Killing Out of Compassion:
Killing Justified by Skillful Means (*Upāya*) and Esoteric Knowledge (*'Īlm Ladunnī*) in Buddhism and Islam

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Table of Contents:

Abstract

The concept of compassionate killing is rooted in two stories found in the Buddhist *Jātaka* texts and the Islamic sacred book, the Qurʾān. These stories reveal how transgression of basic religious laws and violation of main ethical precepts are realized by two authorized individuals, the bodhisattva and Khiḍr. Both personages possess two specific features, wisdom and compassion, which enables them to justify their conducts based on the essential Mahāyāna term "skillful means" (*upāya*), and the Islamic notion "esoteric knowledge" *(ʿīlm Ladunnī*). In this thesis, I argue that a close analysis of the concept of compassionate killing will reveal several main common elements that will help to configure a comparative structure of the concept of compassionate killing according to Islam and Buddhism. Despite the points of similarities, further interpretations of these stories and their functions are different in each tradition. In Buddhism, the notion of "skillful means" provides a legitimized context for practicing compassionate killing by later Buddhists, while in Islam, compassionate killing was not perceived as practical action to be followed by other Muslims.

Résumé de thèse

Le concept de meurtre par compassion est ancré dans deux histoires que l'on trouve dans les textes bouddhistes de Jātaka et dans le livre sacré islamique, le Koran. Ces histoires révèlent comment la transgression des lois religieuses les plus fondamentales et la désobéissance des principaux préceptes éthiques sont réalisées par deux personnes autorisées, le Bouddha et Khiḍr. Ces deux personnages possèdent deux caractéristiques spécifiques, la sagesse et la compassion, qui leur permettent de justifier leurs comportements sur la base du terme essentiel Mahāyāna ; les "moyens astucieux" (*upāya*), et les "connaissances ésotériques" islamiques (*'īlm Ladunnī*). Dans cette thèse, je soutiens qu'une analyse approfondie du concept de meurtre par compassion révélera plusieurs importants éléments communs qui permettront de configurer une structure comparative du concept de meurtre par compassion selon l'Islam et le Bouddhisme. Malgré des points de similitude, les interprétations ultérieures de ces histoires et de leurs fonctions sont différentes dans chaque tradition. Dans le contexte du Bouddhisme, la notion du "moyens astucieux" fournit une justification pour la pratique du meurtre par compassion par des bouddhistes ultérieurs, tandis que dans l'Islam, le meurtre par compassion n'était pas perçu comme une action pratique à suivre par d'autres musulmans.

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Introduction

The concept of compassionate killing is not a recognized motif in Islam, or a basic discipline in Buddhism, but an unexpected and striking issue in both traditions. This paradoxical term may seem more perplexing in the context of Buddhism, a religion often understood as an inherently non-violent tradition emphasizing compassion in its doctrines and rejecting the use of violence. However, this concept derives from two stories narrated in sacred books and canonical texts of these two religions. The story that belongs to the Buddhist tradition is titled the "Compassionate Ship's Captain" and is found in the influential *Jātaka* text, *Upāyakauśalya-sūtra.* Interestingly enough, this story has an Islamic counterpart in the 18th Quranic Surah, the meeting of Moses with a mysterious devotee, or "God's specific servant," who is not named in the Qur'ān but is identified by all commentators as Khiḍr.

These two stories are well-accepted and completely justified in their contexts and have resulted in significant religious ideas and approaches in their relative traditions. While these two stories belong to two quite different and even heterogeneous ethical-religious traditions, we can see a striking similarity between them: violating conventional ethics by killing an innocent person out of compassion, which is done by the most prestigious persons. In both scenarios, the act of killing is reported and interpreted as compassion for the victim, other people, or both. Therefore, despite this transgressive theme, both the Bodhisattva and Khiḍr have been praised by their respective communities for quite different reasons. However, it is stated that this practice is a very specific one that can be performed by high-ranking spiritual figures and under special circumstances.

According to Mahāyāna, this story is pivotal because it expresses an intimate relationship with the idea of bodhisattva and his universal soteriological goal. This story is not the only

canonical text on which the notion is founded, yet it is the most significant one. As Jenkins states, "allowances for compassionate violence, even killing, are found among major Buddhist thinkers across philosophical traditions and in major scriptures."[1] There are other texts and commentaries in Mahāyāna which present a categorization of the slain ones,[2] and maintain justification of transgression of moral precepts and committing violent practices. According to Keown, the Bodhisattva Stage sets out a code of rules in the form of a *bodhisattva-pitaka*, in which "taking the life of someone about to commit an act entailing immediate retribution" is permitted "in order to prevent them suffering the evil consequences of that act."[3]

In Islam, the case is different. The story of Khiḍr is the only sacred text that entails the idea of killing out of compassion. However, this story found a very mystical interpretation and function in the Islamic tradition. Khiḍr is mainly depicted as a highly important personage in Sufi literature. He is considered the prophet of initiation into Divine mysteries as well as a special spiritual guide from whom many claimed to have received initiation[4]. Muslim thinkers do not interpret Khiḍr's action in killing the boy as a negative practice; rather, they believe that death was a blessing for him caused his salvation because it prevented him from committing vicious actions and benefited his parents.

[1] Stephen Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1–2 (Switzerland: Lausanne University, 2010 -2011), 299.

[2] One of the earliest commentaries on the text, the *Pusajie yishu*, attributed to the founder of the Tiantai school, Zhiyi (538– 597), divided violations of the precept into three categories. The gravest was killing a buddha, sage, parent, or monastic teacher, a middling level of violation is taking the life of a god or human, and the lowest level is killing any being in the four lowest levels of rebirth (Groner 41).

[3] Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 142.

[4] Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015), 1638.

Research questions and method

Through a comparative examination of the narratives, this thesis seeks to answer the question of how exceptions to the most important doctrines and transgression from sacred values can be made by high-ranking spiritual figures. Therefore, the primary objective of this thesis is to investigate different interpretations offered by Muslim and Buddhist commentators for justifying or developing the idea of compassionate killing. To do so, at the first step, I will probe the main commentaries of the stories in both traditions and try to give an exegetical account of the stories as outlined in the main texts. Moreover, my thesis aims to examine the role and features of the spiritual person in violating norms and investigate his or her motivation for killing an innocent person. It will also examine the further apologetic approaches adopted by Muslim and Buddhist thinkers to justify and legitimize this action. It is obvious that the most suitable method for understanding this concept is to examine it contextually prior to comparing the two traditions.

As the second step, by applying the comparative method, I will find similarities as well as differences in both contexts, while I attempt to keep my research from overemphasizing similarities and minimizing differences between the two contexts. I posit that similarities reflect a conceptual relationship rather than a historical one. Moreover, on the basis of the similarities and differences, I will make an argument about the general characteristics of this concept in chapter three, to gain a better understanding of the theme. This section is especially significant to my thesis because one of my main goals is to find a structure for the concept of compassionate violence according to these two traditions.

As was mentioned, despite many similarities these two stories share, different approaches and outcomes have been adopted. The main difference is manifested in the different trajectories that the stories have caused in their traditions. Therefore, my research will seek the main

orientations these stories have created in their traditions and the functions they have introduced and may yet serve. It seems that the Buddhist tradition needed to create such an idea in order to legitimize and justify killing or violence whenever the religious, social, or political benefits necessitate its realization, while such a necessity does not appear in Islam. One of the reasons for this presupposition, as I will detail in the third chapter, can be traced back to the lack of clear laws for defining the borders of killing in Buddhism; the issue which is elaborated in detail in Islamic jurisprudence.

Finally, in examining the concept of compassionate violence, my thesis seeks to address the following questions: How would this idea be understood in terms of Western moral theory? Can we claim that this concept encourages consequentialist ethics as some researchers such as Goodman have claimed, or a virtue ethics as Keown has suggested, or a deontologist one? Can one moral theory adequately describe this concept? Significantly, my research maintains that limiting the goals of compassionate violence to one Western moral theory that would best describe it is not an appropriate method. I agree with Hallisey's[1] argument that no one moral theory suffices to describe Buddhist morality. Therefore, by analyzing the various dimensions of the motivation of the bodhisattva and Khiḍr for killing in both traditions, I propose a more hybrid ethics in Buddhism rather than offering one solid approach; however, I maintain that the story of Khiḍr is more close to a deontological ethics.

My comparative approach aims to demonstrate deeper levels of the issue that were neglected or not discussed as crucial points in each tradition. In this research, the comparative method has the ability to generate new insights, and especially to present new dimensions for

[1] See Barbara Clayton, *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's Śikṣasamuccaya* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 6-7.

interpreting the story of Khiḍr in the Islamic context and re-configure our normative understanding of the theme.

Literature review

Since the concept of compassionate killing is not known in Islam, no research can be found on this theme. Therefore, my main sources on the Islamic side are those which examine the whole story of Khiḍr in the Qur'ān. The scholarship on Khiḍr explores his personality or the Quranic story with a different variety of scopes and approaches; some of them apply a mythological perspective to his personality, either within or outside Islamic context, while others' approach develops a theological Quranic viewpoint.

Among these sources, I refer to two main detailed books which are written on Khiḍr. Talat Halman in *Where the Two Seas Meet*[1] depicts a model of spiritual guidance on the basis of Moses' journey with al-Khiḍr. The book reflects on both the social and psychological dimensions of the master–disciple relationship according to three medieval Sufi *Tafsīrs*: al-Qushayrī, Rūzbihān Baqlī, and 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī. Halman also distinguishes between the instructing master (shaykh al-ta'lim) and the mentoring master (shaykh al-suhba) as two key words in the story. The second book is *Risālah darbāri-yi Khiḍr* by Mahdawī Dāmghānī[2], who examines how Khiḍr achieves a special position in the Islamic culture. According to Quranic commentaries and Muslim folkloric materials, Dāmghānī displays the anonymous personality of Khiḍr in terms of his spiritual authority.

[1] Hugh Talat Halman, *Where the Two Seas Meet* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2013).

[2] Aḥmad Mahdawī Dāmghānī, *Risālah Darbāriyi Khiḍr* (Tehran: Kitāb Marja', 1386 H (solar)/ 2007).

One of the most comprehensive sources on Khiḍr is a detailed encyclopedic article[1] in which Arsanjānī inclusively describes the opinion of Muslims about the controversial figure of Khiḍr. She has tried to present different aspects of Khiḍr in Persian literature, Islamic history, Sufism as well as the Qur'ān and Hadiṭh. I could find only one article which directly discusses the story of the Killing. This essay which is written by Rād and Muhammad Zādih[2] provides a classification of the Quranic commentators' approach about the teenager who is killed by Khiḍr. I point out the summary of this category in chapter two of this research and evaluate what these Quranic exegetes say about the story of killing.

On the Buddhist side, scholarship on the concept of compassionate violence is scarce. It can be said that almost all the research in this field is focused on the study of rituals (mostly Tantric rituals) which employ violence as a technique for reaching their goals. For example, as the most significant works, Meinert studies this concept in the Tibetan rite of liberation (*sgrol ba*)[3] and Schlieter's essay studies the concept of compassionate killing in the context of the murder of King Langdarma according to Tibetan Buddhist Sources.[4]

Gray is one of the researchers who has an important essay on the concept of compassionate violence, but his paper again examines presence of violent imagery and rituals in Tantric Buddhist literature, as well as violent techniques were employed as an expedience for the purpose of

[1] Humayrā Arsanjānī et al., "Khiḍr," in *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif-e Buzurg-e Islāmī* (*The Greta Islamic Encyclopedia*), vol. 22, edited by Kazem Mousavi Bojnourdi (Tehran: Markaz-e Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Buzurg-e Islāmī, 1395 H (solar)/ 2016).

[2] Ali Rād and 'Āṭifa Mūḥammad Zadi, "Dāstān qatl-i Ggulām tawassuṭ-i Khiḍr: Taḥlīl wa Arzyābī Rahyāfthāyi Tafsīri," *Pajūhīshhāyi Tafsīr Taṭbīqī*, no.9 (Spring and Summer 1398 H (solar)/ 2019).

[3] Carmen Meinert, "Between the Profane and the Sacred? On the Context of the Rite of 'Liberation' (sgrol ba)," in *Buddhism and Violence*, edited by Michael Zimmermann (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006).

[4] Jens Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution? The Murder of King Langdarma according to Tibetan Buddhist Sources," in *Buddhism and Violence,* edited by Michael Zimmermann (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006).

subjugating evil teachings or considered effective in purification rites.[1] Gier's book, *The Origins of the Religious Violence,* dedicates one chapter to this concept in which, by applying a historical approach, discusses Tibetan holy wars and what Tibetan kings performed in the name of defending religion.[2] Dalton's *The Taming of the Demons*[3] is a detailed work on examining mythic and ritual themes of violence such as demon taming and blood sacrifice in Tibetan Buddhism.

I found Jenkin's essay "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence"[4] to be the only work which focuses on studying the concept of compassionate violence in Mahāyāna Buddhism by a textual analysis. In this paper, Jenkins seeks to clarify the relation between compassionate violence and achieving positive merit or making a negative karma.

Outline of chapters

According to these arguments, my thesis is arranged in two main chapters and a comparative section. The first chapter examines the story of the "Compassionate Ship's Captain", and its relationship with some of the main Mahāyānist ideas such as the universal soteriological responsibility of the bodhisattva. I also inquire into the meaning of *upāya* in Mahāyāna tradition, a key term based on which the concept of compassionate violence can be legitimized. Moreover, by relying on the story of the "Compassionate Ship's Captain", I investigate interpretations as well as the ethical paradigm of the elements related to this story according to the important Mahāyāna

[1] David Gray, "Compassionate Violence? On the Ethical Implications of Tantric Buddhist Ritual," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, vol. 14, (2007): 239- 271.

[2] Nicholas Gier, *The Origin of Religious Violence: An Asian Perspective* (London: Lexington Books, 2014).

[3] Jacob Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2011).

[4] Stephen Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (Switzerland: Lausanne University, 2010 -2011), 299–331.

thinkers Asaṅga and Śāntideva. Most notably, I study the ethical ideas of Śāntideva which are well developed in his book *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* (*Buddhisattvas Way of Life*), an influential source of ethical guidance in Mahāyāna. At the end of chapter one, I present two historical cases in which the idea of compassionate killing is realized in this tradition.

The second chapter will focus on Khiḍr's personality and his story in the Qur'ān, while examining various dimensions of his unusual practice according to its Qur'ānic context. By relying on Arabic and Persian sources, I will explore Quranic exegesis on these related verses, and then, as this story is highly engaged with mysticism in Islam, I will study interpretations of the story of Khiḍr from the most significant mystics such as Ibn 'Arabī and Rūmī.

These first two chapters set the stage for my own discourse analysis of the concept in chapter three. Therefore, in the last section, by finding out the similar elements of both contexts and comparing them, including the compassion and wisdom possessed by both the bodhisattva and Khiḍr, I explore how the key similarities can create a structure for the concept of compassionate killing. In addition, I present a detailed discussion analyzing the ethical basis of compassionate violence and try to show that a single moral theory is incapable of interpreting this concept. This chapter further presents how this idea has created different functions and results in the Buddhist and Islamic traditions, although it has a similar structure in both contexts.

I hope that my research can shed light on new dimensions of interpreting the story of Khiḍr and the Compassionate Captain, while introducing an initial structure for the concept of compassionate violence. Moreover, I hope that this thesis can show the importance of this concept as a possible way of justifying violence in religious contexts and raise new questions about the relation between spirituality and violence. In the words of Bernard Jackson, "it is indeed the function of the comparative approach to ask questions and suggest hypotheses…the most profitable comparisons are often those that raise questions rather than those that attempt to answer

them."[1]. Therefore, I hope that my thesis helps to raise new questions, offer new possible ways of understanding, and generate new hypotheses on the concept of compassionate violence.

[1] David Freidenreich, "Comparisons Compared: A Methodological Survey of Comparisons of Religions from "A Magic Dwells" to *A Magic Still Dwells*," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, vol. 16, (2004), 92.

Chapter 1: Killing out of Compassion in Buddhism (the Story of the Compassionate Ship's Captain)

1.1 Killing and violence in Buddhist ethics

At first glance, a high emphasis on giving up violence and cultivation of compassion is found in Buddhist ethics; and according to many scholars, one of the main goal of Buddhism is encouraging people "to learn how to control their minds and attain inner peace in order to control their actions and prevent any violence."[1] The well-known virtues of non-harming *(ahiṃsā)*, loving-kindness *(maitrī)*, and compassion *(karuṇā)* are fundamental to Buddhist tradition.

Moreover, the sacred texts and the basic rules provide the most striking doctrines against violence. The Noble Eightfold Path as the early principal teaching of Buddhism, forbids explicitly harming living beings by the rule of "right action" (*samma-kammānta*). Scriptures belonging to foundational Buddhism take a strong stand against killing any sentient being.[2] For instance, the popular *Dhammapada*, draws attention many times to the rule that one should neither kill nor cause to kill. In chapter 26 for example, we read:

> Him I call indeed a Brahmana who … does not kill nor cause slaughter.[3]
>
> The sages who injure nobody, and who always control their body, they will go to the unchangeable place (Nirvana).[4]

[1] See George Bond, "Sarvōdaya's Pursuit of Peace," in *Buddhism, Conflict and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, edited by Mahinda Deegalle (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 227.

[2] Goodman says that according to some Theravāda Buddhists, it would entail negative karma to kill a poisonous snake that is about to bite a small child. See Charles Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 60-62.

[3] Max Muller, *Dhammapada* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1881), ch. 26, s. 405. https://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe10/index.htm.

[4] Ibid., ch. 22. s. 225.

Refraining from killing is clearly represented as the first commitment in the *pañcaśīla,* which is the most common and important vow undertaken by all Buddhist lay people. *Pañcaśīla*, or the Five Precepts, are the basic training rules observed by all lay Buddhists as well as monastics. They are ritually chanted after the Refuge formula in the presence of a Buddhist teacher or monk, often with the palms folded.[1] The first rule is as follows: "I undertake the precept to abstain from destroying living creatures." This rule implies that one should refrain from any way of harming human, animal or other sentient life.

As well as the *pañcaśīla,* the *prātimokṣa*, the monastic disciplinary code, indicates that deprivation of life (of a human) is among the most serious offences a monk can commit.[2] Within the monastic tradition, murder is ranked third out of four defeats (*parajika*) and results in permanent expulsion from the Sangha (the four defeats are sex, stealing, murder, and false claims of enlightenment). Although ranked third out of the four, murder is still among the greatest sins (*adhamma*) a person can commit. However, abstention from killing *(pāṇātipātā)* is regarded as the first precept in both the different formulations of the *Dasa Sīla*.[3]

Even defensive violence or killing someone in war entails bad karma not only for the doer, but also for all the soldiers.[4] Killing enemies as a warrior in warfare is condemned in several sermons attributed to the Buddha. Moreover, participation in a war, intention to kill someone, or the wish that enemies be killed are all considered negative actions. Schmithausen indicates that "these sermons do not confine their judgement to offensive war only, but rather suggest its

[1] See Cathy Cantwell, *Buddhism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 70.

[2] See Charles Prebish, "The Vinaya," in *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 98.

[3] See George Bond, "Theravāda Buddhism's Two Formulations of the *Dasa Sīla* and the Ethics of the Gradual Path," in *Pāli Buddhism*, edited by Frank Hoffman, Frank, and Deegalle Mahinda, (Richmond United Kingdom: Curzon, 1996), 18-19.

[4] See Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 18.

applicability to any war, including defensive war."[1] However, history shows many cases of violating this rule by Buddhist kings and even sometimes by monks and monasteries who were involved in military struggles.[2] The justification for killing or war in most of these cases is "defense of the Buddhist religion."[3]

In the *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*, where the passage is identifying typical wholesome *(kusala)* and unwholesome *(akusala)* actions, killing living beings is introduced as the first unwholesome action.[4] Furthermore, the ten good precepts or virtuous actions listed in the *Āgamas*, which are applicable to both monastic and lay Buddhists, begin with prohibition of killing and using all means to protect the living.[5] However, it is noteworthy that it is emphasized there that "if one kills out of greed or anger, this is a *pārājika* [defeat] for the bodhisattva."[6] Here is where the paradox arises: are there any circumstances in which killing might be justifiable? This is the main question that I will try to examine in its various aspects in this chapter.

Some Buddhist concepts in general, and some other ideas related to Mahāyāna or Tantra (though not exclusively) possess the potential power to create or legitimize the idea of "killing out

[1] Lambert Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude towards War," in *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History*. Edited by Jan E. M. Houben and Karel R. Van Kooij (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 48.

[2] See ibid., 52-3.

[3] Schmithausen mentions some cases of these justifications according to the Mahāyāna texts. According to him, killing those who hate the Three Jewels, those who have a wrong attitude, persons who discard the Mahāyāna and who promulgate unwholesome doctrines, is even less grave than the killing of an animal: "Killing such people is' rather just like felling-insentient!-trees, mowing grass, or dissecting a corpse, and hence not at all a violation of the precept not to kill." In addition, eschatological wars in which Buddhism is re-established and other religions are destroyed are described in some texts. Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude," 57-8.

[4] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 12.

[5] Paul Groner, "The Bodhisattva Precepts," in *The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 31.

[6] Ibid., 40.

of compassion", which is sometimes called "liberating killing". These concepts are mainly rooted in the stories related to the Buddha's past lives that depict him in myriad roles while killing or engaging in violent actions.

The story of the "Compassionate Ship's Captain," which is recorded in the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra*,[1] is not the only narrative in the Buddhist scriptures that is contrary to the basic Buddhist moral doctrines condemning violence and killing;[2] however, it is the best-known one justifying violence. Because of the story's significance, I shall narrate it here entirely to find out how this story might depart far from the classical Buddhist doctrines.

1.2 The story of the Ship's Captain

"Once upon a time …, there were five hundred merchants who set sail on the high seas in search of wealth. Among the company was a doer of darl [sic] deeds, a doer of evil deeds, a robber well-trained in the art of weaponary [sic], who had come on board that very ship to attack them.… At the same time, among the company on board was a captain named Great Compassionate. While Captain Great Compassionate slept on one occasion, the deities who dwelt in that ocean showed him this in dream:

> "Among this ship's company is a person named so and so … He is thinking, 'I will kill all these merchants, take all their possessions and go to Jambu Continent. To kill these merchants would create formidable evil karma for that person. Why so? These five hundred merchants are all progressing toward supreme, right and full awakening; they are each irreversible from awakening. If he should kill these Bodhisattvas, the fault—the obstacle caused by the deed—would cause him to burn in the great hells for as long as it takes each one of these Bodhisattvas to achieve supreme, right and full awakening, consecutively. Therefore, Captain, think of some skill in means to prevent this person from killing the five hundred merchants

[1] *Upāyakauśalya-sūtra* or *Skill-in-Means Sūtra* is a very influential text of Indian Mahāyāna in which the idea of "liberation killing" is expounded.

[2] Jenkins mentions some of these stories. See Stephen Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (Switzerland: Lausanne University, 2010 - 2011), 299–331.

> and going to the great hells because of the deed.' Then the Captain Great Compassionate awoke. He considered what means there might be to prevent that person from killing the five hundred merchants and going to the great hells."

The story continues by narrating that for seven days the Captain plunged deep into thought, and after that he found that

> "there is no means to prevent this man from slaying the merchants and going to the great hells but to kill him." Then he thought, "if I were to report this to the merchants, they would kill and slay him with angry thoughts, and all go the great hells themselves.… If I were to kill this person, I would likewise burn in the great hells.… I will kill this person myself." Accordingly, the Captain Great Compassionate protected those five merchants and protected that person from going to the great hells by deliberately stabbing and slaying that person who was a robber with a spear, with great Compassion [sic] and skill in means. And all among the company achieved their aims and each went to his own city.

The end of the story narrates the destiny of everyone:

> For me [Buddha as the Captain], samsāra was curtailed for one hundred thousand eons because of that skill in means and great compassion, And the robber died to be reborn in a world of paradise. The five hundred merchants on board are the five hundred future Buddhas of the auspicious eons. Son of the family, what do you think of this? Can curtailing birth and death for one hundred-thousand eons with that skill in means and that great compassion with the gnosis of skill in means be regarded as the Bodhisattva's obstacle caused by past deeds? Do not view it in that way. That should be regarded as his very skill in means.[1]

In this case, the robber who was killed is actually rescued from a fate much worse than mere death and a long period of horrible suffering which would be the karmic retribution for killing a large number of spiritually advanced people. According to the story, there are some notable points that require further examination:

[1] *The Skill in Means* (*Upāyakauśalya) Sūtra*, translated by Mark Tatz (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), 73-74.

1- If other merchants who are bodhisattvas understood the fact about the thief, they would kill the thief with angry thoughts. Accordingly, killing out of compassion is a very particular practice specific to a fully illuminated bodhisattva.

2- The Bodhisattva is primarily concerned with the vicious thief, the crime he wishes to commit and its outcome, rather than the innocent passengers and saving their lives. In other words, the worldly life is not taken into account at all. Even regarding the merchants, the Captain believes that he has "protected" them not because they are alive now, but by preventing them from committing a murder out of aggression.

3- According to the story, the Captain understands the fact about the vicious one and the best solution through the help of the deities and meditation.

4- The text does emphasize the fact that the bodhisattva contemplates for seven days and only after this exercise, he comes to the conclusion that the solution to the dilemma is to kill the thief. This process demonstrates that his action was not spontaneous, nor was it something that is normally performed by a bodhisattva.

5- The practice of killing out of compassion entails high efficacy; it appears that this type of killing purifies the thief's malicious thoughts in a way that he is reborn in a world of paradise. In addition, the cycles of samsāra were shortened by this action.

All these matters are very significant points that need to be scrutinized through studying relevant sacred texts and their commentaries, which will be discussed throughout this chapter. In the next section, I inquire into the principles of Mahāyāna ethics to discover the elements by which this story and similar ones were shaped, and how they contributed to the evolution of the concept of compassionate violence in Mahāyāna Buddhism.

1.3 Ethics in Mahāyāna Buddhism

Ethics in Mahāyāna has more complex aspects than what is found in foundational Buddhism. The main reason for this fact can be traced back the central idea of the bodhisattva. It can be said that by presenting the bodhisattva idea, Mahāyāna has focused more on a universal soteriological goal. In this new ethical paradigm, the enlightened one is to take the responsibility for helping others to attain salvation, showing the path to them, and reducing or preventing their suffering. Consequently, ethics goes much further than a limited personal dimension; it is transformed from a fundamental principle serving spiritual perfection and "individual salvation" into an *instrument* serving "universal salvation". It is quoted in a Mahāyāna text that "by protecting oneself, one protects others; [by] protecting others, one protects oneself."[1] Jenkins explains the issue in Mahāyāna:

> This is simply expressed in the bodhisattva's vow to attain the pinnacle of self-empowerment, buddhahood, for the sake of benefiting others. A circularity between the benefit of self and others is evident in the fact that it is only through helping others that a bodhisattva can accumulate the vast merit required to attain buddhahood.[2]

In the *Vajradhvaja-sūtra*, the bodhisattva is compared to the sun which bestows its light to all beings regardless of their capacity: "When the sun shines, O Devaputra, it illuminates the entire world, regardless of the blindness of beings and the mountain shadows. In the same way, Bodhisattvas appear for the liberation of beings, regardless of the obstacles that these may present."[3]

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[1] Quoted in Perry Schmidt-Leukel, *Understanding Buddhism* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2006), 63.

[2] Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," 304.

[3] Shāntideva, *The Way of the Bodhisattva (A Translation of the Bodhicharyāvatarā)*, translated by The Padmakara Translation Group. (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2011), second edition, 234.

The bodhisattva is the person whose good conduct goes much further than the personal realm and is "to be applied for the benefit and ripening of all beings."[1] Keown and Prebish maintain that since the main goal of the enlightened one's moral practice is for the benefit of oneself and others, we can conclude that the basic value of ethical perfection lies in the concept of karuna.[2] The virtues of compassion and saving sentient beings are highlighted in narratives such as the Jātaka tales. As Gray indicates,

> these themes are dramatically illustrated in stories such as the Bodhisattva's self-sacrifice to feed a hungry tiger family, or in the stories of King Śibi, who sacrificed his own eyes at the request of a beggar, as well as his own flesh to save the life of a pigeon. The importance of these stories is such that they stand at the beginning of Ārya Śūra's Jātaka collection (Khoroche 1989:5-17), and they were also illustrated on a number of Buddhist monuments.[3]

Therefore, ethics, which had an intrinsic value in classic Buddhism, finds an instrumental role in Mahāyāna, its function and efficacy fade, and its undisputed authority is pushed to the margins as a result of the central figure of the bodhisattva. Here is where the seed of the concept of the compassionate violence emerges: can a bodhisattva accomplish his or her soteriological duty within the structure of classical Buddhist ethics, or does a bodhisattva need to go to extremes occasionally?

The point is that in Mahāyāna, ethics cannot define the bodhisattva's practice; rather, it is the bodhisattva who designates the new borders of ethics. There are not any moral rules for the bodhisattva in this new paradigm because he or she is the pivotal criterion for laying down new

[1] Barbara Clayton, *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's Śikṣasamuccaya* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 61.

[2] Damien Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 159. Charles Prebish. "From Monastic Ethics to Modern Society," in *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics,* edited by Damien Keown (London: Curzon, 2000), 47.

[3] David Gray, "Compassionate Violence? On the Ethical Implications of Tantric Buddhist Ritual," 241.

laws or rejecting the accepted ones. That is why in some of the Mahāyāna writings, the bodhisattva's actions go further than the moral precepts; sometimes he or she needs to perform activities against the rules in order to benefit more beings or prevent more suffering. One of the most influential lists indicating traditionally forbidden actions in Buddhist texts is the ten virtuous courses of action (*dasakusalakamma patha*), which are themselves avoidances of ten destructive actions, divided into the negative physical actions of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the negative verbal ones of lying, divisive speech, harsh speech and gossip; and the mental actions of malicious thought, covetousness and false views.[1] According to Tatz, "the bodhisattva has permission to commit the seven unvirtuous courses of action that are done with body and speech,"[2] but not the mental ones. However, this is the idea of some of the thinkers such as Asaṅga, while some others like Śāntideva believe that even the mental virtuous can be violated under special circumstances.[3] However, as I will discuss later, this violation of ethical precepts entails specific requirements in order to be regarded as justifiable.

It is important to note that Mahāyāna ethics does not extend the permission to break moral rules to anyone to reach this ideal, but the enlightened one needs to transgress some of the ethical precepts without attention to whatever consequences might follow. In other words, there are still karmic consequences, but the bigger picture needs to be the priority. Transgression of the precept of not to kill living beings is allowed or described as an admirable practice in certain exceptional situations.

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[1] See Stephen Harris, "The Skillful Handling of Poison: *Bodhicitta* and *the Kleśas* in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra,*" *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 45, Leiden University (2017): 334- 38.

[2] See Mark Tatz, trans., *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics with the Commentary of Tsong-Kha-Pa, The Basic Path to Awakening, The Complete Bodhisattva* (New York and Ontario: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 23-24.

[3] This issue is explained in more details in section 1.4.2.

It is not easy to distinguish whether these kinds of violence aimed at mundane goals or super-mundane objectives, but it seems that both objectives have motivated Buddhists to justify killing. The concept which is applied in accordance with the bodhisattva's soteriological goal is *upāya* (skill in means or skillful means), which as Tatz describes, "supersedes all other precepts"[1] and should be accompanied with wisdom and compassion to accomplish the welfare of others. [2]

The Vajrayāna path follows the ethics of Mahāyāna in this issue. The fact is that tantric Buddhist thinkers not only accept this idea that bodhisattvas are exempt from observing ordinary ethical norms, but also encourage it. For instance, as Gray mentions, the eighth-century tantric philosopher Śāntarakṣita quotes from various sources to support this idea that bodhisattvas can transcend conventional rules of morality. He claims, "As it is stated in all of the Yogatantras such as the *Guhyendutilaka*, 'for the mind endowed with wisdom and expedience, there is nothing which should not be done.'"[3] The noble *Cloud of Jewels* states clearly that it is permissible to kill someone who is about to commit an action of immediate retribution.[4]

It should be reminded here that all these violations can be done only with the aim of realizing universal salvation and offering more proper assistance to practitioners. Therefore, the enlightened one always does what she or he finds as the best rather than going through the process that ordinary people follow. As Goodman indicates,

> once they see what would have the best results, the corresponding movements just happen, without intervening states such as decisions and the formation of

[1] Ibid., 15.

[2] In Mahāyāna, even a more extremist interpretation appeared representing that a bodhisattva could bear the sins of others. See Ryōjun Mitomo, "The Ethics of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the Bodhicaryāvatāra," in *Buddhist Ethics and Modern Society*, edited by Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Sandra A. Wawrytko (New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1991), 19.

[3] See Gray, "Compassionate Violence," 243.

[4] See Goodman, *The Training Anthology of Santideva,* 165.

> intentions. The abandonment of all selfish desires has removed all hindrances to the operation of this compassion, which now spontaneously produces bodily and vocal movements that cause the happiness and relieve the suffering of others."[1]

These facts show that breaking the precepts and committing violence is left open for exceptional individuals and under special circumstances in Mahāyāna tradition. In the next section, I will examine the ideas which justify this transgression.

It is notable that some scholars such as Rupert Gethin hold that the concept of "compassionate killing" is not compatible with the ethical values of early Buddhist texts, especially with the definition of compassion. This debate argues that according to these early texts, someone who possesses a high compassionate intention has destroyed all roots of hate and delusion and is not able to commit the act of taking life. Gethin states:

> The possibility that an act of killing a living being can be motivated by wholesome (kusala) states of mind is simply not allowed in Abhidhamma Buddhist psychology; the intention to kill another being always crucially involves hatred or aversion (Gethin 2004). While certain acts of killing may be manifestations of stronger and more intense instances of anger, hatred, or aversion, no act of killing can be entirely free of these. There can be no justification of any act of killing as entirely blameless, as entirely free of the taint of aversion or hatred. In Abhidhamma terms, acts of killing can only ever be justified as more or less akusala, never as purely kusala. This applies to acts of so-called mercy killing, and acts of war and suicide.[2]

However, this view is refuted by some other scholars. For example, Keown maintains that three unlikely claims are involved in the dogma of the impossibility of compassionate killing.[3]

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[1] Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion*, 132.

[2] Rupert Gethin, "Buddhist Monks, Buddhist Kings, Buddhist Violence: On the Early Buddhist Attitudes to Violence," in *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice,* edited by John R. Hinnells and Richard King (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 67.

[3] See Damien Keown, "On Compassionate Killing and the Abhidhamma's 'Psychological Ethics,'" *Journal of Buddhist Ethics,* vol. 23 (2016).

1.4 *Upāya* (skillful means)

Upāya is a central term in Mahāyāna ethics which is commonly rendered into English by translations such as "expediency," "skillful means" and "adapted teachings."[1] It entails a pedagogical and soteriological function and even a hermeneutical[2] one. This term which is frequently used in the compound *upāyakauśalya* (skill in means), occurs a few times in the Theravāda canon[3], but hardly rises to the level of a regular technical concept, though it comes to prominence later in Mahāyāna.[4] Upāya is defined as the pivotal core of Mahāyāna which distinguishes it from other forms of Buddhism.[5] The main goal of skillful means is to benefit others, inasmuch as it is stated that refraining from engaging in harsh or threatening actions when it is necessary to benefit others is a moral failure.[6] A very important point that needs to be noted is that the bodhisattva is both the beneficiary and the benefactor by applying skillful means.

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[1] Daigan and Matsunaga, "The Concept of Upaya in Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 1, (March 1974): 51.

[2] In his essay, Asaf Federman suggests that skillful means is an ingenious exercise utilized by some of the Mahāyāna thinkers as a hermeneutical device for reinterpreting the sacred texts and Buddha's words and actions. He states that the idea of skillful means allows Mahāyānists to "challenge central Buddhist paradigms and offer a reorientation of the facts.…. [It also allows] a rejection of old literal statements about the life of the Buddha in order to charge them with new meaning." Asaf Federman, "Literal Means and Hidden Meanings: A New Analysis of Skillful Means," *Philosophy East & West* 59, no. 2 (April 2009): 125.

[3] Pye mentions some of these utilizations in the Theravāda texts. See Michael Pye, "Upāya," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones (USA: Macmillan Reference, Gale, 2005), vol. 14, 9484.

[4] Michael Pye, *Skillful Means: A Concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 119.

[5] See Pelden: "There are three kinds of virtue. There is virtue tending to happiness in samsara, which is marked by neither skillful means nor wisdom. There is virtue tending to liberation, which is informed by the wisdom of understanding the nonexistence of the self. Finally, there is the virtue of the Mahayana, which is performed with both wisdom and skillful means." Kunzang Pelden, *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech: A Detailed Commentary on Shantideva's Way of the Bodhisattva*. Trranslated by Padmakara Translation Group (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2010), ch. 6, 198.

[6] Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," 309.

It is mentioned in the texts that Mahāyāna surpasses Theravāda through a seven-fold superiority which one of them is skillful means.[1] Furthermore, it is regarded the most significant feature of a bodhisattva, insofar as that if an enlightened one is not familiar with this skill or cannot apply the means skillfully, he or she is no longer considered a bodhisattva.

As Keown indicates, it is the upāya of bodhisattvas of the seventh stage (*upāya-kauśalyabhumi*) and beyond whose powers and perfections are supernatural. It is only they who have the knowledge and power to use it and can transgress the precepts from motives of compassion.[2] He continues that "by the seventh *bhūmi*, bodhisattvas are perfect in the two divisions of the first six Perfections, namely ethics and insight. In a sense that the final four Perfections are a recapitulation of the first six."[3] It is indicated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that for obtaining skillfulness, the bodhisattva should perform a variety of ascetic practices.[4]

In its soteriological function, upāya is the highest level of the skilled manner for helping individuals to attain enlightenment. As Gowans states, "the common understanding of skillful means is that the Buddha's teaching was typically addressed to a particular person in a particular context for a particular purpose."[5] However, this function is striking when a situation is not normal,

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[1] *Drops of Nectar: Khenpo Kunpal's Commentary on Shantideva's Entering the Conduct of the Bodhisattvas*, Compiled and translated by Andreas Kretschmar (Tibet: Palatino, 2004), vol. 1, 347.

[2] See Keown, *The nature of the Buddhist Ethics*, 157.

[3] Ibid., 159.

[4] *The Nirvana Sūtra*: *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* Mark L. Blum, trans. vol. 1 (California: BDK America, 2013), 54.

[5] Christopher Gowans, "Buddhist Moral Thought and Western Moral Philosophy," in *A Mirror Is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics,* edited by Jake Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 62.

Gowans concludes that this definition of skillful means is very close to relativism, holism, and particularism. He indicates that "a proper understanding of his [bodhisattva] teaching on each occasion may require reference to these particularities, and so we should not assume that what was emphasized as important on one occasion would be emphasized as important on all other occasions or was intended as the final and complete statement of some doctrine or principle." Ibid., 62-64.

or an audience is very different from other ones. The following saying quoted by Pelden is notable: "When sun is warm and stomach full, you look like a practitioner. When setbacks and hard times befall, you're really very ordinary!"[1] Likewise, Asaṅga describes those bodhisattvas who are skilled in means as those who turn hardship into enlightened path even when the world is full of evil.[2]

It is also said in the *Mahaguhyaupayakaushalya-sūtra* that those bodhisattvas "who are wise in emptiness and skilled in the methods of compassion will not be defeated even by serious downfalls." [3] They are analogized to the sun, which bestows its light on every being under any circumstances:

> The outer palace of the sun, o Devaputra, which is material, has no choice but to do its work of illuminating the four continents all by itself. It is unobstructed by cloud, dust, or wind, and it sheds its light impartially over everything. And although all beings place their hope in it, the sun for its part has no need to rely on anything. In the same way, I, a Bodhisattva skilled in emptiness and the means of great compassion, will bring to maturity and liberation all beings, whose number is as limitless as space itself. And I will do this by myself alone! [4]

Therefore, ordinary moral prescriptions may be transgressed by a bodhisattva as a form of skillful means, which is applied as a method by justification of helping others to become awakened. In this meaning, skillful means is finding the best method by wisdom and compassion for transferring a specific teaching according to the abilities of the audience. In other words, this concept may denote the justification of an instrument for the sake of a goal.

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[1] Pelden, *The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech,* 62.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 252.

[4] Ibid., 250-51.

Upāya cannot be confined to a specific structure with a clear pattern; rather, it finds various aspects and interpretations. In fact, the notion of upāya entails acknowledging people's various tendencies and approaches in their spiritual journeys. Even some excellent methods may be harmful for those not ready to accept them. Accepting this diversity of levels leads to providing diverse techniques and teachings for leading people. Accordingly, a high-level bodhisattva cannot believe in a single teaching method for all people and for all circumstances. As it is narrated,

> "when the Buddha began preaching the Lotus Sutra some of his audience walked out. They were satisfied with the purification practices in which they were already engaged, and the new Mahāyāna teachings were unsettling and alarming. Śākyamuni encouraged and supported their leaving; the teachings of the Lotus would have been inappropriate and useless for them."[1]

It should be noticed here that upāya's dimensions are not limited to its diversity. It also entails breaking conventional precepts and even performing conventionally unethical actions. This feature makes ethics more flexible and situational rather than definitive virtues and rules should be observed. According to some of the main texts in early Mahāyāna, such as the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeša Sūtra*, Harris observes that high-level bodhisattvas and buddhas not only employ different methods and teachings according to their audience's level, but also use falsehoods in ministering to the needs of people to accomplish their spiritual development.[2] Accordingly, in this new paradigm, the "right action" is mainly described and evaluated by the doer and her intention rather than the action in itself, and the doer is the factor that authorizes an action. In most of these books, violating the basic ethical rules by a bodhisattva is allowable. For

[1] Taigen Dan Leighton, *Faces of Compassion* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2012), 76.

[2] Stephen Harris, "On the Classification of Śāntideva's Ethics in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra,*" *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 1 (January 2015), 253.

example, Prebish explains in detail that how bodhisattvas may breach minor matters of deportment according to the codes of *Bodhisattvabhūmi*.[1]

One of the most famous texts discuss the idea of skillful means is the *Lotus Sūtra* in which skillful means is a central doctrine and many stories are narrated in it to explain the concept. [2] The concept of skill in means plays an important role throughout the text, occurring over eighty times in the first eight chapters.[3] Pye indicates that in the *Lotus Sūtra,* "it is not merely a question of particular teachings being regarded as secondary formulations. The very appearance of the Buddha, his setting the wheel of the Dharma in motion, and his winning of nirvāna, have a provisional, dialectical nature related to the needs of living beings in their diversity."[4]

One of these cases is the well-known example of "The Burning House" in chapter 3, which clarifies aspects of the theme. According to the text, the Buddha tells a parable to his disciple Shariputra, about a man whose house catches fire when his children inside are entertaining themselves with their favorite playthings. He calls out to his children to leave the house, but they do not believe it is on fire and continue playing with their toys. Therefore, he uses skillful or expedient means to save his children; in order to get them to leave, he promises them three gifts outside the house. Hearing this, the children run from the burning house and are saved.[5] Buddha

[1] See Prebish, "From Monastic Ethics to Modern Society," 45.

[2] Michael Pye examines this meaning in the *Lotus Sūtra* and presents different stories of this concept in his book. See Michael Pye, *Skillful Means*, 18- 82.

[3] Pye, "Upāya," 9485.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Gene Reeves, trans., *The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008), 122- 125.

continues that as the father of the world, he is like this man and all living beings are his children who are stuck in suffering and desire and threatened by many dreadful flames:

> I am the father of this world,
> All living beings
> Are my children,
> But deeply attached to worldly pleasures,
> They are without wisdom.…
>
> Yet, though I have taught and warned them,
> They have not believed or accepted what I said, …
> Therefore, I use skillful means,
> Telling them of the three vehicles.[1]

As Michael Pye explains this story, "the otherwise polemically differentiated "vehicles" *(yāna)—śrāvaka* ("hearer of the Dharma"), *pratyekabuddha* (self-enlightened Buddha), and *bodhisattva*—are only provisional constructs designed to appeal to persons of different religious capacities. Ultimately, it is only the path of the Buddhas *(buddhayāna)* that is real."[2]

Another aspect of skillful means lies in the fact that it is a very deep notion and its truth cannot be grasped by ordinary wisdom. It is indicated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that ordinary people never can understand the real nature of ūpaya in the bodhisattvas: "Good man, the meaning of these things is beyond the extent of your knowledge. The dharma bodies of buddhas have a variety of skillful means that simply cannot be conceptualized."[3] In fact, ūpaya has various aspects which grasping all of them is impossible.

Accordingly, the disciple needs to trust the bodhisattva completely and perform his orders without any doubt in their efficacy. As Leighton explains: "Skillful means involves trusting

[1] Ibid., 127.

[2] Pye, "Upāya," 9485.

[3] Mark Blum, trans. *The Nirvana Sūtra,* 87.

buddha and trusting the world to supply what is required. Such Buddhist faith in the awakening nature of reality entails trusting all beings to help all beings and opening oneself to be an instrument of skillful means."[1]

Jerryson believes that the theme of ūpaya can imply violence. He states that "in neither the Lotus Sutra nor the Sutra of the Forty-Two Sections (or even in Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior) do we find direct advocacy of violence; instead we encounter ambiguous passages for such an interpretation."[2] This claim is notable when we encounter references to stories that include the theme of skillful means in order to justify violence. For instance, Tenzin Gyatso (bsTan 'dzin rGya mtsho), the current Fourteenth Dalai Lama, refers to the simile of the Ship's Captain in order to justify killing in exceptional cases. Yet the Dalai Lama emphasizes that it is generally "better not to use this method," since "killing out of mercy" is a principle that "always bears the risk of negative reasons and feelings.[3] The fact is that in contemporary Buddhism, upāya remains a crucial concept and affects ongoing debates about the method for transmitting dharma, the practices which are appropriate for Buddhists, ethical decisions and judgements, war and politics, and proper behavior of teachers toward their disciples.[4]

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, Asaṅga and Śāntideva are the two significant figures who notice the concept of *upāya* and expand the idea of compassionate violence. Therefore, this notion is probed here mostly by reliance on the opinions of these two Mahāyāna thinkers.

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[1] Leighton, *Faces of Compassion*, 77.

[2] Michael Jerryson, "Buddhist Traditions and Violence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*. Edited by Mark Juergensmeyer et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50.

[3] Jens Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution?" 147.

[4] See Roger Jackson, "Upāya," in *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, edited by Robert E. Buswell (USA: Thomson Gale, 2004), 872.

1.4.1 Asaṅga

Asaṅga's *Chapter on Ethics* is one of the principal sources on the issue of compassionate killing and transgression of moral rules. This chapter is a piece of his larger work, *The Bodhisattva Stages (Bodhisattva-bhūmi).* In his work, Asaṅga argues for violating the rules by a bodhisattva and the meaning of skillful means by giving different examples of how the bodhisattva may transgress several moral precepts.[1] He discusses several times that the bodhisattva can break the precepts whenever he finds it necessary to help people attain enlightenment more easily:

> The bodhisattva may behold a robber or thief engaged in committing a great many deeds of immediate retribution, being about to murder many hundreds of magnificent living beings--auditors, independent buddhas, and bodhisattvas—for the sake of a few material goods. Seeing it, he forms this thought in his mind: "If I take the life of this sentient being, I myself may be reborn as one of the creatures of hell. Better that I be reborn a creature of hell than that this living being, having committed a deed of immediate retribution, should go straight to hell." With such an attitude the bodhisattva ascertains that the thought is virtuous or indeterminate and then, feeling constrained, with only a thought of mercy for the consequence, he takes the life of that living being. There is no fault, but a spread of much merit. (69.a3)[2]

The main significant prerequisite which should accompany violation of a precept is pure compassion. In this situation, the bodhisattva is like a compassionate physician who cuts off an infected finger. The bodhisattva performs such an amputation with a sense of regret an as a last resort.[3] Asaṅga continues in this text by giving permission for lying, slander, harsh speech, idle

[1] Asaṅga permits breaking the first seven precepts because the last three, malicious thoughts, covetousness and false views are intrinsically negative and are caused by a failure in the mental state. (Cf. Harris, "The Skillfull Handling of Poisoning," 339) Moreover, Appleton indicates that "It is said in the prose of the *Hārita-jātaka* that the Bodhisattva can break all the precepts but never lie, yet we even find examples of the Bodhisattva deceiving people." Naomi Appleton, *Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism: Narrating the Bodhisatta Path* (England & USA: Ashgate, 2010), 21.

[2] Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics*, 70-71.

[3] See Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," 312.

chatter, stealing, sexual misconduct, and killing when these actions are motivated by a compassionate wish to benefit all beings. For instance, the bodhisattva steals back religious items that were taken by thieves from a temple, uses slander to divide disciples from corrupt teachers, and speaks harsh words to frighten people into following Buddhist teachings.[1] Here is another example from Asaṅga's discussion:

> Accordingly, the bodhisattva, for sentient beings inclined to dance, song, and instrumental music, and for those inclined to tales of kings and robbers, food and drink, prostitutes and street scenes, is learned in varieties of dance, song, music, and narrative. With a merciful intention he pleases them with varieties of narrative containing dance, song, and music, and endowed with idle chatter. He bends them to submission to his will and influence. Having drawn them in to listen to his words, he moves them from an unwholesome to a wholesome situation. So although there is idle chatter on the part of the bodhisattva, there is no fault, but a spread of much merit."[2]

Asaṅga emphasizes that in committing these practices, which are obviously opposite to the precepts, "There is no fault, but a spread of much merit." [3]

The theme which Asaṅga is discussing it here is found in the second chapter of the *Vimalakirti Sūtra*.[4] The second chapter named "expedient means", narrates that Vimalakirti —who is presenting the bodhisattva's character in this book— lives as a rich lay man in the great city of Vaishali. From the start it is told explicitly that Vimalakirti lives in Vaishali for the sake of saving others, and in order to do that, "he employs the excellent expedient of residing in Vaishali." He is described through contrasts, which represents him as an uncommon figure: "he wears layman's clothes, yet lives as a *śramaṇa*; he has a wife, a son and harem, yet practices purity; he appears to

[1] Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics*, 69-70.

[2] Ibid., 72.

[3] Ibid., 70-73.

[4] Burton Watson, *The Vimalakirti Sutra* (USA: Columbia University Press, 1997), 32- 6.

be surrounded by a retinue, yet practices solitude; he appears to eat, yet is nourished by the virtues of his meditation."[1] He also goes to games and gambling houses, into brothels, and listens to the doctrines of other religions. All theses are done as salvific strategies for the sake of "bringing enlightenment to those there." Then Vimalakirti employs his most important expedient means; he pretends that he is sick in order to give discourses on the reality of the word, emptiness and impermanence of the human body to his visitors.[2]

Another significant element that validates the compassionate violence is intention and state of mind. The Tibetan commentator on Asaṅga's book, Tsong-kha-pa, mentions in *The Basic Path to Awakening* that "state of mind" is one of the main prerequisites for killing: "The time of killing he must ascertain the state of his own thought to be either virtuous or [karmically] indeterminate, and entirely unmixed with defilement and the like."[3] However, some scholars such as Schmithausen believe that the author is describing the victim's state of mind,[4] while others like Tatz hold that this interpretation that this applies to the thought of the victim, makes no sense,[5] and the description regarding the quality of mind refers to the bodhisattva's one. Tatz also emphasizes that the bodhisattva can kill in a situation in which he or she has no other choice but to kill: "There is a paucity of alternatives, since he can find no other means."[6]

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[1] See Edward Hamlin, "Magical Upāya in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra,*" in *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 11, no. 1 (1988): 101.

[2] Hamlin argues that this story which includes the illusory sickness of Vimalakirti reflects characteristics which are related to the notion of emptiness and illusion. See ibid., 101- 102.

[3] Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics,* 215.

[4] Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude towards War," 59.

[5] Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics,* 215.

[6] Ibid.

Consequently, every precept can be broken by the bodhisattva because of his pure intention to save others. According to Asaṅga's view, intention is the main factor which can justify killing. Another commentary on Asaṅga's work emphasises intention of killing as a pivotal point in Asaṅga's thought: "In as much as they are engaged in the means for bringing sentient beings to maturity, their verbal conduct can have no connection at all with the unvirtuous courses of action."[1]It continues with indicating that virtuous thought and pure intention are the most significant elements that validate violating the rules:

> The Skill in Means scripture shows taking life to be unreprehensible when done with detachment and so forth. When it develops from a virtuous thought (because the thought is conjoined with detachment and so forth), it is virtuous. All those done by body [murder, theft, and sexual intercourse] presented in relationship to thought… So application follows intention, and killing with a pure intention is unreprehensible."[2]

As Harvey states, intention of an action is the most important criteria for ethically evaluating an action in Buddhist ethics.[3]

It is noticeable that the most obvious benefit of breaking the prohibitions is to prevent the recipient from experiencing the negative consequences of his misdeed. Indeed, protecting others from being hurt by the actor's commission (such as saving the life of passengers of the ship in the Captain's story) is regarded in the next stages with less attention.

Asaṅga maintains that benefiting sentient beings is another factor for validating transgression of the moral rules. He believes that when outcomes of violating a moral rule are beneficial to some beings, they would be acceptable. Goodman believes that according to Asaṅga,

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[1] Ibid., 326.

[2] Ibid., 323.

[3] Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics*, 52-58.

the act of breaking the precepts must benefit sentient beings distributively so that every being affected must benefit or at least not be harmed.[1] This consequentialist tendency of Asaṅga which is one factor besides others for justifying an action, can be interpreted as wisdom, the ability to recognize the beneficence of an action; and the pure intention is interpreted as compassion for the wrongdoer.[2] In fact, compassion and wisdom play a critical role in the bodhisattva's mind and protect it from the arising of selfishness, craving, and hatred.

A detailed debate on the meaning of consequentialism in Asaṅga's viewpoint has evolved. Some scholars like Goodman argue that Mahāyāna supports a consequentialist interpretation in ethics because of its emphasis on the benefits of action. In opposition to this approach, some other scholars, such as Harris[3] and Gowans,[4] put forward that for Mahāyāna thinkers like Asaṅga, further factors, including the purity of mind of the person who violates the moral rules or what the person performing the action intended, are of higher importance in authorizing an action. As Gowans indicates, "it may be objected that the great emphasis on moral character, and in particular on the importance of mental states such as intentions and motives, and whether or not they are wholesome or skillful (*kusala*), shows that Buddhist ethics is concerned with more than the best consequences of actions."[5]

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[1] Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion*, 85.

He continues that "this fact may be surprising, since Asaṅga includes killing as one example of permissible precept-breaking." It seems that Goodman has not considered the fact that the value of the worldly life is interpreted in the light of samsara and karma; therefore, both death and life can be considered positive or negative cases in regard to the one's action, and they do not entail any intrinsic value.

[2] I have simply applied the word consequentialist here to emphasize on the results of the action, rather than the issues argued in Ethics.

[3] See Harris, "The Skillful Handling of Poison," 338-39.

[4] See Gowans, "Buddhist Moral Thought," 58.

[5] Ibid.

I think that even if we want to highlight the results and benefits of action, it would be a very simplistic view to call this tendency a consequentialist interpretation. If we remember the story of the Ship's Captain who killed the vicious one in order to save the victim rather than saving others, it can be concluded that the meaning of *result* and *benefit* in the Mahāyāna context is entirely different from the common understanding. In fact, the entire intellectual context of the theme should be regarded in any interpretation.

1.4.2 Śāntideva

Śāntideva is considered the main thinker in Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics. It is narrated that in some parts of his life, he had a very strict "yogic conduct" and abstained from normal food and ways of living. He followed this conduct "as a skillful means designed to destroy fixation on and attachment to concepts such as 'clean' and 'dirty.'"[1]

Śāntideva's two books, Ś*ikṣāsamuccaya* and *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, form the basis of Mahāyāna ethics.[2] Ś*ikṣāsamuccaya* is organized into three parts, which according to Prebish, "form a comprehensive statement on bodhisattva ethics."[3] The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (*Introduction to the Practice of Awakening*) which is arranged in ten chapters, is the most famous Mahāyāna text that deals with the conduct of the bodhisattva and the characterizations of compassion. As Gold explains, "this book is distinctive within Indian Buddhist literature for its practical,

[1] Kretschmar, *Drops of Nectar*, 335.

[2]. Prebish, "From Monastic Ethics to Modern Society," 44. Prebish mentions the main ethical texts in Mahayana are as follows: (1) (Mahāyāna) *Brahmajāla-sūtra*, an apocryphal Chinese work (2) Ś*ikṣāsamuccaya* of Śāntideva, and (3) *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva (p. 44); and he continues: "Two further texts are critically important here: the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* and the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, and it is on the basis of their evidence that many authors, Buddhist and otherwise, have advanced the theory of the superiority of Mahāyāna ethics over that of nikāya Buddhism." Ibid., 45.

[3] Ibid.

psychologically vivid articulation of the Mahāyāna path."[1] It is considered a comprehensive work in the Mahāyāna tradition since it includes the philosophical and doctrinal analysis for an experienced audience, besides being a complete guide to Buddhist practice. [2]

Śāntideva has called his book *Bodhicaryāvatāra* because it deals with the training of the bodhisattva and consists of the practice of the six or ten *pāramitās*. As is explained in the introduction to the English translation of the book, these practices can be categorized into three branches: "avoiding harmful actions, adopting virtuous actions, and working for the benefit of beings."[3] Śāntideva describes this path in three stages:

> entrance, training, and accomplishment. The entrance involves taking the Bodhisattva Vow and conceiving for the first time the aspiration for enlightenment, which is called *bodhichitta.* The main body of the text describes the training that follows the generation of *bodhichitta*, that is, the practice of the six *pāramitās*. The goal of this, the accomplishment of Buddhahood, is briefly described at the end of the ninth chapter to attain enlightenment in itself, and to do so for the sake of all beings.[4]

Śāntideva maintains that the most important factor for a bodhisattva in his or her spiritual accomplishment is his or her endeavor to benefit others:

> Directly, then, or indirectly,
> Do nothing that is not for others' sake.
> And solely for their welfare dedicate
> Your every action to the gaining of enlightenment.[5]

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[1] Jonathan Gold, "Participatory Authorship and Communal Interpretation: The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* as a "World Classic,'" in *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*, edited by Jonathan Gold and Douglas Duckworth, (USA: Columbia University Press, 2019), 1-2.

[2] See ibid.

[3] *Shāntideva*, ch.1 (The Benefits of Bodhichitta), stanza 3.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., ch 5 (Vigilant Introspection), stanza 10.

"One should do nothing other than what is either directly or indirectly of benefit to living beings, and for the benefit of living beings alone one should dedicate everything to Awakening. Never, even at the cost of one's life, should one

In all the following sayings, Śāntideva argues the necessity of skillful means for accomplishing the liberation path:

> The Bodhisattva who is skilled in means knows how to bring sentient beings to maturity with that skill in means.[1]
>
> I am skilled in means. I know how to help. In the ocean of cyclic existence, I stand in the ship of complete knowing, on the mainland. I am skilled in dedicating [goodness]. I show the farther shore.[2]
>
> [Bodhisattvas are persons who] discipline sentient beings with thousands of skillful means.[3]
>
> Using various methods of skillful means, wandering through the world, they benefit living beings.[4]

In the fifth chapter of *Bodhicaryāvatāra* one reads: "Thus enlightened, one ought to be constantly active for the sake of others. Even that which generally is forbidden is allowed to the one who understands the work of compassion."[5] This rule can be interpreted by understanding the concept of *upāya-kauśalya* and its role in Mahāyāna ethics. This is the theme that laid the foundation of Śāntideva's approach to the bodhisattva and his conduct.[6]

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forsake a spiritual friend who upholds the Bodhisattva vow and is skilled in the meaning of the Mahäyäna." Śāntideva, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra,* Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, trans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 5, (Guarding of Awareness), 101-102.

[1] Charles Goodman, *The Training Anthology of Santideva: A Translation of the Siksa-samuccaya* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2016), 166.

[2] Ibid., 267.

[3] Ibid., 305.

[4] Ibid., 307.

[5] Quoted in Prebish, "From Monastic Ethics to Modern Society," 46.

[6] Charles Prebish represents some more cases of Śāntideva's ideas associated with transgressing the rules: "Throughout the eighth chapter of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* on 'Purification from Sin' (*Pāpaśodhanā*), citations abound, especially from the *Upāliparipṛcchā-sūtra* and the *Upāyakauśalya-sūtra*, in which ethical transgressions are allowed and sanctioned in the name of skill-in-means" Prebish, *From Monastic Ethics*, 46.

Benefitting others requires a diverse field of methods that needs to be in accordance with different people. This diversity of methods of upāya is the main reason for its justification and necessity. In his commentary on Śāntideva, Gyatso indicates that "To be able to help beings, whose needs and dispositions are so varied, it is necessary to resort to numerous and diverse methods."[1] Śāntideva holds that high doctrines should not be taught to everyone: "To those upon the lower paths do not explain the vast and deep."[2] By "vast" he means vast in activities and skillful means, and by "deep" he means deep in wisdom of emptiness:

> The 'vast' means that one has embarked upon the boundless trainings of the ten bodhisattva levels [*sa bcu*], of the five paths [*lam lnga*], and of the six perfections [*phar phyin drug*]. Thus, one is practicing the unity of 'profound knowledge' [*zab pa'i shes rab*] and 'vast skillful means'.[3]

Here we see that the notion of upāya is closely linked to that of *prajñā*, that is, to wisdom or insight into the true character of things. Such insight implies a recognition of the metaphysical voidness or insubstantiality of all phenomena and all factors of experience (dharmas).[4]

In fact, according to Śāntideva's viewpoint, upāya's necessity consists of two main folds: the first fold lies in the diversity of methods for benefitting others, and the second fold is related to the bodhisattva and his freedom in accomplishing the Bodhi path. Coseru argues that "Śāntideva, by allowing moral rules to be discarded for skillful means (arguably a consequentialist principle), compromises the notion of responsibility that requires a freedom that is responsive to

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[1] Tenzin Gyatso, *For the Benefit of All Beings (A Commentary on The Way of the Bodhisattva*), translated by Padmakara translation group (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2011), 56.

[2] *Shāntideva*: *The Way of the Bodhisattva,* ch.5 (Vigilant Introspection), stanza 89.

[3] Kretschmar, trans, *Drops of Nectar*, 346.

[4] Pye, "Upāya," 9485.

moral reasons."[1] Like Asaṅga, Śāntideva believes in an unrestricted freedom that permits the bodhisattva to perform a wide variety of activities, transgress ordinary moral prescriptions, and even commit any unethical action. As Clayton indicates,

> In the section of purification of the self Śāntideva cites various sutras that indicate that a bodhisattva may, for example, break the rules of celibacy, eat meat, steal, and even kill someone who intends to commit a deadly sin. He may also give gifts of intoxicants and weapons. Such transgressions are enjoined only if the motive is compassionate, and if the act will bring benefit to sentient beings.[2]

Another significant issue in studying upāya from Śāntideva's viewpoint is that skillful means, wisdom,[3] and compassion are never separated. In other words, wisdom and compassion are like two wings for the skillful bodhisattva, who by them can apply means properly. As Gyatso says: "through wisdom, they direct their minds to enlightenment, and through their compassion, they have concern for beings."[4] Harris indicates that Śāntideva's lengthy treatment of wisdom in the ninth chapter of *Bodhicaryāvatāra,* and the extensive meditations on compassion given in the eighth chapter suggest that "Śāntideva accepts the Mahayana position that *bodhicitta* involves the union of compassion and wisdom."[5] When he is asked regarding the other attributes of a person who is skilled in means, his response to this question refers to the necessity of both wisdom and compassion:

> Now, who has skill in means? Those who, with both wisdom and compassion, turn away from giving up on sentient beings. For giving up on sentient beings can

[1] Riccardo Repetti, "What Do Buddhists Think about Free Will?" in *A Mirror Is for Reflection: Understanding Buddhist Ethics,* edited by Jake Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 266.

[2] Clayton, *Moral Theory in Śāntideva's Śikṣasamuccaya,* 103.

[3] It should be noted here that in this theme, wisdom finds a very close relation with the understanding of emptiness. Transcendental knowledge is called "knowledge that arises from skillful means." This transcendental knowledge is itself "the recognition of profound emptiness, the buddha nature." Śāntideva continues that "Wisdom is like fire, easily enhanced by the fuel of skillful means. The swiftest way to enlightenment is unifying the practice of transcendental knowledge with the practices of skillful means." *Drops of Nectar,* translated by Kretschmar, 85- 86.

[4] Gyatso, *For the Benefit of All Beings,* 22.

[5] Harris, "The Skillful Handling of Poison," 334.

> happen in two ways. With only wisdom, it happens because of recognizing the emptiness of suffering. And with only compassion, due to the influence of reactive emotions, compassion is quickly lost.[1]

In *Siksa-samuccaya*, when Śāntideva argues for the importance of upāya for the spiritual journey of a bodhisattva, he emphasises that this perfection will not be accomplished without skillful means, which is founded on wisdom and compassion. Śāntideva then discusses that lacking upāya not only necessarily testifies to lack of wisdom and compassion, but also may result in acquiring some negative attributes.[2] The following stanza is one of the most important sayings of Śāntideva about upāya and violation of the precepts; in it, most of the main concepts of upāya are apparent:

> Therefore understand this well,
> And always labor for the benefit of beings.
> The Compassionate One far-sightedly permits,
> To this end, even what has been proscribed. (ch. 5, stanza 84)

We can see almost all the notions integrated with upāya in this single stanza: aiming to benefit others, compassion, wisdom, and transgression of the precepts. The first interpretation deduced from the text obviously denotes that what is not permitted for others is allowable for the bodhisattva. Gyatso believes that this verse can be interpreted in another way also: "One meaning is that the compassionate Buddha, who sees not only the immediate but also the distant future, has seen that what is not permitted for certain beings is allowed for others."[3]

One of the main differences between Asaṅga and Śāntideva lies in that according to Asaṅga, the bodhisattva can transgress the precepts relating to body and speech, such as theft and killing with a mind free from craving and hatred, but not the mental ones, while Śāntideva extends

[1] Goodman, *The Training Anthology of Santideva*, 162.

[2] See ibid.

[3] Gyatso, *For the Benefit of All Beings*, ch. 5, 54.

this freedom. Asaṅga does not recommend any violation of the mental courses of negative action, of malice, covetousness and wrong views, because these are intrinsically negative, leading to harmful karmic consequences.

On the other hand, Śāntideva suggests some situations in which the bodhisattva needs to utilize the *kleśas* [three poisons or three unwholesome rules] as a strategy for gaining his soteriological goal. According to Harris, "the bodhisattva, protected by the incorruptible *bodhichitta,* which represents the strongest grade of compassion fused with wisdom, can handle even the *kleśas* with immunity, manipulating skillfully the three negative mental courses of action which even Asaṅga will not allow the bodhisattva to touch."[1] Consequently, there are some cases in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* where Śāntideva uses false conceptualization, negative emotional responses, including envy and pride, and ignorance directly as a liberative aid.[2]

1.5 Studying two cases of "killing out of compassion" in the Buddhist tradition

In this section, I aim to clarify the issue of killing motivated by compassion by representing two important cases in the Buddhist tradition that are similar to the story of the Ship's Captain and assist us in gaining a better understanding of this concept. The first case is regarded as a historical incident that narrates the assassination of an emperor whose figure has been a symbol of evil over the centuries. The second case is a sacrificial ritual in which a vicious person is sacrificed. Both

[1] Harris, "The Skillful Handling of Poison," 339.

[2] See ibid., 337-38. Harris points out a similarity of this view to the tantric one: "Śāntideva's strategy of utilizing afflicted energy bears a resemblance to one of the best-known features of Buddhist tantra, in which the power of desire (kāma) is used in the service of liberation." Ibid., 345.

Goodman insists on calling such an approach a "utilitarian interpretation of ethics. He believes that a virtue ethicist would say that the bodhisattva should never do anything that would prevent him from embodying the greatest of all virtues, even for the sake of others. See Goodman, Charles. "Śāntideva's Ethics of Impartial Compassion," in *Readings of Śāntideva's Guide to Bodhisattva Practice*, edited by Jonathan Gold and Douglas Duckworth (USA: Columbia University Press, 2019), 217.

cases address the notion of killing as a method of liberation for the person killed, and the killer is revered as a high-level compassionate monk or teacher.

It is necessary to consider the following observations in studying these cases which make them different from the story of the Ship's Captain:

- First, neither of these two actions is performed by a bodhisattva in their first narrations, which can provide us with a new sphere of interpreting skill in means and violation of the precepts. As will be noted later, the Buddhist monk who kills the wicked emperor is regarded as a manifestation of a bodhisattva in some of the later texts.
- Second, both examples regard killing those ones who are against Buddhist tradition, unlike the Ship's Captain, who kills a thief.

It seems that the very first idea of transgression of the precepts and killing motivated by compassion, which was confined to the bodhisattvas for the general idea of benefiting others, is finding other significant interpretations in the Buddhist tradition. In fact, it is being transferred to a strong justification for suppressing religious opponents. This position is justified through the elements found in this idea: the killer's compassion, benefiting others, and benefiting the victim by killing him to liberate him from his bad karma and (or) preventing that person from committing further negative actions.

In general, heretics or enemies of the Buddhist tradition were the main group whom could be killed out of compassion and without any karmic result for doers. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra,* for instance, says that "if one's motivation is pure, it is possible to kill someone who is persecuting Buddhists or deriding the Mahāyāna without incurring karmic retribution."[1] Even in some texts,

[1] Jenkins, "On the Auspiciousness of Compassionate Violence," 316.

killing millions of enemies of Buddhist tradition is accounted as being no more than animals.[1] Likewise, the *Sarvādurgatipariśodhana Tantra*, translated as *The Purification of All Misfortunes*, advocates the killing of those "who hate the Three Jewels, those who have a wrong attitude with regards to the Buddha's teachings or disparage the [Vajrayana] masters."[2]

1.5.1 Assassination of the emperor

There is a historical example which presents the relationship between the idea of "liberation killing" motivated by compassion and political interest or need. According to the historical accounts, the last emperor of the early Tibetan dynasty, Langdarma (gLang Dar ma), was assassinated with bow and arrow by the Buddhist monk dPal gyi rdo rje around 842. This emperor is depicted as a determined person who aimed to destroy Buddhism or at least a certain monastic establishment. [3] The emperor's figure is transformed into a legendary one that displays an "animalistic or demonic feature" and "is successfully stripped of his human attributes."[4]

Although this event is historical, many mysterious accounts and interpretations have been formed around it in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.[5] Furthermore, a mask dance is performed annually in which the figure of Langdarma as the main personality of the drama is symbolically killed while all the negative spirits are transferred into him. Schlieter maintains that repeating this symbolical drama can prove the importance of the idea of liberating killing.[6]

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[1] See ibid., 310.

[2] Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude towards War," 58.

[3] See Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution," 139.

[4] Ibid., 143.

[5] See ibid., 133.

[6] Meinert, "Between the Profane and the Sacred? On the Context of the Rite of "Liberation" (sgroI ba)", in *Buddhism and Violence*, edited by Michael Zimmermann (Nepal: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006), 107.

There is no historical evidence for dPal gyi rdo rje's motivation;[1] however, the killer is revered as one of the pioneers of Buddhism in Tibet who helped to establish this tradition.[2] Therefore, his act of killing is judged a good deed carried out for the benefit of the community, as it both liberated the country from an anti-Buddhist ruler and liberated the ruler from his bad karma by his being killed.[3] To benefit the victim is exactly what is happening in the case of the Ship's Captain, and it is an expression of the vital aspect of skillful means and the bodhisattva's perfection.

In some Buddhist traditions, the Buddhist monk is considered to be a creation of the bodhisattva Vajrapani.[4] At least two interpretations regarding the intention of this killing are stated in Tibetan Buddhism: preservation of an established cosmic order or doing the command of a deity.[5] The later interpretation is the common prevalent narration in which dPal gyi rdo rje is said "to be chosen and even empowered" to carry out the responsibility asked of him by the protective deity dPalldan lha mo in a vision. Therefore, as Meinert states,

> his responsibility for acting out violence is transferred from the individual to a transcendental level. The deity becomes the legitimizing authority, whereas the individual is reduced to simply executing a divine command. Accordingly, his act of violence is interpreted as his own karmic destiny, which, however, does not seem to entail any significant karmic retribution.[6]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., 133. Schlieter writes, "at least one monastery identifies him as a former reincarnation, or even traces its lineage of abbots back to him. Moreover, some contemporary Tibetan Buddhists have used his deed as an example of and justification for fighting against oppression." Ibid.

[3] See Meinert, "Between the Profane and the Sacred,"100-101.

[4] See Tatz, *Chapter on Ethics,* 297.

[5] See Meinert, "Between the Profane and the Sacred,"108.

[6] Ibid., 109.

It is noteworthy that the killing is realized because a divine being gives the order; thus, as Schlieter explains, "the assassination acquires an even higher legitimacy to the point of becoming unavoidable."[1]

Despite dPal gyi rdo rje's being revered in the tradition, it is said that "he is defeated in his monastic vow and cannot subsequently participate in a ceremony of ordination."[2] This point reveals that violation of the rules by enlightened ones belongs to an entirely separate realm, and that *Vinaya* is still of high importance and its authority cannot be disregarded by these kinds of transgressions. This case shows how compassionate violence which is realized through skillful means may result in negative consequences for its doer, including rejecting the doer from his or her community and depriving doer of his or her previous status. However, the enlightened one performs it without attention to whatever consequences might follow, in order to reach a greater goal.

Another matter that is regarded as being particularly significant in this narrative is the spiritual condition of the victim (emperor) at the time of death. There is an emphasis that the monk kills the ruler at the best moment: "it happens when the king's mind is absent of hate or other insidious thoughts, for the killing occurs while he is reading the stone inscription, or right as he turns to the stranger who has come in reverence."[3] Consequently, the victim's mentality at the moment of being killed can be determinative for facilitating a better rebirth. However, as it was discussed before, some of the scholars do not accept to attribute the stability of mind to the victim.

[1] Ibid., 142-143.

[2] Tatz, *Chapter on Ethics*, 297.

[3] Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution," 141.

It should be noted here that according to Schlieter, the early texts that describe the killing of Langdarma use the simple word "kill" instead of the term "liberation" (*sgrol,* Skt. *mokṣa*). It seems that the latter is a special term that has evolved over the centuries. However, even in the early texts, the killer is designated as having "great compassion" and the victim is introduced as a "demonic" figure. [1] Furthermore, one of the historiographic texts describing the killing of Langdarma refers directly to the simile of the bodhisattva-captain. This can be seen as a document that predicates the same nature of the two events or, at least, the same understanding and interpretation of both actions. As Schlieter indicates, bSod nams grags pa comments on Langdarma's murder as follows: "it was the act of a fearless bodhisattva-hero; it resembles the deed of the captain 'great compassionate,' who killed the dark man with the short spear."[2]

1.5.2 *Sgrol ba*: The ritual of liberating killing

Sgrol ba, or the "ritual of liberating killing," is a controversial issue highly debated among scholars of Buddhist Tantra in Tibet. It is a Tibetan tantric ritual, which is explained in the *Dunhuang* manuscript (eighth or ninth century) for the first time. Some scholars, such as Jacob Dalton[3] and Carmen Meinert[4] argue that this ritual was practiced in Tibet by killing a human being whose effigy was offered as a sacrifice, while some others are not sure about this claim.[5] Carmen Meinert

[1] Ibid., 143-44. Schlieter mentions that "Only a few texts state explicitly that the tyrant-king must be liberated."

[2] Ibid., 146.

[3] Jacob Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2011), 77.

[4] Meinert, "Between the Profane and Sacred," 104.

[5] Some other scholars like Geoffrey Samuel (Geoffrey Samuel, "Review of *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism,"* Numen, vol. 60 (January 2013): 695) and Cathy Cantwell (Cathy Cantwell, "Review of *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism, History of Religions*, University of Chicago, vol. 54, no. 1 (December 2018): 108) content that not enough evidence exists to prove the use of human beings in this ritual. They argue that the sections of the *Dunhuang* manuscript pertaining to human sacrifice are either unclear or can be interpreted as metaphorical or using figurative language. I believe that the second approach

claims that this ritual was performed at least from the ninth century and counted an integral part of early Tibetan Tantric Buddhist practice.[1]

There is not enough evidence to clarify the root of this rite and especially its aspect of sacrifice. Indian tantric tradition and pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, mainly shamanism and Bön culture, are the two main sources that could influence this ritual. It could even be claimed that the frame of Buddhism has potential enough for creating such a ritual, without any external factor. Each approach can be supported by some documents. In addition to the historical evidence, some stories and mythological narratives in the Tibetan Buddhist scriptures reflect the concept of "liberating killing." Most scholars believe that the myth of the Indian deity Rudra (Śiva) and his suppression by the Buddhist divine being Vajrapāni played a significant role in forming and justifying this ritual, whatever its actual content may have been.[2]

It seems that applying rituals as an instrument for destroying enemies was a common strategy in Tibetan Buddhism. Tantric Buddhists employed ritual techniques that were thought to "liberate" or "purify" evildoers who threatened the teachings and institutions of Buddhists, but these rituals actually facilitated eliminating foes. Gray calls this process "subjugating evil teachings."[3]

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is not defensible because the historical evidence demonstrates that in some parts of Tibet a tradition of human and animal sacrifices existed.

Also see Pieter C. Verhagen, "Expressions of Violence in Buddhist Tantric Mantras," in *Violence Denied: Violence, Non-violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History,* edited by Jan E.M. Houben and Karel R. Van Kooij (Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 280.

[1] See Meinert, "Between the Profane and Sacred?" 104.

[2] See Meinert., also Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons,"* 50-74. In this myth, Rudra as an original Hindu and tantric Indian god whose approach is not compatible with tantric Buddhism is killed by Buddha and revived by him and bound by oaths to protect the Buddhist teaching. Rudra as a non-Buddhist deity is transformed into a protective deity of Buddhism through his forceful subjugation by power of illumination and purity of Vajrapāni. Dalton states that "In the Rudra-taming myth, Rudra is described as the cause for tantric Buddhism to appear in the world, his demonic behavior giving rise to the extreme methods of the tantras" (Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons,* 13).

[3] Gray, "Compassionate Violence?" 252.

As Gier mentions, over the centuries, many of the Dalai Lamas have used tantric war magic against their enemies. For example, the Fifth Dalai Lama instructed his disciples to perform elaborate tantric rituals to harm the enemies of the Gelug sect.[1] Gray explores in an essay how in a violent transgressive ritual, the hearts of certain people were extracted and replaced with a magical simulacrum.[2] It is mentioned that victims were represented as the heretical ones who exhibited numerous signs of non-Buddhist affiliation. According to Gray, Documents witness consuming the heart of live people as well as deceased individuals in this violent ritual. In his essay, he explains how the concepts of killing out of compassion and skillful means which were applied as strategies for inducing heretics to enter the Buddhist path, were effective in justifying these transgressive rituals.[3]

Like any other ritual, sgrol ba should be conducted precisely according to the detailed rules to be successfully fulfilled; however, observing the rules does not by itself suffice for warranting the rite's success and efficiency. In fact, a reciprocal prerequisite is needed for an efficient ritual: the victim should be a vicious person whose massive negative karma may not permit liberation through the normal path (i.e. various lives), while the performer needs to possess an illuminated, compassionate mind pure from any ignorance, desire or hatred. In other words, the practice is allowed only for an acknowledged master of perfect mindfulness who is capable of securing the liberation of the victim. This qualification is of high significance since it guarantees a successful ritual. In other words, "the practitioner of the liberation ritual has to make sure that the

[1] See Gier Nicholas. *The Origins of Religious Violence: An Asian Perspective.* eBook, Lanham: Lexington. 2014. 129.

[2] David B. Gray, "Eating the Heart of the Brahmin: Representations of Alterity and the Formation of Identity in Tantric Buddhist Discourse," *History of Religions,* vol. 45, no. 1 (August 2005): 55.

[3] See ibid. 59.

'consciousness' of the freed person is transferred to a heavenly realm."[1] According to the *Dunhuang* manuscript:

> The so-called liberation means to place [lit. "subdue"] sentient beings in the peaceful state in order to elevate them to the state of highest awakening. It is executed *(gnasbstab)* by someone who is skilled in *mantra, mudrti* and *samtidhi,* which [are relevant to] such a practice, and by someone who has the experience of repeated practice of [the meditative technique called] the "subtle vajra."[2]

A total consensus does not appear on the meaning of "the state of highest awakening". Schmithausen points out that in some sources "the Tantric practice of "liberation" (sgrol) results in the victim's rebirth in a more favorable existence and his subsequent entrance upon the way to buddhahood; whereas another, more traditional source, allows him to transfer to a paradisiacal sphere, and finally, to the realm of buddhahood."[3]

As Meinert explains, the body of the victim turns into a divine being through the placement of sacred letters on key points of the body. She moves on to note that the placing of *mantra krong* on the victim's head (who is now regarded as a divine being) is a crucial moment:

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[1] Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution?" 149.

[2] Ibid., 118.

[3] Schlieter, 148.

This is a summarized explanation of *Sgrol ba* from *Dunhuang* manuscript from Carmen Meinhert's translation: "The arrangement of five [seed] syllables [of *0)]* the male Tantric deity *(if-iika)* on the five points [of the body] upon which [this practice] is carried out is also called the five kinds of adornment of mind, a means by which the birth in the three realms is stopped…The placement of [the syllable] *Om* on the top of the head cuts the path [to the destiny] of the demigods. The placement of [the syllable] *hri*on the tongue cuts the path [to the destiny] of humans. The placement of [the syllable] *hum* on the heart cuts the path [to the destiny] of animals. The placement of [the syllable] *drang* on the secret spot cuts the path [to the destiny] of hungry ghosts. The placement of [the syllable] *a* on the sole of the foot cuts the path [to the destiny] of infernal beings. After these paths are cut off, the path of the gods is opened and after a great gathering of Noble Ones is invited, it is deemed appropriate to carry out the [awakened] activities: the Noble sGroIrnanyi ma carries out the activity of liberation… This [syllable] empowers [in such a way that] it splits the body with several [other] spears…"Then the person who liberates, transforms [himself] into sGroIrnanyirna. The right eye is empowered as the sun... The left eye is empowered as the moon…The breath of resounding the laughter *ha ha* distracts and scatters… [The practitioner] ponders that [the person to be liberated] is completely pure, like a crystal ball. And then he is liberated by the weapon, namely, by [the *mantra] shrakeratsa hum phad*." Quoted in Meinert, "Between the Profane and Sacred?" 121- 22.

> The syllable turns itself into a weapon. Usually this part of the liberation ritual is carried out with the use of a ritual dagger, a *philrba,* but here no such object is mentioned explicitly. This is the phase of completion, the moment of actual killing: "This [syllable] empowers [in such a way that] it splits the body with several [other] spears." As a result, the consciousness of the person to be liberated is transferred into a pure realm.[1]

There are a few external signs which can be interpreted as determiners of the rite's success, such as the position in which the head comes to rest at the end of the ritual. However, the issue of the practitioner's qualifications can be very problematic, because there is not any clarification as to what will happen to the victim if the performer is not a perfectly illuminated one, or if one part of the ritual has not been correctly conducted.

According to the *Dunhuang* manuscript, there are five causes that legitimize ritual killing:

(i) someone who deprecates the teachings of the Mahāyāna,

(ii) one who insults a noble one,

(iii) one who comes into the mandala without having performed the rituals,

(iv) one with false views, or

(v) one who threatens the survival of the Mahāyāna teachings. The liberation of such a being should be undertaken with a foundation of great compassion.[2]

Consequently, the victim is chosen from amongst the enemies of the Buddhist dharma, a person reviling or threatening the religious system, or a political enemy endangering the Buddhist religion. However, according to Lambert Schmithausen, "the rite may also be used for the sake of 'liberating' creatures (including animals) from unfortunate inauspicious forms of existence."[3]

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[1] Ibid., 125.

[2] Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons,* 85.

[3] Schmithausen, "Aspects of the Buddhist Attitude Towards War," 60.

It is noteworthy that through this ritual, the victim, who is one of the most vicious of beings, is transformed into a semi-divine being. Therefore, we can claim that there is no longer any dichotomy between performer and victim, and that they are both unified through the symbolic rite of liberation.[1]

Based on both cases, the ritual of liberating killing and assassinating the emperor Langdarma, the following common points can be inferred:

- The killer should be a fully enlightened master or near to this level.
- The killing is performed because of compassion;
- The killer is worried about the future negative karma of the victim rather than preventing people's suffering and embarrassment;
- According to some analysis, the action of killing should be performed at the moment when the victim's mind is neutral and pure from hate or anger;
- The one whose karma is very bad and unfavorable (the person who should be killed to be liberated) is not able to correct his fatal behavior in his next life (or even in so many other lives in future) because of karmic delusion and other karmic effects. Consequently, the concept of Buddhist compassion appears here to justify killing a person in order to facilitate that person's liberation forcefully.
- Legitimating the liberating killing has a gradual process in both stories.

[1] See Reginald Ray, *Secret of the Vajra World* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 2001), 216. Also, Christian Wedemeyer has a long discussion on this issue. (See Christian Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism* (USA: Columbia University Press, 2014), 117-122.

According to what has been said in this chapter, although Buddhism encourages individuals to train their minds and control their actions in order to attain inner peace,[1] some Buddhist concepts may possess the potential power to create or legitimize the idea of "compassionate killing". In fact, compassion, as it is defined in Mahāyāna, is such an extensive concept that can overrule all other Buddhist precepts and moral rules that prohibit killing. I conclude this chapter with a quotation from the current (Fourteenth) Dalai Lama in the context of justifiable causes for killing someone:

> If someone has resolved to commit a certain crime that would create negative *karma,* and if there exists no other choice for hindering this person from the crime and thus the highly negative *karma* that would result for all his future lives, then a pure motivation of compassion would theoretically justify the killing of this person.[2]

[1] See Bond, "Sarvōdaya's Pursuit of Peace," 227.

[2]. Quoted in: Schlieter, "Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution?" 147.

Chapter 2: Compassionate Killing in Islam (the Story of Khiḍr and Moses)

2.1 Introduction

One of the most mysterious *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān entails a story of a compassionate killing which is performed by one of the most highly ranked of God's devotees. This sūrah narrates a meeting between Moses and a wise person called Khiḍr,[1] who is called in the Qur'ān "one servant of God." Khiḍr, who is granted special wisdom and compassion by God, is supposed to teach the unseen knowledge (*'ilm al-ghayb*) to Moses as his venerable master. After that, Moses asks Khiḍr to accompany him as his disciple, and the two of them set out on a journey. The only prerequisite for accepting this accompaniment is that Moses should be patient and not ask questions regarding Khiḍr's actions. During this journey, Khiḍr performs three strange and controversial acts and then separates from Moses because of Moses' impatience. The first and the second actions of these three are violent actions; especially the second one, which is the event of killing an innocent young boy by Khiḍr, which is confronted by Moses' protest. At first, Khiḍr avoids responding, but ultimately explains the reason behind the killing by saying that the parents of the killed boy were believers and there was a concern that the teenager would mislead his parents in future.

The story of this killing is in the middle of the story of Khiḍr and Moses, and it is almost in the middle of Sūrah al-Kahf, which is in the middle of the Qur'ān. In other words, one of the most debatable anecdotes of the Qur'ān is at the center of the book. Sūrah al-Kahf (18th sūrah) can be considered the most sophisticated and mysterious sūrah in the Qur'ān. It consists of 110 verses all ending in rhyming words; hence, throughout this sūrah a very specific metrical style is found so that if the verses are read aloud, it is like a rhythmic text.

[1] From beginning to end, the story is reported in 23 verses: Qur'ān, 18/60-82.

According to Muslim beliefs, this sūrah was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca. In Sūrah al-Kahf, four seemingly unrelated stories are compactly narrated. Nonetheless, through a hidden chain, one can relate these stories to each other;[1] especially, the first, third, and fourth stories are most interrelated. The title of the sūrah is taken from the first story. These four stories are as follows:

(i) The Companions of the Cave (*aṣḥāb al-kahf*)[2]

(ii) The rich infidel and the poor believer[3]

(iii) Khiḍr and Moses[4]

(iv) Dhu-l-Qarnayn[5]

The longest story is that of Khiḍr and Moses, which comprises a total of 23 verses. Some scholars[6] have attempted to interpret the story of Khiḍr and Moses in relation to the two other main stories: the story of the Companions of Cave (Aṣḥāb al-Kahf) and the story of Dhu l-Qarnayn. These scholars reveal invisible links between these three stories, but the purpose of this thesis is to focus only on the story of Khiḍr and Moses, especially the concept of compassionate killing narrated in that.

[1] See Seyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: Harper One, 2015), 1593.

[2] Qur'ān, 18/9-26.

[3] Ibid., 18/32-42.

[4] Ibid., 18/60-82.

[5] Ibid., 18/83-97.

[6] Nasr et al., *The Study Quran,* 1593.

The story of Khiḍr and Moses begins with a conversation between Moses and his young companion[1] (*fatā*) and ends with Khiḍr's comments. Khiḍr's name is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān; rather, he is called one of God's servants (*'abd*), but almost all Qur'ānic commentaries (Shi'ites and Sunnis, old and new) agree that this man is Khiḍr, who is an obscure, mysterious, and multi-faceted figure in Islamic tradition. As a superior human, Khiḍr plays a major role in almost all folkloric, cultural, and religious areas of Muslims and even non-Muslims as I will discuss them in later sections.

Muslim thinkers have discussed the issue how an unknown person can be teacher of Moses, the great prophet of God. Is Khiḍr's dignity higher than an infallible prophet? Is Khiḍr himself an infallible prophet? Some believe that Khiḍr possesses a higher degree than Moses and some give Moses a higher dignity. For example, Baghawī claims that "most of the scholars believe that Khiḍr is a prophet;"[2] while Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī categorizes all the reasons of those who believe that Khiḍr is a prophet into six groups and after verifying their reasons, he eventually concludes that all of them are weak.[3] Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī maintains that Khiḍr and Moses are superior to each other in some respects; in a way that Khiḍr has a sort of knowledge that Moses lacks and vice versa.[4] He indicates that both are infallible prophets though they have different characteristics; Moses is the symbol of the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law or exoteric knowledge), whereas Khiḍr is the symbol of

[1] According to documents, the person who is accompanying Moses is Yūsha' ibn Nūn, Moses' nephew. See Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, edited by 'Abdullah Maḥmūd Shaḥātah (Beirut: Mu'assisa al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 1423 H/ 2002), vol 2., 592.

[2] Baghawī, *Tafsīr al-Baghawī* (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), vol. 3, 205.

[3] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 3rd ed (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), vol. 21, 149-150.

[4] Āmulī, *al-Muqaddamāt min Kitāb Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam*, edited by Henri Corbin and 'Uthmān Yaḥyā (Tehran: Tūs, 1329 H (solar)), vol. 1, 40.

ṭarīqah (esoteric knowledge).[1] Furthermore, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī asserts five hierarchical phases for Khiḍr's spiritual status,[2] in some of which Khiḍr is lower than Moses and in some higher.

2.2 The story of Khiḍr and Moses

60) And when Moses said unto his servant, "I shall continue on till I reach the junction of the two seas, even if I journey for a long time."

61) Then when they reached the junction of the two, they forgot their fish, and it made its way to the sea, burrowing away.

62) Then when they had passed beyond, he said to his servant, "Bring us our meal. We have certainly met with weariness on this journey of ours."

63) He said, "Didst thou see? When we took refuge at the rock, indeed I forgot the fish—and naught made me neglect to mention it, save Satan—and it made its way to the sea in a wondrous manner!"

64) He said, "That is what we were seeking!" So they turned back, retracing their steps.

65) There they found a servant from among Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Our Presence.

66) Moses said unto him, "Shall I follow thee, that thou mightest teach me some of that which thou hast been taught of sound judgment?"

67) He said, "Truly thou wilt not be able to bear patiently with me."

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[1] See Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, edited by Nicholson & Pūr-Jawādī (Tehran, 1363 H (solar)), vol. 2, daftar 3, verses 1962-1972.

[2] Najm al-Dīn Kubrā Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-'Ibād min al-Mabd' ilā al-Ma'ād*, edited by Muḥammad Mahdī Rīāḥī (Tehran: 'Ilmī wa Farhangī, 1365 H (solar)/ 1986), 236-239.

68) And how canst thou bear patiently that which thou dost not encompass in awareness?"

69) He said, "Thou wilt find me patient, if God wills, and I shall not disobey thee in any matter."

70) He said, "If thou wouldst follow me, then question me not about anything, till I make mention of it to thee."

71) So they went on till, when they had embarked upon a ship, he made a hole therein. He said, "Didst thou make a hole in it in order to drown its people? Thou hast done a monstrous thing!"

72) He said, "Did I not say unto thee that thou wouldst not be able to bear patiently with me?"

73) He said, Take me not to task for having forgotten, nor make me suffer much hardship on account of what I have done."

74) So they went on till they met a young boy, and he slew him. He said, "Didst thou slay a pure soul who had slain no other soul? Thou hast certainly done a terrible thing!"

75) He said, "Did I not say unto thee that thou wouldst not be able to bear patiently with me?"

76) He said, "If I question thee concerning aught after this, then keep my company no more. Thou hast attained sufficient excuse from me."

77) So they went on till they came upon the people of a town and sought food from them. But they refused to show them any hospitality. Then they found there in a wall that was about to fall down; so he set it up straight. He said, "Hadst thou willed, thou couldst have taken a wage for it."

78) He said, "This is the parting between thee and me. I shall inform thee of the meaning of that which thou couldst not bear patiently:

79) As for the ship, it belonged to indigent people who worked the sea. I desired to damage it, for just beyond them was a king who was seizing every ship by force.

80) And as for the young boy, his parents were believers and we feared that he would make them suffer much through rebellion and disbelief.

81) So we desired that their Lord give them in exchange one who is better than him in purity, and nearer to mercy.

82) And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and beneath it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father was righteous, and thy Lord desired that they should reach their maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from thy Lord. And I did not do this upon my own command. This is the meaning of that which thou couldst not bear patiently."[1]

The mysterious and complicated character of Khiḍr is rooted in the Qur'ān, in which he speaks vaguely, his phrases are very short, his decisions are strange, and his personality is secretive. Likewise, the language of the tale is very symbolic. The story does not have a straightforward cohesive narrative; it is sometimes narrated in the first person and sometimes in the third person. The verbs and pronouns are sometimes used in the first person plural form (two people or more) and sometimes in the first person singular. It is not exactly clear to whom the pronouns and subjects refer.

[1] Nasr et al., *The Study Quran*, 1600-1602.

Alongside Khiḍr and Moses, who are the protagonists of the story, there are several key symbols and images in the story: fish, devil, rock, sea, ship, treasure, and wall. In addition, there are some concealed people in the story who play minor roles: the companion of Moses (*fatā*= Yūsha‘/ Joshua)[1], the slain young boy, the parents of the killed one, the villagers, two orphans and their righteous father. The elements of the story are so intertwined and compressed that understanding each part requires understanding the other parts. One needs to understand the other elements of the story very well if one wishes to grasp a correct knowledge of Khiḍr and the cause of the murder he committed. Therefore, at first, I will discuss some of the other elements that can be contributory in achieving a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

According to different phases of the story, I have divided the whole tale into six episodes, which will be represented in the next section. Some episodes are discussed in detail, because they are more related to the main issue; i.e. killing out of compassion, and some of them are narrated in summary.

Episode 1: Before meeting

In this part of the story, the fish plays two important roles: one in which Moses meets Khiḍr, and the other during a strange event when it comes alive, rising out of the sea.[2] This cause led Moses and his companion (Yūsha‘/ Joshua) to return, following their footprints[3]and finally they find Khiḍr. Afterward, Joshua is removed from the story without any warning; then the story continues with just Khiḍr and Moses. Animals guide humans in several other Qur’ānic sūrahs,

[1] Nasr explains the relation between Moses and his friend as follow: “In this case, the term [*fatā*] refers to the fact that the younger Joshua followed Moses, served him, and gained knowledge from him. The relationship between Moses and Joshua is one in which Moses is the master and Joshua the disciple, and it is Moses who sets the goals and parameters for their journey. Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 1639.

[2] Qur’ān, 18/ 63.

[3] Ibid., 18/ 64.

including the role of the crow in the story of Abel's killing by his brother Cain,[1] and the Hoopoe in the finding of Queen Sabā'.[2] This fish, which was supposed to be the food of Moses, became his spiritual nourishment and familiarized him with the mysterious world (*ghayb*). The story of the fish is not illustrated in this tale; instead, it is mentioned twice that the "fish in one strange happening became alive and jumped into the sea."[3] Carl Jung discusses in his article that the fish that disappeared in the beginning of story emerges in a new identity (Khiḍr): "Where the fish disappears, there is the birthplace of Khiḍr."[4] Rūmī also metaphorically describes seas in which Khiḍr(s) are fish.[5]

Another symbol is the devil, someone who incidentally declines his usual role through *leading* Moses and his companion. This guidance is formed by engendering forgetfulness in Moses and his companion. After much exhaustion, when Moses asks his companion to prepare food (fish), he regrets that he left the fish in the middle of the road and forgot to take it with him. Then, he attributes this forgetfulness to the devil :"I forgot the fish—and naught made me neglect to mention it, save Satan."[6]

It is noteworthy that in this verse, the forgetting is attributed only to Yūshaʿ (I forgot/*nasītᵘ*) through Satan, whereas two verses earlier (verse 61), the forgetting of the fish is attributed to both

[1] Qur'ān, 5/31.

[2] Ibid., 27/20-24.

[3] Ibid., 18/63.

[4] Jung, *Four Archetypes,* in *The Collected Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), vol. 9, 75. For more information about Jung's interest in Khiḍr see Halman, *Where the Two Seas Meet,* 47; Nicholas Battye, "Al-Khiḍr in the Opus of Jung: The Teaching of Surrender," in *Jung and Monotheisms*, edited byJoel Ryce-Menuhin (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 166-191.

[5] Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Dīwān Shams-i Tabrīzī*, edited by Badīʿ al-Zamān Furūzān-far, 11th ed, (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1366 H (solar)), ghazal no. 294, verse 10.

[6] Qur'ān, 18/63.

Moses and his companion (They forgot/*nasīyā*). The reason of this difference is not clear; however, it may be because of Moses' infallibility (*'iṣmah*). According to Islamic doctrines, Moses, as an infallible prophet, should not be deceived by Satan. By any means, this forgetfulness eventually necessitates that Moses and his companion change their path and return to the place where the fish was left. In the Qur'ān, this significant place is called the *majma' al-baḥrayn* (where the two seas meet), the place where Moses is supposed to meet Khiḍr. In the beginning of the story, Moses says firmly that he is determined to see Khiḍr: "I will not stop till I find him even if this path lasts a lifetime."[1] Moses' strong will and determination indicate that he has deliberately taken this path to find Khiḍr. As a result, it is evident that this journey has been completely conscious for Moses; but no explicit reason is indicated in the Qur'ān to clarify further Moses' intention. Even though the Quranic commentaries, referring to a *hadith* (Prophetic saying), report the reason for choosing this journey: "someone came to Moses and asked him who was the most knowledgeable person of the day? he replied that I was myself and immediately God revealed to him Khiḍr is more aware of you now."[2] Then, Moses became eager to see him, so he set out to find him.

In verse 64, Moses refers to this eagerness when he recognizes that they have lost the fish, saying: "That is what we were seeking!"[3] As a result, Moses and his companion went back to the place where the fish had returned to the sea, and where Moses expected to find Khiḍr. The interesting point is that in this return, both the fish and Satan are quite influential. In other words,

[1] Qur'ān, 18/60.

[2] Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, edited by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (Medina: Islamic University, 1976), 1:63, 65-66; 1: 90-93. A complete and detailed collection of 55 *ḥadīth* regarding the story of Moses and Khiḍr are found in: Majlisī, *Biḥār al-'Anwār* (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1412 H/ 1992), vol. 13: 278-322.

[3] Qur'ān, 18/64.

if Satan had not made them forgetful, Moses would never have met Khiḍr. In fact, Satan plays the role of a mediator for Moses and Khiḍr to meet each other.

Episode 2: The encounter between Moses and Khiḍr

Notably, the whole story takes place during the journey, whether before joining Khiḍr or after it. What is explicitly stated in the Qur'ān is that Moses and his companion "*found* a servant from among Our servants."[1] The details of this confrontation are not mentioned in the Qur'ān; however, some Islamic *ḥadīths* indicate that it was Khiḍr who first recognized Moses.[2] Remarkably, the Qur'ān uses the word "find" to describe the encounter of Moses and Khiḍr.

The Qur'ān introduces Khiḍr as "a servant from among Our servants" who is specifically granted two attributes: knowledge and compassion: "We had granted compassion (mercy) from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Our Presence."[3] Most commentaries have interpreted the compassion as prophecy and this knowledge as awareness of *ghayb* (invisible truths).[4] In other parts of the story, which I will discuss later, these two attributes play a prominent role in grasping a deep understanding of the story. Particularly, Ibn ʿArabī believes that the story should be entirely interpreted on the basis of "compassion."[5]

[1] Qur'ān, 18/65: *fa wajadā ʿabdᵃⁿ min ʿibādinā*.

[2] Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 1412 H/ 1992, vol. 13: 295.

[3] Qur'ān, 18/65.

[4] For example: Nsafī, *Tafsīr*, edited by Marwān Muḥammad Shuʿār (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1416 H), vol.3, 34; Sabziwāri, *'Irshād al-Adhhān 'ilā Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Taʿāruf li al-Maṭbūʿāt, 1419 H), 306.

[5] See Ibn ʿArabī, *Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam*, edited by Abu al-ʿAlā ʿAfīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿArabī, 1365 H/ 1946), 197 onwards.

In the first conversation with Khiḍr, Moses calls this specific knowledge of Khiḍr "growth" (*rushd*)[1] by saying: "Shall I follow thee so that thou teachest me, of what thou hast been taught, right judgment?"[2] The Sufis' attention to Khiḍr is related to this relationship, since they consider Khiḍr a spiritual mentor (*murshid*) who has been guided by God and intends to guide others. In this way, Khiḍr is a perfect master and Moses is a disciple. The third person in this story, i.e. Yūsha', Moses' companion, is neither this nor that. Hence, immediately after finding Khiḍr, he is removed from the story, perhaps because he never has the capacity of achieving esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*).

Khiḍr accepts to teach Moses *ta'wīl* provided that Moses will be completely patient and silent, the two main conditions for entering the mysterious world. In fact, Khiḍr asks Moses to trust him, to be silent, and to be patient regarding what happens during the journey. Nevertheless, Khiḍr really knows that Moses will not be able to be silent and patient. Khiḍr says: "Assuredly thou wilt not be able to bear with me patiently. And how shouldst thou bear patiently that thou hast never encompassed in thy knowledge?"[3]

On the other hand, Moses' response to Khiḍr is noteworthy. Relying upon God, he attributes his capability of patience to God by saying: "Yet thou shalt find me, *if God will*, patient; and I shall not rebel against thee in anything."[4] In fact, Moses very smartly not only responds to Khiḍr affirmatively, but also exempts himself from the responsibility to perform the task. It seems

[1] Qur'ān, 18/66.

[2] *The Koran Interpreted* (an English translation of the Qur'ān), translated by Arthur J. Arberry, 2 vols. (London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan,1955), 178.

[3] Qur'ān, 18/67-68.

[4] Ibid., 18/67-69.

that in this unusual conversation, both sides know that Moses will not be patient and silent; consequently, they reply to each other metaphorically.

T*a'wīl* is a key term which is repeated twice in this story. Moses enthusiastically looks for *ta'wīl*, but as we will see, he fails to be a successful disciple and he does not possess enough patience for comprehending it.

Episode 3: Boarding the ship and piercing it

Immediately after this conditional and uncertain agreement, they begin their adventurous voyage. In the first part of the voyage, they embark upon a ship. According to the Qur'ān, Khiḍr had already identified the ship because at the end of the story, he explained that he knew who the owners of the ship were.[1] In addition, the word ship (*safīnah*) in verse 71 is used as a definite noun because it is grammatically accompanied with "*al*", an Arabic equivalent of "*the*". It means that Khiḍr knew that ship and its owners; however, it is not clarified how he was aware of that. The consequences of this knowing are important in the theological and mystical analysis of this story that will be discussed in next parts.

After boarding the ship, Khiḍr pierces it and instantly Moses complains about this violent action. He angrily addresses Khiḍr by saying, "do you want to drown *them*?" As we see, Moses' expression refers to the passengers of the ship and does not imply themselves (Khiḍr and himself). More specifically, he says that "do you want to drown *them*?" instead of saying "do you want to drown us?" This signifies that Moses worries about the lives of others, not his own. As a messenger from God, he concerns defending the lives and property of the people. By contrast, Khiḍr does not care about the passengers nor Moses's question. Calmly and unconcernedly, he just addresses

[1] Qur'ān, 18/79: "The ship, it belonged to certain poor men, who toiled upon the sea."

Moses and reminds him of his own commitment to patience: "Did I not say that thou couldst never bear with me patiently?"[1]Afterward, Moses apologizes and promises that he will not violate his oath again, and if he does, he will leave his master. Nevertheless, Moses' protest is very significant, regardless of Khiḍr's reflection. It is noteworthy that in spite of his promise as well as his outstanding passion, Moses breaks all the covenants by calling Khiḍr's violent action a strange and terrible one" (*'imr*) during the first leg of this journey. Yet, Moses tries to be polite or indirect in his criticism since he criticizes Khiḍr's action instead of Khiḍr himself.[2]

An important question that arises is why does Moses break his promise? Perhaps, out of his responsibility as a divine messenger in preserving the religious rules. According to the Islamic law, the property and assets of humans belong to them, and nobody is allowed to break this principle. In fact, Moses' protest indicates that religious laws and divine commands should not be violated under any circumstances.

In response, Khiḍr primarily does not pay attention to Moses' protest and reminds him of his failure in not being silent. Moses' attitude against this warning is pure submission and regret. Moses makes excuses for forgetting by saying: "Don't be hard on me, I forgot my promise." It seems that Moses retreats and repents. This implies an inner conflict between esoteric and exoteric knowledge.

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[1] Ibid., 18/72.

[2] More expressly, in this part of the conversation, Moses uses the verb "to come" when he says: "you [Khiḍr] *came* in a dangerous thing [way]"[2]. The Arabic word of this expression is *ji'ta* (you came), which is usually used as an intransitive verb unless otherwise noted. For example, in this case, the form of transition is used by adding a direct object (*shay'an*). Moses, who wants both to be polite and to protest, criticizes Khiḍr in two sentences: an interrogative sentence, "didst thou make a hole in it in order to drown its people?" and a declarative one, "thou hast done a monstrous thing". This style is exactly used in the next protest when Moses condemns Khiḍr for killing the young boy.

At the end of the journey, Khiḍr explains the reason of his action. In that part of the story, Khiḍr defends his transgression and violent practice. First, he says that he neither wanted to sink the travelers nor inflict any violence on their property. Instead, he claims that he was going to protect their ownership. He says: "I desired to damage it, for just beyond them was a king who was seizing every ship by force."[1] Hence, he believes that his act would prevent the king from seizing the ship because of its damage. Apparently, Khiḍr not only does not consider his work violent, but also, he justifies his work as a wise and compassionate action that protects poor people's property. Some of the commentators such as Āmulī state that Khiḍr makes a hole in the hull of the ship so that the tyrant king would see that the ship was damaged and thus abstain from seizing the ship, while the passenger could not see it.[2]

At the end of the story, when Khiḍr explains the reason for the ship's impairment, he uses the first-person pronoun (*'an a'ībahā*) and attributes this application to his own will. This is due to the fact that he sees himself as a compassionate rescuer who, without reward, protects people against an unseen danger. However, in his next statement, Khiḍr denies responsibility for the ship's impairment and lays the blame on God. He says: "I did not do anything on my own behalf."[3] This clever answer reminds one of Moses' answer to Khiḍr, when Khiḍr asks him to remain silent in all events and Moses replies: "if God wills, I shall not disobey you in any matter."

This statement is very outstanding for the Sufis because it depicts a new mystical picture of the story, in general, and Khiḍr, in particular. Nonetheless, this last expression can raise a very important theological issue for Islamic scholars: the compulsion theory (*jabr*) and the delegation

[1] Qur'ān, 18/79.

[2] See Jawādī Āmulī, *Tasnīm*, Surah al-Kahf, session 55, Qom: 'Isrā'. http://portal.esra.ir/Pages/Index.aspx?kind=2&lang=fa&id=NjM5-HtEaqORFEeU%3d&admin=200&SkinId=66.

[3] Qur'ān, 18/82.

theory (*ikhtīyār*). Significantly, from the beginning to the end of the conversation between Khiḍr and Moses, God is present as a third person. Sometimes His presence is more obvious,[1] and other times more hidden.[2] By increasing and decreasing of this presence, the theme of the story turns from compulsion to delegation and vice versa. If the story is constructed in the paradigm of delegation (free will), then Khiḍr would be fully responsible for all the actions. Either we can consider these actions as violent action or non-violent. He is therefore the one who must be blamed. In this paradigm, at first, Khiḍr uses the first-person pronoun and attributes the actions to himself.[3]

Moses' protest is also included in such a paradigm, in which he clearly considers himself a supporter of inhabitants' rights by asking Khiḍr about his deed. The protest, regardless of whether it is a social, juridical, or moral protest, implies that from Moses's point of view, Khiḍr is the one who should be considered responsible for the events; consequently, Moses addresses him very directly, "Didst *thou* make a hole?"[4], "Didst *thou* slay a pure soul?"[5] This reflection is theologically close to the theory of free will (*ikhtīyār*); however, Khiḍr's final statement is the opposite of this theory when he says: "I did not do this upon my own command."[6] In fact, by referring to God's will, Khiḍr not only absolves himself of any responsibility, but also implicitly promotes the theory of determinism. In such a paradigm, many ethical issues such as disregarding ethical rules in

[1] Either when Khiḍr attributes actions to God's will in verse 82: "Lord desired that they should reach their maturity and extract their treasure", or when he attributes his own actions to God by saying: "I did not do this upon my own command."

[2] When Khiḍr uses first person verbs that imply Khiḍr himself is an agent. For example, *aradtu* and *a'ība*: "I desired to damage it." In the Qur'ān, 18/ 79.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Qur'ān, 18/ 71.

[5] Ibid., 18/ 74.

[6] Ibid., 18/ 82.

occupying other ones' properties, denying the responsibility of an action, and the criterion for evaluating a conduct remain unanswered.

Episode 4: Killing out of compassion

After the story of the ship, in the second story, Moses and Khiḍr encounter a young boy who is immediately killed by Khiḍr. Such an important murder is reported in the fewest possible words.[1] Grammatically, the killed one is introduced through the indefinite noun, "young boy" (*ghulām*^{an}), which makes the story more complicated. That is, the verse means that the killed boy was unknown not only to Moses, but also to Khiḍr. However, in the next few verses, when Khiḍr explains the cause of the killing, he describes him as if he already knew him well. This is a conflict appears between the grammar of the story and its content.

Regardless of this conflict, the killing of the teenager is very disappointing for Moses so that he at once addresses Khiḍr in a serious manner and describes his commitment as malicious. Nevertheless, Moses' expression is quite polite because, as in the story of the ship, he condemns the act itself, not the perpetrator.[2] Perhaps, this is because he believes in the infallibility and wisdom of Khiḍr and also does not yet know his intention of killing;[3] therefore, he only judges Khiḍr's action by saying "You brought about what is wrong" [4] (*la qad ji'ta shay'*^{an} *nukrā)*. If Moses used the word *fa'alta* (do) or *'atayta* (bring), instead of the word *ji'ta*, the meaning of the verse would be different, and it would no longer belong to Khiḍr's action, rather it would include the perpetrator. The distinction between the action and the perpetrator is important when we are

[1] In a verb form which is consisted of five Arabic letters: *f, q, t, l, h.*

[2] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Mu'assisah al-'Ilmī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1402 H/ 1982), vol. 13, 344.

[3] Jawādī Āmulī, *Tasnīm*, session 54, 55: http://portal.esra.ir/Pages/Index.aspx? kind=2&lang=fa&id=NjM5-HtEaqORFEeU%3d&admin=200&SkinId=66

[4] This translation is mine, because other English translations, including Nasr's and Arberry's do not precisely imply the distinction between act (*fi'l*) and preparator (*fā'il*). According to common translations of this versus, Moses blames Khiḍr himself rather than his action, while it is slightly different with Arabic phrase mentioned above.

analyzing this story from the Islamic theological point of view, in which Khiḍr is considered an infallible prophet who must not be a perpetrator of any kind of violence, specially killing an innocent person. There are two key elements in Moses' protest:

1. He calls the killed teenager pure and innocent, although he did not know him before. Most likely, Moses judged according to teen's appearance and age. According to Islamic teachings, a person who has not yet reached the age of puberty is considered pure and innocent. Some commentaries believe that the killed person (*ghulām*) is a child or an immature boy.[1] If Khiḍr, who is a servant of God, has committed the murder of a pure child, it would be henceforth more difficult to justify this murder.

2. Moses uses the phrase "*a qatalta nafs^{an} bi ghayri nafs^{in}* " which means literally "did you kill a soul without any other soul? " In the Islamic works, this phrase usually corresponds to *retaliation* in cases of killing (*qiṣāṣ*), as the only legal authorization for killing. Indeed, Moses asks, Why did you [Khiḍr] kill a teenager who had not already committed a murder.[2]

In response to Moses' question regarding the reason behind the killing, Khiḍr shows two reactions: first, he reminds Moses of his promise to be silent, which causes Moses to retreat from his own path and say sorry. Unexpectedly, he modestly tells Khiḍr, "If I question thee concerning aught after this, then keep my company no more. Thou hast attained sufficient excuse from me."[3] The second reaction occurs when Khiḍr explains the reason for the killing. The reason is nothing

[1] Qumī, *Tafsīr*, edited by Ṭayyib Jazāyirī (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb, 1404 H), vol. 2, 39.

[2] Along with this common translation, it seems that the phrase in question can be translated so that Moses is asking Khiḍr whether he killed a faultless teenager without blood-compensation (*dīyah*). Through this question, Moses, as a prophet well-known for observing and applying the canonical aspect of religion, is trying to discover the truth about who really should pay the compensation for this killed innocent. Hence, the phrase "*bi ghayri nafs*" (killing a soul without any soul) might refer to the future rather than the past. Indeed, Moses is noting that Khiḍr should determine the blood-compensation of the killed teen. Therefore, the phrase "*'a qatalta nafs^{an} bi ghayri nafs^{in}*" should be translated: Did you kill someone without blood-compensation?

[3] Qur'ān, 18/76.

but the teen's infidelity by which he would rebel against his own believer parents. Accordingly, the teen is killed not because of an offence he might have committed before, or due to his current infidelity, but because his infidelity would weaken the faith of his parents in the future.

The fact is that Khiḍr's response is complex and vague. In other words, his unusual justification raises a number of jurisprudential[1] and theological questions besides ethical ones. In this act, the killer has no jurisprudential or moral justification. The killed one has not committed any crime, but he is accused of a religious sin that will happen in the future. More surprisingly, Khiḍr does not even speak with certainty about this crime; rather, he describes it uncertainly when he uses the words *we feared*: "we feared that he would make them [his parents] suffer much through rebellion and disbelief."[2] Then, he uses the phrase "*we desired*" when he says: "So we desired that their Lord give them in exchange one who is better than him in purity, and nearer to mercy."[3]

Another important point that should be noted here is that, in the early part of the story, Moses called the killed teen a "pure one" (*zakīyyah)*, and it is astonishing that Khiḍr implicitly accepts Moses' opinion by saying, "we desired that their Lord give them in exchange one who is *better than him in purity*." In fact, Khiḍr agrees with Moses that the teen is a *good* (pure/*zakīyyah*) individual, but for the sake of his bad future in misleading his parents, Khiḍr asks God to exchange him for a *better* (purer/*azkā*) child. Surprisingly, Khiḍr calls this exchange God's compassion *(rahmah*). It seems that in Khiḍr's justification, the personality and identity of the teenager have

[1] For more information about jurisprudential aspect see Ali, Aun Hasan. "Reading the Story of Moses and Khiḍr through the Lens of Islamic Law." *Journal of English Language Notes,* vol. 56, no. 1, 2018, 209- 213.

[2] Our'ān, 18/80; Cf. Nasr, 1602

[3] Qur'ān, 18/81.

been completely disregarded. Even when Khiḍr refers to the name of the Lord, he calls Him "the Lord of the parents".

According to these explanations, no convincing reason can be found for killing the young boy, and the following dilemmas are found in the story:

i) The killed teenager is innocent and pure, however, an infidel.

ii) The parents of the teenager are believers.

iii) God and Khiḍr (We) are worried about the faith of the parents, so that in the future, their faith may not be destroyed by their son's disbelief.

iv) God and Khiḍr (We) kill him to prevent this concern.

It is clear that this killing has neither ethical nor juridical justification. Here I discuss another aspect of this issue: theological justification. As was said, the teen is killed because of his negative effect on his parents in the future. This prediction is not inconsistent with the idea of "free will", which is accepted by most Muslim theologians.[1] According to Islamic theology, it can be said that it is quite "reasonable" as well as possible for the teenager to turn from faith to infidelity and from infidelity to faith, so nobody can judge him in terms of his forthcoming deed and decision. Even according to the theory of divine determinism, one can certainly predict the future if one is called to do so by God. In the case of Khiḍr, the issue is slightly different, because no Muslim scholar believes that this killing occurs based on determinism, nor does Khiḍr's statement denote this theory explicitly.

[1] See Qāḍī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Al-Mughnī fī Abwāb al-Tawḥīd wa al-'Adl*, edited by Tawfīq al-Ṭawīl et al., n.d, n.p, vol. 8, 3 onwards; Ṭusī, *Tajrīd al-'Itiqād*, edited by Muḥammad Jawād Ḥusaynī Jalālī (Tehran: Markaz al-Nashr- Maktab al-'Alām al-Islāmī, 1407 H), 197, 199; Hillī, *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrī al-'Itiqād*, edited by Hasan Hasan-zādih Āmulī (Qom: Mu'assisat al-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1413 H), 305, 308-313.

As was mentioned before, Khiḍr applies both singular and plural verbs to attribute the action to the doer. Because of this discrepancy, some commentators refer to the theory of hierarchical causality to avoid falling into the trap of absolute determination.[1] In this theory, Khiḍr and God are both the cause of the murder; one is on the lower level and the other on the higher.

Episode 5: Repairing the wall

Opposite to his two previous actions, Khiḍr's third conduct is not violent; however, it is regarded as unusual. They proceed to a town, but the habitants of the town do not welcome them with hospitality. Instead of harming anyone or anything, Khiḍr restores a wall in the town. Again, Moses violates his promise, asking why Khiḍr repaired the wall but did not ask for any recompense for his work. Here is when Khiḍr does not give any more opportunity to Moses and detaches himself from Moses. He explains to Moses that the reason behind his action was that the wall belongs to two little orphans whose father was a virtuous man and underneath the wall is a treasure which is supposed to be preserved for the orphans until they grow up.

Episode 6: Separation of Khiḍr from Moses

After the third occurrence and because of Moses' disobedience, Khiḍr says to Moses: "Now is the time for separation between me and you; now I will inform you of the significance of that with which you could not have patience."[2] Then Khiḍr begins to explain the unseen truth involved in his actions and uncovering the mysterious wisdom which was concealed in his conduct. He

[1] See Maybudī, who distinguishes between three phases of Khiḍr's statutes. The first level which is realized in the first action is the lowest one in which Khiḍr attributes everything to himself. The second stage which is represented in the story of killing, shows the middle status, when Khiḍr has God by his side and they do everything together. The third one which is realized in the third action is the highest level in which everything is just attributed to God. In this issue, the technical word used by Maybudī is "*kasb*" by which he theologically opens a middle way between absolute determination and delegation, and justifies a hierarchical causality as well: Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār*, edited by Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1371 H (solar)/ 1992), vol. 5, 730.

[2] Qur'ān, 18/ 78.

emphasizes that all his actions were according to God's mercy. As was discussed before, at that moment, Moses understands that although Khiḍr's acts were violent, unreasonable, and against the ethical and religious rules, they were all done out of wisdom and compassion.

2.3 Khiḍr in Islamic culture

There are several opinions regarding the status of Khiḍr as a mysterious person. Some commentators on the Qur'ān state that he is one of the prophets.[1] Some Sufis say that he is a spiritual master (*walī, pīr, murshid*) or a saint who guides those who seek a spiritual way.[2]

In folklore, neither the story of the murder nor the story of the ship is important. In this context, Khiḍr is introduced as a legendary hero or a full-fledged myth[3] instead of "an anonymous slave of God".[4] The word Khiḍr means "green one", which is a symbol of freshness, vividness, newness, hope, and life.[5] This characterization of Khiḍr's personality has been very appealing to lay people who have transformed him into both mythical and mystical figure.[6] In addition, this symbol is frequently used by Rūmī, in *Dīwān Shams*. Sometimes he specifically refers to various aspects of Khiḍr and sometimes uses the symbol of greenness as a general

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[1] For example, Baghawī claims that "most of the scholars believe that Khiḍr is a prophet; Baghawī, Tafsīr, vol. 3, 205. See also Sabziwāri, '*Irshād al-Adhhān*, 1419, 306.

[2] Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu'āmalat al-Maḥbūb*, edited by Muḥammad Bāsil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1417 H/ 1997, vol. 1: 15, 16, 101, vol. 2: 121; Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-MaḥjūbI*, edited by Zhokovski, preface by Qāsim Anṣārī (Tehran: Ṭahūrī, 1999), 128, 178, 303, 373.

[3] See Ibn 'Asākir, 'Alī ibn Ḥasan, *Ta'rīkh Madīna Damishq*, edited by Ali Shirī. Beirut: 1415-1421 H/ 1995-2001, vol. 16, 399-434; Ibn Ḥajr 'Asqalānī, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-'Iṣābah fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba*, edited by Ḥisān 'Abd al-Mannān. Beirut: bayt al-Afkār al-DuwalIyyah, 2004, vol. 1, 345-362. Cf. Afshārī, Mihrān, "Khiḍr." In *Dānishnāmi-ye Jahān Islām* (Tehran: Bunyād Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Islāmī, 1393 H (solar))/ 2014, vol. 15.

[4] Qur'ān, 18/65.

[5] See Khalīl ibn Aḥmad Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, edited by Mahdī Makhzūmī & Ibrāhīm Sāmirrā'ī (Qom: Dār al-Hijrah, 1410 H), vol. 4, 175-176.

[6] Talat Halman names Khiḍr "the Universal Green Man": Halman, "The Green and Artistic Spiritual Guide." The Sound Journal, 2011: http://Khiḍr.org/talat.halman.htm. See also Wilson, "The Green Man: The Trickster Figure in Sufism." *Gnosis* 19 (spring 1991): 22-26.

concept: green chest,[1] green dome,[2] green water,[3] green heaven,[4] green chance,[5] green gold,[6] green wisdom,[7] and green soul.[8] Metaphorically, he makes a connection between "green soul" and Khiḍr's divine knowledge, by which Khiḍr realizes the unseen facts that Moses was not able to grasp them.[9]

In folklore, Khiḍr's communication with Alexander the Great, or Dhū al-Qarnayn,[10] is more significant than his communication with Moses since Alexander is looking for the "fountain of immortality" and Khiḍr is the one who guides him to it.[11] Along with being the teacher of Alexander, Khiḍr is introduced as a supernatural person. He possesses the power to control everything in the world: heaven and earth, sea and land, drought and fertility, disease and health, and so forth. He is the supporter of vulnerable people and the poor. People hoping to have children, farmers for their crops, fishermen for their catches, and patients for their healing, all petition Khiḍr. In fact, he is present in all the minor and major parts of people's

[1] See Rūmī, *Kullīyyāt-i Dīwān Shams-i Tabrizī*, edited by Badī' al-Zamān Furūzān-far, 11th ed. (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1366 H (solar)), ghazal no. 772, verse 11.

[2] Ghazal no. 87, verse 2.

[3] Ghazal no. 224, verse 3.

[4] Ghazal no. 1162, verse 2.

[5] Ghazal no. 2892, verse 11.

[6] Ghazal no. 3007, verse 3.

[7] Ghazal no. 3038, verse 6.

[8] Ghazal no. 624, verse 5.

[9] Ibid.

[10] For more information about Alexander and Dhū al-Qarnayn see: Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mīzān*, vol. 13, 382 onwards. Also see Halman, *Where the Two Seas Meet*, 2013, 5, 8, 13, 44-45, 56, 95, 204, 248, 252-254, 258.

[11] Niẓāmī Ganjawī depicts three pictures of this story in *Sharaf-nāmi*, in *Kullīyāt Khams* (Tehran: Jāwīdān, 1366 H (solar)). However, this affiliation to the "fountain of immortality" has led some to blame Khiḍr. For example: Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī, *Dīwān*. Edited by Muhammad Qahramān (Tehran: 'Ilmī Farhangī, 1383 H (solar)), vol.1, 488.

lives.[1] These features have been major points of focus in the anthropological and sociological approaches to this figure and are subject of many debates and much research,[2] which have often understated the theological and ethical dimensions of his personality.

The term Khiḍr is a well-known term for Middle Eastern people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. In addition, in Iran, Turkey, and Syria,[3] there are many shrines called Khiḍr (or Khwājah Khiḍr) and many miracles are attributed to him.[4] In these sacred places, people practice their own religious rituals, like praying and sacrificing. For them, Khiḍr is a mysterious person who is present everywhere and nowhere. The Muslim mystics are accompanied by Khiḍr in their spiritual paths (*sulūk*), and he inspires and illuminates them.[5] As a matter of fact, it seems that only few heroes, myths, or even prophets possess such efficacy as Khiḍr in Islamic culture.

The origin of these myths is not very clear; there is not any research that clarifies from where this special and exclusive position comes, or why it is exclusively attributed to Khiḍr. One reason for this special position is presumably that Khiḍr possesses a very mysterious and enigmatic personality, which helps to pave the way for attributing various myths to him. His resemblance to heroes of ancient myths, such as Gilgamesh, on the one hand, and his mysterious character

[1] Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, 968; Ibn ʻAsākir, *Ta'rīkh Madīna Damishq*, edited by Ali Shirī (Beirut: 1415-1421 H/ 1995-2001), vol. 16, 339-434.

[2] See Dāmghānī, *Risāla Darbāriyi Khiḍr*; Qudrat allāh Murādī, *Khiḍr wa Mūsā dar Farhang Islāmī* (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1385 H (solar)/ 2006).

[3] J. E Campo, "Khadir," in *Encyclopedia of World Religions: Encyclopedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 2002. https://search-credoreference-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/content/entry/ fofislam /khadir/0.

[4] See Muḥammad Saīd Nijātī and Muḥammad Mahdī Faqīh Baḥr al-ʻUlūm, *Haḍrat Khiḍr 'alayh al-Salām wa Makānhāy-i Mansūb bi Īshān* (Tehran: Mashʻar, 1395 H (solar)/ 2016).

[5] Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb*, 1417 H, vol. 1: 15, 16, 101, vol. 2: 121.

mentioned in the Qur'ān, on the other, reveals in him a capability by which he responds to all people's needs.[1]

Although one never finds any phrase denoting Khiḍr's immortality in the Qur'ān, it is his most common characterization in lay culture. The origin of this feature is related to the interpretation of Dhu l-Qarnayn, whose story comes immediately after the story of Khiḍr in the Qur'ān, as the final part of Surah al-Kahf.[2] Like Khiḍr, no exact information about Dhu l-Qarnayn is found because the language of the Qur'ān is completely symbolic in this mysterious story. Some of the commentators maintain that Surah al-Kahf consists of three *related* stories: "The Companions of the Cave (Aṣḥāb al-Kahf)", "Khiḍr and Moses", and "Dhu l-Qarnayn"[3]. In this approach, Khiḍr first comes up from the darkness of the cave; then he appears in the path of Moses to uncover the unseen world for him for a while; and finally, he emerges for Dhu l-Qarnayn to guide him to reach the "fountain of immortal life" in the darkness (*'ayn al-ḥayāt*).[4]

These interpretations state that these three stories are episodes of one story although they seem independent. Consequently, Surah al-Kahf can be considered as a single puzzle whose pieces should be connected to each other and necessarily be interpreted in relation to each other. Finding hidden links between the three stories has caused the details of Khiḍr's story—especially the murder of the teenager—to become underestimated. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter,

1 See Arsanjānī, "Khiḍr." in *Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Buzurg-I Islāmī* (*The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*), vol. 22, ed. Kazem Mousavi-Bojnourdi (Tehran: Markaz-i Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif Buzurg-i Islāmī, 1395 H (solar)/ 2016, 405-414.

2 Qur'ān, 18/83-97.

3 See Seyed Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran,* 1593.

4 Ibid.

Jung[1] tries to highlight some symbols from every part of this puzzle to achieve one integrated perspective on it at the end. Other scholars, like Henri Corbin[2] and Seyed Hosein Nasr,[3] also attempt to depict a mystical picture of this Surah, but no interpretation has argued the issue of killing from the point of criticizing it as a violent action.

2.4 The story of killing in the Qur'ān's commentaries

There are two different approaches to the story of the killing in the Qur'anic interpretations. Some of the exegeses disregard the story of killing and do not discuss it.[4] The second approach belongs to those who discuss the case of murder and try to justify Khiḍr's action. They either emphasize that the young boy was a sinful person who should be killed or stress the point that Khiḍr is an infallible messenger who has not committed a crime. In the second approach, since good and evil cannot be attributed to any action of God,[5] and no external criteria exist for His deeds, whatever He and His selected devotee do is right and best.

Therefore, no Muslim scholar has considered Khiḍr's action a violent action; by contrast, it is always regarded as a merciful action. In this approach, all theological and juridical questions about this complicated issue are simply addressed by presenting God as the main reason. As a result, Moses' objection to Khiḍr is primarily rooted in his incapability in comprehending Khiḍr's

[1] Jung, *Four Archetypes,* in *The Collected Works,* 2012, vol. 9, 75; Nicholas Battye, "Al-Khiḍr in the Opus of Jung: The Teaching of Surrender," in *Jung and Monotheisms*, 1994, 166-191.

[2] Henri Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, translated by Ralph Manheim (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 70.

[3] Nasr et al., *The Study Qura*, 1593.

[4] For example, see Tustarī, *Tafsīr al-Tustarī*, edited by Muḥammad Bāsil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1423 H/ 2002), 97-98.

[5] Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Aṣfā fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Qom: Daftar-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī: 1418H), vol. 2, 724.

inner knowledge. In other words, the conflict between Moses and Khiḍr is basically determined by the level of their knowledge.

Nonetheless, the commentaries provide many reasons to depict an appropriate picture of Khiḍr, in particular, and Islamic teachings, in general. As mentioned, they maintain that the murder of the teenager not only does not weaken the Islamic faith, but also strengthens the faith of believers. All Qur'anic commentaries that discuss the story of the killing can be classified into three approaches:

2.4.1 The commentaries based on *hadīth*

There are some Quranic commentaries which by providing some related *ḥadīths* (Prophet's saying and practice) make effort to justify the killing of the young boy. For example, Qumī,[1] Ṭabarī,[2] 'Ayyāshī,[3], Tha'ālabī,[4] and Fayḍ Kāshānī[5] on the basis of some *ḥadīth*s emphasize the infidelity of the young boy as the main reason for his murder. However, none of the *ḥadīth*s prove that the teenager is an apostate in nature (*murtad bi-l fiṭrah*). Moreover, Māwirdī,[6] Ibn Jawzī,[7] and Samarqandī,[8] attribute wickedness and robbery to the young boy and call him a rebellious child

[1] Qumī, *Tafsīr,* edited by Ṭayyib Jazāyirī (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb, 1404 H), vol. 2, 39.

[2] Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 1412 H), vol.15, 185; vol. 16, 3-4.

[3] 'Ayyāshī, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (Tehran: 'Ilmīyyah, 1380 H (solar)/ 2001), vol. 335-336.

[4] Tha'ālabī, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Aarabī, 1422 H), vol. 6, 186-187.

[5] Fayḍ Kāshānī, *al-Aṣfā fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān,*1418 H, vol. 2, 725.

[6] Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa-l 'Uyūn* (Beiryt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah: n.d), vol. 3, 328-330, 333-335.

[7] Ibn Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1422 H), vol. 3, 103.

[8] Samarqandī, *Baḥr al-'Ulūm* (n.p, n.d), vol. 2, 356.

who would be extremely vicious in future, especially, in relation to his parents. Makārim Shīrāzī maintains that the killing prevented him from committing further crimes in future.[1]

These opinions are rooted in the *ḥadiths* whose authenticity are doubtful both in terms of documentation (*sanad*) and content. The most important problem in these *ḥadiths* is regarding their content because of its contradictory to both Quranic verses and Islamic doctrines. Moreover, the commentators do not present any acceptable reason to demonstrate that the victim is an adult.

2.4.2 **The linguistic approach**

Nuḥās,[2] Sharīf Murtaḍā,[3] Ibn ʻAṭīyah,[4] Qurṭubī,[5] Abu Ḥayyān,[6] and Suyūṭī[7] are among the commentators who try to find a justification for the murder through focusing on the semantic and syntaxial structure of words and phrases. For example, they say that the Arabic word *ghulām* is used for one who is an adult.[8] Likewise, the word *zakīyyah* is used for both innocent and non-innocent persons.[9] All together, they conclude that the young boy is a pubescent disbeliever the killing of whom is permissible.

This approach focuses on the aspect of maturity or immaturity, while the issue of proving guilt is passed over. Furthermore, the argument is unreasonable when we consider Khiḍr's

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[1] Makārim Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr Nimūnih* (Tehran: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmīyyah, 1374 H (solar)), vol. 12, 505-506.

[2] Nuḥās, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1421 H), vol. 2, 302.

[3] Sharīf Murtaḍā, *Tafsīr Sharīf Murtaḍā* (Beirut: Mu'assisah al-'Ilmī li al-Maṭbū'āt, 1431 H), vol. 3, 66.

[4] Ibn ʻAṭīyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-Azīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al 'Azīz* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1422 H), vol. 3, 532.

[5] Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Tehran: Nāṣir Khusraw, 1364 H (solar)), vol. 11, 20-22, 36.

[6] Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī Tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al- Fikr, 1420 H), vol.7, 208.

[7] Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-l Ma'thūr*, (Qom: Āyatullāh Mar'ashī Najafī, 1404 H), vol.4, 230.

[8] For example, Nuḥās, *I'rāb al-Qur'ān*, 1421 H, vol. 2, 302; Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' al-Aḥkām*, 1364 H (solar), vol. 11, 20-22, 36.

[9] Ibn ʻAṭīyyah, *al-Muḥarrar al-Azīz*, 1422 H, vol. 3, 532;

statement in which he postpones the teenager's sin to future. In addition, the rationale of these groups, namely that the word "young boy" *(ghulām*) implies an adult, conflict with the views of other exegeses.[1]

Another exegesis which applies a linguistic approach to interpreting the story of the killing is *al-Mīzān.* This commentary is categorized as a philosophical one in the original; however, it applies a linguistic approach to this issue. While most of the Qur'anic exegeses maintain that the role of Khiḍr is apparently more significant than that of Moses in this story, Ṭabāṭabāī gives Moses priority in *al-Mīzān*.[2] By emphasizing the Arabic structure of this part of the story, Ṭabāṭabāī aims to show that Moses's protest is much more important than Khiḍr's action. He indicates: "Therefore, the story is the story of his [Moses'] protests."[3] He demonstrates his own idea by distinguishing between two parts of this statement:[4]

i. "When (*'idhā*) they met a young boy, then he [Khiḍr] slew him", as the first part.

ii. "[Moses] said, 'Didst thou slay a pure soul who had slain no other soul?"', as the second part.[5]

Ṭabāṭabāī holds that in this quasi-conditional statement, the second part (the consequent or the apodosis) plays a pivotal role in comparison with the first part (the antecedent or the protasis). Particularly, the first underlined word (when/*'idhā*) is equivalent to an *if clause*[6]; and the second

[1] For more information see Ali Rād and 'Āṭifa Mūḥammad Zadi, "Dāstān qatl Ghulām tawassuṭ Khiḍr: Taḥlīl wa Arzyābī Rahyāfthāyi Tafsīri," *Pajūhīshhāyi Tafsīr Taṭbīqī*, no.9, (Spring and Summer 1398 H (solar)/ 2019, 296.

[2] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mīzān*, vol. 13, 344-345.

[3] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mīzān*, vol. 13, 345.

[4] See Qur'ān: 18/71.

[5] The same structure is used in the verse 77, where the third story of Moses and Khiḍr is reported:

the first part: "When (*'idhā*) they came to the people of a town; they asked its people…" the second part: "[Moses] said, 'If you wished, you could have taken for it a payment'" (verse 77).

[6] According to the Arabic grammar, *'idhā*, which is translated "when", makes the sentence conditional.

one (Moses said) is equivalent to the *main clause.* As a result, the second part of the sentences which includes Moses' protest is more important than Khiḍr's action.[1]

However, Ṭabāṭabāī leaves the reason for the importance of Moses' protest undiscussed. It seems that the Qur'ān is inviting us to pay closer attention to the social responsibility of Moses in supporting and respecting the rights of people besides observing the ethical and religious rules. Highlighting the protest of Moses can be regarded as a reason why Khiḍr's method in violating the rules was never accepted in Islamic tradition, neither as a jurisprudential law for leaders nor as a social norm for lay Muslims.

2.4.3 Theological approach[2]

The third category of the commentaries aims at justifying the murder of the young boy by focusing on theological arguments. This approach is basically founded on two main theological doctrines: first, life is a privilege given to us by God.[3] God bestows the soul on humans and retakes it whenever He wills. The second doctrine, which can be regarded as the most significant justification, emphasizes the benefits of this action based on the wisdom of God (*ḥikmah*).[4]

According to Khiḍr's explanation at the end of the story, the young boy is supposed to become not only a vicious person but also a pagan one. Moreover, he would misguide his parents and lead them into heresy. Therefore, his murder is theologically wise because it prevents more

[1] Jawādī Āmulī is another Quranic interpreter who confirms the idea of Ṭabāṭabāī according to which Moses' objection is more important than Khiḍr's action. See Jawādī Āmulī, *Tasnīm*, Sūrah al-Kahf (Qom: 'Isrā'), session 56 in http://portal.esra.ir/Pages/Index.aspx?kind=2&lang=fa&id=NjM5-HtEaqORFEeU%3d&admin=200&SkinId=66.

[2] For more information about this approach and the previous ones see Ali Rād and 'Āṭifa Mūḥammad Zadi, "Dāstān qatl Ghulām, 295-299, 302-306.

[3] Ibid., 302.

[4] This issue is sometimes interpreted as this principle "removing a worse thing by replacing it with a bad one" (*daf' fāsid bi afsad).*

evil consequences.[1] Khiḍr is totally sure that this murder is performed out of compassion and entails many benefits.

Jawādī Āmulī believes that in addition to wisdom, God's grace and compassion are theologically manifested in the story of murder. He continues that if the killed one survived, there would be at least three evil consequences: First, the teenager would become a rebel and infidel. Second, he would misguide his parents. Third, he and his parents would suffer divine punishment. As a result, in order to avoid these undesirable outcomes, God, out of His endless compassion, terminates the youth's life through Khiḍr.[2]

According to the Qur'ānic narration, the goal of this killing is to maintain the religious beliefs of the parents. Ṭūsī,[3] Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī,[4] Bayḍāwī[5], and Fakhr al-Dīn, Ālūsī,[6] emphasize this motivation as the main goal originating from theological doctrines. Furthermore, one of the benefits about the killing is that God will bestow on these parents another child who is better than this one.

Some commentaries have interpreted the word "fear" (*khashyat*) in Khiḍr's statement (we feared that he would make them [his parents] suffer much through rebellion and disbelief)[7] as

[1] Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqāyiq Ghawāmiḍ al-Tanzīl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1407 H), vol. 2, 741; Sharīf Murtaḍā, *Tafsīr Sharīf Murtaḍā* (Beirut: Mu'assisa al-'Ilmī li-l Maṭbū'āt, 1431H), vol. 3, 68; Seyed Qotb, *Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān* (Beirut & Cairo: Dār al-Shurūrq, 1412 A.H), vol. 4, 2281.

[2] See Jawādī Āmulī, session 63.

[3] Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1420 H), vol. 7, 81.

[4] Abū al-Futūḥ Rāzī, *Rawḍ al-Janān wa Rawḥ al-Janān* (Mashhad: Āstān Quds, 1408 H), vol. 13, 19.

[5] Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Āsrār al- Ta'wīl* (Beirut: Dār 'Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1418 H), vol. 3, 288.

[6] Ālūsī, *Rawḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm* (Saudi Arabia: Maktabah Nazār Muṣṭafā Ilbāz, 1419 H), vol 8. 318, 333.

[7] Qur'ān, 18/80. Cf. Nasr, 1602.

"knowledge" and "awareness."[1] Consequently, it implies Khiḍr's certainty about the murder rather than represents his doubts or any ambiguity. In fact, this approach by integrating God's wisdom and compassion, which are both transferred to his selected Servant and are manifested in the benefits of the action, try to justify the killing of the young boy.

2.5 Khiḍr in the Sufi tradition

As mentioned, in the folkloric culture of Muslims, Khiḍr is the only person who has achieved immortality through the water of life. Possibly it is because of this feature that his next characteristic has emerged: guiding those who seek a spiritual path. The second characteristic is specific to Sufi texts because of Khiḍr's full resemblance to a mystical master for all ascetics. For instance, in *al-Luma'*,[2] *Qūt al-Qulūb*,[3] and *Kashf al-Maḥjūb,*[4] two main texts among the oldest Sufi works, Abū Tālib Makkī, Abū Naṣr Sarrāj, and Hujwīrī repeatedly narrate some anecdotes related to this characteristic of Khiḍr. These anecdotes are similarly expanded in later periods of Sufism, especially in 'Aṭṭār's and Rūmī's statements.[5]

[1] Ṭabarsī, *Majma' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Tehran: Nāṣir Khusraw, 1372 H (solar)), vol. 6, 753.

[2] Abu Naṣr Sarrāj Ṭūsī, *al-luma'*, edited by 'Abd al- Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāhā 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo: Dār al- Kutub al-Ḥadītha, 1380H/ 1960), 179, 224, 332.

[3] Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulūb fī Mu'āmalat al-Maḥbūb*, edited by Muḥammad Bāsil 'Uyūn al-Sūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1417 H), vol. 1: 15, 16, 101, vol. 2: 121. In *'Ilm al-Qulūb*, which is doubtfully attributed to Makkī, we see the story of Moses and Khiḍr in four parts of this book. All of them relate to the subject of Moses' knowledge and Khiḍr's one. See Abū Ṭālib Makki, *'Ilm al-Qulūb*, edited by Atā 'Abd al-Qādir (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 1424 H/2004), 50, 64, 69, and 127.

[4] Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 1999, 128, 130, 178,179, 193, 303, 373, 446.

[5] See in *Tadhkirat al-'Ulīyā,* 'Aṭṭār brings these anecdotes in the story of Ibrāhīm Adham, Bishr Ḥāfī, Dhū l-Nūn Miṣrī, Abū Yazīd Basṭāmī, Hātam Aṣamm, Abūbakr Warrāq, Abūbakr Kattānī, and Shaykh Aḥmad Khiḍrūyah. Also, in *Muṣībat Nāme*, section 10. Jalāl al-Dīn Maulawī interprets Khiḍr in both *Mathnawī* (daftar 1, parts 10, 94, 102, and 140/ daftar 3, part 87/ daftar 4, part 106/ daftar 5, part 34) and *Dīwān-i Shams-I Tabrīzī* (ghazals: 634, 815, 874, 2010, 2521, 2550, 2976/ Mustadrakāt, part 1/ Tarjī'āt, part 1.

One of the most remarkable characters in some of the Sufi texts is a person whose name is Shaykh Aḥmad Khiḍrūyah[1] (Khiḍr's namesake). He is introduced as an elderly Sufi[2] who is very similar to Khiḍr not only in his features and behavior, but also in his name. Farīd al-Dīn ʻAṭṭār refers to him in his several works[3] and calls him the owner of chivalry (*futuwwat*),[4] the king,[5] and pathfinder.[6] In both *Mathnavi* and *Dīvān-i Shams,* Rūmi depicts a different feature of Khiḍrūyah.

In *Mathnavi*, Rūmi indicates the aggressive behaviors of Khiḍr and justifies his actions by creating a new story. He draws a mystical picture of Khiḍr in which Aḥmad Khiḍrūyah plays the role of Khiḍr and a sweet-seller child (*kūdak-i ḥalwā furūsh*) plays the role of the killed teenager. In this new story, Shaykh Khiḍrūyah, who is very famous for his generosity and kindness,[7] commits a violent action against the huckster child according to his esoteric comprehension. The story narrates that Aḥmad Khiḍrūyah was a debtor of 400 *dināŕs* to some people; and finally, one day all the creditors gathered in his house to get their money, when he had no money. In the meantime, he hears a boy huckster shouting "Halwa (sweets) here! I sell sweets!" Shaykh asks his servant to go outside and buy all the sweets from the child in order to entertain the creditors. After that, the boy asks for the price of his sweets, half a *dināŕ*; but Shaykh responds, "I have no money to give you. I am deep in debt." The boy, fearing his master's punishment, begins to cry out and

[1] Or Khaḍrawyah.

[2] Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, 58.

[3] See ʻAṭṭār, *Maẓhar al-ʻAjā'ib,* edited by Aḥmad Khush-nawīs (Tehran: Sanā'ī, 1376 H (solar)/ 1997), 40; *Muṣībat Nāme*, section 16 and 27; *Tadhkirat al-'Ulīyā',* part 33.

[4] *Tadhkirat al-'Ulīyā',* edited by Nicolson, 288; *Mathnawī*, translation with an Introduction by Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Book 2, 25.

[5] *Maẓhar al-ʻAjā'ib*, 40.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *Tadhkirat al-'Ulīyā'*, 288; *Mathnawī*, trans. Mojaddedi, Book 2, 25; *Maẓhar al-ʻAjā'ib*, 40.

yell, while Shaykh Khiḍrūyah stays totally calm and relaxed. People begin to blame Shaykh Khiḍrūyah because of this immoral and violent action, but he does not give any explanation. This circumstance continues for several hours, until a person comes up to Shaykh and gives him 400 *dināars* and a half by which he can settle all his debts, including the boy's.[1]

This story though does not correspond in detail to the story of Khiḍr in the Qu'rān, its content and key elements are very similar. Rūmī, in the beginning of the story, points out the story of Ismail's killing by his father, Abraham, and at the end of the story, he compares this tale to the story of Khiḍr and Moses. In addition, in the story of Daqūqī, one of the most complex anecdotes of the *Mathnavi*, Mawlavī presents another mystical interpretation of the story of Moses and Khiḍr. Along with Rūmī, Qushayrī in *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyyah,*[2] Maybudī in *Kashf al-Asrār*,[3] and Ibn 'Arabī in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*[4] discuss Khiḍr and his mysterious identity. The common feature of all these works is using the language of *ta'wīl* as an esoteric hermeneutic method. This method is more prominent in the paradigm of Khiḍr because Khiḍr himself is the main master of *ta'wīl*.[5]

One result of this specific role is that Khiḍr gradually loses his historical personality and turns into a more symbolic character. It should be noted here that the personality of Khiḍr in Islamic tradition has changed over the centuries. Most of the first Qur'anic exegeses such as

[1] To have the story in detail see: *Mathnawī,* translate by Jawid Mojaddedi, Book 2, 25- 29.

[2] Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyyah*, edited by 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd al-Sharīf (Qom: Bīdār, 1374 H (solar)/ 1995), 35, 47, 187, 265, 382, 429, 463.

[3] Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār wa 'Uddat al-Abrār*, edited by Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1371 H (solar)/ 1992), vol. 1, 396, vol. 2, 562, vol. 3, 730,

[4] Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*, edited by Ibrāhīm Madkūr and 'Uthmān Yaḥyā (Cairo: al-Hay'at al-Miṣrīyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kutub, n.d), vol. 3, 181.

[5] See Yūthuf Thānī and Bālā'ī, "Tafsīr 'Irfānī Mūlāqāt Khiḍr wa Mūsā," *Pajūhishnāmi-yi 'Irfān*, no. 8, 1392 H (solar)/ 2013, 153-176.

Muqātil ibn Sulaymān[1] and Tha'labī[2], describe Khiḍr as a definite and historical person in a very detailed account and represent a historical depiction of him by discussing features of his real life, such as his birthplace, title, genealogy and so on. However, in the later ones, mystical and symbolic interpretations replace the realistic view, and Khiḍr is introduced as a universal symbolic figure who is beyond time and place.

This symbolic and supernatural aspect of Khiḍr paves the way for creating new mystical concepts among Sufis. For most of the mystics, Khiḍr corresponds to the esoteric aspect of religion and Moses corresponds with the exoteric one. According to the contrast between interiority and exteriority, Moses' objections to Khiḍr are seemingly due to the contrast between *ḥaqīqah* (as an interior aspect of Islam) and *Sharī'ah* (as an exterior aspect). In this approach, what Khiḍr does is related to the ontological dimension of the creation (*takwīn*), and what Moses does include the legislative aspect of the creation.

Moreover, time and place (which are normally features of the material world) should be understood in different paradigms once one is talking of Khiḍr. For Moses, every action should be done inside the structure of the authorized moral precepts and religious laws, while Khiḍr can surpass any law and breaks any moral discipline.

Some of the Sufis distinguish between two kinds of Khiḍr: Khiḍr as a historical person (*shakhṣī*) and Khiḍr as an imaginary character (*mithālī-naw'ī*). For example, 'Aṭṭār implicitly points out the universal identity of Khiḍr by describing him as an individual who appears to different people in various shapes. He says that Ibrāhīm Khawāṣ saw Khiḍr as a bird flying in the

[1] Cf. Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tafsīr Muqātil ibn Sulaymān*, edited by 'Abdullah Maḥmūd Shaḥātah (Beirut: Mu'assisa al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī, 1423 H/ 2002), vol 2., 592-594.

[2] Cf. Tha'ālabī, *al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6, 183.

sky,[1] while Ibrāhīm Adham was confronted with Khiḍr having human features.[2] Likewise, in *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah* the distinction between these two aspects of Khiḍr can be found.[3]

Corbin, based on Sufi's approach, especially Ibn 'Arabī, depicts these two pictures of Khiḍr: [4]

> It has seemed to us that the fact of having Khiḍr for a master invests the disciple, as an *individual*, with a transcendent, "transhistorical" dimension. This is something more than his incorporation into a brotherhood of Ṣūfis in Seville or Mecca; it is a personal, direct, and immediate bond with the Godhead.
> What remains to be established is the place of Khiḍr in the order of theophanies: How is he, as an unearthly, spiritual guide? … In other words, does Khiḍr in this relationship figure as an archetype, according to the definition established by analytical psychology, or as a distinct and enduring personality? For a complete answer to the question *Who is Khiḍr?* we should have to compile a very considerable mass of material from very divergent sources: prophetology, folklore, alchemy, etc.; but since we here consider him essentially as the invisible spiritual master, reserved for those who are called to a direct unmediated relationship with the divine world.

Khiḍr as a universal character implies an indefinite person who possesses a divine mysterious knowledge. Since he has no individuation, he can appear in any time and place. He is like the Holy Spirit in Christianity or Active Intellect in the Peripatetic philosophy. In this case, Moses knows only universal characteristics of Khiḍr rather than his personal identity; therefore, the word "find" in the Qur'ān can be used once Moses meets Khiḍr physically. Indeed, the

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[1] Aṭṭār, *Tadhkira al-'Awlīā'*, edited by Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Piymān, 1381 H (solar)), part 2, 149.

[2] Aṭṭār, *Ilāhī Nāmih*, edited by Muhammad-Riḍā Shafī'ī Kadkanī (Tehran: Sukhan, 1388 H (solar)), 311-312.

[3] It is represented when Ibn 'Arabī describes his own experience to meet Khiḍr, as an unknown person, very strange and mysterious. See Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al*-Makkīyyah, vol. 3, 181.

[4] Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sūfism of Ibn 'Arabī*, translated by Ralph Manheim (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 198), 70-71. Cf. Shayegan illustrates the same idea in: *Henry Corbin, La topographie spirituelle de l'Islam iranien Henri Corbin,* translated by Bāqir Parhām to *Āfāq Tafakkur Ma'nawī dar Islāmi Irānī*. Tehran: Āgāh, 1371 H (solar)/ 1992.

universal attributes of Khiḍr are definite, although his particular ones are indefinite. Everyone who possesses these definite attributes is Khiḍr unless otherwise noted. Due to these characteristics, Khiḍr can be seen in every time and every place because he is essentially an extraterrestrial and transcendental being. He is in "'*ālam al-mithāl*, "the intermediate suprasensory world, where the Active Imagination perceives events, figures, presences directly, unaided by the senses."[1]

One cannot examine Sufi ideas regarding Khiḍr without studying Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation. He presents a mystical interpretation of the story of Khiḍr. By distinguishing between true reality (*nafs al-amr*) and the tangible-based world, Ibn 'Arabi completely differentiates between the rules of each of these two worlds. Moreover, the rules of the true world may appear opposite to the rules of the mundane one in many aspects. Accordingly, killing the young boy by Khiḍr seems to entail two aspects: the inward aspect which is related to the true world, and the outward one which is in association with the mundane one.[2]

Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation is not stopped here. As a mystic, he puts his finger on the concept of "*ta'wīl*", by which Khiḍr justifies his actions and gives a persuasive answer to Moses. This is the word which is also used in the Qur'ān by Khiḍr when he wants to clarify the reasons for his actions. Literarily, *ta'wīl* means esoteric interpretation and is used specifically in the mystical context. However, Ibn 'Arabī provides another interpretation of *ta'wīl.* He responds to the ambiguities and interprets the story from a totally different viewpoint. In this approach, *ta'wīl* seems to be a magical tool by which all questions will be answered, all ties unloosed, and all conflicts reconciled.

[1] Ibid., 58.

[22] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusus al-Hikam*, edited by Abu-l 'Alā 'Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1365 H/ 1946), 202-203.

His analysis of the theme is completely different from the analyses by other mystics and unique. He holds that all three stories concentrate entirely on Moses and his role in the story rather than Khiḍr. According to Ibn ʻArabī, Khiḍr is like a mirror presented in front of Moses in order to confront Moses with his past and previous actions. In the case of killing, Khiḍr intends to send an important message to Moses: remember your action of killing!

To provide further explanation, Ibn ʻArabī traces back the issue of the killing to Moses' own experience. There are several stories in the Qur'ān in which Moses is somehow involved with the issue of murder. The first time is when Moses was not yet born. The sorcerers warn Pharaoh that a son (Moses) will be born from the Children of Israel (*banī isrā'īl*) who will destroy all his kingdom. To prevent Moses' birth, Pharaoh commands that every new-born boy must be killed. Nonetheless, Moses eventually survived, although there was a massacre of many children because of him. This slaughter is not explicitly stated in the Qur'ān, but from reliable *ḥadīths* there is a broad consensus on this issue among Muslims. Moreover, the italicized words in the following verses potentially indicate Pharaoh's command to kill the enfants:

> And We inspired to the mother of Moses, "Suckle him; but when *you fear for him [Moses]*, cast him into the river and *do not fear and do not grieve*."[1]
>
> [Saying], "Cast him into the chest and *cast it into the river*, and the river will throw it onto the bank; there *will take him an enemy to Me and an enemy to him*."[2]

The second time is related to the dozens of years later when Moses is a strong man. He enters a city and finds therein two men fighting: one from his faction and one from among his

[1] Qur'ān, 28/7.

[2] Ibid, 20/39. See Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol.27, 506 and Ṭabāṭabāī, *al*-Mīzān, vol.14, 150.

enemies. The one from his faction calls for help to him [Moses] against his enemy, so "*Moses struck that one, and he was killed.*"[1]

The third time is when Moses becomes a prophet and his followers are very powerful. Moses invites Pharaoh to monotheism, but Pharaoh rejects it. Pharaoh and his subordinates, who are in fear of Israel's political and military power, order that all the Hebrew boys be killed so that their power would not increase in the future. This order is clearly declared in the Qur'ān:

> And indeed, We sent Moses with Our signs and a manifest authority unto Pharaoh, Hāmān, and Korah. And they said, "A lying sorcerer." So when he came unto them with the truth from Us, they said, "*Slay the sons of those who believe with him.*"[2]

Among the above three cases, in the second murder the role of Moses is more prominent because of his own direct action. Ibn 'Arabī cites some of these Quranic stories when he interprets the story of Moses and Khiḍr.[3] *Ta'wīl,* as a justification upon which Khiḍr relies, is used as a reminder for Moses to remember his adventurous past. Especially, in the story of the killing, Khiḍr implicitly reminds Moses of his action in killing a person. Hence, Moses should not blame Khiḍr very easily. However, the differences between Khiḍr's murder and Moses' should not be disregarded. Moses kills an adult, while Khiḍr kills a teenager. Moses kills accidentally, but Khiḍr's action is intentionally.

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[1] Qur'ān, 28/15-16.

[2] Ibid., 40/23-25. Similarly, the order of the killing is mentioned in three other verses: "And [recall, O Children of Israel], when Moses said to His people, 'And [recall] when We saved your forefathers from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, *slaughtering your [newborn] sons* and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord'" (92/49; 7/41; 14/6). As is clear, there is a great similarity between the first case and the third one. In both cases, Pharaoh kills the infant boys, although it is not clear that the order of killing is because of his anger, revenge, or fear.

[3] Ibn 'Arabī, *Fusus al-Hikam*, edited by Abu-l 'Alā 'Afīfī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1365 H/ 1946), 197, 199, Among commentators on Ibn 'Arabī see 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* by Ibn 'Arabī (Cairo: Dār Āfāq li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2016), 197, 203.

Along with the story of killing, Ibn ‘Arabī compares two other stories from Moses’ past life. He compares the story of the ship to the chest that Moses’ mother puts him in and casts into the river, and the story of rebuilding the collapsed wall (without any wage) to Moses’ providing water for people (without any wage).[1]

In other words, Ibn ‘Arabī believes that Khiḍr’s goal was to introduce Moses to himself in a mysterious way, and to remind him of his past. In particular, he reminds Moses of God’s love and compassion on him in the various events of his life on one hand, and Moses’ former mistakes such as the murder he committed on the other hand. In this interpretation, Moses’s role is very prominent, while Khiḍr’s is secondary. This rare view is particular only to Ibn ‘Arabī and his commentators, for example, Kāshānī,[2] Seyed Ḥiydar Āmulī,[3] Jandī,[4] and Hakkī.[5]

According to the issues discussed in this chapter, it becomes clear that although Khiḍr possesses a high dignity in the Islamic tradition, particularly in the Sufi works, there is no debate around his unconventional actions and especially his transgressive practice of killing a young boy. The concept of compassionate killing is never put forward by Muslim thinkers, nor they have considered the issue controversial. His actions are adapted to the religious paradigm and no serious ethical or rational question has challenged the story. Moreover, Khiḍr’s disposition in violating the ethical precepts and religious law or performing violent actions was neither simulated as a

[1] See Qur’ān, 28/24.

[2] ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* by Ibn ‘Arabī (Cairo: Dār Āfāq li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, 2016), 197, 203.

[3] Āmulī, *al-Muqaddamāt min Kitāb Naṣṣ al-Nuṣūṣ fī Sharḥ Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam*, edited by Henri Korbin and ‘Uthmān Yaḥyā (Tehran: Tūs, 1329 H (solar)), vol. 1, 40.

[4] Jandī, *Sharḥ Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam*, edited by Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtīyānī (Qom: Būstān Kitāb, 1381 H (Solar)), 664-665.

[5] Ismaeil Hakki, Commentary of *Fuṣuṣ al-Ḥikam* by Ibn ‘Arabī, vol.1, translated by Bulent Rauf et al. (Oxford & Istanbul: Oxford University Press, 1986), 945 onwards.

model among lay people, nor confirmed as a teaching beside other doctrines. However, as mentioned in this chapter, Khiḍr is a very symbolic and mysterious figure in the Islamic tradition, which distinguishes him from other significant personages and even prophets and gives him a unique status.

Chapter 3: Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Compassionate Killing According to the two Stories

Comparative method is a challenging approach in Religious Studies that has increasingly sparked debate in recent decades. Most of the critics have asserted that comparative methodology is fundamentally flawed because of the biases which scholars inevitably bring to their comparisons, its focus on similarities and minimization of differences between religious traditions, and its inability to recognize religious phenomena in their original contexts.[1] A *Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* is one of the most significant scholarships conducted in the field of comparative methodology. A *Magic Still Dwells* is a necessary addition to the field because it serves as a roadmap to navigate different approaches to comparative religion.[2] The book has reprinted the essay "In Comparison a Magic Dwells" from the key figure in comparative methodology, Jonathan. Z. Smith. He raises the main question, "how am I to apply what the one thing shows me to the case of two things?"[3]

According to the book, specific requirements and standards should be observed for a comparative method to protect it from oversimplification or reductionism. In my research, I thus avoid overemphasizing similarities, minimizing differences between two contexts, turning superficial similarities into ontological realities, totalizing, and assuming common origin(s). In comparing a similar story in two different traditions, I do not aim to emphasize similarities with regard to the concept of

[1] David M. Freidenreich, "Comparisons Compared: A Methodological Survey of Comparisons of Religion from 'A Magic Dwells' to 'A Magic Still Dwells,'" in *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, vol. 16, no. 1, Brill (2004), 80.

[2] Gregory Price Grieve, "A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age, Book Review*," The journal of Religion,* vol. 82, no. 1, (2002), 160.

[3] Jonathan Smith, "In Comparison A Magic Dwells," in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, edited by Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, Berkeley (Los Angles and London: University of California Press, 2000), 41.

compassionate killing, or to contextualize the two distinct religions in a similar way, which would ignore very real differences in the content and context of this topic. As my first step, I investigated the concept of compassionate killing and its interpretations in the relevant original contexts in the previous chapters, since, obviously, the most suitable method for understanding this concept is to examine the comparands contextually prior to comparing them. In this chapter, I focus on finding and analysing the structural and conceptual similarities and differences in both contexts. In light of the similarities and differences, I will argue how the common characteristics of this concept from two different traditions would lead us to a better understanding of the theme.

Throughout this chapter, by the aid of applying the comparative method, basic structure and characteristics of the concept of compassionate killing would be identified. In the Islamic context, this comparison might yield new interpretations of the Quranic story and re-configure the normative understanding of the theme. In both contexts, the comparative study offers several hypotheses about the analysis and functions of the concept, and a new framework through which to study it. In the words of Bernard Jackson, "it is indeed the function of the comparative approach to ask questions and suggest hypotheses […] the most profitable comparisons are often those that raise questions rather than those that attempt to answer them."[1] In this spirit, my research has eschewed a concrete conclusion about the meaning and function of compassionate killing in favour of revealing the hidden levels of this concept in both traditions.

In this chapter, by comparing the findings of the previous chapters, I explore three main issues. First, I compare the two stories to identify the similarities, and beyond that, to show how these similarities help to configure a possible structure for the concept of compassionate killing. Second, I demonstrate the differences in order to grasp the peculiarities of each story. Finding differences gives insight to see cases more in-depth and expands our knowledge of the specific

[1] David M. Freidenreich, "Comparisons Compared," 92.

characteristics both traditions include. It is noteworthy that these discrepancies are not related to the main elements that configure the framework of this concept, but they appear in the later interpretations of the concept and the trajectory which is set through these stories in each tradition. Third, I examine the motivation of compassionate killing as well as the justifications which are presented in each tradition. Moreover, I set an ethical argument for investigating the relation between the concept of compassionate killing and Western ethical theories.

3.1 Similarities

While these two stories belong to two quite different and even heterogeneous ethical-religious traditions, we can see striking similarities between them. I try to point out as many resemblances as I can and focus on analysing some of the most crucial ones.

Both stories narrate how the highest-ranked spiritual authorities of their traditions, i.e. the bodhisattva and Khiḍr, commit the act of killing a person. In both cases, the one killed is innocent, in the sense that they have not committed any vicious action to deserve death or any other kind of punishment. Both the bodhisattva and Khiḍr kill them to prevent offences that they foresee the slain ones will commit. They perceive these future actions through their own supernatural knowledge which is not accessible to ordinary people. Moreover, they both are completely certain of what they are doing and the correctness of their conduct.

Furthermore, in both scenarios, traces of God or gods are evident. In the Buddhist context, gods appear as assistants to the bodhisattva in his decision-making, while in the Qur'ān, God is regarded as the main factor. Needless to say, according to the Islamic doctrines, attributing an action to God is regarded as the last significant step in authorizing an action.

In both scenarios, a better situation is depicted for either the one killed or other related people. The *Upāyakauśalya Sūtra* mentions that "the robber died to be reborn in a world of paradise."[1] In a similar way, the 81st verse of sūrah al-Kahf states that "so we desired that their Lord give them [parents of the young boy] in exchange [for] one who is better than him in purity, and nearer to mercy." Moreover, in the Islamic *hadith* (Prophetic saying) it is said the young boy went to paradise after he was killed by Khiḍr.

Both the boddhisattva and Khiḍr possess two main characteristics which enable them to transgress any fundamental rule. These two crucial concepts are "wisdom" *(prajñā)* and "compassion" *(karunā)*, which are regarded as the most significant prerequisites for a compassionate killing in both Buddhism and Islam. The Mahāyāna tradition sees the story of the Compassionate Captain as pivotal because it expresses an intimate relationship between wisdom *(prajñā)* and compassion *(karunā)* by attributing them to the bodhisattva.

It is quite noticeable that the Qur'ān introduces Khiḍr as God's servant who, like the bodhisattva, possess two specific characteristics: wisdom (*'ilm*) and compassion (*raḥmat*). The Qur'ān emphasizes that Khiḍr, as "a servant from among our servants" is distinguished as an exceptional saintly exemplar who is "endowed with compassion (*raḥmat*) and wisdom(*'ilm*)."[2] It is very interesting that among all divine attributes, Khiḍr is distinguished by these two features. Khiḍr is the only person in the Qur'ān who is identified by only these two features. Many

[1] *The Skill in Means* (*Upāyakauśalya) Sūtra*, Mark Tatz, trans. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1994), 74.

[2] "There they found a servant from among Our servants whom We had granted a mercy from Us and whom We had taught knowledge from Our Presence." (18:65)

understand compassion as a reference to prophethood or to a kind of spiritual perfection, bestowing upon him perpetual life besides the esoteric wisdom acquired from the Divine.[1]

Accordingly, compassion is of central importance in the concept of justifiable killing. Its function cannot be confined solely to a justification of the killing, nor to the semantic relevance mentioned implied by the label of "compassionate killing." As I will explain in what follows, compassion here is an element that configures the concept and possesses such a power that it prevails over all other religious doctrines and principles. It is represented here as integral with the enlightened one's sense of his universal soteriological task in the world. In other words, if we separate the element of compassion from the concept of compassionate killing, the whole idea of compassionate violence would be destroyed, not just the *compassionate* part. Furthermore, compassion here appears as the most basic and significant Buddhist doctrine. To prove this claim, it is necessary to study one of the basic doctrines in the Buddhist tradition.

In Buddhism, *karma* is regarded as the determining factor for the next life. It is an action that leads to future consequences, especially when the act is performed intentionally. If one wishes to stop the circle of *samsāra*, one needs to take care of one's actions including mental actions. According to Buddhist understandings of karma, no one can help the person in this process but the person him-or herself. In Mahāyāna, the issue changes, and asking bodhisattvas for their help can be regarded as an effective factor which facilitates accomplishing the spiritual path. However, what is happening in the process of compassionate killing is to terminate someone's life in order to prevent him or her from accumulating heavy negative karma and even rid him or her of previous karmic outcomes, *without* his or her asking, intention, or effort. All is done in the name of

[1] Nasr, *The Study Quran,* 1644.

compassion. In fact, compassion with its all-embracing dominion overrides the ethical law of karma, and it is the only concept that has the potential to set aside this pivotal doctrine.

The element of compassion doubles its power when it is combined with wisdom, because wisdom has enough power to present a strong legitimized sketch of the concept of compassionate killing. The bodhisattva and Khiḍr are conceived as ones who possess a special knowledge that is unknown to others, and that their wisdom is meant to be available for the good of all creatures. In the context of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy, wisdom goes beyond understanding of the nature of reality. Thus, "it includes not only understanding ultimate metaphysical truths, but also social, political, and conventional realities."[1] Moreover, wisdom includes all these other realms:

> "understanding the ways things are in the conventional sense – the way the world, as we conventionally understand it, works, especially with regard to the human realm…. the wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings – as the wisdom that knows the way to accomplish blamelessly the welfare of beings in their present and future lives.''[2]

Consequently, this comprehensive definition of wisdom puts into action all the understandings and associates them with the goal of salvation and benefiting others.

By these two main features, the process of justification of all offences finds a legitimized image in both traditions. In Buddhism, compassion and wisdom are described metaphorically as being like the two wings of a bird, which together, enable the bodhisattva to achieve the higher levels of enlightenment. Thereby, the bodhisattva, who is guided by a different set of precepts called the bodhisattva's vow, is qualified to pass beyond the existing religious law and ethical precept. The bodhisattva's vow is a vow that aims to help sentient beings in order to achieve enlightenment and has a soteriological function. As Hamilton states, *Jātakas* "identify compassion

[1] Emily McRae, "Suffering and the Six Perfections: Using Adversity to Attain Wisdom in Mahāyāna Buddhist Ethics," The Journal of Value Inquiry, vol. 52 (27 January 2018) 398.

[2] Ibid., 400.

as the all-consuming motive which carried the future Buddha through great cycles of self-sacrificing labors and sufferings for the sake of omniscient wisdom whereby to save men."[1] These two features configure a high level of skill or knowledge for the person who possesses them: *upāya* (skillful means) in Buddhism, and *'īlm Ladunnī* (esoteric knowledge) in Islam.

The term upāya rises to the level of a prominent technical concept in Mahāyāna.[2] It is a pivotal notion in Mahāyāna and the basis on which the concept of compassionate violence is set up in the Buddhist context. Very generally, upāya refers to the different pedagogical styles applied by the bodhisattva to help people attain enlightenment. The skilled bodhisattva enjoys a knowledge enables him or her to apply different methods according to the disciples' capacity. The notion of upāya arises from the wisdom and compassion embodied in an enlightened one who aims at liberating beings. In Mahāyāna, by presenting the universal soteriological idea of upāya or applying specific methods and provisional means, the bodhisattvas find the ability to lead other living beings toward enlightenment. The high-ranked bodhisattva who possesses the knowledge and power to apply upāya, can transgress the precepts from motives of compassion. Therefore, ordinary moral prescriptions may be violated by a bodhisattva as a form of skillful means.

In this context, the Islamic parallel for upāya is *'īlm Ladunnī* or esoteric knowledge, a key element which legitimizes the action of killing for Khiḍr in the Islamic tradition. *'īlm Ladunnī* is a kind of transcendent wisdom and intuitive knowledge which is bestowed upon those who attain the spiritual perfection. The person who is endowed with intuitive knowledge can attain an inner insight by which she or he will be able to access the unseen mysteries, realize the truth of every

[1] Clarence H. Hamilton, "The Idea of Compassion in Mahāyāna Buddhism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 70, no. 3 American Oriental Society Stable (Jul. - Sep. 1950): 147.

[2] Michael Pye, *Skillful Means: A concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 119.

phenomenon, and go beyond sense perception. It can be said that such a person is directly connected to the divine knowledge source.

The other main common theme that appears in both stories is transgression of religious laws and conventional ethical rules. In other words, a deliberate rejection and intentional refusal of conventional rules in favour of affirming the superiority of transgression is found in both contexts. Foucault and Bataille's discussion on the transgressive actions done in a religious context is noteworthy; they interpret such conducts as a kind of religious experience and entering the divine realm:

> "Foucault's work built on Bataille's scholarship as regards the notion of "limit experiences". Bataille recognises that a "limit experience" is on the edge of limits where the divine and ecstasy meet, where rules are broken until a place beyond all rules is reached. The relationship between limits and transgression is complex as transgression "crosses and recrosses" the line or norm which forces it back into place."[1]

In other words, religious and ethical laws which are considered to be positive karmic seeds that can help people to reach the enlightenment, change to an alternative path and a "mechanism to be transcended"[2] in the paradigm of compassionate killing. Voyce's definition of transgression is a very accurate one that "transgression suspends a rule not by suppressing it, but by surpassing it."[3] Therefore, some notions such as "morality", "right conduct", "virtue", and "ethical value" which are always underlined as the most prestigious ideals, are marginalized by an authorized person for realizing a higher goal.

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[1] Malcolm Voyce, "Michel Foucault and the "care of the self": Approach to the Buddhist Dharma," *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 36:3, (2017): 414.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Malcolm Voyce, "Ideas of Transgression and Buddhist Monks," Published online: 6 May 2010 © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2010. 192.

In conclusion, what is happening in these two stories is a justification of violating all the ethical and conventional rules by relying on skillful means in Buddhism and unseen knowledge in Islam. These specific skill and knowledge are allocated only to high-ranking spiritual persons who apply them mainly for pedagogical and soteriological functions. Both traditions emphasize that unseen knowledge and upāya are very deep notions and their truth cannot be grasped by ordinary wisdom. The bodhisattva or the master who claims to possess this skill or this knowledge is seen in both traditions as an authorized person who can violate every kind of rule because he or she is beyond any law. Therefore, the criterion for evaluating a "right action" is the doer and his or her intention rather than the action in itself, and the rightness of an action is justified by the doer's authority. Both Islam and Buddhism ask disciples to observe pure submission to such a master, as the depicted relationship between Khiḍr and Moses in the Qur'ān represent this issue.

3.2 Differences

Although a semantic representation of the narratives' structure demonstrates a close similarity between the two stories, they both include several unique features that make them different from each other. In other words, while these religious stories have a close resemblance, the same semantic structure, and similar key elements, they produce very different consequences and hermeneutic approaches and set different trajectories to be followed.

Asking about differences raises the question of which functions and objectives—religious, social, political—these stories may serve. The narrative of Khiḍr has produced an effective approach in Islamic mysticism to initiation by mystical teachers and the authority of esoteric knowledge, especially in Sufi orders. In the Buddhist tradition, the story results in a process of legitimizing killing out of compassion in the real world or even killing those who do not believe

in Buddhist doctrines.[1] However, the religious texts that include the theme of the compassionate killing emphasize that it should be done under special circumstances, accompanied with a pure intention and compassionate motivation, and by spiritually realized beings and enlightened persons.

Given that Khiḍr has been an influential master and impressive character in Islamic tradition, his murder of the youth could be expected to have become a model for Muslims, as happened among Buddhists; however, his action did not serve as a practical model either among lay people or for Muslim authorities and thinkers. In other words, while Khiḍr's esoteric knowledge is regarded as the highest source of knowledge and perfection, it has never been considered an authorized source for legislation or justifying social approaches. To clarify the issue, I refer here to another mystical story in the Qur'ān, that of Abraham and his son.

The important point here is that, while this esoteric knowledge is regarded as the highest source of knowledge and perfection, it has never been considered an authorized source for legislation or justifying social approaches. Therefore, it can be said that the story of Khiḍr is the only case in the Qur'ān in which, by relying on intuitive knowledge, one is authorized to transgress the basic religious laws in a social paradigm.

The story of Abraham and his intention in killing his son is similar to the story of Khiḍr. The main theme in both narratives is killing or aiming to kill an innocent person because of God's order, with the underlying issue of submission of the disciple (Moses and Abraham's son)[2] before

[1] I have discussed this issue in detail in the first chapter, especially by referring to the two historical cases. Also, for more historical evidence and analysis see Nicholas Gier, *The Origin of Religious Violence: An Asian Perspective* (London: Lexington Books, 2014).

[2] Abraham's son, who is recognized by most of the commentators as Ismā'īl, is considered the symbol of true disciple, lover, and a submit devotee before master and God in the Islamic mysticism. For example, Rūmī has referred this symbol in his poems so many times.

his master's actions and orders. The story of Abraham and the sacrifice of his son serves as evidence for Muslims' understanding of filicide. However, Muslim commentators have not discussed its ethical basis; that one can take the right of life from another person. Ismā'īl (or Ishāq) was almost killed because of his father's dream, and the commentaries focus on proving Abraham's and Ismā'īl's pure faith and their submission to God without questioning the correctness of Abraham's act, which is the same approach represented in the story of Khiḍr. In fact, this hermeneutical approach depicts the obligatory-bases approach of Muslims (instead of the rights-based one), in which people should be obedient to God and His special messengers, including Khiḍr.

Although the story of Abraham's sacrifice is a symbolic theme and narrated in a mystical language in the Qur'ān, its function in the Islamic tradition is not confined to mystical speculations; rather, it has penetrated among lay people, forging connections to the idea of martyrdom in Muslim societies. In other words, by a practical interpretation of this story, Muslims follow the theme of one's sacrifice or a loved one in the name of martyrdom or sacrifice, which is specifically realized in situations such as a fighting in holy war, defending one's ideas, denouncing an injustice, and opposing oppression. However, this influence is manifested only in the case of accepting one's own death voluntarily, not killing or sacrificing another.

The interpretation of the story of Khiḍr and the trajectory it created in the Islamic context differs from what is seen in both the story of Abraham and the Buddhist story of the Compassionate Captain. His action is neither followed by believers in more general contexts, such as the theme of sacrifice, nor prescribed by thinkers under special circumstances, as happened in Buddhism. However, reasons for this significant difference are unclear and warrant examination.

One reason that Khiḍr's action did not convey the role of a pattern or develop the idea of compassionate violence in the Islamic tradition is the difference between Islamic jurisprudence

and Buddhist legal codes, especially the rules regarding killing. According to the Qur'ān, an unjustified murder of a person is considered equivalent to the murder of all human beings.[1] In Islamic jurisprudence, killing is allowed under specific circumstances,[2] but none of these circumstances correspond to the model of killing in the story of Khiḍr. For example, polytheists and infidels could be killed only if they committed aggression, rebellion, violation, and encroachment whereby the Muslim community would incur serious trouble. In all these cases, individuals are only punished *after* committing the offence, not *before*. Indeed, retribution before the crime (as happened in the story of Khiḍr) is not acceptable in Islamic law. The jurisprudential system in Islam is all-inclusive, with detailed laws for any issue, including killing. All the circumstances for an allowable killing and its prerequisites are explained in great detail by the jurists. Furthermore, over the centuries, the jurists possessed the control and authority of the society in most periods, and jurisprudence dominated other approaches. Consequently, with such an authoritative and inclusive system, it is unsurprising that Khiḍr's action is not established as a model for Muslims or substituted for the canonical rules.

In Buddhism, the legal sources for lay people which were mostly created by the local rules, do not establish laws that authorize killing persons defined as vicious. Consequently, it seems that lacking a comprehensive body of laws to design a clear structure in order to elaborate the conditions for killing a malicious person, resulted in legitimizing killing through another direction.

As I have discussed in detail in chapter two, some of the commentators such as Ṭabāṭabāī have indicated that according to the grammatical structure of the verses in Khiḍr's story, the part

[1] Qur'ān, 5/32.

[2] For example, apostasy (irtidād), rebellion (*baghy*), retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*), and fornication (*zinā*).

of Moses' protest is of higher importance than the part of Khiḍr's action. This emphasis can prove how Islamic law prevails over any exception.[1]

The other reason could be referred to Ibn Arabi's opinion, which is explained in detail in chapter two. The story of Khiḍr is narrated in the Qur'ān in the context of his meeting with Moses. In all the scenes, he is talking to Moses, so that one can infer that all these incidents occurred with the aim of teaching something to Moses or reflecting on his past. Therefore, the theme is interpreted in a private model lesson for a specific time rather than a common teaching that can be applied for every time.

Moreover, as explained in chapter two, the personality of Khiḍr in Islamic tradition has changed over the centuries. In the first Qur'anic exegeses, the commentators represent a historical depiction of Khiḍr by discussing features of his real life; while, in the later ones, mystical and symbolic interpretations replace the realistic view. In other words, as Henri Corbin explains, Khiḍr becomes a universal symbolic figure who is beyond time and place. It might be understandable that in such an interpretation, his actions cannot be established as a common model in the tradition.

Another aspect of examining the difference between Islamic and Buddhist interpretations of the story lies in the understanding of the different eschatological schemes present in the two versions of the story. The Islamic eschatology is based on resurrection (*ma'ād*), upon which the end of the world, the final judgment, and the eternal division of the righteous and the wicked are justified. According to the Qur'ān, resurrection is clearly explained as the only way to gain immortality. It is the Day of final Judgement and eternal division of the righteous and wicked. Moreover, God is the only judge to determine happiness or misery, reward or punishment, and heaven or hell for all humankind. As a result, no one knows what will happen and no certain criteria

[1] Ṭabāṭabāī, *al-Mīzān*, vol. 13, 344-345.

exist for us to know who is a blessed one and who is a miserable. Everything is associated with God's omnipotence. At Divine judgement, "every small and great thing is recorded," and even the smallest acts will not be ignored: "We shall set the just scales for the Day of Resurrection, and no soul shall be wronged in aught. Even if it be the weight of a mustard seed, we shall bring it. And We suffice as Reckoner."[1]

In addition, divine forgiveness is another doctrine in Islam that effectively prevents Muslims to do any moral judgment. According to many verses in the Qur'ān, God can forgive all of one's sins even if they are very vicious. This forgiveness does not depend on any condition; namely, God can forgive anyone without any reason. Therefore, the absolute will of God prevents any prediction about human destiny after death.

In Buddhism, the theory of reincarnation and *samsara*, depicts a model of seemingly endless rebirths in which each individual enters into a circle whose criteria of misery and happiness are well defined and predictable. Consequently, the bodhisattva—or an awakened one— has the power to see all the karmic seeds and results of another person, while in Islam no one will have this kind of knowledge. Therefore, in Mahāyāna, a bodhisattva is authorized to act according to her or his knowledge of a person, while in Islam, no one is allowed to do that.

3.3 Motivation: an ethical analysis

Since compassionate killing in both traditions is performed by a high-level *bodhisattva* and a person of prophetic ranking, if not higher, it will be imperative that we attempt to understand the possible motivation behind the killings. Moreover, as it was discussed earlier, the ones killed were innocent victims who had not committed any vicious actions deserving of death. This is a very

[1] Qur'ān, 21/47.

significant element that is common in both stories which makes the issue more complex ethically, and raises the following important questions: what is the main motivation of the killing in these stories? Can we consider the killing of an innocent person as a moral action by investigating the doer's intent?

The act of killing is reported and interpreted as beneficial for the victims, other people, or both. In fact, to benefit others and bring about positive results are considered the main goals of the killing. In the story of The Compassionate Captain, the bodhisattva kills the vicious man to rescue him from his future bad karma and from experiencing the negative consequences of his misdeed. Furthermore, in both historical cases which were examined in chapter one, that is the killing of the emperor and the sacrificial ritual of *sgrol ba*, the intent to liberate the killed person from his or her negative karma was the ultimate goal. In the story of Khiḍr, the motivation mentioned is that of emancipating the parents of the killed young boy from undesirable outcomes of their son's heresy. All these cases share a significant common notion: salvation.

A strong soteriological approach is manifested in both stories. In fact, saving or delivering an individual from an unfortunate condition is declared as the main goal of killing. However, it should be noted that the soteriological approach which is depicted in this paradigm is very different from the main features of the shared doctrine of salvation represented in most religions. In the concept of compassionate killing, none of these factors appear: an individual's effort in order to be liberated, one's demand to be saved, asking for help, or even complaining of an unsuitable condition. In other words, the ultimately "good" state is not achieved by one's own volition or endeavour, rather it happens completely unintentionally for the saved one by the deliberate intervention of the enlightened one.

By examining the story of Khiḍr, another motivation can be found in relation to the protection of religious doctrines. As explained in chapter two, Khiḍr kills the youth because he has knowledge about the youth's future actions. According to Khiḍr's knowledge, the young boy will become an infidel in the future and mislead his parents who are believers.[1] In the Buddhist narrative, we cannot find any evidence regarding religious doctrines, and all the reader is told is that the victim aims to commit a robbery. However, in the two other historical cases, i.e. the killing of the emperor and the sacrificial ritual (*sgrol ba*), the reader is told that the main motivations for killing is to support and defend the religious tradition and its doctrines. Therefore, one of the functions of the concept can be defined as protecting the stability of a religious tradition in society. However, this is not an idea that corresponds to Buddhist scriptural sources and the story of the Compassionate Captain, but does appear later as a developed concept, which may serve social and political goals also.

According to the story of Khiḍr in the Islamic context and later interpretations of the concept of compassionate killing in Buddhism, defending religious tradition exceeds other religious doctrines and ethical precepts. It is noteworthy that even the most sacred laws and basic doctrines of a religion are permitted to be transgressed merely by the intention of protecting the religious doctrines. Thus, this concept can marginalize human rights by the power of the sacred and its protection. However, the two stories demonstrate that any violation of the basic doctrines is only allowed for high-ranking individuals.

[1] It is an interesting point that many of the Quranic exegesis such as Ṭabarī, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Māwirdī, Ibn Jawzī, and Samarqandī attribute wickedness and robbery to the young boy, as I have explained it in more detail in the second chapter. They call him a rebellious child who would be extremely vicious in future, especially, in relation to his parents.

The issue of moral judgment is one of the most important questions that arises in the text. Do we consider the killing of an innocent person as a moral action? Does the idea of compassionate violence suggest that the consequences of one's conduct are the ultimate basis for any judgement about the rightness or wrongness of that conduct? This kind of killing cannot be considered a moral action unless its motivations and reasons are taken into account. Having considered the more detailed explanations provided by the future Buddha and Khiḍr, the reader might revise her moral judgment and possibly call the murder a justified moral act; particularly, in the paradigm of non-secular ethics.

If we go back to the story of Khiḍr and take a closer look at the dialogue between Khiḍr and Moses, we will see that Moses calls the deed of Khiḍr an incorrect and immoral act. Khiḍr is indeed confronted by Moses' protest both when he damages the ship and when he kills the teenager.[1] In this story, Moses' protest is very important because it happens despite his belief in Khiḍr's status as one of the most highest devotees as well as his promise in following Khiḍr without questioning him. As mentioned in chapter two, at the beginning of his conversation with Khiḍr, Moses promised that he would be silent about Khiḍr's actions, but he could not. He breaks all his covenants by calling Khiḍr's violent action a monstrous (*'imr*) and terrible one (*nukr*). Moses' protests represent that he did not expect such immoral actions from a special messenger of God (Khiḍr).

According to so-called "ethical intuitionism,"[2] which is common to all human beings, not only Moses, but also everyone in this position should make the same judgment about Khiḍr's

[1] "When they [Khiḍr and Moses] had embarked upon a ship, he made a hole therein. Moses said, "Didst thou make a hole in it in order to drown its people? Thou hast done a *monstrous* thing!" So, they went on till they met a young boy, and he slew him. He [Moses] said, "Didst thou slay a pure soul who had slain no other soul? Thou hast certainly done a *terrible* thing!" (18/71, 74).

[2] See Huemer, *Ethical intuitionism* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

actions. Intuitionism, in this sense, is a theory about how ethical beliefs need their own justification and how we can recognize that certain things are good or not: In fact, through this moral intuition, we can ascertain how moral agents understand which things are good, or which actions are right and wrong. As Huemer states:

> Reasoning sometimes changes how things seem to us. But there is also a way things seem to us prior to reasoning; otherwise, reasoning could not get started. The way things seem prior to reasoning we may call an "initial appearance." An initial, intellectual appearance is an "intuition".[1]

This idea is basically traced back to Plato who believes that morality and values are objective.[2] As a result, all human beings have a common ethical intuition by which their moral judgments about a behavior are almost the same. Furthermore, this theory indicates that some of the ethical laws can be considered "universal" which are conceived by ethical intuitionism. For instance, we would intuitively admire a hungry poor person who gives her food to another poor person. On the other hand, we would have a negative reaction if we see some one abusing a child. Likewise, the following laws maybe considered to be universal: "Courage, benevolence, and honesty are virtues. If a person has a right to do something, then no person has a right to forcibly prevent him from doing that thing. It is unjust to punish a person for a crime he did not commit."[3]

According to these laws, especially the last one, what Bodhisattva and Khiḍr did in killing an innocent person cannot be considered a moral action; rather, we have to call it an immoral or a violent action. Nevertheless, in both Buddhist and Islamic tradition, not only have the killing not been considered a violent or immoral action, but they have been praised. In Quranic commentaries,

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[1] Ibid, p. 101-102.

[2] Rist, *Plato's Moral Realism: The Discovery of the Presuppositions of Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 214, 227.

[3] See Fieser, "Ethics," in *IEP*, accessed 05 September 2020 in https://iep.utm.edu/ethics.

the moral issue is either not questioned at all or it is confirmed as a morally right conduct immediately, as I have cited in chapter two. Hence, there is not any unsolved moral problem left regarding Khiḍr's actions.

Along with this traditional affirmative approach, Khiḍr's clarification on the reasons of his actions lead us to revise our moral judgment about him. Here is where the paradox arises; the killing of an innocent person is accepted as a correct and moral action in further interpretations of the story, whereas, on the basis of our ethical intuition, this killing should be a wrong and immoral action. This paradox which is also seen in the Buddhist story could be resolved by analyzing the meaning of "universal" —as a main element in the ethical laws.

One of the most important points in studying the laws that are universal and self-evident is that they cannot have fixed rules such as laws of physics, or like mathematical propositions, or perhaps like the laws of logic. Ethics is rooted in human interactions; therefore, any changes in these interactions could affect ethical laws even if it is claimed that they are universal and self-evidence.

Moreover, mathematical and logical concepts are identical to their referents. In other words, there is no distinction between the concept of number 4 and its referent, while ethical concepts are distinguished from their real referents in the concrete world. Ethical laws are essentially related to the universal concepts whose examples are very diverse. For example, everybody accepts that killing is a bad and immoral act as a general concept, but there is not any consensus in the world on calling a lot of murders bad or good, immoral or moral. In fact, to attribute "immoral" and "bad" to a behavior depends on the conditions in which that behavior takes place and the interpretations that are inferred out of that. Accordingly, ethical laws are basically built up with modulated concepts, while mathematical and logical concepts are made by fix and

unchangeable ones. For instance, one kind of killing might be validated and justified by a group of people while is condemned by the other. Therefore, the universality of ethical laws is conditional, not absolute.

As McKay states, "universal moral intuitions are like anchors, invisible from the surface but immovably secured to the seabed, whereas culturally prevalent moral norms are like buoys on the surface of the water, available to direct observation."[1] Humans everywhere recognize the moral values relating to kindness, fairness, loyalty, courage, abhorrent cruelty, cheating, betrayal, subversion and so on, but people are often obliged to prioritize one virtue over the others or condemn some vices more than others, depending on a wide range of contextual factors and goals.

This variability is apparent also at the level of entire cultural groups, some tending historically to emphasize certain virtues more highly or punishing particular vices more harshly than others.[2] For example, in many cultures killing is banned; even though, it takes place under specific conditions like war. Therefore, finding real examples of the universal moral laws is a difficult task, if not impossible. Moreover, the variety of ethical theories and schools make this task much more complicated because they present different criteria to signify the concrete examples of the universal laws. Consequently, how can one consider the both Islamic and Buddhist stories moral or which ethical theory can explain such an action if it is supposed to be a moral action? In order to reach the answer, we need to look at normative ethics and its divisions.

[1] Whitehouse and McKay, "Do universal moral intuitions shape and constrain culturally prevalent moral norms?" In *This View of Morality*. https://evolution-institute.org/new.evolution-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/tvol-morality-publication-web2018-7.pdf, accessed 05 September 2020.

[2] Ibid.

In a general division, normative ethics are divided into the following three theories: (1) virtue theories, (2) duty theories (deontological ethics), and (3) consequentialist theories.[1] Normative ethics involves arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct.[2] For instance, The Golden Rule is a classic example of a normative principle; However, The Golden Rule does not offer any particular help in many of the moral dilemmas, in which one cannot distinguish between moral do's and don'ts. [3] For this reason, detailed information about moral criteria are argued through these subcategories.

For moral verification of the story of Khiḍr's killing, the deontological ethics can be correspondent to the story. Based on the last statement of Khiḍr, he has done only his divine duties either in damaging the ship or the killing the teenager. In response to Moses' protest, he explains the reasons of his actions in detail as so: "I did not do this upon my own command. This is the meaning of that which thou couldst not bear patiently."[4] To show how this statement of Khiḍr can be correspondent to duty theories (deontological ethics) I refer to the classification of ethical duties which are divided into three heading:[5] duties to God, duties to oneself, and duties to others.

The first category, i.e. duties to God, indicates a reciprocal interaction between human beings and God; namely, for every command of God a duty exists. The so called "Divine

[1] See Fieser, "Ethics." For more information about these three theories, see also Kagan, *Normative Ethics* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), 1-7.

[2] "It is directed at discovering the kinds of things, actions and the like, which are good, right, obligatory, i.e. which judgments and principles are to be adopted and why. Normative ethics is often explained as being concerned to discover which things are intrinsically good, and which principles of obligation are the true fundamental principles of morality. Alternatively, it is explained as setting out the sort of life we wish to lead and which we wish to prescribe for others, and so on." See Timmons, *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics* (ed), vol. 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1-4.

[3] Fieser, "Ethics."

[4] Qur'ān, 18/82.

[5] Fieser, "Ethics."

Command Theory" or "commanded by God"[1] says that "when God command a thing to be done, that was not before obligatory or unlawful, the thing Willed or Commanded doth forthwith become obligatory, that which ought to be done by creatures."[2] This view is rooted in the notion of an all-powerful God who is in control of everything. In other words, "God simply wills things, and they become reality. He wills the physical world into existence, he wills human life into existence and, similarly, he wills all moral values into existence."[3]

For those committed to the existence of objective moral truths, such truths seem to fit well within a theistic framework. That is, if the origin of the universe is a personal moral being, then the existence of objective moral truths are at home, so to speak, in the universe."[4] Therefore, one advantage of Divine Command Theory is that it provides an objective metaphysical foundation for morality. Besides, it gives us a good answer to the question, why be moral? In theism, one is held accountable for her or his actions by God and those who do evil will be punished. Indeed, being moral does not guarantee happiness, so we must believe in a God who will reward the morally righteous with happiness.[5]

As a pure obedient servant of God, Khiḍr performs his moral duties which are nothing but God's commands. In this obligatory-basic approach, neither Khiḍr nor a killed teenager have any right to God's omnipotence. Along with the story of Khiḍr, the story of filicide by Abraham serves

[1] Seidler, "Pufendorf's Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2018. URL= <https :// plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/pufendorf-moral/>.

[2] Prichard, *Moral Obligation: Essays and Lectures* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 77.

[3] Fieser, "Ethics."

[4] Austin, "Divine Command Theory," in *IEP*. 2020. https://iep.utm.edu/divine-c/.

[5] Ibid.

as other evidences for Divine Command Theory and its role as a sub-heading of the deontological ethics. In this story, Ismāʻīl (or Ishāq) was almost killed just for the sake of his father's dream:

> Abraham said, "O my son! I see while dreaming that I am to sacrifice you. So consider, what do you see?" He replied, "O my father! Do as you are commanded. You will find me, God willing, among those who are patient." [1]

According to the Islamic tradition, the commentaries of the Qur'ān have interpreted this narrative as Abraham's pure faith and his submissiveness to God. In fact, Both Abraham and Ismāʻīl are performing their duties unto God.

In this theist paradigm, not only is killing not a bad deed, but also it should be considered a moral action because of its correspondence to the divine command. Especially, in the case of Khiḍr, who is granted special wisdom and compassion by God, the killing of the teenager should be perceived as the result of justice, wisdom and mercy of God. This is to the fact that in this tradition, what matters is God's will.

Hourani depicts two models of ethical theory in Islam: "objectivism" and "theistic subjectivism."[2] Objectivism states that values such as justice and goodness have a real existence, independent of anyone's will, even God's. Contradictorily, "theistic subjectivism" says that all values are determined by the will of God, who *decides* what shall be just and so forth. In comparison to the three main branches of normative ethics, that is, virtue ethics, duty ethics, and consequentialist ethics, objectivism is correspondent to virtue ethics whose original sample, especially in the Islamic context, is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is clear that such a killing committed by Khiḍr, if it is called a moral act, can never be categorized under objectivism or its equivalent:

[1] Qur'ān, 37/ 101-107.

[2] Hourani, *Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 57.

virtue ethics. We have therefore just two alternative theories: consequentialist ethics and duty ethics.

Consequentialist ethics are ethics founded upon the idea that an action's consequences are of paramount importance for determining whether or not it is morally right or wrong. According to this view of ethics, a morally appropriate action must have good or beneficial consequences, or, at the very least, it must balance producing better consequences than all other options available to the agent of the action.[1] According to this definition, there is no way to recognize the story of Khiḍr as a model of consequentialism because of its lack of any beneficial consequences.

Although a consequentialist interpretation could be inferred according to verses 80 and 81,[2] a deeper analysis rejects this interpretation because of the following reasons. The result of the killing the young boy is neither in favor of Khiḍr (the killer), nor the young boy (the one killed), but as the Qur'ān says, his parents would be kept safe from any suffering could be caused by their son's rebellion and disbelief. Accordingly, at the moment of the murder, no result is obtained; on the contrary, the parents are possibly overwhelmed with the sorrow of losing their son. The benefit of protecting the parents from their son's rebellion and disbelief is to achieve a benefit in the future, and it is not clear how much the teenager's rebellion and disbelief could have followed a worse result for parents than losing their child. Moreover, Khiḍr says that "we *feared* that he would make them suffer," not we "were aware" or we "knew" that he would make them suffer. In other words, there is not any certainty about the young boy's future actions. In addition, if God bestowed on the parents a purer and more merciful child, it cannot be regarded as a *result* or *benefit*, rather it is

[1] Odell, S. Jack, *On Consequentialist Ethics* (Australia: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004), 1.

[2] "And as for the young boy, his parents were believers and we feared that he would make them suffer much through rebellion and disbelief. So we desired that their Lord give them in exchange one who is better than him in purity, and nearer to mercy."

more considered compensation. Therefore, despite the superficial similarity of this verse with consequentialist ethics, it seems that Khidr's killing cannot correspond to this theory. As a result, deontological ethics is the only option upon which we can interpret Khiḍr's action; particularly, when we consider divine duty, or Divine Command Theory, as a subcategory of deontological ethics.

Mariam al-Attar evaluates Divine Command Theory in Islamic tradition and looks for an ethical presupposition of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. She uses theistic subjectivism as a technical term that implies Divine Command Theory and states that values are those approved or commanded by God. It is more commonly known as ethical voluntarism, since it claims that ethical value concepts must be understood in terms of God's will. His will does not presuppose any objective value; thus, it might be arbitrary. No morality could hence be perceived apart from revelation.[1]

In this approach, an action is a moral action as much as it is a just one, because the criteria of both morality and justice is the same. God wills things, and they become reality and He wills all moral values into existence. When answering whether God commands a particular action because it is morally right, or it is morally right because God commands it, theist deontologists believe that which is morally right is so because God commands it. In this approach, God is just; even in commanding the killing of an innocent person.

In the Buddhist tradition, the issue of identifying Mahāyāna with one of the approaches found in the normative ethic is more controversial. Some of the thinkers such as Asaṅga and Śāntideva believe that benefiting sentient beings is a main factor in order to validate transgression of the moral rules. They maintain that when outcomes of violating a moral rule are beneficial to

[1] Mariam Al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic Thought* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 12.

some beings, they would be acceptable. According to this, some scholars like Goodman argue that Mahāyāna supports a consequentialist interpretation in ethics because of its emphasis on the benefits of action. Goodman states that Śāntideva offers "a fully general action-guiding principle for the conduct of bodhisattvas—and that principle turns out to be a statement of utilitarianism. He bases his entire ethical stance on a robust and consistently articulated conception of impartiality that centrally involves agent neutrality."[1] Goodman explains how the main goal of a bodhisattva takes on the high demands of agent-neutrality to renounce one's own point of view, especially with the Mahāyāna idea of skillful means.[2]

In opposition to this approach, some other scholars put forward that further factors, including the purity of mind and intention are of higher importance in authorizing a transgressive action. Virtue ethics claims that the right action is the one a person of virtuous character would habitually perform in the relevant situation[3] or is defined as "the project of basing ethics on virtue evaluation."[4] Damien Keown is one of those who has strongly regarded Buddhist ethics as a type of virtue ethics.[5] Harris indicates: "Šāntideva's primary purpose in writing the BCA was to provide guidance on how to develop the Buddhist virtues."[6] However, he has a more conservative view and mentions that "Šāntideva's BCA does not provide sufficient evidence to allow us to conclude that Šāntideva would, or should, commit or had already implicitly committed to any given

[1] Charles Goodman, "Consequentialism, Particularism, and the Emptiness of Persons: A Response to Vishnu Sridharan," *Philosophy East and West* 66, no. 2 (April 2016) 637-649.

[2] See Meynard Vasen, "Buddhist Ethics Compared to Western Ethics," in *The oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Daniel Cozort and James Mark Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 329.

[3] See Harris, "The Classification of Sāntideva's Ethics in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*" *Philosophy East and West* 65, no. 1 (January 2015), 269.

[4] Ibid., 267.

[5] Keown, *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, 139.

[6] Harris, 269.

normative theory."[1] Therefore, instead of looking for the moral theory that would best describe Buddhism, Hallisey advocates an approach which he calls "ethical particularism," that does not seek a unifying theory of Buddhist morality. He states, "one can use categories like "consequentialism" and "deontology" as heuristic devices for laying out the contours of ethics of different Buddhist traditions, but one should not seek a unified theory for Buddhist morality."[2] Similarly, in her book, Clayton puts forward the idea that instead of following a straightforward virtue ethics, she will apply "a kind of utilitarian hybrid of virtue ethics."[3]

According to the story of the Compassionate Captain as well as other sources from *Śāntideva* and Asaṅga, I believe that we can find strong evidence of all three branches of normative ethics; that is, virtue, deontological, and consequential ethics in this context. Therefore, this thesis supports the idea proposed by Hallisey and Clayton in relation to not limiting the Mahāyāna ethics in one of the approaches and follow a hybrid scheme. In what follows, this thesis shows cases of all three approaches according to the story of the Compassionate Captain and some of the classical texts.

Let's look at the story of the compassionate Captain when the bodhisattva clarifies his motivation before killing: "the Captain Great Compassionate protected those five merchants and protected that person from going to the great hells" and continues so after he killed the robber: "For me [Buddha as the Captain], samsāra was curtailed for one hundred thousand eons because of that skill in means and great compassion, And the robber died to be reborn in a world of paradise." According to these phrases, one can find traces of both benefits of the killing and

[1] Harris, 250.

[2] Clayton, *Moral theory in Śāntideva's Śikssāasamuccaya,* 5.

[3] Ibid.

emphasizing on the idea of salvation as a virtue. In his book *Bodhicaryāvatāra,* Śāntideva discusses the training of the bodhisattva which consists of the practice of the six or ten *pāramitās*. As is explained in the introduction to the English translation of the book, these practices can be categorized into three branches: "avoiding harmful actions, adopting virtuous actions, and working for the benefit of beings."[1] Again we can see that how virtue and result are intertwined in these texts. However. in another section, Śāntideva states that the most important factor for a bodhisattva in his or her spiritual accomplishment is his or her endeavor to benefit others.[2]

In the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, the goal of the bodhisattva of violating the rules is described as "bringing enlightenment" to people,[3] which I interpret it as a virtue rather than a benefit or consequence. Moreover, virtuous thought and pure intention of killing are pivotal points in Asaṅga's thought,[4] which is essentially presenting a virtue ethic.

On the other hand, one can have a deontological interpretation of some of the texts. As Vasen points out, "there is a place for the notion of duty and obligation in Buddhist ethics as virtue ethics, or, if one wishes, a deontological element, but only in the weak sense of the term."[5]For example, in *Siksa-samuccaya*, when Śāntideva argues for the importance of upāya for the spiritual journey of a bodhisattva, he emphasizes that this perfection will not be accomplished without skillful means. Śāntideva then discusses that lacking upāya not only necessarily testifies to lack of wisdom and compassion, but also may result in acquiring some negative attributes. [6] Therefore, a

[1] *Shāntideva*: *The Way of the Bodhisattva,* stanza 3.

[2] Ibid., ch. 5 (Vigilant Introspection), stanza 10.

[3] Burton Watson, *The Vimalakirti Sutra*, 32- 6.

[4] Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics,* 215.

[5] See Meynard Vasen, 332.

[6] Ibid.

bodhisattva for accomplishing her or his own enlightenment and achieving the full liberation needs to apply upāya; in other words, upāya is regarded as a mandatory duty and prerequisite for a bodhisattva, which by performing this duty, she or he might attain enlightenment.

Consequently, my thesis proposes that to select one approach of virtue-oriented ethics, duty-based ethics, or consequentialism for identifying the concept of compassionate violence is a reductionist approach that disregards other aspects of the Mahāyāna tradition. It is obvious that ethics does not have a fixed structure whose examples can be recognized distinctly. The issue gets more complicated when it lies in a religious tradition like Buddhism. As was discussed, in Islam, by relying on a final authority called God and the theory of Divine Commands, the issue seems more straightforward, whereas, in Buddhism, we lack such a strong divinity and the authority of the bodhisattva needs to be perceived in a more human and controversial framework.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this thesis was to investigate the concept of compassionate killing both in Buddhism and in Islam through the analysis and comparison of two stories, which were both rooted in the sacred texts of these traditions. As a result, the comparison allowed me to develop and build a theoretical framework for this concept. The framework provided a basis needed to avoid cultural biases as well as the mistake of imposing the interpretation of one context onto the other.

In chapter one, the concept of compassionate killing was analyzed according to the story of the Compassionate ship's Captain which is narrated in *Upāyakauśalya-sūtra*. I discussed the Mahāyāna pivotal doctrine of bodhisattva and her or his universal soteriological goal and explained how the doctrine of bodhisattva created the basic notion of upāya. By examining the underlying meaning of the notion of upāya, this research examined the ideas of two main figures in the history of Mahāyāna ethics. First Asaṅga's work the *Chapter on Ethics,* and then Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, in addition, other primary sources were also analysed, such as the *Lotus Sūtra* and the *Vimalakirti Sūtra*. This research demonstrated that some elements such as: liberating a person from their negative karma, assisting a person in achieving enlightenment, and considering the benefits of violent action, were among the main justifications represented in theses texts. However, in the two historical cases which were discussed in chapter one, defending the religious doctrines were the most important reason for justifying this transgressive practice.

Chapter two followed a similar approach and outlined the concept of killing out of compassion in the story of Khiḍr and Moses' meeting, as told in the Qur'ān. In this chapter, I examined different aspects and episodes of the story to provide a comprehensive structure of the context of the story. To understand the interpretations of Muslim thinkers in justifying Khiḍr's unconventional actions, the chapter reviewed many Quranic exegesis and commentaries.

Furthermore, since Khiḍr is a significant figure in Islamic mysticism, my thesis also examined the writings of prominent Sufi' figures such as: Rūmi and Ibn 'Arabī on the aspect of compassionate killing. The analyses revealed that although the story of Khiḍr in Qur'ān is a significant one, his unconventional actions were not interpreted as a common response to be followed by Muslims. His intuitive esoteric knowledge granted him a specific status in Islamic mysticism, and thus, he is presented as a spiritual guide to enable Sufi disciples to find their own mystical way and elevate their spiritual rank.

Chapter three compared the main similarities and differences between Buddhism and Islam on the concept of compassionate killing. This analytical approach allowed this research to show the shared elements between the two stories as well as the different aspects. The wisdom and compassion, which are the shared specific characteristics of both the bodhisattva and Khiḍr, are utilized to justify their transgressions. In fact, the transgression from the religious laws and ethical principles is an essential part of their spiritual journey. Once again, we may take note of Voyce's definition of transgression that "transgression suspends a rule not by suppressing it, but by surpassing it."[1] However, this kind of transgression which was followed by the Buddhists and was developed into the tradition, was not incorporated in the same way by Islam; the story of Khiḍr remained confined to mystical approaches. Therefore, it can be posited that the story of Khiḍr is the only instance in the Qur'ān in which, relying on intuitive knowledge authorizes one to transgress principles of religious laws in a given context. In the final component of chapter three, my thesis argued that it is possible to morally justify compassionate killing and the possibly adapt

[1] Voyce, "Ideas of Transgression and Buddhist Monks," 192.

the concept to the three branches of normative ethics: virtue ethics, deontological ethics and consequentialism.

Thanks to this study, different aspects of the concept of compassionate killing have been clarified by the aid of examining two different traditions and comparing them. I hope that this survey can raise new questions in both religious contexts, while helping to configure a more detailed framework for perceiving the concept of compassionate killing in the traditions of Islam and Buddhism.

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