

The Scientific Miracle of Quran and Hadith Regarding Enlivening of Soul in Embryo

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ABSTRACT

With the help of modern scientific instruments man has not only discovered new facts about the macrocosm but also delved deep into the secrets of microcosm. For instance, development of the embryo in the womb of the mother. For centuries man was curious to know about the developmental stages of the embryo right from conception to the birth but all these efforts were futile until the invention of modern scientific tools like microscope, x-rays, and ultrasound machines. No one exactly could conjecture when and how the growing organism was enlivened with spirit. But with the help of these new instruments man was astonished to find how these different stages were exactly described by the Holy Quran when man's knowledge of these phenomena was in the primary stages.

About a millinium and half ago, Quran clearly described the unknown facts about the development of embryo in its initial stage. Even a non, believer will have to admit the facts described by the heavenly book. In the present research paper different stage of embryo in the womb of mother have been discussed with special attention to the stage when embryo is enlivened with spirit in the light of Quran, Hadith and modern embryology.

KEY WORD: Quran, Science, Embryology, Embryo, Soul, ultrasound, microscope.

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of spirit in the Holy Quran

The spirit as described in the Holy Quran has three different connotations

1. The order to Arch Angel Gabriel concerning Jesus.

وَأَنبَأْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنبَأْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ [1]

“And we gave Jesus son of Mary clear miracles and empowered him through the holy spirit”

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ لِعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ادْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَلَدِكَ إِذْ أَنبَأْتُكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ [2]

“And addressing Jesus thus “When Allah said to Jesus ‘Remember my blessings on Thee and Thy mother and I strengthen thee through the holy spirit (Gabreal)”

2. Another meaning of spirit is the “holy book”

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا [3]

“And thus we inspired in thee a spirit with our order”

3. Another meaning of spirits is as the soul enlivening the self, (نفس)

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْنَاهُ وَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ [4]

“When We fashioned him and inspired in him our soul then fall down prostrate before him”

Besides these three meanings the self (نفس) has been designated in the Holy Quran as soul.

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا [5]

“God transpires themselves in their hour of death”.

SOUL AND WORLD RELIGION

This subject is extremely difficult and very complex to explain. In general it is agreed upon that the presence of soul decides the death and life of a person. Religion of the world have expressed their point of view in diverse ways

Old Egyptian believed that the soul remains near the body but detached from it after death.^[6] Old Chinese believed in two types of souls-A- The lower soul and B the higher souls.

The lower soul perishes with the decaying body and the higher soul remained with the grave and they also worshipped it.^[7]

The ancient Greeks believed that as the body was made up of atoms so was the soul which was made up of the invisible particles. Plato believed that the body is material and the soul is immaterial.^[8]

Christianity believes that the soul is the driving force in the body. They also believed that the soul is the differentiation between material and immaterial spirit. However the relationship between the soul and the spirit is considered as essential and unavoidable.^[9] In Hinduism the soul is considered as eternal. As the body comes into existence and the soul enters it and as the body decays and dies away the soul enters another medium to perpetuate itself. ^[10]

Islam has got a different view about the soul (روح). When the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was asked by the people about the soul. Almighty Allah replied in response to the query of people as follow.

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا^[11]

“They ask you about the soul- tell them that it is an order from my lord.”

Sensing the intellectual limitations of the human mind, no simple and clear-cut explanation can be vouchsafed by the lord citing the constraints of the limited knowledge granted to man. Soul is an intangible thing and the movement of the body depends on it. No life is imaginable without the concept of the soul.^[12] It is the beginning and ending of life and when it leaves the body all movement and sense perception comes to an end. In this respect the relationship between the soul and the spirit is only temporary in this world.^[13] A great Muslim intellectual Hafiz Ibn Qayyim has observed that understanding the soul without divine inspiration is not possible.^[14]

Types of soul

- A great Muslim scholar Allama Qazi sanauttah Panipati has differentiated these two types of soul,
- a. Animal soul (روح حيواني)
 - b. Real soul (روح حقيقي)
 - a. Animal soul is that force which is present in every part of the growing embryo. The same soul is present in the fertilized ovum and remains with it until the embryo comes into the shape of a human being. This stage is achieved in about four months from conception date.^[15]
 - b. Real soul is that which was created even before the creation of the world. It was aware of itself and its creator and a participant the day of covenant when the lord brought forth all the soul and asked them

الست بربكم قالوا بلى^[16]

“Am I not your Lord?” and with a unanimous voice they answered “why not”

And in the womb of the mother same soul enters the human embryo at the age of about four months and intermingles with the animal soul to give nourishment to the embryo and helps it to grow into a perfect human being. And at the end of natural life cycle the same soul separates from the animal soul to render human processes null and void.^[17]

In the science of embryology the process of movement of the embryo in the womb is called quickening. In usual cases the quickening in the womb gets started after a period of about 4 months after the fertilization of ovum by the sperm cell. ^[18]

ENLIVENING OF EMBRYO IN THE WOMB OF MOTHER

The Quran has pointed out different stages of the development of embryo in the womb of a mother.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ . ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ . ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ^[19]

“We have created man from an extract of clay. The we made him a sperm-drop in a firm resting place. Then we turned the sperm-drop into a clot, then we turned the clot into a fetus-lump, then we turned the fetus-lump into bones, the we clothed the bones with flesh; thereafter we developed it into another creature. So, glorious is Allah, the best of the creators.”

The exegetes of the Holy Quran believe that the words “Then we developed into another stage” (ثم) means that a spirit was given to the embryo.^[20] the different stages before the giving of the spirit are described as “we changed him” (ثم خلقنا) but the creation of the spirit in the body of the embryo has been described as “we developed him in to an other creation. ثم انشأناه خلقا آخر”.

Thus it becomes clear that the development of the embryo has apportioned into two stages.

- a. The development before the spirit.
- b. The development after the soul has been inspired into embryo

Worth mentioning is that the Holy Quran has used “فا” and “Thumaa” in the above mentioned verse. “فا” is always used when two stages take place without any interval. While “Thumaa” is used when some interval occurs in two actions and this is the stage when an embryo is enlivened with soul.^[21]

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has described this difference in the following Hadith.

عن عبدالله قال حدثنا رسول الله ﷺ ان احدكم يجمع خلقه، في بطن امه اربعين يوما ثم يكون في ذالك علقه مثل ذالك ثم يكون في ذالك ثم يكون في ذالك مضغه ثم يرسل الله الملك فينفخ فيه الروح ويومر باربع كلمات بكتب رزقه واجله وعمله وشقى او سعيد (صحيح مسلم)

Hazrat Abdullah bin Masaoood has reported that our prophet (PBUH) has informed us that all the material of your creation is stored in the womb of your mother for 40 days. Then it becomes a blood clot and then in another 40 days it becomes a piece of flesh. Then Almighty sends an angel who inspires a soul in it and then an order is ordained in which 4 things are mentioned,

- 1- The food it will consume.
- 2- The time of death.
- 3- Its actions and
- 4- Whether it will be lucky or unlucky in its life^[22]

The exegetes of Hadith have pondered deeply over the connotations of vocabulary used in this description – like the use of ‘Thumma yakoon fe Zalik (ثم يكون في ذالك) (then it remained in that condition) and “Mithlu Zalik” مثل (like that condition)-the exegetes have agreed that it doesn’t mean that forty days, but it means separate periods spread over a span of 40 days- that it means 40 days after fertilization of ovum by the sperm when the necessary material for the beginning of life are collected in the womb. Then another 40 days when it changes into a blood clot- and then another 40 days when the blood clot is transformed into a piece of flesh- meaning that 120 days are required before the foundation of life is created then immediately after a gestation of 120 days soul is inspired in the embryo. This can be compared to the Quranic injunction of the period of a widow for her remarriage which is clearly given as four months and ten days. This Hadith clearly explains the Quranic injunctions of the waiting period because by this period a woman is clearly conscious of the existence of a new life within her body.^[23]

Allama Ibn Kathir has reported a saying of Hazarat Ali (رضي الله عنه)

إذا انتت على النطفة اربعة اشهر بعث الله اليها ملكا فنفخ فيها الروح في ظلمت ثلاث فذالك قوله ثم انشأناه خلقا آخر

“When a period of 4 months has passed over the fertilization ovum Almighty sends an angel who inspires in total three rails of darkness a soul within the growing embryo and it becomes from a lifeless piece of flesh into a living organism”- this is the meaning of Quranic allusions “Thumma Anshana ho Khalaq an Akhar” ثم انشأناه خلقا آخر^[24] and then we transformed it into a different thing^[24].

In the modern age sensitive ultrasound equipment has recorded the amazing development of the embryo the womb of mother at different stages.

At the age of 4 months and a half a growing embryo has been recorded sucking thumb in the womb of the mother. In another record an embryo has been recorded playing with umbilical clord.^[25] This means that after the age of 4 months and after inspiration of soul in its body, the embryo has become a living person thus indulging in these childish activities.

Now the question arises as to what was the condition of the embryo before inspiration of the soul as it was continuing to grow and constantly changing the shape?

For getting a satisfactory solution to this puzzle, let us first find out what is life?

In order to satisfactorily solve this puzzle we find out what is life.

LIFE

There can be many description as to what life is but the most basic and scientific description is

“Any system capable of performing a number of such functions as eating, metabolizing, excreting, breathing, moving, growing, reproducing and being responsive to external stimuli”.^[26]

Now with advanced knowledge of man it is possible to create a machine with the above mentioned qualities but even then common logic will tell us that it is a machine performing these tasks but not a living organism.

As opposed to the hypothesis part of a living organism though apparently not alive still carries within itself the ability to become alive with favorable circumstances around it. So in this case with human embryo though it has got a life but with no soul until the time comes when it is paired with a soul for an appointed period of time.

We take the example of seed. though it has no apparent characteristics of life. It may carry on its existence for centuries in its present shape without any nourishment but as soon as it is provided with favorable circumstances for germination, life sprouts in it and through a process of metamorphosis it become either a plant or a tree. Such is the case with the cells in an organism though appearing lifeless, but they have the potential power of growing into an organism.

WHAT IS CELL RESPIRATION?

The system of cells, their growth, development and respiration has been described by Encyclopedia. Britannica as follow.

“The process by which organism combine oxygen with food stuff molecule, diverting the chemical energy in these substances into life sustaining processes and discarding as waste products, carbon dioxide and water”^[27]

Allama Qazi Sanaullah Panipati has differentiated between real life and dormant life in cell. He calls it animal life and real life. It becomes clear that all the growth that occurs in the embryo before 4 months is only cellular life. And after this period the piece of flesh is transformed into a human being and the soul is inspired in it. The growing embryo starts movements in the womb and the woman carrying it becomes aware of a new life moving inside her body. Even it is possible at this time to feel the embryo’s movement from outside by pressing one’s hand against the belly of the mother. In medical terminology it’s called quickening of life in the embryo.

CONCLUSION

Keeping in view the above mentioned information it is pertinent that the Holy Quran and Hadith has given important indications about the development of embryo in the womb of a mother. Quran has given such importance to embryology that Almighty has mentioned it in the first revelation. The embryological terms of Holy Quran are clear examples in this regard.

It is the duty of Muslim scientists to divert their attention towards this very important field of medical science and explore the scientific miracles of Quran and Hadith.

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