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Breastfeeding from Quran to Medical Science

Mehdi Dehghani Firoozabadi¹ and Mohammad Ali Sheikhi^{2*}

¹Department of Anesthesiology, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences-Yazd, Iran

²Department of Cardiac surgery, Atherosclerosis Research Center, Golestan Hospital, Ahvaz Jundishapur University of Medical Sciences, Ahvaz, Iran

*Corresponding author

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A B S T R A C T

One of these great miracles is the attention and emphasis paid on Breast feeding in the Quran. Totally, eight verses (ayahs) of seven chapters (suras) of the Quran are related to the mother's milk; a wise vision from different aspects that is along with unique justice and tips of the social and family doctrine. In addition, in the wake of the revelation of the severes, eloquent Hadiths of the infallible Imams (AS) emphasize on the importance of breast milk. And looking at the fate of some of those fed breast milk may easily show this fact. According to the Quran reference to breast milk in several different verses and Hadiths of the Imams (AS) in this case, the breast milk is of great importance. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the breastfeeding related verses in the Quran and Hadiths in order to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding in terms of religion deals. And then, we evaluate and assess recently reported research on the benefits and superiority of breastfeeding for babies and the mothers themselves. This research is completed in review form by studying the Quran, Hadith books and related research in different countries, as well as research web-sites. Among the eight verses of the Quran related to thebreastfeeding,233rd verse of Sura Al-Baqarah may be the most important in which it is stated that: *"And mothers[should] breastfeed their children for a total of two years. [This sentence] is for those who want to complete breast feeding duration."*This verse has a particular emphasis on the breastfeeding duration, and it states a 2-year period for breastfeeding. In fact, this is also referred in14th Sura of Luqman: *"And we recommend man upon concerninghis parents;his mother got pregnant to him, faint over faint. And his breastfeeding duration is for two years"*.A very interesting point in verse 15 of Sura Ahqaf catches the eyes of all: *"and we recommend man [to] his parents of kindness. His mother got pregnant to him with great burden and gave birth to him with suffering. Getting pregnant and breastfeeding duration is 30 months for complete growth."* With a little reflection, we can find out that the Quran tells us the least time period for breastfeeding babies born in 9th month is 21 months. And more importantly, if a child was born in less than 9 months, or early, breastfeeding him/her for a total time period of 30 months minus the pregnancy duration is quite enough to compensate premature birth defects. This is a great doctrine given to humanity 14 centuries before.

Introduction

Quran attaches great importance to breastfeeding. And the Quran considers this maternal duty and jihad so precious and valuable that has obligated a husband to appreciate the mother's breastfeeding and reward her, where He states in the verse 6 of Surah Al-Talagh (divorce): "and if they suckle, give them their wage". Yes, in this way God expresses a matter of great importance from different views. Elsewhere, to show maternal love and affection during breastfeeding stage cites an examples to make it tangible for everyone, where in verse 2 of surah Hajj (The pilgrimage) says: "on that day you will see every one that suckles shall forsake her suckling, and every carrier shall miscarry, and you shall see mankind drunk although they are not drunk; dreadful will be the punishment of Allah" This is how Quran states sense of intimacy and boundless affection of lactating mothers for infants in their arms. It is interesting that it does not end here and a very strange and beautiful point is stated very fine and detailed in verse 7 of Surah Al-Qasas (the stories) and God says: "we revealed this to Moses' mother: 'suckle him, and when you feared for him, cast him into the water. Neither fear, nor sorrow because we shall restore him to you and make him among the messengers'." By slight reflecting on words and phrases of the verse above, we find that God asked the mother of Moses to give her first milk (colostrum) to her child after giving birth to him. The milk is not only is amazing in nutrition but also in terms of medicinal properties. In the twelfth verse of this blessed surah God stated: "we had forbidden him before that to be suckled by foster mothers, therefore she (Moses' sister) said (to them): "shall I direct you to a people of a household who will take charge of him for you and advise him?" Scholars have used the verse to confirm acceptance of wet

nurses for newborns. As from the verse 23 of Surah An-Nisa (women) "forbidden to you are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your paternal aunts and maternal aunts, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your mothers who have given suck to you, your suckling sisters, your wives mothers..." laws about the rights of *Mahramiat* and milk-suckling *mahrms* (*Rada* relatives) are extracted (Holey Quran).

Hadiths

Discussions about the verses stated are numerous and different interpretations have been placed on them. All of them are not possible to be expressed in this article but it worth mentioning briefly in this review a few hadiths from the myriad hadiths of infallible Imams (as), including the following:

- Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "for the baby, no milk is better than breastfeed."
- Imam Ali (AS), the leader of the faithful, said: "children do not feed from any milk more blessed than mother's milk."
- Imam Sadiq (as): "prohibit those who suckle your children from drinking wine"
- Imam Ali (as): "Make sure to find suitable wet nurses for your infants, since child's personality grows with nurse's milk."
- Imam Baqir (as): "I recommend that entrust your infant to pious wet nurse, because if nurse's milk be infected, it affects the baby."
- Imam Baqir (as): "it is best for children to stay in the mother's arms and grow by breastfeeding."

Imam Sadiq casted his eyes on Isaac's mother (mother of Walid bin Sabbih) while she had one of his sons, Mohammed or Isaac, under her breast and said to her:

Definitely (Allame Majlesi, Osule Kafee, Qom, 1995; Ebadi Amin *et al.*, 2014).

Breast feeding in medical science

With the advance of modern technologies and the expansion of research centers, we observe an increasing rate of research in various areas of medicine including the issue under study. Hence, it is tried to discuss merely a few of them in this article. One of the successful studies in this area is done by Kull *et al.* (2002) in Sudan. In their research as “breast milk and allergic diseases in children”, they concluded that exclusively breastfeeding will have preventive effects on various allergies in children such as asthma, dermatitis, allergic rhinitis, etc. In Germany, Arnez *et al.* (2003) studied breastfeeding and obesity in childhood. As reported, at first, it seemed that breastfeeding had a short term yet durable effect on preventing from childhood obesity. It will increasingly shift mothers toward breastfeeding. Yet, Caspi *et al.* (2007) results in London are among the most interesting ones in the field. This group studied the effects of breast milk on IQ by genetic changes on the metabolism of fatty acids. They reported that breastfed children have a higher IQ as compared to those who are not. It was due to the presence of unique fatty acids in breast milk. Again, among respective studies done in Iran, Reyhani *et al.* (2000) compared the growth curve of 0–6 breastfed children to the bottle-fed ones in Gonabad. They reported that the breastfed children’s weight was above percentile 50 in the growth curve. Yet, the bottle-fed weight was below percentile 50 in the curve. In another study in Tehran, Nikpour *et al.* (2009) investigated the relationship between the duration of breastfeeding and the incidence of acute leukemia in children. They stated that the rate of acute leukemia incidence was 3.354 times higher in children breastfed less than a month as compared to

those breastfed between 19 and 24 months. As mentioned earlier, there are definitely other extensive studies showing the superiority of breast milk. Yet, it is impossible to cite them in this short article. The abovementioned will indicate this superiority. Yet, another important issue which must be mentioned is that breast milk is not only vital for the child, but also highly useful for the mother. Accordingly, to further understand the issue, several articles can be found. Here, we will point out two of them: In Canada, Jern Storm *et al.* (2003) studied breastfeeding and the probability of reducing breast cancer. They reported a lower rate of breast cancer incidence in women breastfeeding their infants for over a year. In the US, another article as “the advantages of breastfeeding for mothers”, by Alicia Dermer (2001) puts that breast milk is not only effective for child but also important for mother. The secretion of oxytocin in mother’s body will induce a feeling of satisfaction with motherhood. Mother will increasingly enjoy mothering. There are also tens or even hundreds of studies which can show the superiority of breast milk whether regarding its advantages for the mother or for the child.

However, the noteworthy is to what extent mothers are committed to breastfeed their children in various societies in various societies and to what extent the officials will publicize breastfeeding. It is also required extensive studies. For instance, in Khoramabad, Mardani *et al.* (2007) examined new mother’s awareness of mother’s breast milk.

Results showed that, out of 550 new mothers, the rate of awareness was weak in 33 (6%), medium in 216 (39%), and high in 301 (55%). Yet, further and more comprehensive studies are required for examining this critical issue (--).

Conclusion

Based on what is discussed in this study, we find out wherever Quran has emphasized and (or) pointed a certain subject, it has considered the happiness, good, and well being of human being society. In this case, again, after reviewing verses, anecdotes, and studies regarding breast milk, it is completely became obvious that breast milk is so useful and even necessary for mother and child. We will observe its highly useful effects on human being society by conducting further research and more extensive advertisements concerning the increase of mothers' tendency toward breastfeeding.

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