

# Religions And Its Attitude Towards Infertility & Assisted Reproduction

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Religions and its Attitude towards Infertility & Assisted Reproduction are different in different religions. Here we consider major three known religions Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The aim of the study is to understand the view of these religions on infertility and assisted reproductive technology. People's opinions regarding assisted reproduction are significantly influenced by their religious beliefs, and different religions have responded to this treatment in different ways. There are many shades in between these extremes, which range from complete approval to complete rejection of all assisted reproductive technologies.*

**Key words:** Religion, Infertility, Assisted Reproduction, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Numerous legendary stories have made reference to fertility. In mythology, fertility gods can be found in a variety of religions or belief systems. In some ancient cultures fertility deity also can see. A fertility deity is a god or goddess who is connected to conception, pregnancy, and birth in mythology. These deities may be directly linked to sex in some instances or they may merely represent traits that are connected. Demeter was the central deity in fertility rites held in classical Greece. According to Ibn Ishaq, the Kaaba was formerly worshipped as a female deity. Aphrodite, Pērkons, Virgo and Germanic religion and mythology: Freyja also considered as fertility deities.

Religious and spiritual aspects of infertility have gotten little attention now, despite the growing quantity of research that has concentrated on the physical, psychological, social, and cultural effects of infertility. It contends that when treating women with fertility issues, medical professionals must take into account all facets of holistic care because infertility is a complex issue that causes several losses. Individuals' religious and spiritual requirements are taken into account in addition to their psychological, social, and cultural demands when receiving holistic therapy (Roudsari, Allan, & Smith, 2007)

Infertility is a disorder of the male or female reproductive system known as infertility is characterized by the inability to conceive after 12 months or more of frequent, unprotected sexual activity. Millions of people are affected by infertility, which also has an effect on their families and communities. Infertility is a serious health issue worldwide, affecting approximately 8%–10% of couples worldwide. According to estimates, one in every six persons who are reproductive age will experience infertility at some point in their lives. Infertility in men is typically brought on by issues with the ejection of semen (1), a lack of sperm or low sperm counts, or poor sperm shape (morphology) and motility. One can have primary or secondary infertility. A person has secondary infertility if at least one previous pregnancy has been accomplished, while primary infertility is when a pregnancy has never been achieved. The prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of infertility are all included in fertility care. In the majority of nations, particularly in low- and middle-income nations, obtaining equal and fair access to reproductive healthcare remains difficult. Rarely do national universal health coverage benefit packages provide priority to fertility care. Each and every person has a right to the best possible level of bodily and mental health. The choice of how many children to have at what age and at what intervals is a matter for both individuals and couples. The realisation of these fundamental human rights may be undermined by infertility. Therefore, addressing infertility is crucial to realising everyone's and couples' right to start a family (World Health Organization, 2018)

India has a great deal of diversity. There is difference in meteorological circumstances as well as in customs, traditions, standard of living, and access to healthcare systems. Due to these causes, the infertility rate in the same region of India differs significantly across castes and tribes as well as between different states (Adamson & et al, 2011). India has a population of as many as 27.5 million infertile people, including men and women, according to the Indian Society of Assisted Reproduction. According to the WHO report, the prevalence

of primary infertility in India was 3.9% (age-standardized to 25–49 years) and 16.8% (age-standardized to 15–49 years). One in every fifteen Indian couples struggles with infertility. The issue is exacerbated by late marriages, demanding lifestyles, obesity, excessive consumption of fast food, smoking, drinking, and drug addiction.

Indians believe their nation has fulfilled one of its post-independence ideals: a society where adherents of many religions can live and practice freely—more than 70 years after India was freed from colonial authority. The enormous population of India is both diversified and pious. India is not only home to the majority of the world's Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs; it also has one of the largest Muslim populations, as well as millions of Christians and Buddhists. Indians see religious tolerance as a central part of who they are as a nation. Across the major religious groups, most people say it is very important to respect all religions to be “truly Indian.” (Sahgal, et al, 2021)

The total number of Indians grew to 1.2 billion in the 2011 census from 361 million in the 1951 census. The number of Hindus grew to 966 million (from 304 million in 1951), Muslims to 172 million (from 35 million), Christians to 28 million (from 8 million). Hindus make up 79.8% of India's population and Muslims account for 14.2%; Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains account for most of the remaining 6%. Muslims in India have higher fertility rates than other groups, but they also have experienced the sharpest decline in fertility in recent decades. In India, fertility is closely tied to women's education, and Christian women are in school longer. Christians had an average of seven years of schooling, according to 2015 data, compared with 4.2 years among Hindus and 3.2 years among Muslims. India is home to about 94% of the world's Hindus. Along with Nepal, it is one of only two Hindu-majority countries. Hindus are the majority in 28 of India's 35 states, including the most populous ones: Uttar Pradesh (total population 200 million), Maharashtra (112 million) and Bihar (104 million). Muslims are a majority in the small western archipelago of Lakshadweep (<100,000) and in Jammu and Kashmir (13 million), on the border with Pakistan. But only 5% of Muslims live in these two places; 95% live in states where they are a religious minority. Christians form a majority of the populations of Nagaland (2 million), Mizoram (1 million) and Meghalaya (3 million) (Kramer, 2021).

Here we are focusing on three major religions. 1) “Hinduism” is Hindu Dharma, an Indian religion or dharma, a religious and universal order or way of life by which followers abide. As a religion, it is the world's third-largest. 2) “Christianity” is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the world's largest and most widespread religion with representing one-third of the global population. 3) “Islam” is the second most followed religion in the world after Christianity, it is also one of the most misunderstood. Islam is a monotheistic religion that teaches that there is only one divine being, one supreme Creator of the universe. Muslims believe that Islam is the true religion of God revealed to humanity.

## **AIM**

The aim of the study is to understand the view of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam religions on infertility and assisted reproductive technology.

## **II. Methods**

Data identified using Google Scholar, MEDLINE, Embase, PsycINFO, CINAHL, Applied Social Sciences Index and Sociological Abstracts. Eligible studies will include original, empirical, peer-reviewed qualitative evidence, published in English. Studies about infertility and religion. Data will be analyzed using the ‘best fit’ framework synthesis approach, drawing the topic. There are questions arise concerning whether and how religion affects infertility treatment decisions.

## **III. Discussion**

Whether they realize it or not, religion can often play a role in supporting and educating followers about the infertility experience as it relates to their faith. All the three religion has its own view on infertility.

### **Hinduism and Infertility**

In the Hindu religion, Parvati, the goddess of the Himalayas, is the archetypal mother goddess and fertility image. Barren women desiring to conceive and mothers seeking to ensure the protection of their children will worship Shashthi and request her blessings and aid. Children have been valued throughout history, and Hindu culture has long placed a high value on maintaining the family as a unit. Hinduism has attempted to comprehend the inherent difficulties that infertile couples may encounter in carrying out their societal responsibilities and has provided alternatives. The sanyasi Agastya, which is taken from the 2,000-year-old Hindu epic Mahabharata, explains why Hindus are so devoted to raising children. It draws our attention to a profound religious need for a child in addition to social ones like “someone to take care of me in my old age.” Each individual is bound by Dharma to produce one child who must perform the annual ceremony of Shraadhha (offering oblations to ancestors). When a man's wife was unable to bear him a child, he was given the

benefit of the doubt and permitted to remarry repeatedly. If, in spite of this, he was unable to have children, it proved his sterility. If a guy from the same family be invited to live with the wives with the husband's consent. This method of exercise is called *niyoga*. (George Bühler, 1886). In the Mahabharata, when king Vichitravirya dies, his mother invites the sage Vyasa to produce children through her widowed daughters-in-law. King Pandu could not have sexual intercourse with his wives. Since he could not father offspring for succession, he renounced the throne, so he undergone demi-gods to impregnate. Thus came the five warrior kings of the Mahabharata who were acclaimed to be the righteous.

Religious law permitted donor insemination for many centuries as long as the couple approved of it, and just as now, the family name would remain and this would be acceptable by society. A tale that implies the use of surrogate mothers can be found in the Bhagavata Purana. Because oracles had predicted that her kid would be his killer, King Kamsa had Devaki and her spouse Vasudeva imprisoned. He murdered Devaki and Vasudeva's six children. The seventh foetus was transferred by the Gods from Devaki's womb to Rohini's womb, Vasudeva's other wife. Incubation and delivery of a child that was conceived in one womb occurred in another womb.

A study done by Braga & et al, 2019, shows that Spiritists and Evangelicals had a noticeably higher rate of fertilization, high-quality embryos, and pregnancies. Patients who prayed about their infertility diagnosis and treatment had a higher pregnancy rate, while those who said the diagnosis had a negative impact on their faith had a lower rate of high-quality embryos. Patients who indicated that their faith had a role in their decision to receive infertility treatment showed a rise in the percentage of high-quality embryos. The frequency of prayers was favorably connected with the response to ovarian stimulation, while the frequency of religious gatherings was adversely correlated with the cancellation of the cycle. Last but not least, optimism about the outcome of the treatment improved the embryo quality.

Hinduism allows for a range of reactions because it is a pluralistic religion. However, alongside karma, the sanctity of life is a fundamental Hinduism principle. Having children is considered one of the most essential components of marriage in traditional Hinduism. The act of conception is viewed as divine.

Today, assisted reproduction is accepted in nearly all its forms Hinduism. Hinduism acknowledges scientific approaches to assisted reproduction. Treatments for infertility are typically permitted as long as they adhere to a few rules, the most significant of which is that the sperm come from the husband or a close relative. Similar to the previous example, *in vitro* fertilization may be allowed if the sperm and egg are not ideally provided. Modern Hindus, however, might be more accepting of anonymous donations. Hindus do not frequently employ surrogacy as a therapy for infertility, despite the fact that it is considered a medical procedure. If used, it will probably be done so within family members rather than with an outsider.

### **Christianity and infertility**

In the very first chapter of the first book of the Bible, the command is given to humankind to "be fruitful and multiply." Genesis 1:28 reads: "God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Yet despite this blessing, there are numerous instances of barrenness in the Bible—from the. Many of the women in the Bible described as being barren, such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Hannah (Samuel's mother), Samson's mother and Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother), later conceive. Joel S. Baden of Yale Divinity School and Candida R. Moss of the University of Notre Dame analyze the Biblical portrayal of infertility in the Biblical Views column "Reevaluating Biblical Infertility," published in the September/October 2017 issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

The word "infertility" does not appear in Scripture. However, the Bible includes multiple references to couples who were barren (sterile) and could not have children naturally. Scripture informs us that God is the one who enables women to conceive, as He "opens" and "closes" the womb (Genesis 30:22; 1 Samuel 1:5-6; Isaiah 66:9).

The demeanor toward conceptive practice changes among Christian gatherings. While helped generation isn't acknowledged by the Vatican, it could be drilled by Protestant, Anglican and different groups.

The Vatican approach :As indicated by conventional Christian perspectives, starting at origination, the undeveloped organism has moral status as a person, and hence most helped regenerative innovations are prohibited. The Vatican has a reasonable situation against helped generation, starting around 1956, Pop Pius XII, characterized fake fecundation as shameless and unlawful, in light of the fact that it influences human lives by isolating reproduction and sexual ordinary capability. Accordingly present day clinical methods utilized in helped multiplication like: IVF, ET, substitute moms and undeveloped organism cryopreservation are not acknowledged by the Catholic Church.. The Catholic Church offers its assurance to the person beginning with its most memorable seconds of presence: It thinks about the zygote as people and unequivocally dislikes research on human undeveloped organisms.

Eastern Customary Church: It was made in 1054 C after the Incomparable Split what isolated Christianity in two: the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Standard Church. This congregation isn't quite as severe as the Roman Catholic Church, permitting clinical and careful treatment of barrenness however it is against IVF, helped regenerative innovations, Surrogacy, giver sperm insemination and incipient organism gift.

The Protestant Church: Protestantism came about mostly from the Transformation, a strict and political development that started in Europe in 1517. Most Protestants live in Europe, and North America. The Protestant holy places acknowledge conventional treatment of barrenness: helped conceptive advances are to some degree acknowledged just when the gametes are from hitched couple and when the methodology evades harm to the pre embryo. Sperm gift and oocyte gift are restricted.

Anglican Church: During the Transformation of 1500, the Congregation of Britain isolated from the Roman Catholic Church. Anglican Church is the state religion of the Assembled realm. Anglicanism spread as the English pioneers got comfortable North and South America, Africa and Asia. Anglicans frequently view themselves as an extension church between Roman

Catholics and Protestants: Helped generation innovation was created in the UK and Australia, where the Anglican Church wins. The Anglican Church is more liberal on the utilization of IVF/ET and permits semen assortment by masturbation for managed impregnation by the spouse for IVF, however it denies the utilization of gamete benefactor, semen and oocyte from an outsider. Gamete gift and surrogacy are denied.

### **Islam and infertility**

It is clearly described in the Qur'an that it is entirely Allah's will and everything that happens is under the sovereignty of the Creator, including the blessings he gives or withholds to a married couple. As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an in Surah Ash-Shuraa, verse No 49-50 that: "God has control of the heavens and the earth; He creates whatever He wills — He grants female offspring to whoever He wills, male to whoever He wills, or both male and female, and He leaves whoever He wills barren; He is all-knowing and all powerful." One more example from the Holy Qur'an is Hadhrath Zakarya AS who was blessed with a son in his old age. Another example is Hadhrath Ibrahim AS and his wife Sarah who was also blessed with Ishaq AS in very old age. Our beloved Prophet Muhammed (SAW) is the best example for any kind of situation the Muslim Ummah faces. He set himself as a role model to deal with issues either of the home or matters of the state. In this matter, we also see that he beautifully taught us the best possible ways to deal with people with no children.

Seeking a cure for infertility is not only permissible, but also encouraged in Islam. In Islamic law, all assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) are allowed, provided that the source of the sperm, ovum, and uterus comes from a legally married couple during the span of their marriage. No third party should intrude upon the marital functions of sex and procreation. Surrogacy is not accepted in Islam. An excess number of fertilized embryos can be preserved by cryopreservation and may be transferred to the same wife in a successive cycle, while the marriage is intact. Using frozen sperm after the death of the husband is not permitted.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

People's opinions regarding assisted reproduction are significantly influenced by their religious beliefs, and different religions have responded to this treatment in different ways. There are many shades in between these extremes, which range from complete approval to complete rejection of all assisted reproductive technologies.

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