

The Influence of Spirituality during Pregnancy: The Lights and Shadows

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In Asia, religion and health have been intertwined for centuries. Many cultures relate pregnancy and childbirth with religion and tradition. Spirituality is vital to nursing and midwifery. It is the part of all nursing and midwifery clients' and families' care¹. Women pray more for protection, safe delivery, and blessings throughout pregnancy. Some women dread death during caesarian section and others are stigmatized². It endures, to birth spontaneously; expectant ladies would try all spiritual and conventional techniques. Women pray alone or together. Pregnant ladies pray to build their faith in God and have confidence in a safe delivery³. Women communicate differently depending on their religion. Women can pray with blessed water, threads, recited water and oil. These items can be used once or throughout pregnancy⁴. The Holy Spirit is supposed to influence users through blessed water and oil. Some women recite scripture during prayers. Religious restrictions for pregnant women vary by group.

Pakistani religious leaders offer prayers for pregnant ladies and handing them holy water, threads and oil. Some leaders directly blow on ladies and give them spiritual advice about using objects or performing other specific practices to ensure safe birth. Traditional practices include food and water limitations, avoiding graveyards and certain times of day, not associating with evil individuals, avoiding lunar eclipses, and drinking certain herbal preparations⁵. Some pregnant women are allowed to work. Women must confess unfaithfulness to their partners when labour is delayed, especially for home births. Avoiding fish may predispose pregnant women to dietary deficits⁶. Some ladies slated for caesarian sections prayed for normal labour and thought God heard their requests if they did not have the surgery⁷. After the labour ward thanksgiving, most women visit Sufi and Saints to testify about their successful delivery. Sufi and Saints or relatives prayed for the women. Some ladies received safe pregnancy and birth guidelines from their prayer colleagues. Thus, Dargah's thankfulness demonstrated gratitude for spiritual aid.

In other cases, religious authorities were contacted if women were unable to perceive baby movements. The religious authorities in such cases stated that the baby was bound in the mother's womb after a medical assessment showed a huge infant. The women were also given a holy book quote to utilize during prayers⁸. Religious leaders prayed for pregnant ladies with horrible dreams. Experts prayed in tongues (Holy Spirit-given speech). Prayers designed to prevent pregnancy complications⁹. Some religious leaders touched the abdomen and administered blessed olive oil to pray for ladies while others advised to avoid evil spirits, expecting women shouldn't consume anything in public. Few ladies vividly recounted an obligatory first-pregnancy practice for their community. She was bound, soaked in mud, and forced to buy onions in the morning. This ritual ensured ancestral protection, safe birth, and a healthy baby¹⁰.

Religious leaders gave pregnant and labouring women stickers. Some ladies put the label in the hair net in the labour ward, while others massaged it on their abdomen. Women also put stickers on their water bottles.¹¹ Most ladies were worshipped with blessed water and prayed upon by their religious counselors. Faces were washed with holy water. Expecting women received

blessed black thread to tie or place beneath the pillows for safety. Mothers utilized some artefacts. Some spouses were unaware of such objects. A woman used religiously sanctified sand and thought it was secure. Water has been added to blessed sand and sieved for pregnancy. The pregnant woman prayed with the sacred book. Some ladies disbelieved in religious instructors and specialists praying for them while their husbands disapproved, several pregnant ladies used oil¹².

Pregnancy and the birth process are sacred because a baby is born. The pregnant women hear from religious advisors, mothers, husbands, and doctors. Pregnancy and caesarian section fears exacerbate the issue. Religious practices then safeguard pregnant women. In this context, nurses and gynecologists should know that religious belief is an integral part of the health care of expecting women in Pakistan and motivate and teach women to avoid vague, unnecessary, and illegal practices that could harm them and the foetus. Women should be free to practice their religion. This reduces religious artifact secrecy.

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