

# *Towards an Objective Explanation of the Causes of Juristic Divergence in Islam*

**Wali Allah Ad-Dahlawi**

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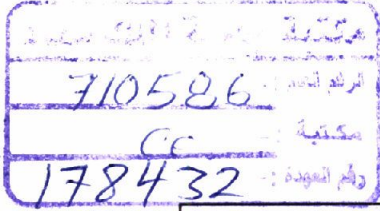


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## About the Author

“Wali Allah ad-Dahlawi”<sup>(1)</sup> Verily, the example of Sheikh Wali Allah, is comparable to a tree of blessedness; its roots at his home, while its branches extend to all houses of the Muslims.” (*Nuzhat al-Khawatir*, 6: 406).

The reformer Imam (Ahmad ibn Abd ar-Rahim), known as Shah Wali Allah ad-Dahlawi, was born in the year A.H. 1114/1702 in a province near Delhi. He died on the twenty-ninth of Muharram in the year A.H.1176/ 1763 when he was sixty-one years of age.

He was brought up in a well-known learned religious family. His father was one of the leading scholars and sufis of his time. He deserves all the credit for committing to writing *al-Fatawa al-Hindiyya*. Many of his family members have not ceased to assume the responsibility of *da'wa* (i.e., call to Islam) up to this day in the subcontinent of India.

In his book *al-Imdad fi Ma'athir al-Ajdad* he mentioned that his ancestral line goes back to Umar ibn al Khattab-may God have mercy upon him.

His time, as he described in his books, was an era of ignorance and fanaticism. People refrained from *jihad*; moreover they overlooked the leader's oppression, and there was corruption both on the level of leaders and people. Decay reached a degree that ten kings ruled in succession in the lifetime of the Imam after the death of Aurangzeb Alamgir. In a such gloomy situation, ad-Dahlawi found himself obliged to revolt and lead a religious uprising against the then current circumstances, while he seemed to say: “Possibly the truth may be sent down to you to set the world free” (sic). Henceforth he focussed on the idea of the revival of *jihad* in Islam, this is found in many of his books and assertions.

Imam Wali Allah grew up while the empire was at its peak of glory, but he witnessed the beginning<sup>(2)</sup> of its sun setting. At that time, the British succeeded in establishing the East India Company in the year 1763. Ad-Dahlawi was apprenticed of Sheikh Muhammad Afdhal as-Siyalkuti, the leader of his time in the science of *Hadith*. In the year A.H. 1142, he aimed for the Hijaz where he spent two years, during which time he was taught by numerous scholars. The most famous of them

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(1) Abridged from a book about the Imam ad-Dahlawi written by Zafar al-Islam Khan who made it possible for the publisher of the Arabic text to make a citation.

(2) *At-Tafhimat al-Ilahiyya*, 2: 120.

was Abu Tahir Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Madani, who said concerning the Imam ad-Dahlawi: "He used to take the wording of *hadith* on my authority while I used to correct the meaning from him".<sup>(3)</sup>

The teaching seat was entrusted to him in the school of his father, al-Madrasa ar-Rahimiyya, in the year 1719, the same year in which Sultan Muhammad Shah came to power in Delhi. He was a great admirer of the Imam, so he presented him with a piece of land, measured to a whole district in the region of Shahjahan to establish a school thereat.

His first work was the translation of the Holy Quran into Persian, which was then the official language of the country. His aim was to enable all Muslims to take the religious instructions from their original source, not through sheikhs (i.e., native scholars) who were creating forms of innovation under the name of religion. Thus, these scholars were furious for his actions. Moreover, they instigated the authorities against him.

Henceforth he became subject to persecution, resulting in the amputation of both his hands. This took place at the end of his life.<sup>(4)</sup> After studying Indian society, he came to the conclusion that the major calamity inflicted on Muslims was *bid'a*, (i.e., innovation) and that the community was in need of an entire purification from all heresies and pagan practices which had spread in the Muslim community as a result of mixing with the pagans, Hindus and others, for long centuries.

On the twenty-first of Dhul-Hijja, in the year A.H. 1144 (5th of May 1731), the Imam led an armed revolution to put an end to corruption.

His actual struggle started five years before, at the time when he translated the Holy Quran into Persian. Large regions in the north came under the dominance of the revolutionaries. A temporary government was announced headed by Sayyid Ahmad in the year 1826. The following had come successively to the leadership of the revolution:

- Imam Wali Allah ad-Dahlawi, 1731-1763
- Imam 'Abd al-'Aziz, 1763-1824
- Imam Muhammad Ishaq, 1824-1846

The revolution lasted from the year A.H. 1144 to the 27th of Dhul- Qa'da

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<sup>(3)</sup> *Al-Baligh al-Janiy*.

<sup>(4)</sup> This was committed by Prince Najaf Ali Khan.



A.H. 1246 (6th of May 1831). Its forces were defeated by the Sikhs in the well known battle of Balakut. The prime minister of the temporary government, Sayyid Ahmad, was martyred during that battle.

Although the revolution was suppressed by force, the movement itself remains until this day. The most important of ad-Dahlawi's<sup>(5)</sup> books is *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*. In the introduction to it, Sayyid Sabiq writes: "The book of *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha* in the secrets of the *Shari'a* and the philosophy of Islam" written by the Imam Wali Allah ad-Dahlawi, is a unique book in its field and original in its subject. Its style is magnificent, characterized by the clarity of Arabic language and the potency of diction, together with the soundness of argumentation and the clarity of the plea.

It suffices the author as an evidence of him being one of the erudite scholars of Islamic thought and rational sciences, that the books attributed to him exceeded one hundred. Those extant in the Arabic language are as follows:

- 1- *Al-Fath al-Mubin* (concerning the obscure words in the Quran)
- 2- *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha* (on the hidden meanings of *Shari'a*)
- 3- *Al-Budur al-Bazigha* (dealing with the realm of theology)
- 4- *Al-Khayr al-Kathir*
- 5- *At-Tafhimat al-Ilahiyya*
- 6- *Fuyūdh al-Haramain* (on Sufism)
- 7- *Al Musawwa fi Sharh Muwatta' Malik*
- 8- *An-Nawadir min Hadith Sayyid al-Awa'il wa -l-Awakhir*
- 9- *Al-Fadhl al-Mubin fi al-Musalsal min Hadith an-Nabiyy al-Amin*
- 10- *The Forty Hadith* (most of them were handed down on Ashraf's chains of authorities)
- 11- *Ad-Durr ath-Thamin fi Mubashshirat an-Nabiyy al-Amin*
- 12- *Al-Irshad ila Muhimmat 'Ilm al-Isfad(sic)*
- 13- *Tarajim al-Bukhari*
- 14- *Sharh Tarajim ba'dh Abwab al-Bukhari*
- 15- *Al-Insaf fi Bayan Asbab al-Ikhtilaf* (between the jurists and the mujtahidun)
- 16- *'Iqd al-Jid fi Ahkam al-Ijtihad wa-t-Taqlid*
- 17- *Al-Qawl al-Jamil* (on behavior)
- 18- *Al-Lamahat* (still in manuscript)
- 19- *Ta'wil al-Ahadith* (on the narrative of the Prophets)

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<sup>(5)</sup> Attributed to Dahli, sometimes Delhi, which is the well-known town in India.

About the Author

- 20- *As-Sirr al-Maktum fi Asbab Tadwin al-'Ulum*
- 21- *Al-Maktub al-Madini* (facts concerning *tawhid*)
- 22- *Al-Maktubat* (notes on the life of Wali Allah, collected by Sheikh al-Hafiz Muhammad Rahim ad-Dahlawi)
- 23- *Husn al-'Aqida* (an article on faith)
- 24- *Atyab an-Nagham fi Madh Sayyid al-'Arab wa al-'Ajam*
- 25- *Al-Muqaddima as-Saniyya fi Intisar al-Firqa as-Sunniyya*
- 26- *Az-Zahrawayn* (commentary on the two Suras, al-Baqara and Al 'Imran)
- 27- *Shifa' al-Qulub* (on truth and knowledge)
- 28- *Diwan ash-Shi'r al-'Arabi* (collected by his son 'Abd al-'Aziz)

In addition to this is the multitude of his works in Persian.