

Cloning

The concept of cloning is not something new to Muslims. It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldun had discussed such a proposition in his famous book Muqaddimah. Though the book basically deals with chemistry as a science, he had raised the possibility of reproduction other than that performed by the natural process e.g. outside a mother's womb. Ibn Khaldun argued that if the temperature and other factors, available in a mother's womb, could be provided to the sperm of a man and the egg of woman for fertilization outside her own womb, then the reproduction is possible. Ibn Khaldun proposed such an idea at a time where scientists were mainly involved in theoretical research. Little did he know that that idea might be a much argued debate in this current world.

In February 1997, a Scottish scientist, Dr. Willmot declared the birth of a lamb, called Dolly, at the Roslyn Institute of Edinburgh, which astonished the whole world. The news of this birth started an unending plethora of questions and issues both in the scientific and within religious institutions. Is cloning ethical, is it permissible? Many religious institutions are still discussing the repercussions cloning will bring about in the future.

What is cloning? The definition of cloning is 'a process of breeding of one or more living beings through transferring the nucleus of a semen cell into the nucleus-free egg or by separating the inseminated egg before the beginning stage of forming the limbs and cells.'¹ Such work, involving the human genetic framework, cannot be copied as the Qur'an states:

"Have the partners they assign to God created anything like His creation so that their creation is indistinguishable from his? Say, 'God is the Creator of all things. He is the One, the All Compelling.'" (13:16)²

"It was We who created you: will you not believe? Consider [the semen] you eject - do you create it yourselves or are We the Creator? We ordained death to be among you. Nothing could stop us if We intended to change you and recreate you in a way unknown to you. You have learned how you were first created: will you not reflect?" (56:58-62)³

"Can man not see We created him from a drop of fluid? Yet - lo and behold! - he disputes openly, producing arguments against Us, forgetting his own creation. He says, 'Who can give life back to bones after they have decayed?' Say, 'He who created them in the first place will give them life again: He has full knowledge of every act of creation. It is He who produces fire for you out of the green tree - lo and behold! - and

*from this you kindle fire. Is He who created the heavens and earth not able to create the likes of these people? Of course He is! He is the All Knowing Creator.” (36:77-82)*⁴

In 1997, two conferences were organised by the International Islamic Fiqh (Jurisprudence) Academy in Jeddah and the Organization of Islamic Medical Sciences in Morocco. Among some of the conclusions reached by scholars, jurists and some scientists in the conferences were:-

- I. Human cloning is haram (unlawful according to Shari’ah [Islamic Law])
- II. Cloning and other genetic engineering techniques for producing germs, plants, animals and very small creatures are halal (permissible according to the Shari’ah) as per the restrictions of Shar’iah imperative of obtaining benefits and removal of harm. 5.
- III. Islamic countries should appeal to enact laws and regulations which restrain regional, national and foreign institutions, scientists and experts from using, directly or indirectly, the Islamic countries for human cloning research.
- IV. Expert committees, comprising of religious scholars and professional experts should be formed to agree on an ethical code, possibly adopted by Islamic countries conducting researches in the field of biological sciences. 6.

Islam has put no restrictions on the freedom of scientific research as it helps Mankind to further understand the hidden meanings in the signs or creation of Allah. However, Islam also cautions that the door of research should not be left unsupervised in a way that while presenting the results of scientific research in the public field, the restriction of any law, be it the Shari’ah or civil laws, is totally omitted. The seal of the Shari’ah permits the lawful and bans anything that is unlawful, a very important code of conduct for any practising Muslim. One cannot stay aloof to the advances of science and technology but such new knowledges must thrive within the framework of the Shari’ah so that Muslims would essentially remain as servants in need of the Creator’s magnificence.

1 Recommendations of the 10th International Islamic Fiqh Academy Seminar held on 28 June - 3 July 1997 (23 - 28 Safar 1417H) at Jeddah and Medical Fiqh Conference held on 14 - 17 June 1997 at Darul Beha, Morocco.

2 Haleem, M.A.S. Abdel. The Qur’an A New Translation. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, pg 154

3 Ibid, pg 357

4 Ibid, pg 284

5 Ibid, pg. 71