

ISLAMIC VIEW ON BIRTH CONTROL



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ISLAMIC VIEW
ON
BIRTH CONTROL

by

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PREFACE

Officers, belonging to various categories, who come for training in this academy, express special interest to know the views of Muslim Ulema community on birth control. While discussing this subject, I had referred to some Arabic literature. My colleagues then requested me to translate those which came under reference. I jumped at the tedious job then and there, and was prompted to translate the second article quicker than the first one.

Al-Ghazzali and Ibn-e- Qaiyum Al-Jaozia, both were famous scholars and Faqih. Al-Ghazzali was one of the basic thinkers of Islam and a famous scholar. He was born in the city of Toos in 1058. In 1091, he was appointed as a teacher in the Nizami - a Madrassah of Baghdad. While teaching there he kept on writing books about Shariat Laws. He worked hard to earn a place of respect in the field of theology and education. He devoted and studied various subjects, specially philosophy. At the end he was deeply attracted toward sufism. In 1095, he abandoned his bright position and worldly desires and fled from Baghdad to become a darvesh (Hermit). He continued his search for peace of mind and soul in the life of hermit. He succeeded in achieving the state where one gets complete peace of mind and soul. In the eyes of the Muslim population, he is not only considered as a Mujaddid of that century, but he is also considered as a re-establisher of religion. His famous book "Eiee-a-z-Ulum-ud-Din" (The revival of the knowledge of religion) is a brief digest of all the systems and it is unique and incomparable. (Brief World Almanac on Islam, Leiden, 1953, p.111)

Ibn-e- Qaiyum Al-Jaozia was a scholar of the Hambal School of thought, and a disciple of the famous scholar Ibn-e-Tayemia. He was born in Damascus in the year 1292, and died in the year 1350. He was completely a trusted disciple of his teacher, and he followed the literary policy of his teacher too. He was tortured and harassed even during the life-time of Ibn-e-Tayemia, and since he criticised Hebronis going to Urus, he was imprisoned too. Like his teachers, he also participated in many debates with many philosophers, Christians and Jews. His book, known as "Jadd Al-Madd" is popular in the Arab World. (Brief World Almanac on Islam, Leiden; 1953, p.111).

The word 'Azal' has been described by our writers as the process by which the spermatozoa of the male is prevented from having a fision with the ova of the female, when the spermatozoa is excreted from the penis during a sexual intercourse. This is the general practice to prevent pregnancy. In my translation, I have used the Arabic Word 'Azal', as it is.

IMAM GHAZZALI ON 'AZAL'

There are four different views of the Ulema on 'Azal' being makrooh or mobah. These views are as follows:

1. One group feels it is permissible (*Halal*) in all conditions.
2. Another group feels that it is not permissible (*Haram*) under any condition.
3. Another group opines that only if the wife permits, then it is permissible, otherwise not. Those who think it to be so, may not feel 'Azal' to be not permissible, but think that this hurts the wife.
4. Another group feels that 'Azal' is permissible in case of slave girls only; but it is not permissible if sexual intercourse is being done with an independent wife.

We feel that 'Azal' should be considered Mobah, Makrooh. It can be of three types:

- Not permissible due to being haram.
- Not permissible for the sake of purity.
- Not being able to adopt the best course.

'Azal' can be termed as makrooh on account of the third type. That is by doing 'Azal' the best course has not been adopted. For example, if a person sits idle in a mosque in a state of depression and yet he does not say his prayers or remember Allah. Or like some people who live in Mecca and yet do not perform Haj every year. So such things are makrooh. This is because they did not adopt the best course.

From the narrations of the discussion of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), we have been able to prove it in our discussions on the best methods to have children. When a man has a sexual intercourse with his wife, at that time one *neki* (good deed) is written in his *beheshti amalnama*. This is equal to the reward due to giving birth child who dies fighting in the way of Allah. It means that if a son would have been born as a result of the sexual intercourse under reference, then the father gets the credit as the medium, although it is Allah who creates him, keeps him alive and makes him strong enough to participate in Jihad. The father is considered as the medium for the creation of such a mujahid, or enable-bodied person who

could participate in the jehad because firstly it was he who had indulged in the sexual intercourse, and secondly he successfully made his spermatozoa to have fission with the ova of his wife.

We have seen that from the legal point of view or from purity's angle, there is nothing objectionable in it. This is because the basis for any solid objection should be some verse of the Holy Qur'an or interpretation of any verse of Holy Qur'an to declare it to be objectionable. On the contrary, there are instances of guess work done to draw conclusions regarding avoiding sexual intercourse totally after marriage, or to make the spermatozoa fall outside the vagina of the wife at the time of sexual intercourse. In all the three cases, there are defects in taking the best advice. But none of the work has been declared as objectionable. There is no disparity between these three conditions. A child is born if spermatozoa of the male have fission with the ova of female. And that happens due to the following four reasons:

1. Marriage;
2. Sexual intercourse;
3. Secretion of the spermatozoa;
4. Fission of the spermatozoa with the ova.

All the above four reasons are interrelated. Hence to remain isolated from the fourth means isolation from the third, and isolation from the third means isolation from the second, and isolation from the second means isolation from the first.

"Azal" is not like abortion or child murder, which is done against a living being. Even then there are stages in development of the foetus. In the first stage the spermatozoa enters the oviducts and fission takes place. To spoil it after the development of the foetus has begun will not be proper. It will also be shameful. Then after the soul enters the foetus, it will be more criminal and shameful to spoil it. And to kill the child after it is born is the most heinous crime and most shameful thing to do. As we said, in women, when fission takes place between the spermatozoa and the ova, the development of the foetus begins. The spermatozoa from the penis of the male is alone not capable to develop the foetus or give birth to the child. The fission of the male spermatozoa and the female ova is a must for the birth of a child.

Physiologists say that the foetus is created by Allah's will and rules and regulations of Allah. The seeds are present in the ordinary blood just like curd or yogurt is present in milk. The spermatozoa of the male makes the blood thick just like 'Yamee.' is used in milk to make it yogurt. Any way, the ova of the female is just one ingredient, and both the spermatozoa of

the male and the ova of the female is required for the creation of the foetus. It is just like a proposal and its subsequent acceptance makes it a pact or agreement. Hence if someone makes a proposition and it is rejected before acceptance, then there is no breach of any agreement. If, however, the proposal is rejected after its acceptance, then that will be a breach of agreement, a deviation from the agreement or dishonouring of an agreement.

Although the spermatozoa is present in the male blood, it is alone not sufficient to give birth to child, likewise the ova of the female have to mix with the spermatozoa of the male to give birth to a child. These are very clear signs.

Now if you say that 'Azal' is not makrooh because it does not kill any child; yet it has to be said that it is makrooh. This is because the intention is bad. Such things can only be done with intention and it reflects a hidden disbelief or lack of faith in Almighty Allah.

My answer is this:

There can be five reasons for doing 'Azal'. These are as follows:

FIRSTLY:

Regarding slave wives. In this case the purpose is to protect the proprietary rights of properties. Because once the slave wife becomes a mother of the children of her master, she does not remain a slave anymore. So in this case the purpose is to have the properties intact and not to loose a slave girl. Hence in this case the control methods are not objectionable.

SECONDLY:

To protect the beauty and health of the wife so that she remains attractive and is able to provide pleasure. And she will also remain safe from endangering life for a child birth. This is also not objectionable.

THIRDLY:

Having too many children gives rise to worries and anxieties. Their feeding and clothing become a problem. One has to indulge in irritating and torture. Some may also have to commit sin to earn illegally so as to be able to feed them. Hence to avoid such a situation, it is not objectionable. On the other hand, if one is not suffering from poverty and want, he is likely to find more interest and devote more time to religious activities. Undoubtedly purity and nobility are God-gifted. Like He said, only Allah arranges for the food for all the living beings on earth. Hence such precautionary dependence is a

deviation from extreme form of purity and good work. Even then we cannot say that it is improper to think ahead about the consequences, or that it is not good to save money for the rainy days, although all such steps may be opposed to having total faith on Almighty Allah.

FOURTHLY:

The fear of having female children, as a result of which the father-in-law faced inevitable humiliation. For this reason the pagan Arabs used to kill newborn girls, so that they could avoid the humiliation. This intention is based on wickedness. If a person does not marry or avoids sexual intercourse with his wife for this reason, he commits a sin. But the reason for this sin committed by him is his bad intention. The sin is not just because he remains a bachelor or that he avoids sexual intercourse. The case is same with 'Azal'.

According to the rules and regulations imposed by Holy Prophet (PBUH), it is extremely wicked to feel humiliation in giving a daughter in marriage. It is as bad as the case of a woman who does not want to marry because she has to remain subordinate to a man, and that she wants to be like a man herself. But if one does not marry just like that, i.e. without any such wicked reason behind, it cannot be called 'makrooh'.

FIFTHLY:

Like some women who do not like to become pregnant due to pride or wants to remain extremely clean, do not want to undergo the pangs of child birth or breast-feeding.

Some women of the external community had shown such behaviour. They used to waste a lot of water and even missed their timely prayers as they remained busy cleansing themselves. They even went to the toilet completely naked so that their clothes would remain clean. These are all conditions and alterations (*beddat*). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) was opposed to such things. Such behaviour is not well motivated. It has been narrated that once while on a visit to Basra, a woman belonging to the external community, sought an audience with Hadhrat Ayesha (RA). But she refused to grant her the audience.

Hence controlling pregnancy is not bad. But the intention may be wicked. Now you might say that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has definitely said three times that those who do not marry for the fear of having to bear the burden of a family, do not belong to my group. My reply will be, doing 'Azal' and not marrying are the same thing, and what the Holy Prophet (PBUH) meant by saying that such persons do not belong to my group is that

these persons are not the best followers of his Sunnah. Following the best course is the following of the Sunnah.

Now, if you say, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said about 'Azal' that it is a minor murder of a child, and he has referred to verses of the Holy Qur'an in this regard, our reply will be, 'Azal' is permissible (Halal). There are many dependable information in the correct hadith to substantiate this statement. In spite of this, the comment that 'Azal' is a minor infant murder -- is an out come of a minor disbelief; it may be unnecessary but not haram.

If you refer to Ibn-e-Abbas, then 'Azal' is a minor infant murder because the child that has thus been prevented from being born, has been deprived of his/her life that would have been his/hers. Our reply is, the argument is that birth control is like killing a life. But this is a weak argument. When Hadhrat Ali (RA) heard this, he denied it. He said, there is no question of infant murder before the seven stages of child birth are crossed. He even recited the relevant verses from the Holy Qur'an wherein the stages of creation are stated.

"We create men from wet clay; then we make the seeds grow; then convert them into blood clots; then the blood clots are converted into a lump of flesh, then the lump of flesh gets bones; then the bones are clothed with the flesh; finally we create a new living being."

If the arguments that we have stated above are examined thoroughly, then the analysis of the meanings and in light of scientific knowledge, the difference between the statements of Hadhrat Ali (RA) and Hadhrat Abbas (RA) will become clear. Of the two correct hadith, the one taken from Jabir has been referred by everyone's consent. It says; "we have practiced 'Azal' at a time when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was informed about it, he did not object". From Jabir, we also get another hadith which says; "Once a man came to the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) and said, "I have a slave girl. She looks after my house, waters my date-palm trees. I go to her. But I don't want her to become mother of my children. Then the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said "If you want to do 'Azal' you can do that. But whatever is written in her lot will happen'. The man went back, and returned after some time as pre-ordained by Allah and said, The girl is pregnant. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said, "I told you, whatever is to come to her life, it will come."

IBN-E-QAIYUM ON 'AZAL'

(From: *Ja'd Al Maad, Cairo Edition, 1324 Hijri published by Maktaba Mainimia, IInd Edition*). (Pages 221-223)

As narrated by Abu Saeed in '*Sahihaan*'.

We were given some slave girls. We performed 'Azal' with them. When we asked the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) about it, he wanted to know if we were doing 'Azal'. Then he said that those who are destined to be born till the Day of Resurrection, will be born.

As narrated by Abu Saeed in '*Sunnah*'.

One person said, 'Oh Prophet of Allah (PBUH) I have a slave girl, I practice 'Azal' with her. I don't want that she should have children. But I want to do what man wants to do. And the Jews say that 'Azal' is minor child murder. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said that the Jews are incorrect. If Allah wants to have a child born, you cannot stop it.

It has been narrated in *Sahihaan* from '*Jabir*'.

We have practiced 'Azal' when the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) was alive and when the Holy Qur'an was being revealed.

Another explanation of *Jabir*, as found in '*Sahi Muslim*' is:

We practiced 'Azal' during the time of the Prophet of Allah (PBUH). When he was told about it, he did not object.

Another narration by *Jabir*, as included in '*Sahi Muslim*' say:

One person asked the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) "I have a slave girl. I practice 'Azal' with her. "The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) said, "What Allah wants, will happen and you can't check it. Later on that person came back and said, 'Oh Prophet of Allah (PBUH) a child has been born to that slave girl. The Prophet (PBUH) said, I am a man of Allah and his Prophet (PBUH)

Uthman bin Zahid has narrated from 'Sahi Muslim' that:

One person came to the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) and said, 'I practice 'Azal' with my wife. The Prophet of Allah (PBUH) asked, "Why do you do so?" The man replied, "I feel pity for her suckling baby". Or he might have said, "For her baby". The Prophet (PBUH) said, "If it would have been harmful for lactating mothers, then the Persians and the Romans would have definitely suffered."

We also find in the Masnad of Ahmad and Ibn-e-Mazar of Sunan that Omar bin Khittab has narrated that the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) has said that 'Azal' should not be done with free wives without their permissions.

Abu Daud has said, that Abu Huraira has narrated that the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) has said that it is improper to practice 'Azal' with free wives without their permission.

Hence all these hadith make it clear that 'Azal' is permissible and the permissibility in this regard has been established by traditional narration (*rewayat*) by ten Sahaba-e-Karam. They are; Ali, Saad Ibn-e-Waqqas, Khubba Ibn-e-Al Ars, Abu Ayub, Zaid bin Sabil, Jabir Ibn-e-Abbas, Hassan bin Ali, Abu Sayeed Al Khudri and Ibn-e-Masud. Even Ibn-e-Ajam has admitted that 'Azal' is mubah. This has been correctly described by Jabir Ibn-e-Abbas, Saad bin Waqqas, Zaid bin Sabil and Ibn-e-Masud.

But there is one group who have objected to 'Azal'. Among them are Abu Muhammad bin Hajam. There are also others. Another one has emphatically said that 'Azal' with wife's permission is mubah and without her permission it is haram. But if anybody's wife is a slave girl, then with her master's permission it is 'mubah' and without her master's permission it is haram. And this is exactly the opinion of Ahmad bin Hambal.

But some among his followers say that 'Azal' is not mubah under any circumstance. And some among them say that it is haram in all conditions. While some say that irrespective of whether the wife is free or a slave, with her permission it is halal, otherwise it is haram. The supporters of 'Azal' has based their contention on those hadith which we have mentioned in this context. And their argument is that it is the inherent right of a woman to enjoy sexual intercourse, not to obtain spermatozoa. Muslim, in his Sahi Ukkasha, has referred to a statement by Jazama Binte Wahhab, who has quoted a narration by Hadhrat Ayesha. Muslim has based his argument of this narration by Hadhrat Ayesha (RA). Hadhrat Ayesha (RA) said that when some people came to enquire about 'Azal' from the Prophet of

Allah (PBUH), I was present. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, it is secret child killing and Allah has cautioned against such practices. In the Day of Resurrection the infant girl will come up and ask as to why she was killed like that.

And they give the argument that Ayesha's hadith have nullified all arguments about 'Azal' being 'mobah'. Because it is the personal instruction of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Whereas it has been made mobah with his permission. And many rules and regulations in Shariat has been made with his permission.

And they said, like Jabir said, "We practiced, 'Azal' at a time when the Holy Qur'an was being revealed. If it was to be forbidden, the Holy Qur'an would have forbidden it. It can be said that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) on whom the Qur'an has been revealed, 'Azal' has been forbidden on his statement that 'Azal' is minor infant murder and all sorts of infant murders are forbidden.

They have further argued that the following hadith, narrated by Al-Hassan Abu Sayeed Khudri in Basra, amounts to making 'Azal' as something forbidden. The hadith is when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) heard about 'Azal' he asked; why you do it? All these things are directed. Ibn-e-Aun said, on hearing this Hassan commented, "I swear upon Allah, it is forbidden".

The opponents further argue that 'Azal' checks or brings an interval in creation; whereas the purpose of marriage is to continue with the process of creation. Hence 'Azal' is an unsocial practice and unnatural checking of enjoyment.

And they also say that it is for this reason that Ibn-e-Umar did not practice 'Azal'. He often used to say, "If I come to know that any of my son is practicing 'Azal' I shall punish him". Ali also did not like 'Azal'. And it has been learnt that Ibn-e-Masud has narrated that 'Azal' is a minor form of child murder. When Abu Imam was asked about it, he said, I don't know of any Muslim who does it. Nafa Ibn-e-Umar has narrated that Umar has punished some of his children for practising 'Azal'. And Yahya bin Saeed, Al Ansari, Saeed bin Musaid have narrated that both Umar and Uthman have forbidden 'Azal'. But all these statements do not carry any solid argument against the clear hadith that 'Azal' is mobah.

It can be said about the hadith of Jazam Binte Wahhab that although it is included in the Muslim it is completely unbelievable. This is because

there are many 'Hadith' that contradict it. For example, the hadith narrated by Abu Daud Muza bin Ismail, Jaban, Yahya, Muhammad and Abdur Rehman Ibn-e-Souban, Rifaya, Abu Saeed Al Khudri. They narrated that a person had come to the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) and had said, 'Oh Prophet of Allah (PBUH), I have a slave girl. I practice 'Azal' with her. But I don't want that she should have any child. But I want what man wants. And the jews say that 'Azal' is a minor form of infant murder. In reply the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) had said, "The jews have misunderstood. If Allah wants a baby to be created, you cannot stop it. And all the compilers of these hadith were reliable and their memories were known to be sharp. Their influence is the greatest proof of the correctness of these hadith. No doubt some scholars have declared these hadith as faulty - and uncertain. This is because there is a controversy with respect to the names of Yahya bin Qadir and Abu Rifaya, both of whom are included in the list of compilers.

There is no doubt that the 'hadith' narrated by Jabir with respect to 'Azal' being mobah, is clear and well proven. Al Shafi has specifically said that many Sahaba-e-Karam of Hadhrat Muhammad (PBUH) have narrated that they have supported 'Azal', and also that they have not considered it harmful. Be-Hagi say that sort of permission or support have been narrated by Saad bin Waqqas, Ibn-e-Ayub Al Ansari, Sayed bin Sabit, Ibn-e-Abbas and others. And this is also the opinion of Imam Malik, Imam Al Shafi and many other Suffis and Ulemas, and most of the Scholars.

Protests have been lodged on account of Jazama's hadith being extremely pure and justified, and scholars consider this hadith, narrated by Jazama, as 'Zauf'. The opine that is it possible that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) who declared the jews contention as lies, could support the same contention later on? It is obviously impossible. Others say that in the hadith under reference the contention that the jews protest have been denied, is uncertain. On the other hand, Jazama's hadith is well proved and reliable. Another group, have argued that there is a link between the two opposing hadith; they say that the jews had emphatically argued that if azal is practiced, then there can be no pregnancy at all. That is why the Holy Prophet (PBUH) protested against this view and this protest is clear in his hadith which says "If Allah wants to create a baby, you cannot stop it". Although azal does not check pregnancy like the way it is done if one avoids sexual intercourse altogether, yet it does reduce child birth to a great extent.

There is another group who argue that both the hadith are proved to be true. But the hadith that it is makrooh is the latest. The followers of Muhammad bin Hajam give this opinion. They say that at the beginning it was a narration and it was given before azal was made objectionable or

declared as makrooh. But historical documents are necessary to prove this claim. Such documents should show that date wise one hadith is prior to the other; it should also state that where from proof to substantiate such claims can be obtained. Umar has opined that unless the seventh stage of creation a human baby in the mother's womb is crossed, it cannot be considered as a child murder.

Story teller Qazi Abu Ali and others have narrated some thing referring to a group of compilers who have obtained the narration from the father of Obaid bin Rifaya. He said that one day, Ali Zubair and Saad were sitting with Umar, some more Sahaba of Holy Prophet (PBUH) were also present there. They discussed about 'Azal' and said that it is not harmful. One of them commented that some people think it is a minor form of child murder. Ali replied that until or unless the seventh stage of child birth is crossed, it cannot be considered a child murder. On hearing this, Umar said, "your statement is very true, may Allah grant you a long life."

ISLAMIC VIEWS ON CHECKING PREGNANCY

(Second Part)

In the first article, the opinions of Al-Ghazzali and Ibn-e-Qaiyum have been given. Here it is shown that Islam started as a struggling religion, that launched a movement for the socio-economic development of mankind. It was for this reason that for several centuries, the Islamic societies spread on account of its political and economic appeal. Islam encouraged large families as establishments, and its success proved that the same was justified. But now the situation has changed. Conquering lands and occupying uninhabited lands are no more possible. In addition to these, modern concepts recommend small size families. But in our society, we still have the tendency to appreciate large size families. It is, therefore, essential for the religious leaders of Islam to reconsider the present structure for the welfare of our society. In this context, the opinion of the Ulema of olden days that the recommended methods to check pregnancy is *mubah* will be of much help to the present Ulema.

The Arabs of pre-Islamic period knew nothing about population explosion or food shortage. At least three social custom were tyrannical. Those were killing of infant daughters, a woman having many husbands, and attacks on each other's tribes but it was a practical method of checking too many child births.

Hadhrat Muhammad (PBUH) brought a message of hope and prosperity. As a great leader, he was able to forge unity among the different tribal clans. Thus he opened a golden chapter and started a heritage of pride and honour. This community invited the Roman and the Persian empires. After bringing faith in the religion, it was felt necessary to increase the number of the believers. Hence marriage and child births were encouraged. Allah promised prosperity to all those who brought faith in Him. It was granted that those who fought in the way of Allah, i.e. for Islam, they will become the inheritors of this world. Marriage is the best way, not just sexual intercourse and that Muslim, who is not prepared to look after a large family, is an outcast from his own clan. Children and wealth were not considered as burdens or problems in those days and the pre-Islamic practice of killing infant daughters were considered as heinous crimes. All the controversial and contradictory religious beliefs were brought to an end by Islam.

In the early age, Islam gave up the practice of men becoming hermits. Like one aspires to have peace in the life after death, it is also necessary to have prosperity and strength in the society here while we live. Both are interrelated. One cannot be conceived without the other; one should not be conceived without the other. The world is the cultivable land, the 'Akheraat' is the reaping of the harvest. The protagonists of religion could not be stoop low or be so mean.

The baby and all its capabilities were considered to be gifts of Allah. There was no horror or hatred against men as far as his body was concerned. The ideal is not a high place in society. The ideal is to be friendly with all. All the sexual potency and desires were considered natural and healthy. Within limits it was neither sinful nor unsocial. It is just a source of pleasure, Muslim husbands have not been asked to sleep with wives only to have babies. Just as we have our duties towards Allah, society and family, we also have some duties towards our own soul and body.

The early history of Islam is in the document of a conqueror spreading the empire. The Islamic society developed and enlarged itself, spread with strength and established an empire and a civilization. The society could not be eliminated even with wars. Agriculture and industry made good progress. When such was the state of affairs, large families were indeed most suitable.

But now times have changed. The situation is not the same any more. There is no possibility of the Muslim society to wage any war to conquer and spread its empire. Good lands are also scarce. Many Muslim states are already suffering from over population. The advancement made in medical science for the prevention and cure of diseases have lowered the death rate and have thus made it necessary to adopt birth control measures. Likewise, the modern concepts of agriculture and industry also do not favour large size families.

In the present day world, the Islamic society must keep up with the modern trends in human society. It has to be done not only for the sake of progress and prosperity, but for that very survival itself as a separate entity. Of course to remain in tune with the modern trends or to keep up with the fast moving world will not be an easy job. Rather it will be a very difficult work. The establishments that were fruitful and beneficial in the past, have become fruitless and harmful obstacles in the way of progress and prosperity. But in keeping up with the age-old conservatism, the well-to-do Muslim society is still holding fast unto the old customs and traditions. In the time of Hadhrat Umar (RA), Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and Emperor

Akbar, it was considered a status symbol to have many wives and many children. Nowadays also many people feel the same way. Fortunately the old customs and traditions were not unilateral and arbitrary. Those were formulated with a view to benefit the society; to have more people of the same faith in the human society. But at no stage it was made compulsory. Although stress was given on general welfare, yet the rights of personal life was always given priority and due recognition. The Ulema of the past openly discussed matters relating to checking of pregnancy, and the best among them always gave the verdict that such steps are justified and logical. The leading scholar among the conservative opinion holders is Imam Ghazzali, and Al-Ghazzali has declared that any Muslim, in order to spend a decent life, to keep his wife beautiful and healthy, and to save himself from the multifarious problems and anxieties of a large-size family, may adopt methods to check pregnancy.

It is a great boon to have such a positive instruction for personal family planning. They are very careful about old instances and they are very respectful to ancient people and practices. But the ancient people have not said anything about controlling the population of a nation. For many reasons, our ancestors did not worry about this problem. But for less fortunate people like us, it has become a serious problem.

If the modern Ulema make a careful study of the modern social and economic conditions, and if they want to give a proper response to the new call, then they will advise the Muslims to abandon polygamy and also avoid having too many children. These old practices have to be given up and family planning methods will have to be adopted as a rule in the larger interest of the general public. The Ulema of today will not find any specific religious instruction against the adoption of such methods. The way it has been analysed by Al-Ghazzali and Ibn-e-Qaiyum, it is clear that birth control is not objectionable.

On the contrary, it has the support of many Hadith-e-Rasool (PBUH) and the recommendation of most of the Ulema. The real obstruction are the influences, old customs and traditions, and the inactive and illogical conservative '*Mullahs*' with very limited knowledge about religion. Their knowledge is limited and completely confined to medieval thoughts. And as a community, they are completely ignorant and unconcerned with political and economic problems that we are facing today. But the need for social welfare demands that re-thinking should be done. And this new thinking should be free from the age-old superstitions; and it should be based on contemporary knowledge of human society and its needs.