

**PSYCHOSOMATIC METHODS
OF
PREPARATION FOR CHILDBIRTH**

AN ESSAY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE MASTER DEGREE IN
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TO:

**THE SOUL OF
MY MOTHER.**



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INTRODUCTION
&
AIM OF THE WORK

INTRODUCTION
AND
AIM OF THE WORK

CHILDBIRTH has been portrayed as a fearsome, painful, life-threatening event since the earliest recorded history (Melzack, 1984).

Religions, then, came to document - on divine bases - this existential tragedy as a written destiny held for women:

"In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Genesis 6:13)

"ووصينا الانسان بوالديه احسانا حملته امه ووضعتة كرها" {الاحقاف: ١٥}

Cultural influences, which accompanied civilization, has contributed to the reinforcement of this concept through: mother's influence, either through the subtlety of their information or through the mystery of their silence, remarks from some friends that childbirth is a kind of martyrdom, husband's anxieties communicated to his wife, TV programs, cinema movies, novels, daily papers, all dramatising childbirth as an ordeal in a trial to attract their customers' attention, old-wives' tales of horrors about certain experiences, beside the folk beliefs and traditions handed from generation to another maintaining this doctrine (Dick-Read, 1987).

The view, thus, became that of grieving for a lost Heaven's Paradise and striving for a substitute on Earth.

Throughout centuries, there appeared preachers for this wished terrestrial Utopia who promised a safe, pain and fear-free childbirth.

Early attempts at realization of that dream were made by the priests and sorcerers of the past, inventing chants, rituals, incantations, pseudomedical practices... etc., but only with limited, if any, success.

Then came the doctors. Heiring the position, and the responsibilities, of the priests and sorcerers, they achieved a marvellous success in providing physical safety. Maternal and foetal mortalities and morbidities have markedly dropped from about 30 per cent in certain areas to 1 per 200.000 in Scandenavian countries (Sammour, 1989). However, trials to achieve the other two aims (relief of pain and alleviation of fear) remained too backwards, and the various drugs and techniques they introduced proved either ineffecient, useless or even harmful. Even, the emphasis on physical safety, utilizing the achievements of science and technology, was on the expence of the individual needs and has, ultimately, lead to a mechanistic approach in managing such a natural experience.

Realizing the role of emotions in shaping the childbirth experience, and looking holistically to man and life, Dick-Read and his followers developed the philosophy of the logic, and cautious, return to Mother Nature for whom birth is the

the mother mediates for survival and it is not likely that she intended it to be painful. As no mother wishes her children to suffer, so must do Mother Nature with her real children: animals and primitive people. Readily, the woman movement all over the world picked, and became enthusiastic to, the Naturalistic view.

Natural childbirth, as instinctively practiced by animals and primitive people, and as can be achieved for civilized humans, through psychosomatic preparation, is now practiced by most women all over the world (Giles, (1979)).

Sorrowfully, this humanistic view has not known its way to the obstetric practice in Egypt.

AIM OF THE WORK

The aim of this work is to review the literature in this subject, presenting the cultural backgrounds, evolution and bases of the different psychosomatic methods of preparation for childbirth; in an attempt to introduce them to the Egyptian culture and, subsequently, to adopt their application in our obstetric practice.

PART I
PAIN

WHAT IS PAIN?

"Every sentient being knows what is meant by pain, but the true significance of pain eludes the most sapient"

Charles Illingworth (1898)

PAIN, Without doubt, has been one of the greatest factors affecting the course of human events, for there has been scarcely any man, great or small, who has escaped its horrors. In fact, one can rewrite the whole human history; great philosophies, revolutions, adventures, creation ... etc., in terms of sufferings and the human struggle to conquer these sufferings.

Definition:

The English word (pain) is derived from the latin "Poena" or the Greek (poine). both meaning punishment or penalty, and phrases such as "on pain of death" still reflects this original meaning (Thrush, 1981).

The difficulty in defining accurately, the term pain is recognized by many authors. Sir Thomas Lewis wrote in 1942 "I am so far from being able, satisfactorily, to define pain that the attempt could serve no useful purpose". Similarly in 1969, Sargent wrote "Pain is impossible to define, but attempts to do so are really unnecessary because every human being knows what is meant by pain - some only too well" (Thrush, 1981).

There are two aspects regarding this difficulty:

- 1- Pain's nature being subjective and personal
- 2- That pain is not a single quality of experience that can be specified in terms of stimulus conditions. Pain, like vision and hearing, is a complex perceptual experience. But the many diverse causes of pain prevent the specification of a particular kind of environmental energy as the stimulus for pain, in the way that light is the adequate stimulus for vision and air pressure waves for hearing (Merskey and Spear, 1967).

Pain, therefore, represents a category of experiences, signifying a multitude of different, unique events and characterized by different qualities varying along a number of sensory and affective dimensions. The vocabulary of pain is very rich of words describing these different dimensions. Melzack and Torgerson (1971) had listed such 102 words describing pain in the English language!

However, a comprehensive and an operational definition of pain would read: "Pain is an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or is described in terms of such damage" (Merskey and Spear, 1967).

CHAPTER (1)

EVOLUTION OF THE HUMAN CONCEPTS OF PAIN

The Primitive Eras:

DURING primitive times pain was often regarded as being due to the presence of evil spirits from the dead or demons

possessing the body which might be dispelled by charms and incantations. The old Welsh name (shot of the elf) reflects the magical etiology of lumbago (Thrush, 1981).

Christianity:

Christianity brought with it a concept of pain as a divine punishment. Jeremiah foretold that "the whirlwind of the Lord would fall with pain upon the head of the wicked" (Jeremiah 30:23).

Pain is also important in christian teachings as a means of obtaining grace or as a sacrament, and as the way to the salvation of the souls from the sin of Adam and Eve. The woman's suffering at childbirth is a punishment for that sin: "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Genesis 3:16).

Attempts at pain relief were sometimes condemned by religious authorities as being contrary to the will of God, an attitude still present till the middle ages. Witchcraft was sometimes invoked for the banishment of demons from the patient's body. In 1591, Eufame MacCalzean was burned alive in Edinburgh, without the mercy of previous strangling, having been found guilty of 28 charges of witchcraft, one charge was the use of charms to cast the pains of labour on to a dog which ran away and was never seen again (Moir, 1986).

Islam:

The concept of pain and suffering as obligatory accompaniments with life is settled in Koran:

"لقد خلقنا الانسان في كبد" صدق الله العظيم. [البقرة: ٤]

"ياأيها الانسان إنك كادح إلى ربك كدحاً فملاقيه" صدق الله العظيم [الانشقاق: ٦].

Pain may be a test for faith:

"ولنبلونكم حتى نعلم المجاهدين منكم والصابرين" صدق الله العظيم [محمد: ٣١].

Even, the mere suffering is a means for forgiveness:

عن أبي سعيد وأبي هريرة ، رضى الله عنهما ، عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم - قال "ما يصيب المسلم من نصب ولا وصب ولا هم ولا حزن ولا أذى ولا غم ، حتى الشوكة يشاكها إلا كفر الله بها من خطاياها". متفق عليه [رياض الصالحين : ص٣٣].

Pain is not only a part of the present life on earth, it is also the fate and the method of punishment for those who run a bad course of life: committing evils and disobeying the orders of Allah:

"يدخل من يشاء، في رحمته والظالمين أعد لهم عذاباً أليماً" [الانسان : ٣١].

Ancient Egyptians:

Thinking of pain as a physical, rather than a metaphysical issue dates back to the ancient Egyptians, circa 3000 BC. They regarded the heart as the central organ to which all sensory functions were attributed. The brain was not mentioned in the list of the major organs, and at embalming was the only organ thrown away as waste. (Thrush, 1981).