

Adam and Hawa (Eve): The Spiritual, not Biological Progenitors of Humankind

Anthropology

The following excerpt is taken from *Islamic Theory of Evolution* by T.O. Shanavas, pp. 154-156:

“Contrary to the commonly held view of Adam and Eve being the primeval parents of the human species, the literal reading of the verse in association with other verses guides us to an alternate conclusion that Adam and Eve are really not the biological parents but spiritual parents of the human species. In order to determine the role of Adam and Eve in the history of the human species, we need to have an understanding of the human soul-body relationship based on the Quran.” (p. 154)

“A complex metaphor can be confused easily with reality. When we use pronouns such as ‘I’ or ‘you,’ we recognize the person based upon the physical features of his or her material body. By doing so, we, in fact, are denying our own existence and accountability on the Day of Judgment. According to the Quran, the human soul is the spiritual center of the real human, while the material body of flesh, blood, and brain serves only as a visible metaphor and a product of evolution. The material body is only the robotic arm of a soul.” (p. 154)

“The dual nature of the human body and soul is made very clear in the Quran as well as in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.” (p. 154)

“Moreover, according to a saying attributed to the Prophet, a fetus is alive but without a soul until the 120th day of intrauterine life, when the soul is breathed into the fetus by an angel.” (p. 154)

‘Abdallah ibn Mas’ud narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

“Each one of you is constituted in the womb of the mother for forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period. Then God sends an angel who is ordered to write four things. He is ordered to write down his deeds, his livelihood, the date of his death, and whether he will be blessed or wretched. Then the soul is breathed into him...” (Sahih al-Bukhari: 3036).

"It is He Who has made all that is created in due proportion. And He initiated the creation of man from inorganic matter of the earth and made his progeny from an extract of the nature of a despicable fluid. Then He fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him the soul (created by Allah for that person), and gave you the faculties of hearing, sight, and mind. But very few of you make right use of these faculties." (Quran 32:7-9)

"Now this is a direct statement. It explicitly says that man was not created in the beginning out of clay but rather out of a certain breed developed from clay. There is, therefore, an intermediate stage between clay and man—a stage of various successive breeds culminating in the superior breed of mankind." (*The Quran: An Attempt at Modern Reading*, p. 72)

"Most exegeses of the Quran choose to interpret this verse to consider the Holy Breath as an event that occurs at a certain stage of the fetus' development in the womb." (Basil Altaie, *The Divine Word and the Grand Design*, p. 134)

"Many Muslims use the Quranic verses 4:1 to discredit the theory of evolution as well.

'O mankind, venerate your Lord, who created you from a single soul, from it created its mate, and from the pair of them has spread abroad countless men and women.' (4:1)

"The creation of the human from a 'single soul' and 'from it... its mate (duality)' refers to the creation of the primordial human soul and its progression into a dyad in the generation of the male and

female human souls, not yet clothed in the garment of biological flesh. Out of these two souls, God created all other human souls. What the verse refers to here is not the creation of visible metaphorical humans in flesh and blood but the creation of real humans manifested as spirits." (pp. 155-156)

In this context, Ali Mirza explains:

"Now those who take this evolution from the Holy Quran, which is not Darwin's evolution, but that which fits in the context of the Quran and Sunnah. Just as it comes in Surah al-Imran, that we chose Hazrat Adam (pbuh). And in the same way regarding Hazrat Imran's descendants, that Allah chose them for prophethood, so they say that Adam (pbuh) was also chosen by Allah, so the choice takes place only when more than one Adams exist. From one of them, Allah selected as our grandfather and selected him in such a way that he continued the generation ahead of him.

Human beings were living in the world, but He chose one of them, Hazrat Adam (pbuh), then Allah breathed His soul into Adam. In the earlier human state of mind there was life; you see animals also having life but no soul; inside the monkey there is no soul but life. This soul is what Allah Almighty has made a characteristic of man. When I breathe My soul into him (Adam), then you angels fall down in prostration. This is a special order of Allah, which is special with man, the soul is the creation of Allah. So they claim that the humans that existed before were only human beings having life but not souls. Allah Almighty did not breathe His soul into them. One of them was chosen by Allah, and he became the first ancestor of us, Hazrat Adam (pbuh)."

Cf. 2:35 and commentary. Adam is here commanded to dwell in the Garden along with his wife, that is, Eve, or *Ḥawwā'* in Arabic, whose name does not appear in the Quran, although it is commonly used in the Islamic tradition. Until this point, the narrative has focused solely on Adam and *Iblīs*, but at this point Eve enters the account without any explicit mention of her own origin. Although it

is clear in the Quran that Adam also represents all of humanity—male and female—in the account of his original creation, his vicegerency, his divinely granted knowledge, and the prostration of the angels before him (cf. 2:30–34), the Quran does not explicitly discuss the process by which this primordial Adam is differentiated into the first male and female who 'dwell in the Garden' after Iblīs's expulsion from it. The Biblical story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib (Genesis 2:21–22), however, is referenced in the Ḥadīth, and many commentators have considered 4:1: 'O mankind! Reverence your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate, and from the two has spread abroad a multitude of men and women,' an oblique reference to the creation of Eve from Adam (see 4:1c). In this case, however, Eve can be said to have been created not from Adam as male, but rather from the original androgynous Adam, who is the prototype of all humanity, both male and female."

(This concept is similar to what the Quran says in another verse about Jesus Christ (pbuh):

"And [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel, [who will say], 'Indeed I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird by permission of Allah. And I cure the blind and the leper, and I give life to the dead – by permission of Allah. And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.'" (Quran 3:49)

Under the commentary of this verse, Yahiya Emerick writes:

"There are two interpretations for the clay bird. Some commentators say that Jesus performed a standard miracle by bringing a clay bird to life in order to astonish his listeners, while others say this is a metaphor for the Jewish nation which was like a lifeless bird. The reformation of Jesus would breathe new life into the community's spiritual practices.")

Next, we will discuss the creation of the Prophet Adam. There are four steps in the creation of Adam, the Prophet:

1. The creation of the soul of Adam.
2. The creation of Adam's outer garment, the physical body (Homo Sapiens Sapiens).
3. The infusion of Adam's soul.
4. The elevation of Adam as the first prophet through revelations of divine messages to him.

These steps are described in verse 15:29 and verse 2:31: "So, when I shaped him and breathed into him my Spirit, fall down prostrating yourselves to him." (15:29)

"Then He gave Adam the knowledge of the nature and reality of all things and everything..." (2:31). These verses describe the creation of Adam's physical body and the infusion of his soul into it." (pg. 156)

Ordinary humans become prophets only when God reveals His wisdom to them. So, God elevated Adam to become the first of His long chain of prophets by teaching him "knowledge of the nature and reality of all things and everything." (2:31). (pg. 156)

"Adam being the first prophet of God preaching Islam, he and his mate became the original spiritual parents of all humans." (pg. 157) "Adam was the first prophet, he must have had a human community to whom to preach the divine message." (pg. 157)

According to Suhaila Smith,

"They were religiously accountable people who worshiped God in accordance with their circumstances, their capabilities, and their comprehension."

The following excerpt is taken from "The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary" by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (pg. 178, note 504):

Quran 4:1

"O mankind! Reverence your Guardian Lord, who created you from a single person (note 504 below), created of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women. Reverence God, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs that bore you: for God ever watches over you."

Note 504:

Nafs may mean: (1) soul, (2) self, (3) person, living person, (4) will, good pleasure as in iv. 4 below. *Minha*: I follow the construction followed by Imam Razi. The particle *min* would then suggest here not a portion or a source of something else, but a species, a nature, a similarity.

The pronoun *ha* refers of course to *Nafs*. The Biblical story of the creation of Eve from a rib of Adam may be allegorical, but we may not assume it in Quranic teaching.

The Perfect Man: 'Soul of Soul' or 'The Divine Spirit'

The following excerpt is taken from *Phenomena of Nature* by Dr. Syed Abdul-Wadud, pp. 247-249:

Man: A Distinguished Creation

The Holy Quran relates the story of evolution, beginning from inorganic matter up to man, in so many different ways and describes man as a distinguished creation.

Let us recollect verses (23:12-14) described earlier: "*We created man from the extracts of inorganic elements of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm drop in its temporary abode, to be firmly fixed. From this fluid We created 'a hanging mass'. Then We created from 'the*

hanging mass' an embryo. Then We created the bony framework with muscles."

After the above description, it is said:

"Then We brought him forward as entirely a new and distinguished creation."

Let us see what are the points of distinction:

Ruh: The first distinguishing feature is the possession of 'Ruh' or 'Divine Energy': (32:7-9)

"It is He Who has made all that is created in due proportion. And He initiated the creation of man from inorganic matter of the earth and made his progeny from an extract of the nature of a despicable fluid. Then He fashioned him in due proportion and breathed into him His Ruh and gave you the faculties of hearing, sight, and mind. But very few of you make the right use of these faculties."

To find out the nature of 'Divine Energy' and how it works actually is not within the domain of perceptual knowledge.

(17:85)

"And they ask thee (O Muhammad) concerning the 'Divine Energy'. Say: The Divine Energy comes from the command of thy Sustainer. Of its knowledge, it is only a little that is communicated to you."

However, the divine energy, according to the Holy Quran, manifests itself in various ways in the universe. In human individuals, it appears in a specific form which is known as **Nafs**, in the Quranic terminology. All human actions dependent on Nafs present themselves in man in an undeveloped form and have immense potentialities. It has the capacity to develop on the blueprints of divine attributes. The potentialities become actualized by human actions that are in conformity with the divine laws given

to mankind through the messengers of Allah. He who gradually develops the Nafs draws closer to Allah, i.e., he realizes and manifests divine attributes within himself. The more the human self is developed, the more it is capable of survival and fit for passing on to its higher stage of evolution after physical death. On the other hand, one whose actions are in the opposite direction causes the disintegration of Nafs, i.e., he recedes from the real and draws closer to the unreal.

The Holy Quran said: “Say, *'The Ruh (Soul) is from the command of my Lord.'*” While explaining the answer, statements and interpretations given by commentators differ. The closest and clearest of these is what Qadi Thana’ullah Panipati has preferred in his *Tafsir Mazhari*. He says: Only what was necessary and what common people would understand has been told—and the full reality of Ruh (Soul), that the question sought, was not unfolded because it was beyond the comprehension of common people and, for that matter, nothing they needed hinged on understanding it. Here, the Holy Prophet (S) was asked to respond by saying that *'the Ruh (Soul) is from the command of my Lord.'* In other words, it is not like the usual created that comes into existence through the dispersal of matter and procreation. In fact, it is something created directly through the command (*kun: Be*) of Allah Ta'ala. At least, this much of the answer makes it clear that Ruh cannot be taken on the analogy of common matter—which removes all those doubts that emerge as a result of trying to understand Ruh through the prism of materialistic inquiry.

The hard truth is that this much knowledge of Ruh is sufficient for man. No business, religious or worldly, depends on knowing more than that. Therefore, taking that part of the question as redundant and unnecessary, it was not answered—especially when understanding its reality is something not easy even for the wisest of the wise, not to say much about the common people. (*Maarifur Quran*, Vol. 5, p. 548)

The Holy Quran says:

(91:7-10)

“By the Nafs and its perfection. He endowed it with the possibilities of both integration and disintegration. Truly he succeeds who nourishes it and he fails who stunteth it.”

The human Nafs is progressive, and to undergo evolution is in its nature. The Holy Quran explains the human actions and their recording on Nafs by calling it ‘a bird’. You keep control over a bird as long as it is in your grip. Once the grip is loosened, it is out of your control. Every cause has its effect, and every human action, however slight, must leave its imprint on the screen of Nafs. It is not in one’s control to check it. Man is thus composed of two distinct entities: physical body and Nafs, and both lie in close proximity to each other:

(17:13-14)

“Every man's 'bird' We have pasted on his own neck and We shall bring forth for him on the Day of Judgment a book which he shall find wide open. (It will be said to him:.) Read your own record. Your Nafs is sufficient this day to make an account for yourself.”

As stated above, the making and breaking up processes of Nafs or human personality are affected only by those actions which are performed willfully and after making a choice. It is the **Ruh** or 'Divine Energy' which confers on man the capacity to choose between right and wrong and thus provides man the unique distinction to act freely as he chooses. The freedom of choice and will thus become the directive force in human evolution, which in fact is the evolution of **Nafs** or 'human personality'.

The following excerpt is taken from *Maariful Quran* by Mufti Taqi Usmani, *Surah Naziat*, p. 697:

The human soul is a refined body which permeates the dense material body. The [ancient] doctors and philosophers called it *Ruh*

or soul. But the real spirit is an abstract substance and a subtle divine creature connected in a special way with this physical soul or Nafs, the life of which is dependent on the divine spirit. The pure, abstract, and non-material spirit is the life of the first soul on which depends the life of the body, and therefore it is called the 'soul of soul'. The real nature of the connection between these two kinds of soul is not known to anyone. It is known to Allah alone.

Perhaps an illustration would clarify the matter. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is 149.6 million kilometers away from the Earth, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. The same thing applies to the human soul. If it exerts itself in spiritual struggle and ascetic discipline in keeping with the teachings of [divine] revelation, it will be enlightened. Otherwise, it would be polluted with the bad effects of the physical body.

“The Perfect Man is, thus, that individual human being who realizes in himself the reality of the saying that man is created in God’s image, who combines in his microcosmic selfhood both the macrocosmic object and divine consciousness, being that heart which, microcosmically, contains all things essentially, and in which the Reality eternally rediscovers Its wholeness.” (The Bezels of Wisdom, Ibn Arabi, Translated by R.W.J. Austin, p. 35)

Perhaps this is the meaning of the following Hadith of the Prophet (peace be upon him):

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah’s Messenger (I) said, “Allah said, ‘I will declare war against him who shows hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine. And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing Nawafil (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, and his sense of sight with

which he sees, and his hand with which he grips, and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him, and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him; (i.e., give him My Refuge) and I do not hesitate to do anything as I hesitate to take the soul of the believer, for he hates death, and I hate to disappoint him.’”

Ruh (Spirit) and Nafs (Self): The View of Qadi Thana’ullah Panipati

Leaving this long-winding debate aside, we consider it sufficient to refer the reader to a special research presented by Qadi Thana’ullah Panipati in his *Tafsir Mazhari*. The respected commentator says that **Ruh** has two kinds: (1) Higher (‘Ulwl) and (2) Lower (Sifi’i). The higher Ruh is bereft of matter and is a creation of Allah Ta’ala, the comprehension of whose reality is difficult. The masters of insight by illumination (*ahl al-kashf*) see its real station to be above the Throne (‘Arsh) because it is more refined than the ‘Arsh. And this higher Ruh, as seen through illumination, is sensed in five degrees at upper and lower levels. Their number is five and they are: (1) The Heart (Qalb) (2) The Spirit (Ruh) (3) The Mystery (Sirr) (4) The Secret (Khafii) (5) The Most Secret (Akhfa). These are all from the refinements of the domain of Divine Command towards which the Holy Qur’an has hinted by declaring: (Say, “The spirit is from the command of my Lord” – 17:85).

As for the lower Ruh, it is a refined vapor which emerges from the combination of the four elements of the human body, that is, from fire, water, dust, and air, and this lower Ruh is called the Self (Nafs).

Allah Ta’ala has made this lower spirit called Self a mirror of the higher spirits mentioned above. An illustration would make it clear. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is far, far away, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. It even receives the heat of the sun in it which could burn a piece of cloth. The same thing applies to the higher spirits. Though they are,

because of their purity and detachment, very high and elevated in station, and far distant too, yet their reflection appears in the mirror of the lower spirit and transfers the states and effects of the higher spirits into it. When these very effects take root in human selves, they become known as subordinate parts of each individual's spirit.

Then, this lower form of spirit which is identified as Nafs or Self, armed with the states and effects which it has acquired from the higher forms of spirits, first gets connected with the heart muscle of the human body. This connection itself is another name for life. Once the lower spirit relates to the human heart, it infuses in it life and cognitions which it has acquired from the higher spirits. This lower spirit then starts circulating through the thin veins spread throughout the body and thus reaches every part of it.

It is this infusion of the lower spirit into the human body which has been called the 'blowing or breathing of the spirit' (the nafkh of Ruh) because it bears close resemblance to blowing or breathing into something.

And, in the present verse, Allah Ta'ala has attributed the spirit to Himself. He has said: (from My spirit) so that the superior status of the human spirit out of the entire creation becomes evident – because, it has come into existence, without any material substance, only under Divine Command. In addition to that, it has a unique ability to accept and absorb the manifestations of Divine Light, an ability which does not exist in the spirit of any other living creature other than that of the human person.

Though dust is the dominant element in the creation of man – and that is why the creation of man has been attributed to clay – the reality is that man is a combination of ten elements out of which five belong to the universe of creation while the other five to the universe of Divine Command. The four elements of the universe of creation are fire, water, dust, and air. The fifth is the refined vapor from these four which is called the lower spirit or Nafs. As for the five elements of the universe of Divine Command mentioned above, they are: (1)

Heart (Qalb) (2) Spirit (Ruh) (3) Mystery (Sirr) (4) Secret (Khafiyy) (5) Totally Hidden (Akhfa).

It is because of this comprehensive making of the human model that man became deserving of Divine viceregency and very much capable of absorbing the light which helps him know his Lord and, of course, sustaining his own burning quest on the path of love and longing for Him. The outcome, though unspecified as to its actual state, is communion with the Divine because the Holy Prophet (S) has said: (One shall be with whoever one loves). And since human beings have the ability to absorb the manifestations of Divine Light, and since they have been given the honor of being in communion with the Divine, it came to be the dictate of Divine wisdom that man be made the object of prostration by the angels. It was said: (you fall down before him, prostrating – 29).

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