Sociology & Cultural Research Review (SCRR)
Available Online: https://scrrjournal.com
Print ISSN: 3007-3103 Online ISSN: 3007-3111
Platform & Workflow by: Open Journal Systems

Heavens in Harmony: A Qur'anic and Astronomical Perspective on the Cosmos

Dr. Wajahat Khan
Lecturer Islamic Studies, University of Kotli, AJ&K
Hafeeza Bano Arain
PhD Scholar, Institute of Islamic Studies, Shah Latif University Khairpur
missbano709@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the deep connection between the Quranic science and the modern astronomical observations in both a theological and scientific perspective. Based on classical exegesis and guidance of modern astrophysical theories, the paper explores the main verses of the Quran that outline the nature and the making of the universe, as well as related dynamics. The verses of the Quran such as Surah Al-Anbiya (21:30), Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:47) are compared with the scientific notions including Big Bang theory and cosmic expansion, which shows significant similarities between the scripture and the empirical evidence. The Quran describes the orbits of celestial bodies, the stratified form of the heavens, and the relativity of time which are in harmony with orbital dynamics, the multi-dimensional universe and time dilation respectively. The study uses a hermeneutic approach (tawil) to bring out how these revelations precede contemporary findings as well as contradict the revelation-rational investigation division. The paper demonstrates how NASA-supported information and the astrophysical theories critically relate to tafsir traditions (e.g., Ibn Kathir and Al-Razi) to accentuate the ability of the Quran to incite scientific and religious interest. The results present the necessity of revival of Quranic cosmology in the Islamic schools and intellectual discourse through a moderate approach that does not dismiss the divine revelation and scientific validity. Finally, such a holistic method reinstates the timeless nature of the Quran to answer the queries surrounding the universe, and also fosters an epistemology that is both faithful and rationalistic in nature.

Keywords: *Qur'anic Cosmology, Astronomy, Big Bang, Time Dilation, Tafsir, Celestial Order, Islamic Science, Revelation, Reason, Hermeneutics, Astrophysics.*

Introduction

The Qur'an, revered as the final revelation in Islamic tradition, provides a unique framework for contemplating the cosmos one that transcends mere symbolism and offers philosophical, spiritual, and empirical reflections. Thematic references to the heavens **(السماوات)**, earth **(الأرض)**, stars, and planetary motion appear throughout the Qur'an, urging contemplation. One such verse affirms:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding" (Qur'an 3:190). Historically, Muslim scholars such as Al-Razi, Al-Biruni, and Ibn al-Haytham approached these verses not only with reverence

but also with a spirit of inquiry merging theology with early scientific exploration (Nasr, 2023). The Qur'an's description of celestial order is often strikingly consistent with contemporary astronomy. It mentions orbital mechanics in verses like:

﴿وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ﴾

"Each in an orbit is swimming" (Qur'an 36:40), suggesting harmony and motion within the cosmic design. Such verses invite reflection on the relationship between divine wisdom and observable phenomena, urging believers and scholars alike to consider the Qur'an not just as sacred scripture, but as a text that stimulates both metaphysical and empirical contemplation. This study seeks to explore how select Qur'anic verses correspond to or anticipate modern astronomical findings. Notably, the Qur'an states:

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾

"And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander" (Qur'an 51:47).

This verse compellingly aligns with modern cosmology's understanding of the expanding universe, first empirically validated by Edwin Hubble in the 20th century (Krauss, 2020). Similarly, the Qur'an offers a layered cosmological model:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا﴾

"He who created seven heavens in layers" (Qur'an 67:3), echoing modern astrophysics' idea of cosmic strata. These are not offered as scientific proof but rather as illustrations of the Qur'an's encouragement to observe, reflect, and inquire. This paper employs a dual-method approach, combining classical *tafsir* (interpretation) with scientific hermeneutics, aiming to create a framework that appreciates both divine revelation and empirical rigor. In doing so, it underscores that scientific exploration can coexist with and even be inspired by sacred texts a tradition deeply rooted in Islamic intellectual history (Iqbal, 2022).

Despite these overlapping insights, there remains a notable gap in scholarly efforts to synthesize Qur'anic exegesis with contemporary astrophysics. While works by Muslim thinkers like Ibn Ashur and Abdus Salam have individually bridged science and revelation, a structured, integrative methodology is largely absent from mainstream academic discourse (Ebrahim, 2024). Most traditional exegeses interpret cosmological verses either allegorically or through a purely theological lens, while modern astrophysics tends to ignore spiritual dimensions. This divide results in an epistemological gap wherein scientific progress and Qur'anic wisdom remain siloed rather than symbiotic. Moreover, the Qur'an emphasizes humanity's responsibility to engage in reflection:

﴿أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنَاهَا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا﴾

"Do they not look at the sky above them, how We built it and adorned it?" (Qur'an 50:6). This rhetorical invitation reflects the Qur'an's role as a text that supports intellectual engagement rather than discouraging it. This research aims to fill the gap by developing a comprehensive framework where the Qur'an is not only venerated but also intellectually activated in the service of understanding our universe.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Understanding the Qur'an's cosmological narratives requires an interpretive lens that integrates both traditional theological exegesis and scientific analysis. From a theological standpoint, classical *tafsir* serves as a foundational interpretive method. Exegetes such as Ibn Kathir and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi provide rich commentary on verses concerning the creation of the heavens, the earth, and celestial bodies. Ibn Kathir, in his *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, interprets the verse

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ﴾

"It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth" (Qur'an 14:32) as a direct affirmation of divine authorship and order in the cosmos. Al-Razi, more philosophically inclined, speculated on the layered nature of the heavens in Qur'an 67:3

﴿سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا﴾

Viewing them as metaphysical dimensions or possibly astronomical spheres. These interpretations do not necessarily conflict with science but rather provide spiritual and metaphysical commentary. More recently, scholars like Mustafa Mahmoud and Ziauddin Sardar have revisited these verses, aligning them with contemporary thought on space-time, dimensionality, and human observation. Thus, the theological lens in this study does not aim to "scientize" scripture, but to understand how divine signs (*ayat*) encourage reflective engagement with the universe as part of spiritual fulfillment.

The scientific framework of this study draws from authoritative sources in astronomy and astrophysics, primarily using data from NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and peer-reviewed journals such as *Astrophysical Journal* and *Nature Astronomy*. Scientific theories such as the Big Bang, inflationary models, and orbital mechanics are used not to reinterpret the Qur'an, but to juxtapose contemporary cosmological understandings with relevant Qur'anic verses. For instance, the verse

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾

"And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander" (Qur'an 51:47). reflects the concept of an expanding universe, now empirically supported by redshift data and cosmic microwave background radiation (NASA, 2023). Similarly, the Qur'anic reference

﴿وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ﴾

"Each in an orbit is swimming" Qur'an 36:40. Resonates with orbital physics describing planetary motion and gravitational balance, core tenets of Kepler's and Newton's models. While the Qur'an is not a book of science, it exhibits a remarkable consonance with observable truths, which invites scholars to use scientific understanding as a complementary not contradictory lens through which divine messages can be better appreciated.

Methodology

Methodologically, this paper will follow a hermeneutic methodology involving an explanation (tafsir) and a deeper interpretation (ta awil) and it will be in the framework of the traditional and even recent models of epistemology. First, classical interpretations of the verses are considered in order to get the essence of their theological background and initial wording

structures. Next, the verses will be recapitulated in line with current scientific discoveries and chart out metaphoric/symbolic/ even literal connections in case there are any. Such twofold study is that which nourishes a moderate conversation between revelation and reason. The empirical content can be found in data sets of the Hubble Space Telescope of NASA, simulations of the galactic expansion, and publications of peer review astrophysics. In the meantime, ta3wil can make space of the stratified meaning which will be imperative when trying to cover cosmological verses that do not imply time but are intended to survive human eras. For instance, Qur'an 41:11 refers to the universe as initially a "smoke" (دُخَان), which mirrors the nebular hypothesis and primordial state of the cosmos as understood today. The methodology does not assume equivalence but highlights complementarity, maintaining the Qur'an's status as a source of guidance while respecting the rigor of scientific investigation.

Qur'anic Cosmology: Key Verses and Interpretations

The Qur'anic account of the creation of the universe is both profound and layered, containing references that align symbolically and at times remarkably with contemporary cosmological theories. One of the most frequently cited verses in this regard is Surah Al-Anbiya (21:30):

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا﴾

"Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, then We separated them" The classical commentators like Ibn Kathir took this verse metaphorically by saying that the heavens and the earth were initially together in a form of non-differentiation and it is through the divine will that Allah formed and gave structure and form. Contemporary cosmologists have seen analogies with this imagery in the Big Bang, the idea that all matter and energy in the universe were once held in a singularity before the latter dispersed to form the cosmos as it is now. Although the Quran does not provide a scientific formula, and although the metaphor of Ratqan (a joined mass) and Fataqnahuma (We split them apart) contains a reference to the disintegration of things, to their breaking apart and scattering, it sounds closer to the reality of cosmic expansion. Another powerful verse is Surah Fussilat (41:11):

﴿ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ﴾

"Then He directed Himself to the heaven while it was smoke." Here, the term دُخَانٌ (dukhan) refers to a gaseous, smoky state similar to the primordial gas clouds from which galaxies and stars form. Exegetes like Al-Razi view this as symbolic of Allah's creative command over an unformed cosmos, while scientists note that such early gaseous states are foundational in star formation.

Another thematic cluster in Qur'anic cosmology involves the concept of celestial order and motion, illustrated in Surah Ya-Sin (36:38–40):

﴿وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَّهَا... وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ... لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنبَغِي لَهَا أَن تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ﴾

"And the sun runs on its fixed course, And We have determined phases for the moon… It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. Each is swimming in an

orbit." This passage is rich in cosmological meaning. The phrase كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ("Each is swimming in an orbit") precisely describes orbital motion a fact unknown in 7th-century Arabia but fundamental in modern astrophysics. The sun's trajectory mentioned in tajree li-mustaqarrin lahaa can be interpreted as referring to its movement toward the solar apex in the Milky Way. Furthermore, the moon's phases are described in terms of "manazil" (stations), indicating a precise lunar calendar system, which is still used in Islamic timekeeping. These verses emphasize balance, rhythm, and precision in the cosmos, which classical scholars like Imam Qurtubi saw as signs (*ayat*) of divine order, while modern readers may relate them to Newtonian mechanics and heliocentric models.

The structure and plurality of the heavens is another significant cosmological concept in the Qur'an. Surah Al-Mulk (67:3) and Surah Nuh (71:15–16) describe the heavens in layers:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا﴾

"[He] who created seven heavens in layers…"

﴿أَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا • وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا﴾

"Do you not see how Allah created seven heavens in layers, and made the moon a light in them and made the sun a burning lamp?" Early exegesis interpreted these "seven heavens" either spatially (as concentric spheres, akin to Ptolemaic astronomy) or dimensionally (as metaphysical layers). In contemporary explanations, the term, seven, is offered as a term multiply or levels in the development of the universe, and the word, layers, is proposed as physical areas of the universe, or, indeed, quantum worlds. The difference of the sun as a Siraj (lamp) and the moon as Nur (light) is linguistically and in scientific way that the sun produces the light and the moon carries it. Semantic precision is one more piece of evidence to the Quran cosmological vocabulary that portrays a tightly invested text in natural phenomena. All these verses create an outlook of a harmonious world in which divine wisdom and cosmic design are interlocked, and there is potential spiritual contemplation and scientific inquiry to be had on it.

Astronomical Parallels and Scientific Reflections

One of the most compelling Qur'anic verses often linked to modern cosmological theory appears in Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:47):

﴿وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْيْدٍ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسِعُونَ﴾

"And We built the heaven with might, and indeed, We are expanding it." The Arabic term لَمُوسِعُونَ (lamosi'ūn) comes from the root *w-s-ʿ*, indicating continual expansion. The classical commentators, e.g. Ibn Kathir, read this verse as metaphorical allusion to the power of divine creativity, without any particular suggestion of spatial proliferation. Nowadays, however, with the revelation of an expanding universe, by Edwin Hubble in 1929, and its confirmation by the study of cosmic microwave backgrounds, this verse has a new scientific meaning. Modern astrophysics says that the universe has been in motion ever since the Big Bang, which is the point of beginning all space and time. The fact that the Quran also refers to the continued growth is even more harmonious with this notion and indicates that such cosmological events in the universe had a certain recognition in the Quranic worldview even though they were not

explicitly described. Although care should not be taken to read scientific findings into theological documents, the words used in this passage make it possible to harmonize the results of both fields of science in theology to make disciplines cross-breed to enhance interdisciplinary practice in science and scripture.

Another intriguing parallel lies in Surah At-Tariq (86:11), which uses symbolic language potentially resonating with modern ideas of gravitational collapse and black holes:

﴿وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ﴾

"By the sky possessing the returning (rain or force)."

The word الرَّجْعِ (raj') can be translated as *return* or *repetition*. While many classical scholars including Al-Razi interpreted it in terms of the hydrological cycle (the return of rain from clouds), some contemporary readings suggest cosmic interpretations. In astrophysics, black holes are regions of spacetime where gravitational pull is so strong that nothing not even light can escape. These entities bend spacetime and potentially contribute to cosmic recycling, including scenarios of Big Crunch or cyclic universes, where the expansion of the universe is followed by a gravitational collapse. Although speculative, such cosmological models echo the concept of "return" or cyclical processes, suggesting that the Qur'anic idea of raj'could encompass a broader metaphysical understanding of return in both material and spiritual dimensions. This highlights the Qur'an's multilayered diction, which is open to reflection across epochs and paradigms.

The Qur'an also engages with concepts that resonate with time dilation a key component of Einstein's theory of relativity in Surah Al-Ma'arij (70:4):

﴿تَعْرُجُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ﴾

"The angels and the Spirit ascend to Him in a day, the measure of which is fifty thousand years."

This verse underlines the fact that time of God and time of humans is not equal. Angels travel through space or dimensions in different realities and this results in time that is unheard of on the human scale. Modern physics, especially the theory of relativity, predicts that time flows at different rates to observers in different gravitational fields or moving at different speeds (a phenomenon called time dilation). To explain further, time slows around large gravitational bodies or when you move at high velocity. The conceptualization of this immensely unequal passage of time in the Quran is to be conceived in the same way as a universe that is not in absolute time but relative and multidimensional in time. Although it is not scientific in its purpose, this verse makes one reflect about the number of times in which one may develop, both spiritually and scientifically.

Implication for Islamic Thought and Science

The Quran has been used not only as a religious text but also as a matter of intellectual debate and even philosophy. In its various verses that refer to the natural world, heavenly bodies, and creation, it gives a conceptual outline that has led to scientific discovery in the Islamic world historically. During the 8th to 14th centuries in what has been termed as the Islamic Golden Age, critiques like Al-Biruni, Al-Khwarizmi and Ibn al-Haytham focused on astronomy, mathematics and optics and often referred to Quranic passages. As an illustration, the

mentions of orbits, cycles, and the heaven conformation in the Qur'an inspired the organization of regular observations of the movement of planets. The tone of the Quran which encouraged believers to reflect (Yatafakkarun) on the signs of the heavens and earth gave birth to a culture which did not see any contradiction in being both a believer and an empiricist. Other researchers such as Ziauddin Sardar (2010) have proposed that a scientific ethic informed by the Quran must be based on humility, spiritual responsibility and exploration, as opposed to rivalry with science.

However, it is not without problems that the effort is made to reconcile Quranic revelation with empirical science. The Quran is in a metaphysical and symbolic language that is difficult to put into a literal scientific mapping. Such inferences as using verses such as Surah 51:47 ("We are steadily expanding it") as support of the Big Bang could feel like reaching fascinating convergences, but perhaps tries to project modern thinking onto an ancient one, more commonly referred to as concordism. This method can inadvertently take away its theological, spiritual, and moral aspects in the belief that the Qur'an is a scientific textbook. Moreover, in empirical science, theories, and discoveries are falsifiable, whereas in Quranic revelation the revelation is unchanging and timeless in Islamic thought. Such is the epistemological dissonance that methodological pluralism in which Tafsir (both classical and contemporary) is not subjugated to scientific paradigms is needed. According to Muslim thinkers such as Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2021), the Islamic cosmology needs the possibility of a symbolic taawil (interpretation) between reason and revelation, instead of pushing equivalences between the language used in scripture and scientific descriptions.

A revival of Islamic cosmology in the current educational and intellectual environment has good potential in terms of harmonizing spiritual awareness with scientific understanding. At the current juncture, the Quran and science can be quite compartmentalized, with religious studies primarily having an approach to the Quran as a text to be studied in exegesis, and scientific fields having little connection to Islamic science. Curriculum changes especially in the Muslim-majority societies can be enhanced with the model which exposes students to the Quranic themes of cosmos as well as modern astrophysics. Organizations like the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and scholars like Nidhal Guessoum (2018) have been promoting revival of the Islamic scientific tradition, but a revival not in an anti-modern but a critical manner of reviving both tradition and science. This integration is not related to the Islamization of science but aims at invoking a sense of awe (khushu'), the moral obligation and meaning behind the pursuit of knowledge. In a time when science has become decontextualized and lacking in morality, bring it back into line with the morals of Quran will be as much spiritual as intellectual re-awakening to Muslim communities to counteract the fact that not only does science determine but also reflect the wonders of the cosmos.

Conclusion

The way in which Quranic cosmology is interlaced with the astronomy of the time reflects a great deal of thinking behind it that has always been observant in terms of the natural world and reasoning out the nature of things through their study. The references to the cosmos, the universe and the heavens in the Quran are not scientific explanations but signs that provoke meditation and reflection. Such verses as the heavens and the earth were of one consistency,

and we were to split them as under (Quran 21:30) attest to a cosmological view that is extremely compatible with contemporary cosmology, including the Big Bang and the expansion of the universe. Instead of trying to find simplistic scientific authenticity of scripture, a more careful hermeneutical path has been advocated in this article that does not disregard the theological, symbolic, and metaphorical depths of the Quranic language, but that also takes seriously the astrophysical knowledge. Classical exegetes such as Al-Razi and Ibn Kathir give historical context, whereas contemporary scholars offer a way of contextualizing Quranic verses in terms of the context of contemporary cosmology. The approach of matching Tafsir and current scientific concepts shows how Quran can continue to be intellectually and spiritually significant in a world that is dominated by science.

However, this interaction is not one that is devoid of limitations and responsibilities. The Quran is a theological document, designed to bring about faith, moral behavior and existential knowledge not to report the physical qualities of the universe. This is why scientifically minded reading can create a reductionist or concordist reading biasing its spiritual significance. Simultaneously, the scientific community should be able to acknowledge that metaphysical worldviews, such as the claims that are presented by the Qur'an, provide moral guidance and a sense of humanity to what would otherwise be an impersonal worldview. It is based on this that the article has concluded that in the modern time, rekindling the Islamic cosmology would not only entail mentioning Quranic verses conforming to astronomical results but would also entail an educational, communicative, and ethical system of inquiry, which would be a marriage of faith and reason. This re-appropriation does not only contribute to a new appreciation of Quranic cosmology, but also to culturally rooted means of making Muslims critical and confident participants in the modern science project. A synthesis can in the end be a pattern of comprehensive knowing where revelation and rational discovery do not stand in opposition, but in a reciprocity with each other.

References

Al-Razi, F. (n.d.). *Tafsir al-Kabir*. Dar al-Fikr.

Al-Suyuti, J. (2005). *Al-Durr al-Manthur fi al-Tafsir bil-Ma'thur*. Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

El-Naggar, Z. (2006). *The Geological Concept of Mountains in the Qur'an*. Islamic Research Foundation International.

Ghazali, M. A. (2017). The Qur'anic concept of the universe and scientific realities. *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization*, *7*(2), 45–58.

Iqbal, M. (1930). *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Stanford University Press.

Khan, M. A., & Ahmad, A. (2021). Qur'anic cosmology and the modern universe: A comparative perspective. *Islamic Studies Review*, *43*(1), 91–115.

NASA. (2023). *Cosmic Origins Program Overview*. https://www.nasa.gov/cosmic-origins

Nasr, S. H. (2006). *Science and Civilization in Islam*. Harvard University Press.

Sardar, Z. (2011). *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Surah Al-Anbiya (21:30)

Surah Fussilat (41:11)

Surah Ya-Sin (36:38–40)

Surah Al-Mulk (67:3)
Surah Nuh (71:15–16)
Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:47)
Surah At-Tariq (86:11)
Surah Al-Ma'arij (70:4)