Knowledge of Allah's Pleasure (Raḍa) and Knowledge of Allah's Will (Mashiyat)

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Abstract

There is essential difference between 'Allah's Pleasure' (Raḍa) and 'Allah's Will' (mashiyat). Much confusion in Muslim thought in problems relating human freedom and predestination has arisen because of not understanding this difference. The narration of the event of killing of a boy by HazratKhiḍrin the Qurānmakes the difference between these two kinds of knowledge evident. Focusing on the above narrative the present study attempts to define the contours of these dimensions of God-given knowledge in Qurānic perspective.

Various antinomies which arise from the problem of free will and predestination have been identified by Muslims as well as orientalists. Some of which include:i) the antinomy of freewill and the predestinarian verses in the Qurän;ii) the antinomy of free will and the appointed term (*AjalMussamma*);iii) the antinomy of free will and Allah's Fore-Knowledge;iv) the antinomy of free will and Allah's Power.v) the antinomy of free will and preordained sustenance.¹ Killing of a boy by a servant of Allah (commonly known as HazratKhiḍr) presents a typical instance in which if the difference between Knowledge of Allah's Pleasure and Knowledge of Allah's Will (*Mashiyat*)is not kept in view, it is impossible to reach a correct conclusion with respect to the problem underdiscussion.

In Surah al-Kahf of the Qurânthe event of the killing of aboy by a person, who is said to be a servantfrom among the servants of Allah whom He had bestowed a special knowledge, is narrated. The name of this servant of Allah is not mentioned in the Qurān, however in Muslim tradition he is known as HazratKhiḍr (pbuh). In what follows we will call him HazratKhiḍr. It does not follow from the Qurān that he was a prophet or a messenger. HazratKhiḍr, as the story goes, sees a boy. He kills him. HazratMusā (pbuh), who was in his company, objects that he has taken a life without a just cause. (18:74) HazratKhiḍrreplies:

- 1. That the boy whom he murdered was the son of a faithful parents
- 2. That he, on the basis of that special knowledge granted to him by Allah Almighty, feared lest the boy should trouble his parents by way of his rebellion and disbelief. (18:75)
- 3. HazratKhiḍr (a.s.) prayed to the Lord to give them in exchange a son better than he in innocence and nearer in mercy. (18:80-81)
- 4. He also said:وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ أُ عَنْ أَمْرِي And I did not do anything on my own accord.(18:82)

Faithful parents always pray to the Lord for a goodly offspring.² A goodly offspring definitely is one that does not trouble his parents by way of rebellion and disbelief.

The activities of the boy and the line of action he used to take were before his parents. It seems that the parents of the boy also feared trouble and distress from him, as did Khiḍr (a.s.). The faithful people pray their Lord for the protection of their faith in trials and tribulations.³ They also pray God to vouchsafe them comfort of their wives and offspring.⁴ In fact progeny of a faithful parents, if not following their parents, may become a most severe test to their faith.⁵ Allah Almighty hears the prayers and saves his faithful servants from any harm to their faith. (2:286; 3:16) Allah accepts prayers from the faithful and the righteous. (42:25-26)

The antinomy identified in this case with respect to human freedom can beformulated in the following manner:

If Allah foreknows that someone will take a wrong line of action, and He causes him to die(through a person whom He has given a special knowledge or in whatever way He likes), then why He did not do this favour to other such persons!

As we have seen in a previous article that not a single soul comes in this world such that it is foreknown to Allah that he/she will leave the world as a sinner. Not even Abu Lahb, or Phiraun were born in such state. It is after being born that they consciously take a wrong line of action. So far the second part of the dilemma is concerned it is again based on a misconception about God's Knowledge. God's Knowledge encompasses everything. Whatever He does or whatever He does not do, is with His absolute Knowledge. While talking about God's Allah doesوَأَنَّ اللَّهُ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّم لِلْعَبِيدِ Knowledge or Power or whatever it is utmost necessary that it is kept in mind that not do injustice to anyone. (3:182, 8:51, 22:10, also cf. 41:46, 50:29). Any view, argument or the antinomy which does not observe this principle, is not worth entertaining. The second part of the dilemma violates this teaching.⁶

There is a difference between 'Allah's Pleasure' (Rada) and 'Allah's Will' (mashiyat). Much confusion in Muslim thought in problems relating human freedom and predestination has arisen because of not understanding this difference. The narration of the killing of a boy by HazratKhidr makes the difference between these two kinds of knowledge evident.

Divine revelation has always been the source of knowing Allah's Pleasure and the prophets, the messengers, have always been presenting the best model of acting upon this knowledge in their lives. So the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure is always clearly stated, declared, predetermined and foreknown. For the Muslims the Holy Qurān is the source of knowing Allah's Pleasure as for the teaching, precept and the principles are concerned. The illustrious lives of the Prophet (pbuh) and the believers, whom he certified as his true followers, present authentic model of this knowledge. In contrast to this, Allah's Will relates to His Absolute Power over the consequences. Only that comes out which He approves. Allah's Absolute Power over the consequences is His Will (mashiyat). Allah's Will is not known, or foreknown (except to him whom He please), it is not declared. It may not be predetermined يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِنْنِ اللهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ وَوَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا:7-even in Allah's Knowledge as stated in verse 3:166 What befell you on the day the two armiesmet in battle, happened with God's permission, and in order for الْمُؤْمِنينَ Him to see who were the true believers and who were the hypocrites. What Allah wills is always with His Absolute Knowledge. The believers are accountable for acting in accordance withthe knowledge of Allah's Pleasure. To accept the consequences as Allah's Will is part of their faith too.

HazratMusā (pbuh) was a prophet. The knowledge granted to him relatedto Allah's Pleasure. Shariatis embodiment of the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure. The Qurān does not certify HazratKhidrto be a prophet. He was one of the righteous servants of Allah whom Allah had granted a special knowledge as stated in the following verse: فَوَجَدَا عَبْدا ً مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتَيْنَاهُ أُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ أُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْما "and (Hazrat Musa) found one of Our servants— a man to whom We had granted Our mercy and whom We had given knowledge of Our Will[ilm-e ladunni]".It is the majesty of HazratKhidr (pbuh) that Allah Almighty has acknowledged him as 'one of His servants'. He has been blessed with two favours: Allah's Mercy and Ilm-e-ladunni. Ilm-e-ladunni, as inferable from the present verse and verse no. 18:82, is that knowledge which Allah grants to the people He likes, and they employ this knowledge where Allah likes. They do not use it on their own accord. The caption pronounced with this knowledge always materialize.⁷ Thus Ilm-e ladunni refers tothe knowledge of Allah's Will or Mashiyat as distinguished from the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure.

This point becomes further clear when we see that HazratMūsa had a high regard for the knowledge which was a distinction of HazratKhidr, and was ready to follow him so that this knowledge be granted to him. As statedin the verse, قَالُ ثَنَّعُكُ عَلَى أَنْ تُعَلِّمُن مِمَّا عُلَّمْتَ رُشْدا HazratMusā (pbuh) entreats HazratKhiḍr: Would you please allow me to benefit from the special knowledge bestowed upon you! (18:66) Another point which derives from the story of HazratMusā and HazratKhidr (pbut) is that at times the act of a person bestowed with *Ilm-e ladunni* may appear to be contrary to the sharia which in reality it is not. The servants of Allah whom He grants Ilm-e ladunni observe great regard for Sharia and do notemploy their knowledge inopposition to the Divine Law. Would anyone ever know about the killing of a boy by HazratKhidr, had it not been narrated in the Qurān! Similarly, none would ever know about *Ilm-e ladunni*, had it not been stated in the Qurān.

To say that Hazrat"Khiḍr's knowledge exceeds that of Moses" or to say that Hazrat"Khiḍrwas a saint and therefore superior to a prophet in esoteric knowledge" is an observation not based on authority. The status of authority lies with the Qurān and the Qurān does not endorse any such thing. Some argue that "Khiḍr's divinely infused knowledge was esoteric, whereas that of Moses was more exoteric". The terms 'esoteric' and 'exoteric' are un-Qurānic philosophical terms. There is much space in them that one hides his own suggestions and conjectures in them. Most appropriate distinction that can be made between them is that the Qurān makes us aware of two dimensions of knowledge: Knowledge of Allah's Pleasure; and Knowledge of Allah's Will. The upholders of these both kinds of knowledge do not do anything on their own. The way to benefit from the upholder of the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure is that after witnessing his veracity and trustworthiness, one follows him without asking how and why. (al-Qurān, 02:3) If one has the honour to be in the company of a servant of Allah who has *ilm-e ladunni*(knowledge of Allah's Will) it is necessary that one bears patiently on what one does not comprehend. This connection between unquestionable patience and special knowledge (*ilmladunni*) is made explicit in this narrative. The dilemmas is based upon above narrative about human freedom and predestination, is based upon false un-Qurānic notions.

Notes

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¹H. A.Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard University Press,1976, 660, 663. Harry AustrynWolfson(1887-1974) was the first and full time scholar of Judaica to the faculty completely devoted to Jewish Studies established in Harvard University America. He was the first Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, a wide read scholar, a prolific and creative writer in the history of philosophy. He retired from this post in 1958. *Religious Philosophy: A Group of Essays*, 1961; *The Philosophy of the Kalam*,1976, are among his best books.

² There did Zakariya pray to his Lord, saying: ﴿ الْأَكُ اللَّهُ مَا لَكُنُكَ ذُرِّيَّةٌ ۖ طَيَّبَةٌ ۚ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاء "O my Lord! Grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure: for Thou art He that heareth prayer! Al-Qurān", (al-Qurān, 3:37) Also see (ibid, 19:1-6).

أَلْذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنًا فَاعْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِة whose who say, "Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us our sins and protect us from suffering in the Fire," (ibid, 3:16)

And those who pray: Our Lord! Grant us from our وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعُيُن ٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُثَقِينَ إِمَاماً 4 And those who pray: Our Lord! Grant us from our wives and offspring the joy of our eyes; and cause us to be the foremost of the Muttaqīn. (ibid, 25:74)

⁵ Al-Qurân, وَاغْلَمُوا أَنْمَا أَمُوالْكُمُ وَأَوْ لِادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ۗ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ ۗ أَجْرٌ عَظِيم and know that your possessions and your children are a test,...(8:28) Among your wives and your children there are enemies for you. (ibid, 64:14-15)

⁶For details see, Abdul Hafeez, "Islamic View of Omniscience and Human Freedom", *Al-Hikmat*, Lahore: Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Volume 26, 2006, pp. 11-47

⁷HazratKhiḍr (a.s.) prayed to the Lord to give them in exchange a son better than he in innocence and nearer in mercy. (al-Qurān, 18:80-81) This is a caption which he pronounces with God-given special knowledge.

⁸"Khiḍr'sknowledge exceeds that of Moses because God has given diverse gifts to various prophets — not, as others have said, because Khiḍr was a saint and therefore superior to a prophet in esoteric knowledge (TafsīrMuqātil, ii, 592-9). *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 3 ed., (2003), s. v. "Khaḍir/Khiḍr".

⁹"Exegetes generally agree that Khiḍr's divinely infused knowledge was esoteric, whereas that of Moses was more exoteric." *Ibid.*p. 82

¹⁰*Ibid.* vol. 5, ed., (2006), s. v. "*Trust and Patience*".