

The Debate Concerning the Attributes (صفات Sifaat) of Allah (swt)

(Translated)

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A debate is circulating among school and university students these days regarding the Attributes of Allah (swt). The activity of some sheikhs on social media concerning this issue has likely stirred these questions among young people, given their constant engagement with these platforms. In this short article, we aim to draw the attention of young people to how to approach this topic and understand it correctly.

Before discussing the Attributes (صفات Sifaat) of Allah (swt), a question must arise in your minds: What is the purpose of these people in raising the issue of the Sifaat of Allah (swt)? Is their aim to guide people to the truth? Or is their aim to divide the Ummah and make each group view its fellow Muslims as enemies?

The West is fully aware that it cannot overcome the Ummah of Islam if it unifies on the basis of its Deen. The Romans experienced this at Yarmouk, the Franks at Zallaqa, the Crusaders at Hattin, and the Mongols at Ain Jalut. America is struggling to confront the Ummah while it is fragmented; what then would happen if it were unified? What plan could be more advantageous for America, and more fruitful, than dividing the Ummah into factions and tearing it apart?

America cannot divide the Ummah through a hateful colonial face, but rather presents to it local faces that have the appearance of religious people, who spread division among the people, intentionally or unintentionally by spreading sectarianism and reviving what had disappeared from the schools of theology ('Ilm ul Kalam). If the opinion of these people spreads among the people, people differ greatly between those who affirm that Allah has a hand and those who deny it from Him, so one of them declares his brother a disbeliever and moves away from the correct understanding that the Messenger of Allah (saw) taught us and that his Companions (ra) applied after him, may Allah be pleased with them all.

If only those who occupy you with theological matters, instead occupy themselves with reviving the Ummah, establishing the Khilafah (Caliphate), and implementing the Shariah Law of Allah (swt). Nothing distracted the Messenger of Allah (saw) from establishing the Islamic dawlah (state) until he did so. So, say to everyone who argues with you about the Attributes of Allah (swt): Where do you stand in relation to the saying of the Messenger of Allah (saw), **“and one who dies without having pledged allegiance dies a death of ignorance”** [Sahih Muslim, 1851]? Ask them, Where do you stand in relation to the saying of Allah (swt), **﴿أَفْخَمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةَ يَبْغُونَ ۚ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾** **“Then is it the judgement of the time of ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allah in judgement for a people who are certain in belief.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Ma'idah, 50]. Those who occupy your minds with these matters live under the protection of rulers, and do not condemn them. They see the rulers' falsehood and do not forbid them from it. They know that these rulers are not the guardians of the believers, yet they do not care about the absence of the Shariah bayah from their necks. All their concern is to distract you from your Shariah obligation towards your Ummah to liberate it from the clutches of colonialism, and the yoke of rulers, and bring it to the gardens of Islam by implementing the Shariah Law of Allah (swt). And how do they distract you? They distract you with the words of men from the words of the infallible one, Muhammad (saw). They distract you with the discussions of the Ummah during its period of confusion. They distract you from the discussions regarding the Prophet (saw) reviving the people until they became an Islamic Ummah.

from the Quran and Sunnah that contradicted them. Among them: They unleashed their minds and searched for what minds can comprehend and what minds cannot comprehend. The mind comprehends the existence of Allah (swt) but it is incapable of comprehending His Essence (ذات Dhaat), Glory be to Him. Allah (swt) has said, **﴿لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْآبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْآبْصَرَ وَهُوَ ٱلْخَبِيرُ﴾** **“Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Aware.”** [TMQ Surah Al-An’am, 103]. The Essence of Allah (swt) is not subject to human senses. So how can the limited and incapable comprehend the Essence of the Absolutely Powerful One Who is not limited by senses? There is no god but He (swt).

Correct understanding must begin with distinguishing what the mind can think about from what it cannot think about. The mind can perceive if it has four qualities: reality, senses, a brain capable of connecting, and previous information about reality. If the mind cannot perceive a reality through the senses, or if the reality is not something that the senses can perceive, then it will not be able to perceive it. Allah's Attributes are not subject to the senses, but instead they are what has been conveyed to us through truthful revelation. We have been informed by our Lord (swt) that He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, and All-Knowing, in His saying, Exalted is He, **﴿مَّا خَلَقَكُمْ وَلَا بِعَنَّاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا وَاحِدَةً ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ﴾** **“Your creation and your resurrection will not be but as that of a single soul. Indeed, Allāh is Hearing and Seeing.”** [TMQ Surah Luqman: 28], and His saying (swt) **﴿وَأَسْرُوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾** **“And conceal your speech or publicize it; indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Mulk 13]. From this we understand that Allah (swt) hears us, sees us, and knows our secrets and our public actions. Our minds cannot comprehend the Essence of Allah (swt): How does He hear? How does He see? How does He know? Is His hearing part of His Essence or not? Or is it neither from His Essence nor from anything else? And so on.

The correct understanding must begin with the fact that belief in the Sifaat of Allah (swt) is derived only from definitive texts. Belief (Iman) cannot be based on conjecture. Allah (swt) says, **﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمَعُونَ أَلْمَنَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَىٰ * وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا﴾** **“Indeed, those who do not believe in the Hereafter name the angels female names, And they have thereof no knowledge. They follow not except conjecture, and indeed, conjecture avails not against the truth at all”** [TMQ Surah An-Najm, 27-28]. The Noble Quran condemns this practice. The mushrikoon of Makkah described the angels as female; then he pointed out that they did not base this belief on definitive evidence.

The correct understanding of the Attributes (صفات sifaat) of Allah (swt) must begin with the words of Allah (swt), **﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾** **“There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing”** [TMQ Ash-Shura 11], and His words, **﴿لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْآبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْآبْصَرَ وَهُوَ ٱلْخَبِيرُ﴾** **“Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Aware.”** [TMQ Surah Al-An’am: 103], and His words, Exalted is He, **﴿سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ﴾** **“Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe.”** [TMQ Surah As-Saffat: 180].

The correct understanding of the Sifaat of Allah (swt) must be based on the rules of the Arabic language of comprehension, not on the dictates of logic. We understand the Attribute that Allah (swt) has affirmed for Himself to the extent that He has stated it about Himself. When He (swt) informs us that He is All-Knowing, we understand from this that Allah knows what we conceal and what we reveal. We understand from this that Allah knows what is before us and what is behind us. This understanding is because the verses indicate it. Our Lord (swt) said, **﴿وَٱللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾** **“And Allah is Hearing and Knowing”** [TMQ Surah Aal Imran, 34], and He (swt) said, **﴿رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُنْجِنُ وَمَا يُخْفَىٰ عَلَىٰ ٱللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ﴾** **“Our Lord, indeed You know what we conceal and what we declare, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the heaven,”** [TMQ Surah Ibrahim, 38] and He (swt) said, **﴿يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ﴾** **“He knows what is presently]before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills.”** [Al-Baqarah, 255]. Therefore, the Attributes of Allah (swt) are divinely revealed and cannot be added to, nor can we explain details that have not been revealed. Scholars of the science of theology (Ilm ul Kalam) have fallen into

the trap of logic when discussing the Sifaat of Allah (swt). They have delved into discussions of the attribute and the one described, whether the Attribute is identical to the one described or a meaning separate from the Essence, and other such inquiries based on the methodology of logic, not the methodology of the Quran.

Arabic is the language in which Allah revealed the Noble Quran and through which the Quran is understood. Our Lord (swt) said, ﴿قُرْءَانًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ﴾ **“It is an Arabic Quran, without any deviance that they might become righteous.”** [TMQ Surah Az-Zumar: 28]. So, the Arabic language and what it indicates must not be abandoned in favor of the logic used by the Greek philosophers, for this is clear misguidance! These people delved into many verses of the Wise Quran, subjecting them to logic while stubbornly refusing to subject them to the rules of grammar. They thus differed in their interpretation of the verse, ﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ تَكَثَّرَ فَأَتَمَّا يَنْكُثْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾ **“Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, O Muhammad they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfills that which he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward,”** [TMQ Surah Al-Fath: 10]. Although this verse is not one of those used to evidence Allah’s Attributes, it is not appropriate to discuss proving or disproving that Allah (swt) has a hand. The use of the word “hand” in it is metaphorical, following the Arabic method of establishing metaphor (مجاز majaaaz) and its contextualizations (قراآن qaraa’in). The word itself is ambiguous in its meaning, so it cannot be used to prove Attributes.

Al-Tabari, in his commentary on this verse, states, (وفي قوله (يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ) وجهان من التأويل: أحدهما: يد الله فوق أيديهم عند البيعة؛ لأنهم كانوا يبايعون الله ببيعتهم نبيه ﷺ، والآخر: قوة الله فوق قوتهم في نصرته رسول الله ﷺ، أحدهما: يد الله فوق أيديهم عند البيعة؛ لأنهم كانوا يبايعون الله ببيعتهم نبيه ﷺ، والآخر: قوة الله فوق قوتهم في نصرته رسول الله ﷺ، على نصرته على العدو.) **“Regarding His saying, “The Hand of Allah is above their hands,” there are two interpretations: one is that Allah’s Hand is above their hands at the time of the pledge of allegiance, because they were pledging allegiance to Allah through their pledge to His Prophet (saw). The other is that Allah’s power is above their power in supporting His Messenger (saw) because they only pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (saw), to support him against the enemy.”**

Al-Qurtubi’s commentary states, (يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ" قِيلَ: يَدُهُ فِي الثَّوَابِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الْوَفَاءِ، وَيَدُهُ فِي الْمَنَّةِ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْهَدَايَةِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فِي الطَّاعَةِ. وَقَالَ الْكَلْبِيُّ: مَعْنَاهُ نِعْمَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ فَوْقَ مَا صَنَعُوا مِنَ الْبَيْعَةِ. وَقَالَ ابْنُ كَيْسَانَ: قُوَّةُ اللَّهِ الْوَفَاءُ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ) **“The Hand of Allah is above their hands” has been interpreted as meaning: His Hand in reward is above their hands in fulfilling the pledge. And His Hand in bestowing favor upon them through guidance is above their hands in obedience. Al-Kalbi said: Its meaning is that Allah’s favor upon them is above what they did in pledging allegiance. Ibn Kaysan said: Allah’s power and victory are above their power and victory.”**

(يد الله فوق أيديهم) أي: هو حاضر معهم يسمع أقوالهم ويرى مكانهم، ويعلم ضمائرهم وظواهرهم، فهو تعالى هو المبايع بواسطة رسوله ﷺ كقوله: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنْ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةُ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْفُرْقَانِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بَبَيْعِكُمْ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۗ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ﴾ [التوبة، 111]. وقد قال ابن أبي حاتم: حدثنا علي بن الحسين، حدثنا الفضل بن يحيى الأنباري، حدثنا علي بن بكر، عن محمد بن عمرو، عن أبي سلمة، عن أبي هريرة قال: قال رسول الله ﷺ: **“من سل سيفه في سبيل الله، فقد بايع الله”** (الله، فقد بايع الله) **“Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties in exchange for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. It is a true promise binding upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So, rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment.”** [TMQ Surah At-Tawbah: 111]. Ibn Abi Hatim said: Ali ibn al-Husayn narrated to us, al-Fadl ibn Yahya al-Anbari narrated to us, Ali ibn Bakkar narrated to us, on the authority of Muhammad ibn Amr, on the authority of Abu Salamah, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah, who said: The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **“Whoever draws his sword in the cause of Allah has pledged allegiance to Allah.”**

Those scholars of theology who researched these topics made mistakes in their research, but they did not disbelieve in Allah (swt). They believed in Him as Lord, Creator, Ruler, Guardian, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, All-Preserving, and All-Encompassing. They exerted themselves and erred in their conclusions because of their mistake in the way they understood the Quran. These are Islamic sects that were right or wrong, and many of them have disappeared, or nearly disappeared. The Ummah today is different from the Ummah of that time. Today it is moving rapidly towards its unity in the Khilafah. So, beware of letting it down, frustrating it, dividing it, and making yourselves judges over it, declaring this one a disbeliever and that one an innovator, by reviving what has disappeared from these sects. Instead, work, strive, and hasten the journey to establish the Islamic state so that the Islamic state, with its pure methodology, can address these issues as the Prophet (saw) addressed them.

In summary, regarding the Sifaat (صفات Attributes) of Allah (swt), they are divinely revealed. We have mentioned only what is explicitly stated in the definitive texts, and nothing more. It is not permissible to add an attribute not mentioned, nor to explain an attribute in a way other than what is explicitly stated in the definitive texts.

O shebaab, young men and women, be a generation of action, not a generation of argumentation. On the authority of Abu Umamah al-Bahili, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «ما ضَلَّ قَوْمٌ بَعْدَ هُدًى كَانُوا عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا أُوتُوا الْجِدَالَ، ثُمَّ تَلَا هَذِهِ الْآيَةَ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصْمُونَ الْآيَةَ» **“No people go astray after having followed right guidance, but those who indulge in disputes.”** Then he recited the Verse, **“Nay! But they are a quarrelsome people.”** [Sahih Ibn Majah, 48]. And Allah (swt) is with you.