

IQBAL AND TAQDIR by: Dr. Mansoor Alam

Part I

Allama Iqbal has written so much about the concept of *taqdir* that it may require a complete book to fully explain and justify his views on this difficult issue. But in a nutshell he says:

"The world of plants and animals is subject to *taqdir*. A Momin is subject to nothing except the orders of Allah (SW) (i.e., Quran)."

On the other hand, seeing the condition of the present Muslims, he said:

"The actions of Muslims these days is predicated on *taqdir*. (This, despite the fact that) the *taqdir* of Allah (SW) was always the driving force behind the will of their ancestors."

"Muslims these days use the excuse of 'taqdir' in order to justify their inaction and irresponsibility towards Islam."

(To some there may seem to be a contradiction in this view of *taqdir* given by Iqbal. But, according to Iqbal this contradiction arises due to the wrong concept of *taqdir* which the present Muslims in general have come to accept, due mainly to the Magian influence on Islam)

One very important point to note is that Iqbal talks here about Allah's (SW) *taqdir* and not man's *taqdir*. Thus, according to him there is no man's *taqdir*. At first, this may sound strange because Muslims have, by and large, always thought in terms of man's *taqdir* whenever this topic is discussed. We will shortly see that the concept of *taqdir* presented by Quran and eloquently explained by Iqbal removes this (apparent) contradiction.

First of all, let us find the root meaning of the arabic word (*taqdir*) which was prevalent at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. Then we will see how the Magian influence slowly changed this meaning to its now "acquired" meaning which in English is translated as destiny, fate, or predestination etc.

The root meaning of the word "taqdir" comes from the root q-d-r (). The meaning of this root is measure or standard. means "I measured the thing." means "I made clothes according to his measurements." Therefore, the root meaning of "taqdir" is for something to fit according to some measure or standard. And "Miqdarun" () means model, pattern or standard according to which something is made. In order to make something fit a pattern or standard, one has to have complete control over that thing. Therefore, means that I have power to make that thing according to a standard.

Quran says:

(33:38)

"Allah's command (directive) took a definitive pattern (model)."

Thus, in the light of this Quranic verse, it is now easy to understand what Iqbal means when he says:

"Plants and animals are subject to taqdir." This implies that all the objects in the universe are working according to a set pattern. This is because Allah (SW) has decreed a pattern (model) for everything:

(65:3)

"Allah (SW) has made a standard for everything."

This "standard" is what we call "law of nature" in modern scientific terminology. Isn't it amazing to note that this was said more than 1400 years ago when the world did not know anything about science. [By the way, this is one way to realize (and provide proof) that the Quran is THE Word of God]

According to the Quran, there is a *world of Amr* (God's world of command, planning and direction) and there is a *world of khalq* (God's created world, i.e., the physical universe). The world of Amr completely and exclusively belongs to Allah (SW) and no one can have any share in it. This is the world of (kun-fayakoon) in the words of Quran - Allah (SW) says "be" and it "becomes." This world of Amr is beyond human comprehension. No one can understand how it operates. For example, it is beyond human beings to know how the universe came into existence from nothing. But after its creation, it enters the world of Khalq and follows definitive patterns (i.e., laws) which Allah (SW) prescribed for it. It is possible for human beings to discover and understand these laws. As a further illustration, we can say that Allah's exclusive power created the law of gravity. We cannot understand how this law was created by Allah or what it was before its creation. It is beyond the human mind to know anything about it before it was created. But after its creation, we can understand it and make use of it. Thus it becomes possible for us to design airplanes and fly them using this law - we can have complete trust in the law of gravity. The same thing applies to all the other physical laws. When Quran says:

(15:21)

or, (15:4)

it means that these are the laws whose knowledge can be obtained.

It is also worthwhile to note that according to the Quran, we can talk about Allah's (SW) taqdir (laws) and not human's *taqdir* because Allah (SW) is The Only One who has created these laws (of nature) and has the exclusive control over them. No one can create even a single law of nature. As a matter of fact, everything is subject to Allah's (SW) *taqdir* (law) including human beings.

Now let us see how Iqbal expounds and beautifully illustrates this concept of *taqdir* as given by Quran.

"The subtle secret of this concept (of taqdir) is hidden in one word. That is, if you change then the taqdir changes accordingly."

"If you become (like) dust, then even a mild wind will blow you and scatter you and will carry you wherever it wishes. If you become (like) a stone (i.e. develop the characteristics of a stone in yourself) then you will break any glass which comes your way."

"If you become (like) dew then your destiny will be an abyss and lowness (and even a mild ray of sunshine will wipe you out of existence). If you become (like) an ocean then your destiny will acquire depth and permanence."

Therefore, if someone has fallen into an abyss, then he/she should not just cry and blame his/her taqdir. One should not say that God has written this in one's fate and that one cannot do anything about it. Iqbal (and indeed Quran) says that this attitude is wrong.

"Whatever condition you are in now, you are subject to (Allah's) taqdir accordingly. If you want that some other taqdir (of Allah) be applicable to you, then change yourself and another taqdir (of Allah) will apply to you. God has an infinite number of taqdir (laws)."

What is this change which Iqbal talks about here? He talks about a change in mental attitude. And there can be no change in mental attitude unless there is a change in the psyche of an individual. Therefore, (psychological) change in the self of an individual is absolutely essential if change in the external condition is desired. Also, a people's condition cannot change unless individuals change. No amount of extrinsic law making can change a society unless there is a psychological change in the individuals composing that society. This is the law of Allah (SW) (on a higher plane) - just like the law of gravity.

Allah (SW) says in the Quran:

(13:11)

"It is a fact that Allah (SW) does not change the condition of a people unless and until the individuals (composing that society) change whatever is inside of them (i.e. their psychology)."

Thus, the human plane cannot take off and reach greater heights if we do not follow this law (verse) just as the physical plane cannot take off and fly if the law of gravity is not followed. This is the taqdir of Allah (SW) and no one can change it. Momins (believers) are those who believe in it, have conviction for it and act accordingly. This is what Iqbal means when he says:

"A Momin only follows the law of Allah."

Since Allah (SW) does not force anyone to believe in his laws or not to believe, the initiative has to come from human beings. To have this choice, Allah (SW) has endowed us with Free Will.

This is the essential hallmark of being human and it is the distinguishing feature between animals and humans.

The entire universe is operating under the laws created by Allah (SW) which we call laws of nature. Human beings are responsible for their own actions if performed by their own free will. One cannot escape the consequences of one's own actions. This is what Iqbal calls "Mukafat-e-A'ml."

But once a person has exercised his/her free will then he/she has to face the consequences of that choice. In the physical world we see this everyday. If I burn my finger I face the consequence and I cannot transfer my pain to somebody else. Whatever we sow, that is what we reap, be it in the field of agriculture, health, education, or business. Iqbal says:

"Wheat produces wheat and barley produces barley (i.e. if we sow barley, we cannot reap wheat). Never be unmindful of 'Mukafat-e-A'ml' i.e. law of action and its corresponding consequences. (Allah (SW) has the authority that He can change into wheat if one sowed barley, but He never does; this is the law of Allah (SW). He never changes His laws for anyone)."

Allah (SW) says in the Quran:

"Allah does not change His laws either in theory or practice (for anyone)."

The same law of "Mukafat-e-A'ml" applies in the human world as well. All our actions produce their desirable or undesirable consequences depending upon the action performed. One's bad action (i.e. any action which is against Quran) can never produce good results and one's good action (i.e. any action according to Quran) can never produce bad results. Human beings only get what they work for.

Also, one can not transfer the consequences and responsibilities of one's own action to someone else.

Iqbal says (in his only English book, Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam):

"Thus there is nothing static my inner life; all is a constant mobility, an unceasing flux of states, a perpetual flow in which there is no halt or resting place." (page 38, ed., published jointly by the Institute of Islamic Culture and Iqbal Academy of Pakistan, 1989)

He continues:

"Pure time, then, as revealed by a deeper analysis of our conscious experience, is not a string of separate, reversible instants; it is an organic whole in which the past is not left behind, but is moving along with, and operating in, the present. And the future is given to it not as lying before, yet to be traversed; it is given only in the sense that it is present in its nature as an open possibility. It is time regarded as an organic whole that the Quran describes as Taqdir or the destiny - a word which has been so misunderstood both in and outside of Islam. . . The destiny of

a thing then is not an unrelenting fate working from without like a task master; it is the inward reach of a thing, its realizable possibilities which lie within the depths of its nature."

In other words, Iqbal says:

"Write your destiny with your own pen. Allah has given you a clean forehead."

How this concept of *taqdir* providing a dynamic and lively outlook on life was transformed into a lifeless and static concept of predetermination is a very sad story indeed. The concept of predetermination and its insertion as the sixth component of Islamic faith (while the Quran requires only five) has damaged the muslim psyche, possibly beyond repair. Muslim kings and dictators have used it to establish their absolute authority in order to maintain their iron grip over the minds of the muslim masses. Muslim institutions of priesthood have constantly used it to maintain their psychological grip over the hearts of Muslims. Muslim capitalists have used their capital to provide the sustenance and to champion the cause of muslim priesthood. This three pronged attack on the minds, hearts, and the stomachs of the muslim masses leaves them virtually helpless prey to these resurrected *Pharos, Hamans and Qaroons*. According to these so called Islamic scholars, it is predetermined who will get what, when and where. Therefore, if a rich person's dogs and cats enjoy gourmet food and a poor person's children die of hunger, it's okay, because everything is predetermined and that is what is written in their fate. Some would argue that *Zakat* would take care of it if every muslim practices this pillar of Islam. But if someone accepts a principle (such as predetermination), he/she has to accept it as such. A principle guides people and not the other way around. The very fact that I am endowed with Free Will (which I exercise every day to make a choice) is sufficient to disprove the principle of predetermination.

We will venture to discover how *taqdir* happened to acquire its present meaning of *predetermination* or *fate* in part II of this article. Suffice it to mention for now, this idea of predetermination is thoroughly Magian in its origin and has penetrated almost every religion on earth including Judaism, Christianity and (unfortunately for Muslims) Islam.

Part II

The Quranic verses which were presented before clearly state that:

- i. The universe works precisely according to the laws decreed by Allah
- ii. Human beings are endowed with Free Will and, therefore, are responsible for their own actions. Every time I am confronted with a choice, I exercise my free will. But once I have made my choice, the result is no longer in my hands. The result is governed by the laws of Allah which Iqbal calls the "law of Mukafat-e-A'mal." The operation of this law is immutable and does not change for anyone. Whatever I sow, that is what I am going to reap. This is the fundamental principle of life - according to the Quran and Iqbal.

Keeping these facts in mind, one is perplexed at the current situation when one hears sermons such as the following:

Whatever is to happen in one's life is already written before birth. No matter what, one can not change this writing in one's taqdir. Allah gives wealth or poverty to whomsoever He wills. He gives dignity or indignity to whomsoever He wills. If He wills, He can turn a beggar into a king and a king into a beggar. One should simply accept the condition one is in and should not complain.

These types of sermons are constantly heard from every pulpit. They are presented as universal truths and fundamental principles of Islam. No one is supposed to challenge this belief in the idea of predetermination or "taqdir." One is supposed to accept this as (blind) faith.

Quran, on the other hand, emphasizes action. Allama Iqbal in his work Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam starts the preface with the very first sentence: "The Quran is a book which emphasizes 'deed' rather than 'idea.' "

How right he is. An idea must lead to action. An idea without an action results in mysticism which produces its own virtual universe which has nothing to do with the real universe or with real people and facing the real problems of real life. Iqbal says:

"If you are not able to handle the problems of the world, it is useless to be absorbed in the expectations about heaven."

Now, one wonders how this idea of predetermination so alien to Islam became an integral part of Islamic faith and immobilized an essentially mobile people. The same Quran, which invigorated and energized the Prophet's companions and their followers (may Allah be pleased with them) into perpetual motion and constant struggle, is with us but not producing the same fruits as it did fourteen centuries ago.

"Although there is no difference between words and meaning, the Azan of a Mulla is quite different than the Azan of a Mujahid."

It is worthwhile to investigate how this concept of predetermination became the sixth component of Islamic faith. It is also instructive to find out when it happened and why.

Let us begin our journey.

At the time when the Quran was being revealed, there were people who believed in predetermination. The Quran says:

(6:149)

"Mushriks will say that if Allah wished neither we nor our ancestors would have done shirk and neither would we have declared anything haraam. . ."

Therefore, according to this verse the people who were mushriks at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) used to say that if we are mushriks, that is because Allah has written it in our fate. And if we have declared something forbidden (haraam) it is because Allah has preordained everything. Who are we to go against what God has already preordained or predetermined? The Quran addresses such people as

(6:149)

i.e., these people are lying and practicing falsehood.

In surah Yasin (36) Allah says:

(36:47)

"When they are told to spend (to feed the hungry) what Allah has provided them with, the kafirs say to the momins, 'Shall we then feed those whom if Allah has so willed, He would have fed?' How openly deviated these people are."

It is clear from these verses that there were people at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) who believed in predetermination. Quran says that these people were mushriks and kafirs and Allah refutes their belief in predetermination or preordination. As long as the Quran was the foundation and source of Islam, the concept of predetermination would not find any support among the Muslims. How could Muslims tolerate an idea which the Quran calls kufr and shirk? But when the Quran lost its place from being the central authority for enforcing the unity of and regulating the lives of Muslims to a mere peripheral position in their lives, the door was opened for non-Quranic concepts and beliefs to enter Islam - the earliest among them being the concept of predetermination.

At the advent of Islam, the Arabian peninsula was surrounded by the two great empires - superpowers of those days - on the west by the Roman empire and on the east by the Persian empire. The Arabs, mostly bedouins, were nomads. They were divided into various tribes. The Romans and the Persians did not think much of them. They were no threat to their empires. These bedouin Arabs were mostly engaged in tribal warfare amongst themselves. They were ignorant and illiterate. This was the period which historically is called the period of Jahiliya.

Now, after the advent of Islam, within a very short span of time, these bedouin Arabs defeated both these empires and became their ruler. People talk about the miracles of the Prophet (PBUH). This is the greatest miracle which the world has ever seen of this magnitude. How could it be explained otherwise - that a group of mostly illiterate and bedouin Arabs (may Allah be pleased with all of them) could accomplish this miraculous feat in such a short time [it is as if, let us say, a country like Ethiopia now will defeat both Europe and America and become their ruler in a span of thirty to forty years. Sounds unbelievable? It must have sounded unbelievable to the Romans and the Persians of the time regarding the Arabs' conquest of their empires].

People of Persia accepted Islam en masse after the fall of the Persian empire but their leaders (both political and military) felt humiliated and shocked. They could not forget the emotional

and psychological humiliation they had suffered by being defeated by a people with far less military power than their own. A sense of revenge was smoldering in their hearts - their military power was shattered and they had become a ruled people rather than the ruler. The Persians never liked the Arabs anyway but their defeat on the battlefield at the hands of the Arabs was like putting salt on their wounded pride. They were bent on finding out the root cause of the Arab's newly found strength. It didn't take them long to figure out that it must be the Quran which has completely transformed their lives. And the power of these Arabs must be due to the transformation which had taken place in their ideology of life (Iman) because of the Quranic message.

When the governor of Persia, Harmuzan, was brought to Medina (after the arrest), Caliph Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) asked him the reason for their defeat. Harmuzan replied that before, when Arabs and Persians used to fight, it was no problem to defeat the Arabs; but now the Persians cannot fight both the Arabs *and* their *God*.

Jews and Christians had suffered similar fate at the hands of the Arabs. Jews were driven out of Arabia and the (Christian) Romans had to surrender Jerusalem to the Arabs.

We see, therefore, that the Jews, Christians, and the Zoroastrian Persians all had their own axes to grind against these (in their eyes) lowly Arabs. Thus began the greatest conspiracy in the history of mankind, in terms of its universal impact. Jews and Christian (religious as well as temporal) leaders were already fuming inside their hearts and minds because of the humiliation they had suffered at the hands of the Arabs, and now the Persian intellectuals joined their rank. They combined their forces together (in conspiracy) against Islam which Iqbal calls the conspiracy of A'jm. Iqbal uses the term "A'jm" to describe this combined force and the term "A'jmi Islam" to mean the (corrupted) form of Islam due to the infiltration of unQuranic concepts and ideologies from other religions (such as Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism, etc.) into Islam [Iqbal uses the term "A'rabi Islam" to represent the pure and the pristine, (i.e., uncorrupted) Islam with its ideas and ideologies coming solely from the Quran]. The first of the concepts in this long chain of non-Quranic concepts which entered Islam is the concept of predetermination.

There used to be a group of intellectuals and political experts in Persia who were very close advisors of the king. They were offered golden bangles as a sign of the status they used to enjoy in the inner circles of the government. They were called "Osawera"

(). After the fall of the Persian empire, the general population accepted Islam (as mentioned before) but the members of "Osawera," although outwardly professing Islam, never really had accepted their defeat at the hands of the Arabs. Since they had figured out that the strength of these Arabs now lies in their new faith, they tried to corrupt the very essence of the Arabs' strengths, i.e., the pure message of Quran.

History tells us that the first person to introduce the idea of predestination in Islam was Maabad bin Khalid Jhanni who learned it from Abu Yunus, a member of Osawera. Ghilan Damishki transmitted this idea further after learning it from Maabad. According to this idea, the destiny of human beings is considered to be predetermined and the followers of this idea were known as Jabriya.

This idea was also the cornerstone of Christianity. The idea that every child is born a sinner and no action of his can erase the stain of the original sin is pure Jabr (force). The dualism of good and evil was also present among the Jews. This idea may have come into the Jews from the Zoroastrian influence during the period of their captivity in Babylon which was under the control of the Persians. History also tells us that during the early period of the Abbasid Dynasty, Jaham bin Safwan (who was originally from Khurasan) propagated this idea of predetermination (or Jabr) with so much fanfare that the followers of this idea became known as Jahamiya. There is confusion in history as to who was finally responsible for this idea and what were the names of the groups (sometimes they were called Jabriya, and sometimes Qadriya). Whosoever might have been the originator of this idea (Maabad or Jaham) and whatever source it may have come from (Zoroastrianism, Judaism, or Christianity), one thing is absolutely certain; that this idea of predetermination is against the Quran and it came to Islam from non-Islamic sources.

This idea of preordination perfectly suited the muslim kings and dictators - so they made sure it became one of the fundamental components of Islamic faith. Once it was inserted as the sixth component of Iman (although the Quran only mentions five-2:177), no one could question these rulers and they were accountable to no one. This is because their oppression was guised as taqdir, part of religion, and unquestionable. This concept of predetermination gave them a free reign and absolute authority to exploit the muslim masses as much as they could - all in the name of religion. Since the muslim masses were (and still are) very religious, they accepted (and most still accept) every fatwa given by the religious scholars at the behest of their Royal highnesses. Just as the Pharaoh could not have ruled without the support of Haman and Qaroon, muslim kings could not rule without them either. So they invented their own versions of Hamans and Qaroons to entrench their own absolute authority over the muslim masses. People who challenged them were ruthlessly crushed by declaring them "Murtad" () [This is another topic and requires separate discussion. Suffice it to say that a lot of muslim blood has been spilled using this concept of Murtad, again, an un-Quranic concept]. These kings were even called (shadow of god on earth).

The three institutions symbolized by the Pharaohs (dictators), the Hamans (religious priesthood), and the Qaroons (capitalists) operate within their own spheres but always cooperate with each other because they know that they cannot survive alone. Royal highnesses took control of the political arena but they needed the blessings of the religious priesthood for their survival. The capital to sustain these two forces was provided by the capitalists. The muslim masses accepted (or were forced to accept) their fate according to their belief in predetermination.

Thus became a concept totally alien to Islam one of the cornerstones of Islamic faith.

And in the words of Iqbal:

"What to say of earth, even the sky (heaven) is crying on your crooked vision (thinking). It is unbelievable that you have crucified the verses of Quran (with unQuranic concepts)."