

Chapter 15: Difficult Deliveries

Pregnancy generally lasts for nine months and ten days. The pregnancy period is very sensitive and full of risks because it has a bearing on the future of the growing foetus. The child in the period spends its life within that enclosure over which it has no control and can be exposed to several physical and psychological dangers.

The child will not have capabilities of himself confronting and contending with these risks. After completing the nine months in the womb successfully it has to pass through another risky phase which is delivery. The process of delivery is not easy and simple but it is very sensitive and difficult.

The child grows to a size in the nine months that particularly its head at this stage is much larger than other parts of the body that its delivery from the narrow passage of the womb becomes very difficult. The possibility during delivery is always there that the child's bones get crushed or twisted. There can also be the likelihood of the brain getting damaged due to the pressure during parturition.

One expert writes:

“The process of delivery can possibly cause psychological defects in the child. Psychiatrists are of opinion that the process of delivery of a child will have a significant bearing on its entire life. In their view delivery is a revolutionary change in the environment and life of the child and deprives it of the security and rest, which it had so far in the foetus. At the time of delivery fear and concern becomes a part of the psyche of the person. The future life of the person is spent imagining unknown thoughts of troubles. The life spent in the foetus was carefree and delivery is the arrival in the travails of the world.¹

Dr. Jalali writes:

When a child arrives in the world, it will be under pressure for a few hours and the most affected will be its head that will be the largest part of the body at birth. If the delivery is not normal then the arrival will be more difficult and besides the risk of the environment, the child has to face the risks of handling with mechanical instruments used during the delivery. In such cases there is chance of infantile mortality. The illnesses like madness and paralysis in children may also be related to difficult deliveries.²

Therefore, delivery of children is not a simple process and requires utmost care and skill to ensure safety of the mother and the child. A little carelessness on the part of the handlers might cause great damage to the mother and the child, sometimes resulting in mortality of either or both. But nowadays the facilities of skilled doctors and specialty medicines are in the access of people and the likelihood of harm to the mother or the child is much reduced.

The pregnant ladies are advised that if they have access to a good gynecologist or a nursing home, they should consult them much ahead of the delivery. They must ascertain from the doctor the expected date of delivery and seek admission to the nursing home ahead of the delivery that they get better care than they can at home.

The main advantage in such cases is that the doctors and nurses are available at the nursing homes and if there is any emergency it can be attended to without much loss of time. If, while staying at home, a pregnant woman faces an emergency, the delay in reaching her to the doctors might result in danger to the mother and the child.

The other valid reason for sending the pregnant woman to the maternity home prior to the delivery is that the same sanitary environment and personalized medical attention cannot be provided at her own home.

Another advantage of going to the maternity home is that the chances of the pregnant lady facing unnecessary and unwarranted interference and opinions of the other women from the family will not be there. Generally such opinions are not educated and they may at times be harmful.

The husband too has a big responsibility during the pregnancy and delivery of his wife. Religiously and morally it is his duty that during this delicate and hazardous time he should provide help and courage to the wife and take all the possible steps to ensure safe delivery of the child.

Carelessness on the part of the husband may even sometimes result in the loss of the mother and the child or they sustain physical and psychological damage. Such heedless husbands will be deemed criminal in the eyes of religion and the society and they will be answerable on the Day of Judgment. They will also suffer the pangs of remorse if for reasons of carelessness or miserliness they avoid providing necessary care to the pregnant wives.

Sometimes, because of the neglect at the required time the husbands have to incur much more expense to salvage the resultant damage. If the families of the pregnant women do not have access to the maternity homes then they should take the services of the competent midwives who have necessary skills and experience of attending to deliveries. In this regard the following precautions must be taken:

1. The temperature of the labor room should be moderate and it should not be too cold. This is important because the pregnant women will be under tremendous pressure and due to the long hours of labor pain they will be indisposed and sweating and there can be likelihood of the babies catching colds and getting exposed to several ailments. If the delivery room becomes colder after the delivery the mother will most

likely catch cold.

The cold wind is very harmful for the new born baby because the environment in the mother's womb will be warmer (having the normal human temperature (37.5 degrees Centigrade) and the room temperature will be much less. The body of the baby at the delivery will not have sufficient strength to adjust to the change. Such babies are likely to fall ill and their treatment is rather difficult. Mortality rate in such babies is rather high.

2. It is necessary to prevent the air in the delivery room from becoming poisonous with the smoke of burning kerosene oil or coal. Breathing such polluted air is dangerous for both mothers and children.

3. It is advisable to maintain privacy in the delivery rooms to the extent possible. Keep unnecessary visitors out of the labor room. Such visitors might cause embarrassment and unease to the pregnant woman and may carry infections when they come from outside. Other women looking at the private parts of a woman is prohibited under Islam. During deliveries the pregnant women will be unable to cover their private parts. Imam Sajjad ordered other women to leave the labor room when a pregnant woman was delivering lest her private parts are exposed to them ³

A responsible pregnant woman should exercise all care during pregnancy and delivery that she delivers a healthy baby to the society that it becomes a useful member of the community. In the view of Allah too it is the best service that a woman can give and will get its reward. One day the Prophet was speaking on the subject of Jihad.

One lady asked, "O, Prophet of Allah Will the women be deprived of the benefits of Jihad?" The Prophet replied that the woman too gets the benefit of the Jihad that the time from the conception to delivery and feeding of the child till its weaning the woman is like the man who is at the battlefield doing Jihad. If that woman dies during this period she would have achieved martyrdom.⁴

1. Biography Pish az tawallud, p. 160

2. Ruwan shinashi kudak, p. 193

3. Wasail al-shia, v 10, p. 119

4. Makarim al-akhlaq, v 1, p. 268

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