

# The Quranic Hermeneutics: Unity in Text, Diversity in Interpretation

Ali Muhammad Bhat<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dept. of Islamic Studies,  
Islamic University of Science and Technology Awantipora 192122, Jammu and Kashmir, INDIA

\*Corresponding Author: [alimohd1265@gmail.com](mailto:alimohd1265@gmail.com)  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/jqsr.2025.06.01.004>

## Article Info

Received: 14 April 2025  
Accepted: 23 June 2025  
Available online: 30 June 2025

## Keywords

Interpretation, translation,  
ideological bias, linguistic  
differences, realism

## Abstract

The Quran, revealed in Arabic, stands as the foundational religious scripture and the principal source of guidance for all of humanity, particularly for Muslims across the globe. Its language embodies both classical eloquence and colloquial resonance. As the primary medium of religious and intellectual discourse, Arabic exerted a far-reaching influence, prompting individuals worldwide to engage with divine revelation. Many were driven to understand the Quran's deeper meanings and the context of its revelation through learning its original language. However, for the vast majority across different regions and linguistic backgrounds, mastering Arabic was not feasible. This gave rise to a pressing need to translate the Quran into various native languages, aiming to make its message comprehensible to broader audiences. In numerous instances, translations and interpretations were manipulated to align with specific agendas, leading to distortions, misinterpretations, and widespread skepticism. Therefore, a critical exploration of Quranic translation is essential, not only to understand its historical and linguistic challenges but also to identify effective strategies for preserving the integrity of the message.

## 1. Introduction

The processes of translation and interpretation function as essential tools for understanding the intellectual frameworks, belief systems, and worldviews of diverse religions and cultures. Each act of translation or interpretation is underpinned by specific aims and intentions, reflecting the translator's objectives and contextual motivations. A comprehensive examination of these processes reveals the underlying efforts and driving forces behind various translational and interpretive choices. George Steiner (2000) in his hermeneutic theory of translation, emphasizes that translating a text from one language to another requires more than linguistic substitution it demands a deep interpretive engagement with the source material. Translators must consider the cultural, historical, and contextual subtleties embedded in the original text. This interpretive process, rooted in hermeneutic principles, is fundamental to conveying the author's intended message accurately and meaningfully within a different linguistic and cultural framework. Such methodology elaborates these concepts and perspectives for a better understanding of the Quranic objectives. The concept of translation, along with the historical trajectory of Quranic interpretation and its perceived necessity by various scholars and intellectual traditions, warrants a thorough critical examination. To address these objectives, the study further investigates the methodological framework proposed by Shah Waliullah, who formulated a set of principles governing translation and interpretation aimed at clarifying the underlying cause-and-effect dynamics inherent in the process. Ultimately, the paper presents a series of concluding recommendations intended to guide future efforts in ensuring accurate and meaningful translation and interpretation of the Quranic text.

## 2. Literature Review

The Qur'an's unique and factual attributes remain undisputed among translators. As the earliest and most influential text in the Arabic language, it has set an enduring benchmark for literary excellence. Yet its significance extends far beyond linguistic mastery; it is revered as a sacred text and is widely acknowledged by literary scholars for its unparalleled creative and rhetorical power. The act of translating the Qur'an has provoked a spectrum of responses, shaped largely by divergent interpretations of its verses. Therefore, a nuanced understanding of the principles of translation and interpretation is vital for engaging meaningfully with the ontological perspectives adopted by various translators and interpreters.

Translation serves as a vital technique for conveying meaning across linguistic boundaries, enabling the transmission of philosophies, ideas, concepts, and theoretical frameworks embedded in the source language. It plays a pivotal role in fostering effective communication by rendering content comprehensible to audiences in their native tongues, thereby bridging intellectual and cultural divides. More broadly, translation represents one of humanity's earliest efforts toward meaningful interaction. In ancient times before the full development of structured languages communication was primarily non-verbal, relying on gestures, signs, symbolic movements, and even dance. With the gradual evolution of language, both the scope and sophistication of communicative methods expanded, giving rise to more nuanced forms of both direct and mediated expression.

Catford (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language with equivalent textual material in another," emphasizing the notion of equivalence in the translational process. However, this definition remains somewhat ambiguous, particularly concerning the nature and degree of equivalence, and it fails to address the critical role of cultural context in shaping meaning. While the goal is to achieve equivalence, in practice, translation often functions more as an interpretive act facilitating an understanding of the underlying intent or worldview expressed in the original language.

This definition underscores the importance of transferring equivalent textual material into the target language. Jakobson, Roman. (1959), a prominent linguist and translation theorist, offers a broader perspective by characterizing translation as "the interpretation of verbal signs through other signs—either within the same language, across different languages, or through non-verbal sign systems." He categorizes translation into three types: intra-lingual (within the same language), inter-lingual (between different languages), and inter-semiotic (between verbal and non-verbal sign systems). These forms collectively serve as tools for deciphering and conveying core meanings across linguistic and semiotic boundaries."

According to Nida & Taber (1969), translation is the process of reproducing the content of the source text in the receptor language in such a way that it closely mirrors the original's meaning, style, and communicative intent. This involves rendering the emotional tone and cultural expressions of one community into terms that are both comprehensible and contextually appropriate for another. Orudari, M. (2008) throughout history, translation has served as a fundamental medium for the transmission and preservation of knowledge across civilizations, playing a pivotal role in fostering inter-linguistic and intercultural communication.

These definitions underscore the centrality of translation in facilitating the transfer of knowledge across languages - a process essential for understanding the spiritual, linguistic, political, economic, and technological evolution of humanity. Within this context, the Qur'an holds a unique position: its profound influence on Arab Muslim society elevated Arabic to the status of a global lingua franca. Yet, the majority of Muslims around the world do not speak Arabic, thereby limiting direct access to the Qur'an's original text. Despite theological concerns surrounding the translation of the Qur'an given its status as the literal word of God conveying its message to non-Arabic-speaking audiences remains a pressing necessity. Translation thus emerges as the only feasible means of communicating the divine message, allowing individuals to grasp the reasons behind its revelation and to align their lives with its spiritual and moral guidance. The translation of the Quranic text from its original Arabic into foreign languages has long been a subject of intense debate, with numerous scholars expressing strong opposition. Critics argue that such translations risk stripping the Quran of its miraculous nature (Ijaz al-Quran), a unique feature believed to be inseparable from its original linguistic form. Notably, scholars like Shaikh Azhar al-Jizawi (1917-1928) went so far as to prohibit Quranic translations into non-Arabic tongues. Others maintain that the act of translation inevitably introduces ideological bias. Research indicates that Quranic translation is not merely a linguistic exercise of conveying Arabic into another language; rather, it often involves the transmission of particular interpretations and ideological frameworks, thereby shaping the reader's understanding of the Quran itself (Burhani, Ahmad Najib, 2015).

As the domain of Muslim rule expanded beyond the boundaries of the Arab world, the need to communicate the Qur'an's message to non-Arabic-speaking populations became increasingly evident. In the early stages, only select verses were translated on specific occasions. One of the earliest recorded instances occurred during the first migration to Abyssinia, where Muslim envoys recited and translated verses from Surah Maryam for the Negus (Mubarakpoori, 1990). Similarly, portions of the Qur'an were conveyed to Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium (r. 610-641 CE), reflecting early efforts to share its message with non-Arab audiences (Ahmad von Denffer, 1983). However, the decline of Muslim political authority and the onset of foreign—particularly European—domination

posed serious threats to the Islamic intellectual legacy. During this period, many European translations of the Qur'an were undertaken not with the intention of fostering understanding, but rather to generate skepticism and undermine its teachings. In response, Muslim scholars began to engage in Qur'anic translation themselves, aiming to preserve the authenticity of the message and counteract the misrepresentations disseminated by foreign interpreters.

The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey further intensified these challenges, particularly as Western misreading of Qur'anic discourse—especially concerning jihad—gained traction. Among the controversial responses was the emergence of the Qadiani movement, led by Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, who interpreted the Qur'an in ways that appeared to accommodate Western perspectives, thereby distorting its original meanings. Translations produced by non-Muslim missionaries and Orientalists often introduced significant inaccuracies and ambiguities, which misled many readers unfamiliar with the Qur'an's linguistic and theological context. This growing concern prompted the Muslim scholarly community to recognize the urgent need for accurate, faithful translations—both to safeguard the Qur'an's integrity and to ensure its message remained accessible and correctly understood by global audiences (Rida, Muhammad Rashid, nd)

### 3. Methodology

All available sources ranging from Quranic commentaries, books and academic journals to other primary and secondary materials—will be subjected to critical evaluation. A thorough review of both medieval and modern scholarship on the Quran will be undertaken to underscore the relevance and significance of the topic within its historical and intellectual contexts. This study analyses Shah Waliullah's magnum opus, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*, stands as a seminal work in the realm of Quranic exegesis, offering a systematic and insightful exposition of the objectives and foundational principles of Quranic sciences. Within this comprehensive treatise, he not only articulates the essential elements of 'Ulum al-Qur'an but also contributes original and impactful insights that significantly enriched the field. His deep and divinely inspired comprehension of Quranic knowledge is reflected in the formulation of three key interpretive principles: the holistic or comprehensive style of the Quran, *'Ulum-e-Khawas al-Qur'an* (the sciences of the Quran's special features), and 'Ilm al-Hil (the science of resolution). Shah Waliullah was a trailblazer in incorporating rational analysis into Quranic exegesis, laying the foundations for a systematic interpretive framework articulated through five key thematic categories in his seminal work, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*

### 4. Discussion of Findings

#### 4.1 Quranic Interpretation and Translations

Translation is an intellectual endeavour that involves extracting and transforming a specific linguistic discourse from one language into another, facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying facts. This process allows the civilizational ideals and philosophical outlooks of one society to be communicated to another, often with the intent of fostering awareness and appreciation of diverse worldviews. At its core, translation aims to make divine guidance, originally conveyed in one language, accessible to broader audiences. As Foster states, "Translation is an act through which the content of a text is transferred from the source language into the target language." (Foster, M. 1958). Languages are not merely tools for communication but are deeply intertwined with the cultures and civilizations they represent. Therefore, effective translation requires a profound mastery of both the source and target languages, alongside a heightened sensitivity to linguistic nuances. This enables the faithful transmission of the author's original thoughts, intentions, and perspectives as accurately and authentically as possible (Baker, M. (2002).

In literary contexts, translation is both a method and a process through which the meanings, themes, and emotional impact of a text in the source language are conveyed to the target language [Ghazala, Hasan, (1995)]. It involves the careful decoding of grammar, style, and sound to preserve the essence of the original. Translation, then, is both an exchange of ideas across linguistic borders and a precise transfer of textual material [Catford, J. (1995)]. Defined as the substitution of one language's textual content with equivalent material in another, translation plays a crucial role in understanding the cultural frameworks, intellectual traditions, and worldviews of different civilizations, religions, nations, and individuals. This practice has existed for centuries, with expressions often simplified and translated within the same language to ensure clarity and comprehension (Pym, A., 1992).

Translations and interpretations serve as valuable products, offering insights into diverse cultures, ancient civilizations, and societal developments. The translation process is essential for understanding various cultural facets, religious beliefs, military prowess, and philosophical ideologies that shape societies across different periods and regions. Particularly, religion has been a primary focus of translation due to its profound influence on nearly all aspects of life (The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (IEP)). The deep connection between religion and society fosters psychological strength among individuals and shapes broader societal norms, as religious texts

carry messages that resonate powerfully with people. Translating and interpreting religious teachings, especially those believed to be divinely inspired, allows for a broader understanding of the values and philosophies inherent in different cultures and ways of life.

From an Islamic perspective, the Qur'an plays a central role in the global dissemination of religious thought, particularly through the translation process (Yowell, A. Muftan, S. L. (1999). Given that the Qur'an is written in Arabic and many individuals are not proficient in this language, translation becomes crucial for comprehending its divine philosophy, adhering to its teachings, and following its guidance in the face of injustice. Achieving a thorough understanding of the Qur'anic text, and its meanings, and effectively reproducing the true essence of its message in the target language is paramount. Qur'anic Arabic is distinctive, rich with symbolism, classical expressions, homonyms, and divine nuances that require careful interpretation (Abdul Raof, H. 2001)

In Islam, the goal of understanding the Qur'an in its correct context is fundamental to the faith. This objective has guided scholars throughout history, who have devoted considerable effort to making the teachings of the Qur'an accessible to those unfamiliar with its language and underlying principles. People naturally seek to understand divine purpose in a manner they can grasp through a language, accent, and style they are familiar with. However, many individuals face significant challenges in achieving this due to their limited knowledge of the language needed to fully comprehend the Qur'anic philosophy. Arabic words often possess multiple meanings based on context, and their moral and symbolic connotations can substantially alter the intended message of a passage.

In contemporary times, while most Arabs use modern Arabic for daily communication and writing, the language of the Qur'an is classical and distinct from contemporary usage. Therefore, a systematic approach is required, in which scholars are not only proficient in the colloquial language but also possess a deep understanding of Islamic history, contemporary issues, and the target language. Such expertise is vital for ensuring that the translation process maintains the integrity of the Qur'anic message while making it accessible to a wider audience (Nasr, S. H. 1977).

The translation and interpretation of the Quran constitute a noble and profound undertaking, particularly when driven by sincere and constructive intent. Such an endeavour demands a nuanced comprehension of the historical context in which the revelations occurred. Central to this understanding is the concept of *Asbab al-Nuzul* (occasions of revelation), which plays a pivotal role in ensuring the accurate application and contextualization of Quranic verses. As Ivor asserts, fidelity to the original meaning, combined with a deep grasp of the source language and its subtleties, is essential for effective and truthful translation into the target language (K. Ogden and La. Richards (1945). In addition, a well-rounded mastery of the Quran, the Hadith, and the Sirah (biography) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is indispensable, given the inherent interconnectedness of these foundational Islamic sources.

The process of translating the Quran began as early as the 7th century, initiated as a virtuous mission to convey the divine message to non-Arabic-speaking communities. A notable early instance is that of Salman al-Farsi, who translated select verses into Persian to facilitate comprehension among Persian audiences (Al-Sarakhs (1988). The process of translating the Quran began as early as the 7th century, initiated as a virtuous mission to convey the divine message to non-Arabic-speaking communities. A notable early instance is that of Salman al-Farsi, who translated select verses into Persian to facilitate comprehension among Persian audiences. This tradition of translation continued in later centuries, with Islamic scholars in the 10th and 12th centuries producing full translations into Persian. Earlier, Musa ibn Sayyar al-Aswar is known to have rendered oral translations into Persian before 225 AH. [ T. W. Arnold (2002). A full translation into an Indian language was reportedly completed prior to 270 AH. According to T.W. Arnold, a Chinese translation of the Quran also existed, illustrating the global reach of these efforts. Furthermore, the earliest known Hindi translation was undertaken around 270 AH by Abdullah ibn 'Umar, then ruler of Sind, upon the request of Raja Mahrook (Daoud Mohammad Nassimi (2008).

The translation of the Quran has continued uninterrupted since its inception and, to date, encompasses over 112 languages. However, it is important to recognize that not all of these translations are universally accepted, particularly those produced by non-Muslims or individuals lacking native proficiency in Arabic. During the Abbasid era, translation efforts were sustained and notably culminated in the first official rendering of the Quran into the Persian language. In contemporary times, translations have been developed to aid non-Arabic-speaking communities within the Arab world, aiming to enhance their understanding of the Quran's content, message, and underlying meanings. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, there is a prevailing consensus among Muslims that the Quran's linguistic style is inimitable and transcends the capacity of any translation to capture its full essence. As such, there is a unanimous acknowledgement of the necessity of engaging with the Quran in its original Arabic form, as translations serve as interpretative aids but cannot replace the authenticity and divine eloquence of the original text (Mustapha, H. (1998).

In addressing the complexities and inconsistencies found in the translation and interpretation of the Quran, it becomes essential to consult the insights of distinguished scholars from earlier Islamic eras. Among the most prominent figures in this regard is the eminent 18th-century intellectual and reformer, Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. Recognizing the exigencies of his time, he formulated foundational principles for Quranic translation and laid a

comprehensive framework for engaging with the sacred text. As a scholar of exceptional calibre, Shah Waliullah undertook a comprehensive revival of the Islamic sciences and disciplines—an endeavour he deemed crucial for confronting the pressing moral and intellectual crises of humanity. A significant source of the challenges afflicting the Muslim world, he observed, stemmed from a profound misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Quranic message.

#### 4.2 Analysis Shah Waliullah's magnum opus, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*

Through his profound contributions, Shah Waliullah not only cultivated intellectual awareness across diverse fields but also played a transformative role in promoting Quranic teachings. He systematically articulated foundational principles and methodologies for interpretation and compiled a coherent framework for Tafsir (Quranic exegesis). His impact on the evolution of Quranic scholarship is both far-reaching and enduring, particularly through his pivotal writings on the translation process. His ground breaking translation of the Quran, coupled with his efforts to reformulate the sciences surrounding it, represented a synthesis of the intellectual heritage developed by pragmatic scholars over the preceding millennium. Demonstrating acute discernment, he identified and set aside superfluous and unproductive theological disputes, instead establishing a structured set of principles to guide meaningful and disciplined engagement with Quranic studies. Shah Waliullah's magnum opus, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*, stands as a seminal work in the realm of Quranic exegesis, offering a systematic and insightful exposition of the objectives and foundational principles of Quranic sciences. Within this comprehensive treatise, he not only articulates the essential elements of 'Ulum al-Qur'an but also contributes original and impactful insights that significantly enriched the field. His deep and divinely inspired comprehension of Quranic knowledge is reflected in the formulation of three key interpretive principles: the holistic or comprehensive style of the Quran, '*Ulum-e-Khawas al-Qur'an*' (the sciences of the Quran's special features), and '*Ilm al-Hil*' (the science of resolution). Shah Waliullah was a trailblazer in incorporating rational analysis into Quranic exegesis, laying the foundations for a systematic interpretive framework articulated through five key thematic categories in his seminal work, *Al-Fawz al-Kabir fi Usul al-Tafsir*. This methodological structure continues to serve as a cornerstone for contemporary exegetical approaches (Shah Waliullah, 1985), his framework includes:

- i) The interpretative analysis of the narratives of the prophets;
- ii) A comprehensive exposition of five principal sciences of the Quran;
- iii) The necessity for Persian translations to faithfully mirror the structure and meaning of the original Arabic;
- iv) The exploration of intrinsic Quranic sciences that highlight its unique qualities; The critique of inadequate interpretative efforts, often results in ambiguous and inconclusive understandings of Quranic verses.

With a focus on deepening the comprehension and development of Quranic sciences, Shah Waliullah recognized his insights as divinely inspired (Shah Waliullah, 1985). These insights include:

- i) A clear and precise elucidation of the essence and reality underlying prophetic narratives;
- ii) The presentation of five core disciplines indispensable for accurate Quranic interpretation;
- iii) The formulation of a Persian translation that authentically reflects the linguistic and semantic richness of the Arabic original;
- iv) An exploration of the distinctive features of Quranic sciences, including their linguistic, thematic, and spiritual dimensions;
- v) A nuanced understanding of complex Quranic passages, along with interpretative strategies to resolve ambiguities and convey their intended meanings effectively.

These five core sciences encapsulate nearly every dimension of the Quran and are foundational to the construction of a just and cohesive human society. In the present era, there is an urgent need to engage with the Quran through a holistic lens—one that incorporates these essential disciplines to uncover its true essence. The Quran addresses the comprehensive well-being of humanity, encompassing all spheres of religious life, including Shari'ah (Islamic law), spirituality, and governance. For those who do not possess proficiency in the Quran's original language, translation becomes a crucial medium for accessing its profound meanings. From Shah Waliullah's standpoint, the precision and fidelity of the translation process are of utmost importance, as they directly influence the reader's ability to grasp the divine message in its intended form.

At a time when the permissibility of translating the Quran into other languages was a matter of scholarly contention, Shah Waliullah championed the necessity of rendering the Quranic sciences and disciplines into vernacular languages to ensure meaningful understanding. He maintained that an accurate grasp of Quranic knowledge could be attained through a faithful translation process—one rooted in sincerity, reverence for Allah, and a commitment to objectivity. Such translations, he asserted, must be precise, clear, and free from superfluous

embellishments, personal interpretations, or doctrinal bias, thereby enabling equitable access to understanding for all individuals.

In the context of the Indian Subcontinent, where the general population lacked familiarity with the Quran's original Arabic, Shah Waliullah recognized the imperative of translating the Quran into Persian. He emphasized the use of colloquial Persian infused with culturally resonant idioms to preserve the text's accessibility and relatability. He cautioned against the inclusion of extraneous commentary or interpretive overlays, advocating instead for an authentic and faithful rendering of the Quranic narratives and events. For him, eloquence in translation was not merely a stylistic preference but a critical tool in fostering genuine comprehension.

Shah Waliullah further underscored the value of translation through his insistence on the pedagogical use of translated texts. He delineated the responsibilities of educators in his work *The Art of Wisdom*, where he emphasized that teachers must ensure students understand the meaning of the Quran through accurate and lucid translations. Thus, a central component of his intellectual legacy lies in his call for meticulous, accessible translation efforts—an essential endeavour for enhancing Quranic understanding across linguistic and cultural boundaries (Imam Shah Waliullah Delhvi, n.d.)

When instructing students in a text renowned for its eloquence, and the language of instruction differs from that of the original text, it is incumbent upon the teacher to offer clear explanations of the translated material to facilitate proper understanding (Imam Shah Waliullah Delhvi, (n.d.).

Shah Waliullah strongly asserted that it is a religious duty for every Muslim to engage in the study of the Quran and Sunnah. Recognizing the linguistic barriers faced by non-Arabic speakers, he advocated for the regular inclusion of translated texts into their daily spiritual practice. In his testament, he advised that believers should dedicate time each day to reading a portion of both the Quran and the Sunnah. For those unable to access the Quran in its original Arabic, he recommended reading two to three pages of its translation daily as a meaningful alternative to maintaining a consistent connection with the divine message (Imam Shah Waliullah Delhvi, (n. d.)

Acknowledging the pivotal role of Quranic translations, Shah Waliullah not only undertook the translation of the Quran to the best of his ability but also developed a comprehensive methodology for translation, accompanied by its guiding principles and regulations. To facilitate this endeavour, he established a dedicated journal, *Al-Muqaddama Fi Qawanin Al-Tarjuma*, in which he expounded upon his views on the core principles, rules, and various dimensions of the translation process.

Muslims across the globe face a myriad of challenges in translating the Quran, especially within the complexities of contemporary academic and intellectual frameworks. These challenges—diverse in nature and of considerable magnitude—pose significant barriers for many Muslims, hindering their direct engagement with the Quran and the classical works of Islamic scholarship. Given the divine origin of the Quranic revelation, the translation process demands exceptional precision and vigilance to ensure the faithful and accurate transmission of its message. Regrettably, there have been instances where some scholars have distorted the Quranic discourse to align with their political, social, or sectarian objectives. [Nida, E. A. (1964). Schaffner (2003) and Tymoczko (2003) further validate this concern, highlighting that ideological biases can sometimes infiltrate the translation of Quranic texts, compromising their original meaning.

Muslims across the globe encounter a range of complex and multifaceted challenges arising from modern intellectual paradigms, further compounded by diverse cultural and civilizational contexts. Among these, the translation of the Quran emerges as a particularly critical concern, given the profound and transformative nature of its message. Ensuring an accurate, impartial, and faithful translation is of utmost importance, as the Quran serves as the spiritual and intellectual heart of Islam—just as the heart sustains the body, the Quran sustains the essence of Islamic civilization. Any distortion or deviation from its authentic teachings risks leading individuals and communities astray. Muslims hold that the Quran was revealed progressively over a span of approximately 23 years to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) through the angel Gabriel. With a global following exceeding two billion, the Quran is universally regarded by Muslims as the most authoritative and sacred source of religious guidance. Owing to its divine status, all translation efforts are viewed not as direct renditions of the holy text, but rather as interpretive representations of its meanings. The foundational importance of Quranic interpretation in the early centuries of Islam is evidenced by the vast corpus of scholarly literature produced on the subject. These works highlight the rich diversity of methodologies adopted by the *Mufassirīn* (Quranic exegetes) in their endeavor to elucidate the divine message (Abdullah Saeed, (2008). As Chesterman (1997) aptly observes:

“If one holds the conviction that sacred scriptures are the literal words of God and feels a moral imperative to propagate this divine message, a profound tension arises. The text is sacrosanct—how then can it be transformed? Translation is not merely a substitution of words; it also reconfigures the very structure within which meaning is embedded.”

Translation, therefore, is a complex and nuanced process, employed across diverse disciplines and cultural settings. It is broadly defined by scholars as a refined skill that necessitates a deep command of both the source

and target languages. At its core, translation is the act of rendering a text from one linguistic system into another through equivalent signifiers, enabling the translator to faithfully convey their understanding and interpretation (Venuti, I., 1995). According to Newmark, the successful transmission of meaning—particularly when dealing with culturally specific references—depends heavily on the contextual expectations and needs of both the readers and the commissioning parties (Newmark, P. (1988). This is especially vital in the realm of religious texts, where the precise translation of culturally embedded concepts assumes paramount importance. In the case of the Quran, where the language employed is highly classical, symbolic, and contextually rich, translating its meanings demands not only linguistic expertise but also a profound grasp of theological, historical, and cultural dimensions. The challenge is further amplified by the fact that only approximately 20% of Muslims are native Arabic speakers. Consequently, the vast majority rely on translations to engage with the Quran and access its divine guidance.

To date, the Quran has been rendered into nearly all major languages, spanning African, Asian, and European linguistic landscapes. The quality and fidelity of these translations are critical, as they serve not just as linguistic conduits but also as theological interpretations that shape individual and communal understandings of faith. In this sense, religious translation transcends mere lexical equivalence—it plays a pivotal role in explicating spiritual doctrines and in mediating how religious belief systems interact with broader socio-cultural and intellectual paradigms. Thus, the translation of Islamic texts must be approached with both reverence and scholarly rigor to ensure that their universal message reaches and resonates with diverse audiences around the world (Hephzibah Israel, 2019).

In contemporary Islamic discourse, the emphasis on translation has become an essential component of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law), deeply embedded within the fabric of Muslim intellectual and cultural life. Translations rooted in cultural contexts are systematically classified according to the occurrence, thematic nature, and conceptual dimensions of Quranic verses. Khoramshahi delineates seven distinct translation strategies to address culturally-bound expressions: (1) definition-based rendering, (2) literal translation, (3) substitution with culturally equivalent terms, (4) neologism or lexical innovation, (5) omission, (6) addition, and (7) adoption or borrowing from other linguistic traditions. In recent scholarly practice, culturally oriented translation approaches have gained prominence, reflecting a growing recognition of their vital role in facilitating a deeper and more meaningful engagement with the divine message (Mojtaba Moradi, n.d.)

The methodologies and frameworks adopted in Quranic translation reveal much about the translators' intentions and interpretative inclinations. Notably, Orientalist translators have been heavily critiqued for their systematic distortions of the Quranic message, often driven by theological or ideological motives. The inimitable nature of the Quran—manifested in its linguistic precision, rhetorical beauty, and profound eloquence—has frequently been misrepresented in Western scholarly circles. Early European Orientalists such as Robertus Rotensis and Hermanus Dalmata undertook the first Latin translations of the Quran, laying the groundwork for subsequent versions in German, Italian, and French (Beata Elzbieta, (2007). One of the earliest English renditions, completed by Alexander Ross in 1688 and based on the French translation, has been widely condemned for its significant inaccuracies and lack of fidelity to the original text.

A year later, in 1689, Maracci published a translation with overtly polemical intentions, beginning with an extensive refutation of the Quran in his preface. His work set a precedent for later Orientalists like John Rodwell and A.J. Arberry, whose translations were framed to cast doubt on the Quranic structure and challenge its literary coherence. These attempts often resulted in the misrepresentation of Quranic themes and deliberate manipulation of its linguistic characteristics (Alexander Bevilacqua, (2013). Following these Orientalist efforts, translations by members of the Qadiani sect emerged, including Maulana Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Quran* (1918), Gulam Farid's *The Holy Quran Malik* (1969), and Muhammad Zafrullah Khan's *The Quran* (1971). These versions were shaped by sectarian agendas, using translation as a medium to propagate specific doctrinal interpretations rather than reflecting mainstream Islamic teachings (Ahmad Gumaa Siddik, (April 2018).

In response to these challenges, Muslim scholars began producing English translations grounded in orthodox Islamic understanding. The first such attempt was by Muhammad Abdul Hakeem Khan in 1905, followed by the widely respected *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (1930) by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, who recognized the limitations of translation and described his work as a humble effort to convey the essence of the Quranic message in English. Similarly, A.J. Arberry, a Christian scholar, titled his work *The Koran Interpreted*, emphasizing its interpretive nature rather than claiming a literal translation—though his version too has been criticized for various misreadings. A significant breakthrough came with Abdullah Yusuf Ali, whose English translation and commentary of the Quran marked a turning point in the field. His work set a new standard in terms of both scholarly depth and accessibility, influencing generations of English-speaking Muslims and non-Muslims alike in their engagement with the Quran (Abdulhasan 'Ali Nadwi, 1965).

The task of translating the Quran from Arabic into any other language presents profound and multifaceted challenges, primarily due to stark linguistic and cultural disparities. Arabic's distinctive literary and rhetorical structure contrasts sharply with the stylistic conventions of English and other non-Semitic languages, resulting in nuanced shifts in meaning and connotation during translation (Salman, M. A (2013).

The inherent complexity of this process lies in the need to navigate diverse cultural frameworks and linguistic systems, which often complicates the accurate conveyance of the Quran's message. Rendering the Quran into English or other languages carries the risk of reducing its transcendent message to a purely textual form, potentially diminishing its divine and spiritual resonance. Literal translations, especially when imposed by translators lacking a deep grasp of the Quranic context, frequently result in confusion, misinterpretation, and loss of theological depth.

Furthermore, the cultural and linguistic incongruities between Arabic—a Semitic language rich in morphology, rhythm, and metaphor—and English, with its Germanic and classical roots, contribute to distortions of the Quran's eloquence and stylistic intricacies. Early English translations particularly struggled to bridge this divide, often failing to capture the full semantic range and syntactic subtleties of the original Arabic. These structural differences in sentence formation, rhythmic flow, and symbolic expression underscore the immense difficulty of producing translations that remain faithful to the spirit and literary sophistication of the Quranic revelation.

The Urdu translation of the Holy Quran by Hafiz Nazar Ahmed (1995), is distinguished by several noteworthy attributes:

- i) Each word and verse in the translation is meticulously aligned with its corresponding Arabic text, preserving the structural and semantic integrity of the original.
- ii) The translation is positioned directly beneath each Arabic line, thereby minimizing ambiguity and enhancing readability.

This work has undergone rigorous review and has received endorsement from leading Islamic schools of thought, including Ahle-Sunnat wal Jama'at, Deobandi, Bareilvi, Jamat-i-Islami and Ahle-Hadith, reflecting a broad consensus on its credibility and accuracy (Hafiz Nazar Ahmed (1995).

In recent decades, a new dimension has emerged within the domain of Quranic translation, particularly in addressing issues of gender bias. Since 1995, an increasing number of female scholars have actively engaged in translating and interpreting the Quran through a feminist lens. This development marks a significant evolution in Quranic scholarship, occurring approximately four centuries after Alexander Ross published the first English version of the Quran in 1649 AD. Prominent among these scholars are Camille Adams Helminski, Taherah Saffarzadeh, and Laleh Bakhtiar, whose translations incorporate commentary that reflects contemporary gender perspectives and challenges traditional patriarchal readings. These women, either converts to Islam or diaspora scholars based in the United States, have played a pivotal role in reinterpreting the Quran from a gender-inclusive viewpoint, offering fresh hermeneutical insights and contributing meaningfully to the evolving discourse on Quranic interpretation (Rim Hassan, n.d.)

One of the most formidable challenges in translating the Quran arises from its intricate textual, literal, and linguistic characteristics. These complexities manifest in several key obstacles: Comprehending the precise context surrounding the revelation of specific verses is often unattainable through translation alone. Reliance on lexical tools, such as dictionaries, while translating, may fail to encapsulate the full depth and multidimensional nature of a verse or surah. As such, mastery over both the art of translation and the discipline of interpretation (Tafsir) is essential for uncovering the Quran's intended meanings. This process not only enhances understanding but also facilitates continuous intellectual and spiritual development.

“We did not send any apostle except [to preach] in the language of his people so that he might make [Our message] clear to them.” (Surah Ibrahim 14:4)

This verse underscores the vital role of the language of revelation in conveying divine guidance. Mastery of Arabic—the original language of the Quran—is thus indispensable for attaining a nuanced and authentic grasp of its message. Translation, while valuable, remains a secondary medium, and proficiency in the source language, coupled with awareness of historical and situational contexts, is crucial for excellence in Quranic scholarship. Despite being revealed gradually over twenty-three years, the Quran remains internally consistent, free of contradiction—a testament to its divine origin and literary inimitability.

## 5. Conclusion

The translation and interpretation of the Quran serve the essential function of rendering the Quranic message comprehensible and accessible. The ultimate aim is to uncover the divine objectives and the fundamental purpose of human existence as intended by God. During the classical period, exegetical works were primarily driven by this singular purpose: to discern the reason behind humanity's creation. Scholars of that era endeavoured to present the Quranic message in the clearest and most possible comprehensible manner. However, a shift occurred with the onset of colonial domination over Muslim lands and the rise of Orientalist scholarship. Western scholars began producing interpretations and translations of the Quran not to understand its message, but to highlight

perceived linguistic and grammatical inconsistencies. This critical lens evolved into a dominant approach among Orientalists, who sought to identify supposed irrationalities within the Quranic text.

This paradigm shift also left its mark on modern Muslim scholarship. Though contemporary Muslim scholars did not adopt the fault-finding mission of Orientalists, they began interpreting and translating the Quran through the lens of their respective ideological and institutional affiliations. As a result, the true purpose of Quranic exegesis was obscured by intra-organizational and ideological disputes. Within these fragmented frameworks, each group regarded its understanding of the Quran as the total embodiment of Islam. In the current context, there is an urgent need for Muslim scholars to transcend these ideological divisions and strive for a unified understanding of the Quran's message. Only through such consensus can the original objective of the divine revelation be reclaimed, allowing believers to guard themselves against both worldly misguidance and eternal loss in the hereafter.

Translating sacred texts particularly the Quran carries profound significance, given its far-reaching influence and the inherent challenge of preserving the sanctity and depth of the original message. This task demands that translators rise above personal inclinations and doctrinal biases to authentically render the divine message for audiences across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The Quran revealed in classical Arabic, possesses an unparalleled linguistic, rhetorical, and stylistic excellence that inherently resists direct translation. A thorough comprehension of its original language is, therefore, essential to fully apprehend its divine wisdom. Nonetheless, for non-Arabic speakers, accessing the Quran through the work of trustworthy, spiritually grounded scholars becomes a necessity.

It is vital to understand that Quranic translation is not a mere word-for-word transference but an attempt to convey its essence within the constraints of another language, an endeavor fraught with limitations. Muslim scholars are in unanimous agreement that no translation can fully replicate the original Arabic text, which is regarded as the only definitive and unaltered version of the Quran. Faith and reverence form the cornerstone of any legitimate translation effort. The process must be undertaken with meticulous care, acknowledging the risk of misrepresentation and the potential for distortion of divine intent. The complexity of language—particularly in conveying the subtleties of lexicon, idiom, and semantic depth—further complicates the task.

As such, translated versions should not serve as substitutes for the Arabic Quran, especially in religious rituals and ceremonial usage. Rather, they should function as interpretative aids designed to illuminate, not replace, the original purpose. In conclusion, Quranic translation must be anchored in accuracy, linguistic competence, intellectual integrity, and above all, devout sincerity. Any departure from these principles jeopardizes the clarity of the message and can foster misinterpretation, eroding the transformative power of the Quran in both scholarly and communal realms.

## Acknowledgement

The information and resources used for this research have been taken from, relevant journals, and some open-source Islamic websites. The author expresses sincere gratitude to online sources for making their translations and interpretations publicly accessible. Appreciation is also extended to the journals and websites that provided valuable content and facilitated access to essential materials relevant to this study.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

## Author Contribution

*The authors are responsible for the study conception, research design, data collection, data analysis, result interpretation and manuscript drafting.*

## References

Al-Quran al-Karim

Abdul Raof, H. (2001). Quran translation: discourse, texture and exegesis. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press  
(Online) available: <http://books.google.jo/books?id=15Wz781jbgwC>, Retrieved on 12/4/24

Abdulhasan 'Ali Nadwi (1965), Qadianism: A Critical Study: Among the verses of the Quran that became the subject of debate are 2:60; 2:72-73; 3:49; 27:16-18; 34:14; 27:30; and 72:1. Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publications,

Abdullah Saeed, (2008) Islamic thought: An introduction, Taylor and Francis, p. 30-32.

Ahmad Gumaa Siddik, (April 2018), Review of Some Orientalists' Approach used in the Translation of the Holy Quran, International Journal on Studies in English Language and literature, Vol.6, No. 4, 40

- Ahmad von Denffer 1983), 'Ulumal-Qur'an'n, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, p.144
- Al-Sarakhs (1988), Al-Mabsut, Dar al-kutub al-Ilmiya. Beirut, Vol. I, p. 137, Zadeh, Travis. The Vernacular Qur'an: Translation and the Rise of Persian Exegesis. Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, [Introduction], p.262
- Alexander Bevilacqua, (2013), The Quran Translations Of Marracci And Sale, Journal Of The Warburg And Courtauld Institutes, Lxxvi, 93-95
- Baker, M. (2002), In other words: A Course book on translation. 9th ed. London: Routledge, p.4
- Beata Elzbieta, (2007), Iberian and Slavonic Cultures: Contact and Comparison, Compares, Poland, 150
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib (2015), "Sectarian Translation of The Quran in Indonesia." Al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies. 53 (2): 251-282
- Catford, J. (1995) A linguistic Theory of Translation. London. Oxford University Press, 20
- Catford, J.C. (1965). A Linguistic Theory of Translation. London: Oxford University Press, 20
- Chesterman, A. (1998). Causes, translations, effects. Target. International Journal of Translation Studies, 10(2), 201-230.
- Clifford Greetz (1973), The Interpretation of Cultures, Basic Book Inc Publisher, New York, 48; E. Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties," British Journal of Sociology 8 (1 957): 1 30- 1 45.
- Daoud Mohammad Nassimi (2008), A Thematic Comparative Review Of Some English Translations Of The Qur'an, (A Thesis Submitted to The University of Birmingham for the Degree of Doctor Of Philosophy) p.46
- Foster, M. (1958), Translation from/in Farsi and English. from <http://www.parasa.ts.com/index.htm>, Retrieved April, 2024
- Ghazala, Hasan, (1995) Translation as problems and solutions (4th ed.) Syria: Dar El-kalem El-Arabi, pp.1-5
- Hafiz Nazar Ahmed (1995), Tarjamah-I Quran, Lahore book Depot, p, 3-15
- Hephzibah Israel (2019), Translation and religion: crafting regimes of identity, Journal of Religion, Vol. 49, No. 3, 323-342
- Imam Shah Waliallah Delhvi, Al-Maqalat, al-Wazitah fi al-Nasheehat wal wassihaShah Waliallah Academy Hyderabad (n. d.), p.43
- Imam Shah Waliallah Delhvi, Muqadimmah Fateh ur Rehman Batarjamat al-Quran, Taj Company, Lahore,(n.d.) p.12
- Imam Shah Waliallah Delhvi, Risalah Danishmandi, Al-Azan, Madrasah Nusrat ul Ulum, Gojrawalan, (n.d.) p.182
- Jakobson, Roman. (1959) 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'. On Translation. R.A Brower (Ed). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, 232-239
- K. Ogden and La. Richards (1945), The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of The Influence of Language upon Thought and of The Science of Symbolism, Harcourt, Brace and Company, p.104
- Mojtaba Moradi, Translation of Cultural Specific Phrases in the Quran, Theory and Practices in Language Studies, vol.4, No.8. 1735-1746
- Mubarakpoori, Safi-ur-Rahman (1990), Al-Raheeq al-Makhtoom, Maktabba Al-Sahabah, Jeddah, p. 113
- Mustapha, H. (1998). Qur'an Translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), Routledge Encyclopaedia of translation studies London, Routledge, pp. 200-203
- Nasr, S. H. (1977) Ideals and realities of Islam. ABC International Group, Inc., pp.32-34
- Newmark, P. (1988), A text book of Translation, New York, Prentice Hall, 33
- Nida, E. A. (1964), Towards a science of Translating: with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved In Bible Translating, Leiden, Brill, 154-155
- Nida, E.A. & Taber, C. R. (1969). The theory and practice of translation. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Ordudari, M. (2008) Good translation: Art, craft or science? <http://translationjournal.net/journal/43theory.htm>, Retrieved March 10, 2023
- Pym, A. (1992): "The Relations between Translation and Material Text Transfer". Target, vol. 4, pp. 171-189.
- Sager, H-C. (1993): Language Engineering and Translation Consequences, Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

- Rida, Muhammad Rashid, *Tarjamā t al-Qur'ān wa-ma fiha min al-Mafasīdwa-Munafā t al-Islam*, Matba'ā t al-Manar, Cairo, pp. 5-7
- Rim Hassan, *English Translation of the Quran by Women: The challenges of "Gender Balance" in and through Language*, [https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/21614/1/MonTI\\_3\\_09.pdf](https://rua.ua.es/dspace/bitstream/10045/21614/1/MonTI_3_09.pdf), retrieved on 25/7/2020
- Salman, M. A (2013). *The translatability of euphemism in the Holy Quran*, (unpublished thesis), Jordan University of Science and Technology, Amman: Jordan (online) [https://www.academia.edu/5468395/The\\_Translatability\\_of\\_Euphemism\\_in\\_the\\_Holy\\_Quran](https://www.academia.edu/5468395/The_Translatability_of_Euphemism_in_the_Holy_Quran)
- Schaffer, C (2003) *Third Ways and New Centres: Ideological unity or Difference?* In M. Calzada Perez, *Apropos of Ideology*, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 92-99; Tymoczko, M. (2003) *Ideology and The Position of the Translator: In What Sense is a Translator in Between?* In M. Calzada Perez, *Apropos of Ideology*, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 181-201
- Shah Waliullah (1985), *Al-fauz al-Kabir fi Usul Tafsir*, (Eng. trans. G. N. Jalbani National Hijra Council, Islamabad, pp. 2-20
- Shah Waliullah (1985), *Al-fauz al-Kabir fi Usul Tafsir*, (Urdu. Trans.) Farid Book Depot, New Delhi, pp. 61-65
- Steiner, G. 2000. "The Hermeneutic Motion", in: Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. London. New York: Routledge. 186–191; Ron Grong Ma, *George Steiner's Hermeneutic Translation Theory*, *International Journal of Educational Curriculum Management and Research* Vol. 4, Issue 3: 61-65
- Steiner, George. *After Bable: Aspects of Language and Translation*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2001:49, 31, 416, 266,312, 314, 314-315.
- T. W. Arnold (2002) *The Preaching of Islam*, Adam Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, p.75
- The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (IEP): A peer Reviewed Academic Resource*, editors: James Fieser, Bradley Dowden, (ISSN 2161-0002)
- Venuti, I. (1995), *The Translator's Invisibility*, Routledge, New York and London, 17.
- Yowell, A. Muftan, S. L (1999) *Principles of Translation*. Dar Annahda Al-Arabiya, 33