

## A QUEST FOR OBSERVING THE RATIONALE BELIEFS OF SOME OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATORS OF THE QUR'ĀN

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### **Abstract:**

Human thought is a unique activity that cannot be avoided from the persuasions of self-imaginary thoughts, especially in the case of an author/translator of a book. While in Islamic teachings the self-imaginary thought does not have any place of recommendation until it follows the principles that the earliest Islamic Scholars formed in the light of Qur'ān-o-Sunnah. There seems to be no set of principles still drawn for looking into the matters of interpreter's thoughts especially in the case of English translations from native or non-native authors as compared to be found in Arabian or Persian trends.

This study will present tables of selected authors which are available to our approach, but not an end of the history. An outlook upon the series has shown that the movement of English translations of the Qur'an started in about, in the 18th Century in the special context of Sub-continental ruling time. That was such a time when missionaries were also proactive and the linguistic field faced the swift effects of the regional languages. Hence, this movement also affected the mindset of Muslim thought. Conclusively, this small study will be a beginning in search of the objectivity behind this movement.

**Keywords:** The Qur'ān, Exegesis Principles, Orientalism, English Translations.

Traditionally all Islamic documents have been verified by Muslim Scholars of the earliest time. Even the mindsets of authors have drawn an especial consideration by the examiners of that time who have dug the nib out from the hidden rocks and if they found a little bit discrepancy in any narrations, all the documents were discarded. That is the reason all treachery schemes that were started from the very beginning by non-Muslims or hypocrite's movements were nullified by the Grace of Al-Mighty Allah, who let Islamic Scholars a firm belief and strong will to discrete the water from milk. A simple work can be referred to here is known as Asma'ur Rijal which is a compilation that has covered three generations, after the Prophet (ﷺ) handed over basic Islamic sources (Qur'ān and Hadith) to His Companions. Thus Sahab Kiraam, Tabi'een, and Taba al-Tabi'un are the responsible class of Islam who communicated the message of Islam with profound honesty and soundproof. Therefore Taqiuddin Nadvi Muzahiri has explained the conditions of narrators of

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Hadith from the said three groups were examined for their private or generic secretes of life inscribed in this book. <sup>(1)</sup> Maulana Muzahiri has also referred to the reason for writing this kind of book by the pioneers because there was blown a fire against the Hadith matters by the pagans of that time, but after this work, all fires were extinguished. Even the orientalist were compelled to say that “Dr. Spinger has written a book in animosity of Islamic kinds of literature but besides of it he has said that no nation in the world has been passed who could have recorded in such a manner as Asmaur Rijal has been invented and documented about the 5 lacks peoples all private and generic features of life that have been kept safe in this book.”<sup>(2)</sup> Therefore, history has given us more safety of documents as in this modern scientific and technological age we are unable to produce much authentic work. However, this study will no more intentionally mingle the histories and philosophies from one mode to another. But according to our task, there is a clear issue to identify which one would be a good translation in the English language to be referred to our people, and which should not be referred to.

The following data is an outline of a collection of English language of Qur’an that have been made by non-Muslim or Orientalists Scholars in history, whether it is particularly quantifiable as compared to Muslim translations that also require continuous work to be completed. But in this small study, it will be mentioned that the classic work of the translation of Qur’ān’ was begun by the Muslim community, however, is still required to be confirmed for the authenticity of their works. Hence, the following combinations highlight the initiatives of Muslim and Non-Muslim works upon English translations of the Qur’ān. Another work of John Medows Rodwell (1808-1900) is valued amongst the readers for its beautiful chronological arrangement of the Chapters. Further, the publisher has also introduced more translators’ uniqueness. Moreover, the following chain of translations has been summarized: “Original Arabic work interpreted by George Sale during 1734-1764. In the advanced editions, the notes and models of the Qur’an (Koran in oriental series 1882) the framework of the translator was protected by R.A. Davenport and Savarys. His new work was supported by E.M. Wherry’s notes and commentary.

Translation of G. Sale’s was edited in Chanda’s classic work and included in the Hundred Books of Lubbocks’. Translation and short notes were made by Dr. Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan in 1905. Translation with notes and index in chronological order was made by J. M. Rodwell in 1861.

The translations of Hadith of Prophet (ﷺ) along with introductory notes were also been included by S. Lane-Poole in 1882 was famous by words Golden Treasury Series. A. N. Wollaston had also introduced Qur’an given this name: “The Religion of the Koran”. <sup>(3)</sup>

This is a qualitative research based on the information gathered through the available research data online and some from physical collections. The discussion

will endeavor to show the realities behind the surface information of the material then it will explain the certainty of the objectives of the study will amaze to extend the ideas for developing better-quality of research for future perspectives.

The history of the rising tradition of the translation of 'Qur'ān':

Though 'Qur'ān' was revealed upon Prophet (ﷺ) then through his companions/followers it was continuously spreading in the world for the well-being and security of humankind. Thus, taking care of all kinds of nature of human kinds Qur'an encompasses complete aspects of human safety. Provisions that have been discussed look like a limited package of contents of the verses of the Qur'ān which are numbered 114 and the verses have been counted about 6666 are circumscribed around the need of each creature of the universe, were not easy to be enhanced, how it was possible to be benefitted. But all these scenarios were caused to get understood only because of the first elaboration made by the Prophet (ﷺ); then it was transformed into a chain of eminent companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). Amongst the very few names, they come on the top of the list who become the first translators or have the command to make exegeses, even with the permission of the Prophet (ﷺ). Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas is remembered in the history of Islam being the first presenter of exegeses of the Qur'ān. <sup>(4)</sup>

While, the first translation is being claimed that it was done in the 7th century CE, in the Persian language, by Hazrat Salman Farsi did the translation of Surat-ul Fatihah<sup>(5)</sup>. And it is supposed that 'Hindu Raja Mehruk (884 CE) had requested to get a copy of translation that were related and prepared as a result of the advice of Abdullah bin Umar bin Abdul Aziz'<sup>(6)</sup>.(Fasil, 2018) About, this case the language of translation has not been mentioned is required to be discovered.

Cornelis Henricus Maria "Kees" Versteegh (born in 1947) till 2011, has referred to a first Qur'ān translation was completed in the 9th Century, in the Dutch language<sup>(8)</sup>. Hence it is claimed as the oldest one of the western languages. This will denote the psychological approaches that were found in elaborations of transmitting theological aspects in their translations. While translation itself is an authoritative mechanism for preaching purposes. It requires accuracy and specified quality that would be matching to the sense of its original text. Therefore, interpreters must have an understanding of the original source text and the ability to transfer it realistically, truthfully, and intrinsically with the receiving language, without the addition or deduction of a single part of the real content<sup>(9)</sup>.

Now the following table will show the chronological view of the translations and how these have met the criterion of the real situations of Arabic text:

**Table-1**

Sr.	Title of Translation	Authors	Published	Language	Remarks
1.	The Al-Coran of Mohamet'	'Alexander Ross'	1649	English	An old language style
2.	The Koran: or Al-Koran of Mohammad	'George Sale'	1734	English	Common translation
3.	The Koran	'John Meadows Rodwell'	1861	English	'Readjustment of Qur'ān's chapter in chronological order and a trial to establish it from some basic styles from Jew and Christian tradition.
4.	The Koran	'Edward Henry Palmer'	1880	English	Authenticity is Required?
5.	The Koran	'Richard Bell'	1937	English	Authenticity is Required?
6.	The Koran	'Arthur John Arberry'	1955	English	the best translation
7.	The Koran	'Nessim J. Dawood'	1956	English	The author was an Iraq-born Jew
8.	The Noble Qur'ān	'Aharon Ben Shemesh'	1979	English	Translation by a Jew author, published by Massada Press (Tel Aviv)
9.	The Qur'ān: 'A new Translation'	'Thomas Cleary'	2004	English	Star-latch Press USA

(<https://web.archive.org>)<sup>(10)</sup>

### Translations from Muslim Scholars:

**Table-2**

Sr.	Title of Translation	Authors	Published	Language	Remarks
1	The Holy Qur'ān	'Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan'	1905	English	The author was a physician, and the work was published in Patiala (India). It is also supposed to be the first complete translation of an Indian National
2	The Qur'ān	'Mirza Abul Fadl'	1912	English	Published in Allahabad (India)
3	The Koran	'Mirza Hairat Dehlvi'	1912	English	Translated by scholars-
4	The Holy Qur'ān	'Muhammad Ali Lahori'	1917	English	Belongs to Ahmadi Community
5	Translation of the Holy Qur'ān	'Ghulam Sarwar'	1920	English	
6	The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān	'Muhammad Marmaduke William Pickthall'	1930	English	This translation fully received acceptance by Muslims and non-Muslim communities.

7	The Holy Qur'ān: Translation and Commentary	'Abdullah Yousuf Ali'	1934	English	'Author was from a Bohra family, in Mumbai (India), but his work was widely published and circulated in the world and received good acceptance.
8	The Glorious Qur'ān, 'text, translation, and commentary	'Moulana A. Majid Daryaabadi'	1941	English	'Interpretation was taken from Pickthall's work but truly the text of exegesis in footnotes are found inspiring and convincing'.
9	The message of the Qur'ān'	'Hashim Amir Ali'	1974	English	
10	The Noble Qur'ān	'Taquidin Al Hilali' and 'Muhammad Muhsin Khan'	1977	English	Most popularized work.
11	'The Message of the Qur'ān'	'Muhammad Asad'	1980	English	'Leopold Weis Gijbraltor took his translation to new heights'
12	'Holy Qur'ān'	'M.H. Shakir'	1982	English	'Also published by the Taj Art Press in 1970, Karachi. Secondly World Organization, Islamic Services, Houston, Texas, USA 1974.
13	The Qur'ān	'T.B. Irving (Al-Hajj Talim Ali Abu Nas)'	1985	English	'Published by Goodword Books (UK)
14	The Quran: 'The Conclusive word of God	'Q. Arafat'	1991	English	
15	The Quran	A Team of Ahmad and Dina Zidan	1990	English	'They are Egypt-born, husband, and wife now residents of England
16	The Quran	Ahmad Zaki Hammad	1996	English	'He is an Egyptian and great scholar of Arabic and English from the Quran Literary Institute Illinois USA'.
17.	The Quran:'Arabic Text with corresponding English meaning'	Umm Muhammad	1997	English	She is an American Muslim Women
18	Quran: 'The living truth'	Bashir Ahmad Mohyidin	2003	English	
19	The Quran: 'phrase by phrase English translation'	'Ali Quli Qarai'	2003	English	
20	The meaning of the Noble Quran; 'with explanatory notes'	'(R) Justice Muhammad Taqi Usmani'	2007	English	'Darul Ishaat, Karachi'
21	The Gracious Quran: 'A Modern phrased interpretation in English'	'Ahmad Zaki Hammad'	2007	English	'Republished from Quran Literary Institute, Illinois USA

The lack of understanding cannot convey the complete meaning of a script and is more important to test the conceptual idea of an author:

“Translation is meant that textual content is converted and produced into a single language that must communicate an equal message. Translators should not forget some of the constraints, inclusive of context, grammar, idioms, and writing clearances of both languages. Subsequently, as has been summarized the minimum qualities of the time of Martin Luther, one who interprets into another language that will be the best of his quality work.”<sup>(12)</sup>

While the deficiency in conveying the full message of any text is a natural phenomenon in all translated languages by the shortage of full knowledge that had to be translated from a cultural perspective.

“Cultural translation is taken into consideration to be one of the maximum critical and complex translations. If the translator does now no longer have any cultural history with a classified supply of language then he is going to face problems conveying the complete that of the cultural styles which can be covered inside the unique text”<sup>(13)</sup>

“In the case of religious matters, especially for the translation of the Qur’ān only a tiny fraction of their numbers – scholars, and experts – can read it in the original Arabic. The difficulties of translation, which arise from doctrinal and from literary considerations, are not insuperable, but they are indeed formidable.”<sup>(14)</sup>

The probable dangers cannot be omitted from the translation of the Qur’ān – While the Doctrine holds the form of the Arabic language and the substance (meaning) cannot be separated. Also, it is believed that if God (Al-Mighty Allah) willed the Holy Book (Qur’ān) to be in Arabic, submission to that will requires that it should not be turned into another language.<sup>(15)</sup> Particularly when we talk about the language of Arabic from the linguistic-cum-spiritual means, then we found to have some dangers resulting in conveying misconceptions of the real text. As likely about revelation, we can say what you want to say, linguistically and spiritually. Thus, Script must show a marvel of fluency and expression, as well the source may be from an ultimate fact. Meaning cannot be assured in such sacred fields of truth unless the language is also verbally inspired. Once given in the Arabic tongue, it cannot be undone or transposed. Translation, even if successful with respect to content, deliberately destroys form, so that the result is, at best, only half of the original’.<sup>(16)</sup> The translation of worldly matters is not a big issue for a translator, so why not when such mistakes will be arising in the translation of the Holy Book of the God, Al-Mighty Allah, to which falsehood cannot come from between his hands or from behind it, about



لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَطْلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ ۗ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

which the

Almighty Allah has already guaranteed to preserve His Holy Book the Qur'ān.

“Immoral cannot touch from the front of it and behind of it; a revelation from your Lord who is Wise and Praiseworthy”.<sup>(17)</sup>

How can the attitude of translation in general help people? Dr. Loreta Ulydienė (2014) is saying that

“Translation is a way of communicating a message between varied cultures and people of diverse environments. This logical method facilitates people to send and receive information and to achieve successful communication. In addition to the alterations in languages that will have differences according to the multiple societies representing their different cultures”.<sup>(18)</sup>

But to express the reality Dr. Loreta says that there might be a question for a translator who would not be convinced to tackle ethnic distinctions in the relevant language that can subsequently be using symbols and signs that have a hostile outcome on the end-user by not causing a corresponding meaning of the real message.<sup>(19)</sup> This indicates that when the translations of the Qur'ān have been prepared by orientalists aiming to create a barrier between the Qur'ān and the people who want to understand Islam, the barrier is only the inadequacy of having 'Faith' in Islamic will, which means that the Shahadah/or confession to Oneness of Allah, to the Last Prophet and the Final Scripture has been revealed upon the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Therefore, the tools which are necessary for translating one language into another, are too much on the smallest task of a translator; but to quantifying the translation of the Qur'ān is also needs to have full faith in Islam, then to acquire knowledge of categorical aspects of Arabic grammar, reasons of the revelations, the authenticity of the reasons, the expression of the verses, the initiative the stops, the reasons and numbers of recitation method (Qir'āt and Tajweed), the words of the Qur'ān, how many words are from Arabic and non-Arab languages, the commandments in the Qur'ān and their particular occasion, their generic or especial orders for the followers or for whole humankind are addressed, then it comes on the exegesis of the Qur'ān and the first and foremost interpretation will be taken from Hadith or sayings of Muhammad (ﷺ), “then take the exegeses that were allowed to Companion of Prophet (ﷺ) have to give it on first priority to get understood by anyone, who would be translating the 'Qur'ān', likely this Suyuti, (R.A.) has mentioned to have about 50 kinds of knowledge for interpreting Qur'ān”.<sup>(20)</sup>

The translation is the bridge that transmits information between two cultures,<sup>(21)</sup> but when it becomes a case of religious knowledge or the translation of a Divine book like the Holy Qur'ān, it keeps a deep sensitivity because the ideology of the translator does not match with the ideology of Islam. Hence, the missionaries have very much tried to manipulate the ideology of Islam from the starting time of the translation of 'Qur'ān' with a strong movement, called Orientalism.

In academic philosophy there comes an emerging realm of Orientalists started in about the 18th century in the Europe/west hubs. Wherefrom the education and culture, the language, literature, religion, law, and art of East Asian societies were studied and it developed to focus the scholarly attention and intellectual energy.<sup>(22)</sup> It is further meant that the contribution of western people to learning eastern languages, civilization, philosophy, literature, and religion was apparently to please their selves from this study. Therefore, Orientalism converted into a religious and cultural movement by seeking the road map of the Arab World to know about the Arabian culture and tradition. Therefore, the orientalists were honest in terms of learning the Arabic Language and the history of Arabs but their core objective is to discover the strategic geographical position of the Arab world to be able to control Arab culture.<sup>(23)</sup>

The writing of several books will get short on this discussion of the comparison of the translations of the Qur'ān. However, for a very small study of comparison it can be divided into two main streams:

- a) Muslim Translations
- b) Non-Muslim Translations are also being dealt with in the following two categories:
  - i. Orientalists/Non-Muslims
  - ii. Qadiyanis

In this study, a selected form and carefully chosen translations have been taken for reconsideration of the points of objection, rejection, or acceptance only the oldest translations were made in the English language.

The significant views of two earlier commentators on translations of 'Qur'ān' of English language realizing that there were required highly intellectuality in it as said by Yusuf Ali (1872-1953) 'I thought the combined effort of understanding the original and duplicating its dignity, beauty, poetry, and magnificence was too amazing for me; therefore, I would like to present you with an English Interpretation'.<sup>(24)</sup> Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936) mentioned that "Despite my best efforts to select the appropriate dialects, which does not mean the 'Glorious Qur'an' which is an incomparable masterpiece whose transcripts will transfer into mankind with tears and joys; thus what I have learned 'the Qur'an cannot be translated'.<sup>(25)</sup>

The table-2 in literature review has mentioned only certain Muslim's names but some of the authors have pointed out in the remarks box that from S.No:1 to 5 are quite required the authenticity of Faith and belonging with Islam, hence some can be from the Qadiyani's community or some can be simple Muslims. M. Abdul Hakim Khan (Physician by Profession), the first Qadyani translation into English language published in 1905, is enough to mention the entity of Qadyani's who claim their selves 'Muslim'; but who have been engorged than of other non-Muslims, they have portrayed a picture of an Idol on the title page; how can be counted their claims of

being Muslim, is also a proof of their idolatry mindset. However, “The logic would apply to Islam's sectarian movements but also unorthodox crowds outside of the fold, such as the Qadiya'nis and their extensive translational initiatives were driven by a desire asserting their ideological singularity”.<sup>(26)</sup>

Some carelessness is found in the Rodwell (1861) translations, is a dominant response to the name of Allah, translated with the word “God” has displeased the work of Sale, while he has presented the title of Qur'an as: ‘The Koran’, wherein he made disgusting claims against Prophet (ﷺ) and for Qur'an in his Preamble.’<sup>(27)</sup> “Rodwell has pointed out his found inventions and also his translations are not free from severe blunders in his translations and notes”.<sup>(28)</sup> On the other hand “Marmaduke Pickthall (1875-1936) a descendant of an Anglican clergyman, embraced Islam has a distinctive quality in getting first-rate of rendering ‘Qur'an’ in English”.<sup>(29)</sup> Pickthall used the manners are so adequately expressed in this regard that “he has taken the word of ‘Allah’ in all his work explaining that there is none the word in alternative in respect of it in English. What he has expressed is that in the word of ‘Allah’ there comes an emphasis upon the last syllable because there found neither feminine nor plural but it remains only for and has never been applied to anything other than the indescribable highest Supernatural Being. He says that he always used the word “God” only for replacing it with the word ‘ilah’ in the Arabic language”.<sup>(30)</sup>

‘Orientalists have used an open field of translating the Qur'an because from the 18th Century, although Muslims were listening and observing the English Language in the Subcontinent, they were engaged in the inflexible political reigning by British Empires, that did not allow Muslims to get capability in translating Qur'an in other languages’. Consequently, incorrect and confusing Western styles in the old Muslim scripture were frequently circulated. The preachers in Christianity were also taken more invasive and diplomatic steps against Islam in the 18th century by moving on producing eagerly lust modes of translations’. Hence Muslims should not agree with their dishonest efforts. The question of inevitably difficult text and its validity from antagonistic argumentations ever required to be resolved. Thus Muslims should decide to find a very trusted translation of ‘Quranic text’ through their valued and instantaneous learning from the western world. Therefore, Muslim translations are entirely meant to resolve this serious notion that should show the purpose of revelation of Qur'an either it is found in any other language.”.<sup>(31)</sup>

Likely Abdul Majid Daryabadi's Translation and Commentary in the English language that was published in 1941, looks quite better from Muslim traditional perspective”.<sup>(32)</sup>

The study concludes with the point to make an earnest appeal to the Muslim readers of the Qur'anic translations especially of the English language, to select the most authentic translator's version because the faith in Islam has an utmost impact on the expression of mindset through the translation of Arabic speech (the Kalam)

of Al-Mighty Allah. As Maulana Syed Abul Hassan Nadwai (1993) has beautifully explained with the reference to ‘Surah Hûd’:

فَإِن لَّا يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنَّ لَّآ إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أُنْتُمْ  
مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

“if they do not reply you - then know that the Qur’ān was revealed with the knowledge of Allah and that there is no deity except Him. Then, would you [not] be Muslims?”<sup>(33)</sup>

Maulana Nadwi has said that the part of this verse ( *أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ* ) the secret of the miracle of the Qur’ān is saying that:

“The Qur’ān is not only a miracle in terms of its words and composition and eloquence and eloquence but it is also a miracle in its words and composition. In its meanings and articles, in its sciences and teachings, in the knowledge of the unseen and the eternal Creator, in the religious, moral, social, and civic teachings, it has presented, in its effects and revolutions, in its predictions and the newspaper. It's a miracle - but when there is no competition in the words and only one aspect and the corner of his perfect miracle, then what is the similarity between his perfect miracles is. From this verse of Surah Hûd, it is clear that the special feature of the Qur’ān and the secret of its miracle is that it has been revealed from the knowledge of Allah and in fact, it is a manifestation of His special knowledge. What can it do with the limited and limited knowledge of God Himself? Just as man cannot match the attributes of God, so he cannot compete with the knowledge of God. So how can there be similarities between Muslim and Non-Muslims interpretations? On the contrary, when can a non-Muslim come out of the realm of his religion? So it is impossible not to fall prey to his Qur’ānic translations of his religious thoughts.”<sup>(34)</sup>

All kinds of translations of Qur’ān claim to their peculiar insufficiency. Here we found a necessity of including verses which are clearly emphasizing the word of God to show such an empirical relationship with the revelation upon Muhammad in the original text of the Arabic language. Here we summarize that a translator should have to be comprehensively expressing the essence of real text transforming into another language.”<sup>(35)</sup> Therefore, Muslims should think carefully and decide what kind of polytheistic approach they are studying as a translation of the Qur’ān, as a result of which the Muslim mind itself can be guided. On the other hand, a group of eminent scholars should be formed who are multilingual and have mastered these languages, then in whatever language they translate the Qur’ān, insha'Allah, all humanity will get the benefits of religion and the hereafter.

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