

**Can the sacred text of the religions books be translated without losing its sacredness?  
The multiple translations of the Quran through history**

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**Introduction:**

Scholars define the Quran as the Arabic speech of Allah that was revealed to the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) both in word and in meaning. This means that anything that's not Arabic isn't the Quran.<sup>(1)</sup> We can't pray in English, in French, in Germany -it has to be in Arabic- Allah promise that he will protect it, until the end of time and that promise doesn't apply to anything else (such as the Sunnah, or the Hadith Qudsi).<sup>(2)</sup> Because of the growing Muslim communities in English – speaking as well as greater academic interest in Islam, there has been a blossoming in recent years of English translations. So, how accurate are the Quran's renderings into English? How did translations of the Quran develop? Can we find a noble and faithful expression in the English language that matches the majesty and the loftiness of the Quran?

**Meaning of translation in reference to the Quran:**

Grappling “translation” in reference to the Quran, some scholars make a distinction between three meanings: the literal, the non literal, and the interpretive translations.<sup>(3)</sup>

**a) Literal translation:**

This is to translate from one language into another fully literally involving the style and the order writhing within which the word appears in the sentence and so on. This proves to be impossible in any language because, the meaning and structure vary from one language to another. That is even difficult in the case of the Quran because the Quran actually is the standard of oratory.

**b) Non-literal translation:**

This appeal to a translation that undertakes to carry the meaning.

**c) Interpretive translation:**

This refers to the case when a person tries to translate a verse or chapter in the Quran but finds it impossible to convey the full meaning. This kind of translator is telling people that “this is not even the translation of the meaning of the Quran”.

But that is all assumed likewise that the translator has reasonable challenge on both languages, the Arabic and English, for example, in case of translating the Quran into English.<sup>(4)</sup> This is, in fact, the enigma that happened historically in this regard.

**The development of the translations of the Quran through history:**

The religion and philosophy of Islam, is based on the belief that God (ALLAH) transmitted knowledge to

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Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and other prophets Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus...<sup>(5)</sup> The followers of Islamic religion, the Muslims, believe that this revelation to humanity was written down in the Quran, which is the flawless word of Allah. Provided that, the Islam is the topmost, the climax and the culmination of all the preceding revealed religions and “hence it is for all times and all peoples”.<sup>(6)</sup>

Firstly, this status of Islam is bolstered and sustained by dazzling and glittering occurrences and deeds. There is no other disclosed and confessed book of the Quran in the same form and content as it was revealed and betrayed.

Secondly, no other discovered and revealed religion has any persuading claim to stipulate and bargain leadership, pilot age and steering in all walks of human life for all times.

Islam is regarded by many writers as: “It (Islam) replaced mawkishness by manliness. It gives hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition of the fundamental facts of human nature.”<sup>(7)</sup>

“Sense of justice is one of the most wonderful ideals of Islam, because as I read in the Quran I find those dynamic principles of life, not mystic but practical ethics for the daily conduct of life suited to the whole world”<sup>(8)</sup>

“History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and foreign Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated”.<sup>(9)</sup>

“I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality, It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity...”<sup>(10)</sup>

The Quran should be read in Arabic for many reasons:

According to the prophet himself, for the witchery, thaumaturgy and fascination of the sounds and the power and the sovereignty of recitation of the poetic language, “Perhaps simply as a mountain to be climbed for the faithful”.<sup>(11)</sup> However, hardly any than 20% of Muslims speak Arabic, so greatest part of Muslims can study the text only in translation. The protuberance or the outgrowth began soon after the death of our Prophet Mohammed (صلى الله عليه وسلم).

The first being translated of the Fatiha into Persian by Salman Al-Farasi one of the prophet’s dearest companions. After was the first western translation into Latin in 1143 by the English monk Robert of ketton, and it was a belated memory by the then Crusading Catholic Church of the need to understand the enemy, and was contemplated as a disproof.

By the 18 th C, there was a growth or an extension and a wide swelling in western translations of the Quran, ruminating the ascendancy of the west in order to apprehend, conceive, penetrate, discern, convert and / or vanquish, checkmate and conquer its ample rival.

Alexander Ross, chaplain to King Charles, offered the first English version in 1649 “The Alco ran of Mahomet” translated out of Arabic into French, by the Sieur du Ryer, and newly Englished to satisfy all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities. George sale based his translation on the 1698

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Latin translation by Maracci, the confessor of pope innocent XI. He was a lawyer and corrector of the society for promoting Christian knowledge's New Testament translation. He showed admiration for Islam and provided a respectful and a courteous surrender and exhibition.

Edward Ross's, 1877 preamble to a new edition of sale's translation and shows the large advance in the understanding of Islam in the century and a half since sale" what was good in Muhammadanism was entirely ignored, and what was not good in the eyes of Europe was exaggerated or misinterpreted."

Unsympathetic translations remained for instance. Reverend Rod well procreated a translation in 1861, inventing and yielding the so-called chronological sura order soliciting his evangelists and colporteurs to critique the prophet's revelation (the apocalypse) as resulting from "Self-deception".

As late as 1937, university of Edinburgh Orientalist Richard Bell created a translation to rearrange the text in its chronological order and contesting that the Coran was "actually written by Muhammad himself".

By virtue of the wax and the growth academic interest in Islam, there was an efflorescence of English translations among scholars in the 20th C, the conspicuous being the Coran interpreted by Cambridge Arabic Scholar AJ Arberry in 1957, and it still the best by a non Muslim in terms of both the approach, convergence and quality, the first non Muslim to acknowledge the orthodox Muslim prospect and conspectus that the Coran cannot be translated, but only interpreted.

Dawood (Daud), an Iraqi jew conceived a translation in 1956 which is still suitable and serviceable in a penguin edition and is perhaps the most expanded circulated non-Muslim English translation. Whilst it was Christian missionaries who lanced translations of the Quran, followed by academics, Islam also encourages conversion and the expansion defy of Christian missionaries around the world stimulated Muslims around to expatiate and cast their own efforts to make the sacred text more increasing to all.

Indian Muslims were the first from within the faith to translate the Quran into English. All wrote at a time of British colonialism.

Muhammad Marmaduke William pickthall, an English educator, converted to Islam in 1917, published his translation in London in 1930. He was the first western translator to maintain and urge that the Quran was untranslatable but the context of the text could still be devolved to English speakers.

This work is now criticized and used as a penguin paperback.

The most famous among the seven advantageous at Amazon along with Pickthall's and hilali's is Abdullah Yusuf Ali's the Holy Quran: Translation and commentary, published in Lahore in 1937.

In 1989, "Saudi Arabia's Ar. Rajhi banking company financed the US- based Amana corporation's project to revise the Yusuf Ali translation to reflect an interpretation more in line with wahhabi thought," Muhammad taqiyuddin Al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan published then, their explanatory English Translation of the Holy Quran, now the most widely spread Quran in Islamic bookstores and Sunni

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mosques throughout the English- speaking world. Many other great leaders have exhibited and hatched various translations to the Coran as the following:

- 1- Muhamed Asad – A jewish convert to Islam – 1980.
- 2- Sayyid Abul Ali Mauduli, founder of the Islamic Party in Pakistan published the meaning of the Quran in Lahore in 1967.
- 3- Rashad Khalifa's in 1978, was an Egyptian who emigrated to texas.
- 4- Edip yuksel and lay the Salah-al Shaiban and Martha Schulte – Nafeh → a reformist translation.
- 5- Laleh Bakhtiar, a Chicago sufi convert to Islam, published the Sublime Coran.
- 6- The leaders of Islam have said “the great Islamic philosophers like Al-Bukhari, Ibn Sina, Al-Farabi, Ibn Rusd Ibn Arabi, and Omar Khayyam, to name but a few argued that the hadith, sunnah and tafsir are part of any educated Muslim's heritage, and can only enrich one's reading of the Quran”.

Erik Walberg in his books the Quran in translation sylogized and drew inferences and said about the translation of the Quran: “We have no final answer to the original question: Is the sacredness of the Quran translatable? Structuralists argue that language itself is a human attribute and question to that extent something fixed in language can itself be sacred?”

Erik Walberg, a man of seizure and apprehension, argued that in the Sufi tradition, the only truth is in heaven and any thing contaminated by the Dunya is putrefaction and putrescence. Any translation, any text for that matter contemplates the restrictions of both transmitter, writer, translator and the reader in the practice and the prosecution of

the transcendental experience itself, however Shakespeare uttered that:

“Translation is the one means by which the literature of one language enters another the degree of ease or difficulty of translating a literary work from one language to another depends on many factors. In addition, the translation of literary works involves not only conveying the meaning of the original work into the second language, but also reproducing for the reader of the second language the form, the tone, and the atmosphere of the original work”.<sup>(12)</sup>

Any translation of the most difficult translations are the religious and they are not as the rest of other knowledge of moral or political or social or economic linked to faith and theology assets and provisions.. Religious translations need to special treats and extensive due to diligence and responsibility in order to not distort and deliberate confusion, particularly the Quran. Problem- that is when you move to translate the Coran into other languages, it can't translate accurately the sense, because there are some expressions that cannot be moved to other languages, since did not understand.

As Muslims, we cannot accept to translate the Quran into other languages because it contains the sacred words of Allah and we consider all the translations of the Quran as a corruption and we have an example of the Coranic verses translated into the English.

﴿فَأَنْتَ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا (27) يَا أُخْتُ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَعْثًا (28) فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا (29) قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ



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وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا (30) وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا  
دُمْتُ حَيًّا (31) وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا (32) وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ  
وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا (33) ﴿﴾ من سورة مريم.

النص المترجم إلى الإنجليزية:

“Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Mary! Thou hast come with an amazing thing. O sister of Aaron! They father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot. Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy? He spoke: Lo! I am the slave of ALLAH. He hath given me the scripture and hath appointed me a prophet, and hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive, and (hath made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblest. Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive”.

To translate the Quran word by word is impossible and the prophet Mohammed (صلى الله عليه وسلم) did not translate the Quran and ordered a translation into another language, even in its kings and non-Arabs, but inverted them to convert to Islam mentioning their beliefs, hadith and its provisions.

All non-Arabic words of the translated Quran aren't called quranic words.

“If we look at translations in terms of the receptors, rather than in terms of their respective forms, there we introduce another point of view; the intelligibility of the

translation... the difference between the two languages and the two cultural settings are represented by the different schaps”.<sup>(13)</sup>

“The study of translation is constantly expanding in a word that is experiencing an explosion of translated texts unparalleled in human history”.<sup>(14)</sup>

### **Conclusion:**

Even for native Arabic speakers, the Quran is a difficult document. So, any translation of the word of ALLAH cannot be the word of ALLAH, rather, it is the translation of the meaning of the word of ALLAH.

### **Notes:**

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- 2- [www.thefreedictionary.com/quran](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/quran)
- 3- [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net)
- 4- [www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php](http://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php)
- 5- [www.spaoeandmotion.com/religion-islam-muslim-islamic-quran.htm](http://www.spaoeandmotion.com/religion-islam-muslim-islamic-quran.htm)
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- 9- De lacy O’Leary, Islam at the crossroads, London, 1923, P.8.
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