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**The History of the Translation of the Holy Quran in Bengali: The Translation Example of  
Gulam Azam**

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**Abstract**

The holy Quran is the divine message sent to all humanity by Allah (SWT). This message concerns not only the owners of the language from which it descended but all humanity. So it is necessary to translate this message into those languages for people from different cultures to understand. However, whether the Quran will be translated into other languages has been discussed throughout history and positive and negative opinions about the issue continue. As a Muslim-dominated country, Bangladesh has been working on the translation of the Quran since the 18th century. This article, firstly, discussed the historical process of the translation of the Quran into Bengali and then the translation of the Quran by Gholam Azam is examined as an example, who worked to understand and explain the Quran and reflect the effect of the Quran in social life.

**Keywords:** Quran, Translation, Bangla Language, Gulam Azam.

**Introduction**

The Holy Quran is a divine guide that has shown guidance to all humanity since it was revealed. This book, which is the primary source of all knowledge globally guides the students of every branch of knowledge. Numerous books and volumes of works written in this respect are available in libraries. The purpose of all written and unwritten sources is to understand the creator, the creator's orders, and his duties more clearly and fulfill what is required. So it is

necessary to read and understand the Quran for people of all races, colors, and languages. However, since the Quran was revealed in Arabic, people whose mother tongue is not Arabic will either learn Arabic or translate it into their language to understand it. The majority of Muslims whose mother tongue is not Arabic memorize some suras and verses without understanding them to read them in prayer. However, since the readers do not know its meaning, they can neither understand the Quran nor fulfill Allah's orders. Therefore, it is essential to translate and understand the Quran for both ourselves and all people.

As in the early years of Islam, scholars have hesitated to translate the Quran into Other languages in the recent past. Because before the Islamic scholars, there are some examples of the translation of the old and new testament and losing its original text. Suspecting that by translating the Qur'an, there might be Corruption and distortion as they distort the books of other religions, some of the scholars stayed away from translating the Qur'an. However, translation movements are started when it was noticed that people were moving away from the Quran day by day. Since the Quran is under the protection of Allah, nobody can change it, which is understood by the declaration of Allah such as "It is certainly we who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it."<sup>1</sup>

As it is known, translating the Quran requires excellent efforts. Anyone who is not fluent in both Arabic and his language cannot translate correctly. It is evident that the translation of the Quran in Bengali, which is relevant to our subject, is not as in other languages. In the past, our scholars were proficient in languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, however, they were not very skilled in their native language, Bengali literature. As the official language of the Indian sub-continent during the reign of Muslim rulers was Persian<sup>2</sup>, the Arabs had been preaching Islam and doing business in the region since ancient times<sup>3</sup>, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu influenced the rulers and scholars. For example, even a great Indian scholar like Shah Waliyullah Dehlevi did not translate the Quran into his native language but translated it into Persian.<sup>4</sup> Persian, Urdu, and Arabic were taught in madrasahs in Bangladesh. Although the Muslim scholars spoke Bengali, the mentioned languages were preferred in academic activities. Bengali language and literature were left in general education and especially for Hindus.

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Qur'an, 15/9.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hay & Soyed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Shahitter Itibritto*, Ahmad Publishing house, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Manna Talib, *Bangladeshe Islam*, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Dhaka, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p.2.

When the British colonial period began, the Hindus tried to be closer to the British rulers based on the thinking that got rid of the Muslim rulers.<sup>5</sup> When the Hindus partnered with the British and both of them began to oppress the Muslims, Muslim scholars in response preferred to stay away from both English and Bengali literature.<sup>6</sup> The Bengal Scholars were late in the translation of the Qur'an, like other subjects, due to the wrong idea that learning these two languages would benefit the English and Hindus. At the end of the last eighteenth century, *Amiruddin Basuniya* from the Rangpur district of Bangladesh translated the Quran.<sup>7</sup> However, this translation was published in 1808. This work address Quran translation studies' historical process because it is less conducted both in the international academic research studies and in Turkey.

Golam Azam, as a well-known person in the Quranic field of Bangladesh, took great initiative to ensure the understanding of the Quran to both the people of Bangladesh and members of his political organization. Others have translated the Quran in Bangladesh as well, however, Gulam Azam, who strives to implement the Quran in his own, family and community life by remaining faithful to the Quran's spirit, is an important figure that draws attention.

## **History of Translation of the Holy Quran**

### **The Source and the Beginning of Translation of the Holy Quran**

According to the Quran's statement, "By the explicit book, we made it an Arabic Quran so that you can understand it thoroughly."<sup>8</sup> is commanded. The word "understanding" in verse is essential here. A community of people who do not have the Arabic language, how can they understand the Quran? Isn't it necessary to translate the Quran to spread Islam among people of different languages? The Quran addresses the issue as follows: "We know that the unbelievers say: A human teaches the Quran to Muhammad. The language of the person they think is teaching the Prophet is foreign (Ajam). This Quran is Arabic."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mohammad Abdul Hay & Soyed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla shahitter Itibritto*, Ahmad Publishing house, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Abdul Fattah Mohammad Yahya, *Devband Andolon: itihash oitijjo obodan*, Al âmin research akademi Bangladesh p. 60-70.

<sup>7</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, P. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Qur'an, 43: 2,3

<sup>9</sup> Al-Qur'an, 7:103.

According to the explanation of the verse, and Ajam (عجم) (non-Arab) lived in Mecca when the Quraysh tried to prevent the spread of Islam. In one view his name is mentioned as "Cabbar". He is a Roman slave of Amr al-Hadrami. According to another opinion, the name of a slave of Khuwaitib bin Abdul Uzza is mentioned as Aish or Ya'ish. According to a third view, his name is Yasir. His nickname was Abu Fakaihah<sup>10</sup>, he sold something near the Safa Hill and talked to Allah's Messenger from time to time.<sup>11</sup> This person cannot speak pure Arabic. However, this novice knows some Arabic and Latin as his native language. Naturally, he translates the Quran into Latin for his understanding.

Besides, the Prophet had many foreign friends. Among them, Salman bin Farisi (R.) from Iran and Bilal-i Habeshi (R.) from Africa are the famous ones. They speak Arabic and their language well. According to as-Sarakhsi (d. 483), Salman bin Farisi did the Persian translation of Surah Fatiha. Although the Quran is in Arabic, it was sent to all humanity in the world. As a result, the Prophet conveyed the Quran's message to all people without discrimination between Arab and Ajam. Calling the rulers of neighboring countries to accept Islam by sending envoys is an essential indicator that he was sent to all humanity.<sup>12</sup>

According to Ibn Sa'd, the ambassadors know the language of the country they were sent to. It is reported that Amr bin Umayya sent the letter of our Prophet (s.a.w.) to Negus or the Christian king of Abyssinia, Najashi, by translating it into their language Amharic. When Dihyat'ul Kelbi brought our Prophet's letter to the Byzantine emperor, the emperor ordered his translator to translate the letter.<sup>13</sup> It is said that in these letters, the relevant verses from the Quran are always quoted. It is understood from some hadiths that the Prophet encouraged the Companions to learn foreign languages.<sup>14</sup> He ordered Zayd bin Thabit, the revelation scribe of the Messenger of Allah (pbuh), to learn the Syrian language and Hebrew. In a short time, Zeyd became proficient in both languages.<sup>15</sup>

Some of the Muslims, who were subjected to the pressure of the Makkan polytheists, immigrated to Abyssinia in the 5th year (615) of the Quran's revelation. The leaders of the Quraysh sent

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<sup>10</sup> Abul Ala Mawdudi, *Tafhimul Kur'ân*, Nahl Suresi, ayet 103, p. 83

<sup>11</sup> Imadudin Ibn Kasir, *Tafsir ibn Kasir*, part, 13, p. 531

<sup>12</sup> Muhammed Abdul Mabud, *Ashabe Rasuler Jibonkotha* (Ashabe Rasulun hayati), 1. Cilt, p. 120.

<sup>13</sup> Mohammad Ibn Saad, *Tabakatul Kubra*, Daru Sadir, Beyrut p. 259.

<sup>14</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, Dhaka, p. 12.

<sup>15</sup> Mohammad Ibn Saad, *Tabakatul Kubra*, Daru Sadir, Beyrut, p. 260.

envoys to the Christian king of Abyssinia, Najashi, demanding the Muslims' expulsion. Najashi wanted to listen to the Muslims complained about this situation.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Cafer b. Abu Talib, as the leader of immigrant Muslims, read from the beginning of the Surah Maryam to verse 40.<sup>17</sup> These developments reveal the importance of translation and translation in terms of how the meanings expressed by the Quran in Arabic should be explained to other nations in their language.<sup>18</sup>

### **Prevention and Permission of Translation of the Quran**

From the very beginning, a negative attitude was observed among Muslim scholars regarding the translation of the Qur'an. In this context, the Bible can also be mentioned. Bible translation has always been an integral part of Allah's mission. As soon as the Bible was revealed, it was translated from Hebrew into Greek, Latin, Syrian and Coptic languages. As a result of these translation activities, the original Bible was thrown into the background and disappeared after a while. Bible translations spread from Syria to Armenia, Georgia, Samarkand, and beyond over the following centuries.<sup>19</sup> The current Bible is considered the unoriginal Bible in this case. His apostles later told the message story of Jesus in the New Testament. Only a few places mention the name of the god there. The translation has been separated from the original because the original has been lost. Due to such losses in translations, the expression "traduttore, traditore," meaning "translator, deceptive" is used for the translator in Italy. Therefore, the translation of the Quran was prohibited, and its originality was preserved. However, just as it has been translated from Arabic as the Latin Bible, the Syrian Bible, it has never been allowed to be translated the Qur'an, the Persian Qur'an, or the Bengali Qur'an.

On the other hand, one of the common styles of the Quran is made over laconic expressions, which in most cases indicate more meaning by using few words. For this reason, Islamic scholars have stated for a long time that the translation of the Quran is impossible and that only interpretation or interpretation is possible. While the debates about whether the Quran can be

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<sup>16</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim, *Jadul Ma'ad* Tahkeek: Shu'aib and Abdul Qadir Arnaitb (Beirut: 29th edition of Muwassatur Risalah 1417/1996) 3/21 p. 39.

<sup>17</sup> Safiur Rahman Mübarekpuri, *Ar-Rahikul Makhtum*, p. 93.

<sup>18</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka., p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wycliffe.org.uk/stories/a-brief-history-of-bible-translation>, access date 12.01.2021

translated or not is still ongoing, some research reveals that non-Muslims are guided by reading the Quran's meaning.

A conference on the translation of the Quran was held during the Hajj ceremony in 1981 with the participation of scholars from different countries, hosted by the Râbitatü'l-âlemi'l-Islamî, established in Mecca. The researchers agreed that translating the Quran into various languages will facilitate the spread of Islam among non-Muslims and that the translations and interpretations made so far should be reviewed.<sup>20</sup>

They stated that the distorted translations of orientalist or priests should also be corrected.<sup>21</sup> However, the translation of the meaning of the Quran is not the translation of the Quran. The translation of the Quran seen in different languages is the translation of the Quran; it is not itself. The translation of the "English Quran" has not been officially accepted, just as the English Bible is official.<sup>22</sup>

### **Spreading the Bengali Quran and Interpreting**

As a result of the constructive criticism of the translation of the Quran and its spread worldwide, various attempts have been made for the translation and dissemination of the Quran in Bengali. " Although Muslims' political domination in Bangladesh occurred at the beginning of the 13th century, Islam reached the Bengal region long ago. Researches show that Islam came to Bangladesh during the 5th Abbasid Caliph Harunur Rashid (786-809) and gradually spread around. "<sup>23</sup>

We have mentioned that the words of Islam and the Quran spread first verbally and then in writing. It is unnecessary to do much research to prove that the Quran was verbally translated and disseminated in Bengal lands. The people of Bangladesh were informed about the needed issues. The most needed matters were inheritance law, zakat, pilgrimage, fasting, prayer, marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In the light of the information that scholars in Bangladesh

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<sup>20</sup> A.B.M. Hizbullah, *Bangla İngreji uccarone kuran bikritir opoproyash*, (The effort to change the Quran by Pronunciation in Bengali and English, p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Muslim World league Journal, 9:1, (November 1981) p.8.

<sup>22</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer İtihaz ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p.14

<sup>23</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer İtihaz ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p.19

obtained from Arabic and Persian sources, the Quran's statement on this issue was tried to be explained. Therefore, a natural translation in these matters occurred spontaneously.

Moreover, human history Hz. Adam, Hz. Nuh, Hz. Moses, Hz. Yusuf, Hz. Ayup, Hz. Shuaib, Hz. Isa and the information about other prophets from the Quran and Prophet's explanations (s.a.w.). The topics of preaching in the country are determined according to the subjects mentioned by the Quran. These briefings have relatively accelerated translation work. For this reason, Iran, Kazakhstan, East, and West Africa, or the method used in the translation of the Qur'an in Turkey said that it is also common in Bengal territory.

The preaching and spreading of Islam in Bangladesh started in the 9th century. The Bengali language as an independent language is a thousand years old. Accordingly, when Islam began to spread in these lands, the development of the language spoken now has just begun. Prose writing was not common in Bangladesh until the end of the 18th century. For this reason, it does not seem possible to translate the Quran into Bengali in terms of early periods.<sup>24</sup>

### **Quran lyrics in Bengali poetry**

After Bangladeshi Muslims focused on developing the Bengali language and literature, among the Muslim linguists, those who knew Arabic and Persian started to write books on different Quran subjects in this language. When one pays attention to Yusuf-Züleyha poems written by Shah Muhammed Sagir (1389-1410), it is observed that the Quran's Sura Yusuf inspires these poems.<sup>25</sup>

Bangladeshi Muslims are dissatisfied with only this chapter by chapter translations, interpretation in mosques, or sermons. Therefore, Muslims have asked the following question: "Why can't we read in our language, while Muslims in every country of the world can read the translations of the Quran in their language?" The spokesperson of this movement was the poet Seyid Sultan (1500-1648).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p.19

<sup>25</sup> Abdul Hay & Soyed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Shahitter Itibritto* Ahmad publishing House, 11. Baski, 2010, p. 119

<sup>26</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p. 20

### **The Necessity of Written Translation in Bengali**

The main idea in the article written by Seyid Sultan is as follows: "Translation of the Quran should be made in writing, not verbally." Because the need for local translation is felt by the people of this continent day by day, this need's manifestations are seen in the 17th-century poet Abdul Hakim's (1620-1690) Nornama poem. At that time, there was a tradition of Persian tafsir along with Arabic tafsir. Therefore, the poet's concern is that there is no difference between the two languages, and the Quran is not translated into his language. On the other hand, reading the holy book without understanding it only in its original language is not suitable for the Qur'an being revealed.

The important thing is to understand the meaning of the Quran when it is read. Allah Almighty, in various parts of the Quran, "Are you not going to think?"<sup>27</sup>, "Do they not think of the Quran?" "Or do they have locks on their hearts?"<sup>28</sup> Naturally, it raises the need for translation and understanding to think. It is not possible to think about something without being understood. On the other hand, the number of Bengali-speaking people in the world is around 300 million.<sup>29</sup> It is an essential contribution to the purpose of the Quran that so many people can read the Quran in their mother tongue.

### **The Status of Other Languages in the Indian Subcontinent in Translation of the Quran**

The Quran translation situation is the same in Bengali and other languages in the Indian subcontinent. During the Pathan and Mongols period, the state administration and cultural language were Persian. Therefore, a famous scholar like Shah Veliyullah Dihlevî (1704-1776)<sup>30</sup> wrote a Persian translation before writing Urdu or Hindi, the languages of the Indian subcontinent. Shah Rafiyuddin (1776) and Shah Abdulkadir (1790), son of Shah Veliyullah, tried to complete this deficiency by converting the Quran into Urdu. The first translation was published in 1840. Among them, Shah Abdulkadir's translation and commentary have gained

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<sup>27</sup> Al-Qur'an 36/68.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Qur'an 47/24.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.dhakatimes24.com/> *Bisso Dorbare Bangla Vashar Obostan*, access date 04.02.2021

<sup>30</sup> <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/sah-veliyullah#1> Access date 12.12.2020



popularity in Bangladesh because it was published in the publishing house of Münşi Abdullah<sup>31</sup> in Hooghly.<sup>32</sup>

### **History of the Written Translation in Bengali**

As a result of the Hindu nation's revival, a secret armed group called the Monk Movement was formed in the Bengal region and tried to end the Muslim rule with these groups. The British Fort William Council completed the construction of a fortress in Kolkata to achieve the British's political goals for trade.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the defeat of Mirza Muhammad Siraj-ud-Daulah<sup>34</sup> in the Palashi War<sup>35</sup> in 1757 and the domination of the East India Company in the Orissa state of Bengal-Bihar not only brought political and economic problems to Muslims but also affected religious life. Muslim schools and madrasas were deprived of government patronage. Instead, schools and colleges based on the Western thought system were established in the region. Muslims remained away from their modern education due to reasons such as the refusal of religious scholars to study in English and the contempt of Hindu youth studying Islam in English. Meanwhile, when English was adopted instead of Persian in the state administration, Muslims were also deprived of government jobs.<sup>36</sup>

With the arrival of British Protestant missionaries in the 18th century, Christian missionary work in Bangladesh took an organized movement. The resurgence of the Protestant community in contemporary Britain has led to the formation of a series of evangelical societies in all countries to make the word of Christ the word.<sup>37</sup> During this troubled period of the Muslims, the activities of Christian missionaries also increased. Missionary activities started to spread rapidly against Islam and the Quran. Among them, the Baptist missionary leader, orientalist William Carey was

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<sup>31</sup> Abdul Mannan, *Bangladeshe Islam*, İslam Vakfı yayın, p. 81.

<sup>32</sup> Hooghly is one of the districts of the state of West Bengal in India. It can alternatively be spelt Hoogli or Hugli. The district is named after the Hooghly River.

<sup>33</sup> Abbas Ali khan, *Banglar Mosalmander Itihash*, p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> Sirajuddaula nawab of Bengal. Mirza Muhammad Sirajuddaula was the grandson of Nawab alivardi khan and son of amina begum and zainuddin ahmad khan. He was born in 1733 and soon after his birth Alivardi Khan was appointed as the deputy governor of Bihar. <http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Sirajuddaula> 31.01.2021

<sup>35</sup> The Battle of Palashi, was fought between Nawab sirajuddaula and the British east india company on 23 June 1757. <http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Palashi>. [The Battle of](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Palashi) access date 31.01.2021

<sup>36</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> [http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Christian\\_Missionaries](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Christian_Missionaries) accessed on 18.12.2020

a pioneer. While explaining his religion, William Carey would ask Muslims who do not know the Quran as follows: "Do you know what is written in the Quran?" Muslims say "No." he would ask why. Muslims used to tell that the Quran is in Arabic, and they do not know Arabic. Carey said, "How are you subject to this? How did you become a Muslim?" he replied.<sup>38</sup>

Some scholars have started a reform movement to protect Islam against polytheism, superstition, and missionary propaganda. The initiators of this movement were Hacı Şeriatullah (1764-1840), Mawlana Imamuddin (1788-1859), Mavlâna Sufi Nur Mohammed Sufi (1979-1861), and Mevlana Keramet Ali (1800-1873).

They aim to bring the original teachings, determination, and characteristics of Islam back to society. These Bengali scholars, who know Arabic and Persian, could not even write their books in Bengali, let alone translating the Quran into Bengali. In the colonial period, Muslims were left behind due to Arabic and Persian predominantly Islamic education, the reduction of Quran courses and madrasahs, and their refusal to attend English-language school colleges.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, once the most educated and knowledgeable people in the country have started to move away from all kinds of academic and social activities. Again, due to these reasons, it was not possible to create a job, such as translating the Quran into their mother tongue, however, there were many expectations in public. On the other hand, even though Persian and Urdu books started to be published using the printing press, the Muslim population remained out of education.

There is also a right side to these political changes in the Bengal region. Colonists initiated the Bengali printing and publishing system in 1777 to facilitate exploitation. On the company's initiative, the Bengali grammar and later the Bengali dictionary emerged. With the translation of English laws into Bengali, prose began to be introduced. Various Bengali books have started to be published, especially in branches such as science.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Srirampur Mission and Fort William College were established. William Carey, professor of Bengali and Sanskrit at the college, has written some Bengali books. He translated the Bible into Bengali and found the Bengali prose on a solid foundation. Hindi language professor John Gilchrist has published many books in Arabic, Urdu, and Persian through Hindustani Publications, which he founded. Between 1802-1803, Mirza

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<sup>38</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Kur'an Procharer Itihash ebong Bonganobader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p. 22.

<sup>39</sup> Abbas Ali Khan, *Banglar Mosalmander Itihash*, p. 94.

Kazim Ali Jawan opened a new era in the printing and publication history of the Quran, translated into Urdu. This is the first edition of the Holy Quran in the history of the Indian Peninsula.<sup>40</sup>

Although the printing system was established in Calcutta, India in 1777, no Bangali people found printing before 1815 in Bangla. In 1820, Munshi Hidayetullah and Munshi Seyid Abdullah started to work in this field, who were pioneers among Muslims in Bengal geography. Abdullah, a native of the Hooghly, is famous for printing the Quran. The Urdu translation and commentary named Mudfihu'l-Quran, made by Shah Abdul Kadir in 1823 was first published in Calcutta. This period has been a turning point for the Bengali language. The Bengal language, which Arabic and Persian heavily influence, has been combined with Sanskrit with William Forster and William Carey's works. However, Hindus and Muslims who were educated at that time knew Persian more than Bengali and Sanskrit. When English was introduced in 1838 instead of Persian, it was the Hindu editors of various newspapers who spoke out against English and recommended that Persian be continued. Because Muslims refused to study in the newly established colleges, they were deprived of Bengali language training in Sanskrit.

### ***Translation Example of Gholam Azam***

After the Prophet himself applied the Quran in his life, Islamic law and the Prophet's education system were applied in Islamic states and various countries of the world for 1200 years. In this long time, state administrators sometimes acted following the principles of religion and sometimes in inappropriate ways. However, there have not been more problems in religious education, law, and thoughts in general terms than it is now.

Even Emperor Akbar<sup>41</sup> (1556-1605) could not make excessive changes in Islamic law and education. Even though state reform and struggle against strife were needed from time to time, there was no need to establish an Islamic state again in 1200 years. Those who wrote Tafsir at that time did not need to build an Islamic movement or write movement-oriented Tafsir. Thinkers write according to the perception of their age while writing articles for people. While

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<sup>40</sup> Mofahhar Hosain Han, *Pobitro Kuran procarer Itihash o Bonganubader Shotoborsho*, Dhaka, p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> Akbar introduced a new order in Islam named Din-I Ilahi at 1581. He introduced a new religion adopting the essence of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc.

religion was valid in many ways in life, there was no need to revive or reside and write an interpretation.<sup>42</sup> If we want to understand the Quran in real terms, it is important to look at the Prophet's 23-year prophetic life. This commentary has been a source of interest for those who are interested in the Islamic movement since the Tafhmul Quran was written with this idea.

Gulam Azam<sup>43</sup> stated the following about the translation of the Quran:

*"When we were little, the Qur'an was loved by us through family tradition. Since then, I have worked hard to understand the Qur'an. I tried to read and understand the commentaries in Bengali and English. However, because I could not understand all of the huge commentaries, I stopped reading. After completing my master's education in March 1950, while working in the "Tablighi Jamaat"<sup>44</sup> and later in the "Tamaddun Mejlis Party"<sup>45</sup>, I felt that the Qur'an should be applied according to the person, society, and state. In four months, while working with Tabligh Jamaat, I realized that I would learn something profound about Islam. They had no program to understand the Qur'an. When I joined the Tamaddun Mejlis Party in 1952, I felt the importance of the Qur'an in social and economic life as well as personal life. I had an elective course in Arabic until my master's degree, and based on it, I started reading Arabic commentaries. In 1954 I switched to Jamaat-i Islami (A political party of Bangladesh), and I was working as a political science faculty member at Rangpor Karamaikel College. Every Friday, there were*

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<sup>42</sup> Gulam Azam, *Kuraner sohoj Bangla onubad*, Kamiyab Prokashoni, Dakka, 2011. p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> Gulam Azam was the Ameer (chairman) of the Islamic political party of Bangladesh called Jamaat-i Islami, founded by Mawdudi (1903-1979) in Pakistan. After joining as a member of the Jamaat (muttafiq) in April 1954, he was arrested in 1955 and had risen to the rukan level of Jamaat-e-Islami in Rangpur Prison. In June 1955, was appointed general secretary of the Rajshahi district Jamaat-e-Islami. A year later, he was appointed deputy secretary-general of the East Pakistan Jamaat and Ameer of the Rajshahi district Jamaat. In the 1969-1971 session, was elected Ameer of East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami. In December 2000, he resigned from his post of chairman and continued as a member of the general advisory board. Gulam Azam died in captivity on the night of October 23, 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Tabligh Jamaat was founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi (1885-1944) in north India. The movement came forth as an offshoot of the Deobandi movement. Tabligh Jamaat took its impetus from a desire to move the dissemination of Islamic teachings away from the madrasa to invite Muslims to share the obligation of enjoining others to faithful practice. [http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Tabligh\\_11.02.2021](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Tabligh_11.02.2021).

<sup>45</sup> Tamaddun Majlish a literary and cultural organization oriented towards Islamic ideology. This Pro-Islamic organization was floated in Dhaka immediately after the partition of India with a zeal to uphold the Islamic ideology in the country. It was founded on 1 September 1947 by the initiative of Abul Qasim, then a professor in the Department of Physics of Dhaka University, and was named Pakistan Tamaddun Majlish. The noted associates of Professor Abul Quasem in floating Tamaddun Majlish were Dewan Mohammad Azraf, Professor ASM Nurul Haque Bhuyan, Shahed Ali, Abdul Gafur, Badruddin Umar, Hasan Iqbal, and some senior students of Dhaka University. Professor Abul Quasem was the founder general secretary of Pakistan Tamaddun Majlish. Dewan Mohammad Azraf was elected president of the Majlish in 1949. [http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Tamaddun\\_Majlish](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Tamaddun_Majlish) 11. 02. 2021.

*lessons of the Qur'an for newcomers like us. The late Abdul Halik from Rangpor was giving us lectures on the Qur'an. I became a fan of his Qur'an lessons and asked him, "Where did you learn such a beautiful Qur'an education?" He smiled and replied, "I learned from the Tefhimul Quran." From that day on, I started to read the Tefhimul Quran. I am not an interpreter of the Tefhimul Quran. I just translated the Tefhimul Quran from Urdu to Bengali."*<sup>46</sup>

### **Reason for Preference of Tafhîmu'l-Quran for Translation**

Gulam Azam had been asked why the Tefhîmu'l-Qur'an of Mawdudî (1903-1979) preferred for translation, While remaining the interpretations of scholars such as Ashraf Ali Thanwi (1863-1943) and Mawlana Muhammad Shafi(1897-1976), Ghulam Azam replied:

"After I joined the Cemaat-I Islami,<sup>47</sup> I started to read the Quran to apply the Quran in individual and community life. Mawlâna Mawdûdî wrote the interpretation named the Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an to make understanding of Ikamat-I Deen (establish of deen). I preferred Tafhîmu'l-Quran because of his attitude toward the Islamic movement in his tafsir. The perfect strategy of the Qur'an reading style in Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an attracted me. Since the readers of the modern age's language and logic are in this interpretation, I decided to translate this commentary into Bengali."<sup>48</sup>

Gulam Azam translated the Quran, which Mawlana Abu'l-Ala Mawdûdî translated into Urdu, from Urdu to Bengali. The Kamiyab bookstore published the first translation in 2006. Translation reached its 10th edition in 2011. An introduction of 44-page has been included in this translation, which the society has adopted. Gulam Azam has the same opinion as Mawlana Mawdudî. He became the chairman of the Islamic political movement founded by Mawdudi, namely the Bangladesh Jamaat-i Islami.

He explained the translation as follows.

"Mawlana Mawdudi's Urdu interpretation Tafhîmu'l-Quran is consists of six volumes. He wrote another work called 'Tarjuma-i Kur'ân-i Majid' means translation of the Holy Quran. A separated translation of the Qur'an from Tafsir Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an and is provided for those who want read-

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<sup>46</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Prokashoni, Dakka, 2011. p. 36

<sup>47</sup> <https://jamaat-e-islami.org/en/special-article.php> access date 25.01. 2021.

<sup>48</sup> Gulam Azam, *Jibone Ja Dekhlam*, Dakka, Kamiyab Prokashoni, V-1, p.16.

only translation without reading lengthy commentaries. Although there is no commentary here, some explanations are included to eliminate the meaning disorders.”<sup>49</sup>

### **Definition of Translation and Translation of Gholam Azam**

There is no single definition that everyone has agreed upon regarding translation, which seems difficult to do. When it is said translation, a broad framework is drawn regarding trial and error, developments, advances, and innovations. It is also accepted that different translation trends are often far from explaining the issue and can be misleading.<sup>50</sup> Almost every translation theory and perspective has made some changes in both the translation definition and the terms. This is natural somewhere. Often translation is defined in different ways as an art or craft, a science, an interpretation, a process, an effort, a reading, analyzing, understanding and explaining, a reproduction, creation and writing, a transference, communication, and change. "Koller, for example, describes all conversations in everyday life as translation. It must be admitted that all these definitions reflect a point of view and contain accuracy. In addition to these, the possibility of translation has always been discussed in history. However, translation has just started to gain the quality of knowledge and science."<sup>51</sup>

According to Berk, translation is understood as both a product and a process. Translation according to him; In daily use, it is usually a written transfer process between two languages, or it realizes some equivalence relations between it and the original text transmitted in this way. According to the same author; it is defined as "an interdisciplinary branch of science that makes all kinds of translation-related phenomena the subject of examination".<sup>52</sup>

The method followed by Gulam Azam in his translation is to reflect the meaning of the sentence rather than explain the meaning of each word in translation. The same approach is followed in Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an. Gulam Azam also tried to reflect the general purpose rather than the lexical meaning when translating from Urdu to Bengali.

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<sup>49</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Prokashoni, Dakka, 2011. p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> Halil Hacı Müftüoğlu, *Kur'ân tercümelerinde yöntem sorunu*, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 2008, p. 31.

<sup>51</sup> Hacı Müftüoğlu, Halil. *Kur'ân tercümelerinde yöntem sorunu*, İz Yayıncılık, İstanbul: 2008, p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> Berk, özlem (2005). Kuramlar ışığında açıklamalı çeviribilim terimcesi, istanbul. Multilingual yayinlari. İsbñ: 975-6542-62-4. p. 732.

While translating the verses of the Quran, Maududi did not write the numbers of every verse. Therefore, he sometimes told more than one verse in one sentence while writing Tefhîm. That is why the verse number is not given in Tafhim. However, since it is difficult for readers to read without the verse number, Gulam Azam wrote the verse number in the translation. When he translated more than one verse in some places, he also wrote the verse numbers at the beginning of the sentence to distinguish it. In some places, explanations that are not in Tefhîm are in quotation marks. In cases where Urdu words do not have Bengali meaning, the closest Bengali synonym to Arabic is used.<sup>53</sup>

### **Features of the Translation of Gholam Azam**

The features of Gulam Azam's translation can be listed as follows:

Gholam Azam translated 30. Part of Quran into Bengali in Ramadan 1980 and the 29th part thus translated in 1987. The 28th, 27th, and the half of 26th translated in 1991. While discussing the remaining parts in 1992, the government seized Gholam Azam's citizenship and was imprisoned in Dhaka. Gholam Azam completed the remaining translation of the 26th part in prison. Gholam Azam made only the translation of Urdu from the first part to the 25th part and made a summary of the Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an interpretation at the beginning of each Surah's last five parts. Gulam Azam himself took notes or made statements where he thought it would be difficult for the public in Mawdudi's translation. In the last part, in places where there is no explanation of Tafhîmu'l-Quran, Gulam Azam made statements and said "This is not the opinion of mufassir, but the translator. Mawdudi made a concise statement in Surah al-Fatiha, and there, Gulam Azam said, "My opinion." he made additions. He put the standard Arabic, English, and Persian words without translating. Because the important purpose of language is to understand and explain. Gulam Azam declared that he is trying to translate as the easiest for those who are less able to read and write, and who can read in their native language, albeit difficult.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Prokashoni, Dakka, 2011. p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> Gulam Azam, *Jibone Ja Dekhlam*, Dakka, Kamiyab kitapevi. V-1, p.15.

## Evaluation on the Translation

As a member of a family coming from a religious tradition, Golam Azam had the opportunity to study the Quran from childhood. His father and grandfather were recognized as great scholars.

Gulam Azam had learned Arabic as well as fluent in Urdu, Persian, Hindi, and English, except for his native Bengali language. After serving in Bangladesh's Islamic political party Jamaat-e-Islami in 1954, he had the opportunity to read, understand and narrate the Quran more comprehensively. He wrote a booklet called "The Quran is easy to understand" by explaining the techniques that will make it easier to understand the Quran to make it understood by others as much as he can understand it.

Maududi's Tafhîmu'l-Qur'an is very famous in Bangladesh as well as in other countries in the Indian subcontinent. Tefhîmu'l-Quran has literary সাধু (shadhu) and oral চলিত (colito)<sup>55</sup> translations in two accents. Gholam Azam decided to translate a little easier, targeting the general public with secondary education and the people in his organization. Some of the other translators also translated the Quran beautifully. However, Gulam Azam dealt with the issues by emphasizing the need to apply the Quran to life in the light of Maududi's translation. The Quran is not just a book, “; it” is a guideline to show how the ways to design all stages of human life. This situation is reflected in the footnotes as well as in the translation.

Maududi did not put long notes in some places in his translation, However, Gulam Azam added a long note in the translation of Surah Fatiha. In the Surah al-Fatiha, Gholam Azam had added an article called "the environment of nüzul", the virtue and importance of Surah al-Fatiha with Maududi's explanation of the naming of the Surah.<sup>56</sup> In the translation of the verses, descriptive meanings in Bengali were put in quotes next to the famous Arabic or Persian words in Bengali. For example, in verse 11 of the chapter of al-Baqara

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<sup>55</sup> A sadhu or chaste and chalita or colloquial or spoken. The two differ basically in verbs and pronouns. The verbs and pronouns get shortened in the colloquial form. For example: করিয়া (kariya; to do) > করে (kare); তাহার (tahaar; his/hers) > তার (tar). The importance of the colloquial form arose at the beginning of the 20th century but the use of chaste Bangla did not disappear totally. [http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Bangla\\_Language](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Bangla_Language) acses date 11.02.2021.

<sup>56</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Prokashoni, Dakka, 2011, V-1, p. 7.



"When they are told, "Do not spread corruption in the land," they reply, "We are only peace-makers!"<sup>57</sup>

The Bengali meaning of the word corruption is translated by the word ফ্যাসাদ "mischief" in verse. It can be said that this corrupt word has provided more convenience to the general readers by putting the word "বিশৃঙ্খলা", which is in Bengali, "corruption" in quotes.<sup>58</sup>

In the 16th verse of the chapter of al-Baqara, it is stated as follows: "They are the ones who trade guidance for misguidance. But this trade is profitless, and they are not 'rightly' guided. "The word "الضلالة", which expresses "misguidance" in verse, is translated with the word গোমরাহ, which is a Persian Word used in Bengali translations. However, Ghulam Azam made it easier by adding the Word (Pothovroshtota)<sup>59</sup> "Misguidance" in quotes next to the word.

## Conclusion

Considering the history of the Bengali Quran translation, although Bengali is an ancient language and Bangladesh is a country with dense Islamic scholars, the culture of Quran translation is not that old and rich. Translation of some suras of Shah Mohammad Sagir<sup>60</sup> (C. 14th-15th centuries) as poetry dates back to 1389 AD. Later, Amiruddin Basuniye translated the last part of the Qur'an in AD 1808 and became an example for the translation of the Quran. Some of the translations in the sources have been well translated by scholars. Some have been translated by non-Muslims or Muslims who do not understand Arabic well.

When various sources are examined, it is seen that more than fifty translations of the Qur'an have been published since the beginning of the translation process. However, not all of them have been preserved for various reasons. It can be said that this situation has arisen due to the state's lack of an institutional up-to-date structure for conservation and the lack of personal adequate effort. Along with the previous translations, there are good translations at the last stage. An example of this is the translation of the Quran by Gulam Azam.

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<sup>57</sup> Al-Qur'an 2/11.

<sup>58</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Publication, Dhaka, p. 16.

<sup>59</sup> Gulam Azam, *Sohoj Banglai Al-Qur'aner Onubad*, Kamiyab Publication, Dhaka, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.kalerkantho.com/print-edition/islamic-life/2019/07/26/795902> access date 26.12.2020.

As a person who has been interested in the Quran throughout his life, Gholam Azam was making a great effort to spread the Quran.<sup>61</sup> Weekly and monthly Qur'an training programs, which are initiated at every level in the organization of their party to understand and apply the Quran, are continuing. Thousands of people had the opportunity to participate in Gholam Azam's programs and read and understand the Quran.

Of course, while mentioning the translation and efforts of Gulam Azam, on the other hand, some of the scholars in Bangladesh perceived these efforts of Gulam Azam as political propaganda. However, if the scholars' efforts were directed towards the students in the madrasa, Gulam Azam's efforts were directed both to the scholars in the madrasa and the people. With the efforts of these two schools, the people of Bangladesh are trying to understand, tell and implement the Quran.

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