

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

## TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING TAQDEER

A fundamental tenet of Muslim *'aqedah* (belief), *taqdeer* (preordainment of everything including man's actions, good and bad) is at the root of two strands of deviation in the *ummah*. The first strand, known as the *Jabariyyah*, maintains that man has absolutely no choice regarding his actions; they are governed entirely by Allah. The second strand, called the *Qadariyyah*, reject the concept of *taqdeer*. Man, they argue, is the creator of his own actions; in no way are they decided by Allah.

The opinion of the *Ahl-us-Sunnah* is that man does have a certain amount of choice (that is known as *kasb*). Existing between the desire to do an action and its creation, this choice cannot be exercised unilaterally; it is subject to the desire of Allah. Hence, Allah is the creator of man's actions and man earns them (he is the *kaasib* thereof).

### **Somewhat *Mukhtaar*, Somewhat *Majboor***

- Man's sight is undoubtedly limited. However, despite the limitation in his sight, nobody regards him as blind. His hearing is the same. It is limited. However, its limitation does not mean that man is deaf.
- The same applies to man's choice.

- ~ He definitely has a choice.
- ~ However, his choice is limited. He can only choose what Allah desires him to choose.

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

- ~ This limited choice does not mean that he does not even have a choice.
- Based on the above, we conclude that man is somewhat *mukhtaar*, somewhat *majboor* (to an extent he has a choice, to an extent he does not).

### Unlike a Stone

Nevertheless, he is unlike a stone, *majboor mutlaq* (absolutely helpless). Had he been so, he would have resented his (sinful) actions. Conversely, he not only acknowledges his actions, but also boasts about it.

Put differently, if man had no choice regarding his actions, he would have strongly believed that he is under duress. On the contrary, when doing any action (good or bad), he does not perceive any heavenly coercion.

### A Miracle of Allah

Actually, *taqdeer* is a miracle of Allah. He gave man such a choice that despite being *majboor*, man does not perceive it in the least. In fact, rather than perceiving that he is *majboor*, man claims that he has absolute choice to do as he pleases.

## **Divine Control**

If man's existence is Allah-given, so too is his choice. Hence, *taqdeer* should not be viewed as deprivation of a human right. Instead, it is merely divine control of the divinely given choice.

## **A Sign of Allah's Kindness**

Moreover, the object of *taqdeer* should be identified. Is it something in which man always had a choice, or is it something in which previously (prior to *taqdeer*), man had no choice? The answer is obvious. Thus, *taqdeer* is a sign of Allah's kindness.

## **Man's Choice is Too Weak**

Actually, man's choice is too weak to exist on its own, without support from Allah. Put differently, the purpose of *taqdeer* is to assist man in making his choice. It is comparable to the assistance that a parent renders to his toddler who is still learning to walk. Holding the toddler's hand, the parent allows him to walk in whichever direction he chooses. However, due to physical weakness, the toddler's choice is weak. Thus, he falls down after two or three steps if he lets go of his parent's hand. *Taqdeer* is similar. The only difference being that while the parent makes his desire *taabi'* (subject) to the desire of the toddler, Allah's desire is never *taabi'* to that of man. Quite the opposite, man's desires are always *taabi'* to those of Allah.

## **The Creation of Allah**

The sensory system, its functioning and all the organs of the body which man utilises from the time he intends to do an action until he accomplishes it, are all the creation of Allah.

Hence, just as man and his attributes are the creation of Allah, so too are his actions.

Explaining the previous point in layman's terms, Moulana Qaasim Nanotwi (R.A) would say that if two people are disputing ownership of the produce of a particular piece of land and one of them acknowledges that the land belongs to the other person. He also acknowledges that the other person bought and planted the seeds, watered the crops as they grew and finally harvested it. Do you think that the judge would still pass judgement in his favour? If you were the judge, you definitely would not do so. So then, how can man claim to be the creator of his actions whereas he and everything he utilises to accomplish his actions are the creation of Allah and belong to Him?

### **The Difference between *Qadr* and *Qadaa***

There are two important terms in the discussion of *taqdeer*:

1. *Qadr*
2. *Qadaa*

*Qadr* is defined as Allah's *azali* (eternal) knowledge of everything past, present and future. *Qadaa* is defined as Allah's ordainment of events in accordance with his *azali* (eternal) knowledge of everything past, present and future.

Having understood the above, it is quite easy to understand that *taqdeer* does not negate any choice on man's behalf. All *taqdeer* means is that Allah always knew how man would behave and subsequently He passed judgement that that is

exactly how man would behave. Moulana Shabbier Ahmed Uthmaani (R.A) writes:

- ~ The fact that Allah always knew man's actions does not mean that man does not have a choice. (Knowing that Zaid was going to sin does not mean that Zaid was forced to sin.)
- ~ On the contrary, it strengthens our claim that man does have a choice. What we mean is that if it is known to Allah that man will sin out of his own choice, he will have to do so out of his own choice. Now if somebody claims that man is coerced to sin, it would mean that there is a discrepancy in the knowledge of Allah!
- ~ If the fact that Allah always knew man's actions does mean that man does not have a choice, what would you say about the actions of Allah? Would that not mean that even Allah does not have any choice regarding His actions?

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### ***Majaazaat (Should Man be Punished for His Sins?)***

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The cause of confusion in the issue of *majaazaat* is failure to differentiate between the World of *Taqdeer* and the World of *Takleef*.

- ~ The first is unseen while the other is seen. It is therefore incorrect to confuse the two or judge one in the light of the other.
- ~ In the world of *Taqdeer* man is *majboor*, in the World of *Takleef* he is *mukhtaar*.
- ~ *Majaazaat* are based on the World of *Takleef* rather than the World of *Taqdeer*. Hence, objections in this regard are baseless.

## Allah's Choice and Man's Actions

Besides, Allah's perfect and independent choice affects man's actions in two ways:

1. Directly – Without involvement of man's imperfect and reliant choice as in the case of the shaking of a person suffering from Parkinson's disease.
  2. Indirectly – with involvement of man's imperfect and reliant choice as in the case of the writer's hand movements.
- Man has a natural tendency to attribute to himself all actions which he accomplishes utilising his imperfect and reliant choice. He regards such actions as his own. This is the meaning of *kasb*.
  - *Kasb* is a phase in-between independent choice and coercion.
  - Due to man being the *kaasib* (earner) of his actions, there is no reason why he should not be punished for his bad actions.

## Cause and Effect Instead of Revenge

Rejecters of *taqdeer* argue that if man's choice were subject to the choice of Allah, it would still be oppressive to punish him for his sins. The answer to this objection is that punishment in the Hereafter is based on *tasabbub* (cause and effect) instead of *intiqam* (revenge). Just as *tasabbub* demands that fire results in something burning and poison results in severe illness and death, it also demands that good actions result in reward and bad actions result in punishment.

Having said that, you could ask why good actions result in reward and bad actions result in punishment. However, if reward and punishment are based on *tasabbub* rather than *intiqam*, such a question would tantamount to asking why fire results in heat or why water results in wetness.

### **Objection**

Now, you could object that if the *Ahl-us-Sunnah* understanding of *taqdeer* were correct, that would mean that Allah is the creator of all good and evil. How can creation of evil be attributed to Allah?

### **Answer**

The answer to this is that there are many things in life, which, if viewed independently, are evil. However, if viewed alongside other components of a bigger picture, they are not evil. For example, every beautiful woman's body has blood and pus. Viewed independently, both of them are regarded as filthy. However, nobody disdains a (beautiful) woman because her body contains blood and pus.

The presence of toilets in a beautiful palace is another example. Viewed independently, a toilet is not the best of places. Nobody invites you to his house to show off his toilet. Yet, you will find a toilet in every palatial house. Does anybody refuse to purchase a house because it has a toilet? Does the value of a house decrease because it has a toilet? Quite the opposite, the house would be regarded as incomplete if it does not have a toilet.

Sin is similar. On its own, it is undoubtedly evil. However, if viewed in conjunction with the rest of Allah's creation and the reason for their creation, it is not evil. In fact, if we consider the purpose of creation, the world would be incomplete without it.

- ~ Allah's aim in creating man and the rest of the universe is manifestation of His perfection.
- ~ Perfection is dependent on the attributes of clemency and anger. Inability to get angry and punish the disobedient is indicative of weakness. (Do we not criticise governments that are unable to punish murderers, thieves and other criminals? Does every successful government not have a legal and penal system?)
- ~ Manifestation of Allah's attributes of clemency and anger require *asbaab* (causes).
- ~ Hence, Allah ordained actions in which man has a degree of choice.
- ~ Consequently, he is rewarded for his good actions and punished for his bad actions.

### **Allah the Khaaliq, Man the Kaasib**

As previously mentioned, Allah creates man's actions and man earns them. (Allah is the *khaaliq* and man is the *kaasib*.) Understanding the difference between the two would answer all reservations with regards our belief that Allah is the creator of all our actions, good and bad.

We have already discussed the difference between the two. Nevertheless:

- ~ The effect of man's actions could be compared to the colour of a garment. Hence, he is called good or bad in

accordance with his actions just as a garment is described as black or white in accordance with its colour.

- ~ Just as the manufacturer of the garment is not described as blue or red in accordance with its colour, the creator of man's bad actions (i.e. Allah) cannot be described as bad.
- ~ Just as there is a difference between the manufacturer of the garment and the person who wears it, there is a difference between the *khaaliq* (creator) and the *kaasib* (earner) of man's actions.

### Sign of Perfection

Bear in mind that ability to create is a sign of perfection, irrespective of the nature of the creation (irrespective of whether the creation is good or bad). Besides Allah, who else is able to create anything, even if it is bad? Thus, creation of man's sinful actions is a sign of Allah's perfection. Ability to punish man for such actions is a separate sign of His perfection.

### On a Different Note

On a different note, man's actions could be likened to his looks. He is praised or insulted for his looks although he neither created nor chose them. Hence, there should not be any objection if man is rewarded or punished for his actions even if they are preordained by Allah.

### Twofold Relationship with Allah

Lastly, man's relationship with Allah is twofold. It is based on:

1. *Mamlookiyyah* – The fact that man is the property of Allah.
2. *Makhlooqiyyah* – The fact that man is the creation of Allah.

Both aspects demand that Allah can treat man as He pleases. He can control man's actions and still punish him for the same. He is not answerable to anybody.

- ~ Having made Nabi Sulaymaan (A.S) king of the (known) world at that time, Allah told him:

*"This is our bestowal. Therefore, be generous or withhold, you will not be questioned."*

Because he was a king and kings enjoy a type of ownership, Allah told him that he may spend the wealth which Allah gave him freely, without fear of being taken to task. Moulana Badr-e-Aalam (R.A) explains that if this applied to the Nabi Sulaymaan's imperfect ownership of the wealth that Allah had given to him, why should it not apply to Allah's perfect ownership of man?

- ~ Due to the semblance between man's relationship with his son and *khaaliqiyyah* (Allah's relationship with His creation), *qisaas* (the death sentence) is waived from the man who intentionally kills his son. In fact, Nabi *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* said:

*"You and your money belong to your father."*

If this applies to man's resemblance with Allah's *khaaliqiyyah*, why should it not apply to Allah himself? This

too reiterates the fact that Allah can treat man howsoever He desires.<sup>1</sup>

*"He is not questioned for what He does, but they are."*

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<sup>1</sup> All the information in this article was sourced from Moulana Shabbier Ahmed Uthmaani's *Mas-alah-e-Taqdeer* and Moulana Badr-e-Aalam's *Tarjuman-as-Sunnah*.