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**Review article**

## **Diet for pregnant women from the viewpoint of Islam and Islamic culture**

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### ABSTRACT

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In this study, the researcher intends to review traditional beliefs related to dietary habits of women during pregnancy and delivery from the viewpoint of Islam; what kinds of foods, it knows, are harmful to pregnant women, and also how much is the impact of religious thoughts on nutrition, health and hygiene during pregnancy; in the end, what the researcher attends to is the resulting effect and changes in people's thinking in the field of pregnant women's nutrition created as a result of cultural, social and economic changes as well as understanding of some applied aspects of traditional health and nutrition study and its beliefs in order to promote the level of community health which is effective in representing some part of community health culture and more enrichment of people's culture.

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### **1. Introduction**

In today's so-called modern world of humans getting farther from each other from day to day and closer to the evening of intimacy and humanity, the revival of customs and traditions of each society can allocate the title of "cultural tranquilizer" to itself and reduce the pains caused by modernity, and this is the most important cases of necessity of doing research in the field of cultural anthropology. I should also point out that the manpower required to progress, in addition to being efficient and experienced, it should be healthy, and in order to educate healthy people in society, naturally, investment in nutrition

should be considered as a part of the profitable investment, and comprehensive programs must be executed in this field. In this respect, the study of the pregnant women's nutrition to educate a healthy baby and subsequently a healthy society can be considered as our most important approach.

## 2. Research background

To approach its specific purpose and considering that in the case of this particular subject, no research has been conducted yet, the researcher has referred to two groups of theses:

1. Studies that dealt with the subject of beliefs, customs and traditions and are related to the social science group.
2. Studies that dealt with the subject of nutrition and pregnancy period and are related to the medical science group. Its report is as follows:
  - 1.1. Monograph of a disease in the culture of Hamadan, Hamid Akhavan, directed by: Rahim Farokhnia, Faculty of Humanities, Islamic Azad University of Arak, 2005, Master of Art.

In this thesis, the researcher considers the region of Hamadan; the way of thinking, attitudes, beliefs; how to look at the culture of Hamadan people on traditional medicine and traditional, religious as well as superstitious culture and beliefs; the way of attitude of the people of the city and also changes; and how to think in the field of treatment status from the cultural, social and economic viewpoint in traditional method of treatment; then he seeks to identify some applied aspects of studying traditional medicine and its beliefs as well as health promotion of society that the researcher has achieved these results:

1. What today is expressed about traditional medical beliefs is mostly concerned with herbal treatments, and there is a relationship between herbal remedies and treatments associated with them, and less attention is paid to its superstitious aspects.
2. Religion is a kind of suggestive belief that relying on it and the mentality created, the human makes the relationship between diseases and treatment; and research shows that the recovery of a disease through it is more than medicinal items.
3. The current world and urban socio-economic developments have also faced the new medicine like other social issues and urbanization with substantial changes.
4. Review of folk beliefs in the culture of Goglan Turkmens (the city of Kalaleh) and its role in the life of Turkmen people, Hakim Sarani, directed by: Rahim Farokhnia, Faculty of Humanities, Azad University of Arak, 2005, Master of Art.

The culture of each nation represents the identity of that nation, so we should strive to enrich and maintain the culture of our country. In order to do this important matter, all researchers of anthropology must endeavor to collect information and data associated with all customs and traditions, as well as the people's beliefs; find the relationship of these customs and traditions in different discussions; attempt to portray the integrity of public culture, and then reconstruct this cultural framework to represent their culture. Here, I admit that the purpose of the researcher in the study has been to achieve this important matter. In this chapter, the researcher deals with presenting its information and data.

### 2.1. Research objectives

The objectives of this research are to get familiar with longstanding traditions of health in Iran's traditional society and probably to revive them in order to facilitate the issue of health because traditional foods and prayers can be identified and evident beside new treatment practices as the part of our cultural identity.

Portraying traditional and indigenous culture in conjunction with pregnancy period can be effective in representing a part of the health community culture and further help the enrichment of the society culture. In fact, the human cultural identity is hidden in such traditions.

### 2.2. Research methodology

A fundamental discussion in anthropology is to identify culture and the key to this identification is the accuracy of its data and collection methods. Since the main source of data collection and the accuracy in this study is based on a number of the questioned's answer, therefore, in the present research, the issue is discussed using Ethnography method.

### 2.3. Research tools – research technique

The author of this research with respect to the subject matter and research methodology, has used observation, interview, observation, case study techniques referring to key information providers and documented information.

The desired information of ethnography is acquired by dialogue, chat, discussion and observation and requires a researcher's patience and skill as well as a respondent's trust. This method can make the researcher familiar with unclear values and factors that can never be possible with a questionnaire (Roholamini, 2001, P. 107).

### 2.4. Research questions

The present research examines recommendations related to dietary habits during pregnancy from the perspective of Islam done with the anthropology approach and also seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Which foods are considered as holy and good from the perspective of Islam?
2. Which foods are considered as bad and undesirable from the perspective of Islam?

In this section, the researcher intends to deal with good and sacred foods from the perspective of society:

Imam Ali (A) said: "grape is the stew, fruit, food and sweet paste." (Makarem –al Akhlagh, P. 198 as quoted by Mostafa Noori)

The Prophet (S) said: "Noah (A) complained to God about grief and worry; revelation received from that to eat grape since it destroys worry." (Bahar, V. 62, P.298, as quoted by Mostafa Noori)

Imam Sadegh (A) said: "Four things make the nature moderate:  
"Syrian pomegranate, baked date, pansy, and chicory"

Imam Sadegh (A) said as quoted from his grandfather, Imam Ali (A): "For a pregnant woman, nothing is better than date to eat."

Imam Bagher, in a narrative said: "a mixture of honey, saffron, and rain water is taking healing." In other narratives, some materials are available about saffron.

Imam Ali (A) said: "Eating apple cleans and washes the stomach." (Khesal, P. 144, as quoted by Mostafa Noorani)

Imam Bagher (A) said: "Smell apples before eating since it makes your sad soul quiet." (Bahar, V. 66, P. 171, as quoted by Mostafa Noorani)

Imam Reza said as quoted from his grandfather, the Prophet Mohammad (S): "Lentil is happy and sacred since makes your heart soft and increases tears of your eyes." (Oyoon al-Akhbar, v. 2, P. 41, as quoted by Mostafa Noori)

Imam Musa Ibn Jafar (A) said: "Eat honey and black seed; honey takes healing of any pains; relaxes the mind and makes the mind if it is eaten with Condor." (Ghiathi Interpretation, V. 2, P. 263, as quoted by Mostafa Noori)

Imam Ali (A) said as quoted from the Prophet (S): "Eat lettuce that makes sleep and digest the food." (Mostafa Noorani, 2005, PP. 199-200)

## 3. Properties of edibles not recommended to pregnant women

Eating too much amounts of these items, including sunflower seeds, wind-inducing vegetables such as (cress, coriander, leek, origany and spearmint) thyme, oleaster, eggplant, very great amount of saffron and turmeric, broad bean, black plum, dried black curds, pepper, ginger, vinegar, egg, salt, cabbage, and sugar are prohibited.

### 3.1. Sunflower seeds

One of the things that a pregnant woman is banned from eating is sunflower seeds. According to people of this region, eating sunflower seeds makes a baby restless and will cause earache, and it is caused by wind-inducing sunflower seeds. Of course, not only in pregnancy but also breastfeeding period, the mother must not eat sunflower seeds since the baby gets earache.

### **3.2. Wind-inducing vegetables**

A pregnant woman is banned from eating vegetables, such as cress, coriander, leek, origany, and spearmint because they believe that these wind-inducing vegetables get the baby always have earache. Breastfeeding women are also recommended the same thing not to eat these wind-inducing vegetables because the wind is transmitted through mother's milk to the baby and will cause it to get earache. In addition to this, the people of this region believe that this type of vegetables affect the taste of mother's milk and makes it tasteless, so they recommend the breastfeeding woman not to eat this type of vegetables either.

### **3.3. Oleaster**

In the case of oleaster, it must also be said eating it is not only good but also bad. Some people believed that eating oleaster is good to babies, but a very great amount of it is not good since oleaster is a little wind-inducing.

### **3.4. Hempseed**

In the case of hempseed that is usually eaten with wheat and more in winter, it is believed that it is wind-inducing and will cause the baby to get earache and be restless. But on the other hand, when the baby vomits a lot, it is recommended that mother to eat hempseed in order to make her milk tasty and not to let the baby vomit any more. Of course, when it is also recommended to eat, the mother should not eat it very much.

### **3.5. Eggplant**

Eggplant is also considered as one of the wind-inducing foods; of course, eating it by the pregnant woman is forbidden since it is said it is wind-inducing, causes sensitivity and is also very cool, the pregnant woman will be annoyed.

### **3.6. Saffron and turmeric**

Saffron and turmeric are considered as spices that at the same time is recommended to eat a very small amount of them, a group of people believe that eating too much amount of them will cause abortion. So eating them too much is dangerous for a woman and her baby.

### **3.7. Broad bean**

A number of people in this region believe that not only eating a great amount of broad bean is harmful to the pregnant woman, but also cleaning it too much will cause abortion.

### **3.8. Black plum and dried black curds**

Black plum and dried black curds are other things that a group of people ban the pregnant woman from eating them. The pregnant woman should not eat black plum since her baby will become black. So, eating them makes the baby's skin color dark.

### **3.9. Pepper**

In this region, the pregnant woman is forbidden from eating spicy foods with too much pepper. They say pepper is hot and eating it too much can be harmful to the pregnant woman.

### **3.10. Ginger**

Ginger is a kind of spice that its eating is recommended in a place and banned in another place. When the pregnant woman feels nausea, eating tea with little ginger is recommended but too much amount of it is prohibited since they believe ginger is very hot and will cause sensitivity in the baby.

### **3.11. Vinegar**

A group of people believed that the pregnant woman should not eat vinegar too much since it can reduce baby's intelligence.

### 3.12. Egg

Egg is also a kind of food that in addition, its consumption is recommended as low as possible, its eating too much for the pregnant woman is prohibited since they believe egg will cause the pregnant woman to be swollen in the last months and her delivery get hard.

### 3.13. Salt

Salt is one of the things that they stress the pregnant woman should be prevented from its eating because they believe that eating salt will cause the pregnant woman to be swollen and her delivery get difficult.

### 3.14. Cabbage

Some also believed that eating cabbage is not good for the pregnant woman since it will make the baby ugly. And not only at the time of pregnancy but also breast-feeding, they know it bad since they believe cabbage will make the mother's milk distasteful.

### 3.15. Thyme

Most people of this region believed this mountain grass "thyme" is harmful to the pregnant woman since she may have kidney's stone, and that is dangerous for the pregnant woman.

### 3.16. Sugar

Some people declared the pregnant woman was forbidden from eating sugar until the first two or three months of pregnancy since it is cool and is not suitable to the pregnant woman.

In addition to the pregnancy period, she is prohibited from eating the following things in breast-feeding period and ten days after delivery:

Although the pregnant woman is recommended to consume yogurt or Doogh, but a woman who has given birth newly is banned from eating yogurt and Doogh because people of this region believe that they are pretty cool and she should not consume them at all.

## 4. Conclusion

In the case of young generation, it must be said with regard to the increase in the level of education, advanced technology and enhanced communication, the attitude of this generation to these superstitions has changed and it knows more these issues as superstition rather than reality, but here it should be said that young people know these issues as superstition and the superstitions are available again in the corner of their mind that the researcher knows it is perhaps because firstly at the time of childhood, in this regard, they have heard a lot from their fathers and mothers; so this is still available in their mental residue, and secondly some parts of Shazand has still maintained their rural texture and these opinions are more specific to these textures.

Today's culture is not independent of the past, and there is no leap. Perhaps, it can be said at different times, the speed of changes has been different, but at different times, cultures have not been independent, but they have been connected together like the colors of rainbow.

The prayers that are read more during pregnancy includes "In the Name of God; Say God is the One; Hazrat Fatimah's praise; Ayatu-l-Kursi chapter; Yasin chapter; Hazrat Yusuf chapter; Hazrat Maryam chapter; Meraj and Nadali's praise; and Noor chapter."

In the end, I have to say culture is like a rainbow that begins from the red spectrum and after passing orange, yellow, green, etc. it reaches purple; the culture is a sequence or series of phenomena that have an intrinsic connection and no natural point can be found in a spectrum in which green is changed to yellow or yellow to red.

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