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The Qur'ānic Revelation and The Imaginal world: A Critical Exposition of Shah Wali Al-Allah Dihlawi's Approach to the Qur'ānic Exegesis

Abul Faiḍ Qutb al-Din Ahmad bin Abd al-Rahim al-Faruqi al-Dihlawi Al-Hindi (1702-1763), commonly known as Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi, is regarded as the most prominent Muslim thinker in the subcontinent during the 17th century. As a prolific author, he produced a vast body of work covering various fields, including philosophy, theology, Sufism, jurisprudence, and Qur'ānic exegesis. Being a scholar of Qur'ānic exegesis, he wrote the significant book *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir* (The Great Victory in the Principles of the Exegesis), which outlines the principles and foundations of interpretation of the Qur'ān. In another work titled *Ta'wil al-Ahadith fi Rumuze Qisas al-Anbiya* (Symbolic Interpretation of the Traditions about the Mysteries of Prophetic Tales), he interpreted the verses containing the stories of the prophets using a unique and innovative approach. His interpretation was based on the concept of the imaginal world (*Alam al-Mithal*), through which he proposed that many of these verses depict events that occur in the realm of dreams, rather than adhering to a realistic or historical interpretation. According to available information, this interpretive approach has not been widely accepted by later interpreters following the Dihlawi period, although similar viewpoints have been proposed in contemporary times.

In this article, I aim to provide a critical analysis of Dihlawi's exegetic approach. First, I will examine the philosophical foundations of the imaginal world in Dihlawi's metaphysics, considering its historical background among Muslim philosophers. Additionally, I will briefly explore some of his relevant exegetic principles, such as the issue of *Sabab al-Nuzul*. Next, based on the aforementioned two works, I will present my understanding of how Dihlawi employed these ideas and principles in his interpretation of the Qur'ān. This is a challenging task since a clear and detailed exposition of this approach is difficult to find, both in Dihlawi's own work and in secondary literature. In the final stage, I will critique his exegetic approach, demonstrating that, in addition to its divergence from more common methods among Muslim interpreters, it faces some fundamental problems.

Keywords:

Qur'ānic Exegesis, Imaginal World, Principles of Exegesis, Shah Wali al-Allah Dihlawi



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