

A study of Afa'l of determination and Afa'l of comparison

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ABSTRACT

Grammatical rules in every language have a decisive role in understanding that language. Meanwhile Arabic is one of the most exact and delicate languages in which the role of the morphological and syntactical rules is of paramount importance. Among the syntactical issues it seems that "Afa'l of Determination" has not been sufficiently assayed and in most cases it has been confused with "Afa'l of Comparison"; while the first term is focused on determination and specification but the latter one is an expression of comparison and preference. The necessity of discussing this issue becomes more urgent when we turn to sacred texts and confuse these two terms with each other. In the current essay with an analytic method and via citation of first hand texts, we seek to explain the difference between these two in order to show that in Afa'l of Determination, we are encountered with a specified object but in Afa'l of Comparison, we are dealing with two categories one of which is preferred as against the other.

Keywords: Arabic, morphological rules, Afa'l of determination, Afa'l of comparison.

Introduction

The scholars know the vital importance of correct definition and exact explanation in various sciences and it is only through precise definition that the scope and limits of a definiendum are revealed. Two men would dispute over something and continue their blind dialogues in the dark ground of notions and judgments while they are using the disputed subject in different senses. However, if they define first the subject in an exact sense and determine their intention of the issue and show that in which sense they are using the term, no dispute would ever happen. Since the term "Afa'l of Determination" contrary to "Afa'l of Comparison" has not been given in literary and syntactical and even exegetical, texts the due attention by the men of literature and syntax and exegesis. We first define these two terms and eradicate the ambiguities.

"Afa'l of Comparison" has been defined as follows: "Comparative noun is a noun that is formed in "Afa'l" referring to the supremacy of the owner of the noun over against the other one in the verb derived from it" ^[1, 2]. While "Afa'l of Determination" is used for determination and specification instead of expression of supremacy; as Razi Astar Abadi states: "Afa'l is better to be devoided of the meaning of comparison and instead to be used in the sense of active participial adjective and this is an act of comparison according to Mobarrad while other scholars contend that it is founded on usage and of course the latter view is more correct like the minor and the major which are used as two distinct terms in the following stanza:

You Al-e Yazid how ugly you are/ Your minor and major are both the meanest people ^[1].

Abbas Hassan has also defined the Afa'l of Comparison and continued to explain the participation rule in the following words: "participation does not have a particular rule and it is only enough to be expressed in a way that it would be clear for the audience even if it is antagonistic or virtual participation; for example, one's word about the two enemies: "this enemy is more lovely for me than the other enemy" and this is the case also about the two types of evils when it is said: "this evil is better than that evil"; while in the first example one intends to say that "I hate this less than the other" and in the second example he means "this is lesser evil than the other"; then there is no absolute and common sense of "loving" and "beauty" as

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regards the two sides in the soul of the speaker rather the common point is the "hatred" and "ugliness" which is in contrast with "love" and "beauty". Then these two sentences can be rephrased as follows: "this enemy is lesser hostile and this evil is lesser evil and those two are more hostile and ugly". Accordingly, participation in the contradiction is analogical based on the weakness and strength" [2]. Ibn Aqil in his work has enumerated certain evidence for its application in non-comparative cases including:

If arms are stretched towards the food/ I do not haste because the most voracious people are the hastiest of them

The one who erected the sky for us/ The house whose piles are strong and tall

Then he continues to interpret these two stanzas as follows: "I do not haste" and "its piles are strong and tall". And Mohammad Muhy Al Din Abd Al Hamid adds a footnote and writes: "Bi Ajlehim" is an "Afa'l of Comparison" on surface but due to the requirement of the eulogy of the poet it is an adjective void of comparison; because if it implies comparison it would be in contradiction with his being the "fastest" in reaching the food but this does not render it impossible to be "fast" towards it and this is indeed an act of vilification not praise. As to the second evidence he states: "Two forms of 'A'z and Atval" have been used for something other than comparison; because the poet is not seeking to say that for Jarir there is a house with high and grand piles in order to compare the piles of his own house with it by describing them as grander and higher" [3].

Ibn Ab Al Hadid has paid attention to this point and considered the terms "good" and "evil" to be in non-comparative sense in the phrase "O' Lord! Give me a good nation instead of them and also give them a bad leader instead of men" and he cites two verses of Quran to substantiate his claim: "There is no goodness in them and likewise no badness in Imam Ali and Afa'l in this context does not imply supremacy like the word "good" in the verse 40 of Surah Al Fusilat and verse 15 of Surah Al Furqan" [4]. Mostafa Ghalaeni has also allocated a short discussion to the issue of "Afa'l for non-comparative occasions" and referred to the verses 54 of Surah Asra and 27 of Surah Al Rome as well as a poem of Farazdaq. He has also restricted the use of Afa'l in non-comparative sense to the heard and well-guarded words [5]. Following the explication of these two issues, we now turn to Quran and Nahjulbalaghah and search for this adjective in a number of the verses of Quran:

1. As to marriage, the Lord has laid the emphasis on the issue of "faith" and described it as the constitutive pillar and warns the Muslims against marrying the pagans; because this will pave the ground for their being sent into the hell. In this regard God states: "*Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever,*

even though he allures you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His Signs clear to mankind: That they may celebrate His praise." (Baqarah: 221).

Contemplation of the latter verse reveals the meaning of the term "good", in which has been repeated twice. The importance of the connotation of the term "good" becomes clearer when we are after the issuance of jurisprudential fatwa. Accordingly, if this refers to the determination and demarcation, marrying the idolater will be illegal and invalid and if it refers to comparison, it will be an expression of the preference of marriage with Muslim and permission of the marriage with the pagans.

But the reasons that show the "determination-basedness" of the adjective "good" are as follows:

- A. Two verbs of "do not marry" and "do not make them your wife" clearly express the sanction.
- B. The explanation that has been expressed in the end of the verse: "*Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness*" strongly endorses the claim; because inviting to the hell fire has nothing to do with any goodness so that the invitation to the paradise to be comparatively better.
- C. Refusing to resort to the marriage if the woman has left the Islam: "But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women: ask for what ye have spent on their dowers, and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you)" (Mumtahinah: 10); insofar, as according to the response of Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him), the continuation of the marriage of Fatima Bint, Asad the mother of Amir Al Muminin (peace be upon him) – as to the faith of whom there is no doubt – with Abu Talib is one of the reasons of the faith of this great supporter of the Prophet of Islam [6].

Given these triple reasons, one can argue for the "determination-basedness" of the "good" and the answer of the objection of Fakhr Razi is also given. He argued that the phrase "do not marry with unbelieving women" in this verse denotes the ban of marriage with the infidel women and accordingly one can feasibly claim that "believing maid is better than infidel woman" and this implies that marriage with the infidel woman is permitted; since the word "Afa'l" implies participation in adjective through one's having a particular advantage, marriage with an infidel woman is associated with worldly profits while marriage with a believing woman secures the otherworldly happiness and these two types of advantages are equally denoting profit seeking though the otherworldly one is more preferable [7].

Jawadi Amoli answers the objection of Fakhr Razi as follows: "the source of this objection is the confusion of the goodness of "believer as compared to the infidel" with the goodness of "marriage with a believer as compared to the marriage with an infidel". What can be inferred from the aforementioned verse is

the goodness of "believer as compared to the infidel" not the goodness of "marriage with that as compared to the marriage with this" ^[8].

However, as we mentioned earlier, if we intended the "determination-basedness" of "good", there is no longer any need to this justification; because goodness belongs to the believing woman while the infidel woman does not have any share of the goodness so that he would want to give it to others. On the other hand, comparison is intended to clarify the reason of supremacy of the superior over the inferior and this preference is not in view of all aspects – even if there is such possibility in the world of reality. For example, in the sentence "this female scientist is better than that" the supremacy of one woman over the other is due to her science not because of all qualities and the second woman might own beauty, wealth and other perfection. Accordingly, the goodness as mentioned in the cited verse is in view of "belief" which is absent in the infidel woman as a whole. Then, there is no occasion to say that marriage with the infidel woman is associated with worldly profits and the marriage with the believing woman is associated with the otherworldly benefits.

2. Quran in the story of Prophet Joseph alludes to the plot drawn for Joseph by court's women. Thanks to the directions notified by the Lord, Joseph managed to tackle the diabolic plot of the Egypt's Governor's wife: "He said: "O my Lord! The prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me: Unless Thou turn away their snare from me, I should (in my youthful folly) feel inclined towards them and join the ranks of the ignorant" (Yusef: 33).

Upon contemplation on this verse it becomes clear that "more to my liking" is concerned with determination and has nothing to do with the comparison; because if any comparison was intended here, it would have implied that the charming flirtation of the Egyptian women and Joseph's deception was desirable but prison and accepting its difficulties was more desirable. However, God has noted that "And (with passion) did she desire him, and he would have desired her, but that he saw the evidence of his Lord: thus (did We order) that We might turn away from him (all) evil and shameful deeds: for he was one of Our servants, sincere and purified" (Yusef: 24) and based on the confession of Satan "those pure hearted believers are not deceived" (ibid: 83). Then, these sacred entities not only do not turn to sin rather they would never think of it at all. Thus, here "Afa'l" refers to determination and denial of all illegitimate desires.

3. The selection of divine prophet is conditional upon two attributes of "sin" and "supremacy" and without these two attributes, no one can reach that high status; this is why God has given a decisive answer to the lusts of the infidels: "Allah knoweth best where (and how) to carry out His mission" (Anaam: 124). This verse is among those verses whose understanding depends on theological standpoint because prophetic mission is an essential part

of theological discourse as a whole and without this science, the intended result is not reached.

Accordingly, if we do not believe in the immaculacy and supremacy of the prophets, we would consider the word "the most knowledgeable" as the "Afa'l of Comparison"; because in this case, the nation itself is in charge of management of the affairs and selection of the prophet – though God is the All Knowledgeable – and the leadership is handled via interactive cooperation. "Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular Prayer; who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for Sustenance" (Shura: 38). Nevertheless, if we believe that the two attributes of "immaculacy" and "supremacy" are among the two necessary requirements of Islamic society and only via having these two attributes, one can handle this mission, there is no way but accepting the determination-basedness of the word "most knowledgeable"; because no one is able to discover these two attributes in anyone and it is only the Omniscient Lord who knows the hidden and revealed of all creatures: "Only you know everything" (Baqara: 32); "He knows the hidden and the more hidden" (Taha: 7).

Thus, the Sunni Muslims who believe that there is no way to know the "immaculacy" and "supremacy" in one person, resort to other paths like "consensus".

Fakhr Razi in his exegesis of the verse 119 of Surah Al Tawbah "O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed)" states: "we confess that in every era there should be an immaculate man but we think that this immaculate is the nation as a whole not any single individual; because the Lord has obligated every believer to be with the true ones and this is possible if he can detect them otherwise this would be an impossible demand. We surely do not know a determinate individual who is immaculate and as a result our view, i.e. immaculacy is the total sum of the nation, is proven and this is what we intend by the authority of the consensus" ^[7].

Though Fakhr Razi's objection is baseless, he has adopted a correct path as regards the necessity and contingency of immaculacy regardless of his flawed argument for proving his own stance. Moreover, his explanation as to the impermissibility of the unbearable obligation is not in line with his foundations. On the other hand, the claim of authority of consensus as a result of the consensus of the nation, as a whole, can lose its basis with the disagreement of one person and does not realize. Thus, it becomes clear that the validity and invalidity of the words of the nation depends on the acceptance or denial of the one who is himself searching after the truth and struggles to reach the knowledge via the consensus of nation and this would be tantamount to vicious circle.

In *Sharh Al Maqasid*, almost the same stance has been voiced and the author has considered the knowledge of people's supremacy impossible for the scholars ... he has also regarded the identification of immaculacy impossible and argued that the appointment of the immaculate Imam is a superhuman mission ^[9].

On the other hand, Shia Muslims believe that consensus is only valid as regards the secondary rules not about the principles. Of course, even in the case of the secondary rules, they must be inferred from the words of Immaculate Imams otherwise consensus has no value. Moreover, obligation is not forced to anyone rather the next immaculate is chosen by the previous immaculate and these rings of the chain of prophecy ends with the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Then, an immaculate Imam can merely be chosen by the Prophet under the guidance of the Lord.

It is due to the impossibility of appointment of Imam by the people that Imam Reza has considered the knowledge of the status of Imamate to be beyond the capability of the minds of the nation: "If they know the status of Imamate so that they can choose him. The people cannot choose the Imam by themselves" ^[10]. Imam Sajjad (peace be upon him) in a tradition has referred to the divine nature of the appointment of Imam: "Imam must be immaculate and immaculacy is not a superficial thing, then, Imam has to be appointed by God". In the light of the discussed issues, it becomes clear that "the most knowledgeable" is in determination-based sense and one cannot infer comparison from it.

4. After describing the dire conditions of the villains and corrupted people God, proceeds to speak of the desirable conditions of the men in paradise: "The Companions of the Garden will be well, that Day, in their abode, and have the fairest of places for repose" (Furqan: 24).

No doubt, those who deny the meeting of the God and the oppressors who are defying the path of righteousness, all will face appalling destiny and taste the divine wrath while the men of God-wariness and the wayfarers of the path of prophets after their death will enter the Garden of Eden and sit by the angels. Thus, is there any place for considering two adjectives of "good" and "the best" as the Afa'l of Comparison or they must be traced back to "determination"?

Tabarsi cites the view of Balkhi and argues that these two words as such have nothing to do with comparison and supremacy. He refers to the fact that "He is able to create everything from the scratch" (Rome: 27); and the phrase "Allah is the greatest ever" ^[11].

Fakhr Razi has also resorted to four reasons in the justification of this verse and his first reason is relevant to our claim. He states: "If a lord gives his servant a property and the latter returns this favor with unfaithfulness and forces the lord to punish him, the lord will address the servant with all anger: is this better or that?" ^[7].

It is needless to say that this punishment and anger is not desirable for the servant who just seeks after the giving of the lord.

5. God warns the believers against oppression and calls for justice and fairness: "O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear

Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do" (Maedah: 8).

According to the best order "the one who has created everything has created it in the best form" (Sajdeh: 7). All the universe elements revolve around the justice "There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its fore-lock. Verily, it is my Lord that is on a straight Path" (Hud: 56). No single creature can leave the justice circuit. Moreover, the believers have received the order from the God not to leave the path of justice and fairness even before those who are going astray and despise the God and His prophet.

In this verse, justice-seeking is described to be closer to God-wariness and upon reflection on the verses of Quran and the prophetic traditions, it becomes clear for us that injustice has nothing to do with God-wariness. This is to say that only justice is closed to piety and since justice is a truth that is of certain levels of the more one is decorated with it, he is closer to God-wariness but injustice does not have anything to do with God-wariness when the comparison is at issue.

6. As to the jurisprudential judgment of heritage and the inheritors, God states: "But kindred by blood have prior rights against each other in the Book of Allah. Verily Allah is well-acquainted with all things" (Anfal: 75).

This verse nullifies the notion of heritage via the brotherhood treaty which was established by Prophet among the Muslims in the early years of Hijra and demonstrates the heritage by blood ^[12]. Tabarsi speaks of the priority of those people in heritage who are closer as compared to other candidate inheritors: "this verse connotes that the one who is closer to the dead person by blood is more competent to inherit" ^[11]. To put it otherwise, in the issue of heritage, God notes that some of the relatives are "prior" to others. In other words, all relatives can inherit in one way or another but some are more competent indeed. Said differently, the verse does not intend to say that all relatives have equal right of inheritance and some others are more competent rather it determines the exact relatives who should inherit. Here relatives are divided into a number of classes and each class has its own priorities and the other classes can expect the inheritance if the previous class is not available. Jurisprudentially speaking, first class consists of children, father and mother while the second class is composed of siblings, grandmother and grandfather and the third class comprises uncle and aunt. As Zarareh quotes Imam Sadeq to have said: mother is closer than the brother and sister to be the inheritor ^[12].

It is interesting to note that Imam Sadeq has also used this verse for determination of a non-jurisprudential issue: "this verse has been revealed about the Prophet, Imam Ali, Hassan, Hossein and Fatima as the chain of sainthood and leadership. This chain continues with Imam Sajjad and after him the other immaculate Imams continue this" ^[13].

It is needless to say that Imam Sadeq in this tradition refers to the determination-basedness of the adjective "more

competent"; because the previous Immaculate Imam has other sons beside the next Immaculate Imam but none of them had the required conditions and more importantly immaculacy. In fact, Imam Sadeq has used the aforementioned verse in order to provide more extensive interpretation of the verse of purification and triggered theological discussions and in this way have included hermeneutical examples along with the revealed examples. On the other hand, by adopting determination-based meaning of the term "more competent" its circle becomes narrower in a way that only one person is described as the relative of the immaculate Imam.

7. In some verse of Quran, God has encouraged the believers to fight with the infidels: "Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you? Do ye fear them? Nay, it is Allah Whom ye should more justly fear, if ye believe!" (Tawbah: 13).

Here some etymologists have suggested that *Khashyyat* (dread) is more particular than *Khauf* (fear) because dread is a sense of fear associated with a sense of respect which has its root in knowledge. It is exactly for this reason that God has restricted it to the saints: "Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving" (Fatir: 28). According to Imam Sajjad, "those who have a wider share of knowledge, their share of divine dread is increased" (Sahifeh Sajjadyah, Pray 52). The same is said by Imam Ali in different words^[14].

Now if the adjective "most competent" was intended to suggest comparison, the infidels would have been a source of dread even despite the dreadful nature of Divine Presence. However, if this adjective was an expression of determination, it is only God who is worthy of dread.

Thinking of divine book of God explains a significant point for the believers to the effect that whenever in Quran dread is used, it refers to the otherworld "People, fear your Lord, and fear the Day when no father shall ransom a thing for his child nor a child for his father" (Luqman: 33), or hardship "If any one of you do not have the affluence to be able marry free believing women, (let him marry) from among the believing women that your right hand owns" (Nisa: 25), or facing recession "commerce wherein you fear decline" (Tawbah: 24), or being caught by poverty "do not kill your children due to your fear of poverty" (Asra: 31), or oppression of the orphans "Let those (disposing of an estate) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own if they had left a helpless family behind: Let them fear Allah, and speak words of appropriate (comfort)." (Nisa: 9) and an oppression that has been resulted from the infidelity "'As for the youth, his parents were people of Faith, and we feared that he would grieve them by obstinate rebellion and ingratitude (to Allah and man)" (Kahf: 80). But where the dread or fear belongs to an entity and this should be just before the God not any creature whatsoever; and this issue is mentioned in every occasion where the word fear is used in the sacred book^[15].

The verses of Quran clearly endorse this fact and warn against harboring any fear into one's heart of any creature: "do not fear the people and only fear of us" (Maedah: 44), "establish regular prayers, and practice regular charity, and fear none (at all) except Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance" (Tawbah: 18), "(It is the practice of those) who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And enough is Allah to call (men) to account" (Ahzab: 39).

This is because one's fear of God does not leave any place free for the fear of the other living creatures and with the manifestation of the majesty of God, there remains no room for self-expression. To endorse this, one can refer to the words of Imam Ali where he describes the faithful as follows: "Creator emerged with all His majesty in their hearts and everything other than Him looked minor" (Nahjulbalaghah, sermon 193) and in another place he stated: "the majesty of Creator in your eyes turns the creatures insignificant" (Ibid: Wisdom 129).

In the aforementioned verse, the same is the case and Allama Tabatabaei has endorsed this view of determination instead of comparison in this regard in an exclusive way^[12].

Conclusion

According to what was expressed in this essay, based on the Quranic verses, "Afa'l of Comparison" refers to comparison, preference and the supremacy of a noun as compared to another noun in a specific adjective while "Afa'l of Determination" is intended to determine, specify and demarcate one of the two nouns without finding any portion of the intended adjective in the other noun. To put it otherwise, adjective is merely proved for one of the two nouns and is wholly denied from the other noun and the confusion of these two senses of "Afa'l" keeps us away from understanding the true meaning of the Quranic verses.

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