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INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

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**Imposition of Divine Obligations (*Taklīf*) As a Trust (*Amānah*)
Entrusted to Mankind and the Wisdom behind It: An Exposition of
Verse 72 & 73 of Al-Aḥzāb in Shah Wali Allah Al-Dehlawi's *Hujjat
Allāhi Al-Bālighah* (Part 1)**

Mohammed Farid Ali al-Fijawi*

Abstract

Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi asserted that the term “*amānah*” in verse 72-73 of al-Aḥzāb, implies *taklīf* (Imposition of Divine Obligation) on the human being. He explained that *taklīf* constitutes three important elements namely, imposing Divine obligations, option to obey and disobey, and reward and punishment. All creations (*makhlūqāt*) of Almighty Allah is bound by a set of laws by the Creator, but these three elements draw a line of distinction between them and the humans. In order to argue this as a wisdom behind *taklīf*, al-Dehlawi presented two types of arguments, revealed arguments (*dalīl naqlī*) and rational argument (*dalīl ‘aqlī*). In this academic note (part 1), we are covering the first argument.

Keywords: *Amanah* (trust), *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi, *taklif* (Divine Obligation), *mukallaf*.

Introduction

The socio-ethical-legal term “*amānah*” roughly translated as trust in Islam is complex when it comes to verse 72 and 73 of Chapter al-Aḥzāb in the Glorious Qur’an. Great Islamic scholars have deciphered it through time and presented various meanings and denotations of this term. This paper reads into *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* (*The Conclusive Argument from God*) the *magnum opus* of 18th Century scholar, Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi (1703 – 1762), and attempts to present Shah Wali Allah’s exegesis on the term *amānah*.

This is an analytical study of Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi’s *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* which provides exegesis of the Qur’anic verses in hand. And to further fathom al-Dehlawi’s text, the researcher aided from a contemporary Indian scholar, the late Mufti Sa’id Ahmad Palanpuri (d.

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2020) a Hadith master (*muhaddith*) at Islamic Seminary Darul Ulum Deoband. Palanpuri edited Shah Wali Allah's works and wrote extensive commentaries on it. He not only exhausted his energy producing biographical pieces on Shah Wali Allah's works, but literally taught Wali Allah's works his entire life. In commentary of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*, Palanpuri wrote *Raḥmat-ullāh al-Wāsi'ah Sharḥ Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* (4 volumes each volume consisting of over 600 pages). Palanpuri created a presentation style which has become the landmark of his style. In this work, he provided a detailed discussion of the subject matter before dealing with the text of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* together with examples and complete references of the verses and the *hadith* quoted in the text. Then he provided the Arabic text with its translation followed by the explanation of difficult words and phrases in the text. *Raḥmat-ullāh al-Wāsi'ah* was published by Maktabah Hijaz Deoband, UP, India in 2001.¹

Beside the biographical works, the researcher also referred to Hermansen's English translation of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah*. This is a pure translation of the text without any commentaries. The researcher basing on Hermansen's and Palanpuri's work constructed a simplified translation of the text. The translation of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* text is provided in block text followed by the contextual analysis.

The Wisdom behind Imposing Divine Obligations (*Taklīf*)

Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi in sixth chapter of *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* opened a discussion with the title "The inner dimension of imposing Divine obligation (*Bāb Sirr al-Taklīf*).” He wrote:

[Almighty Allah the Exalted said (Al-Aḥzāb: 72-73):

¹ Another important commentary of *Hujjat Allāhi Bālighah* is *Sharḥ Hujjat Allāh al-Bālighah* (355 pages) written by the famous Maulana 'Ubayd Allāh Sindi (d. 1944 CE) in Urdu. He rephrased *Hujjat Allāh* in his rendering with notes sufficing to provide a framework to discussions carved by Shah Wali Allah. Chapter headings and subheadings are taken from *Hujjat Allāh* followed by Sindi's commentary. At places Arabic text from *Hujjat Allāh* with Urdu translation is quoted in block-text format. This reputed work was recently published for the first time in 2010 by Hikmat-i Qur'ān Institute, Karachi, Pakistan. Though the two commentaries are in Urdu language, their level of scholarly excellence should not be underestimated, especially when the commentators are great grand-students of Shah Wali Allah through continuous chain of scholars. These scholars literally lived the philosophy of Shah Wali Allah, taught and studies his works formally in traditional Islamic seminary schools.

“We did indeed offer the trust (amānah) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; He was indeed unjust and foolish.”

“(With the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women, and Allah turns in Mercy to the believers, men and women: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”

Al-Ghazālī, al-Bayḍāwī and other scholars has established that “trust (*al-amānah*)” in this verse means the commitment to the Divine injunctions set by Almighty Allah. In a manner that the committing one exposes themselves to reward and punishment through obedience and disobedience. “Offering the trust to the heavens and the earth” in the verse means to test their capacity. “They refused to undertake it” means the absence of suitability and capacity in them. “Man undertook it” means his appropriateness and capacity for the commitment.]²

Sa’id Ahmad Palanpuri in commentary, deliberated that people often pose questions such as:

- i. Why only humans are subjected to commitment of Divine injunctions (*mukallaḥ*)?
- ii. Why other creations are not imposed with this commitment?
- iii. What is the wisdom, cause, and reason of this commitment?

Al-Dehlawi’s discussion provides answers to these questions in a detailed manner. To be a *mukallaḥ* translated in Islamic literature in various ways simply means that Almighty Allah has imposed obligations (*aḥkām*) on humans and placed reward for those who obey and punishment for those who disobey. As far as the obligations or laws are concerned, Almighty Allah has bound every creation with it. And every creation in its own way act within the boundaries of the law fixed for it. For instance, the sun and moon is set to rise and set, wind to blow, clouds to rain, birds to chirp, and so on. None of these creations can oppose the laws set for it. However, there is no reward placed for obeying these laws. In case of humans, they are imposed with the laws (*ma’mūr*), given the option to obey or disobey the

² Sa’id Ahmad Palanpuri, *Raḥmat-ullāh al-Wāsi‘ah Sharḥ Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligah* (UP, India: Maktabah Hijaz, 2001), vol. 1, 249.

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laws, and the reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience is been set for them. So the combination of all three constitutes the imposing of Divine obligations (*taklīf sharʿī*).³

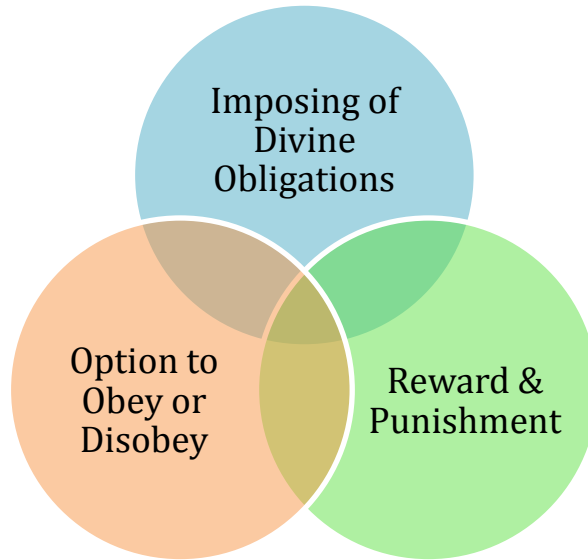


Figure 1: *Taklīf Sharʿī*

Shah Wali Allah explains and supports this meaning of *taklīf* with revealed arguments (*dalīl naqlī*) and with rational arguments (*dalīl ʿaqli*).

Revealed Arguments (*Dalīl Naqlī*)

Taking the queue from al-Ghazālī and Bayḍāwī, Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi added two important points in the exegesis of the ongoing verses. He wrote:

[I hold that on this point] the Speech of Allah the Exalted, “he was unjust and ignorant” functions as an argument for what have been said earlier. This is because, the unjust person (*ẓalūman*) is the one who does not do justice whereas he has the capacity of justice; and the ignorant person (*jahūlan*) is the one who does not have knowledge whereas he has the capacity to become knowledgeable. Beings other than man are either

³ Ibid., vol. 1, 246.

knowledgeable and just untainted by ignorance and injustice such as the angels, or are unjust and ignorant not capable of acquiring justice and knowledge at all such as the animals (*bahā'im*). This means, only one who is suited for the imposition of Divine obligations and capable for it is the one who has the potential to achieve perfection (*kamāl bi al-quwwah*) rather than achieving actual perfection (*lā bi al-fi'l*). The letter “L” prefixed to His speech “He will punish” (*liyu'adhiba*) is the “*Lām*” of consequence [in Arabic Syntax], as if Almighty Allah stated that the result of taking up the trust (*amānah*) [of *taklīf*] would be punishment and reward.]⁴

In elaboration, Palanpuri wrote that the term “*bi al-quwwah*” denotes something having potential to be somebody or achieve something. In the contrary, the term “*bi al-fi'l*” stands for somebody already having a talent or trait. For instance, as soon as a child is born, he has the potential to learn and become a writer (*kātib*). So the child is described as “*insān kātib bi al-quwwah*” meaning he is a writer by potential. Later, when he grows up, practices and becomes an actual writer, he is defined as “*kātib bi al-fi'l*.”⁵

Shah Wali Allah al-Dehlawi in exegesis of verse 72 and 73 of al-Aḥzāb explained the imposition of Divine obligations (*taklīf*) with the support of revealed argument. He argued that Almighty offered *amānah* (trust) to all the creation (*makhlūq*). *Amānah* is a responsibility like lecturer and employee has teaching responsibility. One who is entrusted with a deposit is responsible of safekeeping it. Head of a state is responsible of leading his state. Similarly, imposition of Divine obligations is a responsibility. Those who fulfil the imposed obligations, honor the *amānah* and those who do not fulfil the obligations fall short in honoring the responsibility.

Almighty Allah presented this responsibility to all the creation, but the verse only stated three major creation, heaven, land and mountains. This is because when one raises his head he sees the heaven. When one sees straight he sees the mountains and when he lowers his head he sees the land. When these 3 major creation were offered with *amānah* of *taklīf* it is obvious that the minor creations were also offered. This is symmetric to the command given to all the creation to prostrate to Adam, but the Qur'an only

⁴ Sa'id Ahmad Palanpuri, *Raḥmat-ullāh al-Wāsi'ah Sharḥ Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligah*, vol. 1, p. 249.

⁵ Sa'id Ahmad Palanpuri, *Raḥmat-ullāh al-Wāsi'ah Sharḥ Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligah*, vol. 1, p. 250.

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states the angels because at that pointing time they were the most honorable creation. When the most honorable creation is commanded, the lower level creation are inevitably included in the command.

All the creation refused to undertake the burden of *amānah* of *taklīf*. This offer and refusal was not in a sensory and verbal sense, but in a non-sensory natural disposition (*fiṭrī*) form. Offering the *amānah* of *taklīf* to all the creation means comparison of their capacity against the *amānah* of *taklīf*. Their refusal means incapability of bearing this responsibility. Their fear to undertake this offer means they certainly do not have the capacity to undertake *amānah* of *taklīf*.

On the other hand, when the capacity of human being is compared against the *amānah* of *taklīf*, they are found perfectly capable. This what it means that human undertook this responsibility. Wall, bricks, stones cannot be ruled as ignorant and unjust, because these does not have the capacity to know and to do justice. In contrary, human being has both the capacity to be knowledgeable and just, and the capacity to be ignorant and unjust. Human being has both of these capacities in contra to angels and animals. Angels only have the capacity to be knowledgeable and just, whereas animals does not have this capacity at all.

Conclusion

The following can be summarized in relation to verse 72-73 of Chapter al-Aḥzab:

1. *Amānah* denotes bearing the responsibility of *taklīf*.
2. Offer means comparison of the capacities of the creations.
3. Refusal means absence of capacity in all the creations except human beings.
4. Undertaking (*ḥamal*) means capability of human being to bear the responsibility of *taklīf*.
5. Human being to be ignorant and unjust is evidence that they have sufficient amount of capacity to bear the responsibility of *taklīf*.

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