

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi and the Conclusive Argument from God

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Abstract:

This scholarly analysis critically assesses the literary work, "The Conclusive Argument From God: Hujjat Allah al-Baligha," by Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi. Dihlawi's Hujjat Allah al-Balighah delved into the intricacies of Sharia by unveiling its underlying principles and exploring its various branches. While grounded in Sharia's esoteric dimensions, the work seamlessly integrates Hadith, Fiqh, ethical teachings, Sufism, and even philosophical elements. Drawing upon his expertise in descriptive and epistemological disciplines, Dihlawi navigated these mysteries with an unwavering commitment to knowledge. Remarkably, he identified the scientific justification for each Quranic and Prophetic mandate, bridging the gap between revelation and reason. Furthermore, he eloquently emphasized the importance of Sufism and spirituality within the Islamic context. Hujjat Allah al-Balighah illuminated the relevance and interconnectivity of the four primary Sunni schools of thought, highlighting their joint base in Islamic law and tradition.

Keywords: civilization; human felicity; religious obligation; Shari'a laws; social piety.

INTRODUCTION

This writing is a review of the book by Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi, *The Conclusive Argument From God: Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*. ISBN: 978-90-04-10298-9. Pages: 506. Year of publication: 1996.

Overview of the Book's Contents

Prominent Sufi mystic and Hanafi scholar Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi became a key religious reformer and leader in the Indian subcontinent. Motivated by an aspiration to revive Muslim societies throughout Asia, he directed his extensive knowledge and deep comprehension of Islamic texts into a prodigious body of work. Dihlawi wrote more than fifty-one essential books in many fields of Islamic scholarship, including Hadith (the tradition of the Prophet), Tasawwuf (mysticism), and Tafsir (exegesis of the Qur'an). He was able to serve a variety of audiences because of his remarkable proficiency in Arabic and Persian, the two most widely spoken languages at the time. His profound and extensive understanding of the Zahri (outer) and Bateni (inner) facets of knowledge, in particular, won him acclaim and the title of "Imam" among Islamic scholars (Chowdury, 2023).

During the 17th century in the Indian subcontinent, distinct philosophical views acquired prominence, forcing Shah Wali Allah to examine their potential impact on Islamic thinking. Recognizing the necessity for a thorough response, he wrote Hujjat Allah al-Balighah in Arabic (Chowdury et al., 2023). This renowned treatise addressed critical theological concerns and raised questions regarding Sharia and Sufism. Its subtle approach garnered it prominence as an essential critique of Islam. Manazir Ahsan Geylani, an Indian academic, complimented the book's clarity and comprehensiveness, saying it "succinctly presents Islam as a perfect way of life" (Kismati, 2000).

Although Hujjat Allah al-Balighah did not only rely on Hadith knowledge, Indian scholar Abu Tayyiba praised it and its abundance of interpretations. He claimed that the book did more than any other in the preceding twelve

centuries to expose even the “theories and secrets” contained inside different Hadiths. To him, it was the most outstanding work of Shah Wali Allah and one of the “greatest books ever written” (al-Dihlawī, 1981). Noor Muhammad Azmi, a Sufi scholar, reiterated this opinion, ranking it third in importance only to the Quran and Sunnah due to its thorough treatment of otherwise unexplored subjects. Praise was given to it for being a trustworthy interpretation and authoritative guide to the Quran and Sunnah, commonly regarded as an “extract of the Sharia.” (Kismati, 2000).

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi’s *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* is divided into two sections, the first of which has seven chapters. Each chapter is divided into several sections, providing a rigorously arranged exposition of Islamic themes. Dihlawi delves into Sharia’s basic ideas and “secrets” in the first chapter, offering practical strategies for deducing and grasping its complex regulations. He explained the rationale for human accountability on the Day of Judgement and the divine basis for reward and punishment. Notably, Dihlawi began his work by exploring the finding and governance of creation, acknowledging cosmology as a fundamental subject that underpins everything else. The argument was that a careful examination of the opening verses of the Quran, specifically Surah Al-Alak, provides a comprehensive description of cosmic processes. Drawing attention to the verse, “Read, in the name of your Lord who created – Created man from a clinging mass,” Dihlawi underscored the Quran’s comprehensive understanding of the universe’s beginnings and workings” (Q. S Az-Zumar 1-2).

Allah has taken three steps to create the entire created world. First, He brought matter into existence from non-existence, i.e., nothingness without substance. He gave fullness to matter. When a companion asked Muhammad (Pbuh) about the origin of creation, he replied, “In the beginning, there was the Creator, nothing else.” In the second stage, Allah created another creation. Allah created Adam from clay and Jinn from fire. The combined conclusion of evidence and logic is that Allah has organized the creation into several classes and races. Then, he specified the characteristics of that caste and class. For example, human characteristics are eloquence, smooth skin, simple shape, and rationality.

Conversely, horses are characterized by fearlessness, hairy skin, angular shape, and lack of logic. Similarly, the properties of poison are killing power, the properties of ginger are astringency and dryness, and the properties of camphor are softness and cooling. Such characteristics are seen in minerals, plants, animals, and other classes and nations.

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi shed light on several aspects of Tasawwuf, including the concepts of *Alame Mesal* (the World of Forms), *Mala-e-A’la* (the Supreme Council), and *Haqiqate Rooh* (the Soul) (Hermansen, 1988). In his exploration, he emphasized the significance of critical terms in Tasawwuf, mainly *lime ladunni* (direct knowledge granted by God) and *Ilham*. He defined *Ilham* as divine or infused knowledge, citing the journey of Prophet Musa (as) and Hazrat Khizr (as) as examples. Khizr’s actions, such as breaking the boat, killing the boy, and repairing the wall, were carried out under God’s secret orders, exemplifying *Ilham* in action. The revelation of scriptures and laws to the Prophets also falls under the category of *Ilham*. Notably, individuals can also achieve moments of *Ilham* through spiritual practices.

Expanding on another Sufi term, *Alam-e-Mishal* (“world of forms”), Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi drew upon Quranic and Hadith sources. He proposed that behind the physical world we perceive lies a corresponding “world of forms” where archetypes of everything in our reality exist. Human qualities and limitations, for example, find their pre-existent forms in this realm. According to al-Dihlawi, everything that manifests in the material world first takes shape within this “world of forms.” Consequently, what we experience in the physical realm can be considered a reflection of these pre-existing forms. However, the existence of this realm remains invisible to the common eye despite its potential physical manifestations (Allāh, 2020).

Following this, Dihlawi turned his attention to *Mala-e-A’la* (the “Supreme Council”) and explored the crucial role of angels in this divine assembly. He described the bearers of the heavenly throne (*Al-’Arsh*) and the surrounding council, composed primarily of angels, as constantly praising God and seeking forgiveness for His faithful servants. He envisioned them interceding with the words: “O our Lord! Your wisdom and mercy encompass all things. Therefore, forgive those who have turned away from You and chosen the straight path You have shown.”

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi delved into the enigmatic nature of the Soul, drawing insights from the Quran and Hadith. He asserted that the Soul is all living creatures’ foundation and source of life. Its existence animates the body, and its absence signals the end of life. Dihlawi touched on the delicate and permitted heat that exists within the body. He characterized blood, bile, and phlegm as the optimal mix of the four physiological parts, acting as a crucible to produce a heated mass responsible for feeling, movement, and vital energy. This energy, impacted by the forces mentioned above, can have various characteristics such as lightness, heaviness, purity, or impurity. Disruptions in any organ forming this heated mass can cause internal disruptions, ultimately affecting life and death. Dihlawi acknowledged the importance of this warm mass but separated it from the Soul’s essential nature. He described it as the lowest level of the Soul, similar to the scent of a flower or the heat emerging from a fire. According

to him, the real Soul is a distinct and independent entity free of physical mixing. He imagined it as a point of light or a luminous body, free of the constraints of shifting states or material combinations. According to Dihlawi, this soul essence is constant across all states, unaffected by physical dimensions or opposing traits such as black and white. It does not evolve but instead remains a unique and immutable essence.

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi then expounded on the concept of accountability. He emphasised how Allah will judge everyone on the Day of Resurrection and suffer the consequences of their acts. He discussed in detail that individuals will receive positive consequences for suitable activities and negative results for wrong actions. Dihlawi explained that there are four reasons why man will suffer the consequences of his actions in the Hereafter. The number one reason is that according to the work done in this world, people will be rewarded in the Hereafter, which is a natural thing, he identified. The second reason is Allah's final decision, so people should act accordingly. The third reason is that the demand of the Sharia is the same, so the Sharia inspires people to do good deeds and calls them to stay away from evil deeds (Allāh, 2020).

The fourth reason is Allah warned the people through the revelation to the Prophet (Pbuh). During the time of earlier Prophets, Allah used to punish the Ummah of that Prophet directly. Still, Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) requested Allah not to punish his Ummah like other Prophets directly but to judge according to his deeds at the time of Resurrection. Allah has accepted this prayer of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh). The revelation of Allah to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) and the Prophet's supplications and assurance of Allah's help naturally made this matter imperative. Dihlawi said that in this context, the first two aspects of the results of actions are natural and impossible to change—the third- aspects changes with time. The fourth aspect is related to the supplications of the different Prophets. He concluded this chapter by discussing the various aspects of causality.

In the second chapter of his work, Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi tackled crucial aspects of human life on Earth. He meticulously outlined steps individuals can take to achieve success in various domains, skillfully demonstrating how personal, social, national, and international lives can be enriched with happiness and beauty. He structured this chapter into eleven sub-sections, exploring fundamental human needs and rights. He then delved into practical methods for ensuring the fulfillment of these needs and upholding these rights. The result is a masterful arrangement of diverse aspects of civil life, including interpersonal interactions, economic structures, state and military policies, and social frameworks. This comprehensive and insightful approach undoubtedly leaves a lasting impression on any scholar.

In this chapter, Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi delved into the ideal characteristics of a ruler. He emphasized the importance of good character, where the ruler must exhibit strength and compassion. Facing enemies with bravery and determination for the nation's well-being while simultaneously showing kindness to ordinary citizens are essential qualities. Wisdom is paramount, enabling the ruler to implement Islamic principles effectively. Maturity, intelligence, and independence are crucial to garnering respect and influence. Physical fitness and wholeness are also necessary for Generosity and sociability to cultivate positive relationships with the people. Focus on the public good is vital to avoid the perception of self-serving leadership. Sharp foresight allows rulers to capitalize on opportunities and navigate challenges like skilled hunters. Suppressing evil and upholding discipline are core responsibilities. They maintained cordial relations with the people and showed unwavering vigilance in ensuring the state's security, rounding out the necessary attributes of a worthy ruler (al-Dihlawī, 1981).

In the third chapter, Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi discussed what a Muslim civilization would look like, including discovering the Civilization (*The Irtifiqat*), the art of economic transactions (*mu'amaliit*), kings' conduct, and the current conventions among people. Then, he elaborated on the various customs and traditions prevailing among the people.

In the fourth chapter, Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi discussed human fecility, the nature of fecce, the differences among people in fecce, the principles to which the attainment of the second way goes back and the way of acquiring these qualities. He has discussed in detail in this chapter what happiness is, the differences among people about meditation, ideas related to joy, and ways to achieve happiness. He discussed the chapter on fortune from the perspective of Tawheed, shirk and Iman. Therefore, he addressed the reality and importance of related regulations, including namaz, fasting, hajj, and zakat. In particular, he has analyzed their mysteries and theories very well.

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi discussed the definition of righteousness and sin; preface: concerning the true nature of holiness and sin, the unity of God (*tauhid*), the true nature of associationism (*shirk*), belief in the divine attributes, predestination and worship is the right of God, may, the inner meanings of the ablution and full bath, the inner dimensions of prayer, zakat, fast, pilgrimage in the fifth chapter. He has clearly shown how sin destroys a person or society. Besides, he has discussed in detail how a virtuous or honest person enlightens society and how he understood the matters of this life and the hereafter with importance (Othman et al., 2015).

Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi's sixth chapter delved into national politics, offering insightful perspectives on governance and leadership. He structured this chapter into twenty-one sections, each exploring various facets of this crucial domain. He emphasized the vital role of "guiding communities" within a nation. These communities, likely referring to religious or intellectual leaders, serve as protectors and guardians, rallying to safeguard the people during times of danger. Dihlawi stressed the importance of these communities adhering to the principles of Islam in their entirety, setting a righteous example for the nation. This chapter also presented a comparative lens, venturing into discussions of past religions and contrasting them with Islam. He dived deep into various aspects of Islamic practices and beliefs, highlighting the significant transformations experienced during the Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic) era. Through this analysis, Dihlawi aimed to illuminate the underlying "secrets and theories" underpinning Sharia law and effective state management systems.

Shah Wali Ullah elaborated on the definition of prophetic knowledge, its types, and its importance in the seventh or last chapter of the first volume. He divided the seventh chapter into eleven sections, highlighting prophetic knowledge's definition, types, and importance. Wali Ullah also gave an enlightening discussion on the history of Hadith compilation, the Sharia differences, and opinions of the Sahabah, Tabi'een and Faqih. In the last part, he discussed *taharat* and prayer in detail. Thus, he concluded the first volume (al-Dihlawi, 1995).

The second volume of Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi's *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* explored individual and societal well-being, from personal practice to public governance. He continued to delve into diverse themes without employing formal chapter divisions, opting for individual titles for each discussion. This volume commences with examining spiritual practices, focusing on the true essence of prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. Recognizing the importance of ethical income as a foundation for accepted worship, Dihlawi then explored Islamic principles in business and earning strategies. He underscored the correlation between legitimate methods of obtaining riches and the final approval of one's spiritual deeds and prayers (Hermansen, 1988). The second volume covers family concerns in addition to individual commitment. The topics of marriage, divorce, spousal rights, and childrearing techniques are all covered in this section.

Dihlawi also guided on issues related to initiation and coming-of-age customs. As the volume goes on, societal and national problems become more apparent. He addressed essential government matters, including the caliphate, the legal system, and the application of Islamic law. The deep discussion of military strategy and other critical national issues demonstrates Dihlawi's comprehensive approach to societal well-being. Shah Wali Allah covered different everyday living practices for regular people. He established essential standards for manners, clothes, civilization, culture, etc. Finally, he closed his excellent work by emphasizing the traits of Prophet Muhammad's Companions (Pbuh) and urged them all to emulate them. Wali Allah's book *Hujjat Allah al-Balighah* effectively communicates the different teachings of Islam to contemporary Muslims.

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