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**(lawlā) لولا The Translation of  
and لوما (lawmā) in the Glorious Qur'an  
into English**

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**Discussion:**

Lawlā and lawmā are two Arabic complex particles consisting of the conditional particle لو (law) 'if' followed by لا (lā) for the first and ما (mā) for the second; both meaning 'not'. This gives the new meanings of (if not; except for; were it not for; had it not been for) to both complex particles (Hasan, 1974: 512). However, these two particles have meanings and functions other than what is indicated by their forms they include. The following discussion tackles these particles in detail.

**1- Lawlā** to Kharma and Hajjaj (1989:141), is the negative form of لو /law/ 'if', consisting of لو /law/ 'if' followed by لا /lā/ 'not'. It is considered a complex particle by Sibawayhi (cited in Al-Asmar, 2005:254), while other scholars consider it simple in that its constituents cannot be used separately to give the same meaning, and the second constituent لا /lā/, cannot have variable forms for number and gender as can the particle حبذا /habbaḏā/ 'how nice/lovely!' whose second part ذا /ḏā/ can change according to number and gender (Al-Asmar,2005:254).

Arab scholars have paid more attention to the study of lawlā than lawmā, perhaps because the latter has more restricted use in standard Arabic; in the Glorious Qur'an it is used only once. Therefore, the major part of this paper will be devoted to studying and analyzing the meanings and functions of lawlā both in the theoretical and practical sections; lawmā will be tackled when

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dealing with its single occurrence mentioned above in the same order.

**1.1 Lawlā as حرف امتناع لوجود** (a particle of nonfulfillment of consequence due to the existence of antecedent). This function of lawlā is that of condition (Babiti, 2004: 896). It has the meaning of hypothetical clauses and thus it can be equivalent to 'if+ it+ had not+ been for' 'had+ it+ not+ been+ for' and 'but for', usually with a subject embedded within the construction (see Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989: 141).

In the following example:

لولا زيدٌ لمات عمرو (Had it not been for/ were it not for Zayd, Amr would have died) the hypothetical meaning lies in the time reference (past) introduced by lawlā.

The non-fulfillment of the action described by the verb مات in the consequence clause is due to the existence of an antecedent in the lawlā clause 'Had it not been for'..... which prevented Amr's death (Al-Muttaliby, 1986: 126). In this regard, Al-Asmar (2005: 255) maintains that lawlā is interpreted in accordance with the type of sentences it is used in. If it is followed by (an) affirmative clause(s), it is interpreted as حرف امتناع لوجب (a particle with an antecedent causing the non-fulfillment of the consequent). In this case the consequence clause is preceded by the particle ل/la/ as in:

لولا زيد لأحسنت اليك (Were it not for Zayd, I would have been kind to you). Nevertheless, the lawlā clause can be followed by a negated form of the clause of consequence usually preceded by the negative particle ما (mā) as in the following verse:

لولا مفارقة الاحباب ما وجدت لها المنيا الى ارواحنا سبلا

(Were it not for parting with the beloved ones,

Death would not have way to our souls) (Hasan 1974: vol.iv: 480)

It is to be noted that in the two above – mentioned cases لولا is followed by a noun (mainly in the nominative case and a perfect verb preceded by ل/la/ meaning: would, could,...etc). It can also be followed by a pronoun as in لولاه /lawlāhu/ 'were it not for **him**'. However, the consequence clause is sometimes omitted when the context implies its existence as in the following 'aya: ولولا فضل الله 'And had it not been for the (النور: ١٠)

Grace of Allah and His Mercy on you (He would have hastened the punishment upon you)! And that Allah is the One Who accepts repentance, the All-Wise (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 226). Here the consequence clause 'لعاجلكم بالعقوبة على معاصيكم' 'He would have hastened the punishment upon you (Ibid)' is omitted as it can be understood from the context (Al-Tabariy, 2001: vol.17: 188; Babiti, 2004: 896).

**1.2** The second function of lawlā is التحضيض (urging). It is usually followed by a verb in the imperfect as in لولا ينههم الربنيون والاحبار (المائدة من الآية ٦٣) 'Why do not the rabbis and the religious learned men forbid them from uttering sinful words and from eating illegal things. Evil indeed is that which they have been performing' (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 69; Al-Tabariy, 2001: vol. V: 529; Al- Asmar, 2005: 255). It can be followed by a perfect verb with the meaning of the imperfect وانفقوا مما رزقناكم من قبل ان يأتي احدكم الموت فيقول ربّ لولا (المنافقون ١٠) 'And spend (in charity) of that with which We have provided you, before death comes to one of you and he says: "My Lord! If only You would give me respite for a little while (i.e. return to the worldly life), then I should give Sadaqah (i.e. Zakat) of my wealth , and be among the righteous i.e. perform Hajj (pilgrimage to Makkah) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996: 555) The consequence clause is followed by الفاء السببية (fā' of consequence) in this case, or by an object of an imperfect verb denoted by an explicit verb as in لولا ابويكم ترحمون (المائدة من الآية ٦٣) 'If only you be compassionate with your parents'. In the examples above, urging involves the meaning of gentle request as in the 'aya (المائدة من الآية ٦٣) or forceful command; that is, the addressee has to fulfill what he is asked to do as in the example in the 'aya of 'المنافقون ١٠'.

**1.3** Lawlā also functions in a context of reproach (التوبيخ). In this case, it is followed by a perfect verb as in the glorious aya لولا جاءوا (النور ١٣) (Why did they not produce four witnesses?) (Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996: 351). It can be also followed by an object of an elliptical perfect verb denoted by an explicit verb as in لولا المجتهد كفاؤه (lit.: Had you the hard-working rewarded' = You should have rewarded the hard-working) (see Hasan, 1974: 514).

1.4 lawlā can function as an interrogative device and, in this case, it has the meaning of request as in لولا أعطيتني الكتاب فأقرأه which is interpreted as 'would/could you give me the book so that I read it?'

Another example is the glorious 'aya رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (المنافقون ١٠) My Lord! If only You would give me respite for a little while - i.e. return to the worldly life - then I should give Sadaqah 'i.e. Zakat' of my wealth , and be among the righteous 'i.e. perform Hajj' which means pilgrimage to Makkah' (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 555). Being a request, it can be put as 'My Lord! Would You give me respite?' (see Babiti, 2004: 898). Another meaning of lawlā in this case is also reproach as in the 'aya وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُونَ (الانعام ٨) 'Why has not an angel been sent down to him? Had We sent down an angel, the matter would have been judged at once, and no respite would be granted to them' (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 128). As can be noted here, lawlā is followed by a perfect verb in the first clause, and by the 'ف' fa' of consequence in the consequence clause.

٢ **Lawmā:** Grammarians agree that lawmā has the same meanings and functions of lawlā. However, some of them restrict its function to التحريض (urging) and consider it of the interrogative type (Al-Asmar, 2005: 258) as in the following glorious 'aya لَوْ مَا (الحجر ٧) تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (Why do you not bring angels to us if you are of the truthful ones?) (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 262)

### **Analysis:**

On the following pages, some glorious 'ayas including lawlā, and one 'aya – the only one including lawmā – as revealed in the Glorious Qur'ān will be tackled. Each 'aya will be explained following interpretations of reliable exegetes. Then three translations into English will be analyzed in order to see whether their respective translators are successful or not in transferring the meanings and functions of the above – mentioned two particles into English. The translators are: Al-Hilali& Khan (1996), Shakir (1982) and Rodwell (2001) referred to as translators 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

### **SL Text 1**



وقال الذين كفروا لن نؤمن بهذا القرآن ولا بالذي بين يديه ولو ترى اذ الظالمون موقوفون عند ربهم يرجع بعضهم الى بعض القول يقول الذين استضعفوا للذين استكبروا لولا انتم لكانا مؤمنين (سورة سبا: الآية ٣٠) .

### Interpretation

This glorious 'aya talks about disbelievers on the Day of Judgement. The weaker group of them, feeling the awe of the situation they are in and fearing the punishment they deserve for their wrong doing, blame their superiors in earthly life for their straying off the right path. They say to them that they (the rich and superiors) were the cause of their disbelief in Allah and his truthful message (Islam) (Al-Tabari, 2000: vol xx: 406)

### TL Texts:

١- And those who disbelieve say: "We believe not in this Quran nor in that which was before it," but if you could see when the Zalimoon (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.) will be made to stand before their Lord, how they will cast the (blaming) word one to another! Those who were deemed weak will say to those who were arrogant: "Had it not been for you, we should certainly have been believers"!( Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 289)

٢- in that which is before it; and could you see when the unjust shall be made to stand before their Lord, bandying words one with another! Those who were reckoned weak shall say to those who were proud: Had it not been for you we would certainly have been believers (Shakir, 1982, 210)

٣- The unbelievers say, 'We will not believe in this Koran, nor in the Books which preceded it.' But couldst thou see when the wicked shall be set before their Lord! With reproaches will they answer one another. The weak shall say to the mighty ones, 'But for you we had been believers' (Rodwell, 2001: 286)

### Discussion:

In this glorious ' aya, the function of lawlā is that of reproach; one of the functions involving hypothetical meaning حرف امتناع لوجود. This function is evident in two clauses: لولا انتم لكانا مؤمنين. The first starts with lawla 'were it not for' and 'had it not been for' – followed by the subject انتم 'you'. This clause is followed by the consequence clause لكانا مؤمنين initiated by the consequence particle ل /la/: 'we would have been believers'.

Examining the renditions of the three translators above, one can clearly see that they all realized the meaning and function of lawlā in this glorious 'aya; the hypothetical meaning expressed in the consequence clause (certainly those disbelievers remained astray). Using this structure shows that they are reproaching their superiors who, as they say, are the cause of their going astray. To note, translators 1 and 2 used the same structure of 'had it not been' as equivalent to lawlā while translator 3 used 'but for' instead.

#### **SL Text 2:**

"قلولا أنه كان من المسبحين للبت في بطنه الى يوم يبعثون"(سورة الصافات: الآية  
(١٤٣

#### **Interpretation:**

This glorious 'aya talk of prophet Yunus (Jonah) who got despondent of Allah's Mercy and Help to convert his people to the right path. He was swallowed by the whale and he stayed in his stomach for some time. Allah Almighty forgave him after that and ended his ordeal because he was a righteous worshipper and glorifier of Allah. Otherwise, he would have remained inside the whale till the Day of Resurrection (Al-Tabariy, 2000, vol xxi: 108)

#### **TL Texts**

1- Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, He would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 307).

2- But had it not been that he was of those who glorify [Us], he would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised (Shakir, 1982: 218)

3- But had he not been of those who praise us , In its belly had he surely remained, till the day of resurrection?(Rodwell, 2001: 301)

#### **Discussion**

This glorious 'aya consists of two clauses. The first one starts with the particle لولا that initiates cause and effect relation: 'Yunus being a glorifying servant of Allah' is the clause. The second clause is the consequence clause beginning with the particle لَ /lə/ that introduces the effect 'he would remain inside the whale where the verb لبثَ (remained) is in the perfect indicating future in the past. In

the sense adopted in this paper this is a hypothetical sentence of the type where lawlā is حرف امتناع لوجود.

When one investigates the three renderings above, one can note that the hypothetical sense of cause and effect has been retained by the three translators, yet some stylistic preferences have been observed. Translators 1 used an unmarked style in both clauses: " Had he not been of them who glorify Allah, He would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection". Translator 2 deferred the object of lawlā (he) putting it after 'that' of the subordinate 'that clause' and using the dummy 'it' after 'had'. This resulted in two subordinate clauses. As for the consequence clause, there is not much difference between the first two renderings.

Looking at the consequence clause in rendering 3, one can obviously see that the translator thematized the prepositional phrase 'in its belly' which necessitated another marked structure through inversion in the verb phrase, hence: 'had he'. Fronting the prepositional phrase emphasizes 'the belly of the whale' while in the SL text emphasis is on لبث 'remained/tarried' which is the new information, as Prophet Yunus being inside the whale's belly is given information and need not be fronted.

### SL Text 3

" قال يقوم لم تستعجلون بالسينة قبل الحسنة لولا تستغفرون الله لعلمكم ترحمون "

(سورة النمل: الآية ٤٦)

### Interpretation:

In this 'aya, the Messenger of Allah (Salih) asks his people "why do you want to see first the torment prepared for disbelievers before you see the good (Allah's Mercy) promised to those God-fearing believers." This is followed by another question: "Why do not you ask Allah's forgiveness so that you may get His Mercy?" (Al-Tabariy, 2000, vol.xix: 476; Al-Baydawi, 1418 A.H., vol.iv: 162)

### TL Texts

1- He said: "O my people! Why do you seek to hasten the evil (torment) before the good (Allah's Mercy)?Why seek you not the

Forgiveness of Allah, that you may receive mercy?" (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 252).

2- He said: O my people! why do you seek to hasten on the evil before the good? Why do you not ask forgiveness of Allah so that you may be dealt with mercifully? (Shakir, 1982: 182)

3- He said, 'O my people, why, if ye ask not pardon of God that ye may find mercy, hasten ye on evil rather than good? (Rodwell, 2001: 252)

### **Discussion:**

The part of this glorious 'aya beginning with lawlā consists of two clauses: لولا تستغفرون الله 'if you seek Allah's forgiveness' and لعلمكم ترحمون 'so that you may receive mercy'. The function expressed in the above-mentioned two clauses is that of 'rebuke' that can be interpreted in terms of cause-effect meaning as their forms show. Yet, according to Arab grammarians as well as exegetes, this part of the aya, just as the part preceding it, involves a question that expresses rebuke and urging. (see Al-Asmar, 2005: 256). It is to be noted here that the verb after لولا is in the imperfect because it refers to the present تستغفرون 'ask for forgiveness' as well as the future.

Checking the renderings of this part of the 'aya, one can see that translators 1 and 2 rightfully expressed the sense of rebuke and urging using the interrogative wh- type of questions (why) 'why seek you not the forgiveness of Allah' and 'why do you not ask forgiveness of Allah'. These two clauses are followed by the consequence clauses beginning with 'that' in the first rendering, and 'so that' in the second, thus: 'that you may receive mercy' and 'so that you may be dealt with mercifully' respectively.

Moving to the third rendering , one can note that the translator has used a different syntactic order in the whole 'aya making it one compound complex sentence with embedded structures. First, he used 'why' as a parenthetical wh-question between two commas. Second, he used two subordinate clauses; the first being a conditional 'if you ask not pardon of God' and the second a 'that' clause 'that ye may find mercy'. These two

subordinate clauses are then followed by the main clause, 'hasten ye on evil rather than good' which is followed by a question mark.

Doing this, this translator has distanced the interrogative 'why' from the main clause 'hasten you.....?' More importantly, functionally speaking, lawlā has shifted from its original position in the SL text before تستغفرون الله 'you ask Allah's forgiveness....' thus changing the status of this part from the interrogative into a conditional construction 'if you ask not pardon of God....' Also, as evident, the function of rebuke and urging has been lost consequently.

#### SL text 4

"ولولا فضل الله عليكم ورحمته وإن الله تواب حكيم" (سورة النور: الآية ١٠)

#### Interpretation

In this glorious 'aya, Almighty Allah addresses humans and reminds them of His Mercy and Forgiveness He bestows upon them despite their wrong doing. Almighty Allah is most compassionate, most merciful and most Wise. Therefore, humans should be thankful to Allah and must adhere to good deeds and avoid going astray, otherwise, as implicitly inferred in this 'aya, they will be severely punished in earthly life and in the hereafter (Altabariy, 2000, vol.xvii: 188).

#### TL Texts

1- And had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy on you (He would have hastened the punishment upon you)! And that Allah is the One Who accepts repentance, the All-Wise (Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 226).

2- And were it not for Allah's grace upon you and His mercy-- and that Allah is Oft-returning [to mercy], Wise! (Shakir, 1982: 169).

3- And but for the goodness and mercy of God towards you, and that God who He loveth to turn , Wise...! (Rodwell,2001: 230)

#### Discussions

In this glorious 'aya, which is of the type حرف امتناع لوجود, there is no clause of consequence. It begins with lawlā 'were it not' followed by the subject فضل الله عليكم 'the Grace of Allah on you' to which is conjoined the noun phrase رحمته His Mercy by the conjunct واو (waw). The clause of consequence is implied: 'لعاجلكم'

'بالعقوبة على معاصيكم' (Al-Tabariy, 2000, vol.xvii: 188) 'He would have hastened the punishment upon you' which can be inferred from the context of the 'aya.

Looking at the TL texts, one can note that translators 2 and 3 committed themselves to the SL form mentioning only the two clauses of condition 'were it not for Allah's grace, ...and that Allah is oft-returning [to mercy]...' by translator 2, and 'but for the goodness and mercy of God...and that God who He loveth to turn...' by translator 3. To speakers of English, this construction is difficult as it does not give the implied meaning of consequence: the cause-effect relationship. Translators 1, however, accurately added the implied clause of consequence between brackets, thus providing the complete meaning of the 'aya that can be easily understood by English readers.

#### **SL Text 5**

"لوما تأتينا بالملئكة إن كنت من الصادقين" (سورة الحجر: الآية ٧)

#### **Interpretation**

In this glorious 'aya, the only one involving the particle lawmā in the Glorious Qur'an, the polytheists disbelieve that the Qur'an was revealed to the prophet (P.B.U.H.). So, they ask him to bring angels to them to see and then believe in his message, as they claim. (Al-Tabariy, vol.xvii: 66; Al-Zamakhshariy, 1407 A.H., vol.ii: 571)

#### **TL Texts**

- 1- Why do you not bring angels to us if you are of the truthful ones?  
(Al-Hilali& Khan, 1996: 157)
- 2- Why do you not bring to us the angels if you are of the truthful ones? (Shakir, 1982: 117)
- 3- Wouldst thou not have come to us with the angels, if wert of those who assert the truth? (Rodwell, 2001: 167)

#### **Discussion**

التحضيض (lawma) in this glorious 'aya has the function of (urging) and described in terms of امتناع لوجود 'the non-fulfillment of a consequence with the existence of antecedent'. The antecedent here is the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) which the polytheists deny, while the non-fulfilled is bringing the angels

before those polytheists. The verb after لوما is imperfect while the second clause begins with the conditional إِنْ 'if' followed by a verb in the perfect, yet it denotes the present. Arab grammarians agree that التحضيض 'urging' in this aya has the meaning of a question (Al-Asmar, 2005: 258 ;Al-Zamakhshariy, 1407 A.H.: vol.ii: 571).

If one examines the translations, one could discern the sense of التحضيض 'urging' through the queries expressed by the wh-question by translators 1and 2 followed by the conditional clause 'if you are of the truthful ones', in both renderings. Translator 3 used the archaic form of interrogative 'wouldst thou not have followed by a conditional clause also including the archaic 'thou art'. This rendering lacks the sense of urging and includes a stronger sense of dis- belief.

### **Conclusion:**

The theoretical and practical parts of this paper show that lawlā and lawmā have different meanings and functions in accordance with the contexts they are used in. This poses difficulties for translators who fail sometimes to recognize that the form is not the sole indication of meaning. This occurs in 'ayas whose form is that of conditional in the affirmative, yet their meaning is interrogative. In some cases the translators do not understand the implied meaning due to the absence of some linguistic forms. Also, changing the order between and within the antecedent and consequent clauses can be detrimental to the meanings and functions of the 'ayas concerned. All this can lead to difficulties in understanding the intended meaning expressed by lawlā and lawmā on the part of English speaking readers.

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ترجمة "لولا" و "لوما" في القرآن الكريم الى اللغة الانكليزية

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#### المستخلص

هذا البحث محاولة لدراسة الاداتين "لولا" و "لوما" في اللغة العربية حيث يتناول وظائفهما في الجملة العربية طبقا للسياق اللغوي ومقتضى الحال اللذين تستخدمان فيهما. ويتم التركيز في هذا الخصوص بصورة رئيسة على استخدام "لولا"، وعلى نحو اقل مرادفتها "لوما" في القرآن الكريم حيث تتحقق باستخدامهما معاني ووظائف مختلفة. ثمة أمر هام آخر يُعنى به البحث يتمثل في كيفية ترجمة هاتين الأداتين الى اللغة الانكليزية من قبل بعض مترجمي القرآن الكريم لغرض تبيان ما تقدموا به من ترجمة من عدمه قدر تعلق الامر بمعاني ووظائف الاداتين عينهما.

يفترض البحث ان معاني ووظائف "لولا" من ناحية، و"لوما" من ناحية اخرى متداخلة بعضها مع بعض، ويفترض أن هذا التداخل يؤدي الى ظهور صعوبات جمة لدى ترجمة كل منهما. اما الاجراء المتبع في هذا البحث، بما فيه جمع البيانات، فيتضمن انتقاء خمس آيات من القرآن الكريم تشتمل على الأداتين "لولا" و "لوما" حيث تتم دراستهما استنادا الى تفاسير تقدم بها مفسرون ثقة. يلي ذلك دراسة ثلاث ترجمات لآيات تشتمل على الأداتين المذكورتين أنفا كي يتم التحقق من نجاح المترجمين في ادراك معاني ووظائف هاتين الأداتين من عدمه.