

A Muslim Woman's Perspective

Sources of the Islamic Tradition

Before one can speak meaningfully about family planning in the context of the Islamic tradition, it is necessary to clarify what one means by "the Islamic tradition". This tradition — like other major religious traditions — does not consist of or derive from, a single source. Most Muslims, if questioned about its sources are likely to refer to more than one of the following: The Qur'an (the book of Revelation believed by Muslims to be the Word of God revealed through the agency of Archangel Gabriel to the Prophet Muhammad); Sunnah (the practical traditions of the prophet Muhammad); Hadith (the sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad); Fiqh (Jurisprudence) or Madahib (Schools of Law); and the Shari'ah (the code of life which pertains to all aspects of Muslim life). While all of these "sources" have contributed to what is cumulatively referred to as "the Islamic tradition", it is important to note that they do not form a coherent or consistent body of teachings or precepts from which a universally-agreed-upon set of Islamic norms can be derived.

Many examples can be cited of inconsistencies amongst various sources of the Islamic tradition. There are, for instance, inconsistencies between the Qur'an and the Hadith literature which are considered to be the primary sources of the Islamic tradition. Inconsistencies can also be found within the body of the Hadith literature and the literature of the Schools of Law. In view of this fact, it is hardly possible to speak of "Islam" or "the Islamic tradition" as if it were unitary or monolithic. Its various components need to be identified and examined separately before any generalisation is attempted on behalf of the tradition as a whole. It is obviously not possible, within the scope of this short paper, to engage in a comprehensive discussion of the complex issue of family planning in the light of all the above-mentioned sources of the

Islamic tradition. However, in a brief account which follows, attention is drawn to those ideas and attitudes found in the sources of Islamic tradition which I consider to be significant and pertinent in a contemporary reflection on a subject of increasing importance both in the Islamic world as well as the world in general.

Family Planning and the Qur'an

Theoretically — without a doubt — the Qur'an is the highest and most authoritative source of normative Islam. A clear Qur'anic statement of any subject is regarded by the overwhelming majority of Muslims as decisive and beyond questioning. The Qur'an is not, however, a book of laws and regulations which deal directly with every conceivable issue or problem. Rather, it is a book of divine wisdom meant to guide human beings so they can actualise their potential as human beings made "in the best of moulds" (Surah 95: At-Tin: 4) and become God's vice-regents on earth. While there is no clear text or texts in the Qur'an which focus directly on the contemporary issue of family planning, the Qur'an does establish, through its teachings, the ethical framework in which this issue — like other contemporary issues — can be discussed in all its multifaceted complexity.

Often progressive Muslims who support family planning say that the Qur'an is silent on the issue of family planning and they take this silence to be a sign of affirmation rather than negation. For instance, Fazlur Rahman has pointed out that "in the verses of the Holy Qur'an one finds nothing which gainsays the view that we should control our population, for a time, to remedy our present situation."¹ On the other hand, conservative Muslims, like Abul A'la Maududi, insist that "the Qur'an is not silent"² on the subject. They point to the Qur'anic condem-

nation of the practice of burying female children alive which has prevalent in pre-Islamic Arabia (Surah 81: At-Takwir: 8-9; Surah 16: An-Nahl: 57-59); and also to the Qur'anic verses in which the "killing" of children is prohibited or censured (Surah 6: Al-An'am: 137, 140, 151; Surah 17: Al-Isra': 31; Surah 60: Al-Mumtahanah: 12). Further, they refer to verses such as the following to support their contention that procreation is a blessing from God:

"O people! fear your Lord who has created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from these He raised up many men and women" (Surah 4: An-Nisa': 4)³

"And remember (the time) when you were few, and how He made you many" (Surah 7: Al-A'raf: 86)⁴

"And, truly, We sent forth apostles before thee, and We appointed for them wives and offspring" (Surah 13: Ar-Ra'd: 38)⁵

"And God has given you mates of your own kind and has given you, through your mates, children and children's children, and has provided for you sustenance out of the good things of life." (Surah 16: An-Nahl: 72)⁶

"And who pray: "O our Sustainer! Grant that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes." (Surah 25: Al-Furqan: 74)⁷

Opponents of family planning also cite Qur'anic verses, such as the following, which state that all sustenance comes from God who provides for all creatures, particularly blessing those who have trust in God:

"...do not kill your children for fear of poverty — for it is We who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them" (Surah 6: Al-An'am: 151)⁸

"There is no creeping being on earth but that upon God is its sustenance" (Surah 11: Hud: 6)⁹

"And onto everyone who is conscious of God, He (always) grants a way out (of unhappiness), and provides for him in a manner beyond all expectation: and for everyone who places his trust in God, He (alone) is enough." (Surah 65: At-Talaq: 2-3)¹⁰

Addressing, first, the arguments used by conservative Muslims to contend that the Qur'an is

opposed to the idea of family planning, I would like to state the following:

(1) The references in the Qur'an to the killing of children (who — according to the testimony of both "sacred" and historical texts — were female, not male, offspring) are to children already born and not to unborn children. Hence they are not relevant in a discussion whether birth control is permissible or not.

(2) The references in the Qur'an to the "killing" of children, may not, in all instances, point to actual slaying of offspring, but could be symbolic of ill-treatment of children. As pointed out by Ghulam Ahmad Parwez in his lexicon of the Qur'an, the Arabic root-word "q-t-l" means not only to slay with a weapon, blow or poison, but also to humiliate and degrade or to deprive of proper upbringing and education.¹¹

(3) Though the Qur'an repeatedly refers to God as the creator and sustainer of all creation, it does not absolve either individuals or communities of responsibility for their survival and well-being. Rather, it constantly reminds human beings (a) that "for itself lies every soul in pledge"¹²; (b) that reason ("aql") is what elevates human beings above all other creatures and enables them to become God's vicegerents on earth (c) that right belief ("iman") is inseparable from righteous action ("amal") which involves continual striving ("jihad") for overcoming inner and outer obstacles to making the world the abode of justice and peace, which is the goal of Islam; (d) that God will not change the condition of human beings until they change what is in themselves (Surah 13: Ar-Ra'd: 11). Using the Qur'anic references to God's power or promise to sustain all creation to argue "for an unlimited population in proportion to the economic resources" is — as pointed out by Fazlur Rahman — "infantile. The Qur'an certainly does not mean to say that God provides every living creature with sustenance whether that creature is capable of procuring sustenance for itself or not."¹³

Addressing, next, the argument used by progressive or "liberal" Muslims in support of family planning, namely, that the Qur'an is silent about the subject which means — at the very least — that it is not opposed to the idea of birth control, I would like to respond as follows:

(1) The absence of war does not necessarily imply peace, as the absence of sickness does not necessarily imply health. The fact that the Qur'an does not say anything against the idea of birth control does not — likewise — necessarily imply that it supports family planning.

(2) Many present-day Muslims, having heard all their lives that "the Qur'an is the complete code of life" expect to find in the Qur'an specific or direct statements pertaining to all the issues or subjects which are of importance to them. When they do not find such statements they assume that the Qur'an has nothing to say about these issues or subjects. This perceived "silence" of the Qur'an regarding a number of significant "modern" issues — such as the issue of family planning — creates a theological and ethical vacuum which different persons and groups fill in different ways.

What needs, urgently to be done — in my opinion — is the critical review of the idea that the Qur'an is a complete code of life. In what way is the Qur'an a complete code of life? Certainly, it is not an encyclopedia which may be consulted to obtain specific information about how God views each problem, issue or situation that human beings may be confronted with. Nor is the Qur'an "a legal code", as pointed out by Muhammad Iqbal.¹⁴ By regarding the Qur'an as a Book in which they will find ready-made laws,

regulations, prescriptions or assessments relating to everything in life, a large number of Muslims have lost sight of the main purpose of the Qur'an. This purpose — as stated by Iqbal — is "to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his relation with God and the universe... The important thing in this connection is the dynamic outlook of the Qur'an".¹⁵

Though the Qur'an does not address the issue of family planning specifically, or directly, its teachings shed a good deal of light on how this issue — and other contemporary issues — may be understood or dealt with, within the ethical framework of normative Islam. For instance, the Qur'an puts great emphasis on the preservation of what we commonly refer to as "fundamental human rights" such as

- (a) the right to be respected for one's humanity;¹⁶
- (b) the right to be treated with justice and equity;¹⁷
- (c) the right to be free of traditionalism, authoritarianism (religious, intellectual, political, economic), tribalism, classism or caste-system, sexism and slavery;¹⁸
- (d) the right to privacy and protection from slander, backbiting and ridicule;¹⁹
- (e) the right to acquire knowledge;²⁰
- (f) the right to work, to earn, to own property;²¹
- (g) the right to have a secure place of residence

in an environment in which one's possessions and covenants are protected and in which one can move freely;²²

(h) the right to leave one's place of origin under oppressive conditions;²³

(i) the right to develop one's aesthetic sensibilities and enjoy the bounties created by God;²⁴ and

(j) the right not only to life but to "the good life" which is possible — according to Qur'anic perspective — only in a just society because justice is a prerequisite for peace and peace is the prerequisite for self-actualisation.²⁵

For Muslims, the Qur'an, being God's Word, is the primary and most authoritative source of Islam. As mentioned above, the Qur'an strongly affirms and upholds fundamental human rights. It follows, therefore, that these rights must be acknowledged and protected in all Muslim societies and communities. Given the unhappy socio-cultural, economic, and political conditions of much of the present-day Muslim world where the increase in the birth-rate is amongst the highest in the world, the need for family planning may be regarded as self-evident. The right to use contraceptives, especially by disadvantaged masses whose lives are scarred by grinding poverty and massive illiteracy, should be seen — in the light of the Qur'anic vision of what an Islamic society should be — as a fundamental human right. This is particularly applicable to Muslim women who, though over 500 million in number, are amongst the most unrepresented or voiceless, and powerless, "minorities" in the world.

Family Planning and the Hadith Literature

In pre-Islamic Arabia, birth control was practised mostly by "coitus interruptus" ("azl"). As pointed out by Fazlur Rahman, contradictions may be found in the Hadith literature on the question of whether Islam permitted or prohibited "azl".²⁶ There are three well-known hadiths ("ahadith") on the subject of "azl" and they are mutually contradictory. According to one of them, the Prophet is reported to have referred to "azl" as a "lesser infanticide".²⁷ This hadith is contradicted by a second one which narrates that a man came to the Prophet and said, "We practise "azl", but we have some Jewish neigh-

bours who say this is a lesser infanticide." The Prophet responded by saying, "They are lying. It is not a lesser infanticide; you may practice it, but if God has predetermined for a child to be born, it will be born." After some time this man told the Prophet that his wife has become pregnant, and the Prophet said, "did not I tell you that if a child is predetermined by God to be born, it will be born?"²⁸

The third hadith is in contradiction with both of the above. It states that a companion of the Prophet said, "We used to practise "azl" (during the prophet's lifetime) and he knew about it while the Qur'an was also being revealed, but the Qur'an did not prohibit it."²⁹ According to Fazlur Rahman, the last-mentioned hadith "seems to have a ring of historical authenticity about it... It therefore seems plausible to hold that the common pre-Islamic practice of contraception was allowed to stand by the Prophet as it was, without his saying anything about it, although it would have been possible for him to ban it, if he had thought fit."³⁰

Since two of the three hadiths cited above indicate that the Prophet gave either verbal, or tacit, approval to the practice of "azl", progressive or "liberal" Muslims adopt the position that the Hadith literature sanctions family planning. To refute this view, conservative or "traditional" Muslims cite the Qur'anic verses in which offspring are referred to as a blessing from God, and to hadiths which report the Prophet as exhorting his followers to get married,³¹ procreate and increase in number, and as saying that on the Day of Resurrection, he would be proud of how large his community was in comparison to other communities.³² Here, it may be noted that neither getting married nor begetting children is considered mandatory in Islam. While the Qur'an refers to offspring as a blessing, it also states that they could be a source of "fitna" or mischief in the world. Further, the Qur'an is far more concerned about the righteousness ("taqwa") of Muslims than about their numbers. This concern is also echoed by the hadith which says that the few who are virtuous are superior to the many who are undesirable.³³

In the context of family planning and the Hadith literature, it is of importance to mention that while the hadith according to which the

Prophet heard directly about the practice of "azl" and did not disavow it, is found in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim — the two Hadith collections which Sunni Muslims regard as being the most authoritative — the hadith condemning the practice of "azl" is generally regarded as a weak (as opposed to "sahih" or "sound") hadith.³⁴ Here, it is also of interest to note that according to the Hadith collections compiled by Ahmad ibn Hanbal (the Musnad) and Ibn Majah and Abu Dawud (the Sunnan), the Prophet forbade the practice of "azl" without the wife's consent.³⁵

Family Planning and Schools of Law

All the five major Schools of Law in Islam, namely, the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, Hanbali, and Ja'fari, permit the practice of "azl".³⁶ While the Shafi'i School "allows contraception unconditionally to the husband, who need not do it with the consent of the wife",³⁷ the other four schools permit the practice of "azl" only with the wife's consent.³⁸ The practice of contraception is forbidden only by the medieval Spanish Muslim Ibn Hazm's Zahiri or "literarist" School which had few followers.³⁹ It is allowed by the Zaidi as well as the Ismai'ili Schools.⁴⁰

Amongst the Muslim jurists whose views on contraception have had the most widespread impact, is al-Ghazali who was the pre-eminent philosopher and Sufi, besides being a Shafi'i legal scholar. Falzur Rahman has summarised al-Ghazali's position on contraception in the following passage:

"Al-Ghazali held that a truly pious person who has attained to "trust in God" (among the highest spiritual "stations" of Sufism) cannot resort to contraception because he or she knows that God, who has created a soul, will not leave it without sustenance. Therefore, for such a person to exercise conception control is unlawful. But people who have this kind of trust in God are very rare, while the average person is always haunted by worldly considerations. For such people it is permitted to exercise conception control to free them of economic worries. Further, if a person fears that having children might force him or her to obtain livelihood by foul means like stealing or robbery, it is mandatory that he or she avoid having children in order to avoid the distinct possibility of committing sins. Al-Ghazali goes so far as to hold that a man who fears that if his wife has children, her health or good looks might be

affected and he might come to dislike her should refrain from having children."⁴¹

Here, it may be of interest to mention that several medieval jurists permitted not only contraception, but also abortion within four months of pregnancy before the "ensoulment" of the foetus.⁴² In general, Muslim jurists had held two opposing views of abortion. The first is that it is totally forbidden. This view is held by the majority of the Maliki School, while a small minority permits abortion within forty days of conception. The Ja'fari School also prohibits abortion. The second view is that abortion is permissible until "ensoulment" which is generally believed to occur after 120 days of conception. This view is held by the Hanafi School, the Shafi'i School, the Hanbali School and the Zayd School, though there are differences in opinion amongst individual jurists regarding the time of "ensoulment" and whether a compelling reason is required for abortion.⁴³ Amongst a compelling reason may be mentioned danger to the mother's life or a nursing child and the probability of giving birth to a deformed or defective child.⁴⁴

In Summation

Based on the overview of the sources of the Islamic tradition which has been presented in the foregoing pages, it can be stated with confidence that there is much support for family planning within the religious and ethical framework, as well as the legal and philosophical literature, of Islam. Despite this fact, in practice, family planning programs continue to fare badly in most of the Muslim world. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all the factors responsible for this state of affairs. However, I would like to mention two factors which have — in my judgement — contributed greatly to the large-scale ineffectiveness of family planning programs in Muslim societies and communities.

The first and most important factor is that women — who are the persons most obviously and directly affected by family planning initiatives (since only they can become pregnant) — are regarded in virtually all Muslim societies as being less than fully human. In several of my writings I have shown how the idea that women are inferior to men who alone are fully human or autonomous, is built in the Islamic — as in the

Jewish and Christian — tradition on three fundamental theological assumptions. These assumptions are:

a) that God's primary creation is man, not woman, since woman is believed to have been created of man's rib and is, therefore, derivative and secondary, ontologically;

b) that woman, not man, was the primary agent of what is costoumarily described as "Man's Fall" or expulsion from paradise, and hence "all daughters of Eve" are to be regarded with hatred, suspicion and contempt; and

c) that woman was created not only from but also for man, which makes her existence instrumental and not of fundamental importance.

The major reason why these assumptions — which are not warranted by a correct reading of the Qur'an — have remained unchallenged for so long is not only because the masses of Muslim women are steeped in poverty and illiteracy, but also because even privileged and educated Muslim women — like their counterparts on other major religious traditions — have been systematically denied the opportunity to acquire the critical tools whereby they can examine the roots of their tradition and discover how they became so disadvantaged. They are, therefore, unable to refute the arguments which impose unjust laws and restrictions upon them in the name of Islam.

Here it is important to note that women have been the primary target of the impetus toward "Islamisation" evident in a number of Muslim countries in recent years. In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to know that Muslims in general see educated or emancipated women as symbols, not of "modernisation" but of "Westernisation". While the former is associated with science, technology and progress and is largely approved of, the latter is associated with emblems of "mass" Western culture such as promiscuity, break-up of the family and community, latch-key kids, drug and alcohol abuse and is largely disapproved of. Caretakers of Muslim traditionalism feel a strong and urgent need to put women in their "proper place". They seek to do that by confining them to their homes and reducing them mathematically, to less than a fully human status.⁴⁵

Muslim women are subjected not only to phy-

sical and economic subjugation, but also to moral, intellectual and spiritual degradation through a misinterpretation of the essential message of Islam. Thus, they are told that according to Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 223, the wife is the husband's "tilth" so he can "plow" her whenever he so desires, that according to Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 228, and Surah 4:An-Nisa': 34, men have "a degree of advantage" over them that they have the right to control and confine and even to beat women who refuse to be totally subservient and obedient to their husbands who are referred to as "majazi khuda" or "god in earthly form".

Having spent twenty years doing research on women-related passages in the Qur'an I know that the Qur'an does not discriminate against women. In fact, in view of their disadvantaged and vulnerable condition, it is highly protective of their rights and interests. But this does not change the fact that the way Islam has been practised in most Muslim societies for centuries has left millions of Muslim women with battered bodies, minds and souls. Lacking any sense of self-worth, self-esteem or self-confidence, they find it very hard to resist the pressure put on them by conservative, widely influential Muslims like Maududi who tell them repeatedly that family planning is demonic in intent and contrary to both God's wishes and society's welfare. Maududi's observations, cited below, are typical of the conservative line of thinking which is thwarting the success of family planning programs throughout the Muslim world:

"Co-education, employment of women in offices, mixed social gatherings, immodest female dresses, and beauty parades are now a common feature of our social life. Legal hindrances have also been placed in the way of marriage and on having more than one wife, but no bar against keeping mistresses and illicit relationships, prior to the age of marriage. In such a society perhaps the last obstacle that may keep a woman from surrendering to a man's advances is fear of illegitimate conception. Remove this obstacle too and provide women with weak character assurance that they can safely surrender to their male friends and you will see that the society will be plagued by the tide of moral licentiousness."⁴⁶

Without a radical change in the way in which Muslim women perceive themselves, there is no chance that family planning will ever become an

integral part of Muslim social and domestic life. How this change is going to be brought about is the challenge which needs to be faced by everyone who is concerned about the future of the Muslim "ummah" (community) as well as the world at large.

The second factor which has been responsible — in my opinion — for the failure of many development projects — including family planning projects — in the Muslim world, is the attitude toward religion in general which exists in the minds of those who design these projects. A bias which is widely prevalent among development "experts" — most of whom have a Western, secular, orientation — is that "the issue of development does not involve theological debate; it relates to entirely other issues."⁴⁷

I disagree very strongly with those who regard religion as being irrelevant to development issues. Even those who concede that religion may be one of the factors to be considered in development projects do not understand the reality of present-day Muslim societies. Certainly, in the context of the Muslim world, it is essential in my judgement to see that Islam (in all its complexity) is not just one of the factors involved in development issues, but the matrix in which all other factors are grounded.

Notes:

- 1 Rahman, F., "Religion and Planned Parenthood in Pakistan" in Muslim Attitudes toward Family Planning, compiled and edited by Olivia Schieffelin, The Population Council, New York, 1972, p.94
- 2 Maududi, A.A., Birth Control (translated and edited by K. Ahmad and M.I. Faruqi), Islamic Publications Limited, Lahore, 1974, p. 83
- 3 Translation by Fazlur Rahman, "Religion and Planned Parenthood in Pakistan", p.94
- 4 Translation by Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'an, Dar Al-Andulus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.216
- 5 Ibid., p. 368
- 6 Ibid., pp. 406-407
- 7 Ibid., p. 558
- 8 Ibid., p. 198
- 9 "Religion and Planned Parenthood in Pakistan", p. 94
- 10 The Message of the Qur'an, o. 872
- 11 Parwez, G.A., Lughat al Qur'an, Idara Tulu'e Islam, Lahore, 1961, volume III, pp. 1338-1340
- 12 For instance, see Surah 52: At-Tur: 21, and Surah 74: Al-Muddaththir: 38
- 13 "Religion and Planned Parenthood in Pakistan", p.94
- 14 Iqbal, Muhammad, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Shaik Muhammad Asraf, Lahore, 1962, p.165
- 15 Ibid., pp. 165-166
- 16 For instance, see Surah 17: Al-Isra': 70
- 17 For instance, see Surah 4: An-Nisa': 135, 136; Surah 5: Al-Ma'idah: 8
- 18 For instance, see Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 177, 256, 282; Surah 3:

Al-'Imran: 79, 159; Surah 4: An-Nisa': 36, 92, 135, 136; Surah 5: Al-Ma'idah: 89; Surah 6: Al-An'am: 107, 108; Surah 9: At-Tawbah: 60; Surah 10: Yunus: 99; Surah 12: Yusuf: 40; Surah 16: An-Nahl: 82; Surah 18: Al-Kahf: 29; Surah 24: An-Nur: 33; Surah 42: Ash-Shura: 21, 38, 48; Surah 47: Muhammad: 4; Surah 58: Al-Mujadalah: 3.

19 For instance, see Surah 4: An-Nisa': 148-149; Surah 24: An-Nur: 16-17, 27-28, 58; Surah 33: Al-Ahzab: 53; Surah 49: Al-Hujurat: 11, 12.

20 For instance, see Surah 9: At-Tawbah: 122; Surah 20: Ta-Ha: 114; Surah 39: Az-Zumar: 9; Surah 96: Al-Alaq': 1-5.

21 For instance, see Surah 4: Al-Nisa': 11-12, 31.

22 For instance, see Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 229; Surah 3: Al-'Imran: 17, 77; Surah 5: Al-Ma'idah: 1; Surah 17: Al-Isra': 34; Surah 67: Al-Mulk: 15.

23 For instance, see Surah 4: An-Nisa': 97-100.

24 For instance, see Surah 7: Al-A'raf: 32; Surah 57: Al-Hadid: 27.

25 For a detailed account of human rights affirmed by the Qur'an, see my paper entitled "On Human Rights and the Qur'anic Perspective" published in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Volume 'I', No.3, Summer 1982, pp. 51-65; reprinted in Human Rights in Religious Traditions, edited by Arlene Swidler, The Pilgrim Press, New York, 1982, pp. 51-65; also in Muslims in Dialogue: The Evolution of a Dialogue, edited by Leonard Swidler, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, 1992, pp. 463-495. Here, it may also be mentioned that currently a paper I wrote, entitled "Human Rights in Islam" is being published under the auspices of the German Foundation, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

26 Rahman, F., Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition, Crossroad, New York, 1989, p. 113

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 114

30 Ibid.

31 It is widely believed by Muslims that the Prophet had said that whoever gets married completes half of the "Din" or "Faith" of Islam

32 Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition, p. 114

33 Quoted by Engineer, A.A., "Islam and Family Planning", Progressive Perspective, Institute of Islamic Studies, Bombay, Volume 1, No. 4, October 1992, p. 5

34 Osman, Fathi, Al-Fiqr al-Islami wa'l-Tatawur, Cairo, 1960, p. 197

35 Ibid., the emphasis is the author's

36 Bowen, D.L., Islam and Family Planning, Population and Human Resources Division, Technical Department, Europe, Middle East and North Africa Region, Volume 1, Number 1, February 1991, p. 10.

37 Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition, p. 114; the emphasis is the author's

38 Wahbah al-Zuhaili, Al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Addillatuh, Dar al-Fiqr, Damascus, 1984, Volume 7, pp. 331-332, referred to by Azizah Al-Hibri, "Family Planning and Islamic Jurisprudence", in Religious and Ethical Perspectives in Population Issues, The Religious Consultation on Population, Reproductive Health and Ethics, Washington, D.C., 1993, p. 5

39 Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition, p. 114

40 Islam and Family Planning, p. 10

41 Health and Medicine in the Islamic Tradition, p. 115

42 Ibid., p. 118

43 Islam and Family Planning, pp. 10-12

44 Omran, A.R., Family planning in the legacy of Islam, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, Cairo, 1988, p. 332, cited in Ibid., p. 11

45 In this context reference may be made, for instance, to the Hudood Ordinance (1979) or the Law of Evidence (1984) which were implemented in Pakistan as a part of the "Islamisation" process initiated by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. Both of the above were very discriminatory towards women and have had a markedly negative impact on the lives of many women (especially disadvantaged women) in Pakistan.

46 Birth Control, p. 176

47 Sobhan, Salma. "Political History in the Indian Subcontinent" — a paper read at a seminar on Women, Islam and Development, sponsored by the Foreign Ministry of the Royal Netherlands Government, which was held in the Hague, on September 15, 1993.

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