92831 - Ruling on Caesarean births

the question

Is it obligatory to resort to Caesarean section if there is some fear for the life of the baby? I feel that this is done a great deal, and perhaps it is a western plot to reduce the numbers of Muslim offspring and weaken the wombs of Muslim women. I wonder whether it is necessary to resort to this surgery and hasten to do it before the natural labour begins, out of eagerness to protect the baby, or is it better to wait until labour begins whether the child lives or dies?.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Caesarean section is an operation in which the abdomen is cut in order to bring the child out of the mother. It is said that it is so called after Julius Caesar, because he was the first one to be born in this manner, when his mother died during labour, after which the doctor cut open her stomach and brought him out of her, and Caesar lived to become the emperor of Rome.

Secondly:

Natural childbirth is better for the mother, but this does not mean that Caesarean section should not be used when necessary. Among such cases of necessity are: when the placenta is in the lower part of the uterus (placenta praevia), when the foetus is deprived of oxygen, when there are tumours in the pelvis, when there is high blood pressure, when there is haemorrhaging that threatens the life of the mother and baby, when there are conjoined (“Siamese”) twins, when the foetus is abnormally large, and other cases of necessity where Caesarean section is indicated. This is one of the great blessings of Allah, an example of His mercy towards His creation.

Many doctors take the matter of resorting to Caesarean section lightly, because they want to earn more money or because they cannot be patient with the mother during natural childbirth. Some women ask for this surgery in order to preserve the gracefulness of their bodies or so as to avoid the pain of childbirth.

Undoubtedly doing this leads to the loss of numerous benefits, and also has effects on the mother and on future births, as referred to by the brother in his question.

Shaykh Muhammad ibn Saalih al-'Uthaymeen (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

I would like to take this opportunity to point out a phenomenon that has been mentioned to us, which is that many obstetricians, male and female, in the hospitals are too keen for birth to take place by surgical means, which is known as a Caesarean. I am afraid that this may be a plot against the Muslims, because the more births take place in this manner, the more the skin of the abdomen is weakened and pregnancy becomes more dangerous for the woman, and she becomes unable to get pregnant. Some of the people who work in private hospitals have told me that many women come to the hospitals and their specialists tell them that there is no alternative to a caesarean, then they go to this private hospital and give birth naturally. He mentioned that there were about eighty such cases in one month. This means that the issue is serious, and attention must be drawn to it. It should be noted that in this case some pain and exhaustion is inevitable.

"His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship" [al-Ahqaaf 46:15]

It is not something to be done as soon as the woman feels a contraction, so that she may avoid pain. Natural childbirth is better than a caesarean. End quote.

Liqaa'aat al-Baab il-Maftoohah (2/question no. 42).

The Shaykh (may Allah have mercy on him) was also asked:

Allah says in Soorat 'Abasa (interpretation of the meaning):

"Then He makes the Path easy for him" ['Abasa 80:20]

So Allah guarantees to make it easy for this newborn. Many men and women have noticed that there is haste in performing caesarean sections. Is this a sign of weak trust in Allah, may He be glorified and exalted?

He replied:

I think that this method which people use nowadays when the woman feels the contractions and goes to the hospital, and they do a caesarean section for her, I think that this is inspired by the shaytaan, and that the harm caused is far greater than any benefits, because a woman is bound to feel pain when in labour, but this pain has a number of benefits:

1 – It is an expiation for sin

2 – It raises her in status if she is patient and seeks reward.

3 – The woman understands the extent of the pain suffered by other mothers.

4 – She will appreciate the extent of the blessing of good health that Allah bestows on her.

5 – It will increase her love towards her child, because the more difficult it is to attain something, the dearer it becomes.

6 – If the child is born by via the usual, well-known route, this is better for him and the woman.

7 – Damage may be expected from this surgery, because this operation weakens the wall of the uterus etc, which may tear. And it may be successful or unsuccessful.

8 – The woman who gets used to having caesareans is unlikely to give birth in the natural manner, because that is not possible, and there is the risk that the site of the surgery may rupture.

9 – Having surgery results in having fewer children, because if the abdomen is cut three times in different places, it becomes weak and future pregnancy becomes dangerous.

10 – This is a kind of luxury, and luxury is a thing that leads to doom, as Allah says (interpretation

of the meaning):

“Verily, before that, they indulged in luxury…” [al-Waaqi’ah 56:45]

Women should be patient and seek reward, and should continue to give birth in the natural way, because that is better for them in this world and in the Hereafter. Men should also pay attention to this issue, for we do not know, perhaps our enemies are the ones who have made these operations easy for us so that we will lose these benefits and be subject to these losses.

Question: What is meant by luxury?

Answer: Luxury includes avoiding the natural pain of childbirth. This is a kind of luxury. If luxury does not help one to obey Allah, then it is either blameworthy or at the very least permissible.

Liqaa’aat al-Baab il-Maftooh (86/question no. 17).

To sum up: Caesarean section should not be resorted to except in cases of necessity, when natural childbirth is not possible, or it poses a danger to the mother or the child.

And Allah knows best.