

## ALLAH'S OMNIPOTENCE AND FREEDOM OF WILL FOR MAN

Divine Power encompasses all things is a principle taught in the Qurān. In the presence of such a principle a sect of Muslim theologians with predestinarian bent of mind, i.e., the Ash'arites, found it impossible to believe human free will without certain preconditions. Whereas the Mu'tazilites, a sect of Muslim theologians with libertarian bent of mind stressed human free will in an unconditional sense. This disagreement involved these groups in polemics. They not only formulated arguments to justify their point of view, but also devised arguments to falsify their opponents. Antinomy is a form of argument which is devised to prove a certain view as self-inconsistent. It is presented as a challenge to the opponent to show whatever approach the opponent adopts, he is bound to meet such results as are equally unacceptable to him. Abu al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari, the founder of Ash'arite sect, formulated antinomies on different aspect of the problem of human free will, 'Antinomy of Divine Power and Human free will' being one among them.<sup>1</sup> In this article I intend to examine the views of the Ash'arites and the Mut'atazilites while examining this antinomy. Ash'ari says:

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### Notes

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1) The translations of the verses quoted in the article has not been taken from any specific translation of the Qurān. I have consulted several translations but quoted only that which was near to my understanding. I have given my arguments, wherever necessary, for adopting a specific translation.

2) Since the discussions in this article revolve around the Qurānic concept of God, so we have preferred to use the word 'Allah' to stress this fact.

a) “Given Divine Power, it must mean infinite power; and so everything must be within the Power of Allah.”

b) “But given man’s free will, it means that man’s power to choose between two kinds of action is not within the Power of Allah.”<sup>2</sup>

As for the antinomy on the score of Allah’s Power, three solutions were presented by the Muslim theologians of the early & medieval ages, of which the second solution consisted of two versions. This second solution in its two versions, and the third solution are referred to as ‘theories of acquisition’. In this article I shall examine these theories in the context of Qurānic teachings. I would also try to determine the meaning of the term *KASABA* (to acquire), the key term of these theories, and the terms *KHALQ* and ‘*AML*’ as used by theologians in their theories of acquisition to compare it with use of these terms in the Qurān. I have especially examined the

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#### REFERENCES:

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Klein, *The Elucidation of Islam’s Foundation*, Eng. trans. of Abu al Hasan Al-Ash ‘arī’s , *Al-Ibāna ‘An Usul Ad-Diyānah*, New Heaven: American Oriental Society, 1940. Antinomy concerning inexorability of the Appointed Term, Antinomy concerning Provision of Sustenance, Antinomy formulated with reference to the verses of the Quran etc.

<sup>2</sup> Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 663-64. Wolfson states: “This antinomy is phrased by Al-Asha‘rī in the form of a question raised by the Mu‘tazilites as to ‘whether God has power over that over which He has endowed men with power.” Wolfson cites the above with reference to Al-Asha‘rī, *Kitāb Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn wa Ikhtilāf al-Musallīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, Constantinople, 1929-1930, p. 199. I have seen only Urdu translation of this book of al-Ash‘ari but I have preferred to directly examine, in the perspective of Qurānic teachings, the concepts involved in this dilemma, to show that among other things, it were the

translation of the Qurānic word “*ta‘malīn*” by Al-Asharī in his *Kitāb Al-Luma‘* where he presents verse 37:96 as defense to his theory of acquisition. His theory of acquisition is actually based on this verse. With these preliminary remarks let us examine these solutions:<sup>3</sup>

### 1. View of the Most of the M‘utazilites

One of the above mentioned three solutions is attributed to most of the M‘utazilites. They believed that Allah is not to be described as having power over a thing over which he has endowed man with power. For Allah to exercise His Power in cases involving man’s free will is one of the impossibilities which Allah in His Wisdom established in the world.

As is apparent these Mu‘tazilites, try to secure human freedom at the cost of Allah’s Power in their first proposition, which is not correct. According to the Qurānic teachings Allah’s Power encompasses everything except what is a logical impossibility. Their thesis stated in the first proposition does not reconcile with the Qurānic teachings that Allah has Power over all things. However, in their second premise they seem to be right. Had they expounded their views only in the form of the second premise, it should have been sufficient.

### 2. Theories of Acquisition: Dirār and Najjār’s View

Dirār and Najjār, both M‘utazilites, presented a solution of the antinomy which draws upon a distinction commonly made in ordinary speech between the artisan who makes a thing and the purchaser who acquires the thing and thus becomes its owner. They applied that distinction to

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unwarranted formulations of certain key concepts which gave rise to polemics in such theological matters.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 663-719

human actions: “Every human action is created by Allah but is acquired by man, and it is in the sense of man’s being acquirer of the act that he may be called its agent. Accordingly every human act comes from two agents, namely Allah the creator and man the acquirer”.<sup>4</sup>

While Dirär and Najjār are in agreement as to the description of the human act as an acquisition in this new sense of the term, they differ as to the origin and meaning of this acquisition. According to Dirär, Allah endows man from birth with the power to acquire the act which is to be created for him by Allah, so that the power to acquire and the act of acquiring are to be ascribed to man’s own free will. “Man, therefore, is to be called simply ‘an agent in reality’ and the term ‘acquirer’ is to apply also to man in the case of ‘generated effects’.”<sup>5</sup> Whereas according to Najjār’s view, “the power to acquire as well as act of acquiring is created in man by Allah simultaneously with His creation of the act for man, so that both man’s power to acquire and his act of acquiring are created for him by Allah; man, therefore, is to be called simply ‘an agent’ but not ‘an agent in reality’, and the term ‘acquirer’ is not to be applied to man in the case of ‘generated effects’.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 735

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 736.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 736. “The Najjārite are the followers of Husain b. Muhammad al-Najjār, whose views were adopted by most of the Mu‘tazila in the district of al-Rayy....Najjar says that God is the creator of all man’s deeds, good and bad, right and wrong: man on his part acquires these deeds. He further maintains that the created power has a certain effect on these deeds; this he calls acquisition, *kasb*, as Ash‘ari does. He agrees, too, with Ash‘ari that capacity exists with the act. The Dirāriya are the followers of Dirär b. ‘Amr and Hafs al-Fard. .... Both say that man’s deed are in reality created by God and man in reality acquires them. Thus it is possible for an act to be produced by two agents. It

### 3. Use of the Term ‘Creation’ for ‘Acquisition’ in M‘utazilite’s and Use of the Term ‘Power’ for ‘Acquisition’ in Ash‘arites.

Differing with most of the M‘utazilite’s Shahhäm believed that i) Allah may deprive man of the free will with which He has gifted them, and, ii) unlike Dirär and Najjär, he retained the original Libertarian use of the term ‘acquisition’ as meaning ‘the act of man’s free will with which he has been gifted by Allah.’ Thus in contradistinction to the view common to both Dirär and Najjär, Shahham believed “that every act of man may come from either one of two agents, namely, Allah, in case He has deprived man of his freedom, in which case man’s act is ‘by necessity’, or man, in case Allah has not deprived man of his freedom, in which case man’s act is ‘by acquisition’, that is to say, it is a free act of man’s will.”<sup>7</sup> Their fellow M‘utazilites rejected the Dirär-Najjär solution, but Shahham’s pupil al-Jubbai and a group of M‘utazilite’s followed the Shahham’s solution. However, al-Jubbai and probably also his followers, rejected the term “acquisition” as a description of man’s free action, substituting for it the term “creation”. Thus they said that man was the creator of his actions.<sup>8</sup>

The Dirär-Najjär solution, if not accepted by the libertarians, was accepted by the Predestinarians. It seems as if they saw in it an explanation of the libertarian verses of the Qurän. Ash‘ari, quite clearly states that he followed the Najjärite version of ‘acquisition’. However, in his

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is possible, too, for God to change accidents into bodies. Capacity and incapacity also are parts of the body, and therefore a body, which certainly continues to exist for two moments, *zamänain*. (p. 76); A. K. Kazi, & J. G. Flynn (trans.), *Muslim Sects and Divisions* (The Section on Muslim Sects in *Kitäb al-Milal wa ’l-Nihal*) by Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Karim Shahrastäni, London: Kegan Paul International, 1994, p. 75-6.

<sup>7</sup> Wolfson, *Ibid.*, p. 736.

attempt to show that ‘acquisitionism’ is against both compulsionism and libertarianism, Ash‘ari emphasized on the one hand that acquisition is a ‘power’ and on the other hand that it is ‘created’ in man by Allah and that Allah has power to force man to it.<sup>9</sup>

As could be expected, the question arose how acquisition could be called a ‘power’ when it has no influence upon the object of the power. Attempts to answer this question were made by Baqilani, Juwayni, and Ghazali.

i. Bakillani’s answer is a revision of the theory of acquisition as presented by Ash‘ari. Admitting with the acquisitionists that man’s actions are created by God, Bakillani tries to show how acquisition is a power in man and is not without influence upon the actions of man. He distinguishes in every human action between ‘the act itself’ and ‘its mode of operation’. Allah creates the former whereas the later is within the power of man, and it is the later to which the term ‘acquisition’ is to be applied. Bakillani’s version of Acquisition is based on the affirmation of an unintelligible influence upon ‘the mode of operation of an action’. He denies Allah’s direct creativity of human action at ‘the mode of operation of that action’. Bakillani thus introduced into human action an element of freedom. Juwani’s criticism on this view is that it amounts to the

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p.737.

<sup>9</sup> Erich W. Bethmann, *Bridge to Islam*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953, p. 67. Bethmann writes “... Al-Ash‘ari (260-327 A.H.; A.D. 873-935) ...maintained the absolute, eternal, free will of God, including His power to will evil and to do evil. But he allowed man certain powers. This he called *kasb* or *iktisab*, which as a theological term has the meaning of acquisition. That means, if God wills a thing, He creates in man the power to acquire it. The acquiring of the thing willed by God is man’s own act, and thereby his responsibility is established. So taught Al Ash‘ari. That this is no real solution is very apparent. It is fatalism somewhat camouflaged...”

denial of Allah's influence on the mode in a special sense inasmuch as mode is defined as that which is neither existent nor non-existent. He also says that the acceptance of this conception is a turning away from the path of truth and salvation as it is against fundamental religious beliefs.<sup>10</sup>

ii. Juwani criticizes Ash'ari's Concept of Acquisition by saying that the affirmation of a power which has no influence whatsoever is like the denial of power altogether. Criticizing Bakillani's Version of Acquisition he says that 'the affirmation of an unintelligible influence upon a mode' is like the denial of an influence in a 'special sense'. Criticizing compulsionism, the view of the denial of power and capacity on the part of man, he says that it is contrary to both reason and sense-perception. Hence he rejects all. Juwayni himself, tries to solve this problem by using the term 'power' in the sense of 'will'. He tries to show that power in the sense of will does not have to influence its object. He shows this by comparing 'will' to 'knowledge'. He argues that, "just as one may be said to be knowing something without his influencing the existence of that something, so one may also be said to be willing something without influencing the existence of that something."<sup>11</sup> "Now when God creates in man a knowledge of some existent thing, it means that the very creation of the knowledge implies its having that existent thing as its object, so that the knowledge itself has no influence either on the existence of the thing or on its having it as its object. So also, when God creates in man a power to will, to acquire implies its having that created something as its object, so that the power to will itself has no influence, though it is called

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Wolfson, , *The Philosophy of the Kalam*, p. 693-5

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 738.

power.”<sup>12</sup> Thus Juwayni endorses and justifies Ash‘ari’s use of acquisition by construing it according to his own understanding into a moderate kind of interpretation of the traditional belief in predestination.

iii. Ghazali does not discuss this question directly, but his answer for it is contained in two, out of his three discourses in which he deals with ‘acquisition’.<sup>13</sup> In the first of his three discourses on acquisition he, like Juwayni, tries to show how ‘power’ need not have an influence upon its object. “But whereas Juwayni tries to show it by the analogy of ‘man’s power’ (in the sense of

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 694.

<sup>13</sup> Cf., *Ibid.*, p.699.

Reference here is to Ghazali’s *Ihyä*, chapter 1 *Tauba (Repentance)* and chapter 5 *Kitab al-Tauhid wal-Tawakkal*) Ghazali’s view is that man has got freedom of action. He also believes that everything is the creation of God. Ghazali thinks that in his opinion these views are not opposed to each other. Not only ‘will’ but also man’s ‘wishing’ is created for him. When God creates will and makes it firm, He creates power needed for that action. The unification of will and power compulsorily leads to action. The will and power, both, are the creations of God. Then there is a well-arranged plan according to which each of these factors created by God follow the other. This plan does not change. For example, God creates movement of hand before He creates a well-arranged writing. He creates power before He creates the movement of hand. He gives it life and creates firm will before He creates power, and so on. Thus God is agent of actions. Only He is the Creator of everything and there is no master of action except Him. But how does man get freedom of action? Ghazali thinks that when nature is subject to some condition, the condition is created to accept that nature. Then that nature can be acquired from the strength of fate and God-given gift. According to al-Ghazali God creates the conditions and man acquires the action. Al-Haj Maulana Fazul-ul-Karim, *Imam Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, Eng. Trans. of *Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, Book. 4, by Al-Ghazali, Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1971. p. 05-07.

Ghazali also dilates upon the same problem at pages 240-253.



man's will to acquire) to 'man's knowledge' of something, Ghazali tries to show it by the analogy of 'man's power to acquire', to 'Allah's power to create'; for prior to the creation of the world Allah's eternal power to create was a power without an object influenced by it."<sup>14</sup> Ghazali's answer to this question is also contained in the third of his three discourses on acquisition where he explains of how what 'the People of Truth' call acquisition is a combination of 'compulsion' and 'choice'. Explanation brought forth by Ghazali is that acquisition is a 'choice' despite its being also a 'compulsion', because man is abode of 'compulsion' as he is of the 'choice' because the compulsion in the case of acquisition comes from within man himself and not from something external to man.<sup>15</sup>

As we see, the discussion of almost all the theologians belonging to both the sects *i.e.*, the Libertarians as well as the Predestinarians and the Compulsionists revolves around the controversy in the use of the term *KASB*(Acquisition); we have also seen that the later M'utazilites of the group of al-Jubbai substituted this term with the term *KHALQ* (Creation). In order to make a criticism of the dilemma under discussion it is necessary to make an appreciation of the theories of acquisition; and in order to make an appreciation of these theories it is necessary to examine the concepts of *KASB* and *KHALQ* so as to find Qur'anic view in this regard.

# 1. Some Uses of the Derivatives of the Root *KÄF SEEN BÄ* in the *Qur'an*.

## i) *KASABA*

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<sup>14</sup> Wolfson, *ibid.*, p.702.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p.702-11, also cf., p. 738.

Nay, whosoever earns(*kasaba*) evil(*sayyiatuhu*) and is surrounded by his wrong-doings(*khatiatuhu*) .....(02:81)

,.... Each man shall be pledged for what he earns(*kasaba*).....(52:21)

ii)KASABAA

And as to the thieving man or thieving woman, cut off their hands, as a reward for what they have earned(*kasabaa*) ...(05:38)

iii)KASABAT

These were a people, they have passed away, for them what they earned(*kasabat*), and for you what you earn(*kasabat*); and you shall not be questioned as what they did(*yamaloona*). (02:134) (02:141)

In order that Allah may reward every soul as it has earned(*kasabat*); surely Allah is quick to take the account. (14:51)

iv)KASABTUM

These were a people, they have passed away, for them what they earned(*kasabtum*), and for you what you earn(*kasabtum*); and you shall not be questioned as what they did(*yamaloona*). (02:134) (02:141)

,...nothing which they earned(*kasabtum*) is of any avail, for Allah guides not the disbelieving people. (02:64)

v)KASABU

And those who earn(*kasabu*) evil(*sayyiate*) their reward is an equivalent evil...(10:27)

And the evil(*sayyiat*) which they earned(*kasabu*) will become apparent to them, and that which they laughed at would recoil on them.(39:48)

vi) *TAKSIBO*

,...And no soul earns(*taksibo*) anything except for itself, and no bearer shall bear the burden of another... (06:164)

vii) *TAKSIBOONA*

,...,then taste the agony for what you earned(*taksiboona*) (07:39)

viii) *YAKSIB*

And he who commits(*i.e.*, earns) a sin(*ismann*), commits(*i.e.*, earns) it then against himself alone;...(04:111)

And he who earns(*yaksib*) a sin(*ismann*),then falsely accuses an innocent person therewith, he then surely is the bearer of a slander and a clear sin(*ismam mobina*).  
(04:112)

ix) *YAKSIBOHU*

And he who commits(*i.e.*, earns) a sin(*isman*), commits(*i.e.*, earns) it then against himself alone; .....(04:111)

x) *YAKSIBOON*

,...So woe be to them for what their hands have written, and woe be to them for what they earn(*yaksiboon*). (02:79)

xi) *AKTASABA* ,... Each man of them has his share of what he has earned(*aktasaba*) of the sin(*ithm*),... (24:11)

## **Analysis**

### **1. The Derivatives of the Root *KÄf Seen Ba***

(i) The verb *kasb* meaning “to earn, to commit, or to do” has been used in the Qurän specifically with reference to ‘what man does’ and nowhere has it been used with reference to ‘any of Allah’s act or activity’. The verb *kasb* has never been used in the Qurän as a human opposite of the Divine attribute of *Khalq*, nor as a human complimentary to it. The proof for drawing this conclusion is that no where in the Qurän the term *kasb* has been used for Allah; and wherever it has been used in the Qurän, is used in the sense of ‘an accomplished moral act(‘*amal*)’ in it’s noun form or, ‘accomplishing’ of a moral act (*i.e.*, in its verbial form) on the part of human agent.

ii) Nowhere in the Qurän the verb *kasba* or the verb *iktasaba* or any other derivative of the root *käf seen ba* has been used as an equivalent to any form of the verb ‘to acquire’ in the sense of ‘to own something already created by Allah’ or ‘to own something created by Allah simultaneous with man’s doing of a moral act’.

iii) That wherever in the Qurän the verb ‘*kasab*’ or some other derivative of the same root has been used in its verbial form or as a ‘noun’ in connection with human moral act, it is used in the sense of ‘to earn the blessing’ or ‘to earn the wrath’ of Allah as a consequence of a moral act (a righteous act or an evil-doing); or it has been used to refer to ‘the righteousness or the evil’ which man earns as a moral agent, which ultimately refers to the reward or punishment to be met with in the Hereafter.

iv) That the difference in taking the verb *kasb* or some other derivative of the same root to mean a) ‘to earn’ with conscious effort and with free choice (in which sense it has been used in the *Qurān*), and in taking it to mean b) ‘to acquire’ as distinguished from ‘to create’ (in which sense it has been used in the analogy of an artisan who makes a thing and a purchaser who acquires the thing) lies in the fact that taking it in the later un-Qurānic sense renders the moral responsibility of man unreal or doubtful & questionable. It also gives rise to a kind of fatalism. This analogy was an outcome, as we shall see, of a confusion concerning the Will of Allah and the Pleasure of Allah.

## 2. The Derivatives of the Root *Kha Lām Qäf*

That the verb *khalq* as a description of the Divine attribute “to create” has been used in the *Qurān*

- i) mostly with reference to concrete things(*ashyā*) e.g., the creation of the earth, or the creation of the heavens, or to both the earth and heavens, or to the creation of both the earth and the heavens and whatever therein is;( 16:20, 25:03, 52:35)
- ii) It is also used in the *Qurān* with reference to the spatio-temporal physical phenomena like the creation of ‘death’ and the creation of ‘life’. Hence it is used in connection with the creation of all the living beings including human beings and animal beings.
- iii) The verb *khalq* has been used in the *Qurān* both for (a) creation ‘not out of something’(*min ghayri shayin*);52:35 and (b) creation out of something (already created by Allah).15:26, 23:14, 17:61. (It is in this second sense that the use of the word

‘creator’(*khaliq*) for a human being can be deduced from the Qurān. But no moral significance is construed here for even a disbeliever can be a creator in this sense.)

### 3. ‘*Amal* and *Khalq*

i)(a) Nowhere, the word *khalq* (to create) in any of its verbal forms, or in any of its noun & other non-verbal forms *e.g.*, *khāliq* (creator) has been used in the Qurān for Allah in the sense of doing, accomplishing, or bringing about a human act of moral responsibility(‘*amal*) nor participating in it in any sense, nor as the Doer or Accomplisher of such act(‘*amal*).

(b) nor the word *khalq* (to create) in any of its verbal or non-verbal forms has been used for a human agent with reference to bringing about, or accomplishing, or doing a moral act(*i.e.*, ‘*amal*), nor as doer and accomplisher of such act.

ii) The word ‘*amal* (to do or to accomplish a moral act, or an accomplished moral deed) in any of its verbal forms has never been used as synonymous to the word *khalq* (to create) nor in the sense of *takhliq* (something created). It has never been used in any of its verbal, or non-verbal form for Almighty Allah. Through out in the Qurān the word ‘*amal* in its different derivatives has specifically been used to denote man’s act of moral responsibility.

iv) Nowhere in the Qurān, any derivative of the verb *Khalq* (to create) attribute creation of anything man-made, or any human moral act to Allah. The verse 37:96 is the only verse of the Qurān in which the terms *Khalaqakum*(creation) and *Ta‘malūn*(which you utilize) occur together in one verse. Al-Ash‘arī, interprets it to attribute the man-made things to secure

support for his thesis which interpretation is not supported anywhere from the Qurān.<sup>16</sup>

al-Taftāzānī also quotes verse 37:96 but also refers to verse 5:110 which he thinks the Mutazilites can use in their support. al-Taftāzānī interprets it to support Ash‘arīte stand.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. *‘Amal* and other Synonymous Words

Three other words used in the Qurān, in different forms, for doing or bringing about something are *ja‘ala* and *fa‘ila* and *šana‘a*. All of these words have been used for describing the activity of both man & Allah. However whenever these words have been used for man, they are used almost synonymous to the word *‘amal* (i.e., human act of moral responsibility) 28:4; 16:112; 24:30 and whenever they are used to describe some Divine activity, they are used absolutely devoid of the above sense. 20:39; 20:41; 39:6; 40:64.

#### 5. Examination of the Mutazilite Theories of Acquisition & Creation

The above theories, whether Mu‘tazilite or Asharite, consist of the following thesis:

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<sup>16</sup> S.J. McCarthy, *The Theology of Al-Ash‘arī*, (Eng. translation of the *Kitāb Al-Luma‘* and *Risālat Istihsān al-Khawd fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, of Abu’l-Hasan Ali b. Ismā‘il Al-Ash‘arī), Beyrouth: Imprimerie Catholique, 1953. Reference here is to Discussion of *Qadar* at Chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup> E.E. Elder, *A commentary on the Creed of Islam*, Eng. trans. of al-Taftāzānī. New York: Columbia University Press, 1950. p. 82. In verse 5:110 Allah addresses Christ on the Day of Judgment:...and how thou didst shape(*takhluqo*) of clay as it were the likeness of a bird by My permission, and thou didst blow upon it and it was a bird by My permission... It is clear from the context that the verse narrates a miracle. Though a derivative of the root *Khā Lām Qāf* has occurred with reference to a human being i.e., the Christ, the verse uses the formula ‘by My permission’(*bi iznillah*) twice to emphasize that it was not an ordinary act of a human being. As a parallel we can ask: Was the Moses creator of Serpent from his staff? It fully sports our contention that no where in the Qurān, any word of the root *Khā Lām Qāf* has been used for any ordinary man-made thing nor for human act of moral responsibility.

(i) Human actions are ‘acquisition’(*aksab*).

Mu‘tazilites develop this thesis to further include the proposition ‘Man is creator of his actions.’ by construing the term acquisition by the term ‘creation’ to secure complete moral liberty for man.

The above thesis contains two terms ‘acquisition’, and ‘creation’ used synonymous to each other with reference to man. In order to examine the above theses, we must examine the use of these terms from the point of view of how far is it correct and proper. Nowhere in the Qurān these terms have been used as synonymous with reference to man, not only in the context of moral action but also in any context whatsoever. So the Mu‘tazilite construal of the term ‘acquisition’ by the term ‘creation’ to secure complete moral liberty for man was wrong. But the original thesis common both to Mu‘tazilite and Ash‘arite was right.

## **6. Examination of Asharite Theories of Acquisition & Creation**

The Ash‘arites construe the term ‘acquisition’ into the term ‘power’ or ‘capacity’ to develop the above thesis to include ‘Acquisition is a power and that it is created in man by Allah and that Allah has Power to force man to it’ ultimately to say that Allah is the creator of actions and man is the acquirer.

The above theses contain three terms ‘acquisition’, ‘creation’, and ‘power’. In order to examine the above theses, we must examine the use of these terms from the point of view of how far is it correct and proper.

We have seen that the term *kasaba*(to acquire) has been used in the Qurān in the sense of ‘to earn the moral responsibility of the accomplishment of an action as a consequence of one’s



own effort'. Nowhere in the Qurān it has been used in the sense of 'to get something without one's effort at earning it either (a) as a gift; or (b) as a trust.'

Allah is the Creator of the earth, the heavens, and whatever is between them. He gives man life, capabilities needed, and everything at man's disposal, when he is born. Allah also gives him 'freedom of will' but as 'trust' conditional to maturity of intellect & moral consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Man neither 'acquires'(*kasb*) any of these things nor 'creates' them; he just receives them as Grace. Allah creates man and only He bestows these capabilities to man.

At the maturity of moral consciousness, man, by exercising the trust of 'freedom of will to choose' in the utilization of Divine bestowment acquires the responsibility of exercising the trust and of the utilization of capabilities in accordance. But man has no control over the consequences. Allah is Omnipotent over all things, so He has control over everything *i.e.*, the consequences. Consequences flow only from the Will of the Lord. It is only in this sense that evil or good, happens only if willed by Allah. This is known as *Mashiat*. Allah's willing certain consequences is based on His Knowledge but it is not the same as His decreeing. Allah does not decree evil. Allah decrees only to exercise one's free choice in the utilization of Divine bestowment in accordance with Divine Guidance.

Thus using the term '*Kasaba*'(to acquire) for man and the term '*Khalaqa*'(to create) for God, as antonym, (or even as complementary,) to describe the nature of man-God relationship in

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<sup>18</sup> Even the word *kasaba* has not been used in the Qurān for man's assuming the trust which was offered to heavens and earth and hills and they shrank from bearing it. The word '*hamala*'(to bear, to

the accomplishment of moral action is un-Qurānic. Qurān never uses these terms in this sense. The Qurānic terminology relevant in this perspective is *Kasab* (Acquisition) and *Qudrah* (Omnipotence). Use of the term *KASABA* or any of its derivative in the above sense is un-Qurānic and absolutely improper, incorrect and illegitimate. Al-Ash‘arī in the fifth chapter of his *Kitab Al-Luma‘* in an answer to the question: Why do you claim that acquisition(*aksäb*) of creatures are created by God? presents verse no. 37:96 which says that “God has created you (*Khalaqakum*) and what you make/do (*ta‘malün*)?” and verse no. 46:14 which says: “Such are the rightful owners of the Garden, immortal therein, as reward for what they used to do(*ya‘malün*).”<sup>19</sup>

Ash‘arī argues that as in verse 46:14 the word *ya‘malün* refers to human beings acts of moral responsibility(*a‘malohum*) and the reward attaches to their such works, similarly in verse 37:96 the meaning of the word *ta‘malün* should also be taken in line with the above as works or acts of moral responsibility(*a‘malohum*). Thus God is the Creator of human beings as well as their works or acts of moral responsibility. Hence God Creates the moral acts, the human being only acquire these acts. The acquisitions of creatures are created by God.<sup>20</sup>

Verse 37:96 is the only verse of the Qurān in which the terms *Khalaqakum* and *Ta‘malün* has been used together in one verse. The term “*Khalaqakum*” (created you) has only one meaning

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assume) has been used here. (al-Qurān 33:71) The reason is clear. The assuming of the trust was not a moral act; it is in the exercise of trust that man earns responsibility.

<sup>19</sup> McCarthy, *The Theology of Al-Ash‘arī*, p.53.

<sup>20</sup> Ash‘arī quotes some other references from the Qurān to support the same conclusion. But the verse 37:96 provides basis to all these arguments. So it seems wise to examine the interpretation of verse 37:96 or also verse 46:14, if necessary, to determine the validity of his line of argument.

and there is no disagreement about it. The disagreement is on the meaning of the term *ta'maliin* which can have the following meaning: i. you utilize; ii. You make; iii. You do; iv you work. The meaning at ii, iii, & iv above are synonym to moral act, and making an examination of the different derivatives of the root *Käf Seen Bā, Kha Lām Qäf*, and *'Amal* , *ja'ala* , *fa'ila* and *Šana'a* we have seen that no where in the Qurān, any derivative of the verb *Khalq* (to create) attribute creation of anything man-made to Allah nor it attribute any human act pertaining to moral responsibility(*'aml*)to Allah. Al-Ash'ari, takes *ta'maliin* in verse 37:96 to mean “to do”( *'amalohum*) to attribute the creation of moral act to Allah to secure support for his thesis.<sup>21</sup> Most of the exegesis of the Qurān including Marmaduke Pickthall has translated the word *ta'maliin* in this verse as ‘you make’. Richard J. McCarthy, in the translation of Al-Ash'ari's *Kitab Al-Luma'*, on the authority of Bell<sup>22</sup>, translates it as ‘you make’. But McCarthy admits at footnote 3 <sup>23</sup> that the Arabic word “*ta'maliin*” contains the idea of “make” and “do”. But my point is that here in this verse it makes no difference whether you translate “*Waallaho khalaqakum wa ma ta'maliin*”(37:96) as “And Allah has created you and what you make” or as “And Allah has created you and what you do”. This verse occurs in context of carving certain materials into idols for worshipping by the idolaters. (Thus in the verse just before *i.e.*, in 37:95 Hazrat Ibrahim(peace be on him) draws attention of the idolaters: do you worship those that you yourselves carve?) Thus if you take the word “*ta'maliin*” to mean “you do” *i.e.*, act of

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<sup>21</sup> Reference here is to ‘Discussion of *Qadar*’ in al-Ash'ari's *Kitab Al-Luma'*.

<sup>22</sup> Reference here is to English translation of the Qurān by R. Bell. McCarthy has not quoted any further reference of this book.

worshipping idols, or you take it to mean “you make” i.e., idols, it makes no difference as I have shown, nowhere in the Qurān the word “*khalq*” or any of its derivative attributes the creation either of a moral act or of any man-made object to God. Qurān does not support any of these two meanings. In my opinion the word “*ta‘malūn*” in this verse refers to the materials on which the idolaters act to carve them for worshipping. Thus it renders verse 37:96 to mean “And Allah has created you and the materials you utilize (to carve)”.<sup>24</sup>

### Conclusion

1. To use the word *kasb* as opposite to *khalq* in a discourse concerning human acts of moral responsibility is to use it in an un-Qurānic and wrong sense. Dirār & Najjār committed this fallacy.
2. To use the word *khalq*(to create), either for man or for Allah, in a discourse of bringing about or accomplishing or doing an act pertaining to moral responsibility (i.e., ‘*amal*’), is also quite un-Qurānic; hence illegitimate and out of place. Therefore, al-Jubbai’s rejection of the term ‘acquisition’ as a description of man’s free action, substituting for it the term ‘creation’ was wrong. However, Shahham’s distinction of ‘man’s act by necessity’ (in case Allah withdraws moral consciousness from man as in a mad or absorbed person) and ‘man’s act by acquisition’ and his definition of the term “acquisition” is correct. Ash‘ari’s acceptance of Najjārite version of

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<sup>23</sup> al-Ash‘ari, *ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> I have been inspired by *Tafsir-e-Fazli*, an Urdu exegesis of the Qurān to formulate this opinion. Hazrat Fazal Shah & Muhammad Ashraf Fazli, *Tafsir-e-Fazli*, vols. 7, Lahore Pakistan: Fazli Foundation, 6 (1997): 36.

‘acquisition’ indulged Ash‘ari, and for that matter Baqillani, and others in un-Qurānic comparison of ‘*khalq*’ and ‘*kasb*’ in a discourse of moral act.

3. The Qurānic terminology relevant in this perspective is *Kasab* (Acquisition) and *Qudrah* (Omnipotence). Man acquires the evil or the righteousness of an act by exercising his freedom of choice in favor of any one of the two alternatives and then utilizing the divine bestowment at his disposal. What consequences to allow to occur, is Allah’s prerogative as Omnipotent over all things.

4. Since the antinomy is formulated on the concept of Divine Power and man’s free will, in order to finally dissolve or resolve the antinomy we need to determine the concept of Allah’s Power as taught in the Qurān. But let us analyze the dilemma first. It says:

a) Given Divine Power, it must mean infinite power; and so everything must be within the Power of Allah. b) But given man’s free will, it means that man’s power to choose between two kinds of action is not within the Power of Allah.

If Allah’s infinite Power means that everything must be within the Power of Allah, it should be admitted that it must be within the Power of Allah that He might create such a creature whom He could give freedom of will for his limited span of life such that even Allah does not, at all times, pre-ordain which one of the two alternative kind of moral actions this creature will choose. Does it not accord with the concept of Allah’s Power as defined in the first part of the dilemma? It certainly does. Let us now define the concept of ‘freedom of will’ to examine the second part of the dilemma. ‘Freedom of Will’ on the part of Allah means that He has Power to choose to do or bring about what He in His Absolute Wisdom wills, including to create a creature

whom He could give a real freedom of will in that creature's limited sphere. Does this concept of Freedom of Will contradict with the concept of Allah's Power as described in the Qur'an? Not at all.<sup>25</sup> If Allah's Freedom of Will does not contradict with the concept of Allah's Power then how can it contradict with man's such power if by exercising His Free Will Allah chose to create such a creature whom He granted freedom of will. The dilemma is based on a false concept of the relation of Allah's Power, Allah's Freedom of Will, and man's freedom of will as granted by Allah in His Absolute Wisdom.

5        Qur'anic concept of 'Allah's Power' ( Allah possesses Power over all things: 46:33; 85:40; 2:20; 2:106; 2:109; 2:148; 2:259; 3:26; 3:29) and Qur'anic concept of Allah's Will(*Mashiat*) nowhere contradict human freedom, for Allah has so created man that the responsibility of a moral act(*'amal*) lies with man for it is man who by exercising his free will chooses between alternative kinds of moral actions and employs divine bestowment in its favor. Hence it is he who earns(*Kasb*) the moral act(*'amal*). The part of the verse 46:33 that *Allah possesses Power over all things* and part of the verse 5:17 that *Allah is the Sovereign of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them. He creates what He will(Yash'ä)*. And *Allah is Able to do all things* in a moral discourse mean that 'all the consequences flow from the Will of Allah(*i.e., Mashiat*)', man does not possess the power over consequences. Freedom of will and utilization of divine bestowment on the part of man is no guaranty that he will necessarily be able to bring about the desired consequences. (b) Since Allah is the Knower, the Seer, the Aware of

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<sup>25</sup> Cf., al-Qur'an .... *verily Allah decrees what He wills*. 5:1; 22:14;... *Surely your Lord is the Doer of what He will*. 11:107; ... *And Allah wills no injustice for His slaves*. 40:31;

everything and the Wise, which consequences are to be permitted depend upon His Knowledge. Hence Allah's Will (*Mashiyat*) is based on His being Knower, Seer, Aware, and Wise.<sup>26</sup> This is why the attempt to perform an action on the part of man, is a "return of that affair to Allah": *..And to Allah are all affairs returned. 22:76.* (c) All human actions are related to a specific present. Allah's '*Mashiyat*' (i.e., Will of the Lord) is also related to that present. 'Allah's *Mashiyat*' is not at all times pre-determined, it is not pre-known, it is not pre-declared and pre-defined.

6. In order to clearly understand the concept of '*Mashiyat*' let us differentiate it from the concept of Allah's '*Radha*' (Pleasure) as stated in the Qur'an:

*,... and I am pleased to choose(radhito) for you al-Islam as Din...(5:3)*

*,...Indeed, there has come to you from Allah, a Light and a clear Book; Whereby Allah guides such as follow His pleasure(ridhwanahoo) into the ways of peace, and brings them out of darkness into light by His Will, and guides them to the right path.(5:15-16)*

"A Light and a clear Book" i.e., *al-Islam* contains the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure (*Rada*). Hence Allah's Pleasure (*Rada*) is pre-known, it is pre-determined, pre-defined and well-defined whereas the '*Mashiyat*' (Allah's Power over consequences) is neither pre-known, nor pre-defined and nor necessarily pre-determined. One knows it only when it occurs. One who performs an act either follows the knowledge of Allah's Pleasure (which he happens to possess at that point of time) or follows it not by preferring his own likes. And one is free to perform in accordance to what he has chosen. This is why one is responsible for the exercise of his choice in favor of a specific act and for the utilization of Allah's bestowment in this respect. However, he

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<sup>26</sup> Cf., al-Qur'an 6:101; 9:28; 24:21; 42:12; 42:50.

does not possess power over the consequences. It is Allah who possesses Power over the consequences. Hence the consequences are always according to Allah's Will (*Mashiyat*). In order to avoid any confusion and for more clarity let us examine the concepts presented in the above paras in the form of propositions.

i. Allah has Power over all things.

Nothing happens in the world but by the Will (approval) of the Lord.

All the consequences flow from the Will of the Lord.

Therefore, no consequences flow from the will of man.

ii. Allah has Power over all things.

Man has power over certain things.

Allah's power over all things is a power to create them, to determine their function, to modify their function, or to annihilate them.

Man's power over certain things is to utilize certain things according to the nature of those things.

Allah's Power over all things is absolute.

Man's power over certain things is a trust.

iii. Everything at man's disposal is a Divine Bestowment.

Allah has determined the right course in the utilization of Divine Bestowment.

Allah decrees man to choose the right course.



To choose the right course or to choose what is not the right course in the utilization of divine bestowment is to perform a moral action.

Man is responsible for the action man performs.

There is freedom. Man is not determined.