

A STUDY ON FIVE QUR'ANIC TRANSLATIONS BY NON-MUSLIMS OF THE INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

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Abstract: *The Holy Quran has been translated into almost every language of the world, and India is also credited for being translated into the majority of its languages—these translations from Muslims and non-Muslims. The legitimacy of the translation of the Quran is widely disputable among Muslim scholars. Though most Muslims do not consider Quran translation to be legal under a theological base, it does aid in conveying the divine message to non-Arabic speakers. The driving force of non-Muslim translations that occurred in the Indian sub-continent is the vision of conveying the message of the Quran and the intelligent discussion within different religions and faiths. The Western oriental translations were criticized for failing to capture the original meaning, while the translations by Indians and Eastern scholars were praised for accurately conveying the text's content and failed to be commonly acknowledged and narrated by the history due to the lack of consistent studies and research. It is a fact that the contribution of non-Muslims to the Quranic study didn't get needed attention by researchers. This Paper aims to study five Quran translations compiled by non-Muslim scholars of the Indian sub-continent, using the Qualitative method. The results of this research show that there is an impact that these translations can make in the social and religious domain in India.*

Keywords: *Indian Sub-Continent, Non-Muslims, Qur'an, Regional Language, Translation.*

Abstrak: Al-Qur'an telah diterjemahkan ke hampir semua bahasa di dunia, dan India juga diakui telah menerjemahkan ke sebagian besar bahasanya—terjemahan dari Muslim dan non-Muslim. Legitimasi terjemahan Al-Qur'an masih diperdebatkan secara luas di kalangan cendekiawan muslim. Meskipun sebagian besar umat Islam tidak menganggap penerjemahan Al-Qur'an sah berdasarkan dasar teologis, hal ini membantu dalam menyampaikan pesan ilahi kepada penutur non-Arab. Kekuatan pendorong penerjemahan non-Muslim yang terjadi di anak benua India adalah visi penyampaian pesan Al-Qur'an dan diskusi cerdas dalam berbagai agama dan keyakinan. Terjemahan oriental Barat dikritik karena gagal menangkap makna aslinya, sedangkan terjemahan para sarjana India dan Timur dipuji karena menyampaikan isi teks secara akurat dan gagal diakui dan dinarasikan secara umum oleh sejarah karena kurangnya kajian dan penelitian yang konsisten. Faktanya, kontribusi non-muslim terhadap kajian Al-Qur'an kurang mendapat perhatian para

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peneliti. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji lima terjemahan Al-Qur'an yang disusun oleh cendekiawan non-muslim di anak benua India, dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan adanya dampak terjemahan tersebut terhadap ranah sosial dan keagamaan di India.

Kata-kata Kunci: *Al-Qur'an, Anak Benua India, Bahasa Daerah, Non-Muslim, Terjemahan.*

Introduction

The Qur'an is the source of guidance, not only for Muslims but also for all humankind. The Qur'an is the holy scripture of Muslims, and non-Muslims attempt to understand its meaning using multiple methods. Translation is one of the important ways to understand Arabic Non-Native people and, the exchange of ideas between religious and intellectual communities. Translation into regional languages helps the community to easily access the content of the book which was not accessible for them before that. Non-Muslim Western scholars have been studying Islamic disciplines, especially the Qur'an and the sciences of the Qur'an. 'They were always very critical of Islam.'¹

On the contrary, the Asian mindset toward religions and their disciplines was always harmonious and compatible. In the Indian Sub-continent, Muslims and non-Muslims have lived in harmony, exchanging interfaith ideas. Communal harmony flourished through understanding 'others', adopting the heritage, culture, and traditions, and helping people to participate in others' socio-cultural explorations irrespective of caste, culture, and language.

The Qur'an has been translated into almost every language of the world. From the early period of expansion of Islam into the Indian sub-continent to the contemporary era, scholars in South Asia have strived to interpret the Qur'an, within the context of their unique, religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage. In the Indian subcontinent, there are several Qur'an translations from Muslims and non-Muslims, in most of its languages, Hindi, Telugu, Sanskrit, Malayalam, Urdu, Tamil, Sikh, Bengali etc. As it is the Islamic world expanded all over the world and the non-Arabic speakers overturned the number of Arabic speakers, it is highly required Qur'an be translated, to the religious existence of Muslims. Muslims are a minority in India, even though Muslim dynasties ruled India for more than 700 years. Though they governed India for more than 700 years, nowadays, they are under oppression and discrimination. As a pluralized society, every community must strive hard for the well-being of the country and the community, through promoting intercultural and interreligious interaction and productive discourses. So, studying the contribution of non-Muslims is essential to understanding the mutual interaction and interreligious activities among different communities in India. The Qur'an is the sacred scripture of Muslims, and many non-Muslims studied and contributed to Qur'anic sciences. They compiled many books,

¹ Receb Dogan, *Usul al-Tafsir: the Sciences and Methodology of the Quran* (Clifton: Tughra Books, 2014), 27–30.

especially translations and commentaries.²

The methodology of this study is qualitative and utilizes library methodology, based on authentic data, using the method of hermeneutic circle to describe the process of understanding hermeneutical text. The research studied selected five important translations, in different regional languages of India. Five translations in five regional languages are selected based on the influence and importance of the translations in those languages. Some of them are a first-ever translation of the Qur'an in a particular language.

Muslim communities across Asia, Africa, and Europe were compelled to communicate the Qur'an with a diverse variety of populations and linguistic groups over the past fifteen centuries.³ During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, translations of the Qur'an liberalized from conventional 'untranslatability', and authors all across the world started to produce myriad translations. The facts that led to the elevation in the number are the spread of print technology, the impact of Western scholarship and Christian missionary works on translation, and other regional reasons.⁴ The Qur'an has been translated into more than 114 languages of the world,⁵ and translated into almost eighteen regional languages of India from 22 constitutionally approved languages in India.⁶ In Indian regional translations, Malayalam and Bengali hold the highest position in the number of translations, while Hindi, Tamil, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, and Telugu stand in the middle range.

The studies and research papers can be found on the South Indian Muslim scholarly contributions in Qur'anic interpretation and translation and many have studied the non-Muslim contribution in Islamic studies.⁷ However, the studies on Qur'anic studies by non-Muslims did not get much attention among researchers. Indian scholars have plenty of compilation in the Qur'anic sciences. The books titled '*Khuda Qur'anic Philosophy*' by R.B. Harish Chandra, *Githa and the Qur'an* by Pundit Sunderlal, '*Congruencies of Fundamentals in the Qur'an, and*

2 Javed Akhtar, "Non-Muslim Indian Scholar to Islamic Studies: A Study of Narendra Nath Law's Treatise," *FITRAH: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (July 10, 2023): 121–34, <https://doi.org/10.24952/fitrah.v9i1.7491>.

3 M. Brett Wilson, "Translations of the Qur'an: Islamicate Languages," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, 2020), 552, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199698646.013.51>.

4 Wilson, 558–59.

5 Nabeel A. Rana, "Quran Translated into 114 Languages," University of Pennsylvania - African Studies Center, accessed March 8, 2024, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Publications/Quran_Translated_13255.html.

6 Sajid Shaffi, "Doctoral Theses on the Qur'anic Studies: A Bibliography," *Aligarh Journal of Quranic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 110-42.

7 Naseem Gul, "Contribution of Non-Muslims to Islamic Studies: A Step of Invigoration for Interfaith Cordiality in India," *IJCRT - International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)* 6, no. 1 (March 2018): 602–13; SherAli Tareen, "South Asian Qur'an Commentaries and Translations: A Preliminary Intellectual History," *ReOrient* 5 (April 1, 2020): 233–56, <https://doi.org/10.13169/reorient.5.2.0233>.

Bhagavathgeeda by Mukundan, *The Essence of the Qur'an*, published by Aghila Bharath Seva Sangam, *Selections from Qur'an* by V.B. Gayi, *Christ in the Qur'an and Bible* by Bandi Shrinivas Rao, *Qur'an Sharif ke Udmath* (Urdu) by C.E. Modiraja, *Qur'an maim Hindi* by Chandpali Pandi and the book *Ethics of the Qur'an* by Madanlal are the important books written by Indian non-Muslims in Qur'anic studies.

The book 'The Study of the Qur'an by non-Muslim Indian scholars'⁸ by Dr. Vazeer Hasan is an extraordinary contribution in the field that gives a short understanding of non-Muslim compilations in Qur'an translation. The book *'Vishudda Quraninu Bharatheeya Samarppanam'* (contribution of Bharath (India) to the Holy Qur'an) by Koyakkutty Farooqi⁹ provides a short description of the contribution of Non-Muslims and Muslims in Qur'anic studies. The book titled *'Qur'an Translations in Indian Regional Languages: A Bibliography'* by Sajid Shaffi provides a list of all Qur'an translations prepared in India.¹⁰ The article titled *'Hindu Scholars' Quranic Studies'* by Feizan Jafar Ali and Muhammad Razi Ma'rufi, gives a short description of the contribution of Hindus in Qur'anic studies.¹¹

It is hoped that this study will provide useful information to Muslims and non-Muslims, interested in Qur'anic studies, and academics who studies on the contribution of non-Muslims in Islamic studies about the following points. A need to understand the contribution of Indian non-Muslim scholars in Qur'anic studies in different languages, the Contribution of Indian non-Muslim scholars in Qur'anic studies, and the Guiding Qur'an for interreligious discourses and understanding the religion of others. The majority of the translators described in this paper are Hindus, So, it is possible to read this paper through that lens also.

Polemic of Translatability of the Holy Qur'an

Before entering into the discussion, it is important to mention the polemic of translatability of the Qur'an which is a long-lasting debate among Muslim scholars.¹² *Tarjama* (translation) is 'to directly translate the meaning of a word, phrase, piece of writing or similar from one language to another without losing or changing the meaning.'¹³ Translatability is identified as the 'capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing

8 Vazeer Hasan, *The Study of the Quran by Non-Muslim Indian Scholars* (India: Adam Publishers, 2007).

9 Koyakkutty Farooqi, *Vishudda Quraninu Bharatheeya Samarppanam* (Kozhikode: Light House Books Farook College, 2012).

10 Shaffi, "Doctoral Theses on the Qur'anic Studies: A Bibliography," 110–42

11 Faizan Jafar Ali, "Hindu Scholars Quranic Studies," trans. Mohammad Rezi Maroufi, *Ayeneh - Ye- Pazhoobesh* 26, no. 6 (2016): 25.

12 Fadil Elmenfi, "Untranslatability of the Holy Quran: Analytical Perspective with Reference to Four English Translations," *Reality, Experiences, Challenges, and Remedies on Teaching and Learning English, Translation, and Literature in the Post-Pandemic Coronavirus Atmosphere in the World* (Berlin, Germany, Democratic Arab Center Strategic, Political & Economic Studies, December 29, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6590981>

13 Dogan, *Usul al-Tafsir: the Sciences and Methodology of the Quran*, 30.

radical change.¹⁴ Arabic is a strictly grammatical language and is very difficult to translate.¹⁵

Though the translatability of the Qur'an is controversial, it has become most common among Muslims and non-Muslims in the past few centuries. The number of converts to Islam arose in the eleventh century who didn't know the Arabic and the meaning of Qur'anic text. This is the main factor that led to the wide translation of the Qur'an.¹⁶ Papacy and orientalism are also key factors in the increase in the number of translations, especially into English.¹⁷

Though Allah revealed the Qur'an in the Arabic language, and it has been preserved since then in Arabic, the majority of Muslims are non-Arabs. Since then, the translatability of the Qur'an has been disputable among Muslim scholars.¹⁸ The question appeared from those who denied the translatability of the Qur'an states accuracy and translatability. Classical scholar al-Ghazālī and modern scholars Muṣṭafa al-Ṣabri Efendi (d.1954), and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr (d.1928) are the important proponents of this argument.¹⁹ The mist of the argument that calls for the translation is that the Qur'an is not only revealed to Arabs or Muslims, but it should reach all humankind kind of region, religion race, language, or time. Allah asked all to access the guidance of God from the Qur'an regardless of linguistic differences. Classical scholar al-Zamaksharī and modern famous scholar Muḥammad Muṣṭafa al-Marāghī (d.1945) are the important proponents of this argument.²⁰

On the other hand, classical Muslim scholars mostly consider the text of the Qur'an can't be equivalent to the revealed intended meaning.²¹ Unlike other scriptures, the Qur'an can only exist in its original languages. The questions of the translatability of the Qur'an are related to the language and theology. Linguistic difficulties, lexical problems, semantic problems, metaphor, metonymy, ellipsis, and polysemy are the most common difficulties that occur in the translation of the Qur'an.²²

14 Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 273.

15 Dogan, *Usul al-Tafsir: the Sciences and Methodology of the Quran*, 30.

16 Ahmad Mustafa Halimah, "Translation of the Holy Quran: A Call for Standardization," *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 5, no. 1 (February 1, 2014): 122–33.

17 Tijani Boulaouali, "Quran Translation: A Historical-Theological Exploration," *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 2021): 120–32, <https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.19.2021.202>.

18 Suhail Hidayat and Sohirin Mohammad Solihin, "Translatability of the Qur'an: An Analysis of Linguistic and Theological Elements," *Islamic Insight Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 12–36.

19 Hidayat and Solihin, 31.

20 Hidayat and Solihin, 30.

21 Ahd Othman, "Narratives of (Un)Translatability: The Recurrent Case of the Qur'an," *Translation Studies* (2023): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781700.2023.2279044>.

22 Fadil Elmenfi, "Untranslatability of the Holy Quran: Analytical Perspective with Reference to Four English Translations," *Reality, Experiences, Challenges, and Remedies on Teaching*

Traditionalist scholars who allowed translation of the Qur'an only allowed 'translation in meaning' which is the expression of the meaning of the original text with words close to, or similar, in meaning. Concerns within the language and theological concerns are the important arguments of this group.

When it comes to non-Muslims, it is a high task for them to translate a holy book to which they have no relation, especially the Qur'an as it is very sensitive. The translator has to prepare for a long time, to learn Arabic for Arabic Non-Natives, the fundamentals of the book, religious beliefs, and as well as the basic rules of the translation for a sacred scripture, even non-Muslims who studied Arabic can't understand the meaning of the Qur'an as it understood by a believer, at least, in the respect that a believer giving to the Qur'an.

1. Hindi Translation by Vinay Kumar Awasthi

There are more than twenty translations of the Qur'an of which four or five translations is referred to non-Muslims. The translation named "*Quran Sharif - Tafsiir Majidi*"²³ is a Hindi translation of the Qur'an, translated by a non-Muslim scholar named Vinay Kumar Awasthi. His father has also attempted to contribute to the way of Islam and the Qur'an²⁴ and Vinay Kumar was encouraged and motivated by him to translate. His father had compiled a translation of the Qur'an.²⁵ Vazeer Hasan writes:

"His father, Mr. Nand Kumar Awasthi had published a valuable Hindi edition of the Quran in 1969. In this unparalleled edition, he had produced the text in Devanagari script along with the Arabic text and its Hindi translation which was based on those English and Urdu translations of the Quran which were regarded as authentic. It was commended highly by the scholars of repute. Therefore, being encouraged by this work of his father and using the experience Vinay Kumar decided to do the present translation".²⁶

This translation was compiled depending on the exegesis of the Qur'an by Moulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, who was a famous Muslim scholar, writer, and exegete of the Qur'an. He had an independent Qur'anic tafsir entitled "*Tafsiir Majidi*" in Urdu language and an English tafsir named "*Al Quran Al Adeem*"²⁷.

The translation of Vinay Kumar is considered the translation of *Tafsiir Majidi*. This book was published in Lucknow, Kitabghar. The author made

and Learning English, Translation, and Literature in the Post-Pandemic Coronavirus Atmosphere in the World (Berlin, Germany, Democratic Arab Center Strategic, Political & Economic Studies, December 29, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6590981>.

23 Vinay Kumar Awasthi, *Quran Sharif-Tafsiir Majidi* (India: Lucknow Kitab Ghar, 1983), 512.

24 Nand Kumar Awasthi, *Quran Sharif- Translation with Notes* (India: Lucknow Publication, 2014), 1024.

25 Akhtar, "Non-Muslim Indian Scholar to Islamic Studies: A Study of Narendra Nath Law's Treatise," 121–34.

26 Hasan, *The Study of the Quran by Non-Muslim Indian Scholars*.

27 Abdur Raheem Kidwai, "Abdul Majid Daryabadi's English Translation of and Commentary on the Quran (1957): An Assessment," *Aligarh Journal of Quranic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 36–55.

a commendation of Mawlānā 'Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī as he depended on him for the translation. He regards him as the most distinctive scholar among the translators and commentators of the Qur'an. According to him, it is like a mirror of the ideology and understanding of the Sunni sect of Muslims as well as those having correct faith among Muslims. He was very impressed by the exegesis of the Moulana and understood the importance of the translation.

The translation text starts with the preface of Mawlānā Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwi who was one of the distinguished and well-known Indian Islamic scholars who wrote lots of books in Urdu and Arabic. He also expressed his pleasure in his attempt. A note from Ḥakīm 'Abdul Qavi Daryābādī follows the preface of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwi.

There are several characteristics of this translation. It has the Arabic text of the Qur'an which was intentionally omitted from some of the Western translations of the Qur'an and Qur'anic script in Devanagari also. To help those who know Hindi, to make the reading correctly, instructions and understanding about the reading and context of the Qur'anic text have been provided. Moreover, he provided an index of the subjects and chapters, and a description of Arabic words that are difficult to understand has also been included. He made an immense effort to make the words and language easily understandable for common people. He included some of the Urdu words which are commonly used such as *Miqdar Maqṣad*. His immense effort to translate the exegesis of Moulana and his translation is a perfect meaning of the Qur'an has been appreciated by the majority of Muslims because it was based on the belief of Ahlusunnah which is the way of majority of the Muslims. So that he got acceptance and popularity among Muslims. For instance, he translates the verse:²⁸

ان للذين كفروا سواء عليهم ءأذرتهم ام لم تنذرهم لا يؤمنون. ختم الله على قلوبهم وعلى سمعهم وعلى ابصارهم غشاوة ولهم عذاب عظيم

जनि लोगो ने इंकार किया, उनके लिए समान है डराओ, या न डराओ, वे मानने वाले नहीं हैं। अल्लाह ने उनके दिलों पर और उनके कानों पर मुहर लगा दी है। और उनकी आँखों पर पर्दा है। और उनके लिए बड़ा अज़ाब है।

Another verse:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ حَقًّا لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا مَعَكُمْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مِنْكُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ الْأَرْحَامُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

और जो लोग ईमान लाए और उन्होंने हजिरत (स्थान परविरतन) की और अल्लाह की राह में जहाद किया और जनि लोगो ने पनाह दी और मदद की, यही लोग सचचे मोमनि हैं। इनके लिए बखशशि है और बेहतरीन रजिक है। और जो लोग बाद में ईमान लाए और हजिरत की और तुम्हारे साथ मलिकर जहाद किया वे भी तुम में से हैं। और खून के रशितेदार एक दूसरे के ज्यादा हकदार

है अल्लाह की कतिब में। बेशक अल्लाह हर चीज़ का जानने वाला है।²⁹

It is noteworthy that he included the Arabic text of the verses in his translation. It facilitates the readers for correct and easy understanding of the meaning of the Qur'an. His book is the translation of the Quran commentary by 'Abdul Mājid Daryābādī. That's why we can see his name as the author in some of the publications of the Hindi translation.

2. Telugu Translation by Chilukoori Narayan Rao

There are more than ten translations of the Qur'an in Telugu, of which three translations are from non-Muslims. The first translation of the Qur'an in Telugu was written by Chilukoori Narayan Rao (1890—1951), an acclaimed Hindu professor, who was considered a social reformer. He was known by the name 'Andhra Pithamaha.' He published his translation in 1930, initiated work in 1915, and completed it after fifteen years in 1930 and the second edition in 1938. Rao described all his efforts for the completion of the work and the history of the fifteen years. He writes the way he completed the work:

I have selected two Maulavies who gave sound knowledge of the Arabic language. They took the Arabic Qur'an into their hands. On my side, I kept English versions for reference. At every stage, I discussed with these Maulavies. During my work, I tried my best to retain the original meaning of the text as far as possible. After the completion of the work, I read the translated copy to my Muslim friends who were well acquainted with the traditions and they made corrections wherever necessary. Thus I ventured to print and print the Qur'an in Telugu to the Andhra world.³⁰

Two Maulavies, he mentioned above, Muḥammed Ismā'īl who was munshi (teacher) of the Arabic, Persian, and Urdu languages, and K.M Farooq who was a lecturer, at Government College of Anadhapur. He has included appreciation and gratitude to the two scholars who helped him to understand the Arabic words and to the translation of the Qur'an. He entered into the work of the translation to make the harmony long-lasting between Muslims and Hindus. They were living here for centuries accepting the practices of each other. They have also borrowed some of the virtues into their religions. But never tried to understand others' beliefs and rituals. He was afraid of communal riots and hatred between Muslims and Hindus if they were nothing about other religions. He realized that the effective way to make Muslims translate the sacred text into their language. He says:

Many times, during the Hindu-Muslim riots it appeared as if danger was ahead for these two communities. In such critical circumstances, the Telugu translation has paved the way for communal harmony and brotherhood between the followers of these two faiths. If such friendly relations prevail then the translator and publishers acknowledge, that the creation of such a friendly atmosphere is enough reward for their efforts in producing this book.³¹

He recognized the difficulty of the translation of Qur'anic text into another language. He admits that it was not easy to bring out the original mist from one

29 Awasthi. *Quran Sharif-Tafsir Majidi*, 230.

30 Chilukoori Narayan Rao, *Quran Telugu Translation* (Madras: Sharada Press, 1930).

31 Rao, 13.

language to another, especially between Arabic and Telugu. He writes:

This is the language in which prophet Muhammed (PBUH) understood the revelations of the Qur'an through the medium of the angel Gabriel. Also, this was the language he used for the propagation of the new faith with great zeal and enthusiasm. There is no equivalent language to Arabic in Arabia. Thus, it is needless to say that while the translation is made into foreign languages it loses its flavor. We are mainly concerned with its spirit which if properly understood can go a long way in making all human beings live peacefully in this world.³²

He added an introduction to the book which includes the history of pre-Islamic Arabs and their practices, a life history of Prophet Muhammed and Islam. He has written Arabic sentences in Telugu script explaining the meaning in Telugu of the Muslim faith and practices. He had translated all the verses of the Qur'an into Telugu. The first edition of the translation in Telugu was printed in 1930 and in the same year, all the copies were exhausted. Some reports say that his friends bought copies of the book and helped him from the financial crisis. Because the libraries and other institutions didn't accept his book to be distributed, he printed the second edition of the book ignoring their restrictions. However, the words and language used in the translation are very old and belong to the 20th century. But the second edition is improved compared to the first.³³

He wanted to show similarities between the Muslim and Hindu faiths and identify the cause of friction between them. Not only Muslims but also non-Muslims also got benefits from the translation. As he mentioned in his introduction, Muslims were not only his aim group but to make a sound relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims through his translation.³⁴ His translation got intense criticism from Muslim scholars, due to the errors, mistranslation of the verses, and misunderstanding of the exact meaning of the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam.

Muhammed Qāsim Khan, an educator, and Muslim scholar prepared a new Telugu translation that was praised by prominent Telugu scholars as a piece of literature and won the acclaim of the highest merit which deserves the widest publicity. This was published by Hyderabad Telugu Academy in 1945. He described the interest behind the second translation as it addresses the problems of the first translation. The reason behind the immediate attempt at rendering the Qur'an the inaccuracies he found in Rao's work. Qāsim Khan described this in a lengthy article in 'Andhra Dina Patrika' published from Madras, dated 14th July 1930.³⁵

3. Bengali Translation by Girish Chandra Sen

There are more than thirty translations of the Qur'an in Bengali, modern and old, in which two or three translations are referred to non-Muslims. The first-

³² Rao, 15.

³³ Mazhar Mumtaz, *Quran Majeed kai Tarjum Junubi Hind Ki Zaban (Translation of the holy Quran in south Indian languages)* (Karachi: Educational Press, 1990), 127.

³⁴ Mumtaz, 125–26.

³⁵ Fazale Kareem, ed., *The Holy Quran with full Arabic text in Telugu* (Pakistan: Falcon Publishing House, 2021), 1–7.

ever translation of the Qur'an in the Bengali language is the book titled '*Bengali Translation of the Holy Quran*'³⁶ by a Hindu Girish Chandra Sen (1834—1910) known as 'Moulavi Bhai', who was born in the present Nasagiri district of Bangladesh. He was also the first to write the history of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Bengali. His father, Keshab Chandra Sen, who was a preacher from the Brahma Samaj, asked him to focus on religious studies and he deputed Girish to study Islam. He was very much influenced by Brahman religious leader Keshabchandra who built a religious seminary that combined the archaeological features of several religions.³⁷

Keshabchandra asked him to prepare a Qur'an translation in Bengali language. He traveled to India, and Lucknow, and learned different languages, especially Arabic. He studied Arabic literature, history hadith, and tafsir from Muslim scholars. He depended on *Tafsir E Hosseini of Molla Qaij Kashefu* and the book of *Shah Abdul Kader*.³⁸

He commenced the work in 1881 and completed it within six years in 1886. The first volume of translation was published in 1881. says: "*When I devoted myself to the Arabic language, then many friends requested me to translate the Qur'an into Bengali. Some Muslim friends also requested me. The main objective of the study of the Arabic language is to study the Holy Qur'an and its translation of it into Bengali. For the aspiration of my friends and my responsibility, I rendered the Qur'an now*".³⁹

He thought that Muslims don't make their divine text available for other religions in contrast to Christians. They translated the bible into different languages and made their religion expand in other nations. On the other hand, the knowledge of the Arabic language is rare among other nations. Also, Muslim scholars have different opinions on the translatability of the Qur'an.⁴⁰

After the completion of the translation, he was welcomed and also threatened by Muslim society due to the dispute on the translatability of the Qur'an. He added a letter at the beginning of the translation which he received from Abdul Als and Abdul Aziz, former professors of Calcutta. The Muslim scholars unanimously agree that he was the pioneer of the translation of the Qur'an in Bengali despite the errors that occurred in his translation.⁴¹

The main problem of his translation is that it does not include the Arabic text

36 Girish Chandra Sen, *Quran Shareef, Bengali Translation of The Holy Quran* (India: Harof, 2015).

37 M.M. Rahman, *Bangla Bhashay Quran Charcha* (Dhaka: Islamic foundation. 1995), 53.

38 Mizanur Rahman, "Studies and Evaluation on the Translations of the Holy Qur'an in Bengali During the British Colonial Time in the Indian Sub-Continent," *International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research* 10, no. 1 (July 14, 2023): 23–48, <https://doi.org/10.46291/IJOSPERvol10iss1pp23-48>.

39 Sen, *Quran Shareef, Bengali Translation of The Holy Quran*, 62.

40 Sen, *Quran Shareef, Bengali Translation of The Holy Quran*, 63.

41 Md Masudur Rahman, "Translation of the Holy Qur'an in Bangla: A Historical Perspective," *International Journal of Islamic Thoughts* 7, no. 2 (2018): 1–17, <https://ijits.net/ojs3/index.php/ijits/article/view/106>.

of the Qur'an which makes troubles to the readers to understand the meaning of the Qur'an fully. His translation was criticized by some scholars as propaganda of the Brahma Samaj, a biased, incomplete translation. He sacrificed his life for the contribution he has made to Islam and Muslims. He has also been criticized for translating the Qur'an without having sufficient skills and basic Qualifications.⁴²

For example, he translates Surah Al-Fātiḥah:

বিশ্বপালক পরমশ্বেবররেই সম্বক প্রশংসা। ২ + তনিদাতা ও দয়ালু। ৩। +

বচারদবিসরে অধপিতা। ৪। আমরা তোমাকইমাত্র অর্চনা করতিছে, এবং তোমার নকিটে মাত্র সাহায্য প্রার্থনা করতিছে। ৫। তুমি আমাদগিকে সরল পথ প্রদর্শন কর।

৬। + যাহাদগিরে প্রতী আক্রোশ হইয়াছে, এবং যাহারা পথভ্রান্ত তাহাদরে পথ নয়, যাহাদরে প্রতী তুমিক্ৰীপা করিয়াছ তাহাদগিরে পথ প্রদর্শন কর। ৭।⁴³

The readers of his translation may have difficulties due to the omission of the Arabic text of the Holy Qur'an in his translation.

4. Malayalam Poetic Translation by KG Ragavan Nair

Malayalam is privileged to have had several contributions from both Muslims and non-Muslims in the fields of Qur'anic studies translations and commentaries. It is also remarkable that an intense debate happened among Muslim scholars on the translatability of the Qur'an. Poetic translation of the Qur'an is rarely available and most of them are in Urdu.⁴⁴

There are five Malayalam poetic translations of the Qur'an, Amrihtavaani, by Kg Raghavan Nair, from Palakkad of Kerala, another poetic translation by Ragavan Nair from Konniyoor, Pathanamthitta of Kerala, entitled Divya Deepthi, the translation by Jamaludheen Kunch from Alapuzha, a translation by Guru Nithya Chaithanya Yathi who translated Surah Al-Fātiḥah, Al-Baqarah, and Surah Yāsīn, and the translation by Ali Kannothe who translated some of the surahs into the Mappilappattu sect.⁴⁵ There are also Malayalam translations for non-Muslims such as translation by S.N. Krishnan Rao, editor of the monthly journal 'Sadguru'.

KG Ragavan Nair was born in Pathanamthitta, a district of Kerala. He worked in defense accountancy and retired in 1969 as chief of the pay accounts of defense in Kannur. He completed the translation with immense effort. He describes his effort to translate the Qur'an in the introduction of his book "*The Poetic Translation of*

42 Rahman, "Studies and Evaluation on the Translations of the Holy Qur'an in Bengali During the British Colonial Time in the Indian Sub-Continent," 28.

43 Sen, *Quran Shareef, Bengali Translation of The Holy Quran*, 66.

44 Farooqi, *Vishudda Quraninu Bharatbeeeya Samarpanam*, 50.

45 Sakkeer P. Hussain, "Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala during 18th Century to 20th Century" (Dissertation, Aligarh, Aligarh Muslim University, 2010), 141. <https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in:8443/jspui/handle/10603/60798.141>.

the Concept of the Holy Quran is an Adventure”.⁴⁶ When he was asked by his critics about his experience with the writing of the Qur’an, he replied in the introduction of the translation.

At the end of 1969, after retiring from official life and settling in Chunangad, I got a translation of the Holy Quran written by CN Ahmed Moulavi, I was amazed and excited to read his beautiful work, after the completion of the reading and studying of his translation I realized the errors and misconceptions in my thoughts on Islam and its ideologies. I had studied the bible in my childhood and understood the Qur’anic concepts from the bible.⁴⁷

He read the complete history of the prophet Muhammed and the history of Mecca and Medina before the translation and decided to translate the Qur’an into Malayalam. He describes his experience while he traveled for the collection of data and information in the preface. Before the commencement of the work, he went to meet his cousin P. K. Narayana Pillai, but he discouraged him saying that the Qur’an contains spiritual and material concepts and the translation can’t survive that. He suggested that it should be prepared only after a deep study of the Malayalam and English translations of the Qur’an. The next day I met his friend MA Kareem and he gave me many of the translations of the Qur’an in English and Malayalam. Without his help, this book would not see the light.

The translation was published by IPH (Islamic Publishing House) in 1997 in Kozhikode. In this book, he verified 144 chapters of the Qur’an. He reviewed the Qur’an paragraph-wise part of each Surah and in this way, the whole surah was translated. He followed admittedly the translation of Abdullah Yusuf Ali entitled *The Holy Quran*.⁴⁸

He learned Sanskrit and English, but the lack of knowledge in Arabic is explicitly clear in his translation due to conceptual errors. He made many mistakes and errors in the translations, especially in translating special Arabic concepts as it comes important in the translation of the Qur’an. He got wide acceptance and appreciation from eminent poets in Kerala such as O.N.V. Kurup Ayyappa Panicker (1930—2006), S. Guptan Nair (2006), M.P. Appan (1913—2003), and historian N.A. Kareem.⁴⁹

For instance, he translates Surah Al-Fātiḥah:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ (1:1)

കാര്യണ്ണ സിന്ധുവാം അജ്ജാഹുവിൻ തിരു

നാമത്തിലോതുന്നു ദിവ്യമാം സൂക്തികൾ

(1:2) الحمد لله رب العالمين

ലോകങ്ങളെക്കൊയും കാത്തുരക്ഷിച്ചിടും

46 K.G. Raghavan Nair, *Amrthavani* (Calicut: Islamic Publishing House, 1997), 12.

47 Nair, 13.

48 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran* (Delhi: Global Islamic Publication, 2011), 1–2146.

49 Hussain, “Development of Islamic Studies in Kerala during 18th Century to 20th Century”, 141–44.

ലോകൈക നാഥനെ വാഴ്ത്തുന്നു സർവ്വദം

الرحمن الرحيم (1:3)

കാരുണ്യമേറുന്ന രക്ഷകാ നിൻ കൃപാപുരം

നിരന്തരം വർഷിക്ക ഞങ്ങളിൽ

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ (1:4)

തീർപ്പുകൾ നൽകുന്ന വാസരെ ഞങ്ങളെ

കാരുണ്യമോടു കാത്തുകൊള്ളണമേ

ധ്യാനത്തിലാമലജ്ജമാകും മനÊp-മായി

കാലം കഴിക്കുന്നു സർവ്വദാ ഞങ്ങളും

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (1:5)

നിന്നോടു മാത്രം നിവേദനം ചെയ്തിടും

അന്യ ദൈവങ്ങളെ തേടില്ലൊരിക്കലും

أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (1:6)

നേരായ മാർഗ്ഗം തെളി-ണ രക്ഷകാ

പാരാതെ നിത്യം നയിക്കുമാറാകണേ

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ (1:8)

ശത്രുക്കൾ പോയാരു മാർദ്ദേ-W ദൈവമേ

ലക്ഷ്യത്തിലെത്താൻ തുണക്കുമാറാകണേ

നിൻകോപവർഗ്ഗയിൽ വിന്നോരു മർത്യന്റെ

പിൻപേ അതക്കലാ രക്ഷകാ⁵⁰

It should be noted that the poetic translation of the Qur'an is not acceptable to the majority of Muslim scholars. They have significance as scholarly contributions in Qur'anic studies, even if their contribution is regarded as lawful in Islamic tradition.

5. Sanskrit Translation by Satya Devo Verma

It is very difficult to find Qur'an translations in Sanskrit. There have been fewer contacts and exchanges between the two ancient and rich languages. A Hindu scholar Satya Devo Verma translated the Qur'an in the name 'Sanskrittham Quranam' in Sanskrit. In the preface of this translation, he produced a list of various

50 Nair, Amrthavani, 15.

religious topics, such as the unity of Allah, his attributes, the rise of religion and the end of unrighteousness, the ethics of punishment, the transmigration of the soul, etc. These subjects have been described in the Qur'an as well as in a religious scripture of Hinduism.⁵¹

This was published by Laxmi Publication, New Delhi in 1990. His translation is compiled based on the Hindi translation of Muḥammad Fāruq Khan of al-Hasanat and the translation of Pickthall. He was a renowned Sanskrit scholar who contributed a lot to Sanskrit. He took upon a mission to propagate Sanskrit as a language of day-to-day communication. For his dedication and services, he was awarded the Sanskrit Academy Awards by the State Governments of Haryana, Delhi, and Maharashtra.⁵²

Razia Sultana, the granddaughter of eminent author Mohammad Suleiman has translated the Qur'an into Sanskrit. Her father had translated the Qur'an into Hindi and he is also a scholar in Sanskrit as she was inspired by him.

Impact the Translations in the Social and Religious Domain in India

The translation of the Holy Qur'an into another language in the Indian sub-continent facilitated constructive and cooperative interaction between people of different religious faiths and spiritual and humanistic beliefs. Translating the Qur'an into a native language may contain certain ideologies in the socio-religious domain. India is a plural society where multiple religions have existed and sustained for centuries. In recent years, communal conflicts have grown in India and thousands of people have been killed in these religious conflicts, most importantly Muslims. The people of Hindutva used the Qur'an and some of its words such as *jihād*, *ṭalaq*, and *kāfir*, etc. Several times, the extremists quote Qur'an verses out of context aiming to make polarization among religions. Often, this caused riots and attacks against Muslims in the political and social domain.

Atrocities against minority religions, especially towards Muslims and Christians have increased. The Hindu extremist groups often misquote and distort Qur'an verses and misinterpret Qur'anic words such as *jihād* and *ṭalaq*, for hostility towards them or pure ignorance. In such a context, Qur'anic translations with socio-cultural influences will help in defending those misinterpretations. Muslim contribution to Indian history came from al-Bīrūnī's historical journey to India and the publication of his renowned book *Tārīkh al-Hind*. Hinduism is the first religion in India. Throughout history, multiple religions born within Hinduism like Buddhism and Jainism, and some came from outside like Islam and Christianity. These religions are sustained here in multiple ways such as propagation through the Holy Scriptures, educational institutions, and religious seminaries.

In the introduction of Telugu translation, Narayan Rao explained that he came forward for this endeavor seeing the communal hatred among Hindu-Muslim communities, especially in his state Andhra Pradesh, a state of Indian Union. He

51 Hasan, *The Study of the Quran by Non-Muslim Indian Scholars*, 294.

52 Sanskrit Ke Purodha - Prof. Satya Dev Verma., 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_NCrcLbFof4.

understood that the problem could not be solved unless they each understood the teachings of others.⁵³

The actual translation of the Holy Qur'an facilitated understanding of the actual meaning of meaning of the Qur'an for a large population who can't learn Arabic. The translation of the Holy Qur'an from the eminent scholars of other religions reduced the intensity of criticism against Muslims and misinterpretation of Qur'an verses. The influence of cultural diversity in the translation, especially in the Indian context helped in understanding the contextual meaning of the holy Qur'an for people from different cultures. It helped to reach out to people of different mindsets, and individuals who have different backgrounds. It also reduced the prejudices against the Islam and Qur'an and shared responsibilities among the religions, especially in shared values. It equipped people to reject fundamentalism and promote pluralism. The translations are also used by Muslim preachers to reach out the Islamic ideologies.

53 Rao, *Quran Telugu Translation*, 10–15.

Conclusion

The Qur'an has been translated into almost seventeen consistently approved Indian languages. The decision to study five selected translations from different languages, which were considered scholarly contributions to Islam from other religious scholars, was very difficult, due to the inaccessibility of copies of some of the translations. There are also other translations some of them aren't accessible and some are prepared from different angles. It is noteworthy that the researcher can't find any non-Muslim translations of the Qur'an in Tamil, Assamese, Gujarati, Kannada, Kashmiri, Manipuri, Marathi, and Nepali.

The study asserts that although the Indian sub-continent has many contributions to Qur'anic studies, it is less compared to the contribution of other large countries or subcontinents. There may be multiple reasons for that, such as political, cultural, linguistic, or religious reasons. The discourse among Muslims on the translatability of the Qur'an also has an impact in this case. The financial crisis is another burden behind the task of the translation as it says in many cases. The majority of works which traced the history of Qur'an studies, especially Qur'an commentaries and translations did not even consist of a single line on the contribution of non-Muslims. The study observed that the majority of works that traced the history of Qur'anic studies, especially Qur'an commentaries and translations did not even consist of a single line on the contribution of non-Muslims.

All works, done by these scholars are the result of hard work, dedication, and open-minded approaches. The challenges that they faced during the work, from a Muslim theological context, and within their community didn't affect them. Their contribution should be remembered for generations for the existence of Democracy and secular attributes of this sub-continent. The religious harmony in India, praised by historians, happened through relentless activities within different religions. Muslim scholars, especially in the era of Muslim rulers, translated Hindu texts into Arabic, Persian, and other languages, and Muslim texts into their languages. Islamic ideas have been receiving a considerable response from academic researchers.

The Qur'anic studies of non-Muslims led to the sustainable existence of religious harmony among different communities. India has a rich history of academic and intellectual engagement with Islamic studies. The translation of the Qur'an as it is the holy scripture of Muslims also flourished the intellectual discourses that happened among scholars through translation. The Qur'an became accessible to every people irrespective of the differences in language, culture, region, and religion. It is noteworthy that many more productions of non-Muslims brought negative impacts on the Qur'an, such as the accusation of creation, preservation, and distribution, especially from orientalist through erroneous translations. Nowadays, attacks from extremists through adopting the meaning of Qur'anic methodologies out of context, such as *jihād* and *ḥalāl* are increasing. It is a good solution that interreligious contributions where they discover actual meaning

through actual translation will facilitate sustainable harmony and intellectual discourses.

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