

# Concordance Between Quranic Narrative of Adam and Hindu Narrative of Swayambhuva Manu

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## ABSTRACT

Adam was the first Prophet in Islamic tradition while Swayambhuva Manu was the progenitor of the human race in the Hindu tradition. We trace the parallels between the Islamic narrative of Adam and Hindu narrative of Swayambhuva Manu on four narrations. (1) Beginnings in a situation of a primitive stupor; (2) The negative qualities of black mud or darkness were introduced to break the primitive stupor; (3) The beginning of marriage took place at their time; and (4) Adam was a Prophet while Swayambhuva was venerated as the first progenitor of humankind. These parallel narrations suggest that they may have been the same person sometime in the distant past and their details are available to us differently due to the modifications during long time of transmission. Basically, their life narratives concord with each other. This concordance means that the underlying theological concepts in their lives may also be parallel. We find that the theological concepts relating to these two persons in the two religions are non-contradictory also largely concord with each other though certain silences make them appear to be different. This concordance in the narratives and theological concepts can help develop a mutual understanding between the two religions.

*Keywords: Adam, Swayambhuva Manu, black mud, darkness, marriage, Quran, Hindu.*

## Introduction

Islam and Hinduism both say that mankind has evolved from a single couple—Adam and Havvah in the Islamic tradition and Swayambhuva Manu and Shatarupa in the Hindu tradition. That couple necessarily has to be the same since both say that entire humankind has evolved from one couple. We study the narratives in the lives of Adam and Swayambhuva in the respective texts to explore whether they are parallel and find that they indeed concord with each other.

This means that the underlying theological concepts embedded in their lives may also concord with each other. Those same concepts may have evolved in different directions with the result that today they may appear dissimilar. However, the contemporary dissimilarity could have arisen during the process of evolution rather than be based on the original theological concepts. Thus, we should be able to establish concordance between the theological concepts

of the two religions today. This would help develop a mutual understanding between them.

There are multiple interpretations of the Quran as well as the Hindu texts, often there are debates with the two religions about which interpretation is correct. The Shia, Sunni and Sufi and the followers of Shankara, Madhava and Ramanuja often differ with each other. The differences would be greater between the two religions. Yet, just as Shia, Sunni and Sufi and the followers of Shankara, Madhava and Ramanuja agree on some common concepts, Similarly Muslims and Hindus could agree on some common concepts. That would help us build mutual understanding.

We have deliberately relied upon that particular understanding of these texts that concurs with the other religion. We acknowledge that other understandings do not concord. There would exist no two religions if there was complete concordance. Therefore, we believe that these particular understandings could be the anchor on which we could build mutual understanding.

At the same time, we strive to make an interpretation that is in sync with science. We take the cue from Quran: “Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason” (8:22). Thus, where possible, we take the interpretation that is in sync with science as well.

### **Method**

In his seminal article Ahmad von Denffer lays out the requirements that a scholar must fulfil in interpreting the Quran:

1. Be sound in belief.
2. Well-grounded in the knowledge of Arabic and its rules as a language.
3. Well-grounded in other sciences that are connected with the study of the Qur'an.
4. Have the ability for precise comprehension.
5. Abstain from the use of mere opinion.
6. Begin the Tafsir of the Qur'an with the Qur'an.
7. Seek guidance from the words and explanations of the Prophet.
8. Refer to the reports from the companions of the Prophet.
9. Consider the reports from the generation of Muslims who followed the companions.
10. Consult the opinions of other eminent scholars (von Denffer no date).

Unquestionably, “sound belief” is the first and foremost of the requirement for a tafsir. I have no hesitation in saying that I believe in One God. Regarding condition No. 2, i.e., knowledge of Arabic, this author acknowledges that he does not know Arabic. However, he has consulted with scholars having knowledge of the Arabic language. Also, Al-Ghazali believed the Qur'an to contain hidden meanings which could be misunderstood if one relied solely on the literal Arabic. Hence, he argued, hadith is necessary to understand and explain the literal and actual meaning of the Qur'an (Ali 2018: 14). This author has consulted the Hadith in accordance with this requirement.

The third requirement is knowledge of other sciences. This author has relied on his knowledge of anthropology and psychology in making his interpretations.

Conditions Nos. 4 and 5 are general in nature and entirely accepted. Our interpretation is also compliant with conditions Nos. 6 and 7 (the Quran and the Hadith) though we challenge the understandings of the sahaba, tabi'un and eminent scholars—conditions Nos. 8, 9 and 10—as may be required. Thus, the present interpretation relies heavily on sound belief, the Quran and Hadiths, and knowledge of other sciences.

On the Hindu side, there is no single text in the Hindu religion. The earliest Hindu texts are the Vedas. Next come the Puranas. These may be considered akin to the Quran and Hadiths of the Muslims. The Vayu Purana is among the earliest Hindu Puranas (Hazra 1975:13, 174-175). It gives the narrative of creation in greatest detail hence we have relied substantially on this text. Rationalist thinking has historically been recognized as an integral part of Hindu spiritual practice, philosophical inquiry and self-realization (Jayaram 2023). Thus, we rely on the texts and science in interpreting both the Islamic and Hindu texts.

### **Chronology**

The time of Adam should be similar to the time of Swayambhuva if the narratives actually concord with each other. The time between Jesus and Moosa is reckoned as 1700 years (Al-Munajjid 2002). No information is available regarding the time between Moosa and Ibrahim. However, some Islamic scholars rely on the Biblical time of 245 years (WikiIslam 2021). The time between Ibrahim and Nuh and between Nuh and Adam are both reckoned at 1000 years (Al-Munajjid 2002). The time between Jesus and Adam may thus be reckoned at 3945 years. Two other estimates in the Islamic tradition are 5764 and 5985 years ago, median 5874 years ago or 3852 BCE (Islam Quest 2012, Khan 1997). Consequently, the time of Adam may be reckoned at 3900 BCE or about 4000 BCE. We make clear that we do not

take a position on whether Adam was the first man biologically or not.

The Hindu religion does not give a time for Swayambhuva. However, an estimate of his time can be arrived at from the time of his grandson Indra who was the principal actor in the legends of the Rig Veda. These hymns speak of Indra in a contemporaneous sense. For example, the second hymn of the Rig Veda says, “Indra... come for our offered dainties' sake... come ye swiftly hitherward..., come to what the Soma presser hath prepared” (1:2:4-6). We assume that the time of composition of these hymns was the same as the time that Indra lived. A number of scholars have placed the composition of these hymns at mid-fourth millennium BCE. Linguist Koenraad Elst says Vedic culture was incipient from the early 4th millennium (Elst 2016). Sanskrit scholar O P Bharadwaj says Rig Veda is to be placed before 3000 BCE (Bharadwaj 1986). Greek scholar N Kazanas places the events of the Rig Veda in 4th millennium BCE (Kazanas 2015:29). Michel Danino, author of *The Lost River: On the trail of the Sarasvati* says hymns of the early book of the Rig Veda must have been composed before 2500 BCE (Danino 2010:256). These scholars suggest that the hymns of the Rig Veda were composed around 3500 BCE and, therefore, Indra would have been born at this time.

Indra was the grandson of Daksha, brother of Swayambhuva (Mani 1975). Thus, Swayambhuva would have been born two generations before Indra or around 3600 BCE. The time of Adam at c. 4000 BCE and of Swayambhuva at c. 3600 BCE are close to each other on the historical time scale and we consider them to be contemporaneous. The difference of four centuries may be ignored given the many uncertainties in the reckoning of the time in both the religions.

### **Adam or Swayambhuva**

#### *Three Interpretations of 15:26.*

We now discuss the concordance between the Islamic narrative of Adam and the Hindu narrative of Swayambhuva. The Quran says

“And We did certainly create insana out of clay from an altered black mud” (15:26). The Hadiths supplement the words “black mud” with dirt; and dust (Jami` at Tirmidhi 3956; Sunan Abi Dawud 5116). There are three interpretations of this Ayat (Malik 2019).

*Adam was made directly from mud.* In this interpretation, the word “create” is interpreted as an instant creation; “insana” is interpreted as the person of Adam; and “mud” is interpreted as physical matter from which the physical body of Adam was made. The Ayat is then used to suggest that Allah took physical mud and made the physical person of Adam from it like in a laboratory. This interpretation stands against the available evidence that homo sapiens evolved around 160,000 years ago (Oppenheimer 2012) while Adam, as has been suggested above, lived only around 6000 years ago. This interpretation is also questionable because creation of Adam from mud would mean that he was the first and only human being at that time. However, the Quran says that Allah made him a vice-regent (2:30). The Arabic word “khalifah” used for vice-regent means either successor or deputy. A “successor” succeeds someone and a “deputy” is deputed by someone. Hence, there would have pre-existed other human beings at that time. However, this interpretation is defended on the grounds that the theory of evolution is not “proven.” We are not inclined to endorse this view because Quran directs us to use reason which has to necessarily be done as per available information (8:22). We may modify our understanding if new evidence emerges but we cannot dismiss the evidence that is available at the present.

*Adam gradually evolved from mud with Divine intervention.* The second interpretation is that the word “create” is interpreted as a gradual evolution; “insana” is interpreted as humankind; and “mud” is interpreted as physical matter from which humankind gradually evolved. The Ayat is then interpreted to suggest that Allah caused the evolution of humankind from matter. This interpretation is consistent with the evolution of homo sapiens at 160,000 years ago and with pre-existing

human beings among whom Adam was made the viceregent.

This interpretation concords with the Vayu Purana saying that Brahma created four sets of 1000 pairs of men and women before he created Swayambhuva (8:37-40). Here a number of human beings are said to pre-exist before Swayambhuva as also said in the above interpretation. We endorse this interpretation.

*The Ayat is allegorical.* In this third interpretation, the Ayat is said to have no connection with the creation of the person of Adam. In our view an allegorical interpretation need not stand contra a substantial interpretation. Thus, while accepting the possibility of an allegorical interpretation we do not deny its substantial interpretation as given in the second alternative above.

#### *Breaking felicity*

The question is why Allah may have appointed Adam as vice-regent despite him being created from black mud, ignoring the objection of the angels (2:30)? We suggest that those angels were pure in heart and aligned with the commands of Allah as indicated in the statement “while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?” (2:30); but they were in a primitive state as indicated in the statement “we have no knowledge except what You have taught us” (2:32). Their primitive nature is brought out in the following Tafsirs of this Ayat:

Kashf Al-Asrar: There was a world at ease. No heart burned with passion and no breast was deluded by mad fervour.

Tafsir al-Tustari: If only we could stay here forever... (Commentaries 2.30).

The phrase “No heart burned with passion” suggests a lazy attitude; and the phrase “stay here forever” suggests an unwillingness to progress. Allah, however, wanted man to worship Him actively: “come unto Me in *willing* surrender!” (27:31). We suggest the angels were in a primitive stupor. They were doing the bidding of Allah in an inactive manner whereas Allah wanted them to come

unto Him *willingly*. Allah may have wanted to force them out of this primitive stupor just as a mother may slap a lazy child to make him active. Allah may have given this task to Adam, implanted lower qualities of “black, dirt and dust” in him, and made Adam the vice-regent so that he would shed blood, break the stupor of the angels and make them active. Thus, another Tafsir says:

Kashani: The disapproval of the angels of the appointment of Adam as vice-regent is due to “their being veiled from the manifestation of the inner meaning divinity...” (Commentaries 2.30).

The inner meaning divinity here may refer to *willing* surrender even if that means shedding of blood. Contrary to these Tafsirs, Al Qushairi says that “the angels’ objection to the appointment of Adam was “not an objection to the divine decree but rather a way of seeking to understand it. To interpret the expression in such a way as to absolve the angels of any blame is more fitting since they are sinless” (Commentaries 2.30). We agree that the descended angels were indeed “sinless” in that they did no wrong; but, at the same time, they did not fully understand Allah’s command of *willing* surrender.

#### *Satan made Adam and Eve slip*

Satan caused the angels to slip out of the primitive stupor and removed them from that *mimmā* in which they had been (2:36).

This Ayat is translated variously. Out of the seven translations of the word “*mimmā*” given by the Quranic Corpus, Pickthall and Yusuf Ali use the words “happy” and “felicity” respectively; while other five translators use neutral terms like “condition,” “it,” “state,” and “that.” The overall sense is that Adam and Eve were in a happy state and the satan made them slip out of it.

#### *The sin of Adam*

Iblis may have seen through this ignorance of Adam and said:

Your Lord did not forbid you  
this tree save you should

become angels or become of the immortals (7:20-21).

As a result,

Adam and his wife ate of it, and their saw'atuhuma became apparent to them, and they began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And Adam disobeyed Allah and erred" (20:121).

The primary meaning of the word "saw'atuhuma" in the above verse is "evil." Thus, this Ayat could say that the evil of stultifying and primitive happiness became apparent to them.

This interpretation concords with the Vayu Purana. It describes the situation before the creation of Swayambhuva as follows: "This world became full of that population" and "every moment was of happiness for them. There was no cold or unbearable heat. They got wanted things everywhere" (8:46, 56-57). The phrase "full of that population" concords with the pre-presence of a number of human beings among whom Adam was made vice-regent. Every moment being that of happiness indicates that those people were content with their situation and wanted to stay in that state "forever" as said by al-Tustari "If only we could stay here forever... (Commentaries 2.30).

Next, the Hindu religion tells of three qualities within each human being—purity, darkness and passion. All individuals have the dominance of one of these qualities. These qualities are exemplified by the three elements fire, air and ether; and as three deities of Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma as follows:

Quality purity - element fire – deity Vishnu;

Quality darkness - element air – deity Shiva (Sivananda 1994:21);

Quality passion – element ether – deity Brahma (Puri No Date).

The problem at the time of Swayambhuva, it seems, was that those people were dominated

by the quality of purity but lacked the quality of passion. Hence Brahma took the following step:

(Brahma found that) for some reason creation did not take place. Then Brahma was sad. Then he created the *dark* power. The people were suffering having discarded the quality of passion and having adopted the quality of *purity*. A couple was born from that quality of *darkness*... Unrighteousness was born from the feet of Brahma and violence was born from his sadness. Brahma became happy at this (Vayu Purana 10:1-8).

The key phrase here is that people were *suffering due to the quality of purity*. Darkness helped break that suffering. This concords with Allah making Adam vice-regent from black mud so that the angels were shaken out of their primitive stupor (2:31).

The people of the quality of purity made from the element of fire according to the Vayu Purana concords with the primitive angels mentioned in Ayat 2:30. However, the angels were made from light according to the Hadith quoted previously while Satan was made from fire according to the Quran (15:27). In our view this does not create a difficulty because light and fire always go together. The Islamic tradition may have stressed the making of angels from the "light" in light-and-fire while the Hindu tradition may have stressed the "fire" in light-and-fire.

*Iblis: An angel became a satan*

The narrative of Adam proceeds with Iblis refusing to bow to Adam: "All the angels prostrated except Iblis and he became one of the disbelievers." In this section we use the word angel without inverted comma to denote generic angels which includes angels who may fall and become Satan; and we use the term "angel" in inverted commas for angels who strictly follow the commands of Allah.

Our understanding is that the generic angels were free to follow their path. Those who used their freedom to strictly follow the commands of Allah were known as “angels.” However, this statement is a tautology. An angel is an “angel” only as long as he follows the command of Allah. He is no longer an “angel” if he does not follow the commands of Allah. In this latter case he becomes a satan. We thus suggest that the generic angel Iblis did not follow the right path and became a satan.

This proposition faces the difficulty that the Quran says that angels assist Allah (66:4), glorify Him (21:19-20) and do what they are commanded (16:49-50). However, this does not mean that they do not have freedom. It only means that these generic angels followed the commands of Allah and were known as “angels.”

*Adam, the Vice-regent*

Iblis argued that he was made from “fire” while Adam was made from “earth” therefore he was superior. We give below the qualities of angels, Iblis and Adam in tabular form to clarify the matter and then discuss the same in detail.

Table 1: Qualities of angels, Iblis and Adam

Line No	Description	Angels	Iblis	Adam
1	Purity, Doing what was commanded	(+) Purity	(-) Lack of purity	(+) Purity
2	Passion	(-) No Passion	(+) Passion	(+) Passion
3	Made from...	(+) Light	(+) Fire	(-) Mud

The “angels” had the quality of purity (Line 1) but had no passion (Line 2) as noted in the statement “we have no knowledge except what You have taught us” (2:32) discussed above.

Allah did not listen to them because they had no passion.

Iblis had the quality of passion (Line 2) but he did not bow to Adam as commanded (Line 1). Allah did not honour him because he did not do as commanded. Thus Ibn-Kathir says in his Tafsir on 7:12: “The cursed one looked at the origin of creation not at the honor bestowed, that is, Allah creating Adam with His Hand and blowing life into him. Shaytan made a false comparison when confronted by Allah's command” (Commentaries 7.12).

Adam had purity (Line 1) and passion (Line 2). Allah honoured him for these qualities.

It is clear that Allah wanted both purity and passion. Angels lacked passion and Iblis lacked purity. Adam had both qualities. Allah ignored whether they were made from light, fire or mud. Hence, Allah ignored the advice of Angels, condemned Iblis and made Adam the viceregent. The main point in the Islamic narrative of Adam is that Allah gives primacy to purity and passion.

The Vayu Purana concurs with the above scenario. We give again the above table with reduced numbers of rows as applicable.

Table 2: Qualities of “people” and Swayambhuva

Line No	Description	People	Swayambhuva Manu
1	Purity	(+) Purity	(+) Purity
2	Passion	(-) No Passion	(+) Passion

On purity of the people, the Purana says:

At that time there was prevalence of truth, non-greed, forgiveness, happiness and self-control... They had no desire or self-interest from others nor was there need to ask for anything... (8:59-69).

This description applies also to Swayambhuva who was born among them.

On passion, we have already mentioned Swayambhuva's quality of darkness briefly above. This quality is described more vividly as follows:

(Among the descendants of Swayambhuva       Manu)  
Unrighteousness begot son  
Falsehood and daughter  
Removal from Violence.  
Falsehood begot two sons  
named Fear and Hell from  
Removal. Fear begot Death  
from Mirage. Death begot Old  
Age, Sadness, Anger and  
Jealousy (10:39-42).

Thus, Brahma eulogized Swayambhuva because he had purity in starting creation and passion as indicated in the negative qualities. The qualities of falsehood, violence, fear, etc. do not stand against "purity." Purity is to be understood as purity of heart and the violence undertaken with a pure heart for the progress of humankind does not stand against purity.

Thus, the angels mentioned in the Quran concord with the people mentioned in the Vayu Purana; and Adam concords with the Swayambhuva. The Hindu texts are silent on Iblis. It is possible that there existed an asura by the name of Iblis but this has not been recorded in the Hindu texts. The existence of such a person, however, slips into the recorded Hindu narrative smoothly.

### **Sin of Not Eating and Sin of Greed**

#### *Satan's Advice*

A difficulty with our proposition is that the Quran says in clear words:

So, We said, "O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Then let him not remove you from Paradise so you would suffer" (20:117).

We, on the other hand, have suggested that Iblis helped break the primitive stupor hence he did the bidding of Allah. We have a difficult

question here. On the one hand, Allah says that satan "will not harm them at all except by permission of Allah" (58:10). On the other hand, the Quran says that satan was an enemy to Adam and Eve. We need to take a step back to understand this matter. Allah had taken a promise from Adam before his encounter with Iblis:

And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination (20:115).

The Quran, however, does not disclose the nature of the earlier promise. Then Allah warned Adam against eating from the Tree of Eternity (2:35). However, Adam did not heed the warning given by Allah, and instead listened to satan:

Your Lord did not forbid you this tree save you should become angels or become of the immortals (7:20-21).

Adam ate of the Tree against the command of Allah and was expelled from Paradise for this transgression:

[Allah] said, "Descend, being to one another enemies. And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time (7:24).

The sequence of events was, therefore, as follows:

1. Allah took an unspecified promise from Adam.
2. Adam forgot and did not keep the unspecified promise.
3. Allah warned Adam not to eat of the Tree.
4. Satan said to Adam that he would become immortal if he ate of the tree of eternity.
5. Adam ignored Allah's warning and listened to the satan, ate of the tree of eternity and was removed from Paradise.
6. Adam was sent to a place of enjoyment.

The conventional understanding is that Allah *actually* wanted Adam not to eat of the tree of eternity and Adam made a transgression. He

repented for it (2:37) and was forgiven. The difficulties with this understanding are as follows.

One, if the earlier unspecified promise was of not eating of the tree; and Adam did not eat of the tree; then he showed determination and followed the promise. This interpretation stands contra the statement in the Quran that “We found not in him determination.”

Two, there is no reason as to why Allah, being ever merciful, would not want Adam to eat of the Tree of Eternity.

Three, in the end, Adam was actually rewarded for his transgression by being sent to a place of enjoyment even if that was only temporary.

Thus, we propose that Allah actually wanted Adam to eat of the Tree of Eternity. But Adam would not eat of it. Then Allah gave a “negative suggestion” to prompt him to eat of it. A “negative suggestion” is a suggestion given opposite to what is intended such as a mother telling a child not to go outside and play when she actually wants him to go outside and play because she knows that the child will do opposite of what is told. We will discuss this in detail in the following sections. We now propose an alternative understanding of the six events mentioned above with our suggestions given in brackets.

1. Allah took an unspecified promise from Adam [of *eating* of the tree of eternity].
2. Adam did not keep the unspecified promise [of eating of the tree and did not eat of the tree of eternity].
3. Allah [gave a negative suggestion to prompt Adam to eat of the tree of eternity] but Adam still did not eat of it.
4. [With the permission of Allah] Satan said to Adam that he would become immortal if he ate of the Tree of Eternity (20:120).
5. Adam ignored Allah’s literal warning [and followed the actual command of Allah] and listened to satan, ate of the tree

of eternity and was removed from [the primitive state of the] Paradise.

6. Adam was sent to a place of enjoyment.

The three difficulties mentioned with the conventional understanding do not arise in this scenario.

One, if the unspecified promise was of eating of the tree; and Adam did not eat of the tree; then he did not show determination as said in the Quran that “We found not in him determination.”

Two, Allah, being ever merciful, actually wanted Adam to eat of the Tree of Eternity.

Three, Adam was rewarded for eating of the Tree by being sent to a place of enjoyment.

However, this scenario presents another difficulty. We are imputing to Allah the giving of a negative suggestion which is not indicated in the Quran. However, the issue is of deciding which of the two attributes of Allah—mercifulness and truthfulness—is primary. If mercifulness is primary, then in a situation of conflict between mercy and truth, Allah may have adopted mercifulness and ignored truthfulness. We discuss this now.

#### *Mercifulness versus truthfulness*

Allah had taught Adam the names of *all* things after appointing him as viceregent (2:31). The tree of eternity would have been among these things and we may consider that Adam knew of this tree (20:120). It is also clear that Adam did not eat of the tree because, had he eaten of it, there would be no occasion for Allah to prohibit eating of it. The question then is, why did Allah prohibit eating of it in 2:35 when Adam was not eating of it in any case? Further, why would Allah want Adam to not live long by prohibiting him to eat of the tree of eternity since He is ever merciful?

Our suggestion is that Allah, considering mercifulness to be primary, actually wanted Adam to eat of the Tree. Hence, Allah adopted a minor untruth and gave a *negative suggestion* in order to be merciful.



### *Negative suggestion in modern psychology*

Roxanna Erickson Klein, registered nurse and licensed professional counsellor, Dallas, Texas, tells us:

...patients need hope and encouragement. Sometimes, these are more readily accepted, if negated. Negative suggestion is like “reverse psychology,” it is most effective when some part of the patient does not respond well to direction, or is overly pessimistic (Klein 2016).

Dr. Sherry Buffington, Dallas based doctor of psychology and the originator of Accelerated Mind Patterning says:

The subconscious mind does not recognize negatives... So, when we say “I choose not to overeat,” the subconscious sees only overeat (Buffington 2020).

In other words, if you want someone to eat, you may actually say “do not eat.” The subconscious mind will hear it as “do eat.” Richard Campbell, author of *Dark Psychology* says:

It is often believed that the subconscious mind cannot hear negatives. Instead, any negatives communicated to the subconscious mind are interpreted as positives. For example, if you were to tell someone, do not go peeking into my room when I am away, that person is likely to interpret this subconsciously as, do go peeking into my room when I am away. This is probably the reason why there are so many exasperated parents of kids who seem to do the exact opposite of what they are told not to do (Campbell 2019).

These studies indicate that a negative suggestion can prompt a person to act in the desired direction. We suggest that Allah may have given such a suggestion.

### *Bidah*

We are aware that the Quran does not tell of a “negative suggestion” hence our suggestion could be bidah, i.e., creating an innovation without precedence. Generally, this is frowned upon. However, the Minhaj-ul-Quran website suggests that an innovation that compatible with the Qur’an is not only acceptable but welcome (Iqbal 2007). Thus, a Hadith says:

Whosoever *introduced a beneficiary action* in Islam will be rewarded for his practice as well as for the practice of the people who follow him, without lessening their reward. Whosoever *introduced a bad practice* in Islam will take the sin for it as well as the sin of the people who follow him, without lessening their sin (quoted in Iqbal 2007).

In other words, the introduction of a new idea has to be weighed on the touchstone of good or bad. In the same away, another Hadith says:

Whoever innovates something into this matter of ours *which does not belong to it* will have it rejected (Bukhari 2550).

This Hadith implicitly encourages “innovation” that leads people to understand what belongs to the Quran. An example of a similar “negative suggestion” from the Quran is available in Allah “making evident the believers:”

And what struck you on the day the two armies met [on the day of Uhud] was by permission of Allah that He might make evident the [true] believers (3:166).

Allah never wanted to destroy the Muslims. Allah knew they would be defeated. Yet

Allah asked them to march on and be defeated so that “He might make evident the believers.”

Another Hadith seems to say that *any* innovation is to be rejected.

O my companions, those who live after me will, very soon, see a lot of differences among you. Stick to my path and the

path of the Rightly Guided Khalifas. Abstain from innovations, for every kind of innovation is a Bid'ah, and every Bid'ah is misguidance and all misguidance leads to hellfire (Quoted in Iqbal 2007).

The Minhaj-ul Quran website clarifies that the context of this Hadith was of possible disputes between the followers of the four initial Khalifas regarding interpretations of the Quran: In that situation of conflicts between followers of the Khalifas, the Prophet said that the people should follow the Khalifas and not innovate themselves.

Therefore, we submit that the innovation of Allah having given a negative suggestion is consistent with the Quran and should be welcomed.

#### *Swayambhuva's sin of greed*

The Vayu Purana does not tell of such a negative suggestion. However, it tells of a wish-fulfilling tree dying out (8:64). This implies that those people, including Swayambhuva, over-exploited the wish-fulfilling tree leading to it dying out.

We give the six steps given above as applied to the Hindu narrative below:

1. Brahma made the wish-fulfilling tree.
2. Swayambhuva did not eat of the wish-fulfilling tree.
3. Silent (Brahma gave a negative suggestion but Swayambhuva did not eat of it).
4. Silent (Rakshasa said to Swayambhuva that he would become immortal if he ate of the wish-fulfilling tree).
5. Swayambhuva ate of the wish-fulfilling tree but he did so excessively, the tree died out and Swayambhuva was removed from his place.
6. Swayambhuva became progenitor of large numbers who spread in the area. In this way we

suggest that the two narratives concord with each other.

#### *Common Sequence*

The Quranic and Hindu narratives concord if the actual sequence of events was as follows:

[1] Those people made sin of not eating > [2] They ate > [3] They made sin of greed by over exploitation.

The Quran tells of the sin of not eating while it is silent on the Tree dying out due to greed. The Vayu Purana tells of the sin of greed while it is silent on the sin of not eating. Both religions tell of the sin of Adam and Swayambhuva but at different points of the sequence.

#### **Fortuitous Results**

A number of indicators suggest that Allah was happy with Adam for having eaten of the Tree. One, [Allah] said, "Descend, being to one another enemies. And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time (7:24). Among the seven translations given on Quran Corpus website Sahih International, Muhammad Sarwar, Mohsin Khan and Arberry give the word "enjoyment" or "benefit" while Pickthall, Yusuf Ali and Shakir give neutral descriptions. Thus, the overall sense is that there would be enjoyment in store for Adam on the earth. Thus, Maududi explains: "God's command that Adam and Eve 'go down' should not be misunderstood to mean that their departure from Paradise was by way of punishment. The Qur'an has made it clear many a time that God accepted Adam and Eve's repentance and pardoned them. Thus, the order does not imply punishment. It rather signifies the fulfilment of the purpose for which man was created."

Two, the line of noble persons—Habil, Nuh, Ibrahim and Moosa descended from Adam.

Three, a Hadith says that Friday is the best day because, among others, on this day Adam was expelled from Paradise (Sahih Muslim 4:1856).

Fourth, if Adam had indeed violated Allah's orders in eating of the Tree and then forgiven,

the results could not have been better than Adam not having made the violation at all. That would be like saying an honest man is worse than a thief who confessed of his having made a robbery.

It is possible, therefore, that Allah forgave Adam for the minor transgression of not having eaten of the tree of eternity soon enough because Adam followed the larger command of Allah to break the primitive stupor of the people by using the qualities of black, dust and dirt. Thus, “his *Lord chose him and turned to him* in forgiveness and guided [him]” (20:122).

The fortuitous results of Swayambhuva’s works are told in terms of him and Shatarupa becoming the progenitors of humankind (9:68, 10:16).

### **Marriage**

The Quran tells of Allah making woman as a mate to man (30:21) to beget a good family (7:189). This is mentioned in the Vayu Purana as Shatarupa accepting Swayambhuva as her husband (10:11-12) to become progenitor of humankind.

### **Conclusion**

The concordance between the Islamic narrative of Adam and the Hindu narrative of Swayambhuva is seen in the following common points:

- 1 Beginnings in a situation of a primitive stupor.
- 2 Use of the negative qualities of black, dust or dirt; or of darkness to break the stupor.
- 3 Eating of the tree of eternity or wish-fulfilling tree. The Quran says this was done after Allah gave a negative suggestion while the Hindu texts is silent on this point. On the other hand, the Hindu texts tell of the extinction of the wish-fulfilling tree while the Quran is silent on this point.
- 4 The beginning of marriage.
- 5 Adam was forgiven and made Prophet while Swayambhuva is portrayed in a positive sense.

6 Fortuitous results of settlement at a place of enjoyment or of large numbers of progeny.

These concordances indicate that the same narrative is mentioned in the Quran and the Hindu texts.

The implication of this proposition is that one should follow God’s command promptly but by applying one’s mind, not blindly. Adam did not show determination in following the unstated command of Allah to eat of the Tree; and he did not understand the true import of Allah’s literal prohibition of eating from the Tree. He followed Allah’s command blindly without application of mind. Swayambhuva over exploited the wish-fulfilling tree and did not apply his mind to its extinction.

This is not to deny or to deprecate the distinctions between the two religions. However, the distinctions need to be seen in terms of the parallels in the larger narrative. The task before both religions is to dialogue with each other and develop a more enriching mutual understanding.

Suggestion for future research is that more detailed study of the Quran may be undertaken to ascertain whether it tells of the extinction of the Tree due to over exploitation; and more detailed study of the Hindu scriptures may be undertaken to ascertain whether the Hindu texts tell of Swayambhuva not eating of the wish-fulfilling tree initially. That would bring the two narratives in closer concordance. Second, a study of the parallels between the Islamic and Hindu narratives of Noah, Abraham and Moses may be undertaken.

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