
Translation of Terms by Renowned English Translators of the Holy Quran (A Comparative Analysis)

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Abstract

The translation of the Holy Quran into English presents unique challenges, as translators must balance linguistic dependability, theological accuracy, and cultural sensitivity. This study explores the translation of key terms by renowned English translators of the Quran. The research examines the translators' approaches to rendering distinctive Arabic terms into English by conducting a comparative analysis. Through linguistic analysis, this paper seeks to uncover the relationship between linguistic choices and theological interpretations, offering insights into how translators navigate the complex task of conveying divine scripture to a diverse, non-Arabic-speaking audience. The findings aim to contribute to broader discussions on Quranic translation and to open various avenues for further research on the topic.

Keywords: terms, equivalent words, translation process, "source text" (ST), target language (TL); "target text" (TT), comparison

Introduction:

The importance of Arabic to English translation is vital for several reasons. It bridges communication gaps between Arabic-speaking and English-speaking communities, fostering understanding and collaboration in various fields such as business, diplomacy, and education. Arabic, with its rich cultural heritage and diverse dialects, encompasses a wealth of knowledge in literature, science, philosophy and religion.

The translation of texts from Arabic to English holds significant importance, especially when it comes to conveying the meanings of Quranic verses and terminology accurately. As the Quran is divine and a central religious text in Islam, ensuring that its verses are translated with accuracy is vital for Muslims and non-Arabic speakers to understand its teachings and principles. A clear and faithful translation helps to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, allowing a broader audience to access the

wisdom contained within the Quran and guidance for mankind especially, Muslims to attain peace and prosperity in life here and hereafter.

This translation process is not limited to transforming words from one language to another; it requires a deep understanding and interpretation of the context, delicacies involved in the whole process, and spiritual significance that each verse carries. The layers of meaning found in the Quran are sometimes dependent on context which makes the role of translators critical and challenging to find equivalents for accurate and faithful translation. We will briefly review the translation and its process to evaluate the translation of certain terms by prominent translators.

What is Translation?

Etymologically¹, "translation" is a "carrying across" or "bringing across." The Latin "translatio" derives from the past participle, "translatus," of "transferre" ("to transfer" - from "trans, ""across" + "ferre," "to carry" or "to bring").²

It is a process of "Communication", by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior which is at the heart of all human interactions. In more technical and academic terms, "Translation is the communication of the meaning of a source-language text by means of an equivalent target-language text."³

In Arabic, the equivalent of translation is "Tarjumah" (ترجمة) and the translator is called "Tarjuman" (ترجمان) the person who engaged in the process of translation from the source language to the target language. Since the beginning, particularly since medieval translation became one of the key modes of transferring information and knowledge into the target language for native speakers. In Arabic, the process of translation is narrated similarly.

تبليغ الكلام لمن لم يبلغه⁴

To communicate the message to the person who has not received it.

تفسير الكلام بلغته التي جاء بها. ومنه قيل لابن عباس- رضى الله عنه انه ترجمان القرآن⁵

To explain the text in the same language as Ibn-i-Abbass had done by commenting and explaining the Quran, he was given the title of Tarjaman-ul-Quran. (ترجمان القرآن)

تفسير الكلام بلغة غير لغته⁶

"To explain things in another language".

نقل الكلام من لغة الى اخرى⁷

"To transfer the message from one language to another language".

Its terminological meanings are as follows

الترجمة اصطلاحاً: هي التعبير عن معنى كلام في لغة بكلام آخر في لغة اخرى مع الوفاء بجميع معانيه ومقاصده.

To express and explain the meaning of any text in another language by finding equivalent words to communicate the same meaning and message. In this whole process, the role of translators is essential, and the translator's own fundamental underlying theological beliefs are required to be prevented from interfering in the process of translation as well as from misinterpreting the rendered text. It is an important fact that the experts differentiate between Tafsir and Translation⁸

Translators serve as "ethnographers"⁹ bridging the source and target languages. They align experiences from the Source Text with those in the Target Text, acting as mediators between two cultures. Their knowledge and goals are reflected in their translations. Translation communicates the meaning of a source-language text through an equivalent target-language text and has historically facilitated cultural exchange. The Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam, is one of the most translated texts, as many Muslims who do not speak Arabic rely on translations to understand its meanings. The study of translation is becoming increasingly important in the age of Generative AI.

The text to be translated is called the "source text" (ST), and the language it is to be translated into is called the target language (TL); the final product is sometimes called the "target text" (TT). Therefore, it is considered a skill and a craft consisting of the attempt to replace a written message and statement in one language with the same message and statement in another language". Qur'an has its own style and rhythm that is neither poetry nor prose¹⁰ and its translation is more complex, complicated and challenging as it is unique in its all aspects from linguistic to its many fold meanings.

The translation of terms from the source language to the target language plays a crucial role in effective communication. Accurate translation ensures that the intended meaning is preserved and understood by the target audience. It not only facilitates comprehension but also helps maintain cultural distinction and context. Therefore, the translation of theological discourses, eschatology, and terminologies is the challenging aspect of this whole process of translation. It is a known fact that hundreds of Arabic words do not have any equivalent word for translation in other languages for instance Attributes of Allah Almighty and A'fv, Jihad, Rabb, kufr, 'ibadah, etc. are some examples of it.

It is challenging for translators to have deeper understanding of Arabic language as Arabic words are constructed on trilateral roots and with extensions can lead their meaning to several implications and while translating them one can face the problem that which of the implications is

closer to the Quranic verse(s) and may miss the other connotations for being the person of other language. It will limit the meaning of the divine message. These were some of the reasons that the early Muslim Scholars emphasized the teaching and learning of the Arabic Language as Imam Shafe'i (RA) was of the view that the learning of the Arabic language is obligatory on every Muslim. Ibn Taymiyyah and many other scholars were of the same opinion. Imam Abu Yousuf and Zufar (students of Imam Abu Hanifah) had more strict opinion that it is makruh (undesirable) for two Muslims who can manage conversation in Arabic, to have a conversation with each other in another language.¹¹

Examples of a few terms, their roots and equivalents in the English Language:

Many of the Qur'anic words are to be understood in strictly Islamic terminological terms. The translator needs to bring the equivalents in target language for accurate communication of the message. Some examples are given below:¹²

Words: Terms/Phrases/Attributes etc. And Transliteration	Trilateral Words: Roots and Meanings
“Taqwa” (تَقْوَى):	"و ق ي" to shield, protect, guard.
“Al-Hasana” (الْحَسَنَةُ):	"ح س ن" to be good, beautiful.
“Ina’hu Huwa Al-Samiyun Al-alimun” (إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ):	س م ع to hear ع ل م to know
“Fitna” (فِتْنَةٌ):	"ف ت ن" (to test, try).
“Maruf” and “Munkar” (مَنْكُر, معروف):	"ع ر ف", to know. Refers to what is morally upright or recognized as good. "ن ك ر", to deny. Refers to what is morally wrong and universally recognized as evil.
“In’nalla’ha Yuhib’bul-Muqsiteen” (لَئِنْ لَّلهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ):	"ق س ط" to distribute fairly
“Al-Mar’hma” (الْمَرْحَمَةُ):	"ر ح م" to have mercy.
“Um’mul-Qura Wa ma’n Holha” (أُمُّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا):	ق ر ي to settle. (قَرْيَةٌ village). Mother of Cities. Metaphor used for Holy City of Makkah

These and numerous other Arabic Terms are deeply rooted in the rich history of the language. Renowned dictionaries such as Lisan al-Arab by Ibn Manzur, Taj al-Arus by Al-Zabidi, and Al-Sihah by Al-Jawhari

provide detailed insights into the meanings, uses, and of these words, reflecting the depth and complexity of Arabic vocabulary. The English translations of these terms only give approximate meanings.¹³ These terms are fundamental to Qur'anic translation and its syntax, playing a crucial role alongside deep theological, moral, and grammatical significance and understanding. Commentators of the Holy Quran have also illuminated the terms referred by translators of the Holy Quran as well.

“Taqwa” (تَقْوَى)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَجْلُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا آمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامِ يَنْتَعُونَ فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُوا. وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ. وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ.¹⁴

Pickthall: O ye who believe! Profane not Allah's monuments nor the Sacred Month nor the offerings nor the garlands, nor those repairing to the Sacred House, seeking the grace and pleasure of their Lord. But when you leave the sacred territory, go hunting (if ye will). And let not your hatred of a folk who (once) stopped you're going to the inviolable place of worship seduce you to transgress; but help ye one another unto **righteousness and pious duty**. Help not one another unto sin and transgression but keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is severe in punishment.

Yusuf Ali: O ye who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, nor the sacred month, nor of the animals brought for sacrifice, nor the garlands that mark out such animals, nor the people resorting to the sacred house, seeking of the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord. But when ye are clear of the holy precincts and pilgrim garb, ye may hunt and let not the hatred of some people in (once) shutting you out of the Sacred Mosque led you to transgression (and hostility on your part). Help ye one another in **righteousness and piety** but help ye not one another in sin and rancour: fear Allah: for Allah is strict in punishment.

Asad: O you who have attained to faith! Offend not against the symbols set up by God, nor against the sacred month [of pilgrimage], nor against the garlanded offerings, 4 nor against those who flock to the Inviolable Temple, seeking favour with their Sustainer and His goodly acceptance; and [only] after your pilgrimage is over 5 are you free to hunt. And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression: 6 but rather help one another in furthering virtue and **God-consciousness**, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity; and remain conscious of God: for, behold, God is severe in retribution!¹⁵

Muhsin and Hilali: O you who believe! Violate not the sanctity of the Symbols of Allah, nor of the Sacred Month, nor of the animals brought for sacrifice, nor the garlanded people or animals, and others nor the people

coming to the Sacred House (Makkah), seeking the bounty and good pleasure of their Lord. But when you finish the Ihram (of Hajj or 'Umrah), you may hunt and let not the hatred of some people in (once) stopping you from Al-Masjid-Al-Haram (at Makkah) lead you to transgression (and hostility on your part). Help you one another in **Al-Birr and At-Taqwa (virtue, righteousness and piety)**; but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Severe in punishment.¹⁶

The term "Taqwa" is rich in meaning, encompassing not only piety and mindfulness but also a vigilant commitment to safeguarding oneself from sin or any threat literal meaning. It signifies a deep, inherent awareness of God's omnipresence, encouraging individuals to live a life filled with spiritual consciousness. A comparative approach is essential in analyzing different translations of this term. This analysis involves scrutinizing how accurately each translator captures the essence of the Arabic text, paying close attention to the linguistic distinctions and layers of meaning. It is important to evaluate how well these translations reflect both the semantic depth and the contextual significance of the terms used, thereby fostering a clearer understanding of Taqwa in its original context.

All translators can bring a closer equivalent to "At-Takwa", Muhsin and Hilali's attempt is more academic, theological, and spiritual as they mentioned the terms as given their transliteration along with the different shades of meaning in the parentheses. It keeps the option open for the reader or researcher to assimilate to the translation accordingly. Additionally, I would highlight the AI (Artificial Intelligence) generated translation of the same verse to evaluate it which is derived from the open online sources as per its claim in response to the given prompt. Therefore, AI (ChatGPT) translates the "At-Takwa" as "**righteousness and piety**."¹⁷

"Al-Hasana" (الْحَسَنَةُ):

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَاتِّبِ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ
١٢٥¹⁸

Translation by Muslim Scholars:

Pickthall: "Call unto the way of thy Lord **with wisdom and fair exhortation**, and **reason with them in the better way**. Lo! Thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His way, and **He is Best Aware of those who go aright**."¹⁹

Yusuf Ali: "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord **with wisdom and beautiful preaching**; and **argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious**: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and **who receive guidance**."²⁰

Asad: “CALL THOU (all mankind] unto thy Sustainer’s path **with wisdom** and **goodly exhortation** and **argue with them in the kindest manner** for, **behold**, thy Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to **who are the right guided**.”²¹

Shakir: “Call to the way of your Lord **with wisdom** and **goodly exhortation** and **have disputations with them in the best manner**; surely your Lord best knows those who go astray from His path, and **He knows best those who follow the right way**.”²²

Mohsin & Hilali: Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) **with wisdom** (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur’n) and **fair preaching** and **argue with them in a better way**. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and **He is the Best Aware of those who are guided**.²³

“Al-Hasana” refers to a good deed, divine blessing or favor. Pickthall has rendered the first part of verse closer to the original text (أَذْعُ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ) (إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ) except the adjectival composition (وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ) (الْحَسَنَةِ) as “fair exhortation” which are thematically correct but not the appropriate equivalents to the adjectival composition. Whereas the following translators did the translation near to the original text

Asad and Shakir have rendered it (وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ) as “goodly exhortation” seems to be impressed by Pickthall and kept the socio-culture needs of the target language as compared to the source language. Whereas Yusuf Ali and Mohsin seem closer to the original text as they have translated it as “beautiful preaching” and “fair preaching” respectively.

For “hikmah” all rendered it as “wisdom”. But, when it comes to the end of the verse “Wa-huwa-A’lamu Bil-Muhta’din” (وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ) some has succeeded in conveying the sense of original text and some rendered it through verb active or passive voice for instance, Yusuf Ali rendered “Muhata’din” as “who receive guidance” and Asad, Shakir and Mohsin rendered it as “who is the right-guided, who follow the right way, who are guided” respectively. Asad and Mohsin’s rendering is closer to the original text and they succeeded in conveying the message of the source language into the target language more clear and closer equivalent.

Pickthall, Yusuf, Asad, Shakir and Mosin have rendered “Wa-Jadil Billa’ti Hiya Ahssan” (وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ) as:

“Reason with them in the **better** way”,

“Argue with them in ways that are **best** and most gracious”,

“Argue with them in the **kindest** manner”,

“Have disputations with them in the **best** manner”,

“Argue with them in a way that is **better**” respectively”.

When we keep grammatical, morphological, and cultural structure and aspect in view, we find that Yusuf Ali, Asad, and Shakir followed the morphological aspect in view and rendered “أَحْسَنَ” as the best, which is closer to the original text. Whereas, “better” as Pickthall and Mohsin used, does not exactly convey that intended meaning of this verse. Likewise, “argue and reason” are the better equivalents as compared to “have disputation” as Shakir did it is more literal translation. Further to explore the meaning one needs to explore the Quranic concept of war and the Western view on it.²⁴

“Ina’hu Huwa Al-Samiyun Al-alimun” (إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ):

وَأَنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلَامِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ٢٥-٦١

Pickthall: And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. **Lo! He, even He, is the Hearer, the Knower.**²⁶

Yusuf Ali: “But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, “and trust in Allah: for **He is One that heareth** and knoweth (all things).”²⁷

Asad: “But if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God: **verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!**”²⁸

Shakir: “And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah; **surely, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.**”²⁹

Mohsin & Hilali: “But if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and (put your) trust in Allah. **Verily, He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.**”³⁰

This phrase comprises attributes of Allah and emphasizes His Almighty and Omniscience, He is All-knowing and All-listening. All translators rendered it near to the original text and in verse “Ina’hu Huwa Al-Samiyun Al-Alim’un” (إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ) all rendered it mentioning third person pronoun only except Pickthall, who rendered (إِنَّهُ هُوَ) as “Lo! He, even He” and tried to remain closer to the original text and he has succeeded in his effort. He has realized that it is for emphasis therefore, he mentioned it the way it is in the Arabic text. The rest of the translators did it simply without mentioning (إِنَّهُ هُوَ) third person pronoun twice according to the source text.

“Fitna” (فِتْنَةٌ):

Let’s discuss verse 193 first:

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ١٩٣ —

Muslim translators rendered it faithfully.

Pickthall rendered it as follows: “And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrong doers.”³¹

Yusuf Ali: “And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those **who practice oppression.**”³²

Asad: “Hence, **fight against them until there is no more oppression** and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those **who [willfully] do wrong.**”³³

Shakir: “**And fight with them until there is no persecution**, and religion should be only for Allah, but if they desist, then there should be no hostility **except against the oppressors.**”³⁴

Mohsin & Hilali: “**And fight them until there is no more Fitnah** (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah) and (all and every kind of) worship is for Allah (Alone). But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against **Az-Zlimn** (the polytheists, and wrong-doers, etc.)”³⁵

The term “Fitna” has multiple meanings such as trial, test, or temptation. It depends on the context. Its equivalents mentioned by the Muslim translators are, “prosecution, Tumult or oppression, oppression, persecution, and fitna,” respectively. Yousaf Ali has mentioned two words for clarity “Tumult or operation” and conveying the true essence of the word, whereas Mohsin and Hilali brought the transliteration of the Arabic term and gave the meaning in parenthesis that “Fitna” is (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah). They have taken a very theological dimension to render it.

Also, for the term “Zalimeen” they have mentioned its transliteration and explained it in parenthesis to highlight the linguistic impact of the Arabic Language as well as mentioned its intended meanings. Others (Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Asad, Mohsin, and Hilali) tried to bring equivalent words in the target language and kept the context of the source as well as the target language along with the term “Zulm” and its implications, they rendered it as “wrong doers, who practice oppression, who [willfully] do wrong, oppressors,” respectively. All succeeded in fulfilling and covering the religious aspect and implications of these terms.

Pickthall and Shakir rendered (وَيَكُونُ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ) more literally whereas, Yusuf, Asad and Mohsin rendered it thematically keeping the religious and theological context in view.

“Maruf” and “Munkar”:

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ٤١

Pickthall: “Those who, if We give them **power in the land**, establish worship and pay **the poor-due** and **enjoin kindness** and **forbid iniquity**. And **Allah's is the sequel of events.**”³⁶

Yusuf Ali: “(They are) those who, if **We establish them in the land**, establish regular prayer and give **regular charity**, enjoin the right and **forbid wrong**: with **Allah rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.**”³⁷

Asad: “[well aware of] those who, [even] **if We firmly establish** them on earth, remain constant in prayer, **and give in charity**, and enjoin the doing of what is right and **forbid the doing of what is wrong**; but **with God rests the final outcome of all events**.”³⁸

Shakir: “Those who, should **We establish them in the land**, will keep up prayer and **pay the poor-rate** and enjoin good and **forbid evil**; and **Allah's is the end of affairs**.”³⁹

Mohsin & Hilali: “Those (Muslim rulers) who, **if We give them power in the land**, (they) order for **Iqamat-as-Salt**. [i.e. to perform the five compulsory congregational Salt (prayers) (the males in mosques)], to pay the **Zakat** and they enjoin Al-Ma'rf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam orders one to do), and forbid **Al-Munkar** (i.e. disbelief, polytheism and all that Islam has forbidden) [i.e. they make the Qur'an as the law of their country in all the spheres of life]. **And with Allah rests the end of (all) matters (of creatures)**.”⁴⁰

After analyzing bold words, the reader can learn about the distinctive features of different translators. Every Muslim translator has rendered the word (إِنْ) which means “if” and it is used to indicate the condition. Except for Shakir who rendered “Al'lazina in-maka'na-hum fil Ardh” (الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَانَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ) as “should We establish them in the land” simply without including the literal meaning of ‘if’ he has rendered it simply and the expression he used is not closer to the theme of the verse.

Muhsin and Hilali brought Islamic academic terms as it and have given the meaning of these terms in parentheses. For instance, “Zakat”, other translators rendered it as “poor-due, regular charity, and poor-rate respectively. It would have been better to render it as “obligatory charity”. Everyone tried to render it in its contextual meaning, “regular charity or poor rate” could be considered comparatively closer translation to the original text/term.

“In'nalla'ha Yuhib'bul-Muqsiteen” (إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ):

وَأِنْ طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَاصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Pickthall: And if **two parties of believers fall to fighting**, then **make peace between** them. And if one party of them doeth wrong to the other, fight ye that which doeth wrong **till it returns unto the ordinance** of Allah; then, if it returns, make peace between them justly, and act equitably. **Lo! Allah loveth the equitable**.⁴¹

Yusuf Ali: “**If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel**, make ye peace between them: **but if one of them transgresses** beyond bounds against the other, then fight ye (all) against the one that transgresses **until**

it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah **loves those who are fair (and just).**⁴²

Asad: “Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully **until it reverts to God's commandment;** and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably (with them): for verily, **God loves those who act equitably!**”⁴³

Shakir: “And if two parties of the believer’s quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully **until it returns** to Allah's command; **then if it returns,** make peace between them with justice and act equitably; **surely Allah loves those who act equitably.**”⁴⁴

Mohsin & Hilali: “And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then **make peace between them both,** but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which **rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah;** then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. **Verily! Allah loves those who are equitable.**”⁴⁵

Muslim translators have rendered words literally and closer to the original text like, (طَائِفَتَيْنِ) two parties or groups and for (الْمُفْسِدِينَ) they brought “equitable or act equitably” as equivalent in target language and none of them went out of intent of the original text. They have done literal translation and put the words of clarity in parenthesis wherever necessary like in the translation of Yusuf Ali and Mohsin in particular.

“Al-Mar’hama” (الْمَرْحَمَةِ):

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ ۖ⁴⁶ ١٧

Pickthall’s rendering: And to be of those who believe and exhort one another to **perseverance** and exhort one another **to pity.**⁴⁷

Yusuf Ali’s rendering is as follow: “Then will he be of those who believe, and **enjoin patience,** (constancy, and self-restraint), and **enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion.**”⁴⁸

Asad’s rendition is, “and being, withal, of those who have attained to faith, and who enjoin upon one another patience in adversity, and **enjoin upon one another compassion.**”⁴⁹

Shakir: Then he is of those who believe and charge one another to show patience and charge one another **to show compassion.**⁵⁰

Mohsin and Hilali: Then he became one of those who believed, and recommended one another to perseverance and patience, and (also) recommended one another to **pity and compassion.**⁵¹

It refers to divine mercy and compassion. Overall, the translators are able to bring the equivalents of the “Al Mar’hama” and emphasized the importance of community support, both in facing challenges and in fostering kindness and all rendered it keeping both context in view. Likewise, see the example below:

“Um’ul-Qura Wa ma’n Holha” (أُمُّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا):

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنْذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ⁵²

Pickthall’s translation: “And thus We have inspired in thee **a Lecture in Arabic**, that thou mayst warn **the mother-town and those around it**, and mayst warn of a day of assembling whereof there is no doubt. A host will be in the Garden **and a host of them in the Flame**.”⁵³

Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Thus have We sent by **inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur'an**: that thou mayest warn the **mother of Cities** and all around her and warn (them) of the Day of Assembly, of which there is no doubt: (when) **some will be in the Garden, and some in the Blazing Fire**.”⁵⁴

Asad: “[Thou art but entrusted with Our message:] and so We have revealed unto thee **a discourse in the Arabic tongue** in order that thou mayest warn the foremost of all cities and all who dwell around it - to wit, warn [them] of the Day of the Gathering, [the coming of] which is beyond all doubt: [the Day when] **some shall find themselves in paradise, and some in the blazing flame**.”⁵⁵

Shakir: And thus, have **We revealed to you an Arabic Quran**, that you may warn the **mother city and those around it**, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering wherein is no doubt; **a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire**.⁵⁶

Mohsin and Hilali: “And thus We have inspired unto you (O Muhammad) a Qur'an (in Arabic) that you may warn the **mother of the Towns** (Makkah) and all around it. And warn of the Day of Assembling, of which there is no doubt, when a party will be in Paradise (those who believed in Allah and followed what Allah's Messenger brought them) **and a party in the blazing Fire** (Hell) (those who disbelieved in Allah and followed not what Allah's Messenger brought them)”⁵⁷

Pickthal, Yusuf, Asad, Shakir, and Hilali have rendered “Um-mul Qura Wa m’n Holha” (أُمُّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا) as “mother-town, Mother of Cities, foremost of all cities, mother city, Mother of the Town (Makkah) respectively.

The Qur'an is the final divine revelation that offers guidance for every aspect of human life. The messages in the Qur'an are sometimes stated explicitly, but at other times they are expressed implicitly through various terms and figurative language. One of the most common forms of figurative language in the Qur'an is metaphor. Modern Muslim scholars

estimate that there are more than four hundred metaphoric expressions and terms in the Qur'an, which need to be translated into the target language keeping the essence of the original text.

One of the major problems encountered by the translator of the Quran is the difficulty in rendering some terms, and lexical items. One of the lexical problems in translating the Holy Quran is the lack of equivalence or the absence of the equivalent of some Islamic terms. These terms have no direct counterpart in English, compelling the translator to convey them in a communicative manner or phrasal words.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

In conclusion, translation serves as a bridge between languages and cultures, aiming to convey the intended meaning and message of the source text into the target language. The translator's role is crucial and complex, especially when dealing with sacred texts like the Quran, where theological accuracy and cultural sensitivity are paramount. Challenges include the absence of equivalent terms in the target language, the multilayered meanings of Arabic triliteral root words, and the potential translation loss.

The Qur'anic principles of justice (Muqsit), mercy (Al-Mar'hama), and goodness (Al-Hasana) express high attributes in human behavior. These terms connect believers to the deeper wisdom of the Qur'an, guiding them in spiritual growth and ethical conduct. Ultimately, these Qur'anic terms are spiritual keys that deepen the connection with the Creator and promote a harmonious life. They guide believers in their quest to please Allah, embody values, and engage in continuous spiritual refinement.

Muhammad Asad often provides broad equivalents that align with the Arabic text while being accessible to modern readers. Pickthall stays closest to the literal Arabic, often retaining its structure and emphasis. Yusuf Ali bridges literal and interpretative approaches, often choosing simplicity over depth also give the notes explaining the historical context as well⁵⁸. Hilali & Khan lean heavily toward interpretative translations influenced by Islamic theological interpretations.

Pickthall retains the exclusivity and balance between literal and meaningful as compared to Yusuf Ali and Asad. Whereas Yusuf Ali keeps contextual meaning and Asad and Shakir avoid complex vocabulary and keep the simplicity and modern context in view while translating the terms. Hilali and Khan keep the theological context and follow the interpretative method to translate the terms.⁵⁹

Further we need to examine the terms and their role in translation and do lexical analysis of each term, focusing on their root derivations, morphological structures, and semantic ranges in Arabic including the Mufisreen's views in the light of the Ahadith to explore and analyse the closer equivalents to learn the real message of the Quran.

The translation of terms from the Holy Quran into other languages, particularly English, is a challenging process that requires linguistic expertise, cultural sensitivity, and theological understanding. The Quran's unique linguistic style and the multifaceted meanings of its Arabic terms often resist direct equivalence in other languages, as seen in examples like Taqwa, Maruf, Munkar, and others. Translators must navigate between the source text and target language while preserving the Quran's intended message.

Theological beliefs and personal biases of the translator must be carefully managed to prevent misinterpretations that could alter the divine message. Moreover, understanding the Quran's unique linguistic structure, rooted in triliteral Arabic roots, is essential to avoid oversimplification or loss of meaning. This challenge highlights the importance of rigorous Arabic language study, as emphasized by early Muslim scholars, for anyone engaging with Quranic translation.

The evolution of translation studies, particularly in the context of generative AI, brings new challenges, opportunities and responsibilities. AI tools can support the translation process but cannot replace the human sensitivity required to grasp the Quran's linguistic, theological, spiritual and cultural significance. As the Quran is one of the most translated works in history, its translation remains not only a linguistic Endeavor but also a bridge for cultural and theological understanding. Thus, religious scholars should also create a dictionary of equivalents to help readers and researchers deepen their understanding of the Quran.

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- ⁶. *ibid.* <http://www.islamicencyclopedia.org/islamic-pedia-topic.php?id=1016>
- ⁷ *Ibid*
- ⁸. Az-Zahabi (الذهبي) Muhammad Hussain, "Attafsir wal-Mufasiroon", Dar-ul-Kutub Al-haditha, Ataba-asaania, 1979. Egypt, PP 23.
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¹¹. <http://www.islamicencyclopedia.org/islamic-pedia-topic.php?id=1016>

¹². See details: مجمع ألفاظ القرآن الكريم - مجمع اللغة العربية، 1970. V.1 (209-212; 272-275; 481-484)

v.2 (311-313; 391-392; 393-394; 760-762; 874-878). See also:

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قاموس إلباس العصري عربي إنجليزي

<https://archive.org/details/al-qamus-al-asry>

¹³. See details: <https://www.ijssh.org/papers/178-A10061.pdf>

¹⁴. Al-Quran 5:2 Transliteration and Translation is retrieved from:

https://www.searchtruth.com/chapter_display_all.php?chapter=5&from_verse=1&to_verse=120&translation_setting=1&show_transliteration=1&show_yusufali=1&show_shakir=1&show_pickthal=1&show_mkhan=1&show_saheeh=1&show_urdu=1

¹⁵. Translation retrieved from: <https://quran.wpa.com/page/Sura-5-Asad>

Translation by Pickthall, Yusuf Ali and Muhsin and Hilali are taken from:

https://www.searchtruth.com/chapter_display_all.php?chapter=5&from_verse=1&to_verse=120&translation_setting=1&show_transliteration=1&show_yusufali=1&show_shakir=1&show_pickthal=1&show_mkhan=1&show_saheeh=1&show_urdu=1

¹⁶. Ibid

¹⁷. Translation by ChatGPT and how it translates: "O you who have believed, do not violate the sanctity of Allah's symbols, nor the sacred month, nor the offerings for sacrifice, nor the garlands marking them, nor those traveling to the Sacred House seeking the bounty and pleasure of their Lord. But when you come out of the state of ihram, you may hunt. And do not let the hatred of a people who once prevented you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. Cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty." Screenshot of ChatGPT:

Sources for ChatGPT Translation

The translation provided by ChatGPT synthesizes the linguistic and contextual understanding of the Arabic text based on commonly accepted meanings and accessible resources, including:

1. **Classical Tafsir:** Works like Tafsir al-Jalalayn and Tafsir Ibn Kathir inform the theological context.
2. **Qur'anic Dictionaries:** Arabic-English lexicons by Lane and Wehr provide linguistic accuracy.
3. **Modern Translations:** Comparative insights from translators like Pickthall, Yusuf Ali, Asad, and Hilali & Khan.
4. **Online Platforms:** Reliable sources like Quran.com and Islamicity.org provide multiple translations for review.

The variation in translations reflects differences in focus, such as literal versus interpretative renderings, making ChatGPT a useful tool for generating a synthesized understanding while encouraging cross-referencing with established works.

From where does ChatGPT get its translation of the verse?

ChatGPT generates translations of Quranic verses by synthesizing information from a wide array of publicly available resources, including classical and modern interpretations. Here's an explanation of where ChatGPT's translation is derived:

Sources of Knowledge for Translation

ChatGPT does not directly pull translations from specific online or live sources now of the query. Instead, its responses are generated based on training data that include:

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Classical Tafsir and Commentaries

Texts like Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Jalalayn, and others provide detailed exegesis of verses, explaining linguistic nuances, historical context, and theological implications.

English Translations of the Quran

Well-known translations such as those by:

Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall

Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Asad, Hilali & Khan

These works contribute to the general corpus, each reflecting different interpretive philosophies. Linguistic and Lexical References

Lexicons like E.W. Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon and Hans Wehr Dictionary support word-level translations of terms in the Quran. Modern Online Platforms Publicly available resources like Quran.com, Islamic Studies platforms, and translations accessible in online archives contribute indirectly to the model's understanding of the text.

How ChatGPT Works

The translation provided by ChatGPT does not come from any single source or is quoted verbatim from a copyrighted translation. Instead, it reflects a combination of:

Literal and contextual meaning of Arabic words in the verse.

Synthesis of interpretations aligned with widely accepted translations.

Simplification and clarity for modern readers.

Limitations and Cross-Verification

While ChatGPT offers a fluent and accessible rendering, it is not a replacement for specific translations by recognized Muslim scholars. For detailed and authenticated insights, one should consult primary sources such as Quran.com or publications by established translators and commentators.

Also see ChatGPT Link: <https://chatgpt.com/share/674da50a-b024-800f-ae40-054142778e2e>

¹⁸. Al-Qur'an 16:125

¹⁹. Pickthall, p263

²⁰. Yusuf p. 689

²¹. Asad p 416

²². Shakir, p 259

²³. Mohsin and Hilali, p 367

²⁴. Malik, S.M. Brigadier, The Qur'anic Concept of War, Wajidalis, Gulberg ii Lahore, 1979. Pp1-6.

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²⁵. Al-Qur'an 8:61

²⁶. Pickthall, p 171

²⁷. Yusuf p 430

²⁸. Asad p 249

²⁹. Shakir, p 167

³⁰. Mohsin and Hilali, p240 (<https://archive.org/details/the-noble-quran-muhsin-khan-and-taqi-ud-din-al-hilali/page/n105/mode/2up>)

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³². Yusuf p 76
³³. Asad p 41
³⁴. Shakir, p 26
³⁵. Mohsin and Hilali, p 40
³⁶. Pickthall, p 324
³⁷. Yusuf p 862
³⁸. Asad p 512
³⁹. Shakir, p. 320
⁴⁰. Mohsin and Hilali, p 449
⁴¹. Pickthall, p 518
⁴². Yusuf, p 1405
⁴³. Asad p 793
⁴⁴. Shakir, p 514
⁴⁵. Mohsin and Hilali, p 699
⁴⁶. Al-Quran 90:17
⁴⁷. Pickthall 624
⁴⁸. Yusuf p 1739
⁴⁹. Asad p 953
⁵⁰. Shakir, p 621
⁵¹. Mohsin and Hilali, p 836
⁵². Al-Quran 42:7
⁵³. Pickthall, p 482
⁵⁴. Yusuf p 1306
⁵⁵. Asad pp 739-740
⁵⁶. Shakir, p 478
⁵⁷. Mohsin and Hilali, p 652
⁵⁸. See details and notes given against the verses of (Al-Baqara, verse 2, Surah Muddathir verse 52, surah Al-Maidha, verse 2 for the explanation of At-Takwa)
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