In the light of these verses from Qurān and Hadith, it is clear that Muhammad (ﷺ) had led a balanced

London N43 RZ, UK) p120

¹ Al Qaradawi Yusuf *The Status of Women in Islām*, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm

² Imam Bukhari, *Sahih Al Bukhari*, trans.Mawlana Muhammad Muzammel Huq et al, 5th volume, no 4951 (Dhaka, Adhunik prokashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar,Dhaka- 1100) p159

³Ibid, p160

⁴ Ibid, p161

married life and there was no possibility of gender disparity In Islām.

The new designed messages are-

Empowerment of women is essential for the development of the society and it is in harmony of the teaching of Islam.

Empowerment of women is essential for the development of a society. Islam encourages empowerment of women.

Taking care of wife is a rewarding act in the eye of Allah. Therefore, the husbands should stop gender disparity inside home.

4.7 Messages related to proper use of divorce

Throughout the history of human marriage, and in different societies and cultures, there has been always a way to end an unsuccessful marriage. In pre-Islāmic Arab society, people divorced their wives on the whims of men, without any real basis. Today history is repeating itself with high levels of divorce, based on no real valid irreconcilable reason. In Islām divorce is discouraged but permitted for legitimate/valid reasons. But the marvel of Islām is that it provides detailed guidelines for marriage and divorce and the guidelines are likely to reduce/ decrease the

possibility of divorce. These include the purposeful selection of the spouse according to Qurān and Hadith, both of them should be responsible to observe their own duties set by Islām, if serious discord arises, both of them will follow the selected arbitrator's advice and measures to follow if any of them is found guilty. In Islām Talaq (divorce) means to be free from tie.¹ Since Islām made divorce legal, some men have misused the permission granted for oppressing and abusing women. Some even go so far to meet their carnal desire by divorcing and marrying multiple times. From the literature review it is found that in many societies women are expelled from their homes immediately after pronouncement of three Talaq, which is against the Qurānic rule. But the proper procedure of Talaq does not open the way for abuse but for reconciliation, mercy or for complete separation in a balanced and peaceful way. Let us see the verses on divorce in the the Qurān.

4.7.1 Verses on divorce

We can start with the verses on divorce. All verses in the Qurān related to divorce are listed below:

"When you (men) divorce women, divorce them keeping in view *Iddah* (waiting period) and reckon the period and fear Allāh, your Lord. Expel them not from their houses, nor shall they themselves leave unless they are guilty of open lewdness. Such are the limits (imposed by) Allāh; and whoso transgresses Allāh's limits, he verily wrongs his souls."²

"And for such of your woman as despair of menstruation, if you have doubts, their period of waiting) shall be three months, along with those who have it (menstruation) not and for those who carry (child in their wombs), their period of Iddah shall be until they deliver their burdens."³

¹ Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada, 1997) p

² 65:1

³ 65:4

“Divorced woman shall wait keeping themselves apart three (monthly) courses. And it is not lawful for them that they should conceal that which Allāh has created in their wombs, if they are believers in Allāh and the Last day. And their husbands have the better rights to take them back in that period, if they wish for reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in a just manner. And men are a degree above them and Allāh is Mighty, Wise.”¹

“And they have fulfilled their prescribed term, take them back on equitable term, and keep your testimony upright for Allāh...”²

“And when you have divorced women and they fulfill their term of *Iddah* either take them back on equitable term or set them free on equitable term. And retain them not to inflict harm unto them so that you transgress (the limit). He who does that, does wrong his own self...”³

“And when you have divorced women and they fulfill the term of their *Iddah* do not prevent them from marrying their former husbands if they mutually agree on equitable term...”⁴

“(This) divorce is (permissible) twice: after that the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. And it is not lawful for you(men) to take back any of your gifts (from your wives) which you have given them, except when both parties fear that they would not be able to keep the limits ordained by Allāh...”⁵

“And if he (husband) has divorced her (the third time) then she is not lawful into him thereafter except in case she had wedded another husband (and been divorced again). In that case, there is no blame on either of them if they reunite; provided they feel that they can keep the limits

¹ 2:228

² 65:2

³ 2:231

⁴ 2:232

⁵ 2:229

ordained by Allāh.”¹

“And if you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you had given the latter a whole treasure of dower (Mahr) take not the least bit of it back. Would you take it back by slander and a manifest wrong?”²

“For divorced women, *Ma'ta* should be provided on a reasonable (scale). This is the duty on the righteous.”³

“Lodge them (women in Iddah) where you dwell according to your means and harass them not so as to straighten their circumstances. And if they are with child, then spend for them till they deliver their burden. Then if they give suckle (to the child), give them their due payment and consult together in kindness, but if you make difficulties for one another, then let some other woman suckle the child. Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allāh has given him. Allāh puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him.”⁴

“There is no blame on you if you divorce women before consummation or fixation of their Mahr, but bestow on them (a suitable gift), the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means: a gift of reasonable amount is due from those who wish to do the right thing.”⁵

“And if you divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of Mahr for them, then the half of the Mahr (is due to them) unless they remit it or (the man's half) is remitted by him in whose hand is the marriage tie and remission (of man's half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget liberality between yourselves”⁶

¹ 2:230

² 4: 20

³ 2:241

⁴ 65:6-7

⁵ 2:236

⁶ 2:237

“O you who believe, when you marry believing women, and then divorce them before you have touched them, no period of Iddah have you to count in respect of them. So, give them a gift and set them free in a handsome manner”.¹

“If a woman fears ill treatment from her husband or desertion, it is no sin for them twain if they make terms of peace between themselves. Such settlement is better and selfishness is ever present in human souls But if you do good and are conscious of Him-behold, Allāh is indeed aware of all that you do.”²

“For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives awaiting for four months is ordained: then if they change their minds, surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful.”³

“As for those women from whom you fear disloyalty, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and move away from them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them.”⁴ And if you fear a breach between them twain (the man and the wife) appoint an arbiter from his folk and an arbiter from her folk. If they desire amendment Allāh will make them of one mind.”⁵

4.7.2 Procedure of divorce

The procedure of Talaq or divorce in the light of the Qurān can be summarized as follows:

The utterance of Talaq means the decision of divorce has been made and spoken publicly in words. This denotes a temporary or provisional state of separation. After the pronouncement of Talaq the couple is required to live apart in the same house till the end of *Iddah* period. *Iddah* is the waiting period for the wife after the utterance of divorce and the duration is three monthly

¹ 33:49

² 4:128

³ 2:226

⁴ 4:34

⁵ 4:35

cycles as declared in the Quran.^{1,2} During the waiting period the wife must not be driven away from the house nor should she leave the house unless she is guilty of open lewdness.³ If the husband changes his mind they can live as husband and wife and the Talaq will be invalid. If the *Iddah* period is over, the Talaq is effective, and in this situation the husband has two options- either to take her back(i.e remarry) on equitable terms or part with her on equitable terms and in both cases two just witnesses should be there. The chance of remarriage⁴ with the former wife is open for two times only i.e. the Talaq uttered by the husband is revocable for two times. After that, if he utters the Talaq for the third time, the divorce is final; there is no more chance for remarriage unless she marries to another man, gets divorce or widowed.⁵ “This provision has been criticized by western scholars: they maintain that if the divorced woman wants her former husband why she should be compelled to lead conjugal life with another unknown person. The reason for such provision is not far to seek. The divorce should not be taken lightly; of all permissible things this is most disliked by Allāh. For that reason Qurān has made divorce rather difficult. The husband and wife have been allowed two chances over a period of six months to settle their discord and achieve reconciliation, but they have failed to do so. There must be something basically wrong with them which none of them can amend; they had been leading a miserable conjugal life. Marriage of the woman elsewhere after the third divorce gives a chance to her to embark on a new conjugal life which may prove happy and satisfying to her. If on the other hand, maladjustment mars their married life and separation takes place, the Qurān has permitted the wife to be wedded to her former husband after the necessary formalities of divorce

¹ 65:4

² 2:228

³ 65:1

⁴ 2:232

⁵ 2:230

from the second husband.¹

The Qurān ²also encourages a wife (though she fears ill treatment on her husband's part) to arrange an amicable settlement between themselves to continue the marriage if possible. Once Prophet (ﷺ) wanted to divorce his wife Sawda, but she sought to keep the marriage and sacrificed her night stay with the prophet to Ayesha.

4.7.3 The additional conditions for the husband for utterance of divorce to be valid

There are some additional conditions imposed in Islām for the utterance of divorce to be valid, according to Islāmic scholars. They are-

During the utterance of divorce, the husband must be sane, conscious, and not under any type of pressure. The words used to pronounce divorce must be lucid and unequivocal, or whether it is in written form or orally.

It is also prohibited for the husband to pronounce divorce if he is under the influence of alcohol or intoxicants. A person who is very loose with his tongue and regularly uses the word "divorce" while rebuking or yelling at his wife, the utterance cannot be considered valid. Also prohibited if he is in a state of severe anger, if his wife is in her monthly cycle, if she is in her post-natal rest period, if she had intimate relationship with the husband during her fresh purity.

4.7.4 The wife can seek divorce from her husband

The wife can seek divorce from her husband in the court for following reasons-

If the husband fails to maintain his wife, violence or ill-treatment towards wife, imprisonment or extended absence of the husband, if the husband has impotency, or any incurable, abhorrent

¹ Khan,Md. Ferdouse ,*The Qurānic verses on Women*, (kualalumpur: A.S.Noordeen, p.o box:42-Gombak, 53800 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 2007)p 21

² 4:128

disease or insanity, if there is any act of swindle or suppression of important information during marriage.¹

Wife has the right to seek divorce in these ways- if the wife has the right of Talaq-i- Taf'eez (in Bangladesh, to achieve this type power of Talaq, the wife has to ask for the right to divorce in the 18th number of the condition of the marriage contract during marriage, then she can divorce her husband in the similar way prescribed above)[Muslim family law], by returning of her marriage gift i.e. Mahr,² which is known as Khula Talaq (the husband cannot pressurize the wife for such divorce to regain the marriage gift), and through Mubarra' where husband and wife mutually agree to release each other from the marriage vows and can fix mutually the financial and other conditions.³

4.7.5 Some other rules from the Qurān to be followed by the husband during the process of divorce

There are some rules on divorce on the basis of the Qurān, which are to be followed by the husband. They are-

Wife will be maintained by the husband during the Iddah period and she will stay in the same house with him which may lead them for reconciliation.⁴

Husband cannot take back any gifts given previously to the divorced wife.⁵

If husband divorce her before consummation, he has to pay half of the Mahr, and in such case the

¹ Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997) p 128-130

² 2:229

³ 4:128

⁴ 65:1

⁵ 2:229

wife need not to observe Iddah period.¹

Husband should give some gifts after Talaq, which is a sign of Taqwa i.e. God-consciousness, here the language of the Qurān is near to obligator.²

Husband will maintain his divorced wife if she is expecting and the maintenance should be continued till delivery of the baby.³

If the divorced wife happens to nurse the baby, the father (i.e. husband) has to pay her for feeding the baby; if he fails his heirs will bear the responsibility.⁴

Husband cannot take back the Mahr from the wife by mischief.⁵

4.7.6 Invalidity of three *Talaq* at a time

During the Prophet (ﷺ)'s time some people used three Talaq at a time for divorce. He declared this talaq as final divorce and showed severe anger for the malpractice. He considered it as playing games with the Book of Allāh (Nasai). On basis of this, some scholars opined that three Talaq at a time is an effective Talaq and the marriage is terminated. But Imam Ibn Tayymiah, Ikramah, Tawus etc declared that three talaq at a time would be considered as one Talaq. They gave the opinion on the basis of Bukhari and Muslim Hadith, -“Abus Sahaba asked Ibn Abbas, and ‘Do not you know that at the time of Prophet Muhamad, Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar (R), they considered three Talaqs at a time as one Talaq He answered, ‘Yes’.” (Bukhari and Muslim). The same thing is narrated from Ibn Abbas (ra), in the Books of Hadith of Muslim, Abu

¹2:237; 33:49

²2:236; 2:241

³65:6

⁴2:233; 65:6

⁵4:20

Daud, Musnad i Ahmad.¹ There are a large number of Hadith on incidents of Talaq which is according to the Qurān. Besides, for unequivocal commands of the Qurān, the holy Book gets priority over Hadith. Here priority of the Qurān and juristic preference are the solutions for the above mentioned problem.

That is why the majority of the Islāmic scholars considered three Talaq for one and strongly recommended to apply divorce with proper time intervals. This procedure of Talaq, is to keep open the way for reconciliation (as husband and wife stay at the same place during the process of divorce), helps the wife to make a future plan so to be in better mental condition, child's future if they have any. In truth, it serves the great purpose to preserve the family i.e. the home- the peaceful abode for human kind and an essential element for human development. Certainly Allāh knows the best.

4.7.7 Justice and good behavior/conduct towards wife are enjoined during the process of divorce

Justice is one of the fundamental instructions in Islam. The Holy Quran also asks husbands to be good to their women even during the course of divorce. The following verses support the above facts:

“And they have fulfilled their prescribed term, take them back on equitable term, and keep your testimony upright for Allāh...”² To demonstrate their honesty..

“And when you have divorced women and they fulfill their term of *Iddah* either take them back on equitable term or set them free on equitable term. And retain them not to inflict harm unto them so that you transgress (the limit). He who does that, does wrong his own self.....He sent down to you the Book and Wisdom, for your instruction, and fear Allah, and know that Allah is

¹ Moududi, Syed Abul Ala, *Tafhimul Qurān*, 17th part (Dhaka, Adhunik Prakashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100, Banglaesh, December,2002) p203

² 65:2

well-acquainted with all things.”¹ Here men are asked not to injure them, not to take undue advantage because Allah is Wise and sees everything.

“And when you have divorced women and they fulfill the term of their *Iddah* do not prevent them from marrying their former husbands if they mutually agree on equitable term...”²

Also preventing divorced women from marrying is denounced by Allāh.

“(This) divorce is (permissible) twice: after that the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. And it is not lawful for you(men) to take back any of your gifts (from your wives) which you have given them, except when both parties fear that they would not be able to keep the limits ordained by Allāh...”³ So, during the process of divorce the Qurān strongly asks men to show kindness not harshness to the wife, not to take back any of the gifts given to wife..

“When you (men) divorce women, divorce them keeping in view *Iddah* (waiting period) and reckon the period and fear Allāh, your Lord. Expel them not from their houses, nor shall they themselves leave unless they are guilty of open lewdness. Such are the limits (imposed by) Allāh; and whoso transgresses Allāh’s limits, he verily wrongs his souls.”⁴ This means husbands should fear Allāh for uttering divorce, not to utter divorce during menstruation as they are vulnerable at that time; wives are not to be expelled from the husband's house. Otherwise the husbands will be transgressors in the eye of Allāh.

“For those who take an oath for abstention from their wives awaiting for four months is ordained: then if they change their minds, surely Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful. But if their

¹ 2:231

² 2:232

³ 2:229

⁴ 65:1

intention is firm for divorce. Allah hears and knows all things”¹

Here Allāh warns not to misuse the power of divorce nor follow the bad custom of *Ela*.

“And if you divorce them before consummation, but after the fixation of Mahr for them, then the half of the Mahr (is due to them) unless they remit it or (the man’s half) is remitted by him in whose hand is the marriage tie and remission (of man’s half) is the nearest to righteousness. And do not forget liberality between yourselves”² This verse ensures her right of getting half of the Mahr.

“O you who believe, when you marry believing women, and then divorce them before you have touched them, no period of Iddah have you to count in respect of them. So, give them a *Mata’* (gift) and set them free in a handsome manner”.³ Here extra gift is encouraged for divorced women.

Since divorce can affect the health of women adversely, it is important to develop messages on divorce to ensure adoption of proper process of divorce in Islām. If the process is followed according to Islāmic rules, women will gain significant rights and economic support, which the society fails to offer to women. The invalidity of three Talaq at a time and her financial support during *Iddah* period will enhance social and economic status of women who are going through divorce and will help protect their health and wellbeing. Based on the analysis and discussion above, the social and health message can be written as:

Three Talaq at a time is against the teaching of the Qurān.

According to the Qur’ān, the wife has the right to have maintenance and lodging in husband's house during the waiting period of the process of divorce.

¹ 2:226

² 2:237

³ 33:49

The Holy Qurān bids to give one Talaq at a time with proper intervals.

Talaq is not a weapon against wife for a man in Islām. So, oppression, hostility and depriving the wife from her basic rights are outlawed by the Qurān and Hadith.

The process of Talaq should be as prescribed by the Qurān. So that it may open the way for reconciliation for the husband and wife to save the family again or a peaceful complete separation.

If you want to divorce your wife

Count the days of Iddat carefully.

That will give you the time to reflect

if you really don't want her anymore.

Being remorseful later will not help,

it will make you miserable, in this world and hereafter.

Remember that dealing with women is not a child's play

that you will throw the "divorce" weapon

whenever you want.

Do you know that

there is no provision of "hila" marriage

In Hadith and Qurān?

4.8 Messages related to prevent misuse of polygamy

Practice of polygamy by men, when misused, is another means to abuse women and to violate her rights. BDHS report 2007 shows the reasons for spousal violence and most widely accepted reason for wife beating among women in Bangladesh is disobeying elders followed by arguing with her husband. Other reasons are financial crisis, wife neglected household chores, wife neglected children, refused sex, disobeyed husband, dowry issue, envy, food crisis etc. Generally poverty, having less education, having more children, husband married more than once are linked with increased risk of domestic violence.¹ So, polygamy is also a cause for wife beating in Bangladesh.

Thus it also creates health related problems for women. In fact, polygamy is not introduced by Islām but it was practiced from time immemorial in the human history.

4.8.1 The verse on polygamy

The Qurān has allowed polygamy under certain situations which is mentioned in Surah Nisā. The Qurān reads, “If you fear that you shall not be able to deal **justly** with the **orphans**, then marry from (among) **women** such as are lawful to you, two or three or four: but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal **justly** with **them**, then only one,... that will be more suitable to prevent you **from doing injustice**.”² Whenever, the above verse is critically seen, it consists of a number of significant explanatory terms like permission of polygamy, justice, orphan, women etc, which make the verse very much comprehensive, complex and not easy to explain.

4.8.2 The Holy Qurān prevents men to marry women for lusts and whims

¹National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, *Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, chap 14, Domestic violence Health*,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009)pp 190,205, 212: WHO 2005b

² 4:3

This verse was revealed in Madinah after the battle of Uhud and its subject matter deals with the social problems that the Muslim community faced after the war. A large portion of this Surah has a detailed discussion on women and orphans, inheritance, marriage, and family rights etc. The Surah begins with a universal message that all mankind are one and mutual rights must be respected; the rights of women and orphans and suggestions on family relationship. Even the name of this surah is Nisa, meaning "The Women". Abdullah Yusuf Ali wrote in his comment that "Notice the conditional clause about orphans, introducing the rules about marriage. This reminds us of the immediate occasion of the promulgation of this verse. It was after Uhud, when the Muslim community was left with many orphans and widows and some captives of war. Their treatment was to be governed by principles of the greatest humanity and equality. The occasion is past, but the principles remain. "Marry the orphans if you are quite sure that you will in that way protect their interests and their property, with perfect justice to them and to your own dependants if you have any. If not make other arrangements for the orphans." ¹Here it is to be noted that, to learn about Asbab al Nujul or occasion of revelation is a vital factor to elucidate/ the verse, otherwise the verse will be misapprehended.

Muhammad Asad in his comment wrote, "...According to an interpretation suggested by Ayesha, the Prophet's widow, this refers to the (hypothetical) case of orphan girls whom their guardians might wish to marry without, however, being prepared or able to give them an appropriate marriage-portion – the implication being that they should avoid the temptation of committing such an injustice and should marry other women instead. (Bukhari, Kitab al Tafsir, as well as Muslim and Nasai). However, not all of Ayesha's contemporaries subscribed to her explanation of this verse. Thus, according to Said Ibn Jubayr, Qatadah, and other successors of

¹ Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Holy Quran, Translation, and Commentary*, (Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989), p179

the companions, the purport of the above passage is this: 'Just as you are, rightly, fearful of offending against the interests of orphans, you must apply the same careful consideration to the interests and the rights of the women whom you intend to marry.' In his commentary on this passage, Tabari quotes several variants of the above interpretation and gives it his unequivocal approval."¹

4.8.3 Verses on orphan and the case of polygamy and women

In this context if some verses on orphan are considered, the humanitarian and fair attitude of the Qurān is exposed. Yet above comments on polygamy and its relationship with orphans are well understood and clarified. The verses are-

"They ask you concerning orphans. Say: the best thing to do is what is for their good; if you mix their affairs with yours, they are your brethren; but Allāh knows the man who means mischief from the man who means good..."²

"To orphans restore their property, nor substitute worthless things for (their) good ones; and devour not their substance (by mixing it up) with your own. For this is indeed a great sin."³

"Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage: if you find sound judgment in them, release their property to them: but consume it not wastefully, nor in haste against their growing up..."⁴

"Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies: they will soon be enduring a blazing fire"⁵

"They ask your instruction concerning the women. Say: Allāh does instruct you about them and remember what has been rehearsed unto you in the Book, concerning the orphans of women to

¹ Asad, Muhammad *The Message of the Qurān*, (Gibraltar, Dar-al Andalus Gibraltar, 1980) p 101

² 2:220

³ 4:2

⁴ 4:6

⁵ 4:10

whom you give not the portions prescribed, and whom you desire to marry , as also concerning the children who are weak and oppressed: that you stand firm for justice to orphans. There is not a good deed which you do, but Allāh is well acquainted therewith."¹ Here it is indicated that justice to women and orphans is part of Islām and the fear of Allāh.

"Come not near to the orphan's property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength: and fulfill (every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)."²

Hazrat Abdullh Ibn Abbas (R) and Ikramah (R) commented that at the age of ignorance men could have wives without limit. For that they often failed to give financial support to the wives and unlawfully spend the wealth of the orphan nephews, nieces and other helpless relatives. Abul Ala Moududi adds that, this verse also points toward the fact that if a person ,wants to marry for second or third time, but is not able to do justice to the orphan and his wealth, then he may marry from those women who have orphan children. Nevertheless, it is an *Ijma* or consensus of the scholars that a man can marry up to four and not more than four at a time. Additionally, legality of keeping more than one wife is conditioned strongly with justice, equality and fair treatment. One who does not fulfill these conditions he deceives with Allāh. Islāmic states have the authority to stop these abuses of polygamy, if the wife/ wives go and informs about unfair treatment towards them to the courts. The *Ijma* or consensus also includes the above situation.³ Allama Zamakhshari, the famous scholar of the Qurān, says that this verse permits polygamy if there is a possibility of committing adultery. The Qurān's strict warning against injustice to orphans on the one hand and against adultery on the other hand scared the sincere Muslims. To

¹ 4:127

² 17:34

³ Moududi Syed Abul Ala, *Tafhimul Qurān*, 2nd part,(Dhaka: Adhunik Prakashani, Dhaka 1100, Nov, 2004) p 98-99

them polygamy was the alternative to escape these two evils. Though the verse strictly says that 'Justice' is an inviolable condition of the validity of polygamy.¹ Some countries already have laws to stop exploitation of polygamy, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, Syria, Iraq, two of the states of Malaysia.²

Justice is an essential element of marriage including polygamy. Although the Qurān allows a man to marry up to four wives, it also lays down conditions for the husband to take care all of his wives with justice, equality in every aspect. At the end of the verse, Allāh strongly talks about justice regarding marriage as it reads, "... : but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal **justly** with **them**, then only one,... that will be more suitable to prevent you **from doing injustice**".³ In addition, the Qurān also says, " And it will not be within your power to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire it, and so do not allow yourselves to incline towards one to the exclusion of the other, leaving her in a state, as it were, of having and not having a husband...."⁴ Asad again comments on 4:129 as, " This refers to cases where a man has more than one wife- a permission which is conditional upon his determination and ability to ' treat them with equal fairness', as laid down in verse 3, of this surah. Since a man who is fully conscious of his moral responsibility might feel that he is committing a sin if he loves one of his wife more than the other (or others), the above verse provides a 'judicial enlightenment' on this point by making it clear that feelings are beyond a human beings control: in other words, that the equality of treatment relates only to outward behavior towards and practical dealings with one's wives. However in view of the fact that a man's behavior towards another person is, in the long

¹ Al Badawi Jamal, *Islāmic Teachings Course*, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifax, N. S Canada,1997) p90

² Hasan Nasima, *Islame Narir Odhikar*, (Dhaka:Bangladesh Womens Lawyers Association, Monico Mina Tower, 48/C, West Agargaon, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh, 2006) p24

³ 4:3

⁴ 4:129

run, almost inevitably influenced by what he feels about the person, the above passage- read in conjunction with verse 3 , and especially its concluding sentence- imposes a moral restriction on plural marriages."¹

Furthermore, the Qurān commands to make decisions including family matters through mutual consultation as revealed in Surah Shura.² Even the breast feeding of a baby of a separated woman must be decided by the husband with the consent of the mother.³

4.8.4 Some remarkable facts of verse 4:3

Some facts are remarkable from Surah Nisa "If you fear that you shall not be able to deal **justly** with the **orphans**, then marry from (among) **women** such as are lawful to you, two or three or four: but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal **justly** with **them**, then only one,... that will be more suitable to prevent you **from doing injustice**."⁴ It can be said that-

Justice towards orphans and wives are equally emphasized and the ruling is in imperative form of sentence.

From the quoted verse and comments it is clear that marrying more than one woman is mere permissible under some multifarious and intricate conditions but it is neither Fard, nor Wajib nor Sunnah nor Mustahab. Polygamy is not encouraged in the Quran but it is an exception. Doing justice towards orphan, helpless widow is equally emphasized for doing justice towards women.

Furthermore, the Qurān considers 'justice' as an uncompromising factor of every phase of life and presented a number of verses relating to 'justice'. Even Allāh's one of the Attribute is Justice and the entire Prophets' one of the principal tasks was to establish 'justice' on this earth.

Some verses on justice are presented to show how important is justice to Muslim. verses on

¹ Asad, Muhammad *The Message of the Qurān*, (Gibraltar, Dar-al Andalus Gibraltar, 1980), p130

² 42:38

³ 2:233

⁴ 4:3

justice....

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be rich or poor..."¹

"We sent aforetime our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the balance (of right and wrong) that men may stand forth in justice..."²

To establish justice is a fundamental teaching of Islām and Allāh does not want His servants to do injustice to themselves and others. This same 'justice' is an obligatory provision on men for polygamy which is very hard to follow according to the Qurān (4:129). Yet prior to the revelation of this verse the Arabs were dipped in ignorance and a man could have unrestricted number of wives. The above mentioned verse 4:3 limits the number of wives to a maximum of four and those wives should be treated with perfect equality i.e. 'justice'. Moreover the verse does not indicate that, the husband is not bound to do justice while he is monogamous- in fact it is a difficult task for him to do justice even with one wife as he has too many duties. He should maintain her (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, medication, even Mahr etc), treat her well, and to sustain the relationship with mutual 'love, mercy, cooperation'.³ He is accountable to Allāh, his wife, children and the society. Therefore a man with more than one wife surely in trouble to keep justice, as he is a split husband to his wives and a split father to his children. Here his responsibility is tough and he is answerable to Allāh and the society for any form of mishandle. So the recommendation is strongly in favor of monogamy and the majority of the scholars consider monogamy as preferred marital arrangement according to the Qurān. However, if the

¹4:135

²57:25

³30:21

wife has such sickness so that she fails to play her role or if there is prolonged warfare and the number of able men is reduced to a distressing degree, and number of widows, orphans, adult young unmarried girls are very big then polygamy might be a solution/resolution for the critical situation.

Justice and impartiality towards wives are essential/indispensable for practicing polygamy. This is why Islām encourages monogamy.

Islām encourages monogamy because absolute impartial and just treatment of all the wives, as required by Islām in case of polygamous relationship, is extremely difficult to satisfy.

Muslims should give priority towards justice not their whims and desires. It will make them realize the grave responsibility and possible bitterness of polygamy and the practicability of monogamy.

4.9 Misapplication of Fatwa causes damage to female health and well-being

Fatwa is a legal statement in Islām, issued by a mufti or a religious lawyer, on a specific issue.

Fatwas are asked for by judges or individuals, and are needed in cases where an issue of fiqh is undecided or uncertain. Lawsuits can be settled on the basis of a fatwa.

It is vital that a fatwa not be based upon the muftis or lawyers own will and ideas, but rather rendered it in accordance with fixed precedent.

Today, fatwas have limited importance in most Muslim societies, and are normally used only in cases of marriage, inheritance and divorce. The importance of a fatwa depends on its acceptance among most people, and if people don't care about it, it is in reality powerless. (<http://i->

cias.com/e.o/fatwa.htm)

“Fatwa is the non-binding legal opinion of Islāmic scholars’.” The judgment of court is not Fatwa but known as Ray or decision, which is binding. It is true that Fatwa Books were produced by renown Islāmic scholars such as Fatwa-e-Alamgiri (produced by about 300 scholars, during the reign of Emperor Aurangagib of India), Imdadul Fatwa (Fatwa of Asfraf Ali Thanobi), Fatwa-e Rashidia etc. Sometimes the Fatwa Books facilitate individual in personal matters and for courts to formulate/devise their decisions. In the history of Islām, the accused people were punished by the Shariah court, neither by any individual Islāmic scholar nor by Fatwa of any village or local leaders.¹

According to the Usul al-fiqh (Principles of Jurisprudence), the fatwa must fulfill the following conditions in order to be valid:

The fatwa is in consistent with relevant legal proofs, deduced from Qur'anic verses and Hadith;

It is issued by a jurist trained in Islāmic law having appropriate knowledge and sincerity of heart;

It is free from individual opportunism, and not depending on political servitude;

It is adequate with the needs of the contemporary world.

“On January 10, 1993, in the northeastern district of Sylhet in Bangladesh, a twenty year old woman called Nurjahan was dragged out of her home by her hair to be punished for adultery.”

Nurjahan’s first marriage had ended in divorce some time ago and she decided to marry Muttalib as her second husband. The local Imam had performed the marriage ceremony but there was no registration for the marriage. Even/yet she had no documentation of divorce of her previous marriage. After some days, some people of the village started to accuse the couple of committing

¹ Fatwa: Use and Abuse, Shah Abdul Hannan, The Bangladesh Observer, Dhaka Thursday, June 25, 1998

adultery as the divorce was not registered and so their marriage was not legal. A Salish, ie, a traditional village arbitration council, declared the marriage illegal and issued a Fatwa of punishment for Nurjahan and Muttalib. "On that cold morning, Nurjahan and her husband were forced to stand in a waist deep pit in the ground and then each was pelted with 101 stones; Nurjahan's elderly parents were given fifty lashes each. Later that day, Nurjahan killed herself by drinking agricultural pesticide."¹

Stoning to death is a death penalty for adultery according to Hadith. It was practiced even before the revelation of the Qurān. It is still practiced in some societies. It should be noted that this type of fatwa was totally brutal and illegal as one cannot take law in one's own hand. Only the State has the legal right to punish individuals for illegal acts. In most cases, Fatwa is implemented against women only and this practice is a reflection of gender disparity as well as a tool for perpetuating violence against women (which is a public health problem also).

What does the Qurān say about this?

In surah Nur verse 2, the punishment for adultery is " ...flog each of them with a hundred stripes..", i.e., equal penalty for man and woman who were found guilty of adultery. In addition, it is mentioned that if there is a charge against chaste women, one has to produce 4 witnesses.² In the 3rd verse it says the adulterer will marry adulteress i.e. according to Qurān they are alive, here some scholars say these men, women are unmarried adulterer, but the Qurān does not specify that.³ Moreover if a husband charges his wife of the same crime, he is to bear witness 4 times by Allāh and on the fifth time he would invoke the curse of Allāh if he was lying. But the wife can negate the charge by bearing witness by Allāh that 'she is innocent' and similarly fifth

¹ Shehabuddin, Elora : Contesting the Illicit: Gender and Politics of Fatwas in Bangladesh, in Gender, Politics and Islām, (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press USA, 2002) pp 201-2,

² 24: 4

³ 24:3

time she would do the same thing as her husband, to prove that she is telling the truth.¹ After that divorce is the form of punishment for them.,In other place All says that that, if a woman is guilty of adultery and confirmed by 4 witnesses, she should be confined in house until death or Allāh ordain for them some other way.²

According to the Qurān, some important points are found-

the penalty for adultery is 100 lashes, not stoning to death

4 witnesses are needed to confirm the crime (the condition of 4 witnesses seems to be very hard, possibly to save the innocent people, especially women.)

no place for confession

Qurān does not differentiate between married/unmarried and man/woman when mentioning the penalty.

the wife can avert the charge (launched by the husband) against her by taking oath by

Allāh, i.e., the case can be easily dismissed if the woman insists that she is not guilty.

the person who charges a chaste woman for adultery and fails to present 4 witnesses will be punished by 80 lashes, and his/her evidence will be rejected for ever after the incident

(Until he repents and mends his conduct) Nur: 4-5.

Nisa: 15 do talk about a different punishment but not death penalty.

the verse of Nisa: 15 is apparently in contradiction with the verse of Nur:2.

all of the above verses are in striking contradiction with the tradition of Prophet sm

The fact remains that adultery is forbidden in Islām³ as it is a threat to the family

life, the foundation of a society. Humankind has to pay for widespread adultery and

¹ 24: 6-9

² 4:15

³ 17:32

consequently a state faces various problems like higher rates of abortions, single mothers, divorce, live together, STDs etc. Even the ways, which lead to adultery, are also strictly prohibited in Islām e.g. free mixing, pornography, damaging or immoral literature, art, film, advertisement etc. Therefore, any approach or temptation towards adultery should be avoided and moral virtue plays a vital role in this regard. According to Holy Qurān, Islām at first ensures the healthy environment of the society and then the question of punishment for adultery may arise provided that there is clear proof.

The Qurān declares death penalty in two cases, murder and for creating specific form of havoc and chaos within a state. In the case of murder, the punishment may be spared by compensation in the form of blood money if the other party agrees.¹ In other words, the Qurān has allowed the death penalty to be spared or escapable. Hence the Qurān does not encourage taking life as it says, “if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people”². This is the essence of Islām which is beyond compromise. In fact, stoning to death was prevalent in pre Islāmic Arab society and was practiced according to Old Testament. The Bible, in chapter 22, 20-22 of the 5th Book of Moses (Deuteronomy) orders that the adulterers should be stoned. Alfred Murad Hofman in his article, “On the development of the Islāmic Jurisprudence”, wrote, “This norm would have been automatically incorporated into Islāmic Law if the Qurān in (24:2) had not treated the very same crime in the greatest of detail”.³

If the hadith on stoning be critically observed some points are noteworthy. One was of the lady who herself came to the Prophet and asked him for the punishment. "Prophet several times turned his face from the woman, so that she could go away. Then finally, he asked the woman to come

¹ 2: 178-79;17:33

² 5:32

³ http://i-epistemology.net/attachments/635_V16N1%20Spring%2099%20-%20Hofmann%20-%20On%20the%20Development%20of%20Islamic%20Jurisprudenc, 22-3-2010s

after the delivery, as she was pregnant. And when she came after delivery, then once again the Prophet asked her to come after the baby stops sucking. At the last stage when the woman herself was determined for the 'rajm' then prophet ordered it. The second instance was of a male. With him too the Prophet applied the same principle, and repeatedly tried that he (the accused) must withdraw his confession. What is most remarkable is the fact that when that fellow was being stoned, he was unable to bear the pain and he asked the people that he wants to withdraw his confession, and requested them to take him to Prophet(pbuh) .But the people did not agree and stoned him to death. When this incident was narrated to Prophet, he became furious and blasted the people as to why they did not bring him (the accused) to him (Prophet), once he (the accused) was withdrawing the confession. What is clear from these instances is the glaring reality that in the case of fornication or adultery one cannot be punished through the stoning to death unless one oneself is determined to undergo the ordeal of that punishment. And secondly, even if during the process of being stoned the applied only in case of the habitual offenders who are not giving up their habit after repeated accused withdraws the confession, he is not to be stoned further."¹

In Bukhari, there is another Hadith that, there was doubt whether the incident of stoning to death was before the revelation of surah Nur or not. Narrated Ash Shaibani ,I asked 'Abdullah bin Abi Aufa, "Did Allāh's Apostle carry out the Rajam penalty (i.e., stoning to death)?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Before the revelation of Surat-ar-Nur or after it?" He replied, "I don't know." Al-Bukhari, Hadiths 8 - 804 and 8- 824.

It is important to note that one of the fundamental rule in Islamic Law is that if the proof is not that clear then that doubt will encourage forgiveness but not for punishment. There is also sayings of the Prophet which are relevant in this regard.

¹ Sherwani, Mustafa Kamal, *Quran and Modern Jurisprudence*,(Lucknow: New Royal Book Company Lucknow, India, 2004) pp390-93

“Keep Muslims away from punishment as much as possible. If there is a way to escape the punishment for a person then let him free. Because it is better for the ruler to forgive a criminal by mistake than to punish an innocent by mistake.” “Avoid punishment as much as you can if there is a way or option to do so.”¹

“Moreover, Prophet (pbuh) usually used to say that 'keep your sins away from me' meaning that they must not be disclosed. Another remarkable incident is that one day a woman came to Hazrat Abu Huraira, saying that she has committed fornication several times. Abu Huraira scolded her, and the other day narrated the story to Prophet (pbuh) The Prophet became furious over Abu Huraira and told him (Abu Huraira) that 'search out the woman and narrate these verses (relating to forgiveness) of Quran to her. The Prophet (pbuh) did not ask Abu Huraira 'search out that woman so that she may be stoned to death.’”²

Some questions may arise from the above discussion. If the death penalty for murder is escapable according to Qurān, then how far it is justified to give death sentence for adultery according to Hadith? Does not the Qurān declare the punishment for adultery in lucid, unequivocal and emphatic expression? If we accept the Hadith, it clearly weakens or even contradicts the punishment explicitly mentioned in the Holy Qurān. How far is the confession valid to establish a serious crime? What is the reliability and credibility of a confessional statement in the court of law as evidence? The mental capacity and competency of the person who confesses is of paramount importance, as is the exclusion of any psychiatric illness.

¹ Mowdudi Syed Abul Ala, *Tafheemul Quran*, 9th vol, Ibn Majah, Hadith, Trans. Mawlana Abdul Mannan Talib (Dhaka: Adhunik press, 25 Shisish Das lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka 1100, 2005) p 91

² Sherwani, Mustafa Kamal, *Quran and Modern Jurisprudence*, (Lucknow: New Royal Book Company Lucknow, India, 2004) pp390-93

To hypothesize, if a woman is raped/assaulted, she may erroneously confess to be partially responsible for the crime either due to post-traumatic psychological instability, extreme guilt, self-blame and even coercion, depending on psychosocial pre-conditioning of personality, local social expectations and socio-cultural norms (eg infamous and internationally condemned 'hudood law' in Pakistan). Such a victim may either attempt suicide or ask for capital punishment to terminate her life (death wish) as a distorted/escapist form of rationalization, and a maladaptive/mal coping psychological defence mechanism to escape personal and social dishonor (note- 'honour killings' in some societies). Additional contributing factors are fear of social ostracism and alienation, and a sense of derealisation, depersonalization and nihilism.

It is often considerably challenging to prove a rape case, such as identification of perpetrator(s), and the process of investigation (particularly in many developing societies) is degrading, intimidating and traumatic for the victim as well as her family. This may certainly contribute to additional psychological impairment, particularly if supportive strategies are lacking, and the relevant society rejects the victim and perceives them as colluding in the crime.

Modern Medical Science, particularly Forensic Psychiatry, refers in detail to the relationships between mental illness and the criminal justice system in developed countries of the world. People affected by mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, delusional disorder, major psychotic depression and substance misuse disorder often experience hallucinations, persecutory ideations, thought disorders, incongruent mood, affect, behaviour and psychomotor abnormality. Psychotic individuals may experience command-type auditory hallucinations instructing that they attempt deliberate harm to themselves or others. Consequently, psychotic patients may confess to crimes that they did not commit, or are expected to exhibit diminished rational capacity and impaired judgment and insight if a crime is

committed. In this context, Forensic Psychiatry deals with the assessment, evaluation, treatment and management of mentally ill offenders, exploring the cognitive capacity for rational judgment, competency and accountability in an individual accused of a particular criminal offence according to the M'Naghten rule.¹

Therefore, 'an accused is not criminally responsible if his or her unlawful act was the product of mental disease or mental effect' – such a decision was handed down in 1954 by Judge David Bazelon in the district of Columbia Court of Appeal. Overall, accused criminals have had reduced punishment or were found not guilty due to psychiatric illness at or during the time the crime was committed.^{2, 3} Psychiatric illnesses causes significant impairment and dysfunction in affected individuals worldwide (as large number of the global population suffers from schizophrenia according to WHO report), and health care for the mentally ill remains highly inadequate, particularly in many developing countries.⁴

A serious matter like death penalty should be from a very clear, unequivocal and authentic source. According to the rule of Islāmic jurisprudence, regarding a specific matter, the Qurān will get priority over a contradictory Hadith. If a Hadith is in contradiction with Qurān, and if

¹ Law Encyclopedia, The M'Naghten rule (Insanity defense) is a test for criminal insanity. Under the M'Naghten rule, a criminal defendant is not guilty by reason of insanity if, at the time of the alleged criminal act, the defendant was so deranged that she did not know the nature or quality of her actions or, if she knew the nature and quality of her actions, she was so deranged that she did not know that what she was doing was wrong.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/mcnaghten-rules>

² Synopsis of Psychiatry, Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Sadock, 8th edition, (Lippicott Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore: 351 west Camden street, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, ISBN 10: 0683303309, Jan 15, 1998) pp 1305, 1315-6;

³ Shorter Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry by Michael Gelder, Richard Mayou, Philip Cowen, 4th edition, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp 898-906,

⁴ Mental health and substance abuse: Facts and figures

Schizophrenia is a severe form of mental illness affecting 7 per thousand of the adult population mostly in the age group 15- 35 years. It is a treatable disorder, treatment being more effective in its initial stages. More than 50% of persons with this disease are not receiving appropriate care and 90% of these are in developing countries.

Schizophrenia http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567_6744.htm

there is no chance of reconciliation, the Hadith needs critical analysis of its chain of narration, texts and time of narration. With sincere honor and full submission to the Prophet (S), the researcher adds that the incidents in Hadith (of 2 cases of stoning to death) are quite specific and cannot be generalized. Surely Allāh knows the best.

Messages are—

Islām does not permit the village Salishh or leaders to give punishment to people including women. Only the court of the state has the power to punish a criminal.

False accusation is forbidden in Islām. So, stop false accusation against women and men.

Fatwa is an opinion of an established Islāmic scholar. Punishing by Fatwa is not allowed, only the Qazi or judge of the court has the power to declare the punishment and state has the authority to implement the law.

False accusation is forbidden in Islām. So, one should not persecute women through false accusation.

According to the Quran, the punishment of adultery cannot take place without presenting four witnesses and the case will be dealt by Islamic court not by the village leaders.

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Future Direction

5.1 Evaluation of existing messages from Islāmic perspective

This work has been done to evaluate and design health messages from Islāmic perspective. Health and health related messages especially designed for women of reproductive age are carefully selected. Number of health messages targeted towards reproductive-age women is many and it is not possible to evaluate all these messages in a single dissertation. This dissertation deals with a small sub-set of all messages targeted towards women of the reproductive age group.

Before analyzing the health messages, a short life cycle of women from birth to reproductive age is described. The purpose of this supportive background information is to better understand and appreciate the problems women face over their life cycle.

The messages on encouragement of breast feeding, exclusive breast feeding for six months, and to feed colostrum immediately after the birth of the baby, were analyzed individually from Islāmic perspective. It is remarkable that there are numerous sayings of Qurān, Hadith and comments and Islāmic literatures on breast feeding. This establishes a direct and practical relationship with breast feeding and Islām that encourages mothers for breast feeding. Breast feeding brings financial savings for poor families and protection of babies from several diseases. The health messages derived through the analysis of Islāmic teachings can be listed below.

Allāh wants all mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Mother's milk is a sign of Allāh. Thus mothers should breastfeed their babies as it helps in a baby's proper development and growth and improves the chance of survival.

The Holy Qurān strongly recommends the mothers to breastfeed their babies for two whole

years. This creates attachment between the mother and the baby which aids in the improvement of physical, psychological development and socialization skills.

Allāh created Colostrum which is highly nutritious for newborns which protects the baby from many illnesses. So, babies should be fed colostrum after birth.

The next health message is- expectant mothers should take plenty of water, vegetable, fruits, and milk for proper nutrition. In relation to this message, it was shown that various types of food are mentioned in the Qurān and Hadith, including milk and water which are created by Allāh for human being i.e. male and female. Prophet (ﷺ) loved some particular fruits, milk and water and every time he ate and drank, he gave thanks to Allāh. Furthermore, he repeatedly described the benefits and completeness of milk in his own way, which is scientifically proved to be true. So, the message and Islāmic teaching has deep connection with the diet of an expectant mother.

The designed messages were:

Our beloved Prophet (ﷺ) said that there is no food or drink more complete than milk. So, expectant mothers should drink plenty of milk for the sake of the baby and the mother.

The Holy Qurān encourages taking varieties of fruits and vegetables. So, it is our responsibility to encourage including fruits and vegetables in the daily meals of expectant mothers and mothers for a balanced diet.

Maryam (A) was one of the best women in the world. Allah provided her with different types of fruits and vegetables.

According to Hadith whatever the husband feeds his wife will be regarded as Sadaqa. So, husbands should be careful about the diet of mothers and expectant mothers.

Nature of violence against women is also addressed in this research. Wife beating and issue of Jawtuk are elucidated under this heading.

For wife beating, it is explained that man and woman have same status as human being, difference in physical and emotional attributes between men and women is a fact and Qurān does not degrade women in this aspect. The Qurān decisively declares that any person can achieve higher status in the eye of Allāh through God consciousness or Taqwa and good deeds [49:13]. This concept negates any other hierarchy in Islām. Verse 34 of Surah An Nisa is critically analyzed as this verse is often used to practice wife beating. This verse is often interpreted in such a way that misconceptions may arise in the mind of a reader. Thus the words of the verse

Qwwamuna, Faddalah, Qaniteen, Darajah, Nush ū z,

D araba, At'a, are examined meticulously in the light of the whole Qurān and the purpose of family life in Islām. The words in the verse like *Qanitāt* and *Ata'a* are often referred as obedience to husband. This opens a way to misinterpret the Qurān against women. Specifically, the word *D araba* (often translated as 'to beat'), has got a number (at least 17) of different meanings and used in the Qurān, in various forms. Again *D araba* comes to the scene after first two steps are unsuccessful as 'to admonish the wife', and to separate the bed. It is concluded that 'to move away' or 'to separate' will be the appropriate use of *D araba* during serious discord between husband and wife as third step. This step is more logical from social and psychological point of view. Women need not only food but also shelter, physical and emotional security. This research found that looking after their emotional requirements is strongly encouraged in Islam in terms of the need for love (30:21). If the third step fails, according to the Qurān (4:35), then the case

should be informed to the guardians who will try for restoring the marriage. In addition, the Qurān in general does not use this word for physical punishment. Eventually, it is shown that wife beating is not allowed at all In Islām. Thus the researcher has arrived in a lucid conclusion which consists of three steps as to admonish first, then to separate the bed and finally if these two steps fail then one of the spouses will move away from the place of discord.

The health related messages were--

Prophet (ﷺ) is the best role model and he never hit a woman. So, husbands should follow his Sunnah and not beat their wives.

Allāh and His Rasul (ﷺ) strongly condemn wife beating. So, how can you beat your wife?

The Qurān strongly recommends for reconciliation within the family. Therefore at the time of discord between husband and wife, one should move away from the place and thus create the way for reconciliation.

The Qurān and Hadith enjoin for building good families. Thus any form of violence and oppression towards your wife is not allowed in Islām.

Family ties in Islām are based on 'love, mercy and compassion'. So/As a result there is no place for violence against women.

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) commanded Muslims not to beat their wives.

Practice of dowry or Jawtuk did not originate from Islām. It exists like a cancer in the lives of a number of women in Bangladesh and a huge number of them in India. Many women are bruised, emotionally harmed and even died due to the practice of Jawtuk. Indeed, it has become a threat for her well-being and life. Islām strongly condemns Jawtuk and the Qurān instructs the paying of Mahr of the bride by the bridegroom. The verses on Mahr were presented and evaluated in this thesis. The researcher shows in conclusion that the practice of Mahr, maintenance of the wife,

participation of the religious scholars, awareness about the existing marital laws and Jawtuk prevention law with application of these laws will help to deal with the situation.

After meticulous discussions a number of messages were deduced based on Islāmic teachings:

Pay Mahr to your wife which is an obligatory duty according to Islām.

Asking for Jawtuk is a great sin in the eye of Allāh. On your marriage day, ask for Allāh's mercy by paying the mahr.

Islāmic teachings consider taking Jawtuk as a crime. Jawtuk is a crime in the Shariah.

Ensure the payment of Mahr as it is the bride's right in Islām.

In Islam circumcision is must for men. Female circumcision was practiced in different cultures, even among Christians, Jews and Muslims, etc. The principal reasons of this practice are- to reduce sexual desire of women and curtail promiscuity, patriarchal view of men and secondary status of women in the society. These are all rejected by Islām. It is found that the Hadith on female circumcision does not have proof value and creates debate among Islamic scholars. It violates the basic human right as it is life threatening and brings lifelong sufferings for women. So, researcher concluded that act like female circumcision which causes women lifelong health hazards and death should be banned. Thus the health messages were-

Islām does not allow any act which is harmful and life threatening for human being. So, female circumcision should not be practiced on young girls and women.

FC is like a crime as it is applied to minor girls which brings them lifelong trauma, severe health consequences and even death.

Patriarchal view, to reduce sexual desire of women and secondary status of women are promoting FC. Islām is against these practices.

5.2 Designing new health and health related messages from Islāmic perspective

One of the main aims of this research is to develop and design new Islāmic health messages, as there are so many problems facing women in current society that do not get enough attention. The topics are carefully selected to address a number of major health concerns of women. Though all the problems women face cannot be addressed in one research dissertation, still an attempt has been made to examine few concerns. This research has developed a number of new messages but it was not possible to test the effectiveness and acceptability of the messages in the real world. Health education specialist should evaluate these new messages to determine their effectiveness. Since the messages are based on Islāmic teachings, it is hoped that these messages will be more effective in improving the health and wellbeing of women in developing countries in the Islāmic world.

It is found that the principal reasons of lower utilization of health care services by women are: lack of quality health care, poverty, lack of knowledge and illiteracy, low status of women, etc. In Bangladesh the low rate of visit for antenatal care and post natal care affect maternal health and well being. 90% of women in deprived group go to traditional birth attendants or for home delivery with or without the assistance of skilled personnel. The lack of skilled help at delivery often leads to life threatening conditions for women. So, higher maternal mortality rate is not only due to lack of medical treatment but also due to social conditions, illiteracy, low awareness,

poverty, powerlessness in decision making, low status of women, superstition, etc. It was found that in some cases superstitions are derived or justified through misinterpretation of Islām. This research has found that seeking medical treatment is encouraged in the Qurān and Sunnah. Famous scholars like Al- Ghazali, Ad Dhahabi, Al Izz Ibn Abd as Salam all opined that medical science would flourish as it was essential for human life.

The researcher analyzed the health status of women at medieval times. It can be concluded that women had good access to healthcare in Islāmic societies to deal with pregnancy and other reproductive health concerns. This information is an example and encouragement for developing countries for improvement of maternal health. It is indeed a great tragedy and injustice that in current societies women remain illiterate and devoid of significant life cycle related knowledge even though Islām considers seeking knowledge as a compulsory duty of all Muslims. Related to this burning issue, new messages were created which are logical and applicable. At the same time these messages will also restore the conscience and accountability of medical professionals and Muslims. Thus the analysis of historical aspects of health care helped in the development of the messages below-

Muslim medical doctors handled effectively obstructed labor in the 10th century. Why do we see so many maternal deaths from obstructed labor in the Muslim world?

The world is moving forward rapidly but are we, the Muslims, moving backward? Otherwise, how can we explain so many maternal deaths from obstructed labor in the 21st century while it was handled effectively by Muslim physicians more than a thousand years back?

Muslims should redouble their efforts in acquiring knowledge and skills; Islām encourages research and development in health, wellbeing and illness. Can we be good Muslims if we

ignore an important tenant of Islām?

Islām encourages all efforts for gaining knowledge. Then what prevents Muslims from doing research in health and hygiene and to adopt technology? Otherwise, ignorance will keep the society dependent on others in the contemporary world.

Social welfare and development is strongly recommended by the Qurān. Accordingly the Muslims and the Muslim health professionals should come forward to work together for women's health. Improving maternal mortality and morbidity should be considered as a duty of medical professionals in Islām.

Muslim professionals could handle obstructed labor in the 10th century. How does the same cause of maternal death exist in the developing Muslim countries in the 21st?

Why is that so many Muslim women in developing countries today die from obstructed labor while it was handled effectively by Muslim professionals more than a thousand years back?.

Islām encourages Muslims to do research in science and technology; including medical sciences. Why are we lagging behind today?

Social welfare and development is strongly recommended by the Qurān. Accordingly the Muslims and the Muslim health professionals should come forward to work together for women's health.

Allah condemned the practice of female infanticide in the age of ignorance. By remaining ignorant about the danger signs of maternal complications and mortality, are we not committing sin in the eye of Allah?

From this study, it can also be concluded that Allah portrays pregnancy and motherhood in an

appealing way in large number of verses of the Holy Quran. The growth of an embryo is depicted in the Qurān as an amazing event and placed as a proof of the Day of Judgment and as an example of Allāh's power of creation. By deeply analyzing relevant verses (e.g. in Surah Maryam,) it was found that the Quran sheds light in the area of emotional well-being during pregnancy, which is neglected in most developing countries. The health messages related to this issue were:

Pregnancy of a woman and development of fetus are cited in the Qurān as evidences of existence of Allāh. Shouldn't we be learning more about pregnancy and healthy development of the fetus?

Allāh speaks about mother's diet in the Qurān. Mothers and expectant mothers should be given proper diet during this time for improved maternal health.

Pregnancy of a woman is cited in the Qurān as an evidence of existence of Allāh. Does it not encourage Muslims and Muslim professionals to learn about Allāh, embryology and obstetrics?

The Qurān asks to give emotional support to expectant mothers. So, mothers should be given proper health care as well as emotional support from family, health experts and society in general.

Maslaha (public interest) is an important way for building a better society. So, Muslims should fight against illiteracy and poor healthcare so as to attain better maternal and fetus health.

A number of verses were highlighted to emphasize on the importance of status of mother in Islām. The Holy Qurān at the same time enjoins for acquiring knowledge and education without which a person or nation will not be aware of maternal health and mother's status. Proper medical care and access to medical care are needed also to attain the purpose. To signify the status of mothers, a list of "immortal" mothers from the Qurān is also placed to reinforce the fact. A mother's social status in Islām is so high that the Qurān discusses about mothers in unforgettable language with vivid illustrations. The human baby is fully dependent on the mother for his or her first food, i.e breast milk which is highly nutritious and essential for baby's growth and development. Even bondage with mother helps the baby for its mental and social development. A number of Hadith is also cited to show the stress on human health which includes maternal health and to elevate her status. According to Hadith, mothers deserve care from their children three times more than the father. The researcher then concluded that the high status of mother also deserves for high quality maternal health care and support for her physical and mental health and well being.

Accordingly the new health messages were-

The Holy Qurān portrays expectant mothers and motherhood with reverence and to create cognizance among Muslims about the obligations towards them. Is this not enough for the Muslim community and the professionals to improve maternal health?

Mother has a high position in Islām. Does it mean only to show verbal honor and doing nothing for her health and well being?

Mother has an honorable position in Islām. Save the mothers. Take preventive and curative measure for them during pregnancy and childbirth to reduce mortality.

Establish human rights and women's right in Islām to achieve the right of 'safe motherhood'.

The Qurān declares that to save a person's life is like saving a nation. So, take good care of mothers to reduce maternal deaths and save many nations.

One will be rewarded by Allāh if one saves a life. So, save the lives of mothers and babies by seeking knowledge about maternal health.

The Holy Qurān portrays expectant mothers and motherhood with reverence to create cognizance among Muslims about the obligations towards them. Can we be good Muslims if we ignore the aspects that Allāh has given such a high priority?

Safe motherhood is a fundamental right of a mother. In Islām mother is the most honorable person in the society but in current Muslim societies mother's wellbeing is not even considered as secondary. Are we not then violating one of the basic tenants of Islām?

Rasulullah (ﷺ) said that paradise lies at the feet of your mother. Muslims and Muslim professionals should work hard for safe motherhood program.

The holy Quran declares "Reverence the womb that bore you". This verse makes obligatory for Muslims to honor and to take care of mothers in every aspect.

Holy Qurān and Hadith ask all Muslims, men and women, to seek knowledge and education. If we follow this order from Allāh, women should get educated and women's education will help to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

Women's education will help to reduce maternal mortality. Holy Qurān and Hadith enjoin all Muslims to seek knowledge and education.

According to Hadith, knowledge is the lost property of Muslims. Hence, know the danger signs of maternal complications for the sake of Islām and ensure health care for women to reduce maternal mortality.

Allah bestowed Maryam (A) with mercy, food and emotional support during the birth of Isa (A). So, Muslims should care for women's health during pregnancy, childbirth and after.

Maryam (A) was sacrificed by her mother for the sake of Allah. She was well accepted by Allāh and He Himself took the responsibility to raise her and of her nutrition at different stages of her life. This certainly teaches Muslims to take care of their women relatives.

Allah sent Angels to speak to Maryam (A) immediately after the birth of Isa (A) and thus He lessened her emotional distress. Hence, Muslims should take care of women's mental health.

The Holy Qurān invalidates the taboo on nutritious foods of mothers. Thus expected mothers and new mothers should be provided by plenty of food and drink for their extra calorie requirements.

Maryam (A) was given sustenance by Allah during her reproductive age which is the preparation time for future pregnancy. So, it is extremely important for the parents to give their daughters nutritious food during her growing age.

It was found that son preference and sex selective abortion are due to gender discrimination, dowry related problem, preference for sons as the earning member and old-age security of the parents, directly and indirectly cultural and religious beliefs, etc. Improved status of women,

especially through access to education, decision making, wealth, etc are to be considered from the policy perspective. Pre-Islāmic Arab society practiced female infanticide. It is deplorable but true that technological development allows people of today to detect the sex of fetus and can decide for sex selective abortions. Here the victim is once again a female i.e female fetus. The researcher shows that the Holy Qurān announces female baby as a glad tiding, a sign of good fortune. This same Arabic word for 'glad tiding' has been used in other places of the Qurān to denote glad tiding for paradise, for believers, Prophet's (ﷺ) characteristics and responsibility, wind before rain, etc. Accordingly, these verses are evidence for the honorable status of female infants in the society. They are not to be buried alive but blessed by Allāh. Again the Holy Qurān addressed people morally and economically in this issue. Lack of knowledge and inconsideration of people towards females are addressed and clarified. Thus verses on moral approach, economic approach, and misconception of people over this issue were critically explored in this thesis. Examples from female persons, who were admired by the Qurān for their strong belief and submission to Allāh, wisdom, leadership quality, social and political role, correct decision making, and patience, are extremely evaluated by the Holy Qurān. Prominent women in Prophet's (ﷺ) time and later were also discussed to show how they contributed to the society by their talents. At that time there were female business women, teachers, contributors for collecting the Qurān, Islāmic jurists, Hadith experts, Hadith narrators, market inspectors, and advisors to rulers, etc. These paradigms promptly elevate the position of women. It can be concluded by saying that appropriate interpretation of a woman's value in Islām may play a strong role to deal with the problem of son preference and selective abortion. The new Islamic health messages developed in this section were:

The Qurān declares a female infant as a glad tiding from Allāh for the parents.

Female infanticide or feticide is strongly condemned in Islam as the Quran says, "On that day (Day of Judgment) she will be asked for what crime she was killed?"

Female feticide is like murder. The Holy Quran declares them as losers who commit this sin.

Prophet (S) said that a person who reared a female child properly will be with him in paradise.

The Quran says it is a great sin to kill a child for the fear of want.

Women are precious creations like men. Allah says that it is wrong to think that they are reared only for wearing ornament.

Male female both are created by Allāh and essential components of the society. So, female feticide is surely a crime and brings disarray and imbalance in the society.

Maryam (A) was sacrificed to Allah by her mother while she was a fetus in her womb. Allah accepted her with satisfaction and said that 'He made her grow in purity and beauty' and made Maryam (A) the mother of miracle child Isa (A). Does not then female feticide mean you are killing future mothers?

The message -'Stop violence against women' is analyzed in the light of Islām. Basic six underlying reasons of violence, wife beating, other forms of domestic violence, Jawtuk are discussed in the light of the Qurān. In reality, misinterpretation of the Qurānic verses and Hadith are also contributing to increasing or condoning violence. These were critically examined and a lucid interpretation in the light of the Qurān was presented. Thus a number of verses and Hadith were presented to show that the reasons are either created by society or adopted in by misinterpretation of Islām. Therefore, it can be concluded that if man-woman relationship,

proper role of women, the Islamic rights of women are well explained, violence free home and society can be established. Hence, the health and health related messages are designed to give importance on women's status, her attributes, and men's role in the society, promoting women's decision making power, prevent misconception about women and her rights etc.

The new designed messages on above issues were-

According to the Quran, man and woman are the vicegerents of Allāh and protectors of one another. So, unequal authority is created by the society and culture.

Basic duties are same for men and women as the vicegerents of Allāh. Hence dissimilarity in acts and responsibilities among men-women in different/ other spheres does not mean the higher authority and status of men.

Allāh created men and women in the best of moulds without showing any preference for any specific gender. The stronger physical structure of men does not mean a higher position in the society.

Man's strong physical structure is bestowed by Allāh and in His judgment human beings can achieve higher position only through Taqwa. Accordingly, man should use this strength for establishing good and to root out evil, to protect his wife and family; not to abuse or deprive her.

Money and wealth are blessings and trial from Allāh. One should not claim higher status because of it. All human beings are equal in Allah's judgment and material things cannot be the basis for claiming higher "status" in Islām.

According to Islām, money and wealth are for proper use and for improving well-being of the humanity. Therefore, better earning capacity bestowed on men by Allāh should not be used to oppress their wives. Allāh has given specific instruction on how to use the money

and how important it is to use the money for proper maintenance of the family.

Allāh made obligatory for a man to maintain his family. This is simply defining the social roles of gender in general. It is neither an indication of superiority of men nor does it imply granting permission to use oppressive practices by men. The Qur'ān has stated very clearly in many places that "status" in Islām is defined not by any material wealth or income but by *Taqwa* (God consciousness).

Stop the financial deprivation of women. Women should be given their financial rights as prescribed in the Qurān. Thus she will attain her freedom to control her own wealth. Islām ensures women's financial rights. Men and women of the society should be educated on rights and responsibilities toward the family and the society to help reduce deprivation of women.

Empowerment of women is essential for the development of the society and it is in harmony with the teachings of Islam.

Empowerment of women is essential for the development of a society. Islam encourages empowerment of women.

Taking care of wife is a rewarding act in the eye of Allah. Therefore, husbands should stop gender disparity inside the home.

There is no teaching of misogyny in the Qurān and Hadith which some people have used as a tool to abuse women. If the Quranic verses and Hadith on women are carefully interpreted it becomes clear that Islām is completely impartial on gender issues.

The Qurānic verses and Hadith on women need unbiased explanation by learned scholars to eliminate misconception and superstition about Islām and women's status. The correct interpretation of Qurān and Hadith will ensure women's advancement.

It is found that women are often victims of violence due to the misuse and misinterpretation of divorce, Hila, polygamy, misapplication of Fatwa, etc. There is no place for Hila marriage in Islām. The Qurānic verses on Talaq are carefully cited, examined and obviously shows the invalidity of three Talaq at a time. Consequently there is no place for violence, force or misbehavior during Talaq or divorce. The Holy Qurān also preserves the wife's right of maintenance throughout the waiting period and staying at her husband's place for the period of the divorce process. The existing Bangladeshi law on divorce is supportive to above facts. The designed messages were-

The Holy Qurān bids to give one Talaq at a time with proper intervals.

Talaq is not a weapon against the wife for a man in Islām. So, oppression, hostility and depriving the wife from her basic rights are outlawed by the Qurān and Hadith.

The process of Talaq should be as prescribed by the Qurān. So that it may open the way for reconciliation for the husband and wife to save the family again or a peaceful complete separation.

If you want to divorce your wife

Count the days of Iddat carefully

That will give you the time to reflect

if you really don't want her anymore.

Being remorseful later will not help,

it will make you miserable, in this world and hereafter.

Remember that dealing with women is not a child's play

**that you will throw the "divorce" weapon
whenever you want.**

**Do you know that
there is no provision of "hila" marriage
In Hadith and Qurān?**

As mentioned before, abuse of polygamy is another way of harming women's health. The main verse on this in Surah Nisa was cited and critically analyzed. It can be concluded that there are at least three matters in the quoted verse which are extremely significant- orphan, justice, and justice towards wife. These are all interrelated in the verse which makes it highly multifarious and complex. Hence occasions of revelation with different scholars' opinions were also mentioned. In fact, righteousness or justice is the fundamental essence of Islām which is beyond compromise. Verses on justice, orphan's right from other places of the Qurān were also quoted and analyzed to show the seriousness of the issue of marrying more than one wife. It is also learnt from the Qurān that polygamy is constrained by strict conditions that are hard to fulfill in this age. It is concluded that this verse focuses on justice and fair treatment towards the wives. The new messages to prevent misuse of polygamy were as follows-

**Justice and impartiality towards wives are essential/indispensable for practicing polygamy.
This is why Islām encourages monogamy.**

Islām encourages monogamy because absolute impartial and just treatment of all the wives, as required by Islām in case of polygamous relationship, is extremely difficult to

satisfy.

Muslims should give priority towards justice not their whims and desires. It will make them realize the grave responsibility and possible bitterness of polygamy and the practicability of monogamy.

The word Fatwa has been misunderstood by Muslims and non Muslims. It is nonbinding legal opinion of Islāmic scholars or Mufti. Sometimes men and women are punished by village Salish in the name of Fatwa. But one cannot take law in one's hand by the name of Fatwa. So, Fatwa was elucidated in this research. In addition, stoning to death penalty for adultery was critically examined and concluded from the research that it cannot be generalized as there is specific punishment of flogging declared by the Qurān in unequivocal language. Furthermore, flogging is to be carried out after fulfilling the strict condition of presenting four witnesses. Some exclusive situation may arise regarding adultery as for example, whether it is by force or the accused person is psychologically ill. Those were highlighted and the researcher In conclusion suggests giving priority to the Holy Qurān in this event.

The messages were-

Islām does not permit the village Salish or leaders to give punishment to people including women. Only the court of the state has the power to punish a criminal.

False accusation is forbidden in Islām. So, stop false accusation against women and men.

Fatwa is an opinion of an established Islāmic scholar. Punishing by Fatwa is not allowed, only the Qazi or judge of the court has the power to declare the punishment and state has the authority to implement the law.

False accusation is forbidden in Islām. So, one should not persecute women through false accusation.

According to the Quran, the punishment of adultery cannot take place without presenting four witnesses and the case will be dealt by Islamic court not by the village leaders.

5.3 Key findings

The key finding of this research is that it is possible *to tie* the health and health related issues of women in light of Qurān and Sunnah. For this purpose, issues like wife beating, maternal health, pregnancy, child birth are highlighted by the researcher from this different angle. The verses from Quran and evidences from the Sunnah are cited to analyze these issues. Furthermore, some important words of the Quran are clarified to promote violence free and healthy environment for women of reproductive age. Some other verses are cited to give encouragement to Muslims to create excellent health facilities and provide good access for women to quality health care, which is their God-given right. Women's mental health is often ignored but the researcher highlighted relevant verses of the Quran to support and care for women's mental health.

Lucid opinions are deduced and practical and logical health and health related messages are placed.

5.4 Future direction

The health messages presented in this thesis can be propagated from Islamic perspective, on TV, radio, bill boards, in books, etc with appropriate pictures which are shown in page no 214-218

Small rhymes with subjects like maternal health, divorce, Mahr, maintenance of wife, polygamy,

domestic violence, can be sung and tuned in popular folk songs. This will create awareness amongst the general public and educate them about these subjects. Sincere efforts in this future direction can change negative attitudes towards females.

Also these messages can be included in women's education and in health education in general.

The findings from this study can be integrated into programs for poverty alleviation like interest free micro credit initiatives.

Charity, Zakat should be properly collected and used and the system of Waqf, should be encouraged by affluent people of the society. During 9-10th century, the Muslim world had hospitals which were independent of patient's fees. Muslim professionals served the humanity regardless of color, race, and sex for the love of Allah and hope for reward on the Day of Judgment that leads a society towards development.

It is also envisaged that a future direction based on this study is the promotion for a more balanced interpretation of the teachings of Islam

Future directions include more research and training in women's health relative issues from an Islamic perspective. For example more emphasis can be given by the government to train traditional birth attendants in rural areas.

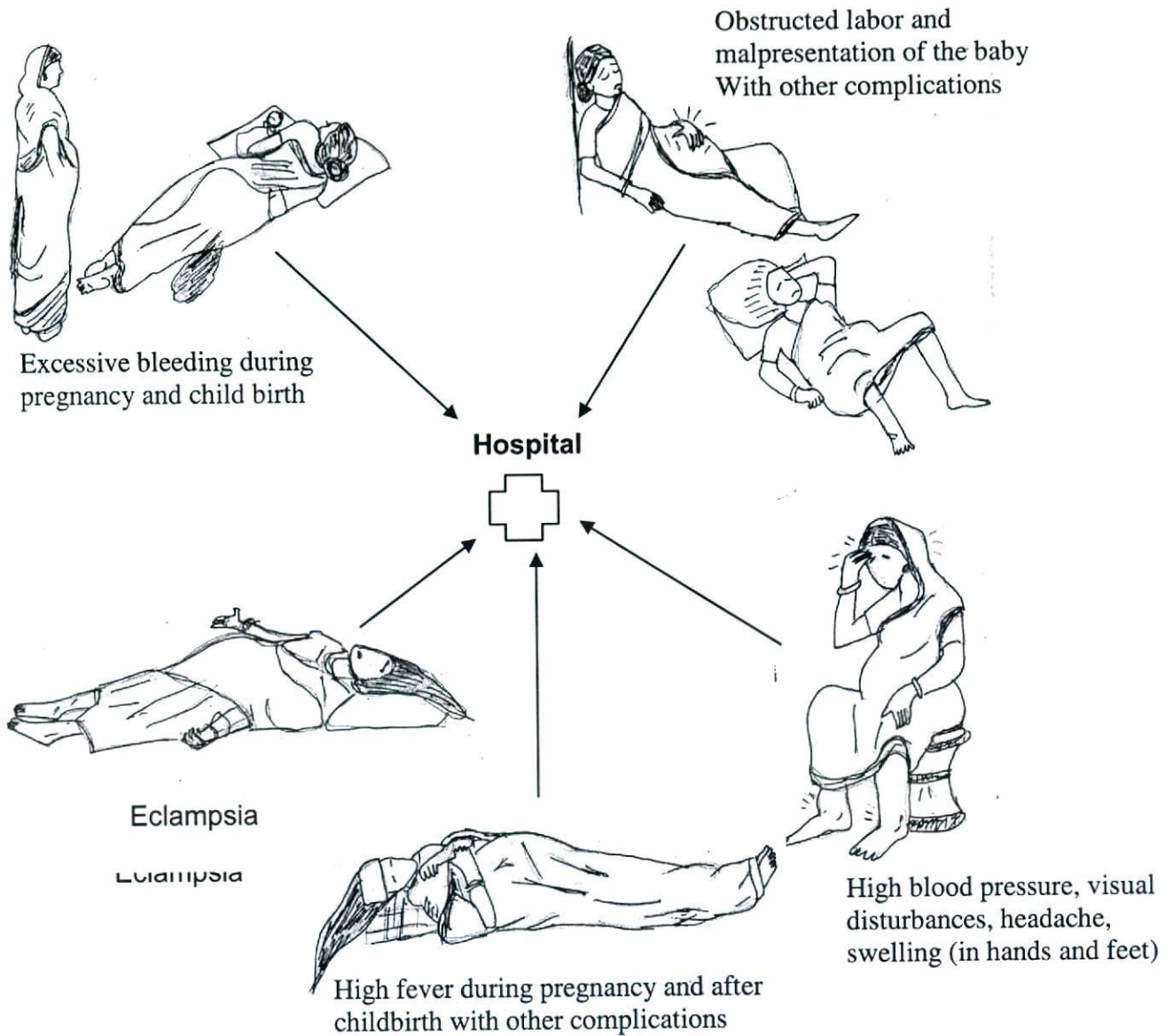
Finally, a key future direction is to review the implications of relevant laws related to violence against women e.g. Jawtuk or dowry, wife beating, illegal polygamy, rape, acid throwing, trafficking of women.

At the same time involvement of the religious leaders to act as advocates in bringing behavior change of people in their communities. This will help to create a supportive environment for improving women's reproductive health, maternal health, family welfare and gender related

concern

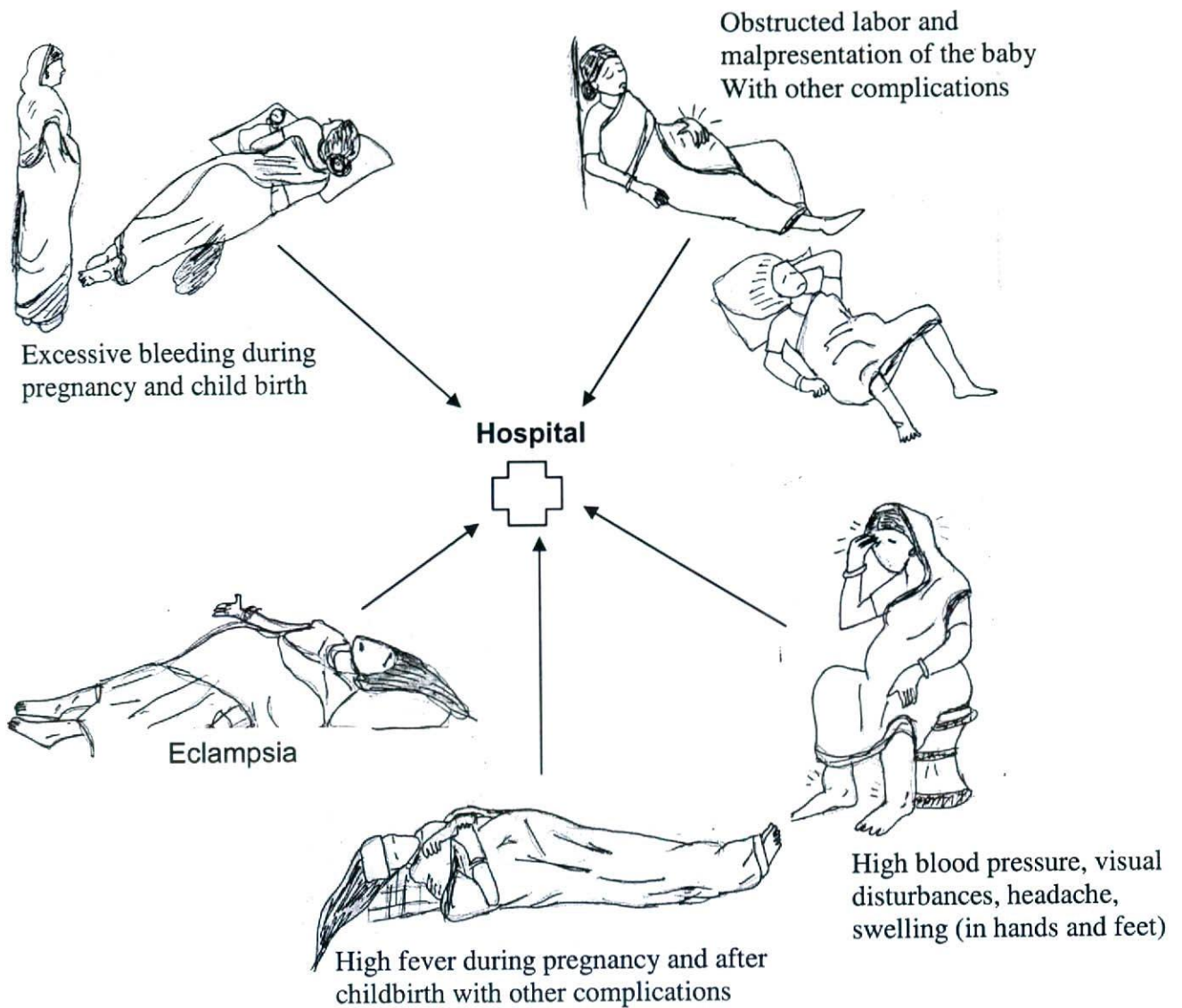
Hence the issue of maternal health is very important in Islām (4:1), but we have neglected it for too long. Based on the findings and practical inferences in this thesis it is hoped that people will be aware of women's reproductive health, family welfare and gender related issues of them and condition of women in Muslim countries will improve.

Life-threatening maternal complications



The Qurān declares that 'to save a person's life as if to save a nation'. So, take good care of mother's and know the five danger signs of maternal conditions to reduce maternal deaths.

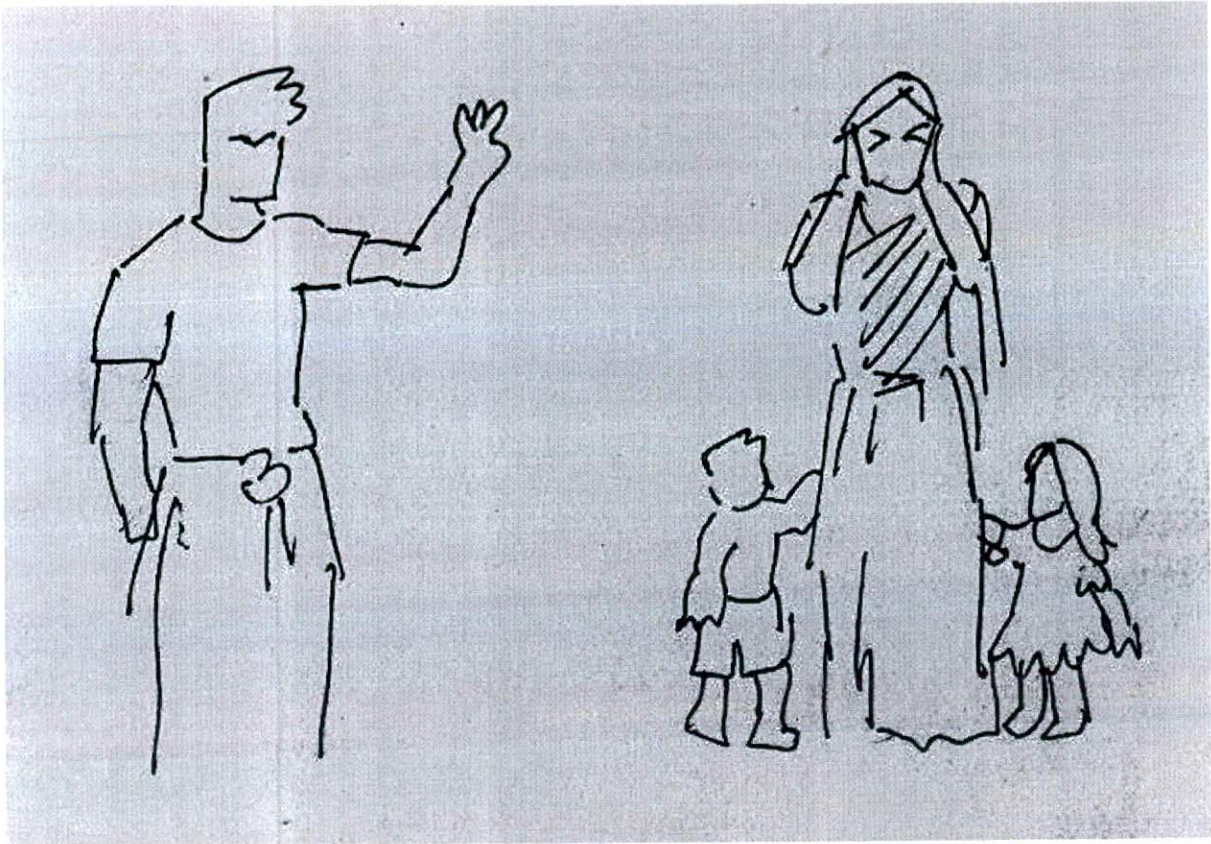
Life-threatening maternal complications



Mother has the highest position in Islām. Save the mothers. Take preventive and curative measure for them during pregnancy and childbirth to reduce maternal mortality.

Establish the human rights and women's right in Islām to achieve the right of 'safe motherhood'.

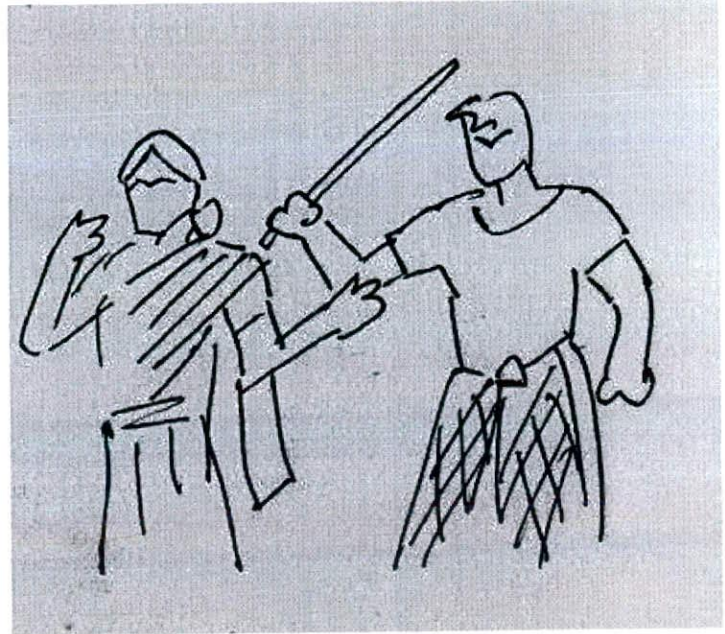
Divorce



The Holy Qurān bids to give one Talaq at a time with proper intervals.

The process of Talaq should be as prescribed by the Qurān. So that it may open the way for reconciliation for the husband and wife to save the family again or a peaceful complete separation.

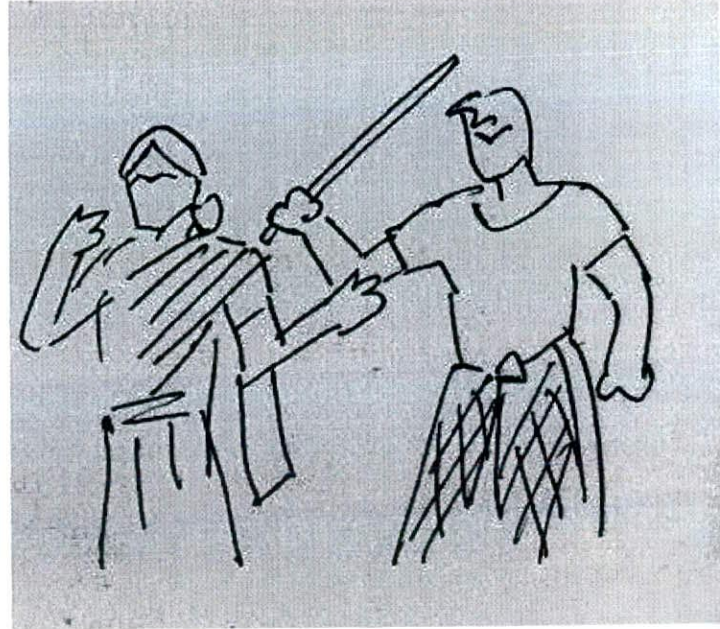
Violence against Women



Prophet (S) is the best role model and he never hit a woman. So, husbands should follow his Sunnah and not beat their wives.

Family tie in Islām is found in 'love, mercy and compassion'. As a result there is no place of violence against women.

Violence against Women



**Allāh and His Rasul (S) strongly condemned wife beating.
So, is wife beating a proper solution for marital discord?**

Prophet Muhammad (S) commanded Muslims for not to beat their wives.

Bibliography

1. Al Badawi Jamal, Islāmic Teachings Course, Volume 3 (Halifax :Islāmic Information Foundation, 8 Laurel Lane Halifx, N. S Canada,1997) p 54-55.
2. Al Kurānul Karim, Bengali Tranalation of Qurān, ,(Dhaka :Islāmic Foundation Printing Press, Baitul Mukarram, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Nov, 1986)
3. Al Qaradawi Dr. Yusuf, The Lawful and Prohibited in Islām, (Egypt : El-FAlah,24 El-Tairan St, Nasr City,Cairo, Egypt,1997) pg 263
4. Al-Asqalani, Fath al Bari, Al Bukhari, 1988, vol.10:111; Hakim Al-Mustadrak, (1342 AH, vol 4:199) 65:3
5. Al-Asqalani, Fath al Bari..Al Bukhari, 1988, vol.10:110
6. Al-Asqalani, Fath al Bari..Al Bukhari, 1988, vol.10:110; Sunan Abi Dawud, 1973vol 4:207]
7. Albar Dr. Mohammad Ali, Contemporary topic in Islāmic Medicine, (Jeddah : Saudi Publishing House, Jeddah, 1995), pg 111.
8. Ali,Abdullah Yusuf ,The Holy Quran , Text, Translation, and Commentary, (Maryland:Amana Publication Brentwood, Maryland, USA 1989), p 822
9. Ali,Abdullah Yusuf ,The Holy Quran , Text, Translation, and Commentary,(Middlesex: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 409 Northolt road, South Harrow Middlesex, HA2 8JQ UK1989) p876
10. Amar Desh of 17th December, Sunday, 2006, source Reuters
11. Anwar al-Jindi, Al Islām wa Harakat at-Tarikh, 1980:43, in pg 81, Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001
12. Asad, Muḥammād, The Message of the Qurān, note 14(Gibraltar: Dar Al Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) p 629
13. Bhuiy Abbas, Sharmin Tamanna, Hanif S.M.A, Nature of domestic violence against women in a rural area of Bangladesh: Implication of preventive interventions, Social and Behavioral Science Unit, (Dhaka: ICDDR,B, Centre for Health and Population Research, GPO box 1000, 2003)
14. Bisho Poristhiti , arthaniti o Islām Bishoiok bisleshon, Hannan, Shah Abdul,(Dhaka:Book Master,86/2 Purana paltan Lane, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh,2006) p41;
15. Choe, Minja Kim, Steele, Fiona Alison, Kim, Seung Kwon; Son Preference, Family Building and Child Mortality in Too Young to Die: Genes or Gender,(New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division, United Nations ,New York, 1998)
16. Comprehensive Text Book of Psychiatry, Edit. Kaplan, Harold I. MD, Sadock, Benjamin J. 6th edition ,volume 2,(Baltimore, William and Wilkins, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, 1995)
17. Deborah Maine and Therese McGinn,; Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, chap 31,Women and Health, edit. Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Deigo, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000),(Academic press, USA, 2000)
18. Department of Family Planning, Government of Bangladesh Information on Family Planning, Reproductive

19. Department of Family Planning, Government of Bangladesh, Information on Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Gender, (Dhaka: IEM Unit, Azimpur, Dhaka, 2004) p 48
20. Family Planning Bureau, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNFPA Bishsho Jonoshankha Dibosh Upolokhe Bishesh Sancelon, (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2005), p 30.
21. Gelder Michael, Mayou Richard, Philip Cowen; Shorter Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry, 4th edition, (Oxford University Press,)
22. Gender, Politics and Islām,(paper)Contesting the Illicit:Gender and Politics of Fatwas in Bangladesh, By Elora Shehabuddin pg 201-2, published by The University of Chicago Press USA, 2002
23. Hannan, Shah Abdul, Bisho Poristhiti, arthaniti o Islām Bishoiok bisleshon, (Dhaka:Book Master,86/2 Purana paltan Lane, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh,2006) p41
24. Heise Lori ,The Violence against women: the Missing Agenda in The Health of Women A Global Perspective, Koblinsky Marge, Timyan Judith and Jill Gay ((Boulder: West view Press, 5500 Central Avenue, Boulder, Colorado 80301-2877, USA, 1993) pp 174-75
25. Ibrahim BB Syed PhD, "Islamic Medicine:1000 years ahead of its Times", Journal of the International Society for the History of IslamicMedicine, 2002(2); 2-9 ,7-09
26. IEM unit, Gender, Women Empowerment and Development, (Dhaka: Dept of Family Planning, Azimpur; Dhaka, UNFPA, Nov. 2005)
27. Islamic Culture and the Medical Arts, The Art as a Profession, US National Library of Medicine, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/islamic_medical/islamic_13.html
28. Islamic Science, the Scholar and Ethics 7-6-09
29. Jame-Al Tirmidhi, Vol 2, Section 21,Hadith no 665, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Islāmī Centre, Kataban Masjid Centre, Dhaka1000, 1996), pp 60-62
30. Kaplan Harold I. and Sadock ,Benjamin J; Synopsis of Psychiatry, 8th edition, , (Lippicott Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore: 351 west Camden street, Baltimore, Maryland, USA,ISBN 10: 0683303309, Jan 15,1998)
31. Khan,Md. Ferdouse ,The Qurānic verses on Women,(kualalumpur: A.S.Noordeen, p.o box:42-Gombak, 53800 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 2007)p 21
32. Lisa C. Smith, Usha Ramakrishnan, Aida Ndiaye, Lawrence Haddad,& Reynaldo Martorell, , The Importance of Women's Status for Child Nutrition in Developing Countries;(IFPRI 2033 K Street N.W. Washington DC 2006-1002 USA, 2003)
33. Lori Heise, Violence against Women: The Missing Agenda, The Health of Women A Global Perspective, Edit Marge Koblinsky, (Oxford: Westview Press, Sanfrancisco, Oxford. 1993) p 174
34. Lynn P.Freeman and Deborah Maine, Women's Mortality: A Legacy of Neglect, in The Health of Women: A Global Perspective, Edit Marge Koblinsky ,Chap 7, (Westview Press, USA, 1993)
35. Mental health and substance abuse: Facts and figures
36. Michael Gelder, Dennis Gath, Richard Mayou, Concise Oxford Text Book of Psychiatry, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994) p 240-241
37. Miller A. Brenda, Downs R. William: Violence against women, in Women and Health, edit. Marlene B. Goldman and Maureen C. Hatch, (San Deigo, Academic Press, 525 B street, suite 1900, Sandiego, California, 92101-4495, USA, 2000)

38. Moududi Syed Abul Ala, Tafhīmul Qurān, 2nd part,(Dhaka: Adhunik Prakashani, Dhaka1100, Nov, 2004) p 98-99
39. Moududi, Syed Abul Ala, Tafhīmul Qurān, 17th part (Dhaka, Adhunik Prakashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka-1100, Banglaesh, December,2002) p203
40. National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT), ORC Macro International, Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004, Infant Feeding and Nutritional Status of Children and Women,(Dhaka:& Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra and Associates, ORC Macro 2005)
41. National Institute of Population Research and Training(NIPORT),Macro International 2009, Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007, chap 9 , Maternal and Newborn Health,(Dhaka: Bangladesh & Calverton, Maryland, USA, NIPORT, Mitra & Associates &Macro International 2009) Table9.6, p117
42. Peter Barrett (2004), Science and Theology Since Copernicus: The Search for Understanding, p. 18, Continuum International Publishing Group, ISBN 056708969X. 7-09
43. Rokeya Shondhane, Begum Rokeya and women Education, Hasan Nasima, (Dhaka :Witness, Dhanmondi Rd 2, Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 1999) p 83-4
44. Rokeya Shondhane, Begum Rokeya and women Education, Hasan Nasima, , (Dhaka :Witness, Dhanmondi Rd 2, Dhaka, Bangladesh, December 1999) p 83-4;
45. Sahih Bukhari, Bengali translation, 5th volume, trans. Huq Muhammad Mozammel Mawlana et al, ed. Musa Mawlana Muhammad, Huq Muhammad Muzammel (Dhaka :Adhunik Prakashani, 25 Shirishdas Lane, Bangla Bazaar, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh) , pp 262,263,264
46. SahihAl Bukhari,Kitābut Tibb, trans.Mawlana Muhammad Muzammel Huque,Ruhul Amin, Muhammad Musa, AMMuhammad Moslem, Sayed Ahmed, (Dhaka:Adhunik Prakashani, 25,Shirishdas Lane, Banglabazar, Dhaka,1100. Bangladesh, August, 2002
47. Sarwar Ghulam , Islām: Beliefs and Teachings, (London :The Muslim Educational Trust, 130 Stroud green Rd, London N43RZ UK,2000) p120.
48. Sarwar, Ghulam,Islām Beliefs and Teachings, (London: The Muslim Educational Trust130, Stroud Green Road, LononN4 3RZ, UK, 2000) p120
49. Social Science, for class 9-10, (Dhaka:National Curriculum Text Book Board, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2006) p 59
50. Social Science, for class 9-10, (Dhaka: National Curriculum Text Book Board, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2006) p 59
51. Sunan Ibn Majah, 1953, vol. 2:1396
52. Sunan Ibn Majah,1953, Vol.2:1265
53. Sunan Ibn Majah,1953,vol. 2:1387
54. The Hans Wehr Dictionary Of Modern Arabic ed. JM.Cowan, 3rd Edition, (New York: Spoken Language Services, Inc. N.Y 14850, 1976) p 966,
55. Transmitted by Al- Nasaai,6/11;Ibn Majah, 1/278 and Al-Hakim, Qaradawi Yusuf Al ,The Status of Women in Islām, http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09
56. Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK 2001), p 78.

57. Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001), p 78.
58. Yacoub Ahmed Abdel Aziz, *Fiqh of Medicine: Responses in Islāmic Jurisprudence to Developments to Medical Science* (London: Ta-Ha publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2001), p 81
59. [online] <http://www.popline.org/docs/1539/281336.html>, 27-7-09
60. [online] Attachment theory <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O87-attachmenttheory.htm>
61. [online] Attachment theory,: An overview of Attachment theory, Kendra Van Wagner; <http://psychology.about.com/od/loveandattraction/a/attachment01.htm>
62. [online] Female circumcision http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&pagename=Zone-English-HealthScience%2FHSELayout&cid=1157365852965#ixzz0f19PxYTP accessed 9-2-2010
63. [online] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6176340.stm>, Last Updated: Friday, 24 November 2006, 12:09 GMT. , 9-2-2010
64. [online] <http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellit>
65. [online] <http://www.Islām-usa.com/im3.html>, Contribution of Islām to Medicine, Ezzat Abouleish, M.D., Islāmic Medicine, edited by Shahid Athar, M.D, 2006
66. [online] <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/Islām06.html>
67. [online] <http://www.muslimheritage.com/topics/default.cfm?ArticleID=570>, 7-06-09
68. [online] http://www.sfusd.k.12.ca.us/schwww/sch618/Medicine/Medicine_and_Health.html Medieval Medicine, Health and Hygiene, accessed 19-7 04
69. [online] http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Articles/shariah/problem_confronting_the_muslim_world.htm, 30-06-09
70. [online] Krishnan S, Gender, caste, and economic inequalities and marital violence in rural South India Popline Document Number: 281336:, Source citation: Health Care for Women International, 2005;26:87-99
71. [online] Muslim, Book of virtues, no4296, http://www.iiu.edu.my/deed/hadith/muslim/032_smt.html
72. [online] OxfordMedicalSchoolGazette, <http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/gazette/previousissues/54vol1/Part5>; [www.history for kids.org/learn/Islām/science/medicine/index.htm](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/Islām/science/medicine/index.htm) date 22-2-08
73. [online] Qaradawi Yusuf Al, The Status of Women in Islām , http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Books/Q_WI/default.htm accessed 20-5-09
74. [online] Schizophrenia http://www.searo.who.int/en/section1174/section1199/section1567_6744.htm, 24-01-2010