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Mitigation (Takhfeef) and Facilitation (Tayseer): In the Context of Islamic Law: A Jurisprudential Study

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Abstract

Islamic law is characterized by university, inclusiveness and amplitude. It aims to preserve human necessities, dignity, freedom, and lawful interests, as well as to avoid human from hardship and discomfort by not assigning them what is unbearable and this moderate approach made humans capable of acting upon the Sharia and carrying it out on others. From here, the importance of the Principle of Ease and Removal of Hardship in Islam emerges which is also known as Mitigation or Facilitation and is discussed by the Jurists in detail. There are many factors or reasons for mitigating or dilution in the Sharia like, Travel, Illness, Ignorance, Forgetfulness, Coercion, General affliction, Weakness, and others. This aspect of religion has been tainted with some confusion, especially in the current modern era, which led to the emergence of three approaches: The first approach is a strict one that may lead to hardship. The second approach is lenient to the extent that may eliminate the legal obligations. As far as the third approach is concerned, it is the moderate one based on the sound understanding of the scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama'ah. Hence, to remove confusion and compare the Principle of Ease or Mitigation in Islamic law in the light of the moderate approach, this topic has been chosen

Key Words: Mitigation, Facilitation, Takhfeef, Tayseer, Islamic Law.

Islamic law is designed to be universal, inclusive, and accommodating, aiming to protect human necessities and prevent undue hardship. The

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Principle of Ease, or Mitigation, plays a crucial role in ensuring that religious obligations are manageable, considering factors like travel, illness, and coercion. In modern times, there is some confusion about this principle, leading to three approaches: one strict, one overly lenient, and one moderate. The moderate approach, advocated by scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wal Jama`ah, offers a balanced understanding of the Principle of Ease and Mitigation, ensuring that religious practice remains practical and fair. ¹

Introduction

Islamic law is designed to be in harmony with human nature and adapt to diverse conditions and circumstances. It aims to preserve human interests and avoid imposing undue hardship. The principles of ease and removal of difficulty are central to Islamic teachings. The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize that Allah does not burden individuals beyond their capacity, and that Islam is meant to make life easier, not harder. Jurists have developed principles like "Hardship brings ease" and "No harm and no harassment" based on these teachings to ensure that Islamic rulings align with the intent of facilitating practice and maintaining fairness. ²

Introduction to the Concept of Mitigation

Islam, chosen by Allah Almighty as the religion for His servants since the appearance of Adam and his descendants, is uniquely affirmed by divine decree: "Verily, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam..." (Quran 3:19). Throughout history, divine laws and rulings have varied across different revelations and nations, each tailored to specific contexts and times. However, the culmination of these laws came with the final message delivered by the last Messenger, Muhammad (peace be upon him), which encompassed humanity and jinn alike. This comprehensive and universal law serves as a guide for all humanity, embodying the mercy and universality articulated in the Holy Qur'an: "And We have not sent thee, O Muhammad, but as a mercy to the worlds." (Quran 21:107). In describing His Prophet and His religion of mercy, Allah Almight wanted to declare that Islam is a religion of ease, tolerance, mitigation and removal of embarrassment in all legal rulings, and not a religion of harshness and stubbornness. Therefore, we find that He has removed from this nation the pressures and shackles that were on previous nations, and this is one of the manifestations of Divine Mercy.³

Examining the legal texts of Islam reveals that the concept of mitigation is grounded in two primary types: the first emanates from the

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innate compassion of the Wise Legislator, facilitating ease and leniency for His servants. Humans naturally gravitate towards ease and gentleness, reflected in general legal norms under normal circumstances. The second type pertains to legal concessions and dispensations recognized by Sharia, accommodating individual circumstances and conditions. Islamic law aims not only to secure benefits for people but also to prevent harm, addressing both typical and exceptional situations that individuals may encounter. ⁴

While mitigation and facilitation are fundamental principles in Sharia law, their strict application without due diligence risks neglecting legal responsibilities. Conversely, excessive rigidity and caution may undermine these essential principles. Thus, it is imperative to adopt a balanced approach—the approach of moderation and gradualness espoused by the Quran and Sunnah. This ensures adherence to legal duties while mitigating undue hardship. May Allah grant me success in following the methodology of the Quran and Sunnah in this research endeavor.

Takhfeef in Islamic Law

Takhfeef (Mitigation), as understood in Islamic jurisprudence, incorporates both its linguistic roots and legal definitions. Various scholars have provided concise definitions, highlighting its application within legal frameworks. Abu Al-Faraj Abdul Rahman bin Ali Al-Jawzi⁵ interpreted mitigation as "facilitating an obligation or reducing its severity"⁶. This definition primarily addresses the linguistic aspect of mitigating obligatory provisions. Moreover, mitigation has been described as "leaving some of the matter without altering its essence"⁷. This legal definition closely mirrors its linguistic counterpart, emphasizing the preservation of the original context while easing certain aspects due to valid reasons.

In contemporary Islamic jurisprudence, the Kuwaiti Jurisprudence Encyclopedia defines mitigation as "alleviating the hardship of a legal ruling through abrogation, facilitation, reduction, or similar measures". This definition underscores mitigation's role in addressing hardship inherent in legal rulings, where adjustments such as abrogation or facilitation are employed to alleviate burdens. In forthcoming sections, the various forms and reasons for mitigation will be elaborated upon, illustrating how Islamic law provides mechanisms to reduce hardship in legal obligations. ⁹

Takhfeef Literally

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Takhfeef (Mitigation) linguistically stands in contrast to burdening, as reflected in the divine saying: "This is an mitigation from your Lord and a mercy..." (Quran 2:178). The term "Mitigation" denotes reducing a load to alleviate its burden, and easing hardship. As Allah Almighty states: "Allah intends to ease your burden, for mankind is created weak." (Quran 4:28). Mitigation, fundamentally expressed by the Arabic term "khifafa" signifies making something light or easier, whether physically or morally. Allah's command to "go forth light and heavy" (Quran 9:41) encompasses both those in comfort and those facing adversity, implying ease or difficulty in movement.In the Hadith of Ataa', the instruction to "prostrate lightly and calmly" advises against burdening oneself unnecessarily during prayer. Thus, something becomes lighter as its weight diminishes, akin to rain easing as it abates 10.

In essence, mitigation in language diminishes hardship and lightens the load until it becomes more manageable, characterized by ease and simplicity in execution.

Tayseer Literally

The concept of "Tayseer" derives from the Arabic verb "yusur," which connotes softness, ease, spaciousness, and richness. It gives rise to "yusr," signifying ease and permissiveness as opposed to difficulty and strictness. It is said to be "yusr," indicating something light and easy to follow, simple and manageable. Ease stands in contrast to hardship, implying facilitation, expansiveness, and conciliation. Allah Almighty states in the Quran: "And we have certainly made the Qur'an easy for remembrance. Is there anyone who will remember it?"(Quran 54:17). Means that emphasizing the Quran's accessibility for recitation and learning, applicable in both favorable and challenging circumstances¹¹.

Linguistically, "Tayseer" involves easing and creating softness and spaciousness in something, removing strictness and difficulty from it. It is akin to Takhfeef but Takhfeef appears more comprehensive, encompassing facilitation and reduction, whereas Tayseer specifically pertains to making things easier.

Tayseer in Islamic Law

The concept of Tayseer in Sharia closely aligns with its linguistic meaning, as highlighted in the Encyclopedia of Jurisprudence which states, "Tayseer in jurisprudential terminology maintains consistency with its linguistic counterpart" ¹². Scholars have identified Tayseer alongside related terms such as permission, expansion, removal of hardship, and

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mediation. For instance, the definition of mitigation encompasses facilitation and the mitigation of hardship, ensuring that legal rulings accommodate normal human capabilities and consider emergency situations with specific, mitigating measures. Scholars define Tayseer as "structuring legal orders in a manner that allows compliance without difficulty or embarrassment" ¹³.

Additionally, it is described as "applying legal rulings in accordance with ordinary human capacity, while addressing emergency and exceptional circumstances through specific, mitigating provisions" ¹⁴.

Terminologically, "Yusr" entails applying legal rulings moderately, adhering to the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), without undue strictness that prohibits what is permissible, nor laxity that permits what is forbidden"¹⁵.

These definitions underscore the interconnected nature of facilitation, tolerance, removal of embarrassment, and moderation within Islamic legal discourse. Given their interrelatedness, presenting their concepts collectively enhances clarity and coherence in understanding their application.

Evidence of Mitigation and Facilitation in Islamic Law From the Holy Qur'an

The principle of Taysir in Islamic jurisprudence emphasizes ease and facilitation, rooted in the Qur'an. A key verse from Surah Al-Baqarah (2:185) highlights Allah's intent for ease rather than hardship, particularly in the context of fasting. This principle is broadly applicable across Islamic law, reflecting Allah's desire to make religious practices manageable. Islamic scholars like Al-Shawkani and Muhammad Rashid bin Ali Reda have affirmed that the core of this principle is to mitigate difficulties and promote ease, encapsulated in the maxim "hardship brings ease." ¹⁶

Mitigation and Facilitation from the Sunnah

Numerous hadiths illustrate the principle of ease in Islamic jurisprudence, demonstrating Sharia's tolerant nature and avoidance of undue hardship. One such hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah highlights the Prophet Muhammad's guidance on this principle: he said that religion is meant to be easy and that those who try to make it hard will find themselves overwhelmed. He encouraged his followers to fulfill their religious duties to the best of their ability and seek help at various times of

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the day. This reflects the practical and compassionate approach of Islam in accommodating the needs and capabilities of its adherents. ¹⁷

This hadith highlights that religion is inherently easy, advocating against hardship and severity. It admonishes against imposing deeds and acts of worship that exceed one's capacity or entail excessive difficulty. Instead, it encourages adherence to actions that are manageable and sustainable. The Prophet's instruction emphasizes the importance of ease and moderation in practicing religion, urging believers to approach their obligations with gentleness and ease. ¹⁸

Narrated by Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, he reported: "It was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, which religion is most beloved to Allah?' He replied, 'The tolerant Hanifiyyah.' This denotes a religion that is gentle and easy, free from burdens and constraints upon those who are accountable. It is the religion of Islam, distinct from all other religions. Variations of this narration are closely related in their transmission chains, such as 'I was sent with the tolerant Hanifiyyah ' and 'The most beloved religion to Allah is the tolerant Hanifiyyah.' The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, also said, 'So that the Jews may know that there is room in our religion. Indeed, I have been sent with a lenient Hanafiyyah.' Imam al-Bukhari included this hadith in his Sahih under the chapter 'Religion is easy."

Facilitating the Implementation of Legal Duties

Islam is a comprehensive system that addresses all aspects of human life, yet it ensures that its duties are affordable and easy to implement. It is distinguished by the simplicity and suitability of its provisions, always considering the capabilities of those responsible. Allah Almighty states, "Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity" and "Allah desires to make light of it for you." Recognizing human weakness, Islam's universal and permanent law was intended to be implemented in an easy and convenient manner, free from obstinacy, hardship, and severity, unlike previous laws which were stricter. Islam aims to alleviate hardship and facilitate ease, as highlighted in the verse, "He enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong, makes lawful for them the good things, and forbids them the bad things, and He relieves them of their burden and the shackles that were upon them." Consequently, all legal rulings in Islam are designed to be easy and practical for everyone to perform.

Islam also encourages ease in worship and discourages excessive burdening of oneself. The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said,

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"Take on deeds as much as you can, for God does not tire until you tire." Anas bin Malik (may God be pleased with him) narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) entered the mosque and saw a rope stretched between two pillars. He inquired about it and was told, "This is Zainab's rope; if she feels weak, she holds onto it." The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Untie it. Let one of you pray when he is active, and if he becomes weak, let him sit down." This hadith emphasizes the importance of not overburdening oneself in worship.

Importance of Concessions and Their Place in Sharia

Previously, we have examined the linguistic and idiomatic definitions of concessions. Concessions (rukhsah) in Sharia are intended to ease hardships and are typically contrasted with 'azimah, which are the confirmed and general rulings intended by Islamic law from the outset. Concessions are legitimate allowances made in response to specific situations or excuses while maintaining the original ruling as the primary intention. They are thus considered partial and incidental adjustments to the general ruling.

The purpose of legislating concessions is to facilitate ease and relieve the community from undue hardship. As stated in "Al-Hidaya" when explaining the basics for beginners: "It is not permissible to wipe over the turban, the hood, the burqa, and the gloves, because there is no harm in removing these things, and the permission is to avoid hardship." Additionally, Al-Dabusi defined a concession as "a permission after a prohibition due to an excuse to facilitate."

The Reason for the Legal Concession

The legal concession was legislated specifically to address the hardship experienced by individuals. The legislator considered hardship a valid reason for granting concessions and mitigation. The hardship stipulated by law to qualify for a concession is considered even if the hardship is not fully realized in practice. This is because hardship is a legal and contextual matter that varies from person to person, case to case, and place to place. What might be considered hardship by some may not be viewed the same way by others. For instance, a strong person may endure tasks such as cutting blades or undergoing pedicures without discomfort and can perform acts of worship perfectly and on time. Conversely, another person might find these tasks burdensome. Similarly, people's tolerance for hunger and thirst varies, as does their courage or cowardice, and their position or circumstances. Kings and leaders, for example, experience different levels of

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hardship while traveling compared to their subjects due to their different resources, comfort provisions, and support systems. Hardship in summer with long days differs from hardship in winter with shorter days. Traveling by modern means such as planes, cars, or boats presents different challenges compared to riding camels or traveling by horse for extended periods. The degree of hardship also varies for patients depending on the type of illness, their physical condition, and available treatments. Thus, hardships warranting concessions vary according to individual circumstances and there is no fixed standard for them. In most cases, Sharia law recognizes travel as a reason for concessions due to the inherent burden it represents. ²¹

Conclusion:

Islamic law is designed to align with human nature and accommodate diverse conditions across the globe, ensuring that its rules are practical and accessible. The Qur'an and Hadith emphasize the principle of ease and the avoidance of hardship in religious practice. Key Qur'anic verses affirm that Allah does not burden individuals beyond their capacity and intends ease rather than difficulty. Similarly, Hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad stress that religion should be approached with ease, not overburdening, and that people should seek practical ways to fulfill their religious duties. Jurists have developed legal principles based on these texts, such as "hardship brings ease" and "no harm and no harassment," to ensure that Sharia remains practical and considerate of human limitations.

Note & Resources:

¹ - The Kuwaiti Fiqh Encyclopedia, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs - Kuwait, 2nd edition, Dar Al-Salasel, Kuwait, 1408 AH, vol. 14, p. 211.

² - Abdul Rahman bin Saleh al-Abd al-Latif, "Al-Qawa'id wa Al-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah Al-Mutadammina lil-Tayseer", Deanship of Scientific Research at the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, 1st edition, 1423 AH / 2003 AD, vol. 1, p. 44.

³ - The Kuwaiti Fiqh Encyclopedia, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs - Kuwait, 2nd edition, Dar Al-Salasel, Kuwait, 1408 AH, vol. 14, p. 211.

⁴ - Abdul Rahman bin Saleh al-Abd al-Latif, "Al-Qawa'id wa Al-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah Al-Mutadammina lil-Tayseer", Deanship of Scientific Research at the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, 1st edition, 1423 AH / 2003 AD, vol. 1, p. 44.

⁵: He is Abu al-Faraj Abdul Rahman bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Ubaidullah bin Hamadi al-Qurashi al-Baghdadi, known as Ibn al-Jawzi, born in 510 AH and died in 597 AH / 1201 AD. He was one of the most prominent Muslim scholars in the Abbasid era. Known for being a hadith scholar, Hanbali jurist, historian, litterateur,

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and commentator, he authored numerous works in various Islamic sciences, including "Zad al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir", "Al-Muntazam fi al-Tarikh", and "Al-Mawdu'at". He excelled in the art of preaching, a field he pioneered. He passed away on the night of Friday, the 12th of Ramadan 597 AH, and was buried at Bab Harb. His title "al-Jawzi" refers to a walnut tree in his ancestor's house in Wasit. Refer to:

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- ⁶: Jamal al-Din, Abu al-Faraj, Abdul Rahman bin Ali bin Muhammad al-Jawzi (d. 597 AH), "Zad al-Masir fi 'Ilm al-Tafsir", edited by Abdul Razzaq al-Mahdi, Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, Beirut, 1st edition, 1422 AH, vol. 1, p. 395.
- ⁷: Muhammad Rawas Qalaji, "Mu'jam Lughah al-Fuqaha", Dar al-Nafaes, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd edition, 1408 AH 1988 AD, p. 125.
- ⁸: The Kuwaiti Fiqh Encyclopedia, Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Kuwait, 2nd edition, Dar Al-Salasel, Kuwait, 1408 AH, vol. 14, p. 211.
- ⁹ Abdul Rahman bin Saleh al-Abd al-Latif, "Al-Qawa'id wa Al-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah Al-Mutadammina lil-Tayseer", Deanship of Scientific Research at the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, 1st edition, 1423 AH / 2003 AD, vol. 1, p. 44.
- 10 : See: Abu al-Husayn, Ahmad bin Faris bin Zakariya al-Qazwini al-Razi, "Maqayis al-Lugha", edited by Abdul Salam Muhammad Harun, Dar al-Fikr, 1399 AH 1979 AD, vol. 2, p. 154.
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Al-Zubaidi, "Taj al-Arus", vol. 14, p. 456 and onwards.

- 12: The Kuwaiti Fiqh Encyclopedia, previous reference, same page.
- ¹³: Abdul Rahman bin Saleh al-Abd al-Latif, "Al-Qawa'id wa Al-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah Al-Mutadammina lil-Tayseer", Deanship of Scientific Research at the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, 1st edition, 1423 AH / 2003 AD, vol. 1, p. 44.
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²⁰: Sahih al-Bukhari, the same reference above.

²¹ - Abdul Rahman bin Saleh al-Abd al-Latif, "Al-Qawa'id wa Al-Dawabit Al-Fiqhiyah Al-Mutadammina lil-Tayseer", Deanship of Scientific Research at the Islamic University, Madinah, Saudi Arabia, 1st edition, 1423 AH / 2003 AD, vol. 1, p. 44.