

# Islamic Views on Family Planning/Birth Control: Some Observations

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## Abstract

The present paper is based on Islamic views on family planning/birth control. Family planning means to accept such types of methods so that population could not be increased. It means to adopt special planning by which human race is stopped. Some of the plans are said to be infanticide. In the modern society people adopted unfair means of family planning because of the worry of increasing in population and it is clearly against the Islamic Ideology. That is why the large number of children is admire in separate stave of Quran but we can do family planning in the light of Islamic teaching. The article also tries to outline the situation of Muslim women in the decision making process at the family level.

**Keywords:** Islamic Views, Family Planning, Population Growth, Poverty

## Introduction

India like other developing countries is facing the problem of population explosion population growth poverty and pollution have close linkage and increasing population is the mother of poverty and pollution as it badly affects our quest for adequate food, shelter, clothing , health and work for all. It can be noted regarding fast growing population of India that every sixth person on earth is an Indian, it is the second largest populous country in the world having 120 Crores of people, it accounts for a meager 2.4 percent of world surface area yet it supports and sustains a whopping 17.7 percent of world population, it is estimated that in 2050, India will overtake china and become the most populous country in the world with 18.4 percent population living here, as against 1.4 percent annual growth rate of population India's annual growth rate was 1.9 percent in 1991-2001 The average density is 382 as compared with world's density of 55 the rapid growth in the population of this country is due to the wideing gap between the birth rate and death rate. The death rate in this country has been brought down Substantially ( 42.6 for thousand during 1901-11 to 8.7/ thousand during 1991-2001)on account of improved and extended facilities for public health and medical care.

The Indian census statistics reveal an interesting and significant phenomenon as rate of growth among some minority growth religious groups, especially Muslims is consistently higher when compared to that of majority community i.e Hindus or of nation as a whole. This is evident from the following.

This trend suggests that members of these groups specially Muslims suffer from the apprehension of their minority status and with consciously or unconsciously attempt to improve their status by enlarging families. However the other arguments put forth for the increasing number of Muslims have been that after winning the wears the conquered people were converted the lure of high officers attracted the Hindus and Muslims victors made all possible efforts to persuade people to embrace Islam. In India there is another reason for spread of Islam Here the Muslims raised the social status of the low caste Hindus that is Islam conferred equality upon people of lower caste i.e the Shudras. But efforts were made to smooth out the difficulties which arose during the adjustment within the social structure of Islam certain obstructions to unity and brotherhood for Islam never faced earlier were experienced whatever the reason but fact remains that the number of Muslims day-by-day in India above the national level increased in this number. This needs through thinking understanding and research.

## Harish Kumar Verma

Assistant Professor,  
Dept. of Sociology  
H.N.B. Govt. P.G College,  
Naini Prayagraj,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

## Population By Religion (In Million)

Religion	Population and its percentage to total population (Year-wise)									
	1971		1981		1991		2001		2011	
	Number	%age of population	Number	%age of population	Number	%age of population	Number	%age of population	Number	%age of population
Hindu	453.4	82.7	549.7	82.3	672.6	82.41	827	80.5	966.3	79.8
Muslim	61.4	11.2	75.6	11.4	95.2	11.67	138	13.4	172.2	14.23
Christian	14.3	2.6	16.2	2.4	18.9	2.32	24	2.3	28.7	2.30
Sikh	10.4	1.9	13.1	2.0	16.3	1.99	19	1.9	20.8	1.72
Buddhist	3.9	0.7	4.7	0.7	6.3	0.77	8	0.8	8.44	0.7
Jain	2.6	0.5	3.2	0.5	3.4	0.41	4	0.4	4.45	0.37
Others	2.2	0.4	2.8	0.4	3.5	0.43	6	0.6	7.93	0.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>548.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>665.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>816.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1026</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1208.82</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** census of India, series-I India part-II C (I) ,(II) census of India 1981, series-I paper-I paper-3 of 1984 (Religion) (III) census of India series-I, paper-I of 1995 (Religion) quoted from India 2001, P.18 census of India 2011 (Religion).

### Muslims: Their Structure and Guiding Religious Instruments

Muslims are the followers of Islam which specially aims at human progress and shows the proper way of it a number of commands and prohibitions covering every avocations of man's daily life, his social and political life as well as promoting of his mind and spirit. These commands and prohibitions have been codified into a complete social and political system. Islam, as described by Hazrat Ali Ibne Ali in his sermon no 203 quoted from Nahjul Balagah [peak of Eloquence] runs as "Islam is the religion which God has chosen as a medium for you to understand your place in the universe and your relation with him. Allah wants it to obliterate ignorance and heathenism from human minds. to quench their thirst for wisdom and knowledge and to propagate truth, justice and piety. The reasonableness and rationality of its doctrine is so powerful that they cannot be repudiated, falsified or belied."

#### Objective of the Study

1. To analyse the current scenario of population by religion in India.
2. To identify on the emerging challenges of family planning/birth control in Islamic traditions.
3. To explain the religious and cultural influences that may affect the obtaining and use of various method of family planning.

#### Sects in Islam

Many scholars insist that there are no sects in Islam. They support the claim by stating that sects in any religion must differ in their beliefs whereas the so-called sects of Islam agree in their accepting all the essential truths, the belief which make one a Muslim. If there is any rejection of these by any person he is excluded from Islam. Some Islamic theologians also claim that the term 'firqua' (sect) may not apply to any group of Islam as they differ in non-essentials only. such stress on unit in Islam is objectively analysed. Muslims theologians wrote outstanding treaties on Islamic sect. These treaties are penned by followers of sunny or orthodox school. The intense prosecution of other sects Shia sect as a race of heretics that were worse than infidels They even sold Shia like beast in the market place as slaves (Malcom:1929:140) Moreover innumerable instance

bear the witness that unity of Islam as claimed has been a reality (Rixvim Roy and Dutta : 1998:5-6)

The authorities on sects on Islam refer to a tradition (Hadis) of Mohommed which does not find a place in the collection of tradition by Bukhari and Muslim. It is claimed that prophet has said "the Jews are divided into 71 sects and the Christians are divided into 72 sects and my people will be divided into 73 sects. "AL Baghdadi further stated in Isnad (chain of reference) of above and quoted the prophet by saying" verify these will happen to my people what happened to Banu Israel. The Banu Israel is divided into 72 religious bodies and exceeding them one.

There are two main sects Shia and Sunny. Originally Shuab (branch) was the word used for sect which only gradually came to have the meaning of firqua (division) The word Shia comes from a root 'Sha' meaning to follow to conform with to obey signifying therefore a group of followers or a party The muslim community since inception had remained more or less united until the death of Usman But latter it was divided into two distinct parties the Shiat Ali and Shiat Muawiya. When latter was recognized as Khlifa the Shia-Ali transformed in Shia since then the term Shia itself came to signify sects.

#### Religious Beliefs

There are three religious instrument which guide Muslims religious beliefs and way of life.

#### Qur'an

The faithful followers of Islam believe that the Quran was divinely inspired and revealed by Allah on the tongue of his honorable prophet making clear everything an everlasting miracle. Man is unable to write anything like it because of its eloquence clarity truth and knowledge and no alternation can be made to it. The Quran we have now is exactly what was sent to the prophet and anyone who calims otherwise is either an evader a mere sophist or else a person in error. In this way Qur'an is labelled as primary source of Mohamadan law in point of time as well as in importance containing the very word of God as communicated to prophet Muhammad. It is not a code through ie resembles to it because it was given to the world in fragmentary form extending over a period of twenty three years .The original objectives of Qur'an were (a) social reforms ie repealing objectionable customs such as usury unlimited polygamy and

gambling etc and (b) laying down principles of punishment (Begum Jafri : 2002:61-62)

#### **Hadis (Traditions)**

It is regarded as part and parcel of the utterances of Holy prophet of Islam here it may be noted that when a prophet of Islam proclaimed that these were the wordings of God as revealed upon him it was constructed as Qur'an and when he pronounced that these wording were from his side it was regarded as Hadith and comprised of two parts (a) Sunnat and (b) Ahadith (plural of Hadith)

However it may be pointed out that the above tradition of the prophet of Islam is narrated with a slight difference and is called Hadis-e-saqlain (two weighty things ie (a) Qur'an and (b) Ahl-e-Bait) i.e the family members of the prophet while others behave it as Qur'an and Sunnat.

#### **Iztehad**

Besides Qur'an and Hadith one section of Muslim community lays great emphasis on 'Ijma' and 'Qayas' (analogical deduction). The religious jurists evolved the principle of Ijma i.e. agreement of Muslim Jurists of a particular age and on particular question which is likely to be reversed or modified under different circumstances by any of four schools of thought i.e. Hanafi school Maleki school, Shafei school and Hamboli school.

#### **Planning the family size/Birth control in Islamic Traditions**

Islam has traditionally been portrayed as not permitting birth control or abortion in any situation. This may be because of a streak fatalism a strong belief in active providence of God ( yourself:1978:82) and the belief that 'Allah' creates sexuality and determines procreation and happiness (Yourself:1978;87)

A section of orthodox 'ulema' today is putting forward arguments against family planning some of them base their case on certain verses from Holy Qur'an. There are two verses 6.152 and 17.31 having almost similar meaning and prohibiting killing of children. The verse 17.31 says ' And kill not your children for fear of poverty we provide for them and for you surely killing of them us a great wrong. All the commentators on the Qur'an agree that the above verse refers to killing females infants immediately after birth for fear of starvation and social ignominy as in the desert families were not considered strong enough to struggle for survival on the other hand male children were happy valued.

The Qur'an ethics in fact condemn killing of even one person amounting as to killing of the entire human race. And it is in that spirit the Qur'an strongly disapproves of burying daughters alive. Similarly the verses 6:152 and 17:31 also refer to this practice of female infanticide and urge upon the Arabs not to kill their daughters for fear of poverty as Allah will provide for them and for their children male or female. Thus these verses specifically prohibit killing of children ie those already born. It was most human on the part of the Qur'an to admonish those who killed their children already born for fear of poverty. No civilized person would stand for such cruelty to children. Imam Shafei one of the great Imams who such founded the Shafei

School of Islamic jurisprudence thinks that one should not produce more children if one cannot support them properly. He bases his opinion on one of the verses of the Qur'an relating to polygamy. It is verse 4.3 i.e third verse of the chapter on woman. (Al-Nisa). In this verse the Qur'an while permitting Muslims to marry four wives in certain condition exhorts them to marry only one if they cannot meet the ends of justice and then ends with the word (as generally translated)."this is more proper that you may not do injustice.

However, Imam Safei, insist that it should be translated as "this is more proper that you do not produce more children" The Qur'anic words which are more being differently translated are 'alla tawlu, which can mean both i.e. not to do injustice and not to multiply children. As for as this subject is concerned Imam Safeis rendering is more relevant. The Imam's argument is that producing more children would make it difficult to provide them with what is halal (i.e. legitimate and permissible) and also would make it difficult for parents to observe 'hudud Allah' (limits prescribed by God). Thus Islam Shafei was a man of vision and he could well anticipate the problems of producing more children. He makes a very important point, namely that Quran lays stress on the legitimate ways of earning one's living (halalan tovviba) and also stresses that one should not resort to ways of earning not permitted by Allah. Imam Shafei feels that if someone produces more children, he will ultimately, in order to feed them resort to prohibited way of earning. Thus producing more children would ultimately amount to earning the wrath of God. In the same way. Imam Raghil, a great Lexicographer of Qur'an thought, said that killing in the verse 17.31 does not necessarily mean putting one's children to death, killing here in fact means not giving them proper education. Ignorance, according to him, is intellectual death, which is worse than physical death, since the word aulad (children) included both male and female, this explanation of work killing (gati) is more plausible.

The hadith literature too support both direct and indirect methods birth control, one hadith says "those few who are virtuous are superior to those many who are undesirable." The implication of this Hadith is obvious. It favours a small number of people who have better opportunities of moral and ethical development. Allama M.H Alvi has also quoted this Hadith in support of family planning. There is also a famous Hadith, which makes acquisitions of knowledge compulsory for all Muslims. This is further reinforced by yet Hadith, which says, acquire knowledge even if it is available in China.

The word 'ilm' in Arabic has very wide connotations and embraces all verities of knowledge religious as well as worldly, physical as well as moral and spiritual. The prophet asked Muslim to go up to china to acquire knowledge and china obviously was not the center of Islamic Knowledge. Thus, from this context also it is clear that the prophet meant worldly knowledge as well. But even if it is confirmed to religious knowledge would not be possible for parents to give higher Islamic Knowledge to their children if they have a large family. "Ilm" must be noted, also implies moral and spiritual development and it is not

possible for parents to impart higher knowledge and ensure spiritual and moral development if they have too many children. Apart from indirect support for a small family from the prophets traditions there are many traditions which lend direct support. Imam Ghazzali, a Muslim theologian, philosopher and Sufi of great eminence, mentions a tradition from the prophet which says smallness of the family (qillat al ayal). This Hadith needs no comments. The Holy prophet is clearly exhorting Muslims to have small families and to avoid large families that would lead to indigence and poverty. The prophet so also reported to have said that the best person is one who has fewer burdens of children on his back. On being asked what he meant by Khafif-al-Zahir (Light Backed) he clarified that this meant one who has a small number of children.

Besides these there are other traditions which support what is called 'azl' which can be translated as birth control. 'Azl' in Arabic literally means removal or dismissal or separation and is also translated as coitus interruptus. But it need not mean only coitus interruptus. It includes all forms of birth control. We find 'azl' being mentioned in large number of Hadith (traditions).

To conclude, it can be said that no eminent Islamic thinker, theologian or jurist has raised any objection to planning one's family or participating birth control. All the four founders of Islamic Schools of Jurisprudence Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik Imam Ibn Hanbal and Imam Shafei have either directly or indirectly approved of it.

#### **Sunny Traditions**

Imam Abu Hanifa, who is largely followed by the Muslims in India, has written to one of his most eminent disciples, Qazi Yusuf, no doubt excess of children creates great worries. This caution is contained in the series of directives that Imam sent to Abu Yusuf. The great Hanafi work on Islamic Law, Hidayam also says "in the opinion of Abu Hanif birth control is permissible."

#### **Shia Traditions**

The Shia Traditions too raise no objection to rather specifically permit birth control. The great founder of Shia Fiqh (jurisprudence) Imam Jaafar al Sadiq said, "Small family is blessing" Not only this, Alim whom the prophet described as the "gate to the city of knowledge" held that not only is birth control permissible but one can resort to abortion before life begins in the womb of the mother. He based his opinion on the Quranic verse, "and certainly we create man of extract of clay, then we make him a small life germ in a firm resting place Then we make the life

germ a clot, then we make the clot a lump of flesh then we cause it to grow into another creation. So blessed be Allah the best of creations.

Thus Hazrat Ali concluded from above verses that Life does not begin at the moment but life germ is placed in the mother's womb. It begins only when life germ has passed through all the stages described above and enters the phase. "then we cause it to grow into another creation." Which according to some, may happen in the fourth month? Thus abortion before life is created could be permissible.

#### **Conclusion**

To conclude, it can be maintained that birth control or family planning is not objectionable in Islam, provided the purpose is moral and for the benefit of human society as a whole. In certain conditions the collective interest certainly precedes the individual interest and when the unrestrained growth of human population causes serious problem in society, it would certainly be permissible to take suitable steps to bring human population under control. This is true about India as well as for different countries where population control has acquired great urgency. If these steps are not taken society as a whole will suffer not only materially but also morally and spirituality, as Maulana Saeed Ahmed Akbarabadi maintains in such conditions planning of family is not only permissible but should be made compulsory.

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