

MORE CONTRADICTIONS IN THE QUR'AN

INTRODUCTION

The Quran, with its many ambiguous statements, is an ideal scripture to find contradictions. At the same time, its ambiguity provides a good opportunity for Muslims to find some explanation or the other to negate a contradiction. Some of the contradictions mentioned below might have already appeared on other Web Sites with slight variations.

Though Muslim scholars emphasize on the need to understand the CONTEXT of every verse to understand its implication better, the job is easily said than done. The innumerable repetitions and frequent appearance of irrelevant verses make the CONTEXT-finding task indeed difficult. One would expect a scripture to be organized in some logical manner to enable people to understand it better. Unfortunately the Quran, often projected by Muslims as the FINAL TESTAMENT from God, fails in this criterion too.

*"Better than a thousand verses devoid of meaning is a single meaningful verse
which can bring tranquility to the one who hears it"*

Dhammapada, 101

1. Embryonic Sex Determination

One of the references on human reproduction which Muslims often quote from the Quran is verse 53:45-46. This is interpreted as a reference to the determination of sex at the fertilization stage itself. However, elsewhere, the Quran says that the sex of a developing embryo is determined well after the leech-like clot stage!

<p>(53:45-46) <i>"That He did create the pairs - male and female from a sperm-drop* (nutfah) when lodged (in its place)"</i></p>	<p>(75:38-39) <i>"Was he not a drop of sperm emitted (in lowly form)? Then did he become a leech-like clot; then did (Allah) make and fashion (him) in due proportion. And of him He made the sexes, male and female" **</i></p>
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* Note the conspicuous absence of ovum required for fertilization.

** This view is further supported by this Hadith: *"When 42 nights have passed over the drop (nutfah), Allah sends an Angel to it, who shapes it and make its ears, eyes, skin, flesh and bones. Then he says, "O Lord, is it male or female?" and your Lord decides what He wishes"* (Hadith, Muslim, Book 33, No. 6392)

2. Width of the Garden

There is a clear discrepancy with reference to the width of the Paradise or Garden in the Quran. Verse 3:133 says that it is all the heavens (**Samawath**: plural) and the earth combined. Verse 57:21 says that the width is the (lower?) heaven (**Sama**: singular) and the earth combined.

<p>(3:133) <i>"... a Garden whose width is that (of the whole) of the heavens and the earth, prepared for the righteous,"</i></p>	<p>(57:21) <i>"... a Garden (of Bliss), the width whereof is as the width of the heaven and the earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah"</i></p>
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3. Who misleads people? Satan or Allah?

According to verse 4:119-120, Satan (the rejected one) is the one who creates false desires and misleads people. Refer also 15:42. However, according to verse 16:93, it is God who leaves people astray as He wills! See also 4:78.

<p>(4:119-120) <i>"I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires....." (says Satan)</i> <i>"Satan make them promises and creates in them false hopes...." (vouched by Allah)</i></p>	<p>(16:93) <i>"If Allah so willed, He could make you all one people. But He leaves straying whom He pleases and He guides whom He pleases"</i></p>
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4. Attitude towards unbelieving parents

Al-Quran gives contradicting information as to what a believer should do when unbelieving parents and brothers insist on worshipping their gods. Verse 31:15 asks believers to keep company with unbelieving parents even if they insist (on following their religion?), but verse 9:23 asks believers not to take their fathers and brothers as protectors if they disbelieved!

<p>(31:15) <i>"But if they strive (Jahada) to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration)..."</i></p>	<p>(9:23) <i>"O ye who believe! Take not protectors your fathers and your brothers if they love infidelity above faith: If any of you do so, they do wrong"</i></p>
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These verses of course appear in different contexts. Apologists can argue that verse 9:23 is applicable only in the context of hostilities and not otherwise. Then we have to define what is hostility. We must not forget that many passages in the Quran reflect an hostile environment of fluctuating fortunes between believers and unbelievers. Since neither the Suras nor all the verses within Suras are arranged chronologically, the contexts of these `revelations' become that much difficult to understand. Interestingly, verse 31:15 also seems to appear in the context of `Striving' from the Unbelievers' side. Note the word `**Jahada**'!

5. Which enters the Paradise: Soul or Body or Both?

After resurrection, it is the body (after reuniting with the soul?) which enters the Paradise. This has been emphasized throughout the Book. See verses 13:5, 17:98-99, 20:55, 34:7, 75:3-4. However verses 27-30 in Sura 89 state that it is the Soul (**Nafs**)* which enters the Garden!

<p>(17:99) <i>"See they not that Allah who created the heavens and the earth has the power to create the like of them (anew)?"</i></p> <p>(75:3-4) <i>"Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay we are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers..."</i></p>	<p>(89:27-30) <i>(To the righteous soul will be said) "O (tho) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord - well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, thee among my Devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven!"</i></p> <p>(31:28) <i>"Your creation and your rising (from the dead) are only as (the creation and the rising of) a single soul..."</i></p> <p>(Pickthall)</p>
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In Islam, the bliss in Paradise is not complete without the corporeal and sense pleasures. Otherwise, how can one drink Zanzabil (76:17), feel the moderate temperature (76:13), enjoy maidens (55:56) and drink honey and milk (47:16-17). These are all joys in state for the faithful.

Yousuf Ali (note 6128 for verse 89:27-30) also says that it is the soul which enters the heaven, and not the gross body which perishes (His comment is contradictory to what verse 75:3-4 says!). Read verse 31:28 also. It says man's creation or resurrection is in no wise but as an individual soul*. Pickthall's translation (see box above) is more clear.

* Unlike in Vedic scriptures, the Quran does not clearly recognize the SOUL as a distinct entity from the BODY. The soul is often referred as a source of all inclinations and desires (3:61, 12:53). The Arabic word `Nafs' has been translated differently by different translators: as SOUL, MIND, SPIRIT and even as HEART! The word `Nafs' at times refers to the individual (12:53), sometimes to the Soul (6:93, 39:42), and sometimes to God Himself (6:12,54)!. Of particular interest is verse 21:35 which says *"Every soul shall have a taste of death...."*. This verse could mean: (i) that the Soul gets a taste of death after separation from the body, as Yousuf Ali interprets or (ii) that the Individual gets a taste of death as it is generally implied on most occasions (3:61, 51:21). Those who are of the opinion that `Nafs' in 21:35 only mean the real Soul would then have to consider this verse as another contradiction to verses 39:42 and 89:27-30 which imply that the Soul is taken back by Allah, momentarily during sleep and decisively at death. Does it mean that the Soul has no death?

6. God needs man or man needs God?

A very clear contradiction exists between verses 51:56 and 35:15. While the former verse says that God created Jinns and mankind for His own reasons (read also 67:2), the latter one says it is man who is in need of God! Read also 51:57.

<p>(51:56) <i>"I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve me" *</i></p> <p>(67:2) <i>"He who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is the best in deed"</i></p>	<p>35:15 <i>"O mankind! It is you that have need of God: but God is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise"</i></p>
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* Of interest in this regard is the popular (but probably fabricated) Hadith: *"I was a secret treasure, and I created the creatures in order that I might be known"* (*, *)

7. EVIL AND GOOD: Where do they come from?

While one verse says that both Evil and Good issue from Allah, the very next verse says only Good comes from Allah!

<p>(4:78) <i>"... If some good befalls them, they say "This is from Allah". But if evil, they say "This is from thee" (O prophet). Say: "All things are from Allah....."*</i></p>	<p>(4:79) <i>"Whatever good, (O man!) happens to thee, is from Allah. But whatever evil happens to thee, is from thyself"</i></p>
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* Interestingly, the remainder of this verse goes like this: *"But what has come to these people. That they fail to understand a single fact?"* Can anyone understand what God says here? The fact that both Good and Evil are from Allah or only Good is from Allah?

8. Who has to be blamed for BELIEF AND DISBELIEF ?

<p>(6:12) <i>"It is they who have lost their own souls, that they will not believe"</i></p>	<p>(10:100) <i>"No soul can believe except by the will of Allah"</i></p>
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No explanation required for this contradiction!

9. Who has to be blamed for the wrongs done?

From verses 35:8, 16:93, 74:31, 2:142, we learn that it is Allah who has to be blamed for all the misguidance. While other verses hold man himself responsible for the wrongs done (30:9, 4:79).

<p>(35:8) <i>"Allah leaves stray whom He wills and guides whom He wills"</i></p>	<p>(30:9) <i>"It was not Allah who wronged them, but they wronged their own souls"</i></p>
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10. UNBELIEVERS: To be persecuted or forgiven?

Verses 23:117 and 98:6 say that unbelievers will not prosper and are the worst of creatures!. Verse 9:29 also asks believers to fight those who do not believe in Allah, the Last Day, His rules and His religion of truth. But verse 45:14 says otherwise. Read also 16:128.

(9:29)

"Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth"

(45:14)

"Tell those who believe, to forgive those who do not hope for the Days of Allah; It is for Him to recompense (for good or evil) each people according to what they have earned"

Apologists can argue that verse 9:29 was revealed in the context of war and 45:14 perhaps towards the end of hostilities. The fact is that the Quran does not specify what verses are applicable in the context of war and what is to be followed during other occasions. And also what rulings were for the past, what are for the present and what are for the future! God has unfortunately left everything to our discretion. Ironically, Apologists claim that the Quran contains solutions for the problems of the Past, Present and Future. There is little doubt that their claims is more emotional than factual.

11. God's advice to Muhammed on propagating Islam

We have seen apologists quoting verses from the Quran in support of their claim that the Quran does not recommend forceful conversions. The verse they often quote is 2:256 which says *"There is no compulsion in religion"*. There are also many verses in the Quran which suggest otherwise and these have already appeared on web pages. Here we see two contradicting directives from God on conveying Allah's religion to the people:

(3:20)

"So if they dispute thee, say: 'I have permitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me'..... 'Do you (also) submit yourselves? If they do, they are in right guidance. But if they turn back, thy duty is to convey the message. And in Allah's sight are (all) His servants"

(8:38-39)

"Say to the Unbelievers, if (now) they desist (from disbelief), their past would be forgiven; but if they persist, the punishment of those before them is already (a matter of warning to them). And fight them on until there is no more persecution and the religion becomes Allah's in its entirety... "

Is verse 8:38-39 an abrogation of verse 3:20? If that is the case, can we recommend the directives in verse 8:38-39 as the standard method to be followed by all Muslims? Or is the latter verse given during the context of war? To me, these verses reflect the changing moods of the prophet in response to the public reaction he received. We see a content & tolerant messenger in verse 3:20 and a contempt and aggressive messenger in verse 8:38-39!

I am yet to see a scripture without any apparent internal/external contradiction in it. In general, the bigger the size of the Book, greater the number of contradictions. Particularly when the texts are a compilation of `revelations' attributed to many seers or prophets. We are living in a pluralistic environment and our

effort must to understand the sublime teachings of all religious texts. Those who sincerely wish to investigate the Truth should do it without any bias and prejudice. Emotion should not take an upper hand at the expense of common sense!

"Those who take error for truth, and the truth for error, will never attain the supreme goal, for they are led astray by vain desires and false views"

Dhammapada, 11.

Note: Readers should not get carried away by the fact that I have quoted verses from Buddhist scripture *Dhammapada*. I don't mind quoting verses from any scripture as long as they meet these two criteria: (i) If its message is sensible and is of great value to the present and (ii) if it does not contradict another verse of the same Book.

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