

Problem of Al-Qadr And Human Acts (Af'al Al-'Ibad) According to Al-Ash'ari and it's Relation with Sunnatullah

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Abstract

The problem of al-qadr was once discussed by the scholars of kalam as early as the 80th century Hijrah again, where the Qadariyyah and Mu'tazilah argued that Allah s.w.t were not associated with the human acts, while the Jabariyyah was the opposite. However, both extremes of this opinion have been rejected by the scholar of the Ahli Sunnah Waljamaah names Al-Ash'ari. But lately, some of the Islamic scholars have begun to re-issue the problem that Al-Ash'ari has solved by claiming that he supports Jabariyyah's opinion in the matter of al-qadr and the theory of human acts. This study focuses on the issue of al-qadr and the theory of human acts according to al-Ash'ari. This study also attempts to resolve the people's understanding of the concept of sunnatullah related to the al-qadr problem which causes al-Ash'ari to be accused of being Jabariyyah. This study uses qualitative methods that include content analysis, which analyzed the data from many sources such as manuscripts, books, journals, and comparative analysis, which compare the al-Qadr thought among scholars. The findings of the study found that in al-qadr and human acts, al-Ash'ari appeared in the middle of the two Qadariyyah and Jabariyyah ideas.

Keyword: al-Qadr, Human Act, Sunnatullah, Cause and Effect, Human Effort

Introduction

From the historical point of view, the problem of the al-Qadr according to al-Baghdadi (N.d.), around 90H the debate about al-Qadr and al-Istita'ah from the pioneer of Qadariyyah like

Ma'bad al-Juhni and Ghaylan al-Dimashq and pioneers of Jabariyyah like Ja'ad bin Dirham arose. According to al-Nashshar (1977), the first-class group that emerged at this time was the Qadariyyah. These groups arose in response to the opinions of Islamic leaders at that time who often blamed Allah for their acts of malicious deeds such as murder and confiscation of property. They say that what they are doing is due to God's fate.

The beginning of the rise of the Qadariyyah was pioneered by Ma'bad al-Juhni (Musa, 1982). He argues that the evil deeds of these leaders are not the destiny of God who determines and does it, but the man himself (Al-Nashshar, 1977). Good deeds are from Allah s.w.t while bad deeds are from man alone. This Ma'bad opinion was continued by Ghaylan al-Dimashq until they both rebelled against the Umayyad leadership at that time until they were killed (Watt, 1973).

The Jabariyyah also rose in response to the opinion of Qadariyyah. From its historical point of view by Jalal Muhammad Musa (1982), founded by Ja'ad bin dirham who had once been the teacher of the last Umayyad Caliphate, Marwan bin Muhammad. After Ja'ad was killed, his opinion was continued by Jahm bin Safwan, also known as the Jahmiyyah tribal figure. The Jabariyyah is also synonymous with the name Jahmiyyah as it was born of Jahm bin Safwan.

Jabariyyah got its name because it was linked to the word of *Jabr* which denied the human act (al-Shahrastani, 1968,). Jabariyyah argues that man has no power over anything, and it can not be said that man is having power. This is because the man is forced into action and man does not have the power and will of him. Who made the deeds of man is God alone, while human deeds are only *majaz* to God's actions. (al-Shahrastani, 1968; al-Ash'ari, 1950).

Therefore, based on the above opinion, the Qadariyyah are those who put the full force of human power, will and deed either good or evil on humanity and not subjected to the power, will and deeds of Allah. While the Jabariyyah's think otherwise that humans have no power, will and deeds, and all that man does is depend on Allah, and man has no power, will and deeds and they are forced (*majbur*) in his deeds.

The opinions of the Qadariyyah and Jabariyyah have, in fact, been long resisted by the scholars as early as the Salaf era. Imam Abu Hanifah also talked much about the problem of al-Qadr in his *wasiyyah's* work. Imam Abu Hanifah was a scholar of *Ahl al-Ra'y* who lived during the emergence of bid'ah proposed by Ja'ad bin Dirham and Jahm bin Safwan of around 80 AH to 150 AH. He firmly stated his position on the matter of al-Qadr (Abu Hanifah, 2009):

We admit that the practice is (divided) into three, obligatory (*fardu*), grace and immorality. Obligatory is based on God's command and His will, His love, His rejoicing, *qada'* and His *qadar*, His laws, His knowledge, His *tawfiq* and His provisions (which written) in Luh Mahfuz. (Practice) of good is not because of the command of Allah, but (the practice is) by His will, His love, His redemption, His *qada'* and *qadar*, His creation, His law, His knowledge, His *tawfiq* and His writing (written) in Luh Mahfuz. (Practice) Evil is not because of the command of Allah, but (the practice is) by His will, not by His love, (the practice occurs) with His *qada's*, not by His pleasure, (the practice occurs) on His fate, not with his *tawfiq*,

(the practice is) with His disappointment and (the practice is) with His knowledge and His writings (written in) Luh Mahfuz.

The problem of al-Qadr According to Al-Ash'ari

In the matter of al-Qadr, Imam al-Ash'ari argued that Allah created every human act whether it was a good deed or a bad deed, a deed of faith (*iman*) or deeds of disbelief (*kufur*). He rejected the opinion that human created their own deeds by denying God's power over such acts. al-Ash'ari also denied that this human being was forced to do their deeds by Allah s.w.t because human deeds are the result of human choice (al-Ash'ari, 1977).

Al-Ash'ari relates to the al-Quran that humans does not create their own deeds (Q 2:7; Q 6:125; Q 47:24):

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ
فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا
أَفْلًا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَفْقَالُهَا

Al-Ash'ari (1977) also narrated from the Hadith of Rasulullah s.a.w that humans did not create their own deeds (al-Bukhari, 1987, vol. 6):

أن خلق أحدكم يجمع في بطن أمه أربعين ليلة... فيؤمر بأربع كلمات، يقال: اكتب أجله، ورزقه، وعمله، وشقي أو سعيد، ثم ينفخ فيه الروح.

In the matter of al-Qadr, it involves some of the major issues in his debate, firstly, the matters relating to the power of Allah, His knowledge, and His Qudrah. Secondly, the matter which related to the problem of human power and the third that are related to the question of *taklif* towards a human according to his acts.

The Power, Knowledge, and Desire of Allah on Human Deeds

In this matter, al-Ash'ari holds that every occurrences, including human action, is all subject to God's power, knowledge, and will. Everything that happens in nature (*al-'Alam*) is everything in the knowledge, power, and will of Allah, including the human acts. al-Ash'ari argues that, if there any act which did not subjected to the power (سلطان) Allah s.w.t, the act would happen without God's will, whereas God has power over everything and every act that happens is all subject to God's will and knowledge. This is contrary to what all Muslims have agreed that whatever God wants to happen will happen and everything that God does not want it will not happen. Likewise, if the bad deeds of a human or a devil's deeds are done without God's will or knowing it, then that is impossible because Allah is the creator of a creature that obligates God to know everything that happens to his being. If Allah had not known and desired something that had happened but it had taken place, it would have fallen out of the power of Allah and put God in a weak situation to know what he did not have power on it. This is something that is impossible for Allah s.w.t because Allah s.w.t does not accept weakness (al-Ash'ari, 1977).

Al-Ash'ari also holds that good and bad deeds, gifts and blessings have been dictated by Allah s.w.t and if Allah does not stipulate that the believers (*mukmin*) are given their mercy they will follow the devil. But God gives them grace and gift to avoid them. Even if Allah does

not create them goodness they will be lost forever and will cast into hellfire. Therefore, for al-Ash'ari all the virtues and disadvantages is subject to the God's will (Al-Ash'ari, 1977).

In this problem also, al-Ash'ari laid the foundation for which all the Muslims agreed, "Everything that Allah wills, it will surely happen, and everything that Allah does not require will never be". This foundation is the main pillar in the *i'tiqad* of a Muslim. However this principle is not seen by al-Ash'ari from the perspective of a burden on a human being, but it is seen from the point of *mashi'ah* Allah. Although this principle seems to imply that man is forced but does not mean al-Ash'ari denies human power to choose their good or bad deeds. It illustrates that God's will applies to the knowledge of God and the knowledge of God covers everything in this world. It is impossible for something to happen without God's knowledge. Just as impossible that God is absolutely ignorant, it is impossible also to happen without His will and it is impossible also to happen without His *Qudrah* (al-Ash'ari, 1977).

Because of that, according to al-Ash'ari, every human act is either good or evil, faith (*iman*) or disbelief (*kufur*), is because Allah desires it to happen, and it happens with the knowledge and power of Allah that creates it and it is also in the knowledge of Allah. The desire of Allah is absolute and if a man act without God requires it to happen, then put God in a state of weakness as it is unable to achieve what is desired. Once God is characterized by ignorance that is weak nature if evil acts occur when God does not know it happens.

The Theory of Human Act (*al-Kasb*)

Although al-Ash'ari has held that Allah ruling on man's actions is either good or bad, creates good and bad deeds, knows the act, and requires that the action takes place, but he still holds that man has an effort to choose their deeds. Although Imam al-Ash'ari restricts human power to his actions, but the boundary placed by al-Ash'ari on human power is not a limitation from the point of choosing and acting. Even the constraints and limitations placed by al-Ash'ari in the matter of human power are only from the point of impact on creating his act or renewing his actions from nothing to exist. However, these human acts are still subjected to something named by al-Ash'ari as effort or '*al-kasb*'. The theory of *al-Kasb* al-Ash'ari refers to the deeds that cultivated by humans but it is created by Allah s.w.t. This is the *al-Kasb* theory that determines whether a person is rewarded or punished as it is the choice of a person himself.

Al-Ash'ari has divided the human act into two, namely the act of *ikhtiyari* (acquisition), the act that can be chosen by man, and the act of *idtirari* (necessity) which is an act that constrained, compelled and forced, and from which it can find no way to get free or escape from it. It cannot be chosen by a human. He thinks that the act of *idtirari* is the act forced by Allah upon the human to do it. Human is forced to do such acts without being able to choose to do otherwise. al-Ash'ari exemplifies this *idtirari* act with the shaking movement of a palsy person or the shivering movement of the fever. The shaking and shivering movements are the actions forced by God on the crippled and feverish man, and the person who is experiencing the situation is unable to do the opposite (Al-Ash'ari, 1953).

While the act of *ikhtiyari* is the work that the human can choose whether to do it or to do the opposite with the new *qudrah* that is created on them. For example, the act of *iman* and *kufur*. A man can choose whether to do *iman* and *kufur* because they have been given new *qudrah* to do the act. Both the movement of *ikhtiyari* (acquisition) and *idtirari* (necessity)

according to al-Ash'ari is different. The act of *ikhtiyari* is termed by al-Ash'ari as *al-kasb*, which is the act that the human can choose, and they will be rewarded or punished for their actions (al-Ash'ari, 1953).

The thought of al-Ash'ari in *al-kasb's* problem is, the man as a perpetrator of deeds, effort his act, but al-Ash'ari does not put that man acting as the creator of that act. An act, if it were done with a new *qudrah* then the act was called *al-kasb*. While each act with all its deeds is a creature of the *Qudrah* of *Qadim* (God's Attribute). It has been mentioned above that al-Ash'ari holding a new *qudrah* can not have the effect of creating an act from nothing to exist. Every act is a creature created by God from nothing to exist because God is the Creator of all things, and man acts as '*muktasib*', the person who endeavors to do that. The acts of human also are the creature of God which given to a human to choose, but the deeds are also created by God and endeavored by a human by their own choice. Therefore, the work of the human being is situated on the person himself, and they will be rewarded or punished for their actions (Ibn Hazm, N.d).

That is why al-Ash'ari once mentioned that the essence of '*al-kasb*' is something that is happening from a '*muktasib*' (endeavours) with the new *qudrah* (al-Ash'ari, 1953). That is to say, for the human, there is an act made in his new *qudrah*, but the *qudrah* is essentially still subjected to the *Qudrah* of Allah s.w.t.

Gharabah (1953) argued that, from the point of view of al-Ash'ari, it was not the new *Qudrah* that affected or created the act of a human, but Allah s.w.t moves his *sunnatullah* by creating such an action immediately after or simultaneously with the new *Qudrah*. The act happens when God wants human to do it, then the act is created by God and cultivated by man.

In this problem, Imam al-Ash'ari attempts to deny the *qudrah* of man that affects the deeds of the human by placing the absolute *Qudrah*, the *Qudrah* of Allah as a *Qudrah* which affects the deeds of the human. He also tries to deny the effect of the new *Qudrah* on the acts of human (Gharabah, 1953).

In the case of this act of *ikhtiyari* also al-Ash'ari put that act done by the power of God solely and not with absolute human power, even Allah that moves it by creating the act on a human with new *qudrah* and *ikhtiyar*. So at this moment the act of human, act as a creature created by Allah s.w.t over the human, and the human acts as the person who attempts to do that act. What is meant by *al-kasb* of a human is, it is distinguished between his new *qudrah* and something that affects the creation of the slave (al-Jurjani, N.d, Vol. 5).

This al-Ash'ari opinion is was answered by Allah when arguing with the Musyrikin (polytheists). There are some of the polytheists who argued that they are doing the acts of *syirk* because of God's will. They say that if Allah does not want them to be Musyrik they will certainly not be Musyrik against Allah. The reason they are given is answered by Allah in al-Quran (Q 6:148-149):

Those who are polytheists would say: If Allah had pleased we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (to

ourselves) anything; even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment. Say: Have you any knowledge with you so you should bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture, and you only tell lies. Say: Then Allah's is the conclusive argument; so, if He please, He would certainly guide you all.

The *Ikhtiyari* (Acquisition) Act and Its Effect on The Act of *Iman* and *Kufur* of A Human

This problem is one of the most complicated questions discussed by the Mutakallimin especially in matters of God's judgment against the sin and reward also *iman* and *kufur* committed by a man in the world. It involves the final conclusion of human beings in the hereafter whether to be rewarded with heaven or punished with hell. While the fact of all good and bad deeds, *iman* and *kufur* are created by Allah s.w.t as held by al-Ash'ari in the question of *al-qadr*. In this problem, al-Ash'ari has given some arguments, why men are punished while their deeds and their immorality are created by Allah. The first argument referred to by al-Ash'ari (1953) is:

"We are pleased that God has decreed unbelief as bad and determined it as false, but we are not pleased that the unbeliever is thereby unbelieving, because God has forbidden us that".

Al-Ash'ari explains that human need to accept the provisions of Allah s.w.t who pledge that the *kufur* is a damnation which will have a bad consequence in the Hereafter. But man does not have to place that *kufur* of the *kafir* is something that God has commanded and determined by that. If it were so, then Allah would force (*idtirari*) them to do so and this view similar to the views of the Jabariyyah group. In fact, Allah s.w.t has already provided *tawfiq* to them to be among the believers (*mukmin*) but at the time when Allah s.w.t already prepares *tawfiq* to them, they do not become among the believers because Allah s.w.t only specializes in the ability to believe only for people believers alone. Actually, these infidels became disbelieve (*kafir*) in their disbelief (*kufur*) because they are keener to go to disbelief (*kufur*), while believers (*mukmin*) prefer their ability to believe and hate their ability to disbelieve (*kafir*), so they remain faithful. While the infidels do not hate their ability to disbelieve. The disbelieve are created by Allah but those who tend to choose this *kufur* as the way they are able to do it rather than the path of *iman* whereas God s.w.t already explained the path of *iman* (al-Ash'ari, 1977).

In another fact, al-Ash'ari mentions about *taklif* to people who infidels (*kafir*) for being a *mukmin*. The infidels have also been sworn by Allah to believe, but they are incapable of believing because they have been busy with matters contrary to faith. al-Ash'ari denies that these infidels are God-given. They do things they cannot, and they do not do the faith because they do not want to do so (Al-Ash'ari, 1953).

Allah s.w.t has also sent to unbelievers to hear and accept the truth, but they did not want to accept the truth (Al-Ash'ari, 1977). This is explained by al-Ash'ari regarding God's direction in general to all mankind to believe in Allah s.w.t. This direction is a general instruction which is mandatory for all humanity in the world to believe in Allah. However according to al-Ash'ari, although this direction is mandatory to all mankind, but the right of guidance only belongs to Allah s.w.t and only those who are chosen to be guided only will be instructed. The word of Allah s.w.t (Q 18:17), (Q 3:86), (Q 10:25):

“Whomsoever Allah guides, he is the rightly guided one, and whomsoever He causes to err, you shall not find for him any friend to lead (him) aright”.

“How shall Allah guide a people who disbelieved after their believing and (after) they had borne witness that the Messenger was true and clear arguments had come to them, and Allah does not guide the unjust people”.

“And Allah invites to the abode of peace and guides whom He pleases into the right path”.

This verse clearly gives a general instruction while the guidance verse is spoken by Allah s.w.t (Q 2:264):

“...And Allah does not guide the unbelieving people”.

which focuses only on them specifically given guidance and not all humans. It is even clear that Allah does reveal only to whom He pleases in al-Quran (Q 28:56), (Q 32:13):

“Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases, and He knows best the followers of the right way”.

“And if We had pleased, We would certainly have given to every soul its guidance, but the word (which had gone forth) from Me was just: I will certainly fill hell with the jinn and men together”.

Thus, it is obviously necessary to acknowledge that Allah does not guide the infidels but Allah does not make them believe in their choices. In addition, al-Ash’ari explains that the nature of disbelief (*kufur*) is also created by Allah to the infidels by letting them get lost, close their ears, hearts, and eyesight (al-Ash’ari, 1977). They are lost because they do not want to take the directions that Allah s.w.t provide them, and they do not care about what Allah will give them as stated by (al-Ash’ari, 1977).

The Relationship Between the Sunnatullah and Human Effort

From the whole description of the question of *al-qadr*, it is clear that al-Ash’ari put the human effort to every act. There is no coercion in the act of *ikhtiyari* that God has given to man. However, it is clear that this man does not create and affect their actions because humans are also creatures created by God as God created them as well.

Because of Allah created all mankind with their efforts, and the people who chose their actions with the new *qudrah*, it explained the question of the *sunnatullah* and humanity. In the case of human effort, they may choose to do one act of *ikhtiyari*, however, their choice occurs with the *sunnatullah* set by Allah s.w.t. The *Ikhtiyar* of a human also does not affect the creation of humanity, but only moves what man desires, and God desires it to happen, so it happens with God will and human choice. The *sunnatullah* in the human act (*ikhtiyari*) mentioned by Hamudah as ‘The act is created when the human being seeks it and strives towards it, then Allah creates the deed, and the deed is cultivated by man’ (Gharabah, 1953).

The fact is, *sunnatullah* has been set by Allah s.w.t, and it moves based on what Allah has set. It can be explained that a man when he wanted to do the act of *iman* or *kufur*, then at that time God created to him the ability and new *qudrah* to do that act, then the man did the act with his choice. At the same time, the act moves according to the *sunnatullah* which God has already set.

al-Ash'ari has also elucidated in *al-Luma'* that, the *sunnatullah* moves with what Allah has specified. The *sunnatullah* has been given an example by al-Ash'ari with action weaving cloth by a man. The weaving cloth requires skill, and the skill does not exist when there is no *qudrah* and exists when there is *qudrah*. If the *qudrah* is inexistent, there is no single weave of the fabric because the weaving comes with the skill and the skill is with the *qudrah*. Traditionally, God has placed that the skill to weave the cloth is with *qudrah*. However, if Allah s.w.t desires to make the weaving together with the nonexistent of the skill, then it is not impossible for the weaving (Al-Ash'ari, 1953).

In addition to the example of cloth weaving, everything that happens in nature also depends on *sunnatullah*. When people get sick, they will go to see a doctor for medicine because of *sunnatullah* laws, drugs can cure diseases. Likewise, in other issues that people understand as a causal reason, whoever strives will succeed, who is lazy will fail, if sick must eat medicines, if hungry needs to eat, and other examples. All of these are examples of *sunnatullah* that have been set on nature.

From this point of view, this *sunnatullah*, even though human deed is chosen by man and they try to do it with new *qudrah*, they still do not create their own deeds, and even the deeds they choose, are moved by Allah by creating *qudrah* and endeavor for human being (al-Jurjani, N.d). However, the act remains on a man as a result of the act. This *sunnatullah* is evidently as a resolution from God towards nature called *sunnatullah* which will not change.

Al-Ash'ari also argues in the problem of human effort (*al-kasb*) using al-Quran (Q 18:17), (Q 3:86), (Q 10:25):

"...And whomsoever He causes to err, you shall not find for him any friend to lead (him) aright".

"...And Allah does not guide the unjust people".

"...And Allah invites to the abode of peace and guides whom He pleases into the right path".

The fact is that from this verse it can be understood that the relation between the human effort theory and the *sunnatullah* theory of prevails simultaneously. The choice of the disbelief (*kufur*) or the faith (*iman*) of a man, also moves simultaneously with the custom or the *sunnatullah* which Allah wills and the choice that the human wants. This verse is often used al-Ash'ari to prove that God created human deeds and human beings attempt to do their deeds. Although human deeds are created by Allah, the will of man with his new *qudrah* chooses to do that, then the action takes place with *qudrah* and human effort. The act is what

happens with the *sunnatullah* that Allah requires. Therefore, it is clear that the choice of man and the creation of God on the human's actions goes as the *sunnatullah* has been set by Allah s.w.t without changing at all.

Conclusion

Based on al-Ash'ari's opinion in the matter of al-Qadr, it is clear that he placed Allah as who created human deeds. Even though the nature of the act is created by God, the al-Ash'ari holds that man has an attempt to determine whether they are doing good or bad deeds. Al-Ash'ari also placed the concept of cause and effect to something that happened. Allah has set His sunnah in this nature by creating something that is happening with reason, and the effect of the cause is a consequence. This *sunnatullah* is something that will not change and explains that it is impossible for human action to be forced by God because everything happens in this world is customary. Believers (*mukmin*) believe in taking the guidance that Allah has provided, and those who go astray and disbelieve, they go for not seeking guidance from Allah, not because Allah has forbidden the disbelief and their error. This *sunnatullah* concept runs on the basis of which Allah has set apart except when the desired change like the miracles of the Prophets. For example, the fire that burns the Prophet Ibrahim, normally fire is hot and will burn anything, but God imposes on fire the act that violates *sunnatullah*, then the fire becomes cold. Therefore, a person who does well will be rewarded, and commit a crime will be punished. Likewise, the believers will be rewarded with kindness and the unbelievers will be rewarded with torture.

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