

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 Hazrat Khidr in the Qurān makes 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 orientalis. Some of which include: i) the antinomy of freewill and the predestinarian verses in the Qurān; ii) the antinomy of free will and the appointed term (*Ajal Mussamma*); 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 Hazrat Khidr) 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 under discussion.

In Surah al-Kahf of the Qurān the event of the killing of a boy by a person, who is said to be a servant from 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 Hazrat Khidr (pbuh). In what follows we will call him Hazrat Khidr. It does not follow from the Qurān that he was a prophet or a messenger. Hazrat Khidr, as the story goes, sees a boy. He kills him. Hazrat Musā (pbuh), who was in his company, objects that he has taken a life without a just cause. (18:74) Hazrat Khidr replies:

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. Hazrat Khidr (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: *عَنْ أَمْرِي: وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ 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 Khidr (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)

To say that Hazrat“Khidr’s knowledge exceeds that of Moses” or to say that Hazrat“Khidr was a saint and therefore superior to a prophet in esoteric knowledge”⁸is 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 “Khidr’s divinely infused knowledge was esoteric, whereas that of Moses was more exoteric”.⁹The 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 (*ilm-ladunni*) is made explicit in this narrative.¹⁰The dilemmas is based upon above narrative about human freedom and predestination, is based upon false un-Qurānic notions.

Notes

¹H. A.Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard University Press,1976, 660, 663. Harry Austryn Wolfson(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: "هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ ۖ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً ۗ إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ" 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).

³ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا أَمْنَا فَأَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ those who say,“Our Lord, we believe, so forgive us our sins and protect us from suffering in the Fire,” (ibid, 3:16)

⁴ وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا 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-Qurān, وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ 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

⁷HazratKhidr (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“Khidr’s knowledge exceeds that of Moses because God has given diverse gifts to various prophets — not, as others have said, because Khidr 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. “Khaḍīr/Khidr”.

⁹“Exegetes generally agree that Khidr’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”.