

THE QUR'AAN AND MODERN SCIENCE



COMPATIBLE OR INCOMPATIBLE?

By
Dr. ZAKIR NAIK

ISLAMIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION
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In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the dawn of human life on this planet, Man has always sought to understand Nature, his own place in the scheme of Creation and the purpose of Life itself. In this quest for Truth, spanning many centuries and diverse civilizations, organized religion has shaped human life and determined to a large extent, the course of history. While some religions have been based on books, claimed by their adherents to be divinely inspired, others have relied solely on human experience.

Al-Qur'aan, the main source of the Islamic faith, is a book believed by Muslims, to be of completely Divine origin. Muslims also believe that it contains guidance for all mankind. Since the message of the Qur'aan is believed to be for all times, it should be relevant to every age. Does the Qur'aan pass this test? In this booklet, I intend to give an objective analysis of the Muslim belief regarding the Divine origin of the Qur'aan, in the light of established scientific discoveries.

There was a time, in the history of world civilization, when 'miracles', or what was perceived to be a miracle, took precedence over human reason and logic. But how do we define the term 'miracle'? A miracle is anything that takes place out of the normal course of life and for which humankind has no explanation. However, we must be careful before we accept something as a miracle. An article in 'The Times of India' Mumbai, in 1993 reported that 'a saint' by the name 'Baba Pilot' claimed to have stayed continuously submerged under water in a tank for three consecutive days and nights. However, when reporters wanted to examine the base of the tank of water where he claimed to have performed this 'miraculous' feat, he refused to let them do so. He argued by asking as to how one could examine the womb of a mother that gives birth to a child. The 'Baba' was hiding something. It was a gimmick simply to gain publicity. Surely, no modern man with even the

slightest inkling towards rational thinking would accept such a 'miracle'. If such false miracles are the tests of divinity, then we would have to accept Mr. P. C. Sorcar, the world famous magician known for his ingenious magical tricks and illusions, as the best God-man.

A book, claiming Divine origin, is in effect, claiming to be a miracle. Such a claim should be easily verifiable in any age, according to the standards of that age. Muslims believe, that the Qur'aan is the last and final revelation of God, the miracle of miracles revealed as a mercy to mankind. Let us therefore investigate the veracity of this belief.

I would like to thank Brother Musaddique Thange for his editorial assistance.
May Allah (swt) reward him for his efforts, Aameen

THE CHALLENGE OF THE QUR'AAN

Literature and poetry have been instruments of human expression and creativity, in all cultures. The world also witnessed an age when literature and poetry occupied pride of position, similar to that now enjoyed by science and technology.

Muslims as well as non-Muslims agree that Al-Qur'aan is Arabic literature par excellence - that it is the best Arabic literature on the face of the earth. The Qur'aan, challenges mankind in the following verses:

“And if ye are in doubt As to what We have revealed From time to time to Our Servant, then produce a Soorah Like thereunto; And call your witnesses or helpers (If there are any) besides Allah, If your (doubts) are true. But if ye cannot –And of a surety you cannot. hen fear the Fire Whose fuel is Men and Stones – Which is prepared for those Who reject Faith.” [Al-Qur'aan 2:23-24] ¹

The same notation is followed throughout the book. References and translation of the Qur'aan are from the translation of the Qur'aan by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, new revised edition, 1989, published by Amana Corporation, Maryland, USA.

The challenge of the Qur'aan, is to produce a single *Soorah* (chapter) like the *Soorahs* it contains. The same challenge is repeated in the Qur'aan several times. The challenge to produce a *Soorah*, which, in beauty, eloquence, depth and meaning is at least somewhat similar to a Qur'aanic *Soorah* remains unmet to this day. A modern rational man, however, would never accept a religious scripture, which says, in the best possible poetic language, that the world is flat. This is because we live in an age, where human reason, logic and science are given primacy. Not many would accept the Qur'aan's extraordinarily beautiful language, as proof of its Divine origin. Any scripture

¹ Al-Qur'an 2:23-24 indicates *Soorah* or Chapter No. 2 and *Ayaat* or Verses 23 and 24.

claiming to be a divine revelation must also be acceptable on the strength of its own reason and logic.

According to the famous physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Albert Einstein, “Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind.” Let us therefore study the Qur'aan, and analyze whether **The Qur'aan and Modern Science are compatible or incompatible?**

The Qur'aan is not a book of science but a book of 'signs', i.e. *ayats*. There are more than six thousand 'signs' in the Qur'aan of which more than a thousand deal with science. We all know that many a times Science takes a 'U-turn'. In this book I have considered only established scientific facts and not mere hypotheses and theories that are based on assumptions and are not backed by proof.

I. ASTRONOMY

CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE: 'THE BIG BANG'

The creation of the universe is explained by astrophysicists in a widely accepted phenomenon, popularly known as the 'Big Bang'. It is supported by observational and experimental data gathered by astronomers and astrophysicists for decades. According to the 'Big Bang', the whole universe was initially one big mass (Primary Nebula). Then there was a 'Big Bang' (Secondary Separation) which resulted in the formation of Galaxies. These then divided to form stars, planets, the sun, the moon, etc. The origin of the universe was unique and the probability of it occurring by 'chance' is zero. The Qur'aan contains the following verse, regarding the origin of the universe: **"Do not the Unbelievers see That the heavens and the earth Were joined together (as one Unit of Creation), before We clove them asunder?"** [Al-Qur'aan 21:30]

The striking congruence between the Qur'aanic verse and the 'Big Bang' is inescapable! How could a book, which first appeared in the deserts of Arabia 1400 years ago, contain this profound scientific truth?

THERE WAS AN INITIAL GASEOUS MASS BEFORE THE CREATION OF GALAXIES

Scientists say that before the galaxies in the universe were formed, celestial matter was initially in the form of gaseous matter. In short, huge gaseous matter or clouds were present before the formation of the galaxies. To describe initial celestial matter, the word 'smoke' is more appropriate than gas. The following Qur'aanic verse refers to this state of the universe by the word *dhukhan* which means smoke.

"Moreover, He Comprehended In His design the sky, And it had been (as) smoke: He said to it And to the earth: 'Come ye together, Willingly

or unwillingly.' They said: 'We do come (Together), in willing obedience.'" [Al-Qur'aan 41:11]

Again, this fact is a corollary to the 'Big Bang' and was not known to the Arabs during the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). What then, could have been the source of this knowledge?

THE SPHERICAL SHAPE OF THE EARTH

In early times, people believed that the earth is flat. For centuries, men were afraid to venture out too far, lest they should fall off the edge. Sir Francis Drake was the first person who proved that the earth is spherical when he sailed around it in 1597. Consider the following Qur'aanic verse regarding the alternation of day and night: **"Seest thou not that Allah merges Night into Day And He merges Day into Night?"** [Al-Qur'aan 31:29]

Merging here means that the night slowly and gradually changes to day and vice versa. This phenomenon can only take place if the earth is spherical. If the earth was flat, there would have been a sudden change from night to day and from day to night.

The following verse also alludes to the spherical shape of the earth: **"He created the heavens And the earth In true (proportions): He makes the Night Overlap the Day, and the Day Overlap the Night."** [Al-Qur'aan 39:5]

The Arabic word used here is *Kawwara* meaning 'to overlap' or 'to coil' – the way a turban is wound around the head. The overlapping or coiling of the day and night can only take place if the earth is spherical.

The earth is not exactly round like a ball, but geo-spherical i.e. it is flattened at the poles. The following verse contains a description of the earth's shape:

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