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## The Scientific Vision of the Qur'an

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### Introduction to the Qur'an

Every religious conviction has an original source book upon which it is based where one can read and accurately form a comprehensive image of that belief system. Qur'an is the main source of the Islamic faith which was revealed to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam more than 1400 years ago. The name Qur'an is derived from the term *al-qur'an*, meaning "the recitation", lecture, and discourse named as such since it came not in physical, written-down form, but through oral revelation and transmission. The Arabian society to which Prophet Muhammad belonged was not a literary one and Arabs did not record things in writing for the most part. Rather they maintained tremendously strong oral traditions, with knowledge and history passed through the generations by word of mouth and their incredible skills of memorization. The Angel Gabriel came to Prophet Muhammad with the first words of the Book "*Iqra*" meaning "recite" or "read" which came directly from God carried by angel to Prophet Muhammad when he was 40 years old in 610 AD. The following verses are said to be the first revelation: *Recite: "In the Name of thy Lord, who created, Created Man of a blood clot. Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous, Who taught by the Pen, Taught Man that he knew not."*<sup>1</sup> After this he continued receiving such revelations until 632 AD. The Qur'an is the sacred scripture of Islam and, for Muslims of all schools of law (*feqah*) and theology, the Qur'an is the very word of God which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad orally through the Angel Gabriel over a period of approximately 23years<sup>2</sup> and uttered verbatim by him to those around him, and stands today as it has been since it was revealed. Upon

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<sup>1</sup>Qur'an 96:1-5

<sup>2</sup>Mary Pat Fisher, *Living Religions: An Encyclopedia of the World's Faiths*, I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997, page 338

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completion, it was divinely revealed guide book to life consisting 114 sections, called *Surahs*, a term mentioned several times and identified as units or chapters of the revelation, roughly in order of length, beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest chapters. For the purpose of recitation the Qur'an is divided into various schemes, such as 30 equal *ajza* (parts). According to Islamic tradition, revelations continued to come to Prophet Muhammad in Makka for 13 years (610-622 AD) about 86 in numbers and belonging to the period of struggle, most short, incisive, fiery, impassioned in style and replete with prophetic sense. In all these *surahs*, the emphasis is given on Oneness of God. His attributes, the ethical duties of man and the coming retributions. The remaining of 28 were revealed in Madina for 10 year (622-632 AD), which was sent down in the period of victory are mostly long verbose and rich in legislative materials. These explain theology of dogmas and ceremonial regulations to the institution of public prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and the sacred months are laid down. They contain laws prohibiting wine, pork, gambling, fiscal and military ordinances relating to alms giving and *jihad*, civil and criminal laws regarding homicide, retaliation, theft, usury, marriage, divorce, inheritance and freeing of slaves. Each *Surah* is formed from several *Ayat* (verses), which originally means a sign or portent sent by God. The number of verses differs from chapter to chapter which are more than 6,000 in the whole Qur'an. The revelations came in fragments as responses to the circumstances that Prophet and his emerging Muslim community faced. The title of each *surah* is derived from a name or quality discussed in the text or from the first letters or words of the *surah*. Muslims believe that the Prophet himself, on God's command, gave the *Surahs* their names.<sup>3</sup> Muslims believe the Qur'an to be the verbal book of divine guidance and direction for all mankind and it is the greatest gift of God to humanity and its wisdom is of unique kind. Since the message of the Qur'an is believed to be for all times, it should be relevant to every age.

The Quran is the 'final message' which is described in the Holy Book as the reminder because the same message was sent before also through earlier prophets, such segments are Torah (*Torat*) given to Prophet Moses, the Psalms (*Zaboor*) revealed to Prophet David, and Evangel (*Injil*) revealed to Prophet Jesus. Islam also recognizes the significance and the contributions of Prophets who preceded Prophet

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<sup>3</sup> Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2007). "Qur'an". *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*.

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Muhammad. From the beginnings of human history, Allah has communicated with his people either by the way of these prophets or by written scriptures: *Lo! We inspire thee as as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jaccob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon and as We imparted unto David the Psabans.*<sup>4</sup> Islam identifies the divine origins of the earlier Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and represents itself as both a restoration and a continuation of their traditions. Because of this, the Qur'an draws on biblical stories and repeats many biblical themes. In particular, the stories of several biblical prophets appear in the Qur'an, some in a condensed form; other stories, such as those of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, are given in elaborate detail and even with subtle revisions of the biblical accounts. Twenty-eight such prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an as predecessors of Prophet Muhammad, who is believed to have been Allah's final messenger. The Qur'an states well of the affiliation it has with earlier books (the Torah and the Gospel) and attributes their similarities to their unique origin and saying all of them have been revealed by the one God.<sup>5</sup> The Qur'an narrates stories of many of the people and events testified in Jewish and Christian sacred books (Tanakh, Bible). Adam, Enoch, Noah, Eber, Shelah, Abraham, Lot, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Jethro, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Aaron, Moses, Zechariah, John the Baptist, and Jesus are mentioned in the Qur'an as prophets of God. All these remain but so heavily intermixed with human additions and alterations that it is very difficult to determine what part of them continues the original message. The Qur'an is the Holy Book in the world to have survived in exact and unaltered form until today after passing more than 1400 years. The motive behind His Holy Book is to guard all previous revelations and restore the eternal truth of God, to lead humanity to straight path and to question the soul of the man, to awaken the human conscience and to enlighten the human thoughts. It is an ever-present miracle witnessing to itself and to Muhammad the Prophet of God. Its spiritual qualities get immense in human being life style in terms of its content of teachings, prophecies about the future and amazing accurate information.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that Prophet Muhammad never claimed that he wrote the Qura'an himself. He had no formal schooling and he made no secret of it. Muslims believe that

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<sup>4</sup> *Qur'an* 4:164

<sup>5</sup> *Qur'an* 2:285

<sup>6</sup> A. G. Dorman, *Towards Understanding Islam*, New York, 1948, p.3

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Muhammad was unlettered (*al-ummi*) and that he did not alter the revelations by a single word, even the Qur'an itself called him 'unlettered' several times. According to Watt, the meaning of the Qur'anic term *ummi* is unscriptured rather than illiterate.

### History of Compilation and Translation of the Qur'an

In accordance with the Sunni understanding, during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad many people learn by heart the Qur'an, and parts were also written down on whatever was at hand, including the bodies of believers, the shoulder bones of camels, tablets, and palm fronds, even some of which have survived to this day. When seventy reciters were killed in the Battle of Yamama, the Caliph Abu Bakr decided to collect the different chapters and verses into one volume. Subsequently, a group of reciters, including Zaydibn Thabit,<sup>7</sup> collected the chapters and verses and produced several hand-written copies of the complete book.<sup>8</sup> The completed text was passed to Caliph Umar, and later kept by Hafṣah bint Umar, widow of Prophet. But a dispute broke out among soldiers from different areas concerning the reading of certain verses during Caliph Uthman's reign, then Caliph Uthman selected Zaydibn Thabit to prepare a definitive version, which he accomplished with the help of three Makkans and a copy was kept in Madina, and others were sent to Damascus, Kufah, Yemen, and possibly Basra. After these copies containing alternate readings were destroyed, and Caliph Uthman's edition became the standard text of the Qur'an and has remained so ever since. The Shi'ite view, as well as that of some Sunnis, holds that Caliph Ali retired from public life after the death of the Prophet and compiled a complete version of the Qur'an *mus'haf*, which was later shown to the people of Madina. The order of this *mus'haf* differed from that gathered later during Uthman's era. Despite this, Ali made no objection or resistance against standardized *mus'haf*, but kept his own book.<sup>9</sup> Apart from minor differences over the numbering of verses and the interpretation of certain words and phrases, orthodox Sunni and Shi'ite scholars generally agreed upon the canonical text of the Qur'an. Accordingly, a standard text emerged very early in Islamic history

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<sup>7</sup> He had recorded some of the Qur'an during Prophet's lifetime

<sup>8</sup> Narrated in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 6:60:201

<sup>9</sup> Tabatabae, Sayyid Mohammad Hosayn, *The Qur'an in Islam: Its Impact and Influence on the Life of Muslims*, Routledge, 1988, Chapter 5

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that remains the authoritative text of the Qur'an to this day.<sup>10</sup> The Qur'an in its present form is generally considered by academic scholars to record the words spoken by Prophet Muhammad because the search for variants in Western academia has not yielded any differences of great significance and because, historically, controversy over the content of the Qur'an has never become a main point.<sup>11</sup> Regarding authenticity of the Qur'an, the Qur'an itself challenges anyone who disagrees with its divine origin to produce a text of a miraculous nature.<sup>12</sup> Muslims believe that the Qur'an is the timeless word of God and it further states that, had the whole humanity and *Jinns* were to gather to produce the like of it, even if they backed each other up with help and support, they will never be able to produce like it.

The Qur'an is one of the most significant of all religious works and one of the world's most beautiful works of literature. It is important to note the Qur'an is only called when read in its original Arabic language. The meanings of the Arabic, however, can be translated into other languages-though translations can never fully capture the beauty and literary elegance of the words in their original classical Arabic. Islamic doctrine teaches that the Qur'an is the miracle of Prophet Muhammad and neither its composition nor its contents can be imitated that is why translation of the Qur'an has always been a problematic and difficult issue. Furthermore, an Arabic word may have a range of meanings depending on the context, making an accurate translation even more difficult. The Qur'an is never to be translated from the Arabic for the purpose of worship because it is believed that translation distorts the divine message. The Qur'an, however has retained in its original classical Arabic language, and passed down through the centuries in this form. Not only has it been preserved in writing, but also via oral transmission. It is the only scripture from God that has stood the test of time. Nothing has been added, nothing taken away, and nothing changed. The Qur'an being the final message from God to humanity-is relevant to people of all times and all places. But over time the Qur'an was indeed translated into many languages to facilitate scholarships and the spread of the Islamic message. However, those Islamic scholars who advocate

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<sup>10</sup>Michael Cook, *The Koran; A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, P.117 – P.124

<sup>11</sup> F. E. Peters "Few have failed to be convinced that the Qur'an is the words of Muhammad, perhaps even dictated by him after their recitation." "The Quest of the Historical Muhammad," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.(1991), pp.3–5.

<sup>12</sup>*The Qur'an* 17:88

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translation argue that the Qur'anic message is universal and in accordance with the Qur'an, they argue, God never sent a messenger who did not speak the language of the people. For these believers the very verse explaining why the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic implies an obligation to translate and transmit its message to non-Arabs. Nevertheless, the Qur'an has been translated into most African, Asian and European languages. The first translator of the Qur'an was Salman Farsi, who translated surah *Fatiha* into Persian during the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>13</sup>. The first complete translation of Qur'an was into Persian language during the reign of Samanids in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD. Islamic tradition holds that translations were made for al Najashi (King) of Abyssinia and Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, as both received letters by Prophet Muhammad containing verses from the Qur'an.<sup>14</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century an Egyptian edition of the Qur'an is printed in 1924 with full diacritical marks and other signs that give precise guidance for the pronunciation of each word, especially for those readers who do not know Arabic and became the official text throughout the Islamic world. Lex Mahomet pseudo prophete, was the first translation of the Qur'an into a western language (Latin) by Robert of Ketton in 1143 AD for Peter the Venerable. *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* was the French translations of the Qur'an by Andre du Ryer in 1647 AD and Alexander Ross offered the first English version in 1649 AD, from the same French translation. George Sale produced the first scholarly translation of the Qur'an into English in 1734 AD. This trend was followed many non-Muslims and Muslim translators like Richard Bell in 1937, Arthur John Arberry in 1955, Yusuf Ali, and M. Marmaduke Pickthall. According to Afnan Fatani in 1936, translations of the Qur'an in 102 languages were known. In 2010, the *Hurriyet Daily News* and *Economic Review* reported that the Qur'an was presented in 112 languages at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Quran Exhibition in Tehran. However, any Qur'anic translation, either in English or any other language, is neither Qur'an, nor a version of the Qur'an, but rather it is only a translation of the meaning of the Qur'an. The Qur'an exists only in the Arabic in which it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad.

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<sup>13</sup> An-Nawawi, Al-Majmu', (Cairo, Matbacat at-'Tadamun n.d.), 380.

<sup>14</sup> For detailed study see, Shamshad Ali, "Foreign relations of Prophet Muhammad and his Diplomatic Mission to Ethiopia", *Islam's Earlier Encounter with the Horn of Africa*, Institut of Islamic Studies, AMU, Aligarh, 1914, pp.47-55



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### Significance of the Qur'an

It has been observed that the Qur'an did not come down all at once; rather it came down in accordance with the requirements of the Muslim society in facing new problems, according to the growth of ideas and concepts, the progress of general social life and to new challenges faced by the Muslim community in its practical life. One verse or a few verses would be revealed according to the special circumstances and events, and they would answer questions which arose in the minds of people, would explain the nature of a particular situation, and would prescribe a way of dealing with it. These verses would correct their mistakes, either of understanding or of practice, would bring them closer to God, and would further enlighten to them the wisdom of the various aspects of the universe in the light of God's attributes. Therefore, they evidently realized that every moment of their lives was under the continuous guidance and direction of God. For Muslims, the Qur'an teaches the meaning of life. In accordance with the Qur'an, humankind's fundamental role in this world is one of moral struggle and each human will be held responsible for this struggle at the end of time. God sent the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an to instruct humanity in how to lead a moral life. The teachings of the Qur'an are dispersed and repeated throughout the holy book rather than being organized as topics. The subjects of these teachings include God and creation, prophets and messengers from Adam to Jesus, Prophet Muhammad as a preacher and as a ruler, Islam as a faith and as a code of life, disbelief, human responsibility and judgment, and society and law. The main topic of the Qur'an is God's relationship with humankind. The Qur'an summons humans to acknowledge God's sovereignty over their lives and invites them to submit to his will. The chief doctrines laid down in the Qur'an are that only one God and one true religion exist; that all people will undergo a final judgment, with the just being rewarded with eternal bliss and the sinners being punished; and that when humankind turned from truth, God sent prophets to lead the way back. The greatest of these prophets were Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad. Muslims believe that on Day of Judgment the world will come to an end, the dead will be resurrected, and a judgment will be pronounced on every person in accordance with his or her acts. The Qur'an vividly depicts the torment of Hell and the bliss of Paradise, the two realms to which people will be sent once judgment has been

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pronounced.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Qur'an is a complete code of guidance for the humankind and the source of spiritual nourishment. The purpose of the Qur'an is to teach people how to live in peace with God and the Universe. So one can say Islam is the Qur'an, and the Qur'an is Islam. Thousands of verses of the Qur'an are stimulus for expanding the mind through observation, study of nature and contemplation. The first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad was "read" which helps open the eyes of the believers for examination and study in all fields of matter and knowledge. Moreover, one comes across hundreds of verses in the Qur'an with inquisitive style appealing people to broaden their scope to think, analyze and come up with better ways to improve the quality of life. In accordance with Qur'an: "*Are the blind equal with those who see? Or is the depth of the darkness equal with the light?*"<sup>16</sup> "*Say: go through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty of sin.*"<sup>17</sup> "*Say: travel through the earth and see how God did originate creation.*"<sup>18</sup> "*Say: wonder in the heavens and earth for the signs of God.*"<sup>19</sup> "*It is He Who gives life and death, and to Him is due the alteration of night and day: Will you not then understand.*"<sup>20</sup> The direct result of this inquisitive approach widens the horizon of exploration and the expansion of intelligent and idea which led to the making of the Golden Age (Abbasid Period), the cradle to the scientific and academic revolution that headed to the Renaissance.

The Qur'an is addressed to the entire humanity transcending all barriers and limitations of race, region or time. Furthermore, it guides humans in all spheres of life i.e., spiritual, temporal, individual and collective. It contains conduct for the head of the state as well as for common people of rich and poor socio-economic status, for peace loving as well as war, for spiritual wellbeing as well as for commercial and material prosperity. The Qur'an helps in the development of personality of an individual and suggests him how to interact with society. It declares every human being will be accountable to the Creator. The methods of the Qur'an states that it not only gives command, but also to educate the people and convince them about their usefulness in respects of its injunctions. It advocates reason of man and invites him to

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<sup>15</sup> *The Qur'an* 100

<sup>16</sup> *The Qur'an* 6:50

<sup>17</sup> *The Qur'an* 27:69

<sup>18</sup> *The Qur'an* 29:20

<sup>19</sup> *The Qur'an* 10:101

<sup>20</sup> *The Qur'an* 23:80



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exercise his own intellect in order to understand himself, his destination and purpose in life, his conduct with fellow beings and above all his relations with his sustainer. The Qur'an adopts various ways and methods for enabling humanity to understand the truthfulness; it relates stories and parables and invokes the testimony for history to show what the right course is, and what doomed the nations in the past. It also teaches man the attributes of Divine Being, which are manifest from 99 beautiful names of the Almighty i.e. the One, the Creator, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, the Peaceful, the Just, and the Merciful etc. It also points out what the duties of man are in relation to God, to his fellow being or others and himself. Thus, one can observe that the Qur'an is the comprehensive code of life covering every aspect and phase of human life. J. W. Draper opined that the Qur'an sounds in excellent moral suggestions and precepts; its composition is so fragmentary that we can turn to a single page without finding maxims which all men must approve. This fragmentary construction yields texts, mottoes, and rules complete in themselves suitable for common in any of the incidents of life.<sup>21</sup>

### The Unique Features of the Qur'an

Muslims believed that the Qur'an is the main source of the Islamic faith that contains guidance for all mankind for all times as well as relevant to every age. Scholars of Islam also believe that its lyrical form is unique and of a style that cannot be written by humans. The Qur'an itself challenges any who disagree with its divine origin to produce a text of a miraculous nature in the following verses: "*An if ye are in doubts as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto; and call your witnesses or helpers (If there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true.*"<sup>22</sup> The same challenge is repeated in the Qur'an several times. The Qur'anic *surah* remains unmet to this day. The unique features of the Qur'an are as follows: No one can 'find a story line' approach in the Qur'an. A film maker would have, very difficult job who tries to pick out some plot for religious film from these pages. Apart from that you never get a historical narrative about Prophet Muhammad and details about his private life strongly enough; there are bits in the Qur'an about Prophet Muhammad. However, there was always part of revelations and are part of whatever it was Prophet Muhammad was

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<sup>21</sup> John William Draper, *A History of Intellectual Development of Europe*, London, pp. 343-44

<sup>22</sup> *The Qura'an* 2:23

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being told to ‘say’ or ‘recite’. Another unique feature is that the text of the Qur’an does not really have a beginning, middle and end; its nonlinear structure is like that of a web or a net. In fact the first verse of the Qur’an to be revealed were actually surah 96 (*Al Alaq*) and last revelation was probably that of surah 5 (*Al Ma’idah*). The Qur’an is not like a ‘story’ rather like a computer, giving to answer whatever question put to it. For instance, how long do you think it would be right for a widow to wait before remarrying? Many major world religions give sensible answer to this; but the Qur’an precise—4 months and 10 days in the following words: “*And those of you who die and leave wives behind them, they (wives) shall wait (as regards their marriage) for four months and ten days, when they have fulfilled their terms...*”<sup>23</sup> The Qur’an is full of examples like this and it is this combination of dedication to One God, plus practical instructions that make the Qur’an also unique.<sup>24</sup> The Qur’an is full of un-exemplified wisdom with regards to its source, its characteristics and its dimensions. The realistic approach of the Qur’an, the practical solutions it offers to human problems.

The realistic approach of the Qur’an, the practical solutions it offers to human the major characteristics of the Qur’anic wisdom is that it is not the static or dry type. It is kind of dynamic wisdom that provokes the mind and quickens the heart. In this wisdom there is a stirring dynamism and there is a moving force attested by historical evidence as well as by Qur’an itself: “*Had We sent down this Qur’an on a mountain, you would surely have seen it humbling itself and rent as under the fear of Allah, such are the parables, which we put forward to mankind that they may reflect.*”<sup>25</sup> Other significant characteristic of the Qur’an is its tractability. In the words of Hammudah Abdalti “*It does not indulge in wishful thinking. Nor do its teachings demand the impossible or float a rosy stream of unattainable ideals.*”<sup>26</sup> Another characteristic is moderation or harmony between Divine and human, the spiritual and material, the individual and collective, and so on. The Qur’an pays due attention to all facts regarding life and all requirement of man. Therefore, the Qur’an presents a complete way of life, deals with even details of it. One of the earliest biographers of Prophet Muhammad opined that the Qur’an is the groundwork of Islam. Its authority is

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<sup>23</sup> *The Qur’an* 2:234

<sup>24</sup> James E. Michener, “Islam, the Misunderstood Religion”, *Robert Digest*, American Edition, May 1955

<sup>25</sup> *The Qur’an* 59:21

<sup>26</sup> Hammudah Abdalti, *Islam in Focus*, USA, 1975, p.195

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absolute in all matters of religion, ethics and science, equally in matters of religion, the Qur'an is supreme and much of the tendency is so plain as to admit no question, even among contending sectaries.<sup>27</sup> The Qur'an is seen one of the major weapons against the forces of darkness and evil because it gives full and detailed guidance of how one should live, what one should do, and what one should avoid or give up, and what one should reject or fight. One of the most important aspects of the Qur'an that has real practical benefits is its message of hope and confidence to the humanity. When things go wrong or when tragedies strike, many people wonder why it had happened to them or their loved ones and they give up belief in God and become terribly depressed. In accordance with Islamic belief it would hardly be reasonable for God to place people in situation which are too much for them, and then expect them to be successful. That would make him very unfair. Instead the Qur'an promises that, "*Allah burdens not a person burden beyond his scope...*" "*And we task not any person except according to his capacity...*"<sup>28</sup> The Qur'an teaches that life is the brilliant demonstration God's wisdom and knowledge, a vivid reflection of His art and power, the Qur'an states that "... *And fear Allah, and know that Allah is All-Aware of everything.*"<sup>29</sup> The Qur'an advocates to the people that life is not a game, or random chance, or pointless, but a test of all people. It further explain that reason for living is not wonder aimlessly about, engaging yourself as best you can, since you have to pass a test and tests are not easy. Since test simply difficulties, it makes sense that not every part of your lives is going to be pleasant or easy. Many people think that if they are more religious then nothing nasty will be happened to them. However, the Qur'an teaches something quite different. It states that no human life ever pass without trials and sufferings, and that the tragedies and misfortunes it encounters are to be accepted without losing faith, as part of the tests: "*Do people think that they will be left alone, because they say; 'we believe', and will not be tested.*"<sup>30</sup> There is no human society where a man can be free in the absolute sense of the word apart from the general idea mentioned in the Qur'an regarding concept of freedom since every man is born free on the *fitrah* or in pure state of nature. This means the man is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the laws of God or

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<sup>27</sup> Sir William Muir, *The Life of Muhammad*, London, 1903, p. VII

<sup>28</sup> *The Qur'an* 2:286, 23:62

<sup>29</sup> *The Qur'an* 2:231

<sup>30</sup> *The Qur'an* 29:23

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desecrates the rights of others. All people are equal and they are treated as they deserve in the light of their deeds in life. The Qur'an gives emphasis in the value of human goodwill. That is why the Muslim believes in the unity of humanity with regards to source of creation, the original parents (Adam and Eve) and finally the destiny. The true way of freedom is not the rejection of religion but in giving people the revolutionary spirit which hates injustice and cures the unjust. This spirit is essentially the spirit of the Islamic people.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Qur'an as a History Book for Humanity**

The Qur'an partially acts as a History book for humanity and details the story of man's creation, his early days and journey to earth, and some of the most important events in human history in these are not only factual accounts of significant events in our history, but also timeless lessons that we can extract to apply to our modern times. From the modesty and dedication of Mary to firm faith of Abraham, the economic sense of Joseph and the strong leadership of Moses, it's all there. Historical events in the Qur'an are related to outline general moral lessons. The Qur'an always draws our attention to take lesson from the events of history when it refers to the total destruction of the very powerful nations. There were many references of individual nations such as the *A'd*, the *Thamud*, and the *Hud* etc. in some cases the Qur'an describes the type of mischief they indulged in. It should be sufficed to quote only two general verses from the Qur'an: "*And how many a generation before them We have destroyed.*"<sup>32</sup> It is not guidance for them: "*how many generations We destroyed before them in whose dwellings they do walk about?*"<sup>33</sup> Man is confined to very narrow perspective because he does not spare time to study the detailed account of history of the past nations and lesson from it. According to the Qur'an 'man is hasty',<sup>34</sup> hence we draw hast conclusion without having sufficient historical evidences. We should accept the verdict of the Qur'an and follow lessons from the Divine Statement. The Qur'an is the only sacred Book where one can find the solutions of all problems pertaining to entire humanity. Whatever questions or problems might be troubling any one, they could be looked into the Qur'an and find either the answer or the principle by

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<sup>31</sup> Mohammed Kutub, "Islam and freedom of Thought", *Islam, the Misunderstood Religion*, <http://islambasics.com>

<sup>32</sup> *The Qur'an* 19:98

<sup>33</sup> *The Qur'an* 32:26

<sup>34</sup> *The Qur'an* 21:37

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which the answer could be deduced and it would be there. The answer might not always be what a weak or conceited or selfish, or greedy person might hope to find, for they would be looking for some way justifying the wrong thing they were doing but answer would be there, and it would be clear and just. Any person rejecting that answer would deliberately be choosing to go against reason and justice. The Qur'an itself states that: "*Nay, but they, the clear Ayah are preserved in the breast of those who have knowledge. And non but the Zalimun (unjust) denies Our Ayah (proofs, evidences, signs).*"<sup>35</sup>

### The Qur'an and the Science

Islam is a far cry from blind faith, the Qur'an challenges our assumption and, after presenting evidence, encourages readers to use their intelligence, Again and again, the Qur'an asks: "Will you not reason?" "Have you seen?" Have you considered?" However, reading the Qur'an will lead you to ponder many things: the world in which you exist, and social norms of the day, and the power, compassion, and mercy of the being that created everything. In the contemporary age, many people are polarized between religion and a 'rational' belief in science holding the two to be incompatible with each other; however, the Qur'an is different because it complements modern scientific knowledge. From Embryology to Meteorology, geology and more, the Qur'an's text has proven to be amazingly accurate in light of scientific discoveries that were only made in the last century. The famous scientist Albert Einstein opined that "Science without religion is lame. Religion without science is blind." Let us study whether the Qur'an and modern science are compatible or incompatible. The Qur'an is not a book of science but a book 'signs' i.e. *ayats*. There are more than 6,000 'signs' in the Qur'an of which more than 1,000 deal with science. History bears witness that neither the Islamic faith nor its system of rule ever came into conflict with science or the application of its theories. Islam has never opposed the adoption of scientific inventions achieved by humanity at large and Muslims have ever made use of all good scientific achievements. Thousands of verses of the Qur'an are stimulus for expanding the mind through observation, study of nature and contemplation. The first word revealed to Prophet Muhammad was "read" which helps open the eyes of the believers for examination and study in all fields of matter and knowledge. Moreover, one comes across hundreds of verses in the Qur'an with inquisitive style appealing people to broaden their scope to

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<sup>35</sup> The Qur'an 29:49

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think, analyze and come up with better ways to improve the quality of life. Islam does not reject science; indeed, it makes it as obligatory as the acquisition of power, and gives it its support. It suffices to say that the very first verse of the Qur'an to be revealed says: *'Recite, in the Name of thy Lord who created; created man from a clot of blood. Recite, for thy Lord is the Most Gracious, who taught men with the pen; taught man what he did not know.'*<sup>36</sup> Prophet Muhammad stipulated as part of the ransom for the polytheists captured at the Battle of Badr, one prisoner should teach ten Muslim children reading and writing, in the endeavor to wipe out illiteracy from the *Ummah*. God has not placed the learned and the ignorant equal. God further says: *'Are those who know and those who do not know equal? Only those who possess understanding are mindful.'*<sup>37</sup> Since the begging Muslims' belief was in the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad: *"The ink of scholars is more precious than the blood of the martyrs."* *"Lo! The angels offer their wings to the seeker of knowledge."* Islam has given the same weight to the ink of scholars as to the blood of martyrs. The Prophet of Islam himself says, *"The study of science is an ordinance"*.<sup>38</sup> True science is not in conflict with the Islamic faith and the belief that God created everything.

The Qur'an links science and power together in two noble verses: *'For why should not a few from every group of them march out as a party, so that they may gain knowledge of religion and warn their people when they return to them? Perhaps they will beware. O ye who believe fight those unbelievers who are close to you, and let them encounter harshness in you, and know ye that Allah is with the god fearing.'*<sup>39</sup> The Qur'an does not distinguish between the natural and religious sciences, but advocates both. It sums up the natural sciences in one verse, by encouraging man to study them. To understand and be familiar with the universe is a way of revering Him and a path towards knowing Him. This is what the God says: *'Hast thou not seen Allah send down water from the sky?'*<sup>40</sup> Here God refers to astronomy and the cosmos, and the connection between heaven and earth. Then the God says: *'And We produce their with*

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<sup>36</sup> *The Qura'an* 96:1

<sup>37</sup> *The Qura'an* 39:11

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Muhammad Kutub, "Islam and Civilization" *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*.  
<http://www.islambasics.com>

<sup>39</sup> *The Qura'an* 9:22-23

<sup>40</sup> *The Qura'an* 35:27

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*fruits of varying colors.*<sup>41</sup> At this juncture God refers to the amazing science of botany. *'And among the mountains are streaks white and red, of varying colors and (others) black.'*<sup>42</sup> At this point there is a reference to the science of geology, and the different modes of strata that constitute the earth. *'And of men and creatures that crawl and cattle, in like manner of various colors.'*<sup>43</sup> In this verse there is reference to the science of biology and the classification system. Do you think that these verses have left out any of the natural sciences? To all of this the God adds: *'The learned among His worshippers alone fear Allah.'*<sup>44</sup> Don't you see that with such a wonderful construction of verses, God commands and encourages mankind to study the universe, placing those who have deep insight into the mysteries of the universe as those who revere and know Him? Therefore, Muslims believe that message of the Qur'an is always consistent with modern scientific discovery. It has been observed that no scientist in Islam has ever been burnt or tortured for discovering or announcing a scientific fact. The Qur'an, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago, mentioned facts only recently discovered or proven by scientists. This proves without doubt that the Qur'an must be the literal word of God. The Qur'anic exegesis gained new significance with the appearance modernism towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century AD, the scholar like Muhammad Abduh, the founder of modernism in Egypt, accepts the Qur'an as the literally inspired word of God, in which there can be nothing false, and tries to show that the results of modern science and many modern views are already present in the Qur'an.<sup>45</sup> The Qur'an is not intervened to be the text of scientific knowledge. Therefore, the scientific evidences of the Qur'an clearly prove its Divine origin.

### **The Qur'an and the Origin of the Universe**

Muslims believe that the Qur'an is coherent in terms of form and content with particular reference to the scientific knowledge about the Universe. Although the people in Arabia at that time were highly superstitious and many worshipped the sun, moon and stars. There is no room for superstition in the Qur'an: the Qur'an itself states about the Sun and the Moon: *"They ask you (Prophet Muhammad) about*

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>43</sup> *The Qura'an*35;28

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> For detailed study see, Muhammad Abduh's article in '*Al Mansur*'

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*the new moon, say: These are the signs to mark fixed periods of time for mankind.*<sup>46</sup> The science of modern cosmology, observational and theoretical, clearly indicates that, at one point in time, the whole universe was nothing but a cloud of ‘smoke’ (i.e. an opaque highly dense and hot gaseous composition). This is one of the undisputed principles of standard modern cosmology. Scientists now can observe new stars forming out of the remnants of that ‘smoke.’ The illuminating stars we see at night were, just as was the whole universe, in that ‘smoke’ material. God has said in the Qur’an: *“Then He turned to the heaven when it was smoke...”*<sup>47</sup> Because the earth and the heavens above (the sun, the moon, stars, planets, galaxies, etc.) have been formed from this same ‘smoke,’ we conclude that the earth and the heavens were one connected entity. Then out of this homogeneous ‘smoke,’ they formed and separated from each other. Although no scientist knows the real truth of the Universe till today but the Quran gives more relations that are quite consistent with the theories of ‘Big Bang’ and the expanding universe: *“have not those who disbelieve known that the heavens and the earth were joined together as one united piece, then We parted them?... and He it is Who has created the night and day, and the sun and the moon, each in an orbit floating.”*<sup>48</sup> ‘Big Bang’ theory is currently accepted explanation of the beginning of the universe and in accordance with the ‘Big Bang’ theory the whole universe was initially one big mass, extremely compact, dense, and hot. Then as the universe expanded and cooled, this force separated into: gravity, electromagnetism, the strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force 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 probability of it occurring by ‘chance’ is zero. On the other hand the Qur’an 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 as under?”* The salient harmony between the Qur’anic verse and the ‘Big Bang’ theory is preordained! This verse proved that this profound scientific truth appeared in the Qur’an more than 1400 years ago.

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<sup>46</sup> *The Qur’an* 2:189

<sup>47</sup> *The Qur’an* 41:11

<sup>48</sup> *The Qur’an* 21:30,33



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### The Qur'an and the Origin of Life on the Earth

Regarding the life the most critical questions are: Where did we come from? Why do we exist? Who is God? Why is there suffering in this world? Where are we going? What happened after we die? - pondered by humanity for centuries, and while philosophers and other great scholars came to various conclusions throughout our collective history, the Qur'an answers these and other crucial questions with clarity. Apart from the heavenly bodies which has very clear-cut idea regarding the origin of life on the earth. The origin of life has been a very attracting and fascinating subject for the scientists since immemorial Plato, Aristotle, Lamarck, Weisman, Darwin and Devries opined that billions of years ago, primeval matters in the sea began to form living things. It is discovered very recently yet. The Qur'an states that: "*And We have made from the water living things. Will they not believe?*"<sup>49</sup> In another verse also the Qur'an advocates regarding the origin of life, "*Allah has created every moving (living) from water. Of them, there are some that creep on their bellies, and some that walk on two legs, and some that walks on four, Allah creates what He wills. Verily Allah is able to do all things.*"<sup>50</sup> According to the theory of special creation of life originated on this earth from some immortal supernatural, force of God. Muslims believe that Adam and Eve were real created people and that both man and female from the same original soul, which divided. Concerning this, Qur'an states that: "*O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, who created you from a single person (Adam) and from him (Adam) he created his wife (Hawwa or Eve) and from both them both He created many men and women.*"<sup>51</sup> Once God has created the principle of male and female pairs, then reproduction by sex instead of cell division becomes possible. In the Holy Qur'an, God speaks about the stages of man's embryonic development: "*We created man from an extract of clay. Then We made him as a drop in a place of settlement, firmly fixed. Then We made the drop into an alaqah (leech, suspended thing, and blood clot), then We made the alaqah in to a mudghah (chewed substance)...*"<sup>52</sup> Literally, the Arabic word *alaqah* has three meanings: (1) leech, (2) suspended thing, and

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<sup>49</sup> The Qur'an 21:30

<sup>50</sup> The Qur'an 24:45

<sup>51</sup> The Qur'an 4:1

<sup>52</sup> The Qur'an 23:12-14

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(3) blood clot.<sup>53</sup> The following verse refers to the creation of human beings from water: *“It is He Who has created man from water: Then has He established relationships of lineage and marriage; for thy lord has power (over all things).”*<sup>54</sup> In this way one can conclude that the Qur’an did not contain a single statement that was assailable from the modern scientific point of view. In the opinion of Hertwig Hirschfield the Qur’an is the fountainhead of the modern sciences.<sup>55</sup> Really, it is surprising all these messages were revealed more than 1400 year ago when the scientific details were meaningless. The evidences in the Qur’an acknowledge that all humanity can find modern truth in the Qur’an regarding each sphere of life. It guides not only spiritually but also socially, politically, economically and scientifically to the whole humanity.

### The Qur’an and Human Equality

The advent of Islam was indeed a world of social, political and intellectual reforms that swiped the Arabian Peninsula and much of the old world. The Holy Qur’an and the *Hadith* are the fountains of this intellectual and social reform. In regard to the Muslim society the life, honor and property of all are considered sacred whether the person is Muslim or not and racism and sexism are incomprehensible to Muslims. Even the Qur’an speaks of human equality in the following words: *“O mankind! We created you from a single soul, male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you may come to know one another. Truly, the most honored of you in God’s sight is the greatest of you in piety. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”*<sup>56</sup> Islam also protects honor. So, in Islam, insulting others or making fun of them is not allowed. The Prophet Muhammad said: *“Truly your blood, your property, and your honor are inviolable.”*<sup>57</sup> Islam rejects certain individuals or nations being favored because of their wealth, power, or race. God created human beings as equals who are to be distinguished from each other only on the basis

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<sup>53</sup> In comparing a leech to an embryo in the *alaqah* stage, we find similarity between the two; also, the embryo at this stage obtains nourishment from the blood of the mother, similar to the leech, which feeds on the blood of others. The second meaning of the word *alaqah* is “suspended thing,” the suspension of the embryo, during the *alaqah* stage, in the womb of the mother.

<sup>54</sup> Qur’an 25:54

<sup>55</sup> *New Researches in to the Composition and Exegesis of the Qur’an*, London,1902, p.9

<sup>56</sup> Qur’an 49:13

<sup>57</sup> Narrated in *SaheehAl-Bukhari*, #1739, and *Mosnad Ahmad*, #2037.

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of their faith and piety. The Prophet Muhammad said: "O people! Your God is one and your forefather (Adam) is one. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab, and a red (i.e. white tinged with red) person is not better than a black person and a black person is not better than a red person,"<sup>58</sup> except in piety"<sup>59</sup>One of the major problems facing mankind today is racism. The developed world can send a man to the moon but cannot stop man from hating and fighting his fellow man. Ever since the days of the Prophet Muhammad, Islam has provided a vivid example of how racism can be ended. The annual pilgrimage (Hajj) to Makkah shows the real Islamic brotherhood of all races and nations, when about two million Muslims from all over the world come to Makka to perform the pilgrimage. Islam is a religion of justice. God has said: "*Truly God commands you to give back trust to those to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, to judge with justice....*"<sup>60</sup> And He has said: "...And act justly. Truly, God loves those who are just."<sup>61</sup> The status of woman in Islam, whether single or married, as an individual in her own right, with the right to own and dispose of her property and earnings. She has the right to buy and sell, give gifts and charity, and may spend her money as she pleases. A marital gift is given by the groom to the bride for her own personal use, and she may keep her own family name rather than adopting her husband's. Roles of men and women are complementary and collaborative. Rights and responsibilities of both sexes are equitable and balanced in their totality. Both men and women are expected to dress in a way that is simple, modest and dignified. The Prophet Muhammad said: "*The most perfect in faith amongst believers is he who is best in manner and kindest to his wife.*"<sup>62</sup> Mothers in Islam are highly honored. Islam recommends treating them in the best way. Islam has been invariably tolerant towards other beliefs. The Qur'an itself states clearly: "*There is no compulsion in religion.*"<sup>63</sup> Protection of the rights of non-Muslims to worship is an intrinsic part of Islamic law. It is also stated in the Qur'an al: "*God does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them; for God loves*

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<sup>58</sup> The colors mentioned in this Prophetic saying are examples. The meaning is that in Islam no one is better than another because of his color, whether it is white, black, red, or any other color.

<sup>59</sup> Narrated in *Mosnad Ahmad*, #22978

<sup>60</sup> *The Qur'an* 4:58

<sup>61</sup> *The Qur'an* 49:9

<sup>62</sup> Narrated in *IbnMajah*, #1978, and *Al-Tirmizi*, #3895.

<sup>63</sup> *The Qur'an* 2:256

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*those who are just.*<sup>64</sup> That is why non-Muslim societies and religious places of worship have flourished all over the Islamic world. History provides many examples of Muslims' tolerance towards other faiths. For instance, prior to the Spanish Inquisition, Jews and Christians lived and prospered in Andalusia (Spain) for centuries under Muslim rule. Islamic law also permits non-Muslims to set up their own courts and implement family and personal laws administered by their chosen religious authorities. History witnessed that the coming of Prophet Muhammad uplifted the human race from the worshipping stones and self-interest into worshipping the Creator of the universe; from exploiting slaves, orphans, women and the weak into the justice of equality, resurgence and liberty; from immorality and corruption to order and law; from a tyrannical political systems to a pluralistic democracy; from insecurity to safety and independence. Such large numbers of underprivileged classes achieved their freedom through voluntary emancipation in Islam as have no other parallel in the history of any other nation, before or after Islam till modern times. Due to emphasis on education in Islam slaves, women and the deprived were able to find dignity and become an integral part of the political and social processes of the society.

### **The Qur'an and Jihad**

Frequent usage of the term '*Jihad*' in the western media and literature have induced an unnecessary animosity between Muslims and the West, especially among non-Muslims. Such misunderstanding, which was raised by ignorance, must have no place in modern intellectual societies. In order to get rid of such misunderstanding, one has to explore the meaning of the term '*Jihad*' within the Islamic Culture. In its most general meaning, '*jihad*' refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, as individuals and as a community, to exert (*jihad*) themselves to realize God's will in history. It is the struggle to lead a virtuous life, to fulfill the universal mission of Islam. In accordance with the classical scholars<sup>65</sup> there are various means by which both the spiritual and the physical *jihad* could be conducted: (1) *Jihad* by the heart is concerned with combatting the devil and in the attempt to escape his persuasion to evil. (the inner, spiritual battle of the heart against vice, passion, and ignorance), (2) *Jihad* by the tongue is concerned with speaking the truth and spreading the word of Islam with one's tongue, (3) *Jihad* by the hand refers to

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<sup>64</sup> *The Qur'an* 60:8

<sup>65</sup> Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam*, p.56

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choosing to do what is right and to combat injustice and what is wrong with action, or one's hand,(4) *Jihad* by the sword refers to armed fighting in the way of God for defensive purposes, or struggle to prevent a greater loss of lives, and(5) *Jihad* by pen is concerned with battling against injustice, ignorance and exploitation with one's writing. Some traditions ascribed to Prophet Muhammad profess the merits of *jihad* conducted by the tongue, as in one hadith in which the Prophet said, "The greatest jihad is a word of truth spoken to a tyrant." Other traditions describe the *jihad* of the pen, that is, of scholars, as more meritorious than the *jihad* of the sword. One of the most famous such hadiths declares the spiritual jihad to be the greater *jihad* as compared to the physical jihad, which is the lesser *jihad*.

Unlike the other religions of the world, Islam also permits fighting in self-defense, in defense of religion, or on the part of those who have been expelled forcibly from their homes. Islam lays down strict rules of struggle that include prohibitions against harming civilians and against destroying crops, trees and livestock. Obviously injustice would be triumphant in the world if good people were not prepared to risk their lives for a righteous cause. Qur'an itself says: "*Fight in the cause of God against those who fight you, but do not transgress limits. God does not love transgressors.*"<sup>66</sup> "*And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for God. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers.*"<sup>67</sup> "*If they seek peace, then you seek peace. And trust in God for He is the One that hears and knows all things.*"<sup>68</sup> Therefore, war is the last alternative, and is subject to the rigorous conditions laid down by the sacred law, but irony is that many people in the West are wrongly accustomed to the term *jihad* to mean "Holy War." Such type of assumption incriminates terror and bloodshed incurred by Muslims to non-Muslims. The term "Holy War" is often used in association with the Crusades wars, while the term *Jihad* is not limited to actual war, and is certainly no substitution for "Holy War." Since the term "Holy War" is mainly the result of the more than 250 years long Crusade<sup>69</sup> wars and by all means "War" in Islam is not "Holy." However the people in the West as well in the non-Muslim world have been

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<sup>66</sup> Qur'an 2:190

<sup>67</sup> Qur'an 2:193

<sup>68</sup> Qur'an 8:61

<sup>69</sup> During the Crusades, Muslims defended themselves against the invading Christian Crusades that marched all the way from England and France to Palestine, Syria and Egypt to "liberate" Jerusalem. The Muslims act of defense was certainly *jihad*, but still could not be taken to mean "Holy War."

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quite misinformed about its meaning and the nature of the term *jihad*. The word *Jihad* came from the Arabic root-word *Juhd*, which means: *exertion of effort, strive or struggle*.<sup>70</sup> *Jihad*, as an Islamic concept, can be on a personal level--inner struggle against evil within oneself; struggle for decency and goodness on the social level; and struggle on the battlefield, if and when necessary. Furthermore, its usage in the Qur'an does not certainly reflect the Western meaning of "Holy War." *The Qur'an says: "As for those who strive in Us (jahadu), We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with these who do good."*<sup>71</sup> The term "Holy War" translated to Arabic is "*al Harb al Muqadasah*." This term does not exist in the Arabic culture or literature.<sup>72</sup> Islamic philosophy regarding the soul is to safe guard it and to prevent bloodshed. False understanding of the word *jihad* as a "Holy War" declared by Muslims against Christians, Jews and other non-Muslim is only a myth. Today, popularly it can be used to describe a personal struggle, to keep the *Fast of Ramadan*, to be good, fulfill family responsibilities, to be good student, to clean up the neighborhood, to fight drugs, or to work for social justice. Despite the fact that *Jihad* is not supposed to include aggressive or offensive action, as distinct from defensive warfare, this has occurred throughout history, for instance some Muslim rulers have used *jihad* to legitimate their imperial designs and expansion as well as in some countries, Muslim activists would like to see Islamic governments installed, and subsequently *jihad* incorporates a more revolutionary goal of replacing their country's political leadership.

### The Qur'an and Terrorism

Terrorism is one of the most contested terms in the modern world and it is well known fact that terrorism is the systematic use of violence to create a general climate of fear especially as a means of coercion<sup>73</sup> in a population which has occurred throughout history and all over the world for a variety of reasons: historical, cultural, political, social, psychological, economic, or religious—or any combination of these. The word "terrorism" is politically and emotionally charged,<sup>74</sup> and this greatly compounds the difficulty

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<sup>70</sup> See Al Munjid Dictionary, page 106.

<sup>71</sup> Qur'an, 29:69

<sup>72</sup> Faysal Burhan, "Focus on the Early History of Islam (A Refreshing Look at the Sirah)", [http://www.islamic.study.org/history\\_of\\_the\\_rise\\_of\\_islam.htm](http://www.islamic.study.org/history_of_the_rise_of_islam.htm)

<sup>73</sup> "Terrorism", *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, 1795.

<sup>74</sup> Hoffman, Bruce "*Inside Terrorism*" Columbia University Press 1998, p. 32.

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of providing a precise definition. Common definitions of terrorism refer only to those violent acts which are intended to create panic, are perpetrated for a religious, political or ideological goal, and deliberately target or disregard the safety of civilians. The origin of the word “terror” in Latin-derived languages is the French *terreur* meaning “to frighten”<sup>75</sup>, which assumed its modern meaning in the context of the French Revolution in 1789 AD. In this context, terrorism was understood as fear created by the state/government rule through the threat of violence. Therefore, terrorism is designed to have psychological effects that reach far beyond its impact on the immediate victims or object of an attack. More contemporarily, however, terrorism has become synonymous with violence perpetrated by non-state actors. Terrorism has been practiced by a broad array of political organizations for furthering their objectives. It has been practiced by right-wing and left-wing political parties, nationalistic groups, religious groups, revolutionaries, and ruling governments.<sup>76</sup> A well-known scholar of Middle Eastern Studies Bernard Lewis, believes that the phrase “Islamic terrorism” is apt, because although “Islam, as a religion” is not “particularly conducive to terrorism or even tolerant of terrorism.”<sup>77</sup> So far another scholar, Karen Armstrong contends that “fundamentalism is often a form of nationalism in religious disguise”, and that using the phrase “terrorism” is dangerously counterproductive, as it suggests those in the west believe that such atrocities are caused by Islam, and hence reinforces the viewpoint of some in the Muslim world that the west is an implacable enemy.<sup>78</sup> In the Qur’an, God has said: *God does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you about religion and have not driven you out of your homes. God loves just dealers.*<sup>79</sup> Some contemporary scholars who have followed a textual based approach to the study of the Qur’an with an emphasis over the coherence in the Book and the context of situation offered a radical interpretation on the verses and prophetic narratives that are usually quoted by the militants to promote militancy.

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<sup>75</sup> Kim Campbell, “When is ‘terrorist’ a subjective term?”, *Christian Science Monitor*, (September 27, 2001). “New York Times columnist William Safire wrote that the word “terrorist” has its roots in the Latin *terrere*, which means “to frighten.”

<sup>76</sup> “Terrorism”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Bernard Lewis, “Islamic Terrorism?”, *Terrorism: How The West Can Win*, Edited by Netanyahu, Benjamin, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1987, p.66.

<sup>78</sup> Karen Armstrong, “The label of Catholic terror was never used about the IRA”. London: The Guardian, (July 11, 2005)

<sup>79</sup> *The Qur’an* 60:8

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In Arabic, the term *irhab* is commonly used today as the equivalent for “terrorism,” its meaning largely affected by the use of the latter term in Western languages, particularly English and French. *Irhab*, derived from *arhaba* (“to frighten,” “to strike with fear,” or “to terrify”) and this term never appears in the Qur’an, though its imperfect verbal form occurs once. The Qur’an states, “*Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to terrify (yurhibuna) thereby the enemies of God, your enemies, and others whom you do not know, but God knows.*”<sup>80</sup> The historical context for this command is that of the early battles of Prophet Muhammad and his followers against their Makkan enemies; it has had limited use subsequently in the context of discourses on *jihad*. Other variations of the same root appearing in the Qur’an refer to humanity’s awe of God, particularly as an appellation for Christian monks (*ruhban*). Since the 1980s, *irhab* has been widely used in Arabic political rhetoric to condemn Israel’s use of military force. Egyptian political elites and government-controlled media usually use the term to describe violence committed by anti-state elements branded Islamist groups. In accordance with many *Ahadith* of the Prophet Muhammad Muslims are forbidden to kill humankind even encouraged to be kind to animals and are prohibited to hurt them. Bernard Lewis, states that Islamic jurisprudence does not allow terrorism and further he notes: “At no time did the (Muslim) jurist approve of terrorism. Nor indeed is there any evidence of the use of terrorism (in Islamic tradition). Muslims are commanded not to kill women, children, or the aged, not to torture or otherwise ill-treat prisoners, to give fair warning of the opening of hostilities, and to honor agreements.”<sup>81</sup> Numerous *fatwa* (rulings) condemning terrorism and suicide bombing as *haram* have been published by Islamic scholars worldwide, one of the most extensive being the 600-page ruling by Sheikh Tahir-ul-Qadri, whose fatwa condemned them as *kufir*.<sup>82</sup> On 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010, Qadri’s fatwa was an “absolute” condemnation of terrorism without “any excuses or pretexts.” He said that “Terrorism is terrorism, violence is violence and it has no place in Islamic teaching and no justification can be provided for it, or any kind of excuses or ifs or buts.” Qadri’s *fatwa* declares that terrorists and suicide bombers are considered to be unbelievers, goes

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<sup>80</sup> *The Qur’an* 8:60

<sup>81</sup> Lewis, Bernard, 'Islam: The Religion and the People', 2009, pp. 53, 145–150

<sup>82</sup> Jerome Taylor, “Sheikh issues fatwa against all terrorists”. *The Independent*, London, (March 3, 2010).



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further than any previous denunciation.<sup>83</sup> Fethullah Gulen, a prominent Turkish Islamic scholar, has claimed that "a real Muslim," who understood Islam in every aspect, could not be a terrorist.<sup>84</sup> There are many other scholars such as: Karen Armstrong, Prof. Ahmet Akgunduz, Harun Yahya and Huston Smith reserve similar points of view.<sup>85</sup> According to Mr. Javed Ahmad Ghamidi the Qur'an does not allow waging war except for against oppression under a sovereign state. He holds that *jihad* without a state is nothing but creating nuisance in the land when hijacked by the individuals and groups independent of the state authority defeats the purpose. The principle behind this study of the issue in the basic sources is the principle that there are divine injunctions in the Qur'an which are specific to the age of the Messenger. He says that nobody can be punished for apostasy or being non-Muslim after the Prophet who acted as the divine agent when he punished the disbelievers by sword who had rejected the message of God and his messenger even after the truth was made manifest to them.<sup>86</sup> In light of these and other Islamic texts, the act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenseless civilians, the wholesale destruction of buildings and properties, the bombing and marring of innocent men, women, and children are all forbidden and detestable acts according to Islam and the Muslims. Islam is a religion of mercy, does not permit terrorism and its followers follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and have nothing to do with the violent events some have associated with Muslims. If an individual Muslim were to commit an act of terrorism, this person would be guilty of violating the laws of Islam.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the above facts and figures found in the Qur'an one can conclude that the Qur'an invites all humans to this universe to adopt a true scientific approach even in the following verse Qur'an addressed to humankind regarding this: "*Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, And the alteration of Night and Day-There are indeed signs for men of understanding.*"<sup>87</sup> The Qur'an, however, is not a book of Science but a book of 'Signs' and these signs invite man to realize the purpose of his

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<sup>83</sup> "Top Islamic scholar issues 'absolute' fatwa against terror". *Nationalpost.com*. March 3, 2010.

<sup>84</sup> "A Real Muslim cannot be a Terrorist". Interview with Nuriye Akman of Zaman Daily. *FethullahGülen's Website*. 2004.

<sup>85</sup> Power, Carla, "Eminent Pakistani Cleric Issues Fatwa Against Terrorism – TIME". *Time.com*, (March 12, 2010).

<sup>86</sup> Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *MeezanGhamidi*

<sup>87</sup> *Qur'an* 3:190

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existence on earth and to live in harmony with Human beings as well as Nature. The Qur'an contains a complete code and conduct of life for the individual and society. The Qur'anic way of life is far superior to the 'ism' that modern man has invented out of sheer ignorance. The following Qur'anic verse stresses the mandatory nature of learning in Islam, "*Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and have been granted Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all you do.*"<sup>88</sup> These important verses show that Muslims are strongly encouraged to pursue religious, scientific and philosophical knowledge. The scientific evidences of the Qur'an clearly prove that this book contains profound facts to be discovered by humankind centuries later. It has been said that in Islam science and religion are inseparable, not only because they both form part of Knowledge, but also because of the assumption that by studying the sciences, Muslims become further convinced of the greatness of God's creation, which ultimately strengthens their faith. There is therefore enough evidence to conclude that Islam must have played a key motivational role in the great scientific achievements of medieval Islamic scholars. In his book *The Sayings of Muhammad*, Abdullah Al-Mamun Al-Suhrawardy<sup>89</sup> quoted Prophet Muhammad as stating, "*The ink of the scholar is more holy than the blood of the martyr,*" which signifies that in Islam scholarly pursuits are more important than any other act of devotion to God. This powerful statement demonstrates the paramount importance that Islam attaches to the search of knowledge. In this perspective, scientific, philosophical and religious endeavors are all central to a Muslim's life and should be treated as essential acts of worship.

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<sup>88</sup> *Qur'an* 58:11

<sup>89</sup> Abdullah Al-Mamun Al-Suhrawardy, *The Sayings of Muhammad* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2004).