

A Closer Look at the Meaning of *Diyāfat Allāh*

Almighty Allāh is referred to in the verses of the Holy Qurʾān with different names. Sometimes He is introduced with ‘*Huwa*’ (He)¹, sometimes with ‘*Allāh*’², sometimes with ‘*Rabb*’³ and so on. All these names manifest a certain meaning, which if overlooked may hamper one from understanding the verse perfectly. Authoritative exegetes of Qurʾān have alluded to this fine reality in their works⁴.

Likewise the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), who represent the guardians of Qurʾān, and appreciate its kernel, also employ every Divine Name for the purpose of referring to a certain Attribute of Allāh (SwT). For example, in the aforementioned prophetic tradition the Holy Prophet 7 said: ‘*I spend the night near my Lord (‘inda Rabbī)...*’ Here the name ‘Lord’ (*Rabb*) is specifically employed and thus it refers to the aspect of God’s Lordship, an extension of which is to perfect and train the human beings. In addition, it also alludes to ‘his state of perfection’ in particular. The first person pronoun “*yā*” in *Rabbī* (رَبِّي) alludes to this subtlety.

Therefore, the food and drink in the tradition must be in harmony with what would confer excellence to the Prophet (s). Obviously in his case we speak of higher excellence, for the path towards Absolute Excellence never ends.

With regard to *Diyāfat Allāh*, the name ‘*Allāh*’ is employed. The name Allāh is an all-comprehensive Name of God which exemplifies all His Perfect Attributes. That is why it is also known as *al-ism al-a‘zam* (the Greatest Name). Its origin is commonly known to be the transitive verb ‘*alaha*’ (he worshipped). Hence it signifies ‘The Worshipped One’ or ‘One Who is worthy of worship’. Consequently, the spiritual food in the month of Ramadān is one that makes us true worshippers of Almighty Allāh, those who exemplify all His Sublime Names (*al-Asmā’ al-Husnā*) in themselves. In one of his sermons, Imām al-Khumaynī alludes to this subtlety saying:

چه بگوئیم در مقابل این نعمت بزرگ الهی که ملتها را دعوت کرده است به

ضيافه الله ضيافه الله با همه اسماء...

“How can we express our gratitude in return for this great Divine Blessing, for the nations have been called to be the guests of Allāh with all His Names...5”

In other words, the Holy month of Ramadān is a month of becoming ‘Abdullāh (an obedient servant of Allāh (SwT)). It is a month of adopting the etiquette of Allāh (SwT) in the language of tradition or adopting the Divine Color in the language of the Holy Qur’ān. The Holy Qur’ān says:

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ

“Allāh’s Color; and whose color is more pleasant than Allāh’s; and He alone do we worship.6”

And the Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

تَخَلَّقُوا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ.

“Adopt the etiquette of Allāh.7”

In fact one of the wonderful supplications taught to us by Imām Bāqir al-‘Ulām (‘a) is *Du’a al-Mubāhilah*, in which what we seek are the Beautiful Attributes of Allāh.

‘Allāmah Tabātabā‘ī, the mentor of leading contemporary authorities in *‘irfān*, would highly emphasize on reading this *du‘ā*, ‘for,’ he would say, ‘there is no mention of Paradisal men or women in it.’ Observe the following verses of this radiant supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ بَهَائِكَ بِأَبْهَاهُ وَكُلُّ بَهَائِكَ بِهِ... اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ عَظَمَتِكَ بِأَعْظَمِهَا وَكُلُّ عَظَمَتِكَ عَظِيمَةٌ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِعَظَمَتِكَ كُلِّهَا...

“O Allāh I seek from You the kind of Your Brilliance (*bahā’ik*) which is the Most Brilliant, and every Brilliance of Yours is Very Brilliant; O Allāh I ask You by Your Brilliance in its entirety....O Allāh I seek

from You the kind of Your Greatness which is the Greatest, and every Greatness of Yours is very Great; O Allāh I ask You by Your Greatness in its entirety...”⁸

The contemporary mystic-scholar Ayatullāh Hasan Zādeh Amuli in his treatise ‘*Light upon Light*’ while enumerating the requirements of observing good manners in front of Almighty Allāh, says:

دگر ادب مع اللّٰه اقتضاء مي‌کند که از او جز او را نخواهي که اين عبادت
احباب و احرار است. اين امر از بلند همّتي عبد است. کساني که دون
همّت‌اند به وفق دنائت خود طلب دارند. يکي از مشايخ ما – رضوان اللّٰه
تعالی عليه – ما را ترغيب مي‌فرمود به مثل دعاي سحر حضرت امام محمّد
باقر عليه السّلام (اللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّيْ اَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ بَهَائِكَ بِاَبْهَاهِ وَكُلِّ بَهَائِكَ بَهِيٍّ...) که در آن
بهاء و جمال و جلال و عظمت و نور و رحمت و علم و شرف است و حرفی
از حور و غلمان نيست، اگر بهشت شيرين است، بهشت آفرين شيرين تر
است.

چرا زاهد اندر هوای بهشت است چرا بيخبر از بهشت آفرين است

“Observing etiquette before Allāh also requires that you do not seek other than Him, for that is the worship of the free men (*ahrār*) and lovers (*ahbāb*). Such a supplication originates from the exalted aspiration of the servant of God. Those who are lower than this station, ask for their needs according to their lower stages. One of our mentors (may Allāh be pleased with him) would encourage us to read supplications like *Du‘ā al-Sahar* [another name for *du‘ā al-mubāhilah*] of Hadrat Imām al-Bāqir (‘a): (O Allāh I seek from You the kind of Your Brilliance which is the Most Brilliant...) wherein there is Divine Brilliance, Beauty, Majesty, Greatness, Light, Mercy, Knowledge, Nobility, but no mention about Paradisal damsels (*hūr*) or heavenly youthful male servants (*ghilmān*). If Paradise is sweet, the Creator of Paradise is sweeter.”

Why is the abstinent after Paradise?

*Why is he oblivious of the Creator of Paradise?*⁹

Later in the same treatise this great mystic quotes *Misbāh al-Shar‘ah*, a masterpiece on the secrets of worship attributed to Imām al-Sādiq (‘a), saying:

لَقَدْ دَعَوْتُ اللَّهَ فَاسْتَجَابَ لِي، وَنَسِيتُ الْحَاجَةَ، لِأَنَّ اسْتِجَابَتَهُ بِاقْبَالِهِ عَلَيَّ عَبْدِهِ
عِنْدَ دَعْوَتِهِ أَكْبَرُ وَأَجَلُّ مِمَّا يَرِيدُ مِنْهُ الْعَبْدُ وَلَوْ كَانَتْ الْجَنَّةُ وَنَعِيمُهَا الْأَبَدَ، وَلَكِنْ
لَا يَعْقِلُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ الْعَابِدُونَ الْمُحِبُّونَ الْعَارِفُونَ، صَفْوَةُ اللَّهِ وَخَوَاصَّهُ.

Imam al-Sadiq (‘a) said: “Indeed I called Allah and He responded to me, and I forgot my wish, for His Response by giving attention to His servant when he calls upon Him is greater and more magnificent than what the servant wants from Him, even if that be Paradise and its eternal blessings, but none save the Knowledgeable Ones comprehend– those who are worshipful, the Divine lovers, Gnostics, Allah’s choicest and special servants. 10”

We can also say that since the Holy Prophet (s) was a perfect manifestation of an obedient slave of Allah (SwT), this month is a month of getting closer to the Holy Prophet (s) too. Leading mystics have clearly stated that the Holy Prophet (s) is a manifestation of the Greatest Name of God – Allah (SwT), which means that he manifests in himself all the Divine Attributes. In other words he is ‘Abd of Allah. We also bear witness to this during every prayer:

أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

“I bear witness that Muhammad is His Obedient Servant and Messenger.”

The Infallible Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) likewise personify the Divine Attributes. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) is reported to have said:

...نَحْنُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى الَّتِي إِذَا سُئِلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِهَا أَجَابَ...

“We (the Ahl al-Bayt) are the Most Beautiful Names of Allah by which when Almighty Allah is asked, He Responds. 11”

And it is also reported from Imam al-Baqir (‘a) that:

نَحْنُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَقْبَلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْعِبَادِ عَمَلًا إِلَّا بِمَعْرِفَتِنَا.

“We are the Most Beautiful Names of Allāh, and without knowing us, Allāh does not accept any deed of His servants. 12”

In a sermon which he delivered on the first day of the Holy month of Ramadān, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) while addressing the fasting ones said:

أَيُّهَا الصَّائِمُ تَدَبَّرْ أَمْرَكَ، فَإِنَّكَ فِي شَهْرِكَ هَذَا ضَيْفٌ رَبِّكَ، أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ تَكُونُ فِي لَيْلِكَ وَنَهَارِكَ، وَكَيْفَ تَحْفَظُ جَوَارِحَكَ عَنْ مَعَاصِي رَبِّكَ. أَنْظِرْ أَنْ لَا تَكُونَ بِاللَّيْلِ نَائِمًا وَبِالنَّهَارِ غَافِلًا، فَيَنْقُضِي شَهْرَكَ وَقَدْ بَقِيَ عَلَيْكَ وَزُرُّكَ، فَتَكُونَ عِنْدَ اسْتِيفَاءِ الصَّائِمِينَ أَجُورَهُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ، وَعِنْدَ فَوْزِهِمْ بِكَرَامَةٍ مِنَ الْمَحْرُومِينَ، وَعِنْدَ سَعَادَتِهِمْ بِمُجَاوَرَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنَ الْمَطْرُودِينَ...

“...O you who are fasting, reflect on your affair, for surely you are a guest of your Lord in this month; observe how your attitude is during the night and day, and how you protect the members of your body from disobeying your Lord; and make sure that you do not sleep through the night and be heedless during the day, so that your month ends while your burden still remains on your shoulders, such that when the fasting ones are paid their due, you are among the losers, and while they enjoy *prosperity in the neighborhood of their Lord*, you are from the expelled ones...” 13

Here one can see that the name ‘*Rabb*’ is employed, signifying that this invitation deals with training the human being so that he may attain his perfection.

If one was to carefully ponder over what is obligatory and highly recommended in this holy month, he would realize that Allāh (SwT) out of His overflowing Mercy compelled the human beings to fast and encouraged them to pray so that they may overhaul themselves and start the journey to Allāh (SwT). Fasting weakens the animal passions and thereby enables the spirit to focus its attention toward the spiritual realms.

In the aforesaid sermon, Imām ‘Alī (‘a) enlightens us with guidelines that would enable us to appreciate and benefit from the Divine invitation of the Holy month of Ramadān. Briefly, he tells us to be careful and not to waste its days in negligence (*ghaflah*) and its nights in sleep (*nawm*), for they are

opportunities for us to elevate our spirits. If we are not able to appreciate the highest level of this invitation, which some mystics consider as *'the banquet'*, we should at least struggle to appreciate the lower levels, which in reality serve as introductory phases for the highest level. And the path towards appreciating the different levels of the Divine Banquet is fasting. The level of fasting, however, is what would determine the 'level of Divine Reception'. Muslim ethicists classify the levels of fasting into three¹⁴:

1. *Sawm al-'Umūm* (the general fast);
2. *Sawm al-Khusūs* (the specific fast);
3. *Sawmu Khusūs al-Khusus* (the most specific fast).

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1. Holy Qur'ān, 112:1.
 2. Holy Qur'ān, 2:255.
 3. Holy Qur'ān, 1:2.
 4. This can be tangibly observed in the excellent exegesis of 'Allāmah Tabṭāṭabā'i's Tafsīr al-Meẓn.
 5. Sahīfeye Imām, vol. 18, pg. 497.
 6. Holy Qur'ān, 2:138.
 7. Sharh Du'ā' al-Sabḥ, pg. 87.
 8. Mafṭḥ al-Jin, pg. 184.
 9. Nūrūn 'alī Nūr, pg. 80.
 10. Nūrūn 'alī Nūr, pg. 81.
 11. Madḥnat al-Ma'jiz, vol. 1, pg. 556 .
 12. al-Mukhtasar, pg. 129.
 13. Fadḥ'il al-Ashhur al-Thalṯah, pp. 107-108.
 14. Many scholars of ethics have adopted this classification. Those familiar with Arabic/Persian literature can refer to vol. 2 al-Mahajjah of al-Kāshānī and Asrār al-Hikam (vol. 2, pg. 568) of Mullā Ḥādī Sabzwārī.

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