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**Hadith Translation: Handling Linguistic and Juristic  
Problems in Translating *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī***

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to provide a critical review of Muḥsin Khan's translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukārī*. It is presented in the form of a discussion of the theory of translation and its practical contribution to Ḥadīth<sup>1</sup> translation. The extensive examples from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukārī*<sup>2</sup>, their translational problems, and their linguistic features are presented to make the reader of Ḥadīth appreciate its unique language. The present work will also be of interest to researchers in the field of Islamic studies. The exemplified discussion of juristic differences reflected in the jurists' variant exegeses of the text and the translator's response to those differences will be of great value to those interested in Ḥadīth jurisprudence. The review intends to detect intricate translation problems in *Bukhārī* and provides solutions to problems and inaccuracies in the translation of Hadith by focusing on sample texts from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. It is not intended to be a translation quality assessment of *Bukhārī*.

I had two choices of handling this review: 1) elaborating translation problems in *Bukhārī* from exegetical and juristic perspectives by detecting defects on the basis of Ḥadīth commentaries or 2) setting up a linguistic framework of major linguistic features of Ḥadīth discourse and making it the standard for assessing Khan's translation and measuring his ability to handle cross-lingual variations by maintaining and retaining syntactic, semantic, and aesthetic features of Prophetic discourse. I opted for the second method because, though linguistics and translation theory are two distinct, autonomous disciplines, they are, nevertheless, clearly intrinsically connected. Translation is a process that inevitably deals with language, and this process concerns linguists in several respects. I, moreover, referred to exegetical and juristic commentaries, as they are indispensable in understanding Prophetic traditions.

I employed four main criteria to measure the accuracy of three translations of *Bukhārī*. These criteria pose the current study's main question: How does the translator of *Bukhārī* handle Ḥadīth discourse

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<sup>1</sup> When the word Ḥadīth is capitalized it refers to the whole rubric of Ḥadīth literature or Ḥadīth sciences. If it refers to a specific prophetic tradition or saying of the Prophet, it will appear in lower case.

<sup>2</sup> I relied on *Bukhārī, the Translation of the Meaning of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, trans. Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 8 vols., Darussalam, Riyadh 1997.

with respect to its syntactic, semantic, lexical, and rhetorical features? The samples discussed in this study pose challenges for a translator of any religious text, particularly Arabic religious texts.

## 1. Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and its Translations

### 1.1. Introductory Remarks on Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

Discounting all repetitions, Bukhārī contains 2602 Prophetic traditions. It is divided into 106 books and a total of 3450 chapters. Each chapter bears a heading that is descriptive of its contents. It seems that al-Bukhārī usually took a portion of the *ḥadīth* for the chapter headings, however, the numerous headings make the work somewhat difficult to use. He used less exacting criteria for the traditions<sup>3</sup> that he used as headings for some of his chapters, and in a corroborative manner for the principal ones. In such cases, “he often omits all or part of the *isnād*, and in certain cases relies on weak authorities” (Siddiqi, 1993:57).

Readers of Ṣaḥīḥ with deep insight will realize that the author compiled his book, not merely as an anthology of accounts, but also as a rich fountain of knowledge covering all areas of the Islamic religion. “Apparently he used the *tarājim* (chapter headings) as a convenient and relevant space for expounding his own views, or the opinions of others that he supported and wanted to advocate” (Abdul-Rauf, 16). Khan does not provide English translations for many of Bukhārī’s titles (vol. 6:412, 413). In some cases, he does not fully translate the titles, though they bear significance to the book. The way he translates *tarājim* indicates that Khan is not aware of their significance or the methodology Bukhārī adopted in his selection of words and quotations.

Bukhārī’s Ṣaḥīḥ is not simply a collection of authentic *ḥadīths*; rather, it is also a classic work of *fiqh*. For this reason, al-Bukhārī does not record the entire *ḥadīth* each time he mentions it. It was his practice (though not in every case) to record only that portion of the *ḥadīth* relevant to the chapter. Thus, he repeats many *ḥadīths* throughout his work. It is imperative that the translator compare all the repetitions and consider the jurisprudential impact of mentioning them in particular places in order to fully understand their meanings. Some of the crucial inaccuracies and inconsistencies in Khan’s translation of Bukhārī were a natural outcome the translator being unaware of this fact.

Bukhārī himself entitled his work *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Musnad al-Mukhtaṣar min Ḥadīthi Rasūl Allah wa Sunanihi wa Ayyāmih*. This is indicative of Bukhārī’s methodology and approach. The word *al-Jāmi‘*

<sup>33</sup> I will use the term ‘tradition’ as synonym to *ḥadīth*.

(lit. comprehensive) signifies that the collection covers all the eight areas that *al-Jāmi'* are generally known to cover. These areas are: dogmatic points, legal rules, moral teachings, etiquette of eating and drinking, commentary of Qur'ān, history and biography of the Prophet, travel and movement, tribulations, and the virtues of the Prophet and his Companions. *Al-Ṣahīḥ* signifies that it is inclusive of only those traditions that meet his conditions for authenticity. *Musnad* means that all traditions included are supported with uninterrupted chains of transmission, stemming all the way back to the Prophet. The rest of his title indicates that he includes Prophetic traditions and statements, deeds of the Companions, as well as historical accounts.

## **1.2. Translations of Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī**

Khan's Translation of the Meanings of Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī is not the first attempt to render the voluminous book into English. The first attempt to translate Bukhārī was embarked upon by the Muslim revert Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss), who introduced a partial translation of the book by translating the historical parts of Bukhārī in his *Early Years of Islam*. The book offers an English translation and commentary of the historical accounts included in Bukhārī. Asad describes his book saying, "It depicts the beginning of the Prophet's revelation, the merits of his Companions and the early years of Islam up to and including the decisive turning point of Islamic history, the Battle of Badr" (Asad, 1938:1).

The idea came first to him during his five years sojourn at Madinah, when he was studying the science of *ḥadīth* at the Prophet's mosque (Ibid). With the encouragement of the poet-philosopher Iqbal, he attempted a task that had never before been undertaken in the English language: the translation and explanation of the Prophet's authentic traditions as they had been carefully and critically compiled in the ninth century by the great traditionalist Muhammad Al-Bukhārī (Ahmad, 2013: 1). He planned to gradually translate and annotate the entire Ṣahīḥ al-Bukhārī and publish it in forty installments. The first five installments were published by Arafat Publications in Lahore between December 1935 and May 1938. The remaining thirty-five installments were to be completed and published over the course of the following five or six years. (Sherif: 14). The outbreak of the Second World War (1939) interrupted the publication of the installments of this work. The 1938 edition is a collection, in book form, of the five installments that he translated.

Asad’s methodology consisted in rendering the “meaning as literally as possible” (Asad: v). His own additions were “confined to the explanatory notes” (Asad: vi). Whenever an addition is unavoidable in the text itself, he uses brackets for the sake of clarity. Asad differed from other translators of Bukhārī in putting great emphasis on the technical aspects of the book by highlighting its significance as a compilation of traditions and jurisprudence. Unlike other translators of Bukhārī and other books of Ḥadīth, Asad divided each *ḥadīth* into two parts: “the documentary evidence of transmission (*isnād*) and the textual substance (*matn*)” (Asad: ii). Though some may find the inclusion of the *isnād* in the translation to be irrelevant to the understanding of the Ḥadīth, Asad believes them to be essential as according to him, “Without an *isnād* a Tradition is no more than a heresy report” (Asad: vii). In addition to his concern about *isnād*, Asad further gives insights to other technical aspects of Bukārī. His translation excels due to the fact that it was rendered by a native speaker of English who delved deeply into the meaning conveyed by the rhetoric and other stylistic features of the Arabic.

Another native English speaker who has attempted the translation of Bukārī is Aisha Bewley, a Muslim revert of American descent. She produced her translation of Bukārī, which may be described as easy to follow and close to the literal meaning, yet conveying the full meaning of the text. As opposed to Khan’s translation which is of *salaft* background and orientation, a characteristic that he tediously endorses throughout his translations, Bewley’s translation reflects Sufi influences that are evident throughout her work. The translator seems to have fulfilled her main objective in presenting this new rendering: to allow the meaning of the original, as far as possible, to come through clearly. The text is presented without any Arabic text or footnotes. This allows for readability and flow of the text, in addition to enabling the reader to see the text as it is without any tendentious shaping of its meaning.

### **1.3. Khan’s Translation of Bukhārī**

Khan is neither a native speaker of Arabic, nor English. He received a degree in Surgery from the University of Punjab and worked in the Ministry of Health in KSA for 15 years. His work at the Islamic university was in the medical field and he spent his entire life as a physician. This raises questions regarding his capability to embark on such a great task, which necessitates versatile knowledge in all spheres of Arabic and English syntax, semantics and rhetoric, in addition to the necessary deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and Ḥadīth. A

cursory view of the revisers of his work reveals that some lack competence in basic Islamic sciences.

Khan presents the Arabic text alongside the English translation, though it increases the volume of the work. This style of providing both texts enables the reader to compare the translation with the original text and it is followed in almost all translations of *Ḥadīth*. Khan, however, takes this a step further by following the Arabic pagination style, from right to left, making it difficult for the English reader, who is the main target of this translation.

Unlike Asad, Khan only focuses on translating the substance of the *Ḥadīth*. He does not render the lengthy chains of transmitters for the English reader, which makes it exceedingly difficult to separate the frequent interpolations of the transmitters from textual substance. He always introduces such interpolations with general phrases such as 'the narrator says' or 'the sub-narrator says', a phrase which leaves the interpolator anomalous and, in most cases, difficult to discern from the Prophet's statements. Likewise, he does not render other technical aspects of Bukhārī such as imitative (*mutābi'āt*)<sup>4</sup> variants (Bukhārī, 1:5), interpolations of later reporters or *mu'allaqāt*<sup>5</sup>, which are indispensable in Bukhārī's chapter titles. On some occasions he does not indicate that the sub-narrator is unsure of the exact wording of the *Ḥadīth*, which may lead the reader to the conclusion that the translator has provided two alternative translations of the same phrase (Bukhārī, 3:166).

Khan prefaces his work with an irrelevant lengthy introduction regarding dogmatic issues that are not essential to his translation. It is a means of gaining credit in *salafī* circles in Arabia to prove that the work is pure of all dogmatic innovations. In his introductory remarks on Bukhārī and throughout his work we do not find any explanation of Bukhārī's methodology in compiling traditions, nor do we find any mention of the problems the translator faced in tackling Bukhārī's text. He does, however, annex a glossary of technical terms at the beginning of each chapter, but most of his definitions are neither coactive, as they do not specify the necessary and sufficient conditions of the word, nor are they denotative, as they do not encompass all extensions.

<sup>4</sup> When the report of one narrator is confirmed by another, and the latter agrees with the former entirely through the same chain of transmission without any change in the *ḥ adīth*, the original narrator and his *ḥ adīth* are called *mutāba'* (confirmed) and the new narrator and his *ḥ adīth* are called *mutābi'* (confirming)<sup>4</sup>. Both the original and the follow up may be exactly the same in wording and meaning or they may vary in wording while agreeing in meaning. In both cases the original Companion who narrated the tradition must be same.

<sup>5</sup> a *Mu'allaq* (suspended or hanging) *ḥ adīth* is a report in which one or more narrators are omitted from the beginning of its *isnād*, by the compiler of the *Ḥadīth* (Al-Ḥākīm, 'Ulūm, p. 24.)

Khan's translation lacks the introduction of a methodological framework for Ḥadīth translation. He does not provide answers for the numerous questions raised in academic circles concerning how to tackle religious concepts peculiar to Islamic texts, how to translate the figurative language that is commonly found in the eloquent statements of Ḥadīth, and how to deal with semantic problems that arise due to various interpretations of the same Arabic text. Likewise, he does not delineate a systematic approach to the rhetorical features of Ḥadīth, such as antiphrasis, chiasmus, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, simile, alliteration, metaphor, etc or for the linguistic elements such as ellipsis, homonyms, lexical cohesion, etc. Although it is not necessary to provide decisive solutions for these issues at the beginning of the work, at least his approach should reveal a consistent methodology, which may be further explained through explanatory footnotes. By critically reviewing Khan's translation, it is plain that he did not follow a consistent or systematic method throughout his translation; in fact, in numerous instances he completely overlooks these linguistic features in a manner that, in many cases, results in misinterpreting the Arabic text.

## **2. Translation Problems of Ḥadīth Discourse in Khan's Translation of Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ**

### **2.1. Syntactic Features**

Ḥadīth discourse is characterized by syntactic constructions that display fascinating linguistic architecture where the permutation of constituents plays a significant role in the interior and exterior linguistic decoration of the construction. A translator cannot overlook those features when conveying Ḥadīth texts into English. This is explained in the following cases:

#### **2.1.1. Structural Ambiguity**

This refers to a situation where a sentence may be interpreted in more than one way due to ambiguous sentence structure. Syntactic ambiguity arises, not from the range of meanings of single words, but from the relationship between the words and clauses of a sentence, and resulting implied sentence structure. When a reader can reasonably interpret the same sentence as having more than one possible structure, the text meets the definition of syntactic ambiguity. Although this is not a common linguistic feature of Ḥadīth discourse, "structural ambiguity requires careful exegetical exploration in order to decide its accurate meaning in the target language" (Abdul-Raof, 2001: 74).



In Bukhārī, we encounter a series of structures that feature grammatical ambiguity because of pronominal reference. For instance the structure (خَلَقَ اللهُ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ) has a pronominal affix (هـ) cliticized to the proper noun (الله), resulting in syntactic ambiguity, which has also led to different interpretations and translations. This pronominal object affix can either refer to (God) which leads to the meaning that Adam has a form as Allah has a form (both are not identical or similar) or refer to (Adam) thus leading to the meaning that Adam has been created in the form Allah has chosen for him. Khan chooses the second meaning by assuming that the antecedent of the pronoun is Adam, thus meaning that Allah created Adam in his (meaning Adam's) complete form (directly) (Bukhārī, 8:246). This, however, conflicts with the other variant version related by Ibn Abī 'Aṣim (1:328) in which the Prophet said, (فَإِنَّ ابْنَ آدَمَ خُلِقَ (عَلَى صُورَةِ الرَّحْمَنِ)). In comparing the two narrations, it is evident that the most appropriate translation would be "Allah created Adam in His form", but explanatory notes must be provided to clarify all likely creedal misconceptions.

### 2.1.2. Syntactico-Rhetorical Interfertilization

There are numerous examples of Prophetic traditions that employ syntactic mechanisms to achieve an intended rhetorical and aesthetic sense. In the following example the morphological form of the word that is used implies a meaning that should be conveyed in the target text. In Bukhārī we read:

(وَكَانَ يَلْقَاهُ فِي كُلِّ لَيْلَةٍ مِنْ رَمَضَانَ فَيُدَارِسُهُ الْقُرْآنَ)

"Gabriel used to meet him every night of Ramadan to teach him the Qur'ān" (Bukhārī, 1:4). The verb (يدارسه – teach him) also connotes a sense of mutual participation of both the student and the instructor which is not conveyed by the English verb (teach). Thus, the Arabic word adds textual value to the text, i.e. a textual enhancement which is not reflected in the translation. The proper translation would be 'Gabriel used to confer with him' or 'Gabriel to go through the Qur'an with him' (Belewy: 1:4).

With regard to the sphere of particles, Arabic is rich in particles that add semantic and rhetorical meaning. Overlooking specific Arabic particles in the English translation may lead to drastic distortion of the source text, particularly those of semantic and rhetorical impact. An example is the following *ḥadīth*:

(إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِمَّا نَوَى)

Khan translates it as: "The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended" (Bukhārī, 1:5). The translation lacks any equivalent for *innamā* (إنما), which implies emphasis and exclusiveness. Thus, it should be

translated as something like, “verily [or certainly] only ...” Though linguists agree that it implies exclusiveness in general, as there could always be exceptions, they differ on the semantic and syntactic ways by which it shows exclusiveness. So this *ḥadīth* should be translated as, “Surely, all actions are but by intentions” and it is not sufficient to translate it as “The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions” or “Indeed, actions are by intention” since it includes an emphatic particle (إِنَّ) and the negative particle (مَا).

Exclusiveness means that the ruling applies to what is stated, and is negated with respect to anything else, and from the Qur’ān it is clear that this is the meaning in which *innamā* is used. Khan represents exclusiveness in his translation of the following verse: (إِنَّمَا تُجْرَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ) (Q66:7). “You are being requited only for what you used to do.” There is a significant difference between Khan’s translation of the *ḥadīth* and the proposed translation, which consequently, affects its jurisprudence. According to Khan’s words, no spiritual reward accrues without intention (Al-Zarqā, 1989:39-40). By including *innamā* the meaning is: intention is a prerequisite of all [spiritual] acts (Shawkānī, 1418AH, 1:361).

According to his translation of the second segment “and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended,” it would be a repetition of the previous segment.

Some English particles have no rhetorical effect on the text. This sometimes leads a translator to overlook them in the target language, though they have a rhetorical impact on the Arabic text. In some occasions Khan overlooks pronouns, believing that they are redundantly employed in the source text, though they may have a rhetorical or aesthetic effect. In his translation of the Prophet’s statement

(مَنْ أَحْدَثَ فِي أَمْرِنَا هَذَا مَا لَيْسَ فِيهِ، فَهُوَ رَدٌّ)

If somebody innovates something which is not in harmony with the “principles of our religion, that thing is rejected.

Khan does not refer to the masculine singular demonstrative pronoun *hādhā* though it is rhetorically significant in the source text. In English it does not seem significant. The Prophet indicated the religion by using the word *hādhā* (هذا) or ‘this’ to emphasize or give importance to the matter that is being referred to. It is similar to the opening verses of (Q1:2) where Allah refers to ‘this book’ with the word *dhālika* (ذلك). Therefore, the proposed translation may be as follows: “Whoever introduces anything into this matter of ours that is not from it shall have it rejected”.

Khan translates the Prophet's statement, (أمرنا) as 'the principles of our religion', though it is overly restrictive and lacking in some of the sense components of the source text. The tradition clarifies the ramification of *bid'ah* (innovation). According to Shāṭibī, *bid'ah* is defined as: an invented path taken in religion which resembles Shari'ah, the following of which aims to exaggerate in worshipping Allah, the Exalted (Shāṭibī, 1992: 1:50). Scholars specified five aspects that must be considered to determine whether or not a particular act of worship is sanctioned by the *Sharī'ah* or not: the cause, type, amount, manner, time, and place (Ibn 'Uthaymīn, 1423AH:25-31). Therefore, translating (أمرنا) as 'principles of our religion' is a vague interpretation. A proposed translation of this word is 'matter of ours' since the Arabic meaning of the word has a semantic effect on the text. The Prophet (peace be upon him) referred to the religion of Islam by using the word 'amr' to demonstrate that this religion is the affair of the Muslims and of great concern to them. All Muslims' deeds and actions are concerned with and related to this 'matter,' the religion of Islam (Al-Munāwī: 6:36). Furthermore, as Al-Shawkānī (2:93) points out that what is meant by 'matter' here is the way of life and beliefs that were being followed by the Prophet and his Companions. That is the matter by which all later acts are to be judged.

### 2.1.3. Verbal Idioms

A verbal idiom "is a term used in grammar and lexicography to refer to a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit" (Crystal, 1980:179). *Ḥadīth* discourse is extensively rich with verbal idioms which constitute a significant component of *Ḥadīth* vocabulary. "Verbal idioms occur quite frequently, a fact that quickly becomes clear to one who keeps an eye open for them. The Arabic equivalent of verbal idioms, *taḍmīn*, is defined as one verb absorbing the meaning of another (Ibn Hishām, 1997:642). "The use of non-regular propositions<sup>6</sup> thus represents one aspect of the 'Ijāz (brevity, terseness of expression)" (Mir 1989:2). Mir (1989:2) observes that clusters of verbal idioms are sometimes found within the span of a short passage.

For the sake of brevity, I designed the following table which includes the original use of a verbal idiom and demonstrates how it shifts to *taḍmīn* by virtue of using it with a non-regular proposition. In addition

<sup>6</sup> Arabic verbs are correlated to typical prepositions. When they are used with other propositions they imply a totally different meaning.

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to mentioning Khan's translation of those verbal idioms I proposed alternates for Khan's translation based on the new meaning of the verb.

Bukhārī	Arabic Verbal Idiom		Khan's Translation	Proposed Translation
	Normal Use of the Verb	Verbal Idiom in Bukhārī		
1:H6	غسلت قدميه	غسلت عن قدميه	wash his feet	wash off his feet in reverence (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:16).
1:H20	يعود إلى الكفر	يعود في الكفر	to revert to disbelief	to revert back to, and remain in disbelief (Ibn Ḥajar, 1:62)
	أصلّ بكم	قوموا فأصلّ لكم	Get up. I shall lead you in the prayer.	Get up to invoke Allah for yourselves (Ibn Ḥajar, 1:489).
	نصح له	فَبِأَنَّا نَرَىٰ وُجُوهَهُ وَنُصِيحَتَهُ إِلَى الْمُنَافِقِينَ	but we have always seen him mixing with hypocrites	we see his favoritism and his loyalty to the hypocrites (Ibn Ḥajar, 1:522)
	أخذ نصالها	فَلْيَأْخُذْ عَلَىٰ نِصَالِهَا	Whoever passes through our mosques or markets with arrows should <b>hold them by</b> their heads	Whoever passes through our mosques or market with arrows must take hold of their heads (Ibn Ḥajar, 1:547).
	أبرد على	فَأَبْرِدُوا عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ	then pray the Zuhr prayer when it becomes (a bit) cooler	Then delay Zuhr prayer till it gets cooler (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:16).
	بعث على بعث بـ بعث من بعث في بعث لـ	محمودا ابعثه مقاما	<b>send him</b> (on the Day of Judgment) to the best and the highest place in Paradise	grant him a praiseworthy position (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:95)
	قرأ من قرأ على	قرأ في المغرب بالطور	reciting "At-Tur" (52) in the Maghrib prayer.	reciting a part of al-Ṭūr or reciting al-Ṭūr in full assiduity or devotion (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:248)
	ينفع الناس	ولا ينفع ذا الجد منك الجد	Hard efforts by anyone for anything cannot benefit one against Your Will.	And the fortune of the fortunate is of no avail against You(r) will (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:332).
73	2:H5 أطاعه	فَإِنْ هُمْ أَطَاعُوا لَكَ بِذَلِكَ	If they obey you in that,	If they surrender their obedience to you in that, (Ibn Ḥajar, 2:395)
	وسوس له وسوس إلى وسوس في	إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَجَاوَزَ لِي عَنْ أُمَّتِي مَا وَسَّوَسْتُ بِهِ صُدُورُهُمْ	Allah has accepted my invocation to forgive what whispers in the hearts of my followers, unless they put it to action or utter it.	Verily Allah has exonerated my followers from the <b>whispering that occurs in their hearts</b> so long as they do not act upon them or talk about them (Ibn Ḥajar, 5:161).

### 2.1.4. Deletion of Prepositions

In order to achieve an eloquent style, prepositions of some *Hadīth* structures are dropped without any linguistic effect on the structure of the source text itself. A translator needs to show those deleted prepositions in the target language. Khan renders those deleted prepositions in his translation as in (سَقَى يَا زُبَيْرُ، ثُمَّ أَرْسَلَ الْمَاءَ إِلَى جَارِكِ»، فَغَضِبَ الْأَنْصَارِيُّ، فَقَالَ: أُنْ) "Is it because he (i.e. Zubair) is your aunt's son?" (Bukhārī, 3:320). In this example the preposition (لِ - because) must be employed before the word (أُنْ).

Khan, sometimes, does not identify a deleted preposition in the source text. It may result in misinterpreting the structure as in (مَا عَمِلْتُ) (عَمَلًا أَرْجَى عِنْدِي أَنِّي لَمْ أَتَطَهَّرْ إِلَّا صَلَّيْتُ) "the best deed, which I think to be the best, is". The preposition (مِنْ) should be employed after the word (عِنْدِي) (Mubārkaḫūrī, 1984:4:359). Therefore the text should read, "I have never offered a deed for which I am more hopeful [that I am rewarded] than that I have never performed ablution except that I prayed thereafter".

### 2.1.5. Past Tense with a Future Meaning

3. Most of past tense included in a conditional sentence implies future meaning, as in (مَنْ أَعْمَرَ أَرْضًا لَيْسَتْ لِأَحَدٍ فَهُوَ أَحَقُّ) "He who cultivates land that does not belong to anybody is more rightful" (Bukhārī, 3:306). In some occasions where past tense implies future meaning in Arabic, Khan does not consistently maintain the future meaning in the target language as in (يَخْرُجُ مِنَ النَّارِ مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ). He translates it, "Whoever said 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and has in his heart good (faith) equal to the weight of a barley grain' will be taken out of Hell." (Bukhārī, 1:37).

He further literally translates past tense in (مَنْ أَكَلَ مِنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ - يَعْنِي) (الثُّومَ - فَلَا يَقْرَبَنَّ مَسْجِدَنَا) [Whoever ate from this plant (i.e. garlic) should not enter our mosque." (Bukhārī, 1:451). In the translation of this example, there is a possibility that the legal ruling of prohibition to enter mosques upon eating garlic is temporal to the incident addressed by the *hadīth*.

### 3.1. Problems of Semantic Features

#### 3.1.1. Semantic Ambiguity

When a word or phrase has widely differing meanings it is said to have semantic ambiguity (Brooke N. and Parker, 2012:1). A special feature of *Hadīth* is that its syntactic structures have great bearing on meaning.

*Hadīth* commentators provide different interpretations and meanings for some phrases. This has influenced the translatability of the text since

as it has a direct effect on the target text. This is exemplified in the following Prophetic tradition:

(إِنَّ مِمَّا أُدْرِكَ النَّاسُ مِنْ كَلَامِ النَّبِيِّ، إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحْيَ فَاصْنَعْ مَا شِئْتَ)

‘Part of what people have of the words of earlier prophethood is: “If you do not feel ashamed do whatever you like.”’ (Bukhārī, 8:89). Ibn Rajab (1:498), Al-Munāwī (2:540) al-Bugha and Mistu (140) maintain that although the structure is in the imperative, it is actually not meant to be an order. It is, instead, a form of threat or warning (Ibn al-Qaiyyim, 1996, 2:348). According to this interpretation, an elaborative addition is deemed necessary. Therefore, it could be rendered as follows, “If you have no modesty, then do whatever you wish and Allah will recompense you” (Zarabozo, 1999:799). In fact, this is the approach of Khan and Hilālī in their interpretation of the Noble Qurān (Q41:40), where they added an explanatory note in parenthesis indicating that it “is a severe threat to the unbelievers” (Hilali and Khan: 866).

A second explanation of this *ḥadīth* states that though the wording is used in the imperative sense, it is a case of an order being used as a statement of fact (Ibn Al-Qayyim, 1983:78-79). In other words, the meaning is, “If a person does not have any shame, then, he does whatever he wishes”. Ibn al-Qaiyyim states that when a person commits sins, his feeling of *ḥayā*’ (modesty) is lessened. When *ḥayā*’ (modesty) vanishes, a person does not care what people might say or think about him (Ibn al-Qaiyyim, 182). This interpretation is also consistent with Arabic semantics. Another example of this nature is the Prophet’s statement ( مَنْ ) (كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ فَلْيَبْتِئُوا مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ). “Whoever tells a lie against me (intentionally) then (surely) he will occupy his seat in Hell-fire” (Bukhārī, 1:83).

A third interpretation is that the command expresses permission (Kamali: 177-179). In other words, “If you are contemplating an act and it is an act such that there is no reason to be ashamed of it in front of Allah or the people, then you may do that act.” This interpretation is favored by Nawawī (ibn Ḥajar: 10:641) and Aḥmad (Ibn Rajab: 1:503). It is maintained by Khan in his translation of numerous verses of the Qur’ān such as:

(فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ) الجمعة: ١٠.

“Then when the (Jumu'ah) prayer is finished, you may disperse through the land, and seek the bounty of Allah (by working, etc.), and remember Allah much, that you may be successful” (Khan: Q62:10).

Salīm al-Hilālī offers a fourth interpretation. He states that this *ḥadīth* encourages modesty and indirectly indicates its virtues. In this way, the *ḥadīth* is understood to mean, “Since you are not allowed to do

any act you wish, you are not allowed to be without modesty.” (Al-Hilālī: 10).

Though Khan opted for the second interpretation, he favors the interpretation that the sentence is an imperative.

In a case when a text suggests various interpretations that are all equally acceptable, a translator is not to be blamed for choosing one as opposed to another, provided that he gives explanatory notes including further alternatives. Such is the case of the forgoing example.

In other instances, a translator may have various interpretations but he opts for one which is proved unacceptable as in the following tradition:

(حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ، حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ الْمَصْدُوقُ، «إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا، ثُمَّ يَكُونُ عَلَقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ يَكُونُ مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ،...»)

“It was narrated by 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd: Allah's Apostle, the true and truly inspired said, "(The matter of the Creation of) a human being is put together in the womb of the mother in forty days, and then he becomes a clot of thick blood for a similar period, and then a piece of flesh for a similar period”.

The phrase (مثل ذلك) is significant in this text. Khan translates it as “for a similar period”. It means that the four stages of human creation take place in the first four months and each stage takes forty days. It is clear from modern day science that such interpretation is not correct. The correct interpretation is that all these stages take place in the first forty days. Therefore, the correct translation would be, “Surely, each of you is brought together in his mother’s abdomen for forty days. It is then a clinging object during that same period. Then it is a lump looking like it has been chewed during that same period” (Zarabozo, 1999:387). This is the interpretation of Ibn Hajar who substantiated his conclusion by statements of his contemporary physicians and other reliable versions of the *hadīth* (Ibn Hajar, 11:481). He based his interpretation on the version of Muslim which reads:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ، قَالَ: حَدَّثَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَهُوَ الصَّادِقُ الْمَصْدُوقُ " إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ يُجْمَعُ خَلْفَهُ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْمًا، ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ عَلَقَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ، ثُمَّ يَكُونُ فِي ذَلِكَ مُضْغَةً مِثْلَ ذَلِكَ

On the authority of ‘Abdullah b. Mas’ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and he is the truthful, the believed, narrated to us: “Verily each of you is brought together in his mother’s abdomen for forty days. Then it is therein a clinging object during this period. Therefore, it is therein a lump looking like it has been chewed in this period. The angel is then sent to him...”

(Siddiqi, 2009, 4: 2036). This interpretation is fully compatible with modern science (Al-bar: 12). Though Siddiqi had the fully detailed and clear version of Muslim, he introduced the same interpolation to the text. According to him, the tradition reads as follows: “The constituents of one of you are collected for forty days in his mother's womb in the form of blood, after which it becomes a clot of blood in another period of forty days. Then it becomes a lump of flesh and forty days later Allah sends His angel to it with instructions” (Siddiqi, 2009:1581)

The reason for this misinterpretation is that the vast majority of scholars and commentators of *Ḥadīth* understand this *ḥadīth* to mean that the three stages of the formation of the fetus take place over a period of one hundred and twenty days. This leads them to the conclusion that the soul is breathed into the womb after that period. This conclusion, in turn, resulted in other important *fiqh* conclusions that permit abortion within the first 120 days for valid reasons.

Another example of semantic ambiguity that results from various interpretations of the source text is the Prophet’s statement “لا تغضب” (Bukhārī, 8:88). Khan translates it as “Do not become angry and furious”. Commentators of *Ḥadīth* provided three possible interpretations of the text. Two of these interpretations are based on the assumption that anger is something natural and beyond the control of human beings (Nawawī, 1997: 62). Given this assumption, the Prophet (peace be upon him) is then misinterpreted to advise the Muslim to do something that is not within his ability. Obviously, the *Sharī‘ah* as a whole would never request something of that nature. Therefore, we need to recourse to alternative interpretations such as the following:

a. It is an order to take those means that will keep the Muslim from getting angry. That is, a Muslim should learn how to change his character and adopt the characteristics of generosity, kindness and calmness that enable him to control his temper (Ibn Rajab 2001, 1:364). According to this interpretation, the proposed translation of the text should be as follows: “Prevent yourself from becoming angry”.

b. It is a prohibition to act upon anger or while being angry (ibid.). According to this interpretation, the English text should read: “Do not act in a state of anger or while being angry”.

c. It is an order to be patient and control oneself when getting angry. This is a literal understanding of the text (Al-Baitār, 105). In this case it may be translated as: “Do not be angry”.



### 3.1.2. Homonyms

The term homonym is used when one form (word), written or spoken, has two or more unrelated meanings. Homonyms are words which have quite separate meanings, but which have accidentally come to have exactly the same form (Yule 1985:96-7; Rippin 1988:162, 170). Ḥadīth discourse abounds with homonymic expressions, where the meaning is derived from the co-text, i.e. the linguistic environment in which the word occurs, as in (فتنة) which has 6 different meanings:

a. Melting of gold and silver in order to distinguish the bad from the good. This is the basic lexical meaning of the word and is rarely used in Ḥadīth discourse.

b. Trial, test or probation (Bukhāri, 1:69). Khan's translation was accurate by using *fitnah* for this meaning at the following Prophetic *ḥadīth*:

“No doubt (وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنكُمْ تُفْتَنُونَ فِي الْقُبُورِ مِثْلَ - أَوْ قَرِيبَ مِنْ - فِتْنَةِ الدَّجَالِ) it has been inspired to me that you will be put to trials in your graves and these trials will be like the trials of Masih ad-Dajjal”. In another context he failed to provide that meaning. Though it similarly means ‘trial’ or ‘test’, Khan translates (فتنة) as ‘hardship’ in the following text: (فِتْنَةُ الرَّجُلِ ( فِي أَهْلِهِ وَمَالِهِ وَوَلَدِهِ وَجَارِهِ، تُكْفَرُهَا الصَّلَاةُ وَالصَّوْمُ وَالصَّدَقَةُ، وَالْأَمْرُ وَالنَّهْيُ) “The afflictions caused for a man by his wife, money, children and neighbor are expiated by his prayers, fasting, charity and by enjoining (what is good) and forbidding (what is evil)”. It should be translated as “trials caused for man by his wife ...” (Bukhāri, 1422, 1:111).

c. Affliction, hardship or distress as in ( فَذَكَرَ فِتْنَةَ الْقَبْرِ الَّتِي ) (يَقْتَنُنُ فِيهَا الْمَرْءُ) “and he mentioned the trial which people will face in the grave”. The word ‘*fitna*’ cannot be translated as ‘trial’ in this context. It is more appropriate to render it as ‘affliction, distress or hardship’. (Ibn Ḥajar: 11:170).

d. Temptation or persuasion as in ( وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ فِتْنَةِ الْمَسِيحِ ) (الدَّجَالِ). Khan renders it as “and from the afflictions of Masih Ad-Dajjal”, though it should be “the temptation of the anti-Christ”.

e. Dissension or sedition as in ‘Ubaidullah b. Khiyār’s statement, ( عَنْ عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَدِيِّ بْنِ خَيْارٍ، أَنَّهُ دَخَلَ عَلَى عُثْمَانَ بْنِ عَفَّانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، - وَهُوَ مَحْصُورٌ - فَقَالَ: إِنَّكَ إِمَامٌ عَامَّةٌ، وَنَزَلَ بِكَ مَا نَرَى، وَيُصَلِّي لَنَا إِمَامٌ فِتْنَةٌ، وَتَنَحَّرُحُ؟ ) (إِمَامٌ فِتْنَةٌ) in this context. Though it means ‘a leader of dissension or sedition’ he translates it as “a leader of Al-Fitan (trials and afflictions etc.)” (Bukārī, 1: 396).

f. Disbelief or infidelity (cf. Ibn Ḥajar 1379: 2:8). Though *fitna* in the following context means disbelief, Khan translates it as ‘afflictions of fighting’: (إِنَّ الْأَلَىٰ قَدْ بَعَوْا عَلَيْنَا إِذَا أَرَادُوا فِتْنَةً أُبَيِّنَا) “And if they intend affliction (i.e. want to frighten us, and fight against us)”. Ḥadīth commentators define *fitna* in this statement to mean ‘disbelief’ (Bukhārī, 1422: 1:111; Qāsim, 1990, 4:352).

In another example though, the word ‘*fitna*’ means disbelief. Khan diverts to a remote interpretation which is not contextually palatable:

(حَدَّثَنَا عَنِ الْقِتَالِ فِي الْفِتْنَةِ، وَاللَّهُ يَقُولُ (وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّىٰ لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ) الْبَقَرَةُ: ١٣٩ فَقَالَ: هَلْ تَدْرِي مَا الْفِتْنَةُ، تَكَلِّفُكَ أُمَّكَ؟ «إِنَّمَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يُقَاتِلُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ وَكَانَ الدُّخُولُ فِي دِينِهِمْ فِتْنَةً، وَلَيْسَ كَقِتَالِكُمْ عَلَى الْمَلِكِ)

“Narrate to us about the battles during the time of afflictions, as Allah says: ‘And fight them until there are no more afflictions (i.e. no more worshipping of others besides Allah’ (2: 139)? Let your mother bereave you! Muḥammad used to fight against the pagans, for a Muslim was put to trial in his religion (the pagan will either kill him or chain him as a captive). His fighting was not like your fighting which is carried on for the sake of ruling”. We notice a clear contradistinction in Khan’s translation. Though he translated the word *fitna* in the Qur’ānic verse as ‘worshipping of others besides Allah, he translates it in the statement of Ibn ‘Umar, which is regarded a commentary on the verse, to mean ‘fighting’. He overlooked the segment ‘وكان الدخول في دينهم فتنه’ which should be translated as “entering into their religion was *fitna* (renunciation of Islam for the sake of disbelief)”.

g. Civil war or turmoil, as in the following text,

(اعْدُدْ سِتًّا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ: مَوْتِي، ثُمَّ فَتْحُ بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ، ثُمَّ مَوْتَانِ يَأْخُذُ فِيكُمْ كَفَعَاصِ الْعَنَمِ، ثُمَّ اسْتِيفَاضَةُ الْمَالِ حَتَّى يُعْطَى الرَّجُلُ مِائَةَ دِينَارٍ فَيَظَلُّ سَاخِطًا، ثُمَّ فِتْنَةٌ لَا يَبْقَى بَيْتٌ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ إِلَّا دَخَلَتْهُ، ثُمَّ هُدْنَةٌ تَكُونُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ بَنِي الْأَصْفَرِ، فَيَعْدِرُونَ فَيَأْتُونَكُمْ تَحْتَ ثَمَانِينَ غَايَةً، تَحْتَ كُلِّ غَايَةٍ اثْنَا عَشَرَ أَلْفًا)

“Count six signs that indicate the approach of the Hour: my death, the conquest of Jerusalem, a plague that will afflict you (and kill you in great numbers) as the plague that afflicts sheep, the increase of wealth to such an extent that even if one is given one hundred Dinars, he will not be satisfied; then an affliction which no Arab house will escape, and then a truce between you and Bani Al-Asfar (i.e. the Byzantines) who will betray you and attack you under eighty flags. Under each flag will be twelve thousand soldiers”. Khan translates ‘*fitna*’ as ‘affliction’ though it

is contextually clear to interpret it as 'turmoil or war' (Bukhārī, 1422, 4:101; Mullā 'Alī Qārī, 2002, 8:3411; Qaṣṭalānī, 1323, 5:241).

Khan had the same problem in translating (أَنَّهُ رَجُلَانِ فِي فِتْنَةٍ ابْنِ (الزُّبَيْرِ) "During the affliction of Ibn Az-Zubair, two men came to Ibn 'Umar". It is very common in Muslim history that *fitna* of Ibn al-Zubayr refers to the civil war that occurred between 'Abdullah b. al-Zubayr and 'Abdul-Malik b. Marawān in 70 AH (Ḥusayn, 1951, 5)

### 3.1.3. Semantic Functions of Conjunctives and Specific Particles

Exclusiveness is used for semantic purposes such as emphasis and clarification of the source text meaning. In numerous cases Khan does not render it in his English translation, though it has a semantic purpose. He overlooks it in the Prophet's statement: (إِنَّمَا هِيَ قِيَعَانٌ) which he rendered as: "(And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits)". He did not include *innamā* in his translation. The proposed translation would be: "(A person who neither cares for knowledge, nor heeds the guidance Allah has revealed) is (like) land that is absolutely bare, where in there are no water holes and no vegetation grows". The reason why it seems essential to render this particle in English is that the other four similes included in the source text are devoid of this structure. This emphasizes that it is meaningfully and reasonably imbedded in the Arabic text.

Khan, similarly, overlooks the semantic function of (أَنَّ) in the Prophet's saying, (أَنَّ الْأَمَانَةَ نَزَلَتْ فِي جُذُرِ قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ), "The virtue of honesty descended in the roots of men's hearts". Its function is to emphasize the existence of a physically unseen status of human soul and assure that it is an established fact, not susceptible to conjecture (Ḥankah, 1995: 362).

### 3.1.4. Juristic Differences Due to Semantic Ambiguity

A major cause of jurists' differences is polysemy and ambiguity in language. A translator must convey the text with the same level of polysemy that facilitates juristic differences as the original text does. Failure to reflect potential several interpretations in the translation of a text that is contextually ambiguous may cause the translator to be accused of bias towards a specific school of law or neglecting other justified *ijtihāds*<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Ijtihād* is "independent reasoning" or "the utmost effort an individual can put forth in an activity." (Esposito, 213). As one of the four sources of Sunni law, it is recognized as the decision making process in Islamic law (*sharī'a*) through personal effort (*jihad*), which is completely independent of any school (*madhhab*) of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) (Ibid).

In *Ḥadīth* discourse, scholars differ due to their various interpretations of semantically ambiguous phrases. For instance, the text of the following Prophetic tradition evoked disagreement among scholars regarding the legal value of dipping unwashed hands in ablution utensils when getting up from sleep: ( وَإِذَا اسْتَيْقَظَ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ نَوْمِهِ فَلْيَغْسِلْ يَدَيْهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يُدْخِلَهُمَا ) (في الإِنَاءِ ثَلَاثًا، فَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَا يَدْرِي أَيْنَ بَاتَتْ يَدُهُ). According to Mālik and Shāfi‘ī, it is emphatically recommended (*sunnah*) to wash one’s hands before dipping them in an ablution vessel (Ibn Rushd, 1:16). They interpreted the imperative (فليغسل) as a form of recommendation, which is linguistically and juristically acceptable. According to a Shāfi‘ī or Mālikī translator, the text will be rendered “And whoever wakes up from his sleep should wash his hands three times before dipping them in the vessel”. According to Mālik the ruling is contingent to the case of a person doubting the purity of his hands. Therefore, a Mālikī translator is expected to convey the meaning of doubt in the target text by rendering the phrase ( فَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ لَا يَدْرِي أَيْنَ بَاتَتْ يَدُهُ ) as “for one may not know where his hands were”. Dāwūd and Zahirites relied on the apparent meaning of this *ḥadīth* to confirm that washing hands before immersing them in the ablution bowl is obligatory after having sleep either during day or night (ibid.). The text, according to them, should be rendered differently, “And whoever wakes up from his sleep must wash his hands three times before dipping them in the vessel”. Aḥmad distinguished between nocturnal sleep and that of the day (ibid.). He understood from the words ‘ayna bātat (where his hands slept)’ the traditional sleep during night. Accordingly the phrase should be translated to mean “where his hands spent the night”.

The question is: where is Khan’s translation in terms of these schools of law? Has he been influenced by a juristic view? Has he maintained impartiality? Or does he completely overlook those differences? He renders the above text as follows:

Segment	School of Law
And whoever wakes up from his <u>sleep</u>	Mālik, Shāfi‘ī and Zāhirites
should wash his hands before putting them in the water for ablution	Mālik and Shāfi‘ī versus Zāhirites and Aḥmad
because nobody knows where his hands were "	Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad
during sleep.	Mālik, Shāfi‘ī and Zāhirites

The proposed translation which is assumed to be general and encompassing all these differences may be as follows: “And whoever

wakes up from his sleep is to wash his hands three times before dipping them in the utensil, because nobody knows where his hands slept”.

In other occasions, juristic differences may arise as a consequence of providing different meanings for a polysemic term. In the context of *tayammum*, scholars differed on the condition of the purifying element of this ritual. For Shāfi‘ī, it is permissible only with dust. For him, the Prophetic saying (إِذَا بَرَدَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَاءُ أَنْ يَتَيَمَّمُوا بِالصَّعِيدِ) should be rendered as “if the water is too cold for them, they may perform *tayammum* with dust”. Mālik and his followers held that *tayammum* is permitted with whatever is found upon the surface of land, with any of its constituents, including pebbles, sand, and earth. Accordingly, the meaning of ‘*ṣa‘īd*’ would be ‘the surface of the land’ (Al-Shirbīnī, 1994, 1:245). Abū Ḥanīfah added to this saying that it is permitted with all kinds of solid matter produced by the earth, like lime, arsenic, gypsum, clay, and marble. According to him ‘*ṣa‘īd*’ is the land and its solid matter (Al-Samrāqandī, 1994:37). Aḥmad maintained that *tayammum* may be performed with dust from a garment or that which is on the surface of wood. For him, *Ṣa‘īd* is translated as dust or dirt.

The main reason for their disagreement is the polysemy of the term ‘*ṣa‘īd*’ in the language of the Arabs (Ibn Rushd, 1:77). It is sometimes applied to clean earth, and at other times to all constituents of the surface of land, to the extent that the interpretation of the derivatives of this term *ṣa‘īd* led Mālik and his disciples to permit it, according to one of his views, even with grass and snow as they said that these are also classified as *ṣa‘īd* in the primary use of the term, (i.e. that which is upon the surface of the earth. (ibid.)

Khan opted for a general translation of the word by introducing it as ‘clean earth’.

Scholars also differed regarding the meaning of the Prophet’s words, (الْمُتَبَايَعَانِ كُلُّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا بِالْخِيَارِ عَلَى صَاحِبِهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْفَرَا). Their differences revolved around whether the word (يَتَفَرَّقَا) is meant for separation, by leaving the place of contract; or whether it merely means termination of their speech regarding the topic of sale. The first meaning is compatible to the context, which is further explained by ibn ‘Umar. It is the view of Mālik, Shāfi‘ī and Aḥmad. Abū Ḥanīfah, on the other hand, opted for the other view (Ibn Rush, 3:154). Khan provides the phrase as “as long as they have not parted”, preferring thus the view of the majority of jurists. A solution to this problem may be proposed by introducing a general term that assimilates both views: “as long as they have not finished”.

### 2.2.5. Literal Translation and Intertextuality

Literal translation of some words in a Prophetic tradition does not convey the underlying meaning of the word to the target language reader, as in:

(دَعُونِي مَا تَرَكَتُمْ، إِنَّمَا هَلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ بِسُؤَالِهِمْ وَاخْتِلَافِهِمْ عَلَى أَنْبِيَائِهِمْ، فَإِذَا نَهَيْتُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ، وَإِذَا أَمَرْتُكُمْ بِأَمْرٍ فَأَتُوا مِنْهُ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ)

“Leave me as I leave you, for the people who were before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences over their prophets. So, if I forbid you to do something, then keep away from it. And if I order you to do something, then do of it as much as you can”.

Khan’s literal translation of the word (سؤالهم) as ‘questions’ is not correct. The target text still cries for exegetical information to clear the fog of potential misinterpretation. According to Khan’s translation, raising questions would then be deemed prohibited in Islam, though Angel Gabriel came and asked the Prophet significant and beneficial questions. In this case, intertextuality is essential. Exegetes refer to intertextuality as exegesis of Ḥadīth through the Qur’ān or through other texts of Ḥadīth. Therefore, to understand this portion of the *ḥadīth* one must first understand what type of questions are referred in the text. During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), in particular, it was not preferred for a Muslim to ask many questions about permissible and impermissible acts. This was because it was possible that, due to somebody’s excessive questioning, a particular act would become forbidden. This is clarified by the Prophet’s statement:

(إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ جُرْمًا، مَنْ سَأَلَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ لَمْ يُحْرَمْ، فَحُرِّمَ مِنْ أَجْلِ مَسْأَلَتِهِ)

“The Muslim with the greatest sin “with respect to other Muslims” is the one who asked about something which was not forbidden, but became forbidden due to his questioning.” (Bukhārī, 9:290).

Therefore, the prohibition or censure in this text concerns questions for which answers are not needed. They are in relation, for example, to hypothetical questions, questions for the sake of intellectual pleasure alone or questions due to obstinacy and other ill-intended purposes. Such types of questions are naturally not allowed. Moreover, scholars pointed out that this fear of something becoming forbidden ended with the Prophet’s demise, as mentioned in the explanatory text. A suggested translation is to include an explanatory parenthesized word such as ‘[excessive] questioning’ in addition to providing explanatory footnotes to clarify the meaning of the text.

In some instances literalism drives Khan to distort the intended meaning of the source text as in his translation of the words (اختلافهم على) (أنبياهم). He renders it as 'differences over their prophets'. The Arabic preposition (على) is translated as 'over' though it means 'with', so the proposed translation would be, 'their disagreeing with'. Previous nations did not perish due to their difference over their Prophets but due to their disagreement with them. This is supported by the context of *ḥadīth* which discusses commands and prohibitions. This meaning is further substantiated by recourse to other prophetic traditions such as:

(إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ الْإِمَامُ لِيُؤْتَمَّ بِهِ، فَلَا تَخْتَلَفُوا عَلَيْهِ)

“The imam is selected to be followed; therefore, do not differ with him” (Bukhārī, 1: 689).

The foregoing is a proposed translation by the writer. Khan translated it as follows: “The Imam is (appointed) to be followed. So do not differ from him” (Bukhārī, 1:388). He committed a mistake in this tradition too by translating (تختلفوا عليه) as ‘do not differ from him’. A follower may be different from his imam but he is not supposed to differ with his him when offering acts of prayer.

In another case, Khan translates (صَلَّى بِنَا رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِحْدَى) (صَلَاتِي الْعِشِيِّ) “...led us in one of the two 'Ishā' prayers.” (Bukhārī, 1:278). The word 'Isha' is transliterated in Khān's translation. By reference to the glossary of technical terms, he explained it as “Night prayer, the time for which starts about one and a half hours after sunset” (Bukhārī, 1:lxvii). According to the unanimous agreement of all Ḥadīth commentators the word 'ashīyy' refers to the time from the decline of the sun at midday to sunset (Ibn Rajab, 3:42). It is the time for both *zuhr* and 'aṣr prayers (Khaṭṭābī, 1:234; Ibn Baṭṭāl, 3:325; Nawawī, 1392, 5:68; Ibn Daqīq, 1:271; Ibn Ḥajar, 1:567).

Proper nouns cannot be translated in any language. Khān sometimes overindulges in literalism which may result in defamatory translation as he translates the phrase (كَانَ اسْمُهُ عَيْدَ اللَّهِ، وَكَانَ يُلقَّبُ حِمَارًا) as “Abdullah whose nickname was Donkey” (Bukhārī: 8:771). While I agree that proper nouns should not be translated, in this case, being that it is a nickname, the meaning of the nickname is key to people choosing to call him by it. Thus it would be good to transliterate and put the meaning in a footnote or parenthesis.

## 3.2. Problems of Lexical Features

### 3.2.1. Lexical Equivalence

Some linguists stress that interlingual translation is impossible in a pure form, because there is “no pure lexical equivalence between languages” (Simms 1997:6). Larson (1984:153) also refers to the fact that since the receptor language is spoken by people of a culture, which is often very different from the culture of those who speak the source language, this will automatically make it difficult to find lexical equivalents. (ibid.: 154).

It is, however, a mere controversial issue that is only philosophically proposed with no practical implication. Translators all over the world and throughout history agree to ‘formal lexical equivalents’ that often serve the purpose of translation. When there is any discrepancy, a note is usually added to make up for the difference and fill the ‘lexical gap of equivalence’.

In the sphere of translation, the accuracy of a translator relies on his choice of appropriate lexical equivalents. There are many examples of Bukhārī where Khan provides inaccurate lexical equivalents. He, for instance, translates (يغدر) as “breaks his promise” (Bukārī: 6) though it would appropriately be rendered as ‘betrayed’, ‘act perfidiously’, ‘act unfaithfully’ or ‘act treacherously’. The proposed equivalent is further confirmed by the context of Heraclius question regarding the Prophet’s treaties (Bukārī, 1:4), where abū Sufyān mentioned to him that Quraysh has signed a treaty with him and they do not know whether he was going to act unfaithfully or abide by his commitments.

In some cases, Khan gives literal and ambiguous equivalents without recourse to technical and contextual meanings provided by commentators. The word, ‘accept’, for instance is of such a broad scope that cannot be properly used in the following context:

(لَا تُقْبَلُ صَلَاةُ مَنْ أَحْدَثَ حَتَّى يَتَوَضَّأَ)

“The prayer of a person who does *ḥadath* (passes, urine, stool or wind) is not accepted till he performs (repeats) the ablution” (Bukārī, 1:137).

The word ‘accept’ encompasses both inner and outward elements of validity, though the text discusses the outward requirements of prayer. It is given a wider concept in the target language. According to Khan’s translation, a prayer cannot be accepted if offered for showing off, though a person is not held legally liable to offer it again. Therefore, the ideal equivalent would be: “Allah does not hold valid the prayer of one who nullifies his ablution until he performs it again.” ‘*Qabūl*’ is defined as the



performance of an act of legally appropriate worship in a way to exempt one from legal liability (Ibn Hajar: 1:235).

Khan's choice of English equivalents is not accurate in many occasions. For example, in translating "التارك لدينه" he uses the words 'reverts from Islam', though 'revert' means "to go back in action, thought, speech, etc.; return, as to a former practice, opinion, state, or subject" (collinsdictionary.com). A person is regarded an apostate (which is the correct meaning of the Arabic word) whether he forsakes Islam for his previous religion, or for any other religion, or even to become an atheist. Therefore it is more accurate to translate it as 'one who forsakes his religion'. Similarly, he renders the phrase (المفارق للجماعة) as 'leaves the Muslims' though it is a general phrase that leaves the gates of bloodshed open in case of any contradiction or opposition to the Muslim community. Therefore, it is proposed to translate it as 'and separates from the [Muslim] community'. The problem of Khan's rendering in those two examples is that he 'interpreted' the text, rather than translated it. In other words, he thought about the commonly interpreted sense taken from the key words (namely, *al-Tārik and al-mufāriq*). It is often the case that resorting to exegesis leads to this result. (Elezabi, 2005).

In some cases, the word may be differently interpreted by Ḥadīth commentators, but Khan confines himself to one connotation. An example is the Prophet's saying, (أن الأمانة نزلت في جذر قلوب الرجال). He renders it as follows: "The virtue of honesty descended in the roots of men's hearts". Khan uses the English equivalent 'honesty' or 'virtue of honesty' for (الأمانة), though it was subject to great controversy among commentators of Ḥadīth and exegetes of the Qur'ān. In his translation of the Noble Qur'an (Q33:72) Khan defines it as "trust or moral responsibility or honesty and all the duties which Allah has ordained," while Lane (102) Pikhall (Q33:72) and Ali (Q33:72) provide a comprehensive, yet precise term, "trust". Ghālī confines it to "trust of devotion" (Ghālī: Q33:72). In some contexts it refers to family and whatever one is entrusted with (Al-Khaṭṭābī: 1932: 2:258), faith (Ibn 'Abdul-Barr, 1378: 14:372), religious duties (Ibn Baṭṭāl, 2003: 1: 94; Ibn Hajar, 1379: 1:81) and the pledge Allah took from the offspring of Adam referred to in Q7:172 (Nawawī: 1392: 2:168). We have, therefore, a wide range of lexical equivalents; the most appropriate of which is 'trustworthiness'. The translator further needs to illuminate the meaning by adding footnotes. I opted for this equivalent because it comprehends all possible meanings of lexicographers and commentators.

Khan's selection of incorrect equivalents is widespread throughout his translation. He provides 'jealousy' as equivalent for the Arabic word

‘*ḥasad*’ (Bukhārī: 8:58), though jealousy is lexically defined as “an unhappy or angry feeling of wanting to have what someone else has” (Merriam-Webster.com).

Sometimes he restricts the meaning of an Arabic title, though it is meant to be comprehensive. Bukhārī means both good and evil manners in the title he gave to the chapter of ‘*adab*’, but Khan confines it to good manners only (Bukhārī: 8:1). The evidence that it also refers to evil manners is found in the fact that Bukhārī included Prophetic traditions on suspicion, hatred, envy, abuse, and other evil manners in addition to the traditions concerning good manners. The Arabic lexical meaning of ‘*adab*’ includes both good and evil (Muṣṭafa, 1985:9). but the English equivalent must be specified.

Similarly he restricts (مهر البغي) to ‘money earned by prostitution’ (Bukhārī: 3:241) though it is a general term applied to all monetary compensation for illegal relations. It may include the prohibition of paying a dowry for a wife upon finding out that she is within the forbidden degrees of consanguinity. Bukhārī included the same *ḥadīth* under a similar title (Bukhārī, 7:197) to show that if a marriage contract is invalid due to a legal impediment, no dowry or compensation is to be paid. In another context, Khan translates (مهر البغي) as ‘the earnings of a prostitute’ which indicates that all earnings of a prostitute are unlawful, even if they are acquired through legal means other than prostitution. It should be translated as ‘prohibition of earnings acquired through prostitution’ or ‘prohibition of compensations for prostitution’. He must then add a technical definition of prostitution.

### 3.2.2. Religious Concepts

“Religious concepts are culture-bound and can be categorized as semantic voids” (Abdul-Raof, 2001:162). Although there are some shared concepts in Arabic and other languages, “total matching cannot be assumed” (Beekman and Callow 1974: 175). In Ḥadīth language there are many technical terms that are used in their technical sense. To make the source text communicatively sufficient, a translator must convey the meaning of those technical terms, either in the body of his text or through footnotes. In some cases Khan provides explanatory adaptive elaboration to the text and sometimes presents the term in transliteration but he, then, refers the reader to the glossary of technical terms that he adds to each volume of his book.

By reviewing Khan’s translation of Bukhārī I discovered many inaccuracies in the definitions of such technical terms. ‘*al-thayyib al-zānī*’, for instance, is translated as ‘a married person who commits illegal

sexual intercourse' (Bukārī: 9:) though Muslim jurists and commentators of Ḥadīth define the term as 'the fornicator who had previously experienced legal sexual intercourse' (Al-'zīm Abādī, 1329AH: 12:4; Al-Anṣārī 1380: 32; Qāsim 1990: 5:342). Furthermore, a technical definition must be provided for *zānī* as it is not the equivalent of fornicator or adulterer in English terms. *Zinā* is technically defined as, in the case of a man, "sexual intercourse by a man, performed intentionally, knowing that it is forbidden, with a woman who is not his wife or slave, or with whom he had intercourse without thinking that she was his wife or slave" (Luhāibī 1983: 108). In the case of a woman it is defined as, "sexual intercourse by a woman, performed intentionally, knowing that it is forbidden, with a man who is not her husband, or with whom she had intercourse without thinking that he was her husband.

Inaccuracies of translating religious concepts, sometimes, lead to deteriorating consequences, especially if those concepts bear counter-meanings in other cultures. Khan, for instance, uses 'inspiration' as an equivalent for the Arabic '*wahy*' though it means, "stimulation or arousal of the mind, feelings etc, to special or unusual activity or creativity, an idea or action resulting from such a state," (collinsdictionary.com) (Ibid). Both words conform to some to-orientalists' argument that the Qur'ān is not the divine word of God.

### 3.2.3. Cross-cultural Variations

Cross-cultural variations among languages can lead to non-equivalence and translation traps; they can also be a source of misunderstanding between members of the target language audience. "No two languages exhibit identical systems of organizing symbols into meaningful expressions" (Nida: 1964:156). This is exhibited in rendering unique Arabic concepts to English. Khan was satisfied to provide a superficial meaning of the word 'عفاف' by translating it as 'to be chaste' (Bukhārī, 1:9, 10.), though it provides much wider connotation i.e. abstinence from what is unlawful and from profanities (Ibn al-Athīr: 2:264; Lane: 2088).

Similar concepts include the word (نصيحة) which is rendered by Khan as 'to be sincere and true' (Bukhārī, 1:53), though Al-Khaṭṭābī stated that *naṣīḥah* is a comprehensive word that embodies every type of virtue and the wanting or desire for all forms of goodness (Ibn Ḥajar: 1:187). Both Al-Khaṭṭābī and Ibn Ḥajar state that there is no other word in the Arabic language that is so comprehensive. It is usually translated as 'sincerity,' since one of its essential connotations is the negation of deception or cheating. The word seems to have two roots, both of them being explicitly featured in this Ḥadīth: (1) to clean, purify or improve

something of all unwanted elements, as in purifying honey from unwanted materials, and (2) to unite or join two or more things together that is otherwise scattered or separated, as in sewing a garment.

Based on the linguistic roots and the Qur'ānic usage of the term (Q66: 8), Al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī has given the legal definition of the term as “the aim of an action or statement that contains goodness and rectification for the other person” (al-Rāghib: 808). Lane aptly summarizes all of the above in his definition, “sincere, honest or faithful advice, or counsel, and conduct, direction to that which is for the good of the person who is the object, by words, or speech, or good advice or counsel; direction to what is good or sedulousness or earnestness..” (Lane: 2802).

The proposed translation of similar concepts and words wherein no English equivalence exists is to present them in transliteration, in addition to providing illuminating footnotes to explain their definitions. It is not sufficient to translate such words by giving their imaginary equivalent, but rather, by explaining their meaning through an exact ethnographic account of the sociology, culture and tradition of that native community. The need for translation with commentary was encountered by Khan in the case of of *ḥayā'* which he transliterated, then explained it in the introductory glossary of technical terms. Such is the case of other concepts peculiar to Arabic. The use of transliteration in Ḥadīth translation “results from a recognition of the untranslatability of cultural voids and of the impossibility of introducing the foreign reader into the cultural world of the speaker” (Dagut 1978:65).

### **3.3. Problems of Rhetorical Features**

Rhetorical language is prototypical of Ḥadīth discourse; a large number of figures of speech occur as:

#### **3.3.1. Simile**

Simile is a figurative expression used to describe something by comparing it with something else, using comparison markers, such as ‘like’, ‘as’, etc. It has a quadripartite structure, consisting of, to use Fromilhague’s (1995) terms (cited in Patrizia, 2007: 3):

- 1- topic, the entity which is described by the simile,
- 2- vehicle, the entity to which the topic is compared,
- 3- similarity feature(s), the properties shared by topic and vehicle,

4- comparison marker, the article used to draw a comparison between the topic and vehicle.

If we want to assess the translation of the following example quoted from Bukhārī and translated by Khan, we have some questions to put in our assessment:

- 1- Did Khan succeed in identifying the four elements of the ST similes?
- 2- Which local strategy did Khan adopt?
- 3- Was Khan able to pinpoint the underlying meaning?
- 4- Are there any salient stylistic features employed by the ST? If so, was Khan able to retain them in his translation?
- 5- Which local strategy would you opt for and why, if you are asked to translate the same text?

The text reads as follows:

( إِنَّهُ لَا يَأْتِي الْخَيْرُ بِالشَّرِّ، وَإِنَّ مِمَّا يُنْبِتُ الرَّبِيعُ يَقْتُلُ أَوْ يُلْمُ، إِلَّا أَكَلَةَ الْخَضِرَاءِ، أَكَلَتْ حَتَّى إِذَا امْتَدَّتْ خَاصِرَتَاهَا اسْتَقْبَلَتْ عَيْنَ الشَّمْسِ، فَتَلَّطَتْ وَبَالَتْ، وَرَتَعَتْ، وَإِنَّ هَذَا الْمَالَ خَضِرَةٌ حُلْوَةٌ ).

“Good never brings forth evil. Indeed it is like what grows on the banks of a water-stream which either kills or makes the animals sick, except if an animal eats its fill the Khadira (a kind of vegetable) and then faces the sun, and then defecates and urinates, and grazes again. No doubt this wealth is sweet and green.”

It is difficult to make this assessment but I will offer my own answers as follows: Khan could not identify the topic or the similarity feature. He did not resort to a local strategy to convey the meaning. He just literally imitated the source text. Moreover, he failed to pinpoint the underlying meaning of the simile. He refers to the topic by using the pronoun ‘it’ though it is semantically ambiguous. It is impossible for the English reader to identify the topic, the similarity feature or the comparison marker. If I were asked to translate this text, I would render it as follows:

“Good (wealth) does not bring evil. (The devastating blossom of this life is like) the vegetation the spring season brings out which kills the cattle by overeating and indigestion, or brings (them) close to death”, but (the example of those who take and spend wealth in their legitimate causes is like) cattle easting (little) *khadīrah* (unpleasant vegetation used as fodder which cattle eat little) to fill its two flanks and face the sun to void its dung and urinate. Then it grazes. So whosoever gets wealth according to his legitimate right, it becomes a blessing for him, and whosoever consumes the wealth without any valid (or just) right, then his similitude is like that of he who eats but is not satiated.

Some texts of Ḥadīth include numerous complicated similes which are hard to identify. The following example includes five similes which are almost ambiguous in Khan's English translation:

(مَثَلُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ مِنَ الْهُدَى وَالْعِلْمِ، كَمَثَلِ الْغَيْثِ الْكَثِيرِ أَصَابَ أَرْضًا، فَكَانَ مِنْهَا نَقِيَّةٌ، قَبِلَتْ الْمَاءَ، فَأَنْبَتَتِ الْكَلَاءَ وَالْعُشْبَ الْكَثِيرَ، وَكَانَتْ مِنْهَا أَجَادِبُ، أَمْسَكَتِ الْمَاءَ، فَفَعَّعَ اللَّهُ بِهَا النَّاسَ، فَشَرِبُوا وَسَقَوْا وَزَرَعُوا، وَأَصَابَتْ مِنْهَا طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى، إِنَّمَا هِيَ قَيْعَانُ لَا تُمْسِكُ مَاءً وَلَا تُنْبِتُ كَلَاءً، فَذَلِكَ مَثَلُ مَنْ فَعَّعَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ، وَنَفَعَهُ مَا بَعَثَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ فَعَلِمَ وَعَلِمَ، وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ)

“The example of guidance and knowledge with which Allah has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain water and Allah benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation (then that land gave no benefits). The first is the example of the person who comprehends Allah's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which Allah has revealed through me (the Prophets and learns and then teaches others. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allah's guidance revealed through me (He is like that barren land.)”

Although the Prophetic tradition includes five intricate and subtle similes, Khan identifies only two. To produce a clear translation that reflects the textural rhetorical elements of source text, it must identify and clarify those five similes as follows:

- a. Guidance and knowledge are like abundant rain.
- b. People are compared to land receiving this rain.
- c. The person who comprehends Allah's religion and benefits (from the knowledge) which Allah revealed through the Prophets, and who learns and then teaches others, is like fertile lands that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance.
- d. A person who neither cares for knowledge nor heeds the guidance Allah reveals is like barren land.
- e. A person who avails benefit to others without benefiting himself thereof is like a hard land that held rain water but it is later utilized for drinking and irrigation of other lands.

If a simile or any of its elements is culture bound, it becomes intelligibly difficult, particularly for a non-Arab audience. In this case, a

clarification of all components is deemed necessary. A non-Arab, for instance, will never be able to touch upon the comparative features of the following similes:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ كَمَثَلِ الْأَثْرَجَةِ، رِيحُهَا طَيِّبٌ وَطَعْمُهَا طَيِّبٌ، وَمَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِ الَّذِي لَا يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ كَمَثَلِ النَّمْرَةِ، لَا رِيحَ لَهَا وَطَعْمُهَا حُلْوٌ، وَمَثَلُ الْمُنَافِقِ الَّذِي يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ مَثَلُ الرِّيحَانَةِ، رِيحُهَا طَيِّبٌ وَطَعْمُهَا مُرٌّ، وَمَثَلُ الْمُنَافِقِ الَّذِي لَا يَقْرَأُ الْقُرْآنَ كَمَثَلِ الْحَنْظَلَةِ، لَيْسَ لَهَا رِيحٌ وَطَعْمُهَا مُرٌّ

“The example of a Believer who recites the Quran, is that of a citron which smells good and tastes good; And the example of a Believer who does not recite the Quran, is that of a date which has no smell but tastes sweet; and the example of a hypocrite who recites the Quran, is that of an aromatic plant which smells good but tastes bitter; and the example of a hypocrite who does not recite the Quran, is that of a colocynth plant which has no smell and is bitter in taste”.

No translation of the six books of Ḥadīth highlighted the similarity features of those similes which may be concluded as follows:

Simile 1: both inwardly and outwardly pleasant.

Simile 2: inwardly pure but outwardly disgusting.

Simile 3: outwardly sweet but inwardly bitter.

In some cases Khan does not observe the existence of a simile in the source text due to the deletion of the similarity marker, which is considered a rhetorical feature in Arabic. An example is the Prophetic saying:

(مَا مِنْكُنَّ امْرَأَةٌ تُقَدِّمُ ثَلَاثَةَ مِنْ وَلَدِهَا، إِلَّا كَانَ لَهَا حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ)

“A woman whose three children die will be shielded by them from the Hell fire.”

It should be rendered as: “...they will be (like) a shield for her from the Hellfire”.

### 3.3.2. Rhetorical Questions

This refers to “a figure of speech in the form of a question that is asked in order to make a point” (Burton, 2007:10). These are extensively used in Ḥadīth as part of argumentation. There are two options in translating rhetorical questions; either introducing them in the form of questions by referring to their figurative shade, or by translating them as statements by revealing their intended meanings. Khan is not consistent in his choices, sometimes translating them in the form of statements in his Qur’ān translation as in:

(وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ)

“and none can forgive sins but Allah” Q2: 135.

In Bukhārī’s translation he literally translates a rhetorical question which is used for astonishment in the following example: ( لَتَتَّبِعَنَّ سَنَنْ مَنْ كَانَ )

قَبْلَكُمْ، شَيْبَرًا شَيْبَرًا وَذِرَاعًا بِذِرَاعٍ، حَتَّىٰ لَوْ دَخَلُوا جُحْرًا ضَبَّ تَبِعْتُمُوهُمْ»، قُلْنَا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، «فَمَنْ؟» (الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى؟) قَالَ: «فَمَنْ»  
so much so that even if they entered a hole of a mastigure, you would follow them." We said, "O Allah's Apostle! (Do you mean) the Jews and the Christians?" He said, "Whom else?". I think maintaining its rhetorical form and purpose in the Qur'ān is more appropriate for the inimitability of its words, but for Ḥadīth there is a room for elaboration by clarifying the intended meaning which is mostly lost if it is translated literally.

### 3.3.3. Ellipsis

This refers to “something left unsaid” (Halliday and Hassan 1976: 142). Ellipted elements in the source language are implicitly understood from the context, but they can cause misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the meaning of *ḥadīth* texture unless a footnote is provided or the source language ellipted elements themselves are added by the translator. Khan renders the Prophet’s statement

(لَا يُؤْمِنُ أَحَدُكُمْ، حَتَّىٰ يُحِبَّ لِأَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ)

as “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” which means that anyone who does not wish for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself should be regarded as lacking belief. Here we have an ellipted word (حَقِيقَةً) ‘truly’ which should precede the verb (يُحِبُّ). This is further proved by a variant version related in Musnad of Abū Ya‘lā (4:407):

(لَا يَبْلُغُ الْعَبْدُ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّىٰ يُحِبَّ لِلنَّاسِ مَا يُحِبُّ لِنَفْسِهِ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ)

“The servant does not reach the reality (true) faith until he loves for the people what he loves for himself”. This means that the denial of faith alluded to in this *ḥadīth* does not imply a complete denial of faith. That is, a person does not become a disbeliever, losing all faith, by not loving for his brother what he loves for himself. Khan did not opt for including the ellipted element in brackets to maintain the source text syntactic texture and meaning.

An ellipted part may be a word as illustrated in the previous examples, or a full phrase or even a cluster of phrases. In Ḥadīth translation, collection of all variant versions of the report may be helpful to identify ellipted segments that must be rendered in the target language. An example is the following text:

(أَنَّ الْأَمَانَةَ نَزَلَتْ فِي جَدْرِ قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ، ثُمَّ عَلِمُوا مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ، ثُمَّ عَلِمُوا مِنَ السُّنَّةِ)

“The virtue of honesty descended in the roots of men's hearts (from Allah) and then they learned it from the Qur'an and then they learned it from the Sunna (the Prophet's traditions).”



The two segments of the source text are almost irrelevant, but upon reading another variant of the report, the fog may be cleared to some extent:

(أَنَّ الْأَمَانَةَ نَزَلَتْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فِي جَذْرِ قُلُوبِ الرِّجَالِ، وَنَزَلَ الْقُرْآنُ فَقَرَأُوا الْقُرْآنَ، وَعَلِمُوا مِنَ  
السُّنَّةِ)

“Honesty descended from the Heavens and settled in the roots of the hearts of men (faithful believers), and then the Quran was revealed and the people read the Quran, (and learnt it from it) and also learnt it from the Sunna.”

Although by introducing the ellipsed segments both meaning and correlation become clear, the problem of insertion will lead to the intervention of the translator with his/her own interpretation, a case which is likely to distort the genuine meaning and/or purpose of the ḥadīth by forcing the translator's personal religious (mis-)understanding. Therefore, I think ellipsis is of two types. One which is it is inevitable to present in the target text such as prepositions and particles that are deleted for a rhetorical purposes. The other type is of lengthy sentences and phrase which were deleted to provide economy in a narrative or a statement such as the aforementioned example. In such a case representing it in the target language will direct the meaning to be restricted to the understanding of the translator. It, then, safe to introduce the text as it appears in the source language and adding elaborations through notes.

### Metaphor

This refers to a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance (collinsdictionary.com). Soskice (1981: 1) emphasizes the dependence of religious language in almost all traditions upon metaphorical speech and adds that no philosophical account of religious language will be complete or sufficient if it fails to take account of the ways that forms of figurative discourse, such as metaphor, a function in the task of conveying that which cannot be said in other ways. In some cases it is more appropriate not to maintain the metaphor in the target language. While Khan maintains it as an aesthetic element in the target language in: (وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلَالِ السُّيُوفِ) “Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords”, it is more pragmatic to clarify the meaning since the main purpose of metaphor is to appeal to the senses. We may retain both pragmatic and aesthetic elements by adding brackets as follows: “Know that Paradise is (as near as) the shades of swords”.

Metaphors in the Arabic language cause problems in translation of Ḥadīth due to the absence of their tenors, sufficing with only the presence of their vehicles. “Yet, the textual and cultural contexts can pave the way

for translators in this regard and help readers of translation in guessing what the tenor is even if the translators have not added the sense in rendering these metaphors” (Mohaghegh and Dabaghi, 2013: 280).

#### 2.4.5. Euphemism

The Random House College Dictionary (1980: 455) defines euphemism as “the substitution of a mild, indirect or vague expression for one thought to be offensive harsh or blunt”. It is used to “avoid the possible loss of face” (Allan and Burridge, 1991:14). “The dispreferred expression may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reason have too many negative connotations to felicitously execute speaker’s communicative intention on a given occasion” (ibid). Ḥadīth discourse contains numerous examples of euphemistic expressions which have special communicative overtones. Like the translation of Qur’ānic and Ḥadīth metaphor, the functional equivalence of euphemistic expression should be preserved.

While direct referential meaning of euphemistic terms is usually avoided in Ḥadīth translations, informational help in the form of a footnotes is beneficial to target language audience, as in

(وَمَثَلُ مَنْ لَمْ يَرْفَعْ بِذَلِكَ رَأْسًا، وَلَمْ يَقْبَلْ هُدَى اللَّهِ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَتْ بِهِ)

“The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take Allah's guidance”. Khan does not retain the euphemistic overtones in the target text. He does not even reach the essence of the real meaning behind this expression (من لم يرفع بذلك رأسًا) which is a euphemistic alternative for those who turn away from guidance through denial to submit to the truth and for those who leave knowledge by negligence to pay heed (Ḥankah, 1995: 88).

#### 2.4.6. Rhetorical Textural Elements

We shall explain through examples from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that embellishments and tropes employed abundantly in Ḥadīth act as cohesive constituents and are rhetorical enhancers to the overall Ḥadīth texture. The translation of texture is the intricate negotiation of textural features; it is a delicate process of accommodating meaning within a new linguistic and rhetorical framework (Abdul-Raof, 2001:109). “A text, however, ripped off its natural setting and transplanted to a foreign cultural setting is bound to suffer some kind of loss” (Ibid).

##### 2.4.6.1. Antiphrasis

This is a figure of speech that is used to mean the opposite of its usual sense, especially ironically. It is common in Ḥadīth discourses. In Bukhārī the statement, (إِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ، وَإِنَّ الْفُجُورَ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ)

“Falsehood leads to Al-Fūjūr (i.e. wickedness, evil-doing), and Al-Fajur (wickedness) leads to the (Hell) Fire”. In the source text above, the antiphrasis word (يهدي) has not been retained in the target text. Thus, even the most minimal rhetorical effect has not been achieved. Translating ‘يهدي’ as ‘guides’ will achieve the same purpose for which it was used in the source text.

#### **2.4.6.2. Antithesis**

This is a rhetorical cohesive element which is possible to a target text (Abdul-Raof, 2001:116) as in ( مَا قَدَّمْتُ وَمَا أَخَّرْتُ، وَمَا أَسْرَرْتُ وَمَا ) (أَعْلَنْتُ، أَنْتَ الْمُقَدِّمُ، وَأَنْتَ الْمُؤَخَّرُ) “Please forgive me my previous and future sins; and whatever I concealed or revealed and You are the One who makes (some people) forward and (some) backward” (Bukhārī, 2:123). Khan could not quench the thirst of a reader to see the rhetorical effect in his translation of (يَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُعَسِّرُوا، وَيَسِّرُوا وَلَا تُنْفِرُوا) “Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam).” (Bukhārī, 1:60).

#### **2.4.6.3. Hyperbole**

This is the use of exaggeration as a rhetorical device or figure of speech. It may be used to evoke strong feelings or to create a strong impression, but is not meant to be taken literally. It is used “to create emphasis or effect” ( Mahony, 2003:82.), as in ( كُلُّ عَمَلِ ابْنِ آدَمَ لَهُ، إِلَّا الصِّيَامَ، ) (فَأِنَّهُ لِي وَأَنَا أَجْزِي بِهِ) “All the deeds of Adam's sons (people) are for them, except fasting which is for Me, and I will give the reward for it”. Khan managed to translate the hyperbole but the meaning still requires explanatory notes. Also, it necessitates brackets to fully clarify it but in this case it may affect the rendering of the hyperbole.

#### **2.4.6.4. Synecdoche**

This is a figure of speech in which a term for a part of something refers to the whole of something, or vice-versa (Merriam-Webster.com: Web. 30 Nov. 2013). Synecdoche may be retained in the target language if an equivalent synecdoche is available such as in (جَعَلُوا أَصَابِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ) “they thrust their fingers into their ears” Q71:7 If it does not have an equivalent in the target language ambiguity may create a problem in understanding the text, particularly if it has a juristic implication such as in (وَيْلٌ لِّلْأَعْقَابِ مِنَ النَّارِ) which was rendered as “Save your heels from the Hell-fire” (Bukhārī, 1:116). Introducing the synecdoche may affect the

meaning. Thus, in this context it is more appropriate to clarify the meaning by rendering it as “Woe to the (people of unpurified) heels, from the Hell-fire”

#### **2.4.6.5. Metonymy**

This is a figure of speech in which a thing or concept is called not by its own name, but rather by the name of something associated in meaning with that thing or concept (Merriam-webster.com. 2012-08-31). Though the word (السماء) is a metonym for ‘rain’, Khan mistranslates it as a ‘rainy night’ in the Prophet’s saying (عَلَىٰ إِثْرِ سَمَاءٍ كَانَتْ مِنَ اللَّيْلَةِ) “after a rainy night”. The word (سماء) is given three interpretations in Arabic: the celestial body, heavens and rain.

In conclusion with certain rhetorical elements, it is beneficial to draw on Malinowski’s approach (1923); the object of a scientific translation of a word is not to give its rough equivalent, sufficient for practical purposes, but to state exactly whether a native word corresponds to an idea, which at least partially exists for English speakers, or whether it covers an entirely foreign conception. Such words can be translated into English, not by giving their imaginary equivalent – when a real one obviously cannot be found- but by explaining the meaning of such through an exact ethnographic account of the sociology, culture and tradition of that native community (ibid. :299, 300).

#### **Conclusion**

Ḥadīth discourse is characterized by syntactic, semantic, lexical and rhetorical constructions which display fascinating linguistic architecture where the permutation of constituents plays a significant role in the interior and exterior linguistic decoration of the construction.

By reviewing Khan’s treatment of syntactic features of Bukhārī’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, it is plain that the text includes structural features which are nearly non-existent in Khan’s translation. Structural ambiguity due to pronominal reference requires careful exegetical exploration in order to decide the accurate meaning in the target language. Khan does not always provide alternative interpretations. His choice was mostly influenced by his creedal beliefs which restrained the scope of his choices. A thorough perusal of his translation reveals that he does not show consistency in rendering syntacto-rhetorical infertilizations, which is a common feature of Arabic language. A superficial and literal translation of verbal idioms causes the target text to lose many of the deep semantic and aesthetic functions of the Arabic verbs - particularly those of non-regular

prepositions. Such is the case when Khan does not respond to dropped propositions of the Arabic style, though endorsing them in English is indispensable to convey the basic meaning of the text. Though sometimes, he clarifies past tense with future meaning, on other occasions he fails to convey this in the target text. This leads to a drastic change in the meaning, particularly if the text is of jurisprudential importance.

By reviewing Khan's treatment of semantic features we conclude that in a/the case where a text suggests various interpretations and all are equally acceptable, a translator is not blameworthy for choosing one over another, provided that he gives explanatory notes including further alternatives. In most cases, Khan either opts for a remote interpretation or overlooks explanatory notes. Homonyms and senses of a word are not consistently or accurately tackled by Khan. A reference to commentaries is indispensable. Khan ignores semantic functions of Arabic particles of substantial interpretational effect on the text. Semantic ambiguity resulting from juristic differences was, in some occasions, properly tackled by Khan in introducing general terms to assimilate all schools of law. In some cases, strict imitation of specific juristic opinion prevented him from presenting assimilative translations of Arabic equivocal terms and phrases. Most of his literal translations were due to not employing effective mechanisms of intertextuality by compiling and reconciling variant versions of the same report, either through reference to Bukhārī or to the other compilations of Ḥadīth.

I think the issue of semantic ambiguity in the body of Ḥadīth needs a consistent treatment based on well-founded academic theories. Otherwise, each translator will possibly opt for his own favored interpretation, a case which will result in biased (often incorrect) renderings. A meticulous study is then needed which will have to be based on semantic and pragmatic features of the text in question, in addition to the rule of the generally-approved principles of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

As far as lexical features are concerned, Khan does not always provide technical meanings of religious concepts or cross-cultural variations in his glossary of terms. His definitions are neither coactive nor denotative. The proposed translation of similar concepts and words where no English equivalence exists is to present them in transliteration, in addition to providing illuminating footnotes to explain their definitions.

With respect to rhetorical features some of them are translatable in English while others are almost impossible to translate. For instance, if simile or any of its elements is culture bound, it becomes intelligibly difficult, particularly for the non-Arab audience. Khan does not provide a clarification of all components when it is deemed inevitable. In

translating rhetorical questions he either introduces them in the form of a question by referring to their figurative shade or translates them in the form of as a statement by revealing their meaning. Khan is not consistent in his choices.

For textural rhetorical features of Ḥadīth, we can safely confirm that the gap between translation theory and practice remains unbridged, and what applies as a solution to one language may not apply to another. The only way to convey the intended language to the target language reader is to resort to explanatory translation, i.e. the use of footnotes or commentaries to illuminate specific areas in source text. This method of footnotes is almost lacking in Khān’s work, though it is supported by a large number of translation theorists and some Qur’an translators. In this case the current study prefers pragmatic adaptation and expanded translation to make the target text fully understandable and achieve “pragmatic accuracy” (Steiner 1975:354).

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