

Prophet Adam (peace be upon him), Angels and Iblees- clarifications of some doubts

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A. Introduction

The Quran talks about the creation of universe and the creation of human beings at many places. Prophet Adam (Peace be upon him) is the first member of mankind, the first human being and the first Prophet. He has been referred as *swaym-bhu-manu* ('Manu' who became himself without any parent) in Indian traditions. There are many events related to him in the Quran. For example, the Quran 2:30-34 talks about:

- a) Almighty God conveys angels that He is going to create a *Khalifa* on earth.
- b) Angels pose question. God responds.
- c) Adam (Peace be upon him), the first man is created.
- d) Allah asks angels and Jinn to prostrate to Adam (Peace be upon him). Except *Iblees* – a *Jinn* – everyone obeyed.

Some people get some doubts about these events. For example:

- A. Is human being *khalifa*, representative or vice-regent of Allah?
- B. What doubts angels had?
- C. Allah did not answer what angels had asked. Why another answer was given?
- D. Why were angels and *Jinn* asked to prostrate?
- E. Was *Iblees* also asked to prostrate?
- F. What is this prostration or *sajda*?

Refer to the following Ayah [Quran 2:30-34] to understand the whole context:

"And, when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."

And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful."

They said, "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise."

He said, "O Adam, inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed."

And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblees. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.

B. How is mankind *Khalifa*?

When ALLAH said that HE is going to place *khalifah* on the earth; does it mean that man is representative of Allah? It is **wrong** to assume that word *Khalifah* means **representative** or **vice-regent because *Khalifa* does NOT mean representative.**

To say that mankind is representative of Almighty God is nothing short of demeaning the status of God. I will use the word representative for Mr. X when someone is not present or he is not available and Mr. X will represent him. When the president has to participate in a conference and due to some reason he is not available, then he will send someone as his representative.

How come God is not present anywhere – by his knowledge? Everything is within his perception. He can NOT use anyone as his representative. His knowledge, awareness is everywhere throughout the Universe so we cannot use this word vice-regent of Allah for anyone. In fact, *dua* of Prophet Muhammad teaches the contrary. In *dua* we ask Allah to be *Khalifa* when we go away from home; when we are away then let Allah take care of our possession. So, here Allah is *Khalifa* of us, i.e. he is successor when we are away from our homes. He is there to take care of our belongings and dear ones.

C. Does Quran explain the meaning of *Khalifa*?

The tri-literal root *khā lām fā* (خ ل ف) occurs 127 times in the Quran. It is used in Quran in various forms in the meaning of ‘Successor’, ‘leave behind’, ‘differ’, ‘contradiction’ etc. **Word *Khalifa* actually means successor.** That is why we say that Hazrat Abu Bakar, Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Umar and Hazrat Ali were *khalifa*; we don’t say that Prophet Muhammad was *khalifa*. Reason is: these 4 people were successor of Prophet Muhammad.

Please note: Word *khalifa* is used in:

- Quran 43:60 in context of ANGELS being *khalifa* on earth and;
- Quran 6:165 in context of human being *Khalifa* on earth

At both places *khalifa* is usually translated as SUCCESSOR which is correct.

However, when the same word is used in:

- Quran 2:30 in context of Adam (Peace be upon him) being *Khalifa* on earth and
- Quran38:26 in context of Prophet David (Peace be upon him) as *Khalifa* on earth

Then some publications mistranslate *khalifa* as vicegerent.

Analyzing all Ayah of Quran dealing with the word “*khalifa*” one gets the idea that it has been used for: **“One or more human beings becoming successors”**.

So, when ALLAH says that HE will make human being as *khalifah* on earth then it means that human beings will come as successor to other creation and they will come into succession of each other. It clearly means that:

1. There were some other creations before mankind on the earth. We will discuss this later in the article.
2. Adam (Peace be upon him) - the first person of Mankind will be a *khalifa* i.e. successor.
3. Mankind will be such that it will come into succession; generation after generation.

D. Question of the Angels – which they asked.

Angels said - **“Will you create someone who will do *fassad*(= disturb the peace of land) on earth and will indulge in bloodshed?”**

Why angels asked such questions? How did they guess that man will indulge in bloodshed and *fasaad*?

One argument is that before mankind *jinn* used to live on earth. They indulged in bloodshed and fought amongst themselves. So, angels were afraid that the new creation will do more bloodshed. This explanation does not have any proof from Quran and it fails on several accounts.

- There is no proof of disobedience of *jinn* prior to this event.
- Angels said that new creation will indulge in bloodshed. *Jinn* are distinct creatures and there is absolutely no proof that blood applies to them. In the next explanation importance and relevance of blood in context of human beings and preceding generation will be explored.

There is another argument which sounds logical. We know as per scientific facts that millions of years before human beings came into existence animals and plants lived on the face of earth. First, there was plant kingdom and later; after millions of year animals started inheriting earth as successor of plant kingdom.

With new creation came more freedom of action, more choice, more free-will, improved instinct and bloodshed & *fasaad*. How?

Imagine the scenario millions of years ago:

- Gigantic animals like dinosaurs eating other animals;
- Animals strangling - killing their prey;
- Animals fatally hitting/goring each other;
- Bigger fishes eating smaller fishes.

There was “anarchy” like situation if one compares with the situation when only plants existed.

Possible beginning era of various species is:

- 475 million years, land plants;
- 400 million years, insects and seeds;
- 360 million years, amphibians;
- 300 million years, reptiles;
- 200 million years, mammals;
- 60-200 million years, dinosaurs

Also, it is to be noted that several huge and deadly animals that existed on earth became extinct as they could not survive the severe competitive environment.

Angels were aware of the fact that new race on earth was bringing more choice, more free-will, more freedom, more bloodshed, more anarchy, more disturbance of peace (*fasaad*) hence they thought that another new race will indulge in bloodshed and *fasaad*. They thought that the new *khalifa* will display more ruthless use of its capabilities.

E. Question of the angels – which they did not ask.

Now, there arises one more question which is important to consider and that is when the angels questioned the reason to create someone who will do *fasaad* and bloodshed then Allah did not reply “human beings will NOT do *fasaad* and bloodshed” OR “YES, I know that he will do *fasaad* and bloodshed”. Instead of these, the reply was “I KNOW WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW”. Reflecting on this reply of Allah, it seems that the angels were concealing the real question. Were angels concealing their real question? The answer is -YES.

1. What was the concealed question of the angels?

Angels are a creation of Allah that do not have free will to the extent of human beings and *Jinn*. They are programmed creatures unlike human beings and *Jinn*. They are submissive to ALLAH all the time, engaged in obedience and worship of Allah.

They thought that when they were already there to worship Allah then why Allah wanted to create a new creation? If the new creation is for the purpose of worship, then why so; when we are already doing that? It was a sort of positive jealousy. But they did NOT ask this question; they concealed it.

“...They (Angels) said: "Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? While we do celebrate your praises and glorify you" Quran 2:30

They are programmed to do this only. They don't have the capacity to disobey Allah.

2. How Allah responded to the concealed question?

To show the difference between angels and human beings Allah taught names OR gave knowledge of everything to Adam (Peace be upon him). Angels were also present there. Then

Allah asked angels to tell the names of everything that He had taught Adam (Peace be upon him).

“And He taught Adam (Peace be upon him) the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: “Tell me the names of these if you are right.” Quran 2:31

Angels expressed their inability to do so because they were NOT made / programmed for this purpose. Angels admitted that they had knowledge of only those things which were already instilled in them by Allah.

They said: “Glory to you, of knowledge; We have none, save what you Had taught us: In truth it is you Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.” Quran 2:32

In other words, angels admitted that that they are programmed to do only pre-determined things; they are programmed with limited knowledge; nothing can add to it.

3. Concealed question of angels answered

*He said: “O Adam (Peace be upon him)! Tell them their names.” When he had told them, Allah said: “Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and **I know what you reveal and what you CONCEAL?**” Quran 2:33*

When Allah asked Adam (Peace be upon him) to tell the names then he told them the names correctly. This is the difference between angels and Adam (Peace be upon him). Angels are programmed creatures with almost no free will, whereas, human beings are NOT programmed creatures. There is no limit to knowledge and capabilities of human beings. The angels were unaware of these capabilities of the human beings – that’s why Allah said in the first place itself, “I know what you do not know” (Quran 2:30) – to convey to the angels that human beings would be different from angels.

In the last, Allah makes clear that He knew the question which the angels had concealed and had NOT asked. The question was – “When we angels are already there to worship Allah then why Allah wants to create a new creation?”

Allah gave the answer to their concealed question in the form of practically showing the difference between human beings and angels. This event of telling names of everything proved to the angels that they did not know about capabilities & qualities of the new creation.

F. What was Prostration to Adam (Peace be upon him) all about?

Another question that requires to be addressed is that why Allah asked angels and Jinn to prostrate before his another creation? This question arises because of our restricted understanding of the meaning of the word *sajda*. By Arabic word *sajda* we usually mean ‘to put down head on ground like we do in *salah*’. In *Salah* or *Namaz*, we do *sajda*. Of course, this is *sajda* but surely this is not the only form of *sajda*.

- Quran uses the word *sajda* in context of stars and plants (Quran 55:6). It says that **stars and trees do *sajda* to Allah**. Do they really bow down like we human beings do? NO. Do stars and trees fall down on their faces on the ground? NO.
- Quran says in 13:15; 16:49; 22:18– “***whoever is within the heavens and the earth – they do sajda to Allah***”. How they do *sajda*? Certainly not the way how we human beings do.
- Similarly, in Surah Yusuf the event is described (Quran 12:4) wherein Prophet Yusuf **saw the dream in which stars, sun and moon were doing *sajda* to him**. Here again, *sajda* doesn't mean what human beings do in *namaz*.

It is evident from the above referred *Ayaah* that the meaning of *Sajda* is to acknowledge the greatness or accept the superiority of the one to whom *sajda* is being made. Like, stars, trees and whole of the creation acknowledges and accepts the superiority of Allah and remains subservient to Allah. When Allah asked the Angels and *Iblees* to do *sajda* to Adam (peace be upon him), it was in order to make them acknowledge the greatness/supremacy of human beings on account of their intellectual capacity as Allah taught the names of the things to Adam (peace be upon him) i.e. Allah gave Adam (peace be upon him) knowledge or intellectual capacity.

This new creation, human being was created who will be the successor on earth. The one who would evolve, progress, grow using his intellectual capacity and the resources available around him on the earth. Angels are assigned the task of various departments of nature e.g. rains, mountains, sky. Angels should not become a hindrance in the progress and growth of mankind. This is what it means by doing *sajda* to human being. Through *sajda* Allah instructed Jinn and angels that they shouldn't become hindrance in the evolution of human beings. Not for any instance we should assume that this *sajda* was in any way connected to the worship of Adam (Peace be upon him) by angels and Jinn.

G. Was *Iblees* also commanded to do *sajda*?

Was the command of ALLAH to do *sajda* to Adam (Peace be upon him) only for angels or for both angels and *Iblees*? It is to be noted that *Iblees* was the representative of Jinn. Jinn are creations who were created prior to human beings. *Iblees* (a *jinn*) was present during this event. Quran makes clear in 2:34 and 7:11 that *Iblees* disobeyed Allah by not doing *sajda* to Adam (Peace be upon him). Still, some people have doubts regarding whether *Iblees* was commanded to do so. This objection gets cleared when we refer to the following Ayah:

“(Allah) said: "What prevented you (O iblis) that you did not prostrate yourself, when I commanded you?" Iblees said: "I am better than him (Adam (Peace be upon him)), You created me from fire, and him You created from clay." Quran 7:12

When Allah asked *Iblees* why he did not do *sajda* to Adam (Peace be upon him) then *Iblees* did not say that he was not commanded to do so; rather he said that he was better than Adam (Peace be upon him).

So *Iblees* accepts that he was commanded by Allah but he refused to do *sajda*. He refused to acknowledge the greatness of Adam (peace be upon him) over himself. He also gave his reason.

He said that he was better than Adam (Peace be upon him) because Adam (Peace be upon him) was made from clay while he was made from fire, thereby considering himself superior to Adam (peace be upon him) and not ready to give way to the overall development and spiritual growth of human beings to which they were capable of. So, this Ayah clears all possible misunderstanding regarding the question “Was *Iblees* also commanded to do *sajda* to Adam (Peace be upon him)?”

Iblees refused to acknowledge the superiority of Adam (peace be upon him) or human beings over himself and therefore causes hindrance to the development of human beings by challenging their intellectual capacity in order that they may not grow closer to Allah i.e. if human beings are superior due to their knowledge they should be able to distinguish right from wrong, truth from falsehood, good from evil. Therefore, he keeps throwing hindrances in the form of temptations in the path of human beings to mislead them from the straight path. He misled Adam (peace be upon him) by tempting him into disobeying Allah. And since then *Iblees* has been causing hindrance to the growth of human beings.

Also, please note that Adam and Eve were not sent to earth as punishment.

- a) Quran 2:30 conveys that Adam and Eve were created for being sent to earth.
- b) Adam committed mistake. Quran 2:36
- c) Adam prayed to Allah and sought repentance, Allah forgave him. Quran 2:37
- d) Then Adam and Eve were sent to Earth. Quran 2:38
- e) So there is no question of Adam and Eve being sent to earth as punishment.

H. Conclusion

1. Allah has made Prophet Adam (Peace be upon him) as beginning of a new race on earth. This new race - human being - is *Khalifa*. *Khalifa* means successor. Man is NOT vice-regent or representative of Allah.
2. Angels are programmed creatures. They are always involved in worship and obedience of Allah. They do not disobey because they are not made to do so.
3. Allah has asked Angels and Jinn to acknowledge greatness of human beings; not to become hindrance in the way of human beings.
4. Representative of the Jinn, *Iblees* refused to do *sajda* because he thought that human being was made from clay hence inferior to him. *Iblees* did *takabbaur* (rejecting truth and to boast over it).

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