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Spiritual Food

These examples inform us that All□h's (SwT) special invitation does not always concern material satisfaction. The food that All□h (SwT) serves in the aforementioned specific invitations are spiritual. In fact in some traditions the word '*ta'□m*'1 is translated as spiritual food. Consider the following:

In chapter 'Abasa [80:24], Almighty All□h says:

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الإِنْسَانُ إِلى طَعَامِهِ

"***Then let man look at his food.***"2

Under this holy verse, the Shi'ite exegete Sayyid H□shim Bahr□n□, in his *Tafs□r al-Burh□n* quotes a tradition narrated by Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayn□ in *al-K□fi* [v.1, p.39, tr.8] from Im□m al-S□diq ('a) as follows:
Zayd al-Shahh□m asks Im□m ('a) what "man's food" stands for in the verse above. The Im□m ('a) responds saying:

عِلْمُهُ الَّذِي يأْخُذُهُ عَمَّنْ يَأْخُذُهُ.

"It refers to the knowledge that he acquires, and its source."
The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

أَبِيتُ عِنْدَ رَبِّي، يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِي.

"I spend the night near my Lord, and He feeds me and quenches my thirst."
Commenting on this prophetic tradition, Sayyid 'Al□ Kh□n al-Madan□ in his magnum opus, *Riy□d al-S□lik□n* says:

ومعلوم أنّ طعامه (صلّى اللّه عليه وآله) عند ربّه ليس من جنس أطعمة الحيوانات اللحميّة، ولا شرابه من جنس هذه الأشربة، وإنّما المراد طعام العلم وشراب المعرفة.

"And it is known that the Prophet's food near his Lord is not of the kind of animal food, nor is his drink like the drinks that we see before us. Indeed what is meant here is only the *ta'□m* (food) of knowledge and the *shar□b* (drink) of gnosis (ma'rifah).3"

'All□mah Majlis□ also, commenting on this tradition says in his Oceans of Lights:

...ولا شك أن ذلك الشراب ليس إلا عبارة عن المعرفة و المحبة والإستنارة بأنوار عالم الغيب...

"...and undoubtedly that drink is nothing but Divine gnosis, love, and seeking illumination through the lights of the hidden realm...4"

The infinitive noun '*shurb*' also, which is commonly translated as 'drinking' does not literally mean 'to drink'. Drinking is only a material extension of '*shurb*'– which literally denotes "to convey to one's inside"5 be that by drinking6 or otherwise.

The Holy Qur'□n for example, uses *shurb* for the polytheists who inclined to the worship of a cow after Prophet M□s□ ('a) went to be the special guest of All□h (SwT), in the following way:

) وَأُشْرِبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ (

"***...and their hearts had been imbued with*** [***the love of***] ***the Calf, due to their faithlessness.***"[7]

Observe that the word '*ushrib*' is employed which does not connote any kind of material intake of drink. Imām al-Sajjād ('a) in his supplication against Satan says:

أَللّٰهُمَّ وَ أَشْرِبْ قُلُوبَنَا إِنْكَارَ عَمَلِهِ وَالْطُفْ لَنَا فِي نَقْضِ حِيَلِهِ.

"O Allāh, saturate our hearts with the rejection of his works and be gentle to us by destroying his stratagems![8]"

And in his supplication of '*Arafah* he ('a) says:

وَأَشْرِبْ قَلْبِي عِنْدَ ذُهُولِ الْعُقُولِ طَاعَتَكَ.

"Drench my heart with Your obedience when intellects are distracted...[9]"

And Imām 'Alī ('a) is reported to have said:

إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ تَعَالى شَرَابًا لأَوْلِيَائِهِ إِذَا شَرِبُوا (مِنْهُ) سَكِرُوا، وَإِذَا سَكِرُوا طَرِبُوا، وَإِذَا طَرِبُوا طَابُوا، وَإِذَا طَابُوا ذَابُوا، وَإِذَا ذَابُوا خَلَصُوا، وَإِذَا خَلَصُوا طَلَبُوا، وَإِذَا طَلَبُوا وَجَدُوا، وَإِذَا وَجَدُوا وَصَلُوا، وَإِذَا وَصَلُوا اتَّصَلُوا، وَإِذَا اتَّصَلُوا لاَ فَرْقَ بَيْنَهُمْ وَبَيْنَ حَبِيبِهِمْ.

"Indeed Allāh has a wine for His friends, which if they drink, they get intoxicated, and when they get intoxicated, they get overjoyed, and when they get overjoyed they get pleasant, and when they get pleasant, they melt down, and when they melt down, they get pure, and when they get pure, they seek, and when they seek, they find, and when they find they reach, and when they reach, they unite, and when they unite there is no difference between them and their lover.[10]"

1. The verb ta‘ima literally stands for ‘he tasted’.
2. Holy Qur’ān, 80:24.
3. Riyāḍ al-Sālikīn, vol. 1, pg. 280.
4. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 6, pg. 208.
5. al-Tahqīq fī Kalimāt al-Qur’ān al-Karīm, vol. 6, pg. 30.
6. EW Lane, EW Lane Arabic-English Lexicon, see under the root word shīn rā bā.
7. Holy Qur’ān, 2:93.
8. Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah (Eng. Edition), sup. 17, pg. 63.
9. Imām al-Sajjād (‘a), Sahīfat al-Sajjādiyyah (Eng. Edition), sup. 47, pg. 185.
10. This tradition has been narrated by many authorities in mysticism such as Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī in his Sharh al-Asmā’ (pg. 534), Ayatullāh Hasan Zadeh Amulī in his Nār ‘alā Nār (pg. 89), Mawlā Narāqī in his Jāmi‘ al-Sa‘ādāt (vol. 3, pg. 152).

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