

Definition (of God) in Divine Theology

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It was related that in the divine religions, mysticism to lordly essence has never been discussed in the form of one irresolute and uncertain matter, which requires philosophical proof. It was also said that its secret too, from the viewpoint of religious sources is the same 'Ma'refat'(gnosis) which has been deposited in man's heart, a 'Ma'refat' which is the outcome of action and creation of God and is the result of His definition.

In the numerous sources and references which we had presented, this point was clearly mentioned that it is Al-Mighty God who by His Grace and Mercy has made the light of His 'Ma'refat' (gnosis) to glimmer in the heart of His slave, has placed the sweet savor of Ma'refat in man's chaste life and satiated him with His limpid Ma'refat.

It is He who after bestowing the source of life to the creatures, once again gifted man with a dignity and made man's heart and Fitrat (innate disposition) the area of descent of His Ma'refat (gnosis) and manifested Himself to the people with all His Beautiful and Majestic qualities. It is the same Ma'refat which at times of hardship and tribulation or in the state of intimate supplication and invocation or at times of observing true signs, returns back to the Fitrat of heart.

In that condition a slave not only feels by reality of gnosis his Creator and object of worship in his conscience and sits lamenting and whispering before Him but finds Him as the One and Powerful and himself as the one overwhelmed by His Power, sees Him in perfection and greatness and himself as low and inferior, sees Him as All-Forgiving and himself as drowned in sins and finally finds Him as Merciful and Generous and himself as needful of His bounties. This gifted Ma'refat and scintillating guidance is reckoned to be the foundation of divine religions and just like a center column of the tent of religion, the collection of Divine Sciences and ethical and practical injunctions are established on that (Ma'refat). If it was not for this divine gift, man would have been unable to perceive His Ma'refat and reality.

(*) Rather, without this definition (of God), even the Ma'refat of the position of Messengership and 'vilayat' (Mastership) would not have been possible for man

(*) This Innate Ma'refat is having such foundational and infrastructural aspect in the divine religions that even if among some of the worships it is reckoned to be the pillar of religion it is for this reason that this worship causes in man, the condition of returning back to his self, remembering that innate Ma'refat and paying attention to God. Prayers is the remembrance of

God and ascension of a believer and if mysticism of the self or soul is the mysticism of God it is because the soul is the bearer of that divine remembrance. Returning back to the self and evading from every sham and deception and recovering that original simple and pure Fitrat (innate disposition) causes once again to return back to that same innate Ma'refat (gnosis).

The discussion, which has come in Quran and traditions (of God) can be divided into two main sections. The first section is the discussion, which shows in which place the innate Ma'refat was given to man and from what time man has been entrusted with this divine trust. In the second section, discussion will be about procurement and consequence of that definition (of God) and its reality and specifications.

Chapter One Birth-Place of Definition (of God)

What is evident from the divine proofs and testimonies is this that the soul of man, before coming into this world and getting attached to the corporal body has already passed through another world or rather worlds. It has witnessed events and scenes and in every stage has experienced some learning and realities such that all of these play a fundamental role in this world and the life Hereafter.

In some of these places, like the world of spirits [Alam-e-Arwah] (world of shadow ['Azlah'] and ghost ['eshbah'] man was possessing only the soul while in some other places like the world of pre-existence ('Alam-e-zar') and substance ('Alam-e-teenat') the soul of man was given a special mould and body. It was in these very worlds (before the world of tillage and generation) that all the human beings without any exception were granted in a lustrous and holy sphere, the divine grace and dispensation and after receiving the most highest monotheistic knowledge they were made to confess and give a covenant.

(*) Of course, after coming into this world man tends to forget the specifications of these places and stages. However the essence of that innate knowledge is present near man and is always blended with his substance (i.e. clay) and accompanies his nature.

(*) This firm and permanent Ma'refat has been so fixed like a strong pillar in the existence of man that till the present world, it has been made perseverant on the basis of 'Upright ('Haneef') religion' and it is a fortification whose strength is very much indebted to the irresistible pillar of Fitrat.

The verses and traditions, which speak about the priority of the previous worlds, are so reliable and numerous that counting all of them would not be an easy task. Moreover, this matter is so much certain and confirmed that in the opinion of most of the

Islamic thinkers, belief in the existence of previous worlds is counted to be one of the religious certainties and exigencies.[1] To such extent that the early theologian Shirazi who himself was the initiator of 'Trans-Substantial Motion' and believed in the theory of "Corporal contingency and spiritual permanence" when comes across such traditions he says: "The soul of man was prior to body in existence, needless of bringing (the theory) of transmigration into picture. The traditions, which have been narrated from Shia sources regarding this matter, are so numerous that they cannot be counted. As such, the precedence of soul to the body is the religious exigencies of Imamia faith".[2]

Before going into the details of this matter it is necessary to point out that what this discussion intends to follow is explaining the monotheistic Fitrat (innate disposition) and proving the innate Ma'refat (gnosis) as the basis of theology (knowing God) and the foundation of divine guidance. As such, discussion about birth place of definition (i.e. introduction of God) and the specification of the previous creations has no direct interference in our purpose such that even if all the proofs and testimonies related to the previous worlds are doubted and denied or as is the practice of some, they are understood sarcastically and metaphorically and they reckon the birth place of definition (of God) to be this very world, yet there will not be any blot in the genuine claim of our discussion.

The past proofs and the coming proofs explicitly prove (correct) this claim that the basis of theology or rather the essence of all the divine knowledge towards innate Ma'refat returns back to the very former meaning (definition). However, considering the fact that the creation of the previous worlds and their true specifications are reckoned to be among the lofty Ma'aref (gnostic knowledge) of Islam and having knowledge about them will help increase one's insight of divine Ma'aref and the entire existence and its commencement and end, we therefore intend to bring here, the proofs of the existence of the previous worlds.

However due to numerousness of such proofs we shall mention at first the reference and sources of 200 traditions[3] and then present some verses and traditions in the text. These evidences are present in most of the authentic traditional books like Usul-e-Kafi, Furu-e-Kafi, Elal-ush-Sharaye and in exegesis (tafseers) pertaining to traditions. However on account of easy reference of the researchers, the evidences will be narrated from the book of Behar al-Anwar. These traditions comprises the secrets such that when the treasure of divine secrets, Amir al-Mo'meneen Ali (A.S.) was teaching them to Haaris Hamedani he would address him as such:

(*) "O' Haaris, surely truth is the best of all the speeches and the one who inclines towards it is a Mujahid (warrior). I will speak the truth; so turn your ears towards me and listen to my

sayings. Thereafter you narrate them to your trusted companions. "Know that I am the slave of God and the brother of Messenger of God and the first one to acknowledge him. Indeed I have acknowledged him at that time when Adam was between soul and body."^[4]

Yes, so that the pilgrims to Mecca during 'Ehram' (pilgrims garb) know that which of the trusts they will fulfill and to which of the covenants they will act upon and they take the Divine Essence and 'Hajar al-Aswad' (black stone) as witness upon them. In front of this phrase of 'Alasto' they cry out:

(*) (Muhaqqiq Hilli- Sharaye Islam; Pg. 201 and wasail us Shia Beirut 5th print; vol. 9; chapter 12 & 13)

It is not ungraceful to mention this point also that the traditions concerning this chapter (the previous places of soul) can be seen in most of the discussions pertaining to beliefs like the various chapters of Monotheism, Prophethood, Imamet, Resurrection, Haj, invocation, soul, creation, etc. and very few discussions can be seen wherein this matter has not been discussed in some way or the other.

For this reason it has been said: The proofs and traditions with regard to the discussion are reliable proofs in reliable chapters.

However on the other hand, these worlds have been subjected to analogical gradation by some of the Muslim thinkers and contemporary commentators and have been rejected by some others. It should be said with utmost regret that the doubts and difficulties which have been set forth in this regard are merely improbabilities in front of decisive proofs and which have been borrowed from the Mu'tazilites.

Moreover, it is noteworthy to know that some of these problems had also been propounded during the time of holy Imams. The narrators of traditions have put forward these problems before the holy Imams and they too have given a proper reply in every case. Therefore it can be claimed that the reply to most of the objections on previous worlds can be derived from the traditions (which shall be mentioned in detail at the opportunate time).

Regarding the sources of traditions it is necessary to mention this point that a few of these traditions have been repeated due to chain of transmission and authorities of the traditions and or the connection of the traditions with some diversified sections. However, considering that the examination of chain of transmission of the traditions and their technical discussion is not possible at this opportunity, the above considered aspects and the chain of transmission of the traditions will be examined one by one in an independent book, although the people of skill are aware that in cases when the tradition are 'one after another', 'helping' and 'certain', there is no need to examine the chain of transmission of the tradition.

Now we draw the attention of the respected readers to some of the verses and traditions in this regard.

1-(*) "And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We bear witness" (Holy Quran: A'raf: 172)

Most of the traditions concerning our discussion have come under this afore-mentioned verse and it is noteworthy that in the discussion about several worlds, this verse has been rationalized. This matter shows that the covenant had been taken in several worlds. In the first section a tradition regarding the world of pre-existence (alam-e-zar) was mentioned under this verse. Now we bring here a tradition about the world of spirits (alam-e-arwaah).

(*) (Elalush-Sharayeh; Pg. 39; chapter 77) Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: "Surely God took promise from His slaves at the time when they were a shadow and they were not yet born in this present world and verse 172 of chapter A'raf is a witness to this same matter."

2-(*) "And when we made a covenant with the prophet and with you, and with Nuh end Ibrahim and Musa and Isa, eon of Merium, end we made with them a strong covenant." (Holy Quran: Ahzab: 7)

(*) (Burhan fi Tafseer-e-Quran; vol. 3; Pg. 294)

Under many verses of Quran, we find traditions like the above one and great emphasis has been laid on the conversation of God with the people and the taking of covenant in the form which has come in verse 172 of chapter A'raf. Therefore taking all these traditions in the allegorical and metaphorical sense is far from truth and in none of the proofs one can find emphasis on metaphorical meaning.

3-(*) "And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: Allah." (Holy Quran: Luqman: 25) (*) (Usul-e-Kafi; vol. 2; Pg. 13)

In this tradition and other traditions like the one which has been mentioned under verse no.5 'Fitrat' (innate disposition) has been adapted to the Ma'refat (gnosis) of God and monotheism. Our discussion too is about this same Fitrat which is reckoned to be the fundamental of religion and the other meanings of Fitrat like creation are not within the scope of this discussion.

Similarly, it has been stipulated in this tradition that if Ma'refat was not innate it was not possible for man to recognize God. Compare this matter with the saying that: "That knowledge (i.e. Innate Ma'refat) which is vague and weak is subject to wrong interpretations. The conclusion is that a person says false and undue things about gods instead of worshipping the One God." (Mohammad Taqi Mesbah - Treatise on Beliefs; Pg. 36) Of course, the matter of

lucidness of innate Ma'refat will come but the point which should be said in reply to the above saying is this that polythesim and blasphemy is not the result of weakness of innate Ma'refat. Rather it is the result of turning away from the innate Ma'refat and the reminding and turning towards non-innate paths. This matter was clearly seen in the previous section in the theology of Plato and Aristotle where Plato, with great hardship and difficulty succeeded in bringing a

father and son for god and Aristotle believed with doubt in forty-seven gods.

4-(*) "Then set your face upright for religion in the right state - the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know" (Holy Quran: Rum: 30)

(*) (Usul-e-Kafi; vol. 2; Pg. 12)

5-(*) "Is it then other than Allah's religion that they seek (to follow), and to Him submits whoever is In the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him shall they be returned." (Holy Quran: Ale-Imraan: 83)

(*) (Tafseer Aiyashi; vol. 1; Pg. 182) From these traditions it can be understood that the people have been put to test and examination in the previous worlds too and in all the stages of examination they were possessing a free will and by their own free will they have acted accordingly. For instance, in the beginning of the above tradition it has come that in the world of pre-existence God asked the people to enter the fire. Consequently, the people of the left (hand) objected while the people of the right (hand) obeyed.

6-(*) "And we will turn their hearts and their sights, even as they did not believe in it the first time." (Holy Quran: An'am: 110) (*) (Burhan; vol. 1; Pg. 549)

With regard to the above verse, Ali (A.S.) said: "By 'first time' is meant the world of pre-existence (alam-e-zar) and the covenant (mesaaq)."

7-(*) "...But they would not believe in what they had rejected before; thus it is that we set seals upon the hearts of those who exceed the limits." (Holy Quran: Yunus: 74) (*) (Tafseer Aiyashi; vol. 1; Pg. 126)

8-(*) "These town: - We relate to you some of their stone:, and certainly their apostles came to them with clear arguments, but they would not believe in what they rejected at first; thus does Allah set a seal over the hearts of the unbelievers." (Holy Quran: A'raf: 101) (*) (Burhan; vol. 2; Pg. 26)

From this tradition and the one, which will come under verse 9 it is apparent that the worlds of pre-existence have been many.

9-(*) "This is a warner of the warners of old." (Holy Quran: Najm: 56) (*) (Tafseer Noor-us-saqalain; vol. 5; Pg. 173)

10-(*) "We created you from dust, then from a small seed, then from a clot, then from a lump of flesh, complete in make and incomplete..." (Holy Quran: Haj: 5) (*) (Furu-e-Kafi; vol. 6; Pg. 12)

From this tradition it becomes clear that the molecular bodies have been transferred to the embryo of man. Thus there remains no place for any doubt about 'transmigration' which is the most significant doubt with regards to pre-existing world. This is because the soul of man does not enter into two different moulds. Rather, in the world of pre-existence it enters the molecular body and in this world too it enters the same molecular body which by getting transferred into embryo is now capable of growth and development.

Paying attention to this point will also be extremely beneficial in replying to the doubt of 'Akelo wa Ma'kool' in bodily resurrection. (Similarly [chapter Ale-Imran verse 81] Faiz Kashani, Tafseer Safi, Beirut vol. 1; Pg. 351. Noor us Saqalain; vol. 5; Pg. 173 [Hajar: 75]; Tafseer Aiyashi; vol. 1; Pg. 249 [Waqe'ah: 46]; Tafseer Mizan; vol. 19; Pg. 125 [Taghabun : 2]; Usul-e-kafi; vol. 1; Pg. 426 [Mu'menun:12]; Burhan vol. 3; Pg. 111 and [Insaan: 1])

Notes:

[1]- The matter of past worlds is not peculiar to the Imamieh sect and Ahle Sunnat too have narrated numerous traditions in this regard in their reliable books. For example Suyuti in the book of Durrul Mansoor narrates under verse 172 of chapter A'raf of Holy Quran only the tradition proving the precedence of the past worlds. These traditions have been narrated from Holy Prophet (S.A.W.), some of his companions, disciples of the companions and famous and reliable scholars of Ahle sunnat (Jalaluddin suytui, Durrul Mansoor; Daarul-Fiqh-Beirut; vol. 3; Pg. 597 to 607).

[2]- Book of Arshia.

[3]- A- Behar al-Anwar, Durrul Ketab al Islamiyah; vol. 3 chapter 11 Al-ta'reef fil Meesaaq; Pg. 276; tradition no. 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 20 Totally 6 traditions. Of course the other traditions of this chapter too prove the context. B- Behar al-Anwar vol. 5; chapter 10 (Teenato wal Meesaaq) Pg. 225; Tradition no(s): 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 25, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 39, 41, 42, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67. Total 38 traditions. C- Behar al-Anwar; vol. 15; chapter 1 (Bada'o khalqahu wa maa yata'allaho bezalek) from tradition 3 to 48 apart from 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 38. Total 39 traditions. D- Behar al-Anwar; vol. 25; chapter 1 (Khalaqahum wa teenatahum Wa arwaahahum alaihe as-salaam) traditions no(s): 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 19, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45 Total: 24 traditions.

Of course other traditions too prove the point. E- Behar al-anwar; vol. 26; chapter 7; Pg. 117 (Ennahum (alaihessalaam) ya'refoon annaas) traditions 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 38. Similarly chapter 5; Pg. 108; tradition no. 13 and Pg. 320, tradition no. 2; Total: 9 tradition. F- Behar al-anwar; vol. 60; chapter 41 (Bada'o khalq al-ensaan) Pg. 317; Tradition 28, 30, 31 (Pg. 344), 31 (Pg. 346), 40, 58, 81, 106. Total 8 traditions. G- Behar al-Anwar; vol. 61; chapter 43. (Fi khalqel arwaah qablal Ejsaad) Pg. 131 from traditions 1 to 19, similarly Pg. 41 tradition 12 and Pg. 79, tradition 12. Total 21 traditions H- Behar al-anwar; vol. 99; chapter 40. (Fazl ul Hajere Wa ellato estelameh) Pg. 216, traditions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 19, 29 and as per the context of such traditions we have traditions 3, 7, 12, 22, 25, 28. Total 15 traditions.

[4]- Behar al-Anwar; vol. 6; Pg. 179. Apparently the world between soul and body has been the world of substance (Teenat) or the world of pre-existence (Alam-e-zar) because these two worlds are after the world of soul and before the world of bodies