



# ALI 274 Islamic Perspective to the Theory of Evolution – part II

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# Scriptural narration

- Questions for reflection:
  - What other information do you need to formulate the Qur'anic perspective of human evolution?
  - What are the critical questions that need to be answered to formulate a complete perspective?

# Is the qur'an a book of science?

- Qur'an describes itself as a tibyan (explanation) of everything. (16:89)
- Ayatullah Nasir Makarem Shirazi makes the following points in tafseere namouneh:
  - Expression implies that the Qur'an is an explanation for everything.
  - The main objective of the Qur'an is to develop human beings.
  - Therefore everything refers to the guidance required to develop human beings.
  - Qur'an is not an encyclopedia that contains the details from the natural sciences.
  - The Qur'an has unveiled some important scientific realities.
  - However, this is not the goal and objective of the Qur'an

# Review from last week

- Important to understand the issue before providing the Islamic perspective.
- Divided evolution in microevolution and macroevolution.
- Microevolution explains how hereditary traits are passed on from one generation to another generation within a population.
- Macroevolution tries to explain the process through which diversity came about within various living species.

# Review from last week

- Important to understand and clarify the critical questions.
- Two questions which will be treated separately from each other:
  - Does the theory of evolution negate the existence of God?
  - Does the theory of the evolution of human beings contradict with the scriptural narration for the genesis of man?
- Assumption moving forward is that the theory of evolution is a valid theory in its general principles.

# Review from last week

- Demarcated the subject of the natural sciences and theology/philosophy.
- Science will explain the natural process through which we have diversity in living species.
- Theology will explain the relationship between natural processes and metaphysical realities.
- Theory of evolution does not negate the existence of God.

# Human evolution and Qur'an

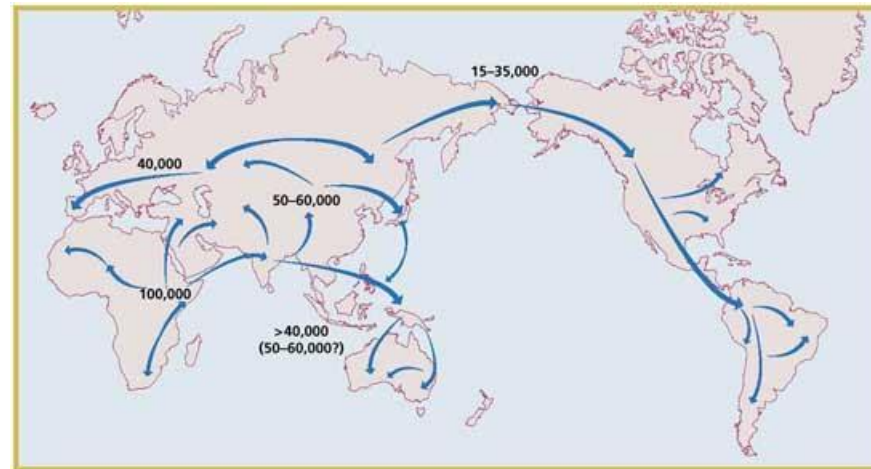
- Evolutionists extend macroevolution to include human beings.
- Evolutionists provide the following timeline for human evolution:
  - 6 million YA: Partial bipedalism -> Sahelanthropus
  - 3.8 mYA: Full bipedalism -> Australopithecus Afarensis
  - 1.8 mYA: Human like frame -> Homo Erectus
  - 600 kYA: Larger brain to body ratio -> Homo Heiderbergensis
  - 200 kYA: Human like brains and brain activity -> Homo Neanderthalensis
  - 200 kYA: Homo Sapiens

# Human technological evolution

- As the brain to body ratio increased, there was gradual technological and social progress:
  - 2.6 mYA: Stone Age begins. Humans carve stones into different tools.
  - 800 kYA: Controlling fire. Marks the beginning of growth in brain size.
  - 600 kYA: Building shelters.
  - 100 kYA: Burying the dead, making simple jewelry. Jebel Qafzeh.
  - 12 kYA: Farming and agriculture



# Human geographical evolution



# Current understanding of Qur'an

- The first human beings were Prophet Adam (a) and Lady Hawwa (a).
- They were created from clay instantaneously by Allah (S). (tin).
- There is not time frame for when they were put on earth.
- There is also no direct mention of other humans before Adam (a).
- All human beings are the children of Prophet Adam (a). (bani adam).
- Qabil was the first human to bury another human being.

# Critical questions

- Below are some of the areas of perceived conflict between Qur'an and science:
  - Does the Qur'an mention the existence of other human like species? If not, is this a deficiency or an oversight?
  - Was Prophet Adam (a) created instantly through a miracle, or did he come into being through a process of macro-evolution? If by miracle, does this contradict science?
  - Are all human beings the children of Prophet Adam (a)? If so, does it mean that Prophet Adam (a) lived over 100 kYA?

# Tools for understanding the Qur'an

- The Qur'an is the spoken expression of God. (Kalam)
- The world is the created expression of God. (Khalq)
- Sayyid Kamal al-Haydari: there cannot be a conflict between the kalam and the khalq of Allah.
- The conflict is between our understanding of the Qur'an (fahm) and our understanding of the world (science).
- Hence it is our understanding that needs to be corrected and not the Qur'an.

# Tools for understanding the Qur'an

- Verses of Qur'an are known as muhkam: they are not open to multiple interpretations.
- Verses of Qur'an are known as mutashabih: open to interpretation upon first reading.
- Allamah Tabatabai implies that it is our understanding that is muhkam or mutashabih, and not the verse itself.
- We will have to see if the verses of the Qur'an about the creation of Prophet Adam (a) are muhkam or mutashabih.
- Flood of Prophet Nuh (a).

# Humans before Prophet Adam (a).

- The Qur'an does not make direct mention.
- Qur'an is not a book of history. Only uses relevant historical events to teach theology and ethics.
- There is indirect mention in the Qur'an:
  - Conversation between Allah (S) and the angels at the creation of Adam (a).
  - *We have created man in the best of forms (95:4).*
- There is also mention of them in the hadith:
  - Ahadith of the Adams before Adam from first and fifth Imam (a).

# Creation of Adam (a).

- The apparent meaning of many verses indicates that Allah (s) created Adam (a) as a miraculous act.
  - *He (God) creation him (Adam) from clay and then said 'be', and he was. (3:59)*
  - *When your Lord said to the angel, 'Indeed I am going to create a human out of a cry clay from an aging mud. So when I have proportioned him and I have breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him.'* (15:29)
- Prophet Adam (a) was created from clay (tin).
- He was lifeless when he was being proportioned.
- God gave life to him by placing a ruh within Adam (a).

# Creation of Adam (a)

- However, some commentators have argued that the verses of the Qur'an are open to interpretation on this issue.

## Evidence for Macroevolution

It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels prostrate to Adam, (7:11)

## Evidence for Humans at the time of Adam (a)

Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of 'Imran above all people, (3:33)



# Decisive verses from the Qur'an

- There are other verses of the Qur'an which are not easily re-interpreted to favor the evolution of Prophet Adam (a):
  - The example of P Isa (a) is like the example of P Adam (a) (3:59)
  - The burial of Habil by Qabil according to the Qur'an. (5:31)
- Ayat. Jawadi Amuli

From the perspective of humanology, the theory of evolution does not negate the account of the Qur'an. The theory of evolution only notes that human beings can come into existence by a process of evolution. However, the theory of evolution does not claim that the only way for humans to come into existence is through the process of evolution

# Are we all the children of Adam?

- Question is important because of its implications.
- If we say yes, then we know that homo sapiens left Africa over 100 kYA. This would mean that Prophet Adam (a) lived over 100 kYA.
- If we say no, then it allows for the evolution of other humans through macroevolution. However it contradicts the apparent meaning of a number of verses in the Qur'an.
- It also contradicts the apparent narration of the development of human societies and human technology.
- There are two possible opinions here.

# Children of Adam

- It depends on whether we take the narration to be a literal or a symbolic narration.

## Literal Narration

- Ayatullah Nasir Makarem Shirazi rejects the possibility of a symbolic narration.
- Prophet Adam (a) is the biological father of all of humanity.

## Symbolic Narration

- Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari entertains the possibility of a symbolic narration.
- In this case, we could claim that he is the intellectual father of humanity, but not necessarily the biological father of humanity.