

Dear Mr. Azhar,

Thank you for forwarding me the email circulated to all LUMS students by Dr. Khalid Zaheer. Because he raises important issues that are of general interest, I am sending in my response.

1. Dr. Zaheer admits that he has never personally witnessed rain fall in consequence to prayers, but confidently states that this is “a matter of human experience” because he thinks some others have seen unusual things happen. Well, there are people who are willing to swear on oath that they have seen Elvis’s ghost. Others claim that they have seen UFOs, horned beasts, apparitions, rising of the dead, etc. Without disputing that some of these people might be sincere and honest, I must emphasize that science cannot agree to this methodology. There is no limit to the power of people’s imagination. Unless these mysterious events are recorded on camera, we cannot accept them as factual occurrences.
2. Rain is a physical process (evaporation, cloud formation, nucleation, condensation, etc). It is complicated because the atmospheric motion of gases needs many variables for a proper description. However, it obeys exactly the same physical laws as deduced by looking at gases in a cylinder, falling bodies, etc. Personally I would be most interested to know whether prayers can also cause the reversal of much simpler kinds of physical processes. For example, can a stone be made to fall upward instead of downward? Or can heat be made to flow from a cold body to a hot body by appropriate spiritual prompting? If prayers can cause rain to fall from a blue sky, then all of physics and all science is worthy of being trashed.
3. I am afraid that the track record for Dr. Zaheer’s point of view on rain is not very good. Saudi Arabia remains a desert in spite of its evident holiness, and the poor peasants of Sind have a terrible time with drought in spite of their simplicity and piety. Geography, not earnestness of prayer, appears to be the determining factor.
4. Confidence in the cause-effect relationship is indeed the very foundation of science and, as a scientist, I fully stand by it. Press the letter “T” on your keyboard and the same letter appears on the screen; step on the accelerator and your car accelerates; jump out of a window and you get hurt; put your hand on a stove and you get burnt. Those who disbelieve in cause-and-effect do so at great personal peril.
5. Dr. Zaheer is correct in saying that many different people (not just Muslims alone) believe they can influence physical events through persuading a divine authority. Indeed, in the specific context of rain-making, we have several examples. Red Indians had their very elaborate dances to please the Rain God, people of the African bush tribes beat drums and chant, and orthodox Hindus plead with Ram through spectacular “yagas” with hundreds of thousands of the

- faithful. Their methods seem a little odd to me, but I wonder if Dr. Zaheer wishes to accord them respect and legitimacy.
6. About the limitations of science: contrary to Dr. Zaheer's assertion, science is not arrogant. On the contrary, it humbly admits that it is not privy to absolute knowledge and therefore it needs to constantly upgrade and improve itself. However, science does have strict standards of truth – it will not accept tooth fairies as real, for example. Proof is indispensable to science.
 7. Dr. Zaheer's remarks about science development: I agree with him that some non-Muslim countries are also doing badly in science. But at no point did I ever say in my lecture (or in my writings on the subject) that being Muslim condemns one to backwardness. In fact, I am impressed by the progress that Iran has made, and the quality of its science and education. They have somehow managed to get beyond the medieval thinking that dooms science in countries like Pakistan.
 8. About earlier ages: Muslims performed impressive scientific and intellectual feats. But many heroes like Omar Khayyam and Ibn Sina were targeted by the orthodox mullahs of those times. To my knowledge they did not reject logic, reason, and causality. They were the precursors of modern science and properly deserve our respect.

----- Forwarded message -----

Date: Wed, 19 May 2004 14:25:55 +0500
From: Shahram Azhar <06020213@lums.edu.pk>
To: hoodbhoy@lms.mit.edu
Subject: FW: Your Comments?

Dear sir,

Dr Khalid Zaheer, an Islamic scholar, has recently sent this mail to all the students, in response to your seminar. I don't think that you are aware of this mail. I feel that you need to respond to this mail. Please send your reply at students@lums.edu.pk

Regards,
Shahram Azhar

-----Original Message-----

From: Khalid Zaheer [mailto:kzaheer@lums.edu.pk]
Sent: Wed 5/19/2004 1:23 PM
To: Shahram Azhar
Cc:
Subject: Your Comments?

Title: Is there a cause-effect relationship beyond the scope of science

Question:

Dr Pervez Hoodbhoy in one of his recent presentations in LUMS mentioned the fact that one of the reasons why Science couldn't get popular in Pakistan was that instead of having confidence in cause-effect relationship, the people of the country believe in such unscientific things as the claim that rainfall can be caused by the prayers of people. What are your comments on it?

Response:

The fact that rainfall sometimes is caused in response to the prayers is a matter of human experience. Although I cannot narrate an incident directly, I know from the observations of people who would not exaggerate unnecessarily that such things have happened before their very own eyes. However, this fact should not cause people to believe that there isn't any cause-effect relationship operating in our world. What it however definitely means is that there is much more to reality than what we know. We can keep exploring to know more about how does it come about that the Almighty causes things to happen in ways that are sometimes unexplainable. However, to deny a known, observed reality is not a very rational approach. Whether it is scientific or not is something I don't know nor do I care. Most religious people, not just the Muslims alone, have a common experience of observing that their prayers get responded in ways that cannot be explained by applying the logic of cause-effect relationship. You just have to be in your senses to know that they do happen when they happen before you. Had that not been the case, most people wouldn't have been religious in this world.

I think that the mistake committed by Dr Hoodbhoy is that he has set forth for himself a very limited criterion for judging what is correct and what is not. His line of logic seems to be that since Science is what we need the most, therefore we ought to have knowledge of Science at all costs in our country. Whatever conflicts with the popularity of Science education, therefore, would be condemnable.

To me the correct approach of any rational person should be to decide that he is eager to know the truth, whether it conforms to the scientific standards or not. The problem I can see Dr Hoodbhoy is going through is that since he has narrowed down his mind to be influenced by only those facts that could be explained by the cause-effect relationship, he has in the process denied himself the possibility of accepting any reality that seems to be happening in defiance of that line of logic. That's a classic example of academic prejudice: You decide beforehand that you would only accept a certain point of view and as a result of your decision you refuse to see anything else that is presented to you, even if it is as obvious as the bright sun. If a religious person falls into the same trap because of

his predisposition towards a certain religious point of view, his religious bias is condemnable. Likewise condemnable is the bias of the person who has blindly made Science and the principle of cause-effect relationship a religiously binding principle for himself.

The truth of the matter is that the more Science progresses the more it shows to man that he knows very little. Indeed Science has progressed by emphasizing the significance of cause-effect relationship in our world. However, to assume that there isn't anyone who can do things by defying it is taking the understanding too far. It amounts to suggesting that the believers in the inviolable application of the cause-effect relationship are not going to accept any reality except the one that appears to them as scientific. That is the kind of attitude that blinds an individual from a good part of the truth because of an exaggerated emphasis on one aspect of reality.

The example that comes to my mind to describe Dr Hoodbhoy's mistake is that of a student of a language who after mastering its principles of grammar starts looking at the masterpieces of that language and concludes that they carry some 'grammatical errors'. Of course, the problem doesn't lie in those masterpieces; instead, it lies in the erroneous perception of the simpleton student who thinks that the masters of the language were bound by the principles of grammar discovered by the grammarians by carefully reading those very masterpieces! Likewise, our world is not running on the principle of cause-effect relationship. It is running the way it is being run by its Master. Man has discovered that, generally speaking, the physical phenomena of our world are following the principle of cause-effect relationship. However, that may not always happen, because the One who is running it has never committed Himself to stick to that principle. Moreover, we don't even know that certain happenings that seemingly defy the cause-effect logic may actually have been caused by a cause that we cannot, at least for now, perceive.

There are two reasons why Dr Hoodbhoy's observation about reason for the lack of development of Science in Pakistan is unacceptable:

- i) There are many countries in Asia, Africa, and South America which though not Muslim are doing equally bad in Science.
- ii) Many Muslims belonging to earlier generations were pioneers in discovering new fields of scientific enlightenment despite their strong faith in God's ability to defy cause-effect relation in this world.

By the name Of Allah The Most Gracious the Most Merciful

Contradictions with Islam by The Theory of Cause and Effect

By S.S Irfan Hussain, MS Comp Eng 03060009

Respected Muslims, Assalam-o-Alikum

First of all I would like to make it clear that from Mr. Pervez Hoodbhoy (He proclaims THE THEORY OF CAUSE AND EFFECT) statements even an ordinary Muslim who has read the Quran (i.e. read along with its translation if he does not understand Arabic because the main purpose is for people to understand it) can understand and certainly say with absolute authority that his statements are in total denial with the word of Allah i.e. the Quran as we all Muslims believe.

For your reminder, observe and try to comprehend these verses from the Quran so you can make up your mind about my above statement. I will give a comparison between his various proclamations and then the refutations that are made by the Quran to his assertions.

One extra point that I would like to point out is that when he states that science does not accept this, and then he basically means that he himself is refuting it. Points of his theory that clearly go against many of the Quranic ayats are as follows:

#	Mr. Pervez Hoodbhoy	Quran
1	In case of rain fall in consequence to prayers he says that "I must emphasize that science cannot agree to this methodology..... If prayers can cause rain to fall from a blue sky, then all of physics and all science is worthy of being trashed. " In other words	<i>In Quran Allah has informed us that what ever may be the circumstances physical or social Allah poses the ability to reverse the tide in answer to a prayer in what ever manner he deems fit.</i> <i>Surah Al Baqarah (It is Surah #2) See its Ayat# 186:</i> "When my servants ask you about me, then I am indeed close to them. I listen and answer to the pray of every prayer when he calls me. Then they should also listen to my call and believe in me so that they may walk in the right way" <i>Al Anam (It is Surah #6) See its Ayat# 63 & 64:</i> Say:" Have you Think for yourselves, If there come upon you the wrath of Allah, Or the hour (that ye dread) Would ye then call upon other than Allah? -(Reply) if you all truthful! "Nay-On him would you all call, and if it be his will he would remove (the distress) which occasioned your call on him, And you would forget (The false gods) which you all join with him" <i>Al Anam (It is Surah #6) See its Ayat# 63 & 64:</i> Who is the one who delivers you from the deep darkness of

<p>he says that prayers, (which Muslims make directly to Allah) cannot cause rain in a blue sky. Allah cannot answer prayers when the physical circumstances do not permit. Or Allah does not possess the ability to pour down rain.</p>	<p>land and see, You all call upon him in humility and silent terror; If he only delivers us from these (dangers), We shall truly be grateful. Say: "It is Allah that delivered you from these and all distresses: and yet you all worship false gods" <i>Surah Al Baqarah (It is Surah #2) See its Ayat# 21 & 22:</i> Oh people worship your RAAB who created you and those who came before you so that you may become righteous. Who has made the earth your couch and the skies your canopy and sent down rain from the sky then brought forth with it (I.e. rain) fruits for your sustenance. Then do not make equals with Allah when you all know. <i>Surah Al Araf (It is Surah #7) See its Ayat# 57:</i> It is he who sends the winds like heralds of glad tidings, before his mercy: when they have carried the heavy laden Clouds, we drive them to a land that is dead, Then make the rain to descend upon it and produce every kind of harvest with it: thus shall we raise up the dead: so that you may remember.</p>
<p>2 He requires scientific proof or observations that are recorded on camera, or by some similar reliable means, that could prove that Allah can answer prayers and reverse a physical phenomenon.</p>	<p><i>Islam does not want people to believe in Allah by seeing Allah or the Angels or paradise or Hell.</i> <i>See Surah AlBaqarah (Surah #2) Ayat # 2-3</i> This is the book; In it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah; Who believe in the unseen, Are steadfast in prayer and spend out of what we have provided for them.</p> <p><i>Those who want such proofs even if they get it they would not believe.</i> <i>See Surah AlAnam (Surah #6) Ayat # 109-111</i> They swear their strongest oaths by Allah that if a (special) sign came to them, they would believe by it. Say, " Certainly all signs are in the power of Allah." But what can make you (Muslims) realize that (even) if special signs came they will not believe. We shall turn to confusion their hearts and their eyes, even as they refused to believe in this in the first instance. We shall leave them in their trespasses to wander in distraction. Even if we did send angels unto them and the dead did speak to them and we all gather all things before their very eyes. They are not the ones to believe. Unless Allah wills. But most of them ignore (the truth). <i>AlAnam (surah #6) Ayat #36</i> If their spurning (i.e. taking it as something little, or rejection) is hard on you, then if you were able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the skies And bring them a sign (What</p>

		<p>good) If it were Allah's will he could gather them onto true guidance. So you should not be among those who are swayed by ignorance (and impatience) <i>AlAnam (surah #6) Ayat #7</i> If we had sent unto you the book on parchment (a writing material commonly used in western Asia from 2nd century onwards) so they could touch it with their hands the unbelievers would have been sure to say: "This is nothing but obvious magic"</p>
3	<p>He also says that "Personally I would be most interested to know whether prayers can also cause the reversal of much simpler kinds of physical processes. For example, can a stone be made to fall upward instead of downward? Or can heat be made to flow from a cold body to a hot body by appropriate spiritual prompting? If prayers can cause rain to fall from a blue sky, then all of physics and all science is worthy of being trashed." He basically denies that Allah has the power to reverse the physical laws; rather he says that</p>	<p><i>Allah informs us in Quran that he is the Absolute, Supreme Authority Commander Cherisher and sustainer of this universe. He can reverse what we observe in our daily life and do whatever he wants just by telling it to be so. Many miracles have been performed by the prophets of Allah but all due to Allah's will.</i> <i>Al baqarah (surah #2) Ayat #116-117</i> They say:" Allah has begotten a son" Glory be to him- Nay to him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth; everything renders worship to him" To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth; And when he decides a matter he says to it "Be," and it is. <i>Al Imran (surah #3) Ayat #47</i> She (Mary) said:"Oh my RAAB how I shall have a son when no man has touched me?" He said: "Even so Allah created what he wills, When he had decided a plan, he but says to it, 'be' and it is!" <i>Al Maidah (surah #5) Ayat #110</i> Then will Allah say "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount my favors on you and on your mother. Behold! I strengthen you with the holy spirit; you spoke to the people in childhood and in maturity Behold! I taught you the book and wisdom the Torah and the Injeel. Behold! You made out of clay as it were the figure of a bird, by My leave, And you breathe into it, And it becometh a bird By my leave, And you healed born blind and the lepers by my leave. And behold! You brought forth the dead by my leave. And behold I did restrain the Children of Israel from you. When you showed them clear signs then the unbelievers among them said."This is nothing but evident magic". <i>As a living miracle sign and scientific proof to these Kufars for the existence of Allah his unlimited Powers described in Quran and Sunnah, Allah has given a challenge in the Glorious Quran to them</i> <i>Al baqarah (surah #2) Ayat #23 24:</i> And if you all are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to our servant, then produce a Surah Like there</p>

<p>these laws govern and control the universe.</p>	<p>unto; and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, If you are truthful. But if you all cannot -and of surety you all cannot, Then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for those who reject faith. <i>Al Yunus (surah #10) Ayat #37,38,39:</i> This Quran is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; On the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, And a fuller explanation of the book-wherein there is no doubt-From the lord of the worlds. Or do they say "He forged it", Say: "Bring then A surah like onto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can, Besides Allah, if you speak the truth" Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the exposition of it had reached them. Thus did those before them make charges of falsehood, but see what was the end of the unjust.</p>
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This mailing issue is without doubt in Allah's Plan as all matters are, so that he could as said in

Surah Anfaal (surah 8) Ayat # 36,37

In order that Allah may separate the impure from the pure, put the impure, one on another, heap them together and cast them into hell. They will be the ones to have lost.

I am really surprised by my fellow Muslims who acknowledging the truth of Islam on lips are so unaware of Islam's basic foundation that they not only befriend these people with their hearts and support their ideas, but also openly propagate their messages. Have they not learned from the Quran that

Al Nisa (surah #4) ayat# 138,139

To the hypocrites give the glad tidings that there is for them a grievous penalty. They are those who take for friends' unbelievers rather than the believers. Is it honor they seek among them? Nay- all honor is with Allah.

Al Nisa (surah #4) ayat# 144,145

**Oh ye who believe! Take not for friends, unbelievers rather than the believers: do you all wish to offer Allah an open proof against yourselves?
The Hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire; no helper will you find for them.**

All of them damn care about what Quran has to say or the Prophet (p.b.u.h) has to say about this issue. While some among them think that people can have their own Islam even if it is clearly contradictory to the Quran and Authentic Sunnah. They say that this is difference of opinion even if it goes in total denial of Allah's Last message. My humble request is as follows:

See surah Al Nisa ayat # 60,61

Have you not turn your vision to those who declare that they believe in the revelations that have come to you and to those before you? They want to resort together for judgement to the Tahguut (Anything worshipped other than Allah or one who is out of all bounds), though they had been ordered to reject him. Satan wishes to lead them astray far away (from the right).

**When it is said to them "Come to what Allah has revealed, And to the messenger":
You would see the hypocrites preventing from you in disgust.**