

Faith in Predestination and Its Philosophy- An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract

Creation of human being as the best creature on earth allows the notion of its free-will in thoughts and actions to use all the other creatures for his own assistance. This self-rule mentions the fact that man can create or manufacture his own destiny and intent by his own hands. The accent on practical aspect of Islamic ideology is a reference to the struggle for best future in this life and the hereafter which is authenticated by the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, the basic sources of Islam. Faith in predestination is also accentuated by those very sources as the fundamental belief of Islam which does not curb the independence of human efforts towards crafting the ultimate goal, though it seems doing this apparently. The conceptions of reward and torment, and the struggle for righteous deeds would become meaningless, if faith in predestination denotes a fixed end of all human beings. Human freedom is so emphasized in Islam, on the other hand, that can-not be restrained anyway. What is the wisdom and philosophy of predestination so therefore? How can it be blended with freedom of choice, struggle for the target, assessment of the deeds, and the achievement of definitive aspiration or the failure thereof? All these notions can better be apprehended deliberating into and keeping them on their specific levels of apprehension that standardizes the authorized ethical system of Islam.

Keywords: Faith; Predestination; Philosophy; Islam

Human being is the best creature on earth. It entails that there should be a best position for human being among all the other creatures of the earth as well as the heavens under the dominion of Allah Almighty (SWT. the God of Muslims), the Omnipotent. It allows the notion that a complete free-will ought to be for all the individuals of the humanity in thoughts and actions to use all the other creatures for its own assistance. The Holy Quran, the basic source of Islamic knowledge, refers to the fact that a man is created free and independent to choose his destiny and live his entire life according to his own will and liberty. Allah (SWT) says in the Holy Quran:

(وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ)

“And say! The truth is from your Lord. Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve.”⁽¹⁾

The emphasis on practical aspect of Islamic ideology is a reference to the struggle for best future in this life and the hereafter which is authenticated by the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, the basic sources of Islam. Faith in predestination is also accentuated by those very sources as the fundamental belief of Islam. It is further made clear that the faith in predestination does not curb the independence of human efforts towards crafting the ultimate goal, though it seems doing this apparently. Predestination, in Islam, relates to a basic conception treated as fundamental belief of Islam articulated with the terms of 'Al-Qadha', 'Al-qadr' or 'taqdeer'. These Arabic terms are used as alternate for predestination the root meaning of which is decree, judgement, assessment, or ultimate destiny. 'Taqdeer' means to think about how to sort things out.⁽²⁾ A word 'al-qadha' is also used with *al-qadr* or as a synonym which means divine will, with the root meaning decision, decree or judgement. 'Qadha' and *qadar* are two interwoven terms/ matters which cannot be separated from one another, because one is foundation and principle while the other is its structure. It refers to believe in a Divine document written and preserved by Allah Almighty (SWT) before the creation of this universe. All the things to be happened in this universe from its creation to the last day of eternity were already written in that preserved tablet called *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the well-guarded tablet). Hence, according to the belief in predestination, all the things are happening in this universe exactly in connection with those predestined conclusions written in *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the well-guarded tablet). As a technical Islamic term *qadar* (Predestination) refers to Allah's eternal knowledge written in that document called *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the well-guarded tablet) about all His creatures that He created in accordance with that knowledge, and about everything that was going to happen for the rest of eternity. It means that all the things to be happened are already decided by the Creator of this universe. The Holy Quran clearly mentions the fact in many places as follows:

(بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ)

“Nay! This is a Glorious Qur'an, (Inscribed) in *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the preserved tablet).”⁽³⁾

It is further declared that the knowledge of Allah (SWT) is all encompassing. He equally knows each and every single thing or incident with out any difference of past, present or future. All His knowledge is preserved in the book called *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the preserved tablet). In Quranic words:

(أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ)

”Know you not that Allah knows all that is in the heaven and on the earth? Verily, it is (all) in the book (*al-lauh al-mahfooz*). Verily, that is easy for Allah.”⁽⁴⁾

The Holy Quran itself regarded as words of Allah (SWT) preserved in the same book (*al-lauh al-mahfooz*). The Holy Quran says:

(وَاللَّهُ فِي أُمِّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَيْنَا لَعَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ)

“And verily, it (this Qur’an) is in the mother of book (*al-lauh al-mahfooz*) with us, indeed exalted, full of wisdom.”⁽⁵⁾

Two more verses are quoted here which reveal the fact that all human actions are already recorded as predestination. All that comes into being or happens anywhere from any person is exactly the same as recorded in the ‘book’.

(وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ)

“...and all things we have recorded with numbers (as a record) in a clear book.”⁽⁶⁾

(وَالطُّورِ وَكِتَابٍ مُسْتَوٍ فِي رَقٍّ مَّنشُورٍ)

“By the *Toor* (Mount) and by the book inscribed, in parchment unrolled.”⁽⁷⁾

According to the Holy Prophet (SAW) all the decisions about human beings had been written as *taqdeer* (predestination) in *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the preserved tablet) fifty thousand years before the creation of this universe. As a tradition reported by *Muslim*, a most authentic book of *Hadith* (the second basic source of Islamic knowledge):

"عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - يَقُولُ « كَتَبَ اللَّهُ مَقَادِيرَ الْخَلَائِقِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِخَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ مِائَةٍ - قَالَ - وَعَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ "

Abdullah bin Amr bin al Aas said: I heard the Messenger of Allah says: “Allah wrote the decrees of His creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and earth, and He said: His throne was above the water.”⁽⁸⁾

It is further reported from the Holy Messenger (SAW) that the very first thing created in this universe was pen so that the decrees and fate of the human being would be written first of all. It is reported by *Tirmidhi* as follows: *Ubaidah ibn as-Saamit* said that The Messenger of Allah said: “The first thing that Allah created was the pen. He (Allah) said, Write! It said, what shall I write? He said: write the decree (*al-qadar* or predestination) of what has happened and what is to happen, for all eternity.”⁽⁹⁾

Predestination is one of the basic principles and components of Islamic faith, as faith in Islam has no credibility without this compulsory component. It is obligatory for each Muslim to believe in *qadar* (predestination). It is to believe thoroughly that a document written by Allah (SWT) fifty thousand years before the creation of universe about everything to be happen until the rest of the eternity based upon His knowledge and decree. Knowledge of Allah (SWT) is all-encompassing. He has written and preserved the predestination. As the Holy Quran says:

(إِنَّا كُلُّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ)

“Verily, We have created all things with *qadar* (predestination/ or preordainment).”⁽¹⁰⁾

His decree and will is perfect and irresistible, so all (good or bad) happens according to His will/ or that written document which is called *al-lauh al-mahfooz* (the preserved tablet). Nothing happens, happened or will happen but in accordance with Allah’s commandments preserved as the decrees of human being. The Holy Quran talks about as follows:

(وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَعْلُومًا)

“...And ever is the command of Allah a destiny decreed.”¹¹

All the actions and matters done or completed here are planned and accomplished earlier as the predestined matters. As stated in the Holy Quran:

(وَلَكِنْ لِيَقْضِيَ اللَّهُ أَمْرًا كَانَ مَفْعُولًا)

“...But (it was) so that Allah might accomplish a matter already destined.”⁽¹²⁾

The faith in predestination also means an absolute precision by Allah (SWT) in all His decreed commandments and assessments preserved in *-lauh al-mahfooz* (the preserved tablet) as well as the happenings of all times world. It is stated in the Holy Quran:

(وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِقَدَرٍ مَحْدُودًا)

“...He has created everything and has measured/ assessed/ determined it with precise measurement/ assessment/ determination.”⁽¹³⁾

It is part of the faith in predestination that there should be firm belief in all attributes of Allah (SWT) and specifically feeling obliged and graced by Him through giving a proportionate and balanced predestination.

(سُبْحَانَ اسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى)

“Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High, Who created and proportioned, and Who destined and (then) guided.”⁽¹⁴⁾

The Holy Prophet (SAW) himself explained that the faith in predestination means to have a firm belief in all good and bad is by Him Almighty. *Umar bin Khattab* described when *Jibreel* (Gabriel) questioned the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) about *eeman* (belief), he said: “It (*eeman*) is to believe in Allah, His angels, His books, His Messengers, and to believe in divine destiny (*qadar*) both the good and the evil thereof.”⁽¹⁵⁾

This faith in predestination creates complications and confusions in human mind. Predestination would mean that all the results of human actions and deeds are prefixed and human efforts cannot be able to alter its destiny from that is already written and preserved. Everything happening or to be happen is pre-decreed, and pre-destined, already written. The conceptions of reward and torment, and the struggle for righteous deeds would become meaningless, if faith in predestination denotes a fixed end of all human beings. The omnipotence of Allah (SWT) also denotes that the man can do nothing

before the will of Him. His will, decree and power is absolute, perfect and irresistible. The issue becomes more confused when human freedom of doing what he wills is also emphasized in Islam. Creation of man with his free-will remains a question. Was man created with free will? Is human being free to do or will? If it is, how can the collision with omnipotence of Allah (SWT) and faith in predestination written by him be removed. No doubt the omnipotence of Allah (SWT) means that He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Almighty, and Absolutely Powerful to do as He wills as revealed in Quran in many places.

(أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا)

“Surely, Allah has the (absolute) power over all things and Allah has covered all the things through His knowledge.”⁽¹⁶⁾

(وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا)

“But you cannot will, unless Allah wills. Indeed Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.”¹⁷

(وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

“And you cannot will unless (it be) that Allah wills....”⁽¹⁸⁾

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْعَلُونَ

“...If your Lord had so willed, they would not have done it...”⁽¹⁹⁾

(لَئِنَّا أَمَرْنَا إِنْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مَّا يَكْفِي سِيقَانًا)

“Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, “Be!” and it is.”²⁰

(إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ)

“You cannot guide those you love; rather Allah guides those He wills”⁽²¹⁾

(مَنْ يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يَهْدِلْهُ وَمَنْ يَشَاءِ يُضِلَّهُ عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)

“Allah sends astray whom He wills and He guides on straight path whom He wills.”⁽²²⁾

This omnipotence of Allah (SWT) and His absolute will does not curb the human freedom which is also accentuated by Islam in its place. Human Free-will would better be understood in accordance with the predestination faith. The Holy Quran asserts about human freedom too undoubtedly as follows:

(وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَمَنْ يَشَاءِ فَلْيُؤْمِرْ وَمَنْ يَشَاءِ فَلْيَنْكُرْ)

“And say! The truth is from your Lord. Then whosoever wills, let him believe, and whosoever wills, let him disbelieve.”⁽²³⁾

(وَهَدَيْنَاهُ الرَّجْدَيْنِ)

“And We have shown him the two ways (of good and evil).”⁽²⁴⁾

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَاثِرًا

“Verily, We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful.”⁽²⁵⁾

(لَنْ يَشَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يُسَوِّغَ)

“To whomsoever among you who wills to walk straight”⁽²⁶⁾

Position of human free will in presence of Allah’s absolute & irresistible Will and power create ambiguity and confusion. Question stays

there how can human free-will work in existence of Allah's absolute & irresistible Will. Wisdom of reward or torment turns out to be vague if notion of human complete freedom does not work. To answer the raised questions and remove the confusions four main aspects of the issue should be kept in mind simultaneously but to be analyzed separately at different levels.

1. Philosophy of Human Test

According to Qur'an, human life is a test. All men and women are being examined during each and every moment of life.

(الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ)

“(That is Allah) who has created death and life so that He may test you which of you is best in deed.” (27)

(إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لِّهَا لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا)

“Verily, we have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them (mankind) as to which of them are best in deeds.” (28)

This impulse of the ‘test’ requires free will of all individuals so that they could make their own struggle to achieve goal of success. So everybody has free-will but free-will is limited and bestowed, not absolute and personal. Limits of free will are different, so the level of test is also different among all individuals.

2. Description of Allah's Attributes

Allah (SWT) is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Almighty, and Absolutely Powerful to do as He wills. This is only a way of description of His attributes and description does not necessarily mean practice of powers. Hence the description and practising the power are two different things. Allah (SWT) has described all his attributes in Quran but he has also revealed that they are not brought into practice in every situation without any discipline or rule. Allah (SWT) Practices His powers according to His unchangeable Law that mentioned in Qur'an:

(فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا)

“You would not found any change in His Law (Sunnah).” 29

3. Nature of Predestination

Actually, the predestination is only the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah almighty that is written in the ‘preserved tablet’. It is due to the perfection of the Knowledge of Allah (SWT) that all happens exactly according to it. His knowledge is so sure, exact and perfect that He knows all the things before their taking place. His Knowledge does not intrude human actions. The Predestination could also be regarded as the pre-estimation as *qadar* also means guess or assessment, but a perfect and exact one. Human guess or assessment can be proved wrong but Allah Almighty's guess is exact and perfect. We may also understand the Predestination as having flexibility or options in its nature. Because it is one of Allah's secrets which no one except

He knows that what is the nature of predestination is, but it reflects from the basic sources of Islamic knowledge that there could be some options or ways out given in the fixed written decrees of the men.

(يَتَخَوُّوا اللَّهَ مَا يُنْشِئُ وَيُخَيِّثُ وَعِنْدَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ)

Qur'an says: "Allah blots out what He wills and confirms (what He wills), and with Him is the Mother of Book." ³⁰

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

(مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يُنْسَطَ لَهُ فِي رِزْقِهِ وَيُنْشَأَ لَهُ فِي أَكْرَمِ فَلْيَسِّرْ رِجْتَهُ)

"Whoever would like his provisions to be increased and his life to be prolonged, let him uphold the ties of kinship." ³¹

It is also assured in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (SAW) that true supplication averts the man from (bad) decree. The conception of two levels of human freedom in doing the things up to one's own will could also resolve the issue. All individuals are free at creational, constitutional or general level to choose their own way of choice based upon creational preordainment. But another level, may be called legal level appears there when one accepts to embrace Islam as a comprehensive legal system based upon Divine legal Commandments. At this level, actually open ways become prohibited by Divine Law and could not be passed through even having the physical ability to go there under the Divine legal commandments. Just like a car driver who stops at the traffic signals even in existence of physical power to cross the signal without any physical resistance. He proves to be responsible for avoiding himself and the others too from any sort of collision in case of legally wrong crossing. Similarly, Islamic legal system upgrades the men as responsible personalities obeying the law of Divine commandments to save them from all kinds of destruction and to achieve the ultimate success in this life and the hereafter. Hence, the issue of faith in predestination can be concluded that it generates responsibility. Free will becomes binding & responsibility due to concept of 'test' and accountability in Islamic legal system. Complete submission to The Lord Almighty is the only resolution of the issue for submissive human nature. Constitutionally free and legally bound mankind, should submit their self to their Lord for achievement of eternal success.

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