**Motherhood & MMR in Pakistan**

**Mother is one flower of the many flowers of the paradise whose presence, beauty, and aroma complement a person’s life.**

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Life becomes undoubtedly easier, more beautiful, and worth living when you have people in your life who understand you, prioritise you and your health, adore you, cherish you, valorise your typical aspirations and sentiments, support you, and affirm you in times of untoward crisis. Seeking such human beings who have all these in-built characteristics amidst this meretricious, yet cynical world is a rarity.

Thankfully, we all are blessed and fortunate enough to have one such unrivalled human being in our lives, but, for the most part, we fail to fully appreciate her efforts in our daily lives, whose day starts with our morning breakfast and ends with finger-licking dinner, ensuing a cup of tea brewed with unalloyed love for us sprinkled with moments of deep affection. She is famously known to us all as a ‘mother’.

A mother’s environment is the first breeding ground where a child plays, grows, learns and feels tangibly, emotionally, psychologically and blossoms an umbilical connection with her. At an age when a human being is too little to fathom anything, the child only understands the language of the souls which was transmitted to him/her at the time of accouchement by their mother. As Rumi puts it, ‘Only the soul knows what love is.’ Her pure, profound love and dulcet voice reach and soothe the depths inside their heart, mind and soul, making them feel scared, safe and protected.

For an expectant woman, going through the travails of giving birth is the toughest process or experience of her life. It is a matter of life and death, as well as an exercise of physical and spiritual endurance. Motherhood is the most integral part of a woman’s life and the biggest moment of her happiness is when she is blessed with a beautiful baby by her Creator.

According to the last year’s September statistics revealed by UN Women, a UN Organisation, the maternal mortality ratio (MMR) in Pakistan stands at 154 deaths per 100,000 live births. As per Pakistan Material Mortality Survey, the ratio of MMR across the country has diminished from 278 deaths to 186 to 154 per 100,000 live births. The MMR ratio in Punjab is the lowest in the country. It stands at 105 deaths per 100,000 live births; followed by KP at 165; then Sindh at 224; while Balochistan has the highest, at 298 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. The federal and provincial governments have expressed their desire to reduce the maternal mortality numbers (MMR) to 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.While this is a good gesture, the government must improve the healthcare system and induct trained doctors into hospitals to demonstrate its commitment to lowering maternal mortality practically.

Lack of antenatal care, education, limited decision-making, awareness, close-by standard public or private hospitals and total reliance on their spouses are the prime reasons of such high mortality rate in Pakistan. Usually what happens when the time of obstetrical comes, women are taken to the near-by hospitals frantically where lack of facilities and inexperienced mercenary doctors’ s inability and dereliction to deal with this sensitive issue cause the death of the mothers. Some skinflint uncivilised husbands also take their wives to shoddy and inadequate hospitals prioritising savings over safety and expose them and their babies to the risk of losing their lives.

Education, prenatal awareness and women’s self-sufficiency can reduce the numbers of mortality rate swiftly. When a woman is educated, sophisticated and skilled, she will know how to deal better with this touchy situation and can better guide her consort to give her precedence over money and take her to a certified standard hospital where all facilities of the time are available.

As Mother’s Day is being observed today on Sunday, May 12, dedicated for paying homage and honouring mothers. The world put the flags out this tradition for the first time in the 20th century in the United States and its prime mover was Anna Jarvis, a social activist. It was the desire of her mother (Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis) to have an official national holiday for mothers for playing their part in the development of the country and recognising their role, contribution and importance in society which sadly came true after her demise.

Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis died (Anna Jarvis’s mother) on the second Sunday in May, in 1905. Almost after nine years, in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson made Mother’s Day an official national holiday. Over time, the world realised the importance of mothers and then every country gradually started jumping on the bandwagon.

A mother personifies many attributes of God that shine through her actions for her children like, inexhaustible love, unwavering protection, empathy, tolerance and loyalty. Allah Almighty has indeed created every woman (soon wouldbe a mother) with an immeasurable heart of these qualities to remind the people of His own attributes by way of her existence and actions.

To sign off the write-up, I think only a mother knows how to attain immortality and conquer the hearts of her children. But how does she sow the seeds of perpetuity in her children? She does it quite beautifully by way of blossoming a four-dimensional relationship; biologically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. That is why people can’t erase her indelible marks on their hearts, minds and souls perennially when she leaves them in this world. Her special place and memories in the hearts of her children are preserved, ineffaceable and become irreplaceable eternally.

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