

## Customs and Desirable after Childbirth, in Islam

Gholamreza Khademi<sup>1</sup>, Maryam Ajilian Abbasi<sup>2</sup>, Abbas Bahreini<sup>3</sup>, \*Masumeh Saeidi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn-e-Sina Hospital, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran.

<sup>3</sup> Students Research Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Shiraz University of Medical Sciences, Shiraz, Iran.

<sup>4</sup> Students Research Committee, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran.

### **Abstract**

Children are a precious gift from God, and the blessing of a child is a special time in a person's life. All cultures and religious traditions have certain ways of welcoming a newborn child into the community; also, each culture and religion has its own customs and traditions for the birth of a child. During and after the birth of a Muslim child, there are certain rituals the mother and father must perform. Some of these traditions are culturally inspired, and others are performed according to passages in the Noble Quran that detail the appropriate actions after childbirth.

We explain some of these customs which include: Birth customs (the Adhan, Male circumcision, Aqiqah, Shaving the hair, Congratulate and Walimah); Muslim baby names and Breastfeeding. There are a number of birth customs common to Muslims, an appreciation of which provides unique insights into the lives of Muslims.

**Key Words:** Birth; Child; Customs; Islam.

\*Please cite this article as: Khademi Gh, Ajilian Abbasi M, Bahreini A, Saeidi M. Customs and Desirable after Childbirth, in Islam. . Int J Pediatr 2016; 4(1): 1195-1204.

---

### **\*Corresponding Author:**

Masumeh Saeidi, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Mashhad University of Medical Sciences, Mashhad, Iran.

Email: Masumeh\_Saeedi@yahoo.com

Received date: Dec 11, 2015 Accepted date: Jan 12, 2016

## 1-INTRODUCTION

One of the most important obligations in Islam is for parents to love and nurture their children. Children have the right to be protected, and the right to learn how to worship and obey God. As previously discussed children's rights come into play even before their conception and birth and God warns humankind to protect themselves and their families from the torment of the fire.

The birth of a child, male or female, is a cause for great celebration. In Islam there is certain etiquette involved in welcoming the child into the family and community.

There are a number of recommended rituals from the authentic traditions of Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, that are to be done that ensure the newborn is received properly by the Muslim society.

However, the absence of any or all of these recommended actions does not negate any children's rights in Islam. Also, in all communities around the world the birth of a child is considered a blessing and ceremonies are held to celebrate this event. Besides being a natural expression of joy, it also serves a special purpose, that is, making it known in a suitable and dignified manner, that the father has accepted the child as his own and that there is no doubt or suspicion concerning this matter. It shuts the door to any mischief that could arise in the future.



## 2- MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2-1. Literature Search

The following databases were searched for relevant papers and reports: MEDLINE, CINAHL, WHO website, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations (UN) website, Embase, Cochrane Collection, Google Scholar, Pubmed, Islamic databases and ISI Web of Knowledge. Key references from extracted papers were also hand-searched.

### 2-2. Search Terms

To evaluate the texts and websites, the singular or combination forms of the following keywords were used to search for the relevant literature: "Customs", "Islam", "Children", "Birth", and "Desirable".

## 3- RESULTS

### 3-1. Rights of the child

Human rights are the basic standards that people need to live in dignity. In addition to the rights that are available to all people, there are rights that apply only to children. Children need special rights because of their unique needs; they need additional protection that adults don't. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international document that sets out all of the rights that children have – a child is defined in the Convention as any person under the age of 18. On the other hand Islam recognises family as a basic social unit. Along with the husband-wife relationship the Parent-child relationship is the most important one. To maintain any social relationship both parties must have some clear-cut Rights as well as obligations. The relationships are reciprocal. Duties of one side are the Rights of the other side. So in Parent-child relationship the Rights of parents are the obligations (duties) of the children and vice versa, the Rights of

children are obligations (duties) of parents. Islam clearly defines the Rights of Parents (which mean duties of children) and obligations of parents (which means Rights of children).

Children have many rights that are clearly articulated in Islamic Law, and for the most part these are well respected. Beginning before conception, they have the right to be born through a legitimate union, with full knowledge of their parentage. The social experiments currently taking place in some countries, facilitating the use of donor sperms and eggs to help barren couples to conceive are therefore categorically prohibited by Islam. Also due to the child are the rights to a good name, to be suckled, to be educated, and above all, to be reared in a stable and loving environment (1-3).

### 3-2. Birth customs

#### 3-2-1. Acceptance of the child, whether boy or girl

Unfortunately, even today, many still have the stereotype that girls are undesirable and treat sons and daughters differently. Whereas, it is clear in the holy Quran that the child is a creation of Allāh (SwT) and He grants a boy to whomsoever He pleases and a girl to whomsoever He pleases (4).

It is narrated that when Imām Zain al-Abidīn (as) was given glad tidings of the birth of his child, he didn't ask whether it was a boy or a girl, but rather first asked, is his creation ok? Then, if told that the child was healthy and there was no defect in the creation, he recited:

"الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَخْلُقْ مِنِّي شَيْئاً مُشَوَّهاً"

"Praise Be to Allāh (SwT) who did not create from me something disfigured" (5).

It is narrated from the Prophet (S): "It is prosperous for the woman that her first child be a daughter" (6). It has been narrated that daughters are goodness and

blessings and sons are favours. One will be questioned about the favours given to them, whereas goodness and blessings will be increased (7).

#### 3-2-2. Congratulations

It is commendable that we congratulate our Muslim brother on the birth of his child and thus add to his happiness. This creates an atmosphere of love and compassion among Muslim families. If congratulations cannot be conveyed, prayers for the well being of his child must be offered. The Noble Quran refers to the glad tidings to Sayyidna Ibrahim (as) and his wife (8) Similarly, Sayyidna Zakariyya (as) too was given the glad tidings of the birth of Sayyidna Yahya (as) (9) on the birth of the Noble. In our congratulatory message to the parent, we may add a prayer to Allah: That He bless the child, That He guide the parents to be thankful, that the child turn out to be righteous, that he have a long life. Irrespective of whether the new born is a boy or a girl, we must offer congratulations. Some people offer gifts, sweets or cash. This practice is within the limits of the Sayings of the Noble Prophet (S) that Muslims must present gifts to one another to foster friendship and love. However, we must neither turn it into a mere custom nor consider it obligatory. We must avoid the ways of non-Muslims and must not indulge in wasteful expenditure.



### 3-2-3. Recitation of Adhān and Iqāmah

The Prophet Mohammad (S) stated that whomever a child is born to, should recite Adhān in the right ear and Iqāmah in the left ear, as this is a protection from the evil of Satan (10).

Additionally, in another tradition it is stated that the mid-wife or someone else should be told to recite the Iqāmah in the right ear so that the Jinn will never trouble the child, nor will it become mad (11).

It is also narrated that the Prophet (S) ensured that Adhān and Iqāmah were recited in the ears of Imām Hasan (as) and Imām Husain (as), as well as Surat al-Fātiha, Ayat al-Kursī, the end of Surat al-Hashr, Surat al-Ikhlāṣ, Surat al-Falaq and Surat al-Nās (12).

### 3-2-4. Clothes of the child

From traditions at the time of the birth of Imām Hasan (as) and Imām Husain (as), it is apparent that it is Makrūh to tie the child in yellow cloth just after birth; rather it is recommended to tie him/her in white cloth (13).

### 3-2-5. Ghusl

It has been mentioned in *Fiqh al-Ridā* that one of the emphasized mustahab acts (some even call it obligatory) after the birth of a child is giving it a Ghusl. One should make an intention that I am giving this child a Ghusl for the pleasure of Allāh (SwT), and then first wash the head, then the right side, and then the left side (14). However, it should be noted that this should only be done if it is medically safe and not harmful to the baby.

### 3-2-6. Shaving the hair

This involves shaving of all the hair of the child (from in the womb) once after birth, and giving gold or silver according to the weight of the hair as ṣadaqah. The hair should then be buried in the ground. It is

recommended to do this on the 7th day after birth (15).

The hair should completely be shaved off, leaving no forelock or ringlet. It is narrated that a boy who had a forelock was brought near the Prophet (S); the Prophet (S) did not pray for him and said that his forelock should be shaved off.

### 3-2-7. Aqīqah and ṣadaqah (16, 17)

The Arabic word aq means 'to cut'. Thus uqooq waldain is 'disobedience to parents and suspension of relations'. In the terminology of Shari'ah it is the sacrifice of a goat for the child on the seventh day after the birth. This involves slaughtering an animal in the name of the child for his/her protection. Aqīqah is a highly recommended sunnah for anyone who has the capability (some even call it obligatory), and it is better if performed on the 7th day after birth (18).

### 3-2-8. Circumcision of boys

The literal meaning of circumcision is 'to cut the skin that is at the tip of the reproductive organ'. In Shari'ah it is 'the round part on the edge above the conical vascular body of the penis'.

Circumcision is obligatory on boys, and as with shaving and aqīqah, it is recommended that it be done on the 7th day after the birth of the child, although if done earlier, there is no harm. If not done then, it is sunnah that it be done until the bulugh of the child, after which it is obligatory on the child himself to do it (19, 20).

### 3-2-9. Walīmah

This involves feeding the believers upon the birth of the child and for the circumcision of the child (these can be combined). It is highly recommended to invite family and friends on the 7th day after the birth of the child (or near that day) to share in the auspicious occasion of the birth of the newborn. It is narrated

from the Prophet (S): "A walimah on the first day is a duty, on the second day good, and on the third day, riyā (i.e. for the sake of other people and not for the sake of Allāh (SwT))". It is Makrūh that all the invitees be rich, but a mix of rich and poor is not a problem. It is also mustahab that the invitees should accept the invitation to a walimah (21).

### 3-2-10. Piercing the ears

Piercing the ears of the child is recommended (22).

### 3-3. Naming the Child

People name their children to distinguish them from others and to call them by their names. Islam is a complete faith. It recognized this habit and its importance. Therefore, it gave a set of instructions on naming the child.

#### 3-3-1. Importance of naming the child

It is narrated (23) from Imām al-Kādhim (as) that the first good a father can do for his child is to give him a good name. It is the right of the child that his parents give him a good name and treat him well (24). In another tradition it is narrated that among the rights of a child are a good name, teaching him to write and marrying him off when he reaches the age of bulugh (25).

#### 3-3-2. When to name the child

It is narrated from the Imāms (as) that: "A son is not born to us, the Ahlul Bayt, except that he is named Muḥammad for 7 days, and then if desired, it can be changed or removed". It has been mentioned in *Fiqh al-Ridā* that fix the name (i.e. announce the name to others) on the 7th day (26).

#### 3-3-3. Recommended names

Naming the children after the Ahlul Bayt (as) is an open declaration of love and friendship towards them, and religion is

nothing but love and friendship of the Ahlul Bayt (as), as Allāh (SwT) states in the Noble Quran, in Surat Āli-' Imrān, (27):

"إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ..."

"If you love Allāh (SwT), then follow me [the Prophet (S)]; Allāh (SwT) will love you..."

It is narrated from Imām al-Bāqir (as) that the most suitable names for a child are those that denotes servitude to Allāh (SwT), like "Abdullāh" (servant of Allāh (SwT)), and the best names for a child are those of the Prophets.

The Prophet (S) said that whoever has four children and has not named any of them after me, has oppressed me (28).

It is narrated from the Prophet (S): "In a house where the names of some of the individuals are of Prophet (S), the blessings of that house will never disappear" (29).

In another tradition, it has been narrated from Imām al-Kādhim (as) that poverty and indigence will never enter the house in which the name Muḥammad, or Aḥmad, or °Alī, or °asan, or Husain, or Ja°far, or Ṭālib, or °Abdullāh, or Fā'ima is present(30). It is narrated from Imām Husain (as):

"If I had a hundred children, I would have liked to name all of them "Alī"(31).

In another tradition it is narrated that one should respect a daughter whose name is Fā'ima and not abuse her and never hit her (32). The titles of Had'rat Fā'ima (sa) can also be used for names of daughters:

- Mubāraka*: The one who is blessed.
- Ṭāhira*: The one who is pure.
- Zakiyya*: The one who is wise.
- Rād'iya*: The one who is content.
- Mard'iyya*: The one whom Allāh (SwT) is pleased with.
- Ṣiddīqa*: The one who is truthful.
- Muḥaddathah*: The one that angels talk to.
- Muḥaddithah*: The one that narrates traditions.

*Zahra*: The luminous one.  
Names not recommended

### 3-4. Contact of child and mother and breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is the act of milk transference from mother to baby that is needed for the survival and healthy growth of the baby into an adult. Breastfeeding creates an inimitable psychosocial bond between the mother and baby, enhances modest cognitive development and it is the underpinning of the infant's wellbeing in the first year of life, even into the second year of life with appropriate complementary foods from 6 months. Furthermore, breastfeeding reduces the risk of neonatal complications, respiratory and other varieties of illnesses.

One of the best acts after birth is cleaning the child and returning him/her next to the mother's skin and covering them with one blanket. Half an hour after birth, the child is completely aware and alert and it is the best time for him/her to become familiar with breastfeeding and the mother's touch. It is culturally and religiously important for Muslim women to breastfeed their infants shortly after birth. In fact, soon after the delivery of a child, many Muslim women are given date, which is a kind of date that improves the quality of breast milk. This tradition is a result of a passage in the Quran where Allah told the mother of the prophet Isa to eat dates so that the child would be patient and clever. There are also many references to breastfeeding in the holy Quran that encourage Muslim women to breastfeed their children for two years. The first few days a lot of milk is not produced; however, the amount produced is enough, useful and necessary for the new-born child. It is important that as much as possible, tiredness of the mother and lack of milk are not used as reasons to bottle-feed the child as these results in delayed milk production from the mother and the child not being able to suck properly. It also increases the possibilities of infections in the child (33-39).

### 4-CONCLUSION

Welcoming the newborn child into the family and community is more than a celebration; the rights and rituals performed serve to remind believers that children in Islam have rights.

Whether the parents are alive or deceased, present or absent, known or unknown the child is entitled to be cared for and raised in security, surrounded by God's love and laws.

**6- CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** None.

### 5-REFERENCES

1. Saeidi M, Ajilian M, Farhangi H, Khodaei Gh. Rights of Children and Parents in Holy Quran. *Int J Pediatr* 2014; 2(3.2): 103-13.
2. Khakshour A, Ajilian Abbasi M, Seyedi SJ, Saeidi M, Khodaei Gh. Child Labor Facts in the Worldwide: A Review Article. *Int J Pediatr* 2015; 3(1.2): 467-73.
3. Ghazizadeh Hashemi AH, Ajilian Abbasi M, Hoseini BL, Khodaei Gh, Saeidi M. Youth Suicide in the World and Views of Holy Quran about Suicide. *Int J Pediatr* 2014; 2(4.2):101-8.
4. Sūrat al-Shura (42), Verse 49: "He gives females to whomever He wishes, and gives males to whomever He wishes".
5. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991.Vol.6. p.21.
6. Majlesi, Mohammad Baqir bin Mohammed Taqi. Bihār al-Anwār. vol. 104, pg. 98, no. 64.
7. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991.Vol.6. p.8.
8. Sūrat al-Hud(11): Verses 49:69-71.
9. Sūrat al- Imran(3): Verse 39; Sūrat al-Maryam(19): Verse7.
10. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991.Vol.6. p.24, no.6.
11. Alliyatul Muttaqīn. p. 126.
12. Majlesi, Mohammad Baqir bin Mohammed Taqi. Bihār al-Anwār. vol. 104, p. 126, no. 86.
13. Alliyatul Muttaqīn. p. 146.
14. Ibid. p. 130.

15. Ibid. p. 132.
16. Ibid. p. 130-33.
17. Aqīqah. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aqiqah>. Accessed in Dec 2015.
18. Mustadrak al-Wasāil, vol. 15, pg. 145, no. 17807.
19. Alliyatul Muttaqīn, p. 1343-135.
20. Ibid. p. 134.
21. Wasāil ash-Shī'a, vol. 16, pg. 455.
22. Ibid. p. 134.
23. Alliyatul Muttaqīn, pg. 128-130.
24. Nouri, Hussein bin Mohammad Taghi Mustadrak al-Wasāil. Al-Bayt :Beirut;1987. vol. 15, p. 128, no. 17748.
25. Ibid. vol. 15, pg. 166, no. 17876.
26. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991. Vol.6. p.18, no. 4.
27. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991. Vol.6. p.25, no.3.
28. Tahdhib al-Balāgha, vol. 7, pg. 438, no. 11.
29. Mustadrak al-Wasāil, vol. 15, pg. 129, no. 17751.
30. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991; Vol.6. p.19, no.8.
31. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991; Vol.6. p.19, no.7.
32. Chiellini, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq. al-Kāfī. Tehran: Islamic Seminary; 1991; Vol.6.
33. Khodae Gh, Emami Moghadam Z, Khademi Gh, Saeidi M. Healthy Diet in Children: Facts and Keys. Int J Pediatr 2015; 3(6.2): 1183-94.
34. Taghizade Moghaddam H, Khodae Gh, Ajilian Abbasi M, Saeidi M. Infant and Young Child Feeding: a Key area to Improve Child Health. Int J Pediatr 2015;3(6.1): 1083-92.
35. Hoseini BL, Emami Moghadam M, Saeidi M, Rezaei Askarieh M, Khademi Gh. Child Malnutrition at Different World Regions in 1990-2013. Int J Pediatr 2015; 3(5.1): 921-32.
36. Ajilian Abbasi M, Saeidi M, Khademi Gh, Hoseini BL, Emami Moghadam Z. Child Maltreatment in the World: A Review Article. Int J Pediatr 2015; 3(1.1): 353-65.
37. Bayyenat S, Ghazizade Hashemi AH, Purbaferani A, Saeidi M, Khodae Gh. The Importance of Breastfeeding in Holy Quran. Int J Pediatr 2014; 2(4.1):339-47.
38. Esfandtari R, Baghiani Moghadam MH, Khakshour A, Faroughi F, Zarif B, Saeidi M. Study of Maternal Knowledge and Attitude toward Exclusive Breast Milk Feeding (BMF) in the First 6 Months of Infant in Yazd-Iran. Int J Pediatr 2014; 2(3.1): 175-81.
39. Hoseini BL, Vakili R, Khakshour A, Saeidi M, Zarif B, Nateghi S. Maternal Knowledge and Attitude toward Exclusive Breast Milk Feeding (BMF) in the First 6 Months of Infant Life in Mashhad. Int J Pediatr 2014; 2(1): 63-9.