

EDITORIAL

POPULATION EXPLOSION?

In Pakistan, failure of population welfare programme makes one wonder one wonder why:-

Pakistan's population is growing at the rate of 3.7% per annum. The rate is second highest in the world. In 1951, the growth rate was 1.7 per annum. The population of Pakistan in 1947 (at the time of independence) was 32 million; and in 1981; it was 84.2 million; and in 1987-88 census, the population has grown to 102.5 million. It is now estimated to be 110 million and it is predicted that if the population of Pakistan grows by the same rate, the population will be doubled by year 2000. It is a fact, not a fiction, that Pakistan's population is increasing by 3.6 million every year, while there are some countries in the world, where total population is equal to the above figure, for example Jordan and Lebanon's population is 3.4 million; and the population of Newzealand is 3.5 million.

The N.G.O's have started functioning for control of family planning since 1950s, and Government of Pakistan has started its programme in mid sixties and still further in eighties the most important programme of population welfare has been started by the government. There is a full fledged department "Population Planning and Welfare" and a huge budget is spent every year, but unfortunately it seems to be ineffective; one wonders why:-

The reasons to my knowledge are:-

1. The idea of a small family, as small to have only 2 children, seems to be not favourable to a community like Pakistan, especially the slogan of a boy and a girl is very strange; what if a couple does not produce a boy and a girl, suppose they produce two girls, and especially in a society like ours they now want a boy; they keep on producing till they get a boy. It is a known fact that in Pakistan couples keeps on producing girls, as many as 8 and 10 to have one boy, and then a few more girls to have a second boy. In a male dominated society the aim to have more boys is a very desperate desire of couple.
2. In a society where everybody is a very firm believer in God and this belief that God provides bread to all human beings; once they are born every time a doctor stress on family planning regarding the economic burden on the parents; a brisk answer comes that God is the bread giver" Again we are unable to answer this.
3. In Pakistan there is no social security system, and old age benefit systems, so the desire of a couple to have many boys is very natural, because they are worried about their old age, they want to have a security.
4. Women's literacy rate is very low, as low as 25% in urban areas and 7% in rural

areas; there are no extracurricular activities, so they keep themselves busy by producing children. That also gives them a false impression that they are still young.

5. The educated and the rich who can afford to have a few more and to bring them in a better way are producing fewer children, while the uneducated and poorer people are producing more children; so the literacy rate is going down, because the uneducated people are increasing more in number as compared to the educated people.

To think about all these problems the solution in my mind is not to talk about of family planning as we are doing it today. In my opinion, to improve the efficiency of the department the following are the suggestions:-

1. Education upto the Secondary School (Matric) be compulsory and free of charge, for both boys and girls; that will have two benefits, (a) girls will not get married before age 16, and they will not have a child before 18. According to our experience being mother before age 18 is risky to the life of both mother and child; even if they don't die it is a great responsibility on a young mother. A girl is not physically and mentally mature enough to bring up her children, which are going to be our future nation. The children produced by a teenager mother are physically and mentally weak. Furthermore an educated mother will be in a better position to bring up a baby in a more hygienic way because our aim should be to have a quality child and not quantity.
2. "Spacing between two children" should be more stressed in the advertisement of family planning, and the versus from the Holy Quran about the importance of breast feeding for two and a half years should be displayed again and again on the electronic media like TV, Radio; Satellite P.T.V.-2 instead of that old slogan of Population Planning Department and at the same time Tafseer of the Ayaat which according to me that every child born to a mother has got a basic right of sucking from breast for two to two and a half years and if that milk is not available because of certain reasons; because it is still the time of the older baby; and thus following Quran for this spacing routine; a natural space between two children will be between 3-4 years. Lactation prevents conception, but not in 100% cases, so the women to be told to have some contraception; if they are reluctant to use the modern methods, because of their religious, they can use the very ancient method of coitus interrupts which was agreed by the Prophet as well; it is as old as from the days of Prophet Ibrahim.
3. A woman's reproductive life is as later as 40-45, but according to our experience a woman who produces a child later than 35, the risk to the life and health of mother and baby is higher. There is increased maternal morbidity and mortality; and the baby is of a poor quality and sometimes the children are mentally retarded. Down's syndrome (Mongolism) is higher in children born to mother above 35-40. Again it is the quality of the children which matters and not the quantity.
4. A primigravida is at risk when she produces a child, and the child is at risk as well. The best and easiest child births are the second, the third and the fourth. The deliv-

ery of the fifth child could be detrimental both to the mother and her baby.

A woman with younger children is more precious according to my thinking and opinion than any other family member. A mother is like a pivot; around which all the members move like the universe, moves around the sun. So if a mother dies at childbirth, the sufferers are the younger children and our future generation;

So far the above reasons it is good for the family, for the mother and for the existing children, that the mother produces fewer children, not more than four; and even these after spacing of three years, because it is a known fact that if a baby is born within one or two years of the previous child, either the first or the second child dies.

Now let me conclude with my thinking and suggestions from my heart to our nation through this Journal; whether it will be government to take it into actions, but I would suggest that the electronic media, like TV and the Radio shall give some time to the religious scholars; so that they talk about the Islamic aspects of family planning, according to Quran and Hadiith, as I have previously quoted from Quran that a nursing mother should look after a baby for two and two and a half years.¹ Similarly Abu Huraira quotes a Hadith from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) which mean that one should look after the wife and children in a better way.²

I wonder why can't we practice an Islamic Policy like Malaysia and Indonesia, who are Muslims like us and they observe family planning. According to my beliefs, family planning especially spacing between children and to avoid conception is very much Islamic because Islam is a religion which preaches to live natural. Avoiding conception is not killing; rather termination of pregnancy is criminal according to all religions, but you will be surprised to know that couples who won't care for contraception rather reject the idea according to their religion, they keep on coming for TOP and if you refuse it saying that is crime, they will say we are responsible for your part of the crime. Even moulvis here brought their wives for TOP. The doctors which I here mentioned above shall be given time on the media so that they teach the public how to have a good quality baby and not poor quality but a big quantity of children, that means observing effective and Islamic any of child spacing so that we have a good quality next generation.

God bless us all!

Prof. Dr. Nazakat Begum

REFERENCES

- 1 Al-Quran, Sura "Baqra", Verse No. 233.
2. Bukhari, Chapter : An-Nafaqaat. Vol. 3.