QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF SHARIA AND ISLAMIC STUDIES

LALEH BAKHTIAR'S ELIGIBILITY TO BE A QUR'AN TRANSLATOR AND

HER METHODOLOGY OF TRANSLATING IT INTO THE ENGLISH

LANGUAGE: A CRITICAL STUDY.

BY

SHEAM KHAN

A Thesis Submitted to

the Faculty of the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Masters in

Tafseer and Uloom ul Qur'an.

June 2018

COMMITTEE PAGE

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Sheam Khan
defended on 22/04/2018.

_____

Dr. Nayef Nahar Ash-Shamari
Thesis/Dissertation Supervisor

_____

Dr. Mary El-Mereedi
Co-Supervisor

_____

Dr. Khair ul Deen Khowja
External Examiner

_____

Dr. Zakaryya Abdel Hadi
Internal Examiner

Approved:

_____

Dr. Ibrahim Al-Ansari, Dean, College of Sharia and Islamic Studies.

ABSTRACT

KHAN, SHEAM, S. Masters,

June 2018, Tafseer and Uloom ul Quran,

Title: Laleh Bakhtiar's Eligibility to be a Qur'an Translator and Her Methodology of Translating it into the English Language: A Critical Study.

Supervisor of Thesis: Dr. Nayef N Al-Shamari.

As the role of Qur'an translations becomes ever-more pivotal in the English-speaking world, the need for critical studies into the eligibility of the translators, as well as of their methodologies of translation becomes increasingly more important. The aim of this paper is to provide a critical study of one such translation; Laleh Bakhtiar's 'The Sublime Qur'an'.

The study explores the concept of 'eligibility' to translate the Qur'an from both a classical Islamic perspective as well as from the perspective of translation studies experts. Eligibility is examined not only in terms of proficiency in the required sciences, but also in terms of academic integrity and whether the translator has been faithful to the source text. The findings from the study are used to determine Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an. An important second thread of this paper is to investigate Bakhtiar's claims regarding the uniqueness of certain aspects of her translation methodology by presenting a meticulous evaluation through a comparison with other translations.

The focus of the third and largest part of this study is concerned with determining and evaluating Bakhtiar's methodology of translating the Qur'an. The study aims to deduce and re-construct Bakhtiar's methodology from her own words, as well as from

the text of her translation. Each aspect of the findings is evaluated, with a focus on the effects of the methodology on the accuracy of the translation as well as its repercussions on Islamic theology.

The main findings reveal a huge discrepancy between what Bakhtiar claims as her translation methodology and between what it actually is. The findings further shed light on Bakhtiar's infidelities to the source text. These are demonstrated through case-studies that reveal numerous ideologically-biased interpolations that run throughout her translation. This research suggests that the elaborate linguistic methodological process Bakhtiar claims to have used, serves as a veil to shroud the ideological interpolations concealed within it.

Dedicated to the memories of my loving Father:

Abdul Aziz Khan,

the source of my inspiration to this day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Nayef Nahar Ash-Shamari, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research in the College of Shariah and Islamic Studies at Qatar University, I am enormously indebted to him for believing in me and my research topic right from the beginning when it was a fledgling idea, until it reached fruition. I thank him for his insightful comments and for maintaining a special interest in my paper right through to the end.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Mary el-Mereedi for painstakingly reading through the manuscripts and providing me with her invaluable comments.

I would like to thank the professors at the faculty of Shari'ah and Islamic Studies at Qatar University, in particular the Former Dean, Dr. Yousuf as-Siddiqi for his personal encouragement to me, especially in my early years, as the first non-Arab student to graduate from the Masters Program in Tafseer and Uloom ul Qur'an, from the College of Shari'ah at Qatar University. Many thanks also go to Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai for his personal encouragement to pursue my topic of research and his helpful correspondence in the early stages of this paper.

A special mention must be made for Salahudeen, Safiyah, Maryam, Ilyas and Ruqayah, for their incredible patience, forbearance, and encouragement, especially in the final days of this study.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest, and most heart-felt gratitude to my best friend; my husband, who has always selflessly encouraged me to pursue my dreams and continues to be my greatest pillar of support. I couldn't have done it without you, "for you are the wind beneath my wings!"

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of Mercy

INTRODUCTION:

The role of Qur'an translations amongst English-speaking Muslims and Non-Muslims has been steadily growing over the last century culminating in a virtual reliance upon the translated rendering by both the lay-man seeking to comprehend the message of the Qur'an as well as the academic seeking to interpret it. This has had a direct impact on the level of influence wielded by translators of the Qur'an. It is therefore a rather paradoxical phenomenon that the bar is consistently being lowered rather than raised when it comes to gauging the eligibility of individuals seeking to translate the Qur'an.

Until now, Qur'an translating has been treated as a legitimate avocation by many, accessible to anyone who would like to try their hand at it. Remarkably, no minimum level of skill has ever been formally stipulated by the Muslims for the eligibility of this critical task.

Admittedly Qur'an translation in the English language has never enjoyed real scholarship, whether from amongst the Muslims or those outside of the faith. From the Non-Muslims the range of translators has included everyone from orientalists and imperialist explorers to self-confessed missionaries who had little or no knowledge of Arabic. The pool of Muslim translators mostly consists of well-intentioned lay-men. Those who were more learned from amongst these translators unfortunately lacked the natural fluency in the English language. There have also been a few husband and wife teams who jointly published their renderings. More recently however, we find a growing trend of translations being published by Muslims that subscribe to certain

ideologies and doctrines trying to legitimize their version of Islam through its sacred text.

The Muslim reader-ship, has in general been relatively tolerant of this 'all and sundry' approach to their Holy Book, welcoming each new attempt with open minds and trusting hearts. The reasons for this general acceptance may be a tacit acknowledgement of the lack of Muslims learned enough in the sciences of the Qur'an and the nuances of the Arabic language, who are also fluent in the English language and capable of providing an effective critique of the erroneous translation.

A large part of the problem however, could also be down to a naivety, where blind-trust is given to anyone who would under-take such a pious venture. In these circumstances the concept of translation is not fully understood by the reader and is mistakenly believed to be a direct reflection of the original meaning of the source text. Allowances are not made for the many possible interpretations that could be pursued and are ultimately at the sole discretion of the translator. In this situation, the power that the translator wields over the masses is not even recognized much less challenged or upheld to scholarly levels of academic integrity. The potential of a translator to exploit his role and be unfaithful to the source text in the interests of furthering his 'version' of Islam, often with 'good intentions' is a very harsh reality and must be addressed.

The Qur'an translator does, in very real terms, enjoy a power and level of influence not granted, even to those involved at the highest levels of Islamic discourse and scholarship amongst English-speaking Muslims. If his/her translation becomes popular or is supported by those who can facilitate its mass distribution, then it is *his or her* interpretation of the Word that becomes the basis of faith for whole communities if not entire nations and continents. This is a sad reality that can be

attested to by those of us who have grown up under the shadow of translations of the Qur'an in the West.

This phenomenon can only be countered by presenting a candid discussion on the eligibility of individuals to translate the Book of Allah. This study hopes to make a contribution in this field by presenting a critical study on the eligibility of one such translator:

Laleh Bakhtiar's translation of 'The Sublime Qur'an' is a popular translation. It has published more than fifteen editions in the span of just over ten years since it was first published in 2007. Despite shooting to fame, in part due to the many media appearances of its translator, it is regrettable that Bakhtiar's translation has not been the subject of any serious critical study outside of her notorious rendering of ayah [4:34]. Her eligibility to translate the Qur'an has likewise not been critically reviewed despite the clamour surrounding her inadequate language skills from some corners.

Bakhtiar self-identifies as a convert to Islam despite being born to an Iranian Muslim father. She grew up in a single-parent home in America with only her mother, who was an American Christian. She re-connected with her Iranian roots through marriage and eventually moved to Tehran with her husband and children where she studied Psychology in a PhD course at Tehran University. Somewhere along the way, she converted to Islam and started work on compiling a concordance of the Qur'an, which would eventually culminate in her translation of 'The Sublime Qur'an' in 2007 at the age of 68.

The concept of the translator's eligibility is however, only one part of the equation when seeking a reliable translation. Of equal significance is the methodology of translating employed by the translator, since this, is very often where the inaccuracies stem from. Given that the majority of Qur'an translators who have

rendered the meanings of the Qur'an into the English language to date, lacked the required level of proficiency in one of the two languages involved, a study of their methodology becomes all the more critical. It is not an exaggeration to say that the success or the failure of a translation is directly linked to the methodology employed by the translator.

Most translators of the Qur'an into the English language did not have a background in translation studies and were not aware, much less adept at how to faithfully transmit the fine nuances and semantics from the multi-faceted Arabic to the rather less intricate English. Most of them did not have a clear methodology outlined in their introduction, and those that did state a methodology were not always able to stay faithful to it in application. For all the above reasons, it becomes imperative for academics in this field to conduct research whereby they first deduce the methodologies utilized by the translators based on a critical study of the translation, and then present an informed evaluation on the deduced methodology, highlighting its effects on the accuracy of the translation and any further repercussions in the field of Islamic theology.

This is essentially the model we have presented in this paper to critically study Bakhtiar's methodology of translating the Qur'an. It is hoped that this study can further serve as a template for subsequent research into the methodologies of other translators.

1. Background:

Translating any text into another language requires not only proficiency in the languages involved and the related sciences, but also a high level of integrity on the part of the translator to maintain fidelity to the source text. Translating a sacred text, such as the Qur'an demands all of the above to an even higher standard due its Divine origin and because it is the basis of the religion of Islam. The repercussions of errors in translation, whether due to the inaptitude of the translator, or due to his /her intentional doctrinal interpolations, are far reaching and spread across a spectrum of related sciences such as Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

Translations of the Qur'an have long been utilized by translators as a tool by which to infiltrate the Muslim mind with their personal beliefs and ideas. This is without doubt a betrayal of the true message of the Qur'an and an affront to the integrity of translation.

Many new endeavours in the field of translation have emerged in the past couple of decades alone. One such work, which has received notoriety and acclaim in almost equal measures is that of Laleh Bakhtiar. Her translation of "The Sublime Qur'an" is most well-known for her rendering of [4:34], and that is what most academics have focused their studies on when discussing her work. It is important to recognize however, that Bakhtiar's translation is of the entire Qur'an, and deserves to be viewed as a whole. This can only be done through a study of her translation methodology, rather than a de-contextualized study of a single ayah, which is what the available literature at present is limited too.

Although Bakhtiar vows to her readers that her translation is *"free from any transient, denominational or doctrinal bias."[1]* and the methodology selected by her to translate the Qur'an was selected with aim of remaining "as *close to the original as possible".[2]* And to provide "*the most objective type of translation",[3]* These claims deserve to be explored through an analysis of her finished product, the translation itself.

Bakhtiar claims that her translation is based on an accurate scientific methodology, unfettered by the shackles of tafseer literature which, in her opinion is biased and representative of the "choices made by men for the benefit of men." Her solution is to produce a 'concordance-based' translation that relies heavily on linguistic roots. For this reason, it becomes imperative to study her eligibility to take on such a task as well as to analyze and derive her methodology of translating, and by default interpreting the Qur'an.

The nature of this research does not permit me to critique Bakhtiar's translation in its entirety, since this would require a much greater time scale. I have therefore limited the discourse to:

1) Examining her eligibility to translate the Qur'an both in terms of the required knowledge as well as in terms of academic integrity.

2) Analyzing her claims with regards to her translation methodology being 'unique' and new to the field of translations of the Qur'an in the English language.

3) Deriving her translation methodology directly from her translation and from her preface and introduction.

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[1] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvi.
[2] - Ibid.
[3] - Ibid.

4) Providing a critical evaluation of Bakhtiar's translation methodology and its effects on the meaning of the Qur'an and its further implications on related Islamic sciences.

2. Research Questions:

1. What are the criteria by which a person is deemed eligible to translate the Quran and does Bakhtiar fulfil these criteria?

2. To what extent is Bakhtiar's translation unique?

3. What is the methodology Bakhtiar follows to translate the Quran and is she successful in adhering to it?

4. What are the effects of Bakhtiar's methodology of translation on the accuracy and intelligibility of her rendering?

5. Does Bakhtiar's methodology allow for the interpolation of ideological bias?

3. Reasons for Selecting this Topic for Research:

1. To be of service to the Qur'an and the sciences of the Qur'an.

2. To make a contribution in a field of Qur'anic studies that at present does not have sufficient literature.

3. Bakhtiar's translation of "The Sublime Qur'an" was published over a decade ago and has recently released its 15th Edition, and yet the translator's methodology has not been the subject of a critical study until now. For this

reason, the general masses are left without any guidance on whether this translation is an accurate representation of the Words of Allah or not. Clarifying this matter is therefore, a fardh kifaayah (collective obligation on the ummah) that needs to be taken up by someone who has specialized in the science of Tafseer and Uloom ul Qur'an and is a native English-speaking Muslim. Since I have been blessed with all of the above, I saw it as an obligation that I must fulfill.

4. As someone who was born and brought up in London, UK, not understanding a single word of Arabic until I decided to study it formally many years later, I know first-hand what it means to be totally reliant on translations to understand the words of Allah. I recognize the impact and power a translator of the Qur'an holds over the reader of his/her translation; he becomes the unofficial mediator between the Words of your Creator and yourself.

The reader is left with no option but to 'blindly' trust the translator and hope that he possesses the integrity to remain faithful to Allah's message and not interpolate his own ideas and bias into the text of the translation. He has no choice but to hope that the translator is endowed with the linguistic expertise and knowledge of the required Qur'anic sciences to correctly interpret the meanings of the Qur'an and render it accurately into a language he can understand. The reader has no way to verify the accuracy of the translation that he takes as his guide in life unless those who are knowledgeable in these affairs clarify which translations are sound and which are erroneous. For this reason, after completing my Qur'anic studies I wanted to choose a topic that would aid the many millions of people who are in the situation that I was in before I was given the opportunity to study and learn. The English-speaking

Muslims are dependent on people who have specialized in the field of tafseer and uloom ul Qur'an who are also fluent in the English language, to clarify the methodologies of the translators of the Qur'an so that the accurate translations are distinguished from the translations that follow a deviant methodology and contain interpolations that are not in the original text of the Word of Allah.

I hope that Bakhtiar's translation methodology will be the first of many translator's methodologies that I will be able to present a detailed critical study on, in the coming months and years, to continue to provide guidance in this field to those who need it.

4. The Value of this Research:

This subject matter is of extreme importance because of the critical function of Qur'an translations to the Muslims of today. The percentage of Muslims today who actually understand the Qur'an directly from the Arabic original are minimal. This leaves the vast majority of Muslims unable to access the meaning of their sacred text except through translations. The average English-speaking Muslim is therefore totally reliant on the translator's scholarship as well as his / her integrity to faithfully render the meanings of the Qur'an into a language that he can comprehend and then implement in his daily life.

Bakhtiar's translation of "The Sublime Qur'an", has garnered much media attention since its first publication in 2007, even receiving a feature length article in The New York Times[4] profiling Bakhtiar and her novel rendering of [4:34]. Despite its fame and notoriety however, the translation has yet to be the subject of any critical study of its methodology. It has grown in popularity following Bakhtiar's regular media appearances which have no doubt helped to bolster sales. In less than a decade since it was first published it has released more than fifteen editions. The need for a critical study of the methodology of its translation and the eligibility of its author to translate the Qur'an, is therefore not only essential, but long over-due.

When selecting a translation of the Qur'an, the most important factor for the reader is to know that the rendering that is in his hands is accurately conveying the original message from His Creator, without any addition, deletion or interpolation of personal or ideological bias. For this reason, Bakhtiar's translation is a very attractive choice for the average Western English-speaking Muslim in the 21st century, since it speaks of an elaborate scientific methodology previously never used by Qur'an translators to this day, to produce a translation that renders the meaning of the Qur'an 'literally' without allowing the ideological biases of the translator, or anyone else for that matter, to be reflected into the rendering in any way, shape or form.

This narrative must be explored and challenged since any claim to a perfectly accurate literal translation carries the risk of establishing itself to be *the* authoritative message from Allah leaving all other interpretations null and void.

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[4] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/25/us/25koran.html?ei=5088&en=835924e5b6d16c52&ex=1332475200&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all

It is therefore imperative that Bakhtiar's translation of "The Sublime Qur'an" which has gained so much traction amongst English-Speaking Muslims and Non-Muslims alike, finally be subjected to a critical study so that those who choose to read it as their translation of choice, do so upon certain knowledge (baseerah) of the integrity of the translator and the accuracy of her translation.

Translation, like any other science has its principles, as does interpreting the meaning of the Qur'an. Translating the Qur'an requires a combination of both of these sets of principles to guarantee objectivity and avoid the insertion of whims and desires. Guarding the original meaning and intent of the Qur'an from deviation is a religious obligation and a failure to do so would result in one inferring from the words of Allah other than what He intended. The translation would in that case reflect the desires of the creation rather than what was intended by The Creator. For this reason, the importance of this topic cannot be over-stated.

5. The Objectives of this Research:

1. To determine the criteria that makes one eligible to translate the Quran and to discern whether Bakhtiar fulfils that criteria.

2. To determine to what extent is Bakhtiar's translation unique.

3. To derive Bakhtiar's translation methodology from her own words and to discern how faithfully she has adhered to it.

4. To determine the effects of Bakhtiar's translation methodology on the accuracy and intelligibility of her rendering.

5. To determine whether Bakhtiar's methodology allows for the interpolation of ideological bias.

6. The Predictions of this Research:

1. The criteria for an accurate translation of the Quran can only be achieved when the translator is proficient to a high level in the source language, the target language, and the sciences of Tafseer and Usool al Tafseer whilst also possessing academic integrity. Bakhtiar is not proficient in the required fields of knowledge to translate the Quran and is therefore not eligible to do so. She also does not possess the academic integrity required of a translator of the Quran.

2. Bakhtiar's claims regarding the uniqueness of her translation are inaccurate and over-stated.

3. Bakhtiar's translation does not conform to the scholastic methodology of translation and she does not adhere to her claimed methodology faithfully throughout the translation.

4. Bakhtiar's translation methodology is the source of many errors and inaccuracies in her translation.

5. Bakhtiar's translation does not conform to scholastic objectivity and allows for the interpolation of doctrinal and theological bias.

7. The Limitations of the Research:

This research paper is based exclusively on Bakhtiar's translation "The Sublime Qur'an", with a focus on the methodology she claims to follow in her preface and introduction. It does not seek to discuss every error in her rendering but will utilize samples from her translation for the sake of providing clarity on a point. This paper is based on the 15th Edition of Bakhtiar's translation, entitled **"The Sublime Quran, English Translation: Revised Edition"** which was published in 2012.

As a Muslim, I believe the Qur'an to be the literal Words of Allah, this paper reflects this view when referring to the original Arabic Qur'an. However, the arguments presented in this paper remain valid regardless of the view of the reader on this matter, since it is essentially a critical study into the concepts of eligibility and methodology.

8. Literature Review:

As of yet, no detailed critical evaluation of Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an has been published, nor is there any literature evaluating or analyzing Bakhtiar's methodology of translating 'The Sublime Qur'an'

Those who have made mention of 'The Sublime Qur'an' generally only refer to Bakhtiar's rendering of [4:34] quoting her reasoning in doing so. Indeed, Bakhtiar received notoriety and acclaim due to her 'new' explanation of this particular verse and hence any academic to address her translation has concentrated all efforts on this single point.

Below is a list of academic works in which Bakhtiar's translation has been mentioned:

1. Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai in his book **"Translating the Untranslatable: A Critical Guide to 60 English Translations of the Qur'an"** Published by Sarup Book Publishers PVT. Ltd. New Delhi.2011.
   In this valuable work Kidwai dedicates four pages of his book to providing a critical overview of Bakhtiar's work. He is the first to person to draw attention to Bakhtiar's (alleged) plagiarism of Arberry's earlier translations by citing a side by side comparison of three passages from the Qur'an: al-Hijr (15:51-56), al-Nisa 4:153-154) and Ta Ha 20: 114-115). He also calls into question her competence as a translator due to her feeble understanding of Arabic and points out a handful of linguistic errors in al-Inshirah (94:7-8) and al-Humazah (104:6-7).
   My paper's objectives seek to differ from Professor Kidwai's work by deducing Bakhtiar's translation methodology from her translation and by

providing an in-depth critique that deconstructs her method with samples to support my ideas. I will further investigate whether she actually adhered to the elaborate methodology she describes in her preface and whether she showed objectivity or displayed obvious or concealed biases. This differs from Professor Kidwai's work, which seeks to comment on the finished product of her translation and not on her methodology. I also seek to address the concept of eligibility to translate the Qur'an in some depth, with the aim of determining Bakhtiar's eligibility. This concept is not explored by Kidwai. Likewise, I seek to examine Bakhtiar's claim to uniqueness in her methodological decisions.

2. Bakhtiar's translation is also mentioned in Professor Abdalla El Khatib's book **"Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an into English Language"** Published by Sharjah University in 2014. This book is essentially an Arabic version of Professor Kidwai's book (mentioned above). It covers the same 60 translations that Kidwai studies in his book with the addition of only one more additional translation by Mohammad Mohar Ali, resulting in a total of 61 books instead of Kidwai's original 60 books. El Khatib dedicates 10 pages in his book to Bakhtiar and her translation. He starts with a page long biography of Bakhtiar for which he cites Wikipedia as his reference as well as her own introduction. He dedicates 6 more pages to translating Bakhtiar's own arguments directly from her preface verbatim without providing a single rebuttal or commentary on the highly questionable opinions she expresses [except on the issue of Bakhtiar's translation of al-Nisa (4:34)]. El Khatib mentions Bakhtiar's plagiarism of Arberry (as discovered by Professor

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Kidwai) and cites the exact same example as provided by Professor Kidwai (al-Hijr 15:51-56) It is regretful however, that he does not credit Professor Kidwai or his book "Translating the Untranslatable" for the discovery of the plagiarism nor for the examples provided. El Khatib also goes on to point out the <u>same</u> handful of linguistic errors that Kidwai draws our attention to, namely: [al-Inshirah (94:7-8) and al-Humazah (104:6-7)]. Unfortunately, the credit for this is again not given to Professor Kidwai, nor is his book cited as a reference for these points.

El Khatib does however dedicate a single paragraph at the end of the 10 pages stating in a summarized form that Bakhtiar has insufficient knowledge of Arabic and that her translation over-stepped the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable by accusing the scholars of this ummah of ignorance and being biased towards women. Since El Khatib does not mention anything new in excess of what Kidwai has already mentioned my paper seeks to differ from his work in the same way as stated above with regards to Professor Kidwai's work.

3. **"Social Agency and Translating the Qur'an, The Case of Laleh Bakhtiar's The Sublime Qur'an and 4:34."** Patrick J. D'Silva. University of Colorada at Boulder, USA, nd. This is Chapter 7 in the Journal "Culguage of Translation from Arabic" Here the author seeks to discuss Bakhtiar's translation of [4:34] and its role as a 'social agent of change.' His work revolves around the reception Bakhtiar received from the Muslim community for her 'new' rendering of [4:34] and whether it is the beginning of a new paradigm shift towards a more feminist sensitive translation. He argues that

her rendering of this ayah is a prime example of 'social agency' on the part of growing feminist voices. My paper seeks to differ from D'Silvio's 18-page chapter on Bakhtiar's translation since the focus of my paper is Bakhtiar's methodology as well as her eligibility to translate the Qur'an whereas his focus is on whether her rendering of [4.34] can be seen as a 'social agent'.

4. **"English Translations of the Qur'an by Women: Different or Derived?"** Rim Hassen, PhD thesis, Warwick University, 2012. The focus of this study is more to do with the backgrounds of the women who actually wrote the translations than it is to do with the product of the translations itself. In Chapter one Hassen discusses the Muslim woman's fixed image and gender roles in Islam in general. In Chapter two she discusses the different life trajectories of the female translators of the Qur'an with a focus on how their upbringing shaped their view of gender roles and in turn how they translated the ayaat that are specific to her focus, namely ayah [4:34]. Chapters three and four deal with the visibility and invisibility of these women through paratext. Chapter five discusses gender balance in linguistics and Chapter six returns to the topic of gender-related verses in the Qur'an and how 'loyal' a female translator has been to her sex in her rendering. As is evident from this brief synopsis of Hassen's paper, her research focus is clearly on the implications of gender on the translation of the Qur'an. My research seeks to differ from hers in that I seek to derive, comprehend, present and then critique an over-all methodology that Bakhtiar put in place for the translation of the Qur'an. I have not limited my focus to the gender related verses since Bakhtiar has translated the entire Qur'an and her methodology needs to be understood in light of its

entirety to get a full picture of what it entails and what she hopes to convey and why. My paper also differs in that it discusses the concept of 'eligibility to translate' the Qur'an, something that Hassen's paper does not delve into.

5. **Projecthumanbeingsfirst.org**, Zahir Ebrahim. This is a blog run by Ebrahim where he publishes his opinions on various religious and political issues. He has included on his blog, personal correspondence that took place between him and Bakhtiar back in 2011, in the form of emails, where he sought to comprehend the reasoning behind her inaccurate translation of Surat Al- 'Asr. Ebrahim, in his letter to Bakhtiar, lambastes her for her mistranslation of such a simple surah and goes on to question her on a range of issues, most specifically her understanding of etymology. In part two of his letter he compares her methods with biblical methods of translation and blames her for not seeing the flaw in biblical translations. In his third and final part of the letter to Bakhtiar, Ebrahim discusses Bakhtiar's interview with Tim King from Salem News and her desire to bring 'reform' to Islam. My research differs from that of Ebrahim's since I seek to derive her entire methodology from her own words in the introduction and preface to her book as well as though samples of her translation. I do not seek to limit my work to certain ayaat but rather evaluate the effect of the methodology on the accuracy of the translation as a whole. I also seek to explore Bakhtiar's academic integrity as a translator, a subject which is not touched on by Ebrahim. I further seek to challenge Bakhtiar on her claims to uniqueness in her methodology and to explore the possibility of Bakhtiar's methodology allowing interpolations of ideological bias into the text of the translation. Neither of these is discussed by Ebrahim.

Likewise, I seek to discuss the effects of her methodology on related sciences like Islamic theology which is again, not presented by Ebrahim. Overall Ebrahim's letter to Bakhtiar is effective on the specific issues he discusses however it is far more limited in its focus than this research paper, since I seek to deduce, analyze and then critique Bakhtiar's methodology in general terms along with presenting a profile on her scholarly integrity and an evaluation on the effects of her methodology on accuracy, intelligibility as well as Islamic theology.

6. **"A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence from the Middle East to America."** Leila Ahmed. Yale University Press, 2011.**,** Leila Ahmed. Ahmed discusses Bakhtiar in a single chapter out of this 360-page book, as one of many figures in the present-day 'Islamic Feminist' movement. She discusses her rendering of [4:34] and how other feminists have embraced or differed from Bakhtiar in her rendering of this ayah. My paper seeks to differ from this book in that I seek to deduce Bakhtiar's methodology from her translation and present an evaluation of how it affects her rendering in terms of its accuracy as well as its intelligibility, whereas the focus of Ahmed's chapter, like most of the others who have written about Bakhtiar, is her rendering of [4:34].

7. "**Qur'an Translation and Commentary, An Uncharted Relationship**," Waleed Bleyhish al-Amri. Islam and Science, Vol.8, Winter 2010, No.2. Center for Islam and Science. This paper seeks to discuss the untranslatable nature of the Qur'an and the different approaches of translators vis a vis tafseer. A vast number of translations are discussed, this is not limited to

translations in the English language, but in the French and German languages as well. A couple of paragraphs are dedicated to discussing Bakhtiar's rendering of [4:34] and how it is not based on tafseer but rather on her own feminist opinions. Al-Amri does not expound on this since his focus is far more general. My paper seeks to differ from his in that the methodology of Qur'an translations is to be discussed in detail and Bakhtiar's methodology is to be derived and then critiqued. I also seek to discuss Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an and present samples from her work that reflect the level of her scholarship or the lack of it in the Arabic language as well as the sciences of tafseer and usool al tafseer.

9. **Methodology of the Research:**

This research paper will utilize the following methodologies:

    i.   A Deductive Methodology

   ii.   An Analytical Methodology

  iii.   A Critical Methodology

CHAPTER ONE OUTLINE:

A Critical Examination of Bakhtiar's Eligibility to Translate the Qur'an.

1.1. **Introduction: The Difference Between Exegesis of the Qur'an and a Translation of its Meanings.**

    1.1.1. Definition of Tafseer (Exegesis).

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CHAPTER ONE:

A Critical Examination of Bakhtiar's Eligibility to Translate the Qur'an.

1.1. Introduction: The Difference Between Exegesis of the Qur'an and a Translation of its Meanings.

To be able to successfully understand the difference between exegesis (tafseer) of the Qur'an and a translation of its meanings (tarjuma), we must first define both of them:

1.1.1. Definition of Tafseer (Exegesis):

The word 'tafseer' is a verbal noun which is derived from the root word 'fassara' which means to explain, to expound, to elucidate, to interpret.

'Tafseer ul Qur'an' therefore means 'the explanation, or the interpretation of the Qur'an'.[5]

1.1.2. Definition of Tarjuma (translation):

The Oxford dictionary defines [translation] as: 'The rendering of the meaning of a word or text, in another language.[6]

'Tarjuma' like most Arabic words, has many more connotations to it than its English counterpart. Amongst the linguistic meanings that Az-Zarqaani lists for 'tarjuma' include:

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[5] - Az-Zarkashee, **Al Burhaan Fi Uloom ul Quraan**, Vol.1, p.13.
[6] - **Oxford English Dictionary**: [translation]

1. Conveying information to someone who has not heard it before.

2. Explaining 'speech' in the same language, he cites as an evidence for this, the Prophet ﷺ nick-naming Ibn Abbas as 'tarjumaan ul Qur'an', (the explainer of the Qur'an).

3. Explaining the speech in another language other than the one it was originally spoken / written in.

4. Conveying / transmitting the speech from one language to another.[7]

From the above categories, only <u>the third and fourth</u> are relevant here. When one uses the term 'translation' in contemporary English it is 'the transmission of a text or speech from one language to another,' that comes to mind.

1.1.3. Types of Qur'an Translations:

Tarjuma by this definition, when it pertains to the Qur'an, can be divided into two categories:[8]

1. <u>Literal translation (tarjumah harfiyah)</u>,[9]

   This is a literal translation with emphasis on the linguistic accuracy of each word. This method of translation seeks to translate each word or phrase from the source language into an identical word or phrase in the target language.

   Az-Zarqaani stipulates two conditions for making 'literal translation' possible:

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[7] - Az-Zurqaani, **Manaahil al 'irfaan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**, vol.2 p.90. See also: Zubaydee, Taaj al 'Uroos, Vol 8, p.211.

[8] - A more detailed discussion on the methodologies of these two types of translation is presented in Chapter [3.2] entitled: "Methodologies of Translation".

[9] - this methodology has been given various names by the scholars in the field of translation studies, such as 'formal equivalence' but for the purpose of this Chapter we will refer to it as simply 'literal translation'.

i. That the target language can boast an equivalent for each word in the source language, such that the translator following this methodology is able to assign to each word in the source language, its equivalent in the target language.

ii. A similarity in grammatical structure between the two languages in terms of pronouns, verbs, sentence order etc.[10]

Based on the above conditions we conclude, that since the Arabic language and the English language do <u>not</u> share equivalents in many aspects of their vocabulary, and the discrepancy between the syntactical richness between the two languages is huge, it would be impossible to derive a 'literal translation' of the Qur'an that would be intelligible to the reader. This is especially true, given the fact that the grammatical structures are also not similar in any way, maintaining the word order, as 'literal translation' dictates would therefore, render the translation incomprehensible in many situations.

2. <u>Translation based on the meanings and tafseer, (tarjuma ma'nawiyyah / tafseeriyah)</u>.[11]

The emphasis of this methodology is on translating the meaning of the text as accurately as possible. It is the translation of the meaning in context. Naturally this methodology also has its drawbacks. Many linguists fear that it allows for the personal opinions of the translator to penetrate into the text more easily.[12]

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[10] - Az-Zurqaani, **Manaahil al 'irfaan**, vol.2 p.93.

[11] - This methodology has also been referred to by numerous terms, amongst them," dynamic equivalence". For the purpose of this chapter we will refer to it as 'translation based on meanings.'

[12] - See Chapter [3.2] of this paper for a detailed discussion on this point.

1.2. The Difference Between Tafseer of the Qur'an[13] and Tarjuma.

There are many differences between a 'tafseer' of the Qur'an, as defined above, and between a 'tarjumah' of the Qur'an. These can be summarized as follows:[14] [15]

1. The main aim of a 'tarjuma' of the Qur'an is that the message of the source text, (the Qur'an), is transmitted clearly enough into the target language, that it is understood and comprehended by the reader independently from the original Arabic Qur'an. This is because in most cases, the reason the reader is referring to the translation is because he does not possess the ability to comprehend the source text.

   Tafseer on the other hand is never independent of the source text. Whether the tafseer is penned in Arabic or in another language such as English, it is directly connected to the source text, (the Qur'an), and its words and phrases are continuously referenced. Tafseer is filled with scholarly opinion on everything from the meanings and nuances of the words to other less directly linked sciences.

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[13] - In this section when we refer to 'tafseer of the Qur'an' we are referring to **a translation of the tafseer** since tafseer in the original Arabic could not be confused with a translation of the Qur'an in the English language.

[14] - See: Az-Zurqaani, **Manaahil al 'Irfaan**, Vol.2, p.93-94. The points have been edited and changed to present an explanation more relevant to this research.

[15] - Az-Zarqaani mentions a fourth difference between 'tafseer' and 'tarjuma', he says, 'tarjuma' provides 'peace of mind' [itmi'naan] to the reader that all the meanings and aims of the source text have been reflected in the translation and this is not the case in 'tafseer.' Despite my great respect for Az-Zurqaani, I fundamentally disagree with the Sheikh on this point which is why I left it out. The translator *always* possesses the final say with regards to his choice of rendering, and as such there is a personal human element of choice and personal understanding that cannot be removed from any translation. 'Peace of mind' can therefore not exist in its perfect sense with any translation of a text that is as complex and open to interpretation as the Qur'an.

2. It is not permissible for a translation to digress from what is stated in the source text.[16] Rather it is the responsibility of the translator to reflect its exact meaning regardless of any personal opinions held by the him/her on the matter. As for tafseer, its main aim is to expound and elucidate on the meanings and implications of the ayah. This could take the form of presenting the legal repercussions of the ayah, a presentation on its modes of recitation, its linguist inferences or any other 'benefits' from the ayah as it pertains to the Islamic sciences.

3. A translation must accurately reflect the meaning of the source text without adding or subtracting anything from it. This is not the case with tafseer, where the mufassir is free to select which words from the ayah he would like to expound on and which sciences he would like to shed light on through the medium of his tafseer. For this reason, it is well-known that there are certain works of tafseer that are specialized in the linguistic aspects whilst others emphasize Islamic jurisprudence, others still expound mostly on i'raab, etc.[17]

After mentioning some of the differences between tafseer and tarjuma[18] and establishing the fact that they are two different and separate sciences, it leads us to the next question, which is, 'is tarjuma independent of tafseer? Put simply, can tarjuma be done in the absence of tafseer?

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[16] - Unless it is in the form of a footnote or parenthesis to clarify the intent of the text if it is obscure or not obvious. But any such note should be made clear that it is not part of the actual translation.

[18] - This is clearly not an exhaustive list of the differences between 'tafseer' and 'tarjuma', it is merely a set of examples of the most obvious differences between them. The list serves to establish the fact that they cannot be considered as one and the same.

1.3. Is Tarjuma Independent of Tafseer?

Essentially what we are exploring in this section is whether it is possible to produce an accurate translation without benefitting from any form of tafseer?

The reason for this discussion is due to the strong views that Bakhtiar expresses regarding <u>not</u> referring to the tafseer of the Qur'an since they were all written by other men who, (according to Bakhtiar) have over the past 1500 years, assumed almost exclusive rights to deciding what the words of God should actually mean. She adds that aside from a few pious rulers, Islamic history is simply 1500 years of uninterrupted rulership by tyrants and dictators.[19]

Due to Bakhtiar's decision to <u>not</u> refer to tafseer as part of her translation methodology we will discuss briefly whether 'tarjama' can indeed be done in the absence of tafseer.

For an informed response to that question, we first need to briefly present what the science of tafseer comprises of:

Tafseer, as is apparent from our above discussions is a multifaceted science that brings with it not only the opinion of linguistic experts on the multiple nuances a single word in the Qur'an may possess, but also the role each ayah plays in many of the Islamic Sciences. Although the finer details of the most correct methodology of tafseer may not be agreed upon by all the scholars of tafseer, they normally consist of the following stages: [20]

1. Tafseer of the Qur'an by the Qur'an

2. Tafseer by the Sunnah

3. Tafseer by the Statements of the Companions

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[19] -See: Bakhtiar**, The Sublime Qur'an**, xxxvii.
[20] - See: Ibn Taymiyah, **Muqaddimah fi Usool al Tafsir**, p.34,

4. Tafseer by the Statements of the Successors (Taabi'een)

5. Tafseer by the Arabic Language.

6. Tafseer by the Customs of the Arabs prior to Islam.

7. Tafseer by Opinion.[21]

An explanation of each one of the above stages of tafseer can be found in great details in the books of Usool ul Tafseer[22]. However, our purpose is not to delve into the intricacies of each category here, or to provide the evidence for their importance. Rather the purpose of mentioning this here is to establish that a detailed methodology of tafseer has already been put in place.

Although the mufassiroon may differ when it comes to the order of precedence between steps four through to seven, depending on their doctrinal inclinations. They remain unanimous about the precedence of the first three steps. Namely, tafseer of the Qur'an by the Qur'an itself, followed by tafseer by the Sunnah, followed by tafseer by the statements of the Sahaba. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper we will only elucidate on these three stages and the repercussions of disregarding them when translating the Qur'an.

1.3.1. Tafseer of the Qur'an by the Qur'an:

This method of tafseer is the most authoritative since the best one to explain one's speech is always the speaker himself. For this reason, turning to other parts of the Qur'an for explanation is the first and most important step of tafseer. It precedes all other steps. This does not mean however that everyone who says,

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[21] - This is of two types, praiseworthy opinion, which is based on a supporting evidence, and blameworthy opinions which are based on one's desires with no supporting evidence to warrant such an opinion.

[22] - See: Ibn Taymiyah, **Muqaddimah fi Usool al tafsir**, As-Suyooti, **al Itqaan fee uloom ul quraan**, Az-Zarkashi, **Al Burhan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**. Az-Zamrali, **Shuroot al mufassir wa aadaabihi li as-Suyooti**. Qattaan, **Mabaahith fi Uloom ul Qur'an**.

'This Ayah is an explanation of that Ayah' is correct. This is the mufassir's own deduction and it may be incorrect.[23]

An example of tafseer of the Qur'an by the Qur'an would be when an ayah is mentioned, and the details of that ayah are made apparent in another ayah as follows:

Allah says in Surah al Fatihah:

$$﴿صِرَٰطَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ﴾[24]$$

"The path of those whom You have favoured"

The details of who 'those whom Allah has favoured" is then clarified in Surah An-Nisaa:

$$﴿وَمَن يُطِعِ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلرَّسُولَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ مَعَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ ٱللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ ٱلنَّبِيِّـۧنَ وَٱلصِّدِّيقِينَ وَٱلشُّهَدَآءِ وَٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ رَفِيقًا﴾[25]$$

"And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor, of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions"[26]

The most acclaimed contemporary work concerning this method of Tafsir is that of al-Shanqiti (d. 1393 AH)[27]. The author has written a lengthy introduction detailing the different categories of clarifying the Qur'an with the Qur'an (Bayan al-Qur'an bil-Qur'an).

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[23] -This point shall be discussed further later in this chapter.
[24] - Al Qur'an, [1:7].
[25] - Al Qur'an, [4:69].
[26] - Sahih International Translation, [4:69].
[27] - Ash-Shanqiti, Muhammad al Amin, **Adwa' al-Bayan Fi Iydaah al-Qur'an bil-Qur'an**.

The following are some examples of its categories:

1) Providing Detail for what has been left Abridged (Tafseel al-Mujmal)

2) Qualifying the Absolute (Taqyeed al-Mutlaq)

3) Specification of the general (Takhsees al-'Aam)

4) Explaining the implications of one Ayah with another Ayah

5) Explaining one word by another word in the Qur'an

6) Explaining a meaning with another meaning in the Qur'an

7) Explaining a linguistic form in one ayah by means of another form in another ayah.

1.3.2. Tafseer of the Qur'an by the Sunnah

The Sunnah is considered the second most authoritative source of tafseer after the Qur'an itself, although it is equally important. One of the Prophet's ﷺ main roles was to explain the meaning of the ayaat of the Qur'an.

Allah makes mention of this in the Qur'an when He says:

﴿ وَأَنزَلْنَآ إِلَيْكَ ٱلذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾ [28]

"And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought." [29]

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[28] - Al Qur'an 16:44.
[29] - Saheeh International, 16:44.

It is important to note that although there are only a small number of ayaat for which explicit statements from the Prophet ﷺ are narrated, there are many more ahadeeth that expound on matters mentioned in the Qur'an, like 'salah', 'hajj', fasting, etc. or through explaining certain words not familiar to the Companions.

1.3.3. Tafseer by the Statements of the Companions:

The third source for understanding the Qur'an is the understanding of the Companions. Their statements are given precedence over anyone else from mankind after the Prophet. Amongst the reasons for this precedence is:[30]

1. Allah selected them to be the Companions of His Messenger and the custodians of His message due to their pure character and their sincerity. The Prophet ﷺ said about them: *"The best of mankind is my generation then those who follow them then those who follow them."[31]*

2. The Companions witnessed the revelation of the Qur'an and were privy to many occasions of asbab un nuzool.

3. They were masters of the language that the Qur'an was revealed in.

4. They were the most knowledgeable of people with regards to the customs of the Arabs prior to Islam.

After understanding the main sources of Tafseer, and the important role that they play in expounding the intended meaning of the ayaat in the Qur'an, it becomes apparent that it would be impossible to really comprehend the true intent of many of the verses of the Qur'an simply by resorting to the language alone. This is because the

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[30] - adh-Dhahabi, **At-Tafseer wal mufassiroon**, Vol.1 p.62.
[31] - Collected by Al- Bukhaari in **Kitaab Fadaa'il As-haab un-Nabi** ﷺ, Hadith no: 3650.

language, in many cases can accommodate numerous meanings and there is no way to know which of these meanings is most fitting unless we refer back to the tafseer.

For this reason, a translator of the Qur'an, <u>must</u> refer to the books of tafseer whilst producing a translation of the Qur'an since it would be impossible to accurately reflect the intent of the ayaat without it. Regarding this Abdul Raof states, "The Qur'an translator does not only need a sound linguistic competence in both Arabic and English but also an advanced knowledge in Arabic syntax and rhetoric…<u>most importantly, he/she needs to compare and refer to major Qur'an exegesis in order to derive and provide the accurate underlying meaning of a given Qur'anic expression, a simple particle or even a preposition</u>."[32]

After establishing the vital role of tafseer in the translation of the Qur'an, it becomes apparent that a translator of the Qur'an must be qualified not just to transmit words from one language to another, but he must also possess the skills of a mufassir to some degree, since an ability to compare different works of tafseer and select the most accurate of them, based on the principles of tafseer, is critical to the success and accuracy of the Qur'an translation.

For this reason, we will briefly explore the necessary conditions to qualify as a mufassir as well as the conditions to qualify as a translator of the Qur'an.

1.4. The Conditions to Qualify as an Exegete (Mufassir) of the Qur'an.

Over the centuries we find the scholars of the Qur'anic sciences have an extremely varied set of conditions that they stipulate for the exegete of the Qur'an. Despite the wide range of conditions presented by them, most of them tend to agree on the fifteen conditions mentioned by As-Suyooti in his al-Itqaan. I have quoted

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[32] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse, Texture and Exegesis**. p.2.

them as well as some additional conditions mentioned by other experts in this field who have penned works on this topic more recently.[33] Below is summary of the conditions mentioned.

1. The mufassir must be a Muslim since disbelief in the Divine Authorship of the Qur'an would be reflected throughout the work of tafseer and ultimately impact its true intent.

2. The mufassir must be of sound aqeedah (belief) and not be from a deviant sect since he is likely to interpret the Qur'an through the prism of his heresy.

3. He must possess knowledge of the Arabic language to a scholarly level. This condition is further elaborated on in the next 5 conditions[34] which explain the different components of the language that are a must for the mufassir to master.

4. Knowledge of Arabic grammar (nahw).

5. Knowledge of Arabic morphology (sarf).

6. Knowledge of the root structures of Arabic words (ishtiqaaq).

7. Knowledge of Arabic rhetoric, (ma'aani)

8. Knowledge of Arabic eloquence (al badee')

9. Knowledge of the styles of oratory (bayan)

10. Knowledge of the qira'aat (modes of recitation) the saheeh from the da'eef and shaadh.

11. Knowledge of the principles of the religion (usool ul deen)

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[33] - As-Suyooti, **Al Itqaan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**, Vol 4, pp.362-366. Qaadhi, An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan, p.325.

[34] - These conditions are listed by as-Suyootee in al Itqaan, as seven separate conditions for emphasis.

12. Knowledge of the principles of Fiqh (Usool ul Fiqh).

13. Knowledge of fiqh (jurisprudence).

14. Knowledge of Asbaab-un-Nuzool.

15. Knowledge of the abrogating verses and the abrogated verses (Naasikh and mansookh).

16. Knowledge of the hadith of the Prophet ﷺ that pertain to the tafseer of the Qur'an and clarifying the unclear matters within it.

17. A divine gift for understanding the Qur'an that is not possible to achieve by oneself.

What becomes apparent from As-Suyooti's list of conditions to qualify to become a mufassir is the heavy emphasis on all the branches of the Arabic language. Indeed, seven out of his fifteen conditions are solely addressing the importance of a scholarly level of Arabic language.

Ar-Raaghib quotes Ibn Abi Dunya as saying about the above types of knowledge, "These sciences are like tools for the mufassir. He cannot be a mufassir except by obtaining them, so whoever makes tafseer of the Qur'an without obtaining mastery in these sciences then he has made tafseer (interpretation of the Qur'an) based on opinions that are forbidden, but if he makes tafseer after obtaining (these sciences) then his tafseer is not based on the forbidden type of opinion (ar-ra'y al manhiy 'anhu)[35]

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[35] - As-Suyooti, **Al Itqaan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**, Vol 4, p.366.

Likewise, Al-Baihaqi narrated in ash-Shu'ab on the authority of Maalik that he said: "It is not befitting of a man who is not a scholar of the Arabic language to make exegesis of the Book of Allah, except that I consider it to be a (نكالاً) disaster." [36]

Ar-Roomee takes a different approach in addressing the topic of what is important for the Mufassir to know by listing a number of principles that every mufassir should be well grounded in.[37] Below is a summary of the usool of tafseer he believes is mandatory upon anyone interpreting the Qur'an:[38]

1. All words that are general ('aam) must retain their generality until there is evidence to warrant their specification (takhsees).

2. The lesson is derived from the generality of the word not by the specification of the cause. This principle is especially critical when understanding asbaab un nuzool, since in most cases, the cause of revelation serves to aid in the interpretation of the ayah (tafseer al ayah) but it doesn't serve to make it specific to that cause (takhsees).

3. The different qira'aat (modes of recitation) often serve to expand the meaning of the words.

4. The meaning of a word changes based on the script (rasm) it is written in.

5. The mufassir cannot expound on a word in the Qur'an until he has considered its context. By context what is meant here is the context of the entire Qur'an and its message.

6. Tafseer is always based on the most probable (al-aghlab) and obvious (al-dhaahir) meaning of the word in the language.

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[36] - Az-Zarkashi, **Al Burhan fi Uloom ul Quran**, Vol. 2, p.302.
[37] - The reason for this could very likely be, because he considers it obvious beyond the need for mention that the Mufassir must have mastery over all the branches of the Arabic language.
[38] Ar-Roomee, **Buhooth fi usool al tafseer wa manaahijihi**, p.136-143.

7. Precedence must be given to the Shar'ee meaning of a word over its linguistic meaning unless there is an evidence (qareena) to indicate otherwise.

We find that most of the conditions and tools listed by the scholars in the field of Tafseer point to a scholarly level of Arabic language and a deep understanding of usool al tafseer. A translator of the Qur'an, first needs to be able to understand and interpret the message of the Qur'an before he/she is able to convey that meaning in another language. We will evaluate Bakhtiar's eligibility in this regard at the end of this chapter.

1.4.1. Bakhtiar's Position on Allowing Tafseer to Guide Her Translation of the Qur'an:

As cited above, Bakhtiar is averse to allowing tafseer to dictate to her what the meanings of the words of Allah may mean and she dismisses the science of tafseer as 'the words of men'. By removing the influence of tafseer from her understanding of the Qur'an, Bakhtiar is left with a very large void to fill.

In most cases a word or ayah from the Qur'an can be understood to have one of many possible meanings, by denying tafseer a role, in determining that meaning, a space is opened up for another influence to take its place. The translator's selection of a particular rendering will always be influenced by some-one or some-thing. In essence Bakhtiar is choosing to reject the influence of those who knew the meanings of the Qur'an the best (the Prophet ﷺ and his Companions) and replacing their influence with either her own understanding or that of her peers, either of which are undeniably going to be less knowledgeable of the intent of the words of the Qur'an. The lack of knowledge however, of those whose influence she is willing to accept

does not seem to be a factor for Bakhtiar. She addresses this issue clearly in her preface saying:

"It is lawful for everyone to draw a meaning from the Qur'an according to his understanding and the limit of his intelligence."[39]

Furthermore, Bakhtiar goes so far as to invite readers to make suggestions of other possible meanings for the words in the Qur'an *"so that the translation becomes part of a democratic, ongoing process."[40]*

Indeed, it is quite inconceivable that Bakhtiar can disregard centuries worth of scholarship on the meanings of the Qur'an (because she views them as just the words of other humans), whilst simultaneously invite the common man to comment on what he 'thinks' the meanings of the words of Allah should be, all so that the translation is democratic! Her statement holds about as much logic as someone who disregards their heart-surgeons advice on his post-operative care instructions and substitutes it with the advice he got from the hospital florist downstairs!

In essence, by these statements, Bakhtiar has just given herself, and everyone else for that matter, free reign to say about the Qur'an whatever they like and to speak about the Qur'an without knowledge.

1.4.2. Speaking about the Qur'an Without Knowledge

There are a number of oft-quoted hadeeth on the prohibition of speaking about the Qur'an without knowledge. Despite the ahadeeth being weak in and of themselves, the principles and prohibitions out-lined in these hadith are correct.

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[39] - Bakhtiar attributes this statement to al Ghazzaali but sources it to an English translation that she herself edited. **"Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an"** Edited by Laleh Bakhtiar.
[40] - **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, lxix.

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: *"Whoever speaks about the Qur'an from his personal reasoning, then even if he is correct then he has still erred"*[41]

Likewise it is reported that he said, *"Whoever speaks concerning the Qur'an without any knowledge, then let him seek his place in the fire of Hell"*[42]

Bakhtiar's contradictory statements, (dismissing tafseer but encouraging her readers to chime in on the translation process) reveal an innate bias against traditional scholarship since if she considers it acceptable for all people to have an opinion on what Allah's intent is in a particular ayah, then it is only logical that the mufassiroon, and the scholars that specialize in that field should be at the fore-front of those people. However, she rejects the latter in preference to the former! What she is saying in essence is not that she has a problem with tafseer per se, her problem is only with traditional scholarly tafseer. As for tafseer that is based on one's own opinion then she welcomes it with open arms.

Regarding Bakhtiar's stance on this matter we quote Ibn An-Naqeeb who said: The meaning of making tafseer based on one's opinion or desires that are forbidden can be summed up in 5 categories:

1. Making exegesis without obtaining the sciences that would permit one to make exegesis.

2. Making exegesis of the ambiguous verses in the Qur'an that none know the meanings of except Allah.

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[41] - Reported by: **Abu Dawud** (3652), **at-Tirmidhi** (2952).
[42] - Reported by Ahmad in his **Musnad** (2069) and **at-Tirmidhi** (2950).

3. Making exegesis in accordance to a corrupt madhab, such that one makes the madhab the origin and constructs his exegesis based on it. He therefore returns to the opinion of the madhab in any way possible, even if it is weak.

4. To make exegesis stating that the intent of Allah by these words is such and such in absolute terms, without any supporting evidence.

5. Making exegesis based on one's inclination and desire.[43]

Bakhtiar appears to be guilty of a good number of Ibn Naqeeb's points. As for the points that she herself is not guilty of committing, then she is guilty of facilitating its occurrence by inviting 'all and sundry' to comment on what the meanings of the Qur'an *could* be.

There is a huge disparity between Bakhtiar's proclivity to say whatever she wants about the Qur'an and the attitude of the Companions and the early scholars in this field. We find Masrooq[44] said, *"Beware of tafseer, for it is as if you are narrating concerning Allah!"* And Ibraheem an-Nakha'ee[45] said, "Our companions would be fearful of (making) tafseer, (their) fear of it was out of reverence for it."[46]

Due to Bakhtiar's aversion to scholarly tafseer as cited above, we will present a separate list of conditions that one must fulfill to qualify as a translator of the Qur'an. This will allow us to be able to explore the relationship between the two in more detail.

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[43] - As-Suyootee, **Al-Itqaan fi Uloom ul Quran**, vol.4, 371.
[44] - d.63 A.H.
[45] - d.96 AH.
[46] - Both quotes from Ar-Roomee, **Buhooth fi usool al tafseer wa manaahijihi**, p.82-83.

1.5.   The Conditions to Qualify as a Translator of the Qur'an.

1. The translator must be a Muslim with correct Islamic beliefs (aqeedah). This is because a person who does not believe in the Divine Authorship of the Qur'an will never be able to do justice to its translation. This point was elaborated on under the section [qualities of a mufassir].

2. The translator must have knowledge of the Arabic language to a scholarly level.

3. The translator must be knowledgeable of the grammar and peculiarities of the Arabic language, and specifically the Qur'an.

4. Knowledge of Arabic grammar (nahw).

5. Knowledge of Arabic morphology (sarf).

6. Knowledge of the root structures of Arabic words (ishtiqaaq).

7. Knowledge of Arabic rhetoric, (ma'aani)

8. Knowledge of Arabic eloquence (al badee')

9. Knowledge of the styles of oratory (bayan)

10. Knowledge of the qira'aat (modes of recitation) the saheeh from the da'eef and shaadh.

11. Knowledge of the principles of the religion (usool ul deen)

12. The translator must be fluent and proficient in the language that he is translating into and be aware of all the nuances of the language.

13. The translator must be familiar with the other Islamic sciences (such as aqeedah, hadith, fiqh etc) to a degree with which he can translate the Qur'an with the proper interpretation.

14. The translation must conform to the intent of the verse, such that it is a reasonable rendering of the meanings of the original. For this, the authentic, classical interpretations of the Qur'an must be consulted.

15. Neither the translator nor the readers of the translation may believe that the translation *is* the Qur'an. The translator should include appropriate remarks on this issue, preferably in the introduction. Likewise, the translated work should not be entitled as 'The Qur'an in English' or 'A Translation of the Qur'an'. Rather such works should be entitled 'A Translation of the meanings of the Qur'an' or similar such wordings, so that it is clearly understood by the readers that the work in their hands is *not* the Qur'an. Many scholars have also stipulated that it is mandatory for the Arabic text to be written alongside the translation, so that it is mentally understood that the translation is not the actual Qur'an.[47]

Az-Zarqaani summarizes the most important conditions for the translator of the Qur'an as follows:[48]

1. The translator must be knowledgeable about the intricacies of both the languages, (the source language as well as the target language).

2. He must have detailed knowledge of the nuances and special characteristics of both languages.

3. The translated text must show fidelity to the entirety of the meanings of the source text. It must also accurately reflect the aims (maqaasid) of the Qur'an and arrive at the same conclusions. This can only be achieved if

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[47] - See: Qaadhi**, An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan**, p.350.
[48] - Az-Zarqaani**, Manaahil al 'Irfaan Fi Uloom ul Quraan**, vol.2, p.93.

the translator has a mastery over the science of usool al tafseer as well as the other sciences of the Qur'an.

What becomes apparent from comparing the list of conditions to qualify as a Mufassir and the list of conditions to qualify as a translator of the Qur'an, is that the translator of the Qur'an requires an excellent grounding in most of the sciences that the Mufassir is required to master. In addition to those sciences, he has the additional requirements in relation to the target language.

Aside from the obvious emphasis on proficiency in the languages involved, the above lists reflect the concerns of the scholars of the Qur'an from a theological point of view aside from their obvious concern regarding the accuracy of the translation. As for the scholars in the field of translation studies then they have their own concerns which can be summarized in the following points:

Nida[49] proposes that the translator meet four basic requirements in translating[50]:

1. Making sense.

2. Conveying the spirit and the manner of the original.

3. Having a natural and simple form of expression that can easily be understood.

4. Producing a similar response.

    Grice[51] adds to this that the translator should not allow what he believes to be true or false to influence the language or the tone of what he translates. This is also highlighted by Hatim and Mason[52].

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[49] -Eugene Nida was a linguist and pioneer in the fields of translation theories, with a special interest in translating sacred texts, in particular the Bible. He has authored over a dozen books on translation methodologies and is considered an authority on the subject.

[50] - Nida, **Towards a Science of Translating**, p.164.

[51] - Grice**, Further Notes on Logic and Conversation**, 1978. p.71.

[52] - Hatim and Mason, **Discourse and the Translator**, 1990, p.6.

1.6. An Evaluation of Bakhtiar's Linguistic Qualifications to Translate the Qur'an.

Naturally, when it comes to examining any translation, the first quality that one looks for in a translator is scholarship in both the source language as well as the target language. This concern is further intensified when the text being translated is a sacred text considered by billions of Muslims to be of Divine origin.

Bakhtiar informs us that she studied Arabic. Her detractors say that her proficiency was not adequate to undertake a translation of the Qur'an. We must therefore define how much Arabic is sufficient to enable one to Translate the Qur'an? And does Bakhtiar possess what is required in terms of scholarship of the Arabic language.

From the discussions presented above on the necessary requirements to be eligible to be a translator of the Qur'an, what becomes apparent is that the most obvious requirement of a translator is that he / she must have <u>mastery</u> over the source language. It is not enough that he has the ability to get the general implication of the meaning, or that he is skillful in consulting dictionaries. Rather "he must not only understand the obvious content of the message, but also the subtleties of meaning, the significant emotive values of words, and the stylistic features which determine the tenor and sentiment of the message." [53]

Mastery of the source language necessitates that the meaning intended by the source text author, in the case of the Qur'an that is Allah, is very clearly and accurately understood by the translator. In this sense, Nida[54] asserts that "if the translator is to produce an acceptable translation, he must have excellent background in the source language and at the same time must have control over the resources of

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[53] - Al-Jabari, Raed, **Reasons for the Possible Incomprehensibility of Some Verses of Three Translations of the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an into English**, 2008, p.220.
[54] - Nida, **Fascinated by Languages**, 2003, p.145.

the language into which he is translating. He cannot simply match words from a dictionary; he must in a real sense create a new linguistic form to carry the concept expressed in the source language." [55]

This explains some of the furor that surrounded Bakhtiar's translation of the Qur'an when it was first published since it had come to light that her proficiency in the Arabic language was not to the standard generally expected for a translator of a sacred text. In this regard Bakhtiar herself states:

"*As I am unlettered, so to speak, in modern Arabic, I relied upon my many years of private tutoring in classical Qur'anic Arabic grammar. It was at that time that I had become familiar with the Mu'jam al-mufahris: al-lafad al-qur'an al-karim. The Mu'jim lists every Arabic root and its derivative(s) found in the Qur'an as verbs, nouns and some particles (adverbs, propositions, conjunctions or interjections).*"[56]

It is astonishing that Bakhtiar fails to comprehend that being 'unlettered' in the Arabic language disqualifies her from being a 'translator of the Qur'an' even if she doesn't mean that in a literal sense. Her assumption that to receive private tutoring in the language by an unnamed individual makes her eligible to translate the Book of Allah is baffling. What undermines her linguistic competence further is that we are not even made privy to the calibre or the credentials of her tutor, nor are we informed about how regular her private lessons were.

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[55] -Also see: Al-Jabari, Raed**, Reasons for the Possible Incomprehensibility of Some Verses of Three Translations of the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an into English,** 2008, p.220.
[56] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiv.

Based on Bakhtiar's own self-evaluation, it is clear that whatever amount of private tuition she received, she did not succeed in reaching the minimum level that would be necessary to be awarded any academic level of recognition or certification in the Arabic language. Bakhtiar was a student of Psychology at Tehran University (which was taught in English) for a number of years and could easily have been awarded some formal qualifications in the Arabic Language had her level been advanced enough to attain this. Alas, Bakhtiar remained 'unlettered' in the Arabic Language, as she herself admits, yet still considered herself eligible to translate the sacred text of Islam, the Book of Allah, from a language that she herself acknowledges she is not fully learned in, into the English Language!

It must be noted that Bakhtiar does make a substantial change to her own account of how much Arabic she has studied in subsequent editions of her work. Perhaps this could be the result of receiving criticism quite publicly,[57] for embarking on a project that she perhaps was not qualified for. Bakhtiar amends her version of events in later editions of her translation, substantially augmenting the depth of her study. The initial description of her studies, as mentioned in the preface of her 2007 edition reads as follows:

"As I am unlettered, so to speak, in modern Arabic, <u>I relied upon my many years of private tutoring in classical Qur'anic Arabic grammar.</u>" [58]

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[57] - Mohammad Ashraf, Head of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) in Canada stated that his organization would not sell Bakhtiar's translation in its bookstores due in part to Bakhtiar not being qualified or having received any training in the Arabic Language from an institution properly accredited to dispense the requisite expertise to translate the Qur'an. The Toronto Star: 21 October 2007.

[58] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiv.

This statement is furnished with an added footnote by Bakhtiar stating that she studied classical Arabic at Tehran University in a Ph.D. program, and later with a private tutor for three years. What she does not reveal is that the Ph.D. program was taught purely in the <u>English Language in the field of Psychology</u>! Instead she allows her readers to presume that she has studied Arabic Language to doctorate level!

By 2011 however when she publishes the next edition of her 'Concordance[59] of the Sublime Qur'an', she changes her earlier statement, quoted above, to the following:

"*As I am unlettered, so to speak, in modern Arabic, <u>I relied upon my many years of studying classical Arabic grammar at Tehran University and on private classes with an Egyptian Professor of Arabic</u>.*"[60]

We see that by 2011, Bakhtiar is no longer resorting to small footnotes to give the illusion of being more learned in the Arabic language, rather she has decided to put it in the main body of her preface. One cannot help but ask that if Bakhtiar really had studied Classical Arabic Grammar in a Ph.D. program from Tehran University, why would she limit the description of her Arabic language studies in her original preface of her first edition of 'The Sublime Qur'an' to only state 'sessions with a private tutor' and not mention this well-regarded qualification from Tehran University in the main body of her 2007 publication?

It is a commonly understood phenomenon, that if a qualified neuro-surgeon for example, was writing a book on neuro-surgery, he would not, in his preface, describe his studies by saying I have studied Biology at High School or I have received private

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[59] - A concordance, according to Samuel Johnson, is "a book which shows in how many texts of scripture any word occurs." -Kassis, A Concordance of the Qur'an, University of California Press, 1983, xx.
[60] - **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, p.lxix

tutoring in the field of Biology and add his greater qualification in a small footnote in later editions of his book.

One may argue that Bakhtiar may have reached a scholarly level in the Arabic language through her sessions with a private tutor, despite not having any formal qualifications in the field, however this is unlikely to be the case for the above-mentioned reasons. Her lack of Arabic knowledge is also apparent throughout the main body of her translation, which we will discuss in more detail in the forth-coming pages.

Bakhtiar's lack of grounding and scholarship in the Arabic language is highly problematic since, as Abdul Raof explains, "the Qur'an translator does not only need a sound linguistic competence in both Arabic and English but also an advanced knowledge in Arabic syntax and rhetoric in order to appreciate the complex linguistic and rhetorical patterns of Qur'anic structures."[61] This is something that goes totally amiss in Bakhtiar's work due to her limitations in the language, and thus we are presented with a very literal dictionary-reliant translation that is littered with errors.

1.7. Examples of Bakhtiar's Lack of Knowledge in the Required Languages and its Repercussions.

Undeniably, the biggest indictment against Bakhtiar's qualifications in the Arabic language is her translation itself, even a cursory browse through it reveals a rendering which it is littered with errors throughout. Since it would be impossible to list all the linguistic errors in translation that Bakhtiar makes, due to the high frequency with

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[61] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse, Texture and Exegesis**. p.2.

which they appear throughout her work, I have selected just a few of these examples here, along with a detailed discussion on the repercussions of Bakhtiar's errors. The samples I have chosen to present, each demonstrate different aspects of the linguistic inaptitude that Bakhtiar manifests throughout the course of her translation.

1.7.1. Bakhtiar's Inaptitude and Lack of Proficiency in the Basics of Arabic Grammar:

Bakhtiar's inaptitude and lack of proficiency in the basics of Arabic grammar is clearly demonstrated in Bakhtiar's translation of the ayah:

$$﴿فَأَجَاءَهَا ٱلْمَخَاضُ إِلَىٰ جِذْعِ ٱلنَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَٰلَيْتَنِى مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَٰذَا وَكُنتُ نَسْيًا مَّنسِيًّا﴾^{62}$$

Bakhtiar translates the ayah as follows:

And the birth pangs <u>surprised her</u> at the trunk of a date palm

tree. She said: O would that I had died before this and I had been

one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing![63]

Bakhtiar does not appear to recognize that the letter [ف] in [فَأَجَاءَهَا] is actually

a particle (harf) that denotes consequence, which in both Qur'anic Arabic as well as modern Arabic, attaches itself to the subsequent verb, the verb in this case being [أَجَاءَ]. So [فَأَجَاءَهَا] is actually a combination of: [ف] + [أَجَاءَ] + [هَا] = [فَأَجَاءَهَا].

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[62] - Al Qur'an: 19:23.
[63] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, 19:23.

Bakhtiar clearly doesn't seem to grasp that the verb [أَجَآءَ] comes from the root word

[ج-ي -ء] [to come]. with a perfect tense of [جاء] which means [he came]. [أَجَآءَ]

which is form IV of the verb therefore means [to drive something or someone in a

particular direction]. Here in the perfect tense [فَأَجَآءَهَا] means 'and drove her'.

From the above basic explanation, we understand that the meaning of the ayah

should simply be *'And the pangs of child-birth <u>drove her</u> to the trunk of a date palm

tree'*. Bakhtiar misses this completely and confuses the word [فَأَجَآءَهَا] with the word

[فَجَأَ] which means [surprised] from the root [ف-ج-أ] She therefore translates it *as

"And the birth pangs surprised her at the trunk of a date palm tree."*

Those who are familiar with basic Arabic grammar will appreciate that

Bakhtiar's mistake is at a very elemental level[64] since it demonstrates a gaping hole in

her knowledge of not only Arabic morphology (sarf), which informs the reader about

the roots of the verbs, but also of Arabic grammar itself (nahw), since she fails to

distinguish between a verb and a particle. If we look at the translations presented by

other well-known Qur'an translators, we find them arriving at the correct rendering

quite effortlessly:[65]

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[64] - For Bakhtiar to be able to err here in the way that she has, it would necessitate that she was not
aware that the [أ] before the [ج] in the word [أَجَآءَ] would render it impossible for the word to be from
the root [ف-ج-أ] meaning to surprise. Likewise, it would necessitate that she could not comprehend the
grammatical construction of the ayah, despite it being simple, nor was she able to differentiate between
a particle and verb.

[65] -It is interesting to note that only Arberry makes the same mistake as Bakhtiar on the meaning of this
ayah. A detailed discussion on the allegations of plagiarism against Bakhtiar has been presented in
Chapter 3.6 of this paper.

Sahih International: And the pains of childbirth <u>drove her</u> to the trunk of a palm tree.[66]

Pickthall: And the pangs of childbirth <u>drove her</u> unto the trunk of the palm-tree.[67]

Yusuf Ali: And the pains of childbirth <u>drove her</u> to the trunk of a palm-tree.[68]

Bakhtiar's mistranslation of ayah [19:23] above serves as an example of her not fulfilling four of as-Suyooti's conditions for qualifying to be a mufassir:

- Knowledge of the Arabic language,

- Knowledge of Arabic grammar (nahw),

- Knowledge of morphology (sarf)

- Knowledge of root structures (ishtiqaaq).

These conditions are also required to qualify to be a translator of the Qur'an, as explained earlier. Bakhtiar's rendering of [19:23] is just one example demonstrating Bakhtiar's lack of knowledge in all of the above four fields.

1.7.2. Bakhtiar's Inaptitude to Implement the Basics of Usool at-Tafseer in her Translation and its Effects.

The case-study presented in this section demonstrates either Bakhtiar's disregard, or her ignorance for one of the most well-known principles of usool al tafseer: 'To give precedence to the Shar'ee meaning of a word in the Qur'an over its linguistic meaning unless a 'qareena' (evidence) indicates otherwise'. Disregarding this

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[66] - Umm Muhammad, **The Quran**, Saheeh International, [19:23].
[67] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [19:23].
[68] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [19:23].

principle, Bakhtiar chooses to translate 'kufr' and all its derivatives as 'ingratitude' based on its linguistic meaning instead of 'disbelief' which is its shar'ee meaning throughout the majority of her translation.[69]

This principle which she fails to implement, necessitates that when there occurs a word or phrase in the Qur'an that possesses different linguistic meanings and it also possesses a specific Shar'ee meaning (Lughawee vs shar'ee meanings), in general the shar'ee meaning is given precedence, unless there is an evidence, (qareena) to suggest otherwise. This is because the purpose of the Qur'an's revelation was to explain the shari'ah of Islam and not to explain the Arabic language.

To give an example, the Arabic word 'Salaat' linguistically means a verbal invocation (also known in Arabic as du'aa). However, in its shar'iah connotation, the word implies a known set of actions and movements performed at specific times of the day, or for specific occasions. [70]

When Bakhtiar disregards this principle and chooses to translate the word 'kufr' as 'ingratitude' based on its linguistic meaning instead of 'disbelief', which is its shar'ee meaning, she explains her reasoning saying:

> *"Most English translations use the verb "to disbelieve" or "to be an infidel" to translate the word kufr.... In the present translation the more inclusive[71] viable terminology is used, namely, "to be ungrateful."[72]*

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[69] - The derivatives of the word [k-f-r], in a few numbered ayaat of the Qur'an, do indeed mean 'ingratitude' rather than 'disbelief' but this meaning is always established due to the presence of a 'qareena' that indicates that the linguistic meaning of 'ingratitude' should take precedence over the shar'ee meaning of 'disbelief'. Examples of such ayaat are: [2:152], [27:40], [31:12], [76:3], [80:17]. There are around 20 such ayaat in the Qur'an. The remaining 500+ ayaat with the derivatives of the word [k-f-r] all mean 'disbelief' according to the shar'ee meaning and it is these 500+ instances that we are discussing in this section of the paper since they have mostly been mistranslated by Bakhtiar as 'ingratitude'.

[70] - See: Qaadhi, **An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan**, p.311.

[71] - I present a detailed discussion addressing Bakhtiar's claim that by translating k-f-r as 'ingratitude' she is actually making Islam less inclusive rather than more inclusive in Chapter 2 of this paper.

[72] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvii.

Bakhtiar's translation of [k-f-r] as 'ingratitide' throughout most of the Qur'an is highly problematic for many reasons,[73] amongst which are:

- It threatens those who are 'ungrateful' with the Hellfire

- It allows war with those who are 'ungrateful'.

- It includes most of mankind with the anger of Allah, since most of mankind are said to be 'ungrateful' to their Lord to some degree.

- It insinuates that those 'who are ungrateful' worship other gods other than Allah and are upon a different deen [religion], as demonstrated by her translation of soorah al kaafiroon:

﴿قُلْ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلْكَٰفِرُونَ لَآ أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ وَلَآ أَنَا۠ عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدتُّمْ وَلَآ أَنتُمْ عَٰبِدُونَ مَآ أَعْبُدُ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ﴾[74]

"Say: O ones who are ungrateful! I worship not what you worship; and you are not ones who worship what I worship. And I am not one who worships what you worshipped. And you are not ones who worship what I worship. For you is your way of life, and for me is my way of life."[75]

Whilst it might be said that most of mankind is ungrateful to Allah to some degree for His blessings upon them, that does not necessitate in any way that every 'ingrate' is now worshipping other than Allah and is following a path other than Islam. Technically Bakhtiar has 'excommunicated' every 'ungrateful' person, Muslim or Non-Muslim through her irresponsible choice of rendering.

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[73] - The evidences supporting these points are presented in full in Chapter 2 Section [2.1.4.] of this paper, under the heading "Inclusive Language".
[74] - **Al Qur'an**, [109:1-6].
[75] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [109:1-6], p.599.

What makes matters worse is that although 'ingratitude' is clearly Bakhtiar's translation of choice for the word 'kufr' and its derivatives, she seems to revert back to the traditional translation of 'disbelief' when she feels like it, merely on a whim, in different places in the Qur'an. Using her concordance[76] I meticulously followed Bakhtiar's translations through all the different places in the Qur'an where she had to translate a derivative of [k-f-r]. Below are my findings:

The triliteral root kāf fā rā (ك ف ر) occurs 525 times in the Qur'an, in 14 derived forms[77]:

- 289 times as the form I verb kafara (كَفَرَ)

- 14 times as the form II verb kaffara (كَفَّرَ)

- once as the form IV verb akfara (أَكْفَرَ)

- 27 times as the noun kāfir (كَافِر)

- once as the noun kāfūr (كَافُور)

- five times as the nominal kaffār (كَفَّار)

- four times as the noun kaffārat (كَفَّرَة)

- 37 times as the noun kufʻr (كُفْر)

- once as the noun kufʻrān (كُفْرَان)

- three times as the noun kufūr (كُفُور)

- 12 times as the nominal kafūr (كَفُور)

- once as the noun kawāfir (كَوَافِر)

- 129 times as the active participle kāfirūn (كَافِرُون)

- once as the active participle kāfirat (كَافِرَة)

[76] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of The Sublime Qur'an,** pp.436-441.
[77] - See: **The Qur'anic Arabic Corpus**, [k-f-r].

Out of the above 14 forms, the following three forms must be excluded from the study since it is agreed upon by Arabic linguists that these terms do not mean 'disbelief':

1. Kaffarah, (كفّرة)which appears four times

2. Kaffaarah, yukfiru and kaffir, (كفّارة، يكفِر، كفِّر) which together appear fourteen times.

3. Kufraan (كفران) which appears once

This leaves us with [k-f-r] and its derivatives being mentioned in the Qur'an 506 times when they refer to 'kufr' as disbelief. Bakhtiar seems to <u>randomly</u> select 48 of these ayaat from the Qur'an and revert the rendering to one of the derivations of 'disbelief'. The rest of the 458 places she chooses to maintain her preferred translation of the word: ingratitude.

There is no evidence nor logic presented for Bakhtiar's choices, which seem to be made on a whim. Even ayaat with an obvious connotation of disbelief like sooratul Kaafiroon are translated as 'ungrateful ones',

As I worked my way through the list of 500+ ayaat that contained derivatives of the word 'kufr' in Bakhtiar's translation, I kept searching for a methodology, a pattern in the context, anything that would prove that there was indeed some logic or reason, behind why she would relentlessly insist on translating 'kufr' as 'ingratitude' but then randomly choose to revert her rendering back to 'disbelief' in a few selected places for no apparent reason. I had, at the time, accepted the scientific methodology hype that was mentioned in her preface at face value, and was trying to give Bakhtiar the benefit of the doubt. The longer I followed through with the study the more apparent

it became that the few places she translated 'kufr' as 'disbelief' really were random happenings, almost accidental in nature, since the same ayah structure and context would be translated as 'ingratitude' once again a little further down in her translation.

What made matters worse was when I arrived at Bakhtiar's translation of the following ayah:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا ٱلسَّمَآءَ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَٰطِلًا ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَوَيْلٌ لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ مِنَ ٱلنَّارِ﴾ [78]

"And We created not the heaven and the earth and whatever is between

the two in falsehood. That is the opinion of <u>those who were ungrateful</u>.

Then, woe to <u>those who disbelieved</u> in the fire!" [79]

Here was the term [ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ] mentioned twice referring to the same set of

people both times, being translated the first time as "*<u>those who were ungrateful</u>*" and the second time as *"<u>those who disbelieved</u>"*. There did not appear to be any contextual evidence to justify the change between her two renderings within the same ayah. I was left wondering whether perhaps her 'scientific system' was not so 'scientific' and it really was just based on a random selection of translations by Bakhtiar.

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[78] - **Al Qur'an**, [38:27].
[79] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [38:27].

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In a final attempt to resolve whether Bakhtiar had any linguistic or theological system in place or whether it was just a haphazard set of translations based on a whim, I decided to produce a set of 3 simple rules for Bakhtiar, based on the most basic principles of fiqh and tafseer, to test if there had been any context consideration, or any meaningful consideration at all for that matter, in Bakhtiar's process of translating. The rules were simple and would serve to exonerate her from being a random haphazard translator using a self-contradictory methodology of translation.

The rules were as follows[80]:

1.) Any ayaat speaking about the 'kuffar', that refers to them using a derivative of the word 'KUFR' that continues on to clearly threaten them with everlasting damnation in the Fire of Hell would warrant a translation of 'disbelievers', rather than 'those who are ungrateful'

2.) Any ayaat that refers to the people with a derivative of the word kufr and then goes onto define the kufr in no uncertain terms as disbelief (like worship of gods other than Allah) must warrant a translation of 'disbelief' instead of 'ingratitude'.

3.) Any ayaat that combine the above two rules in one place, (that they are threatened with the hellfire *and* their clear act of disbelief is defined within the ayaat itself) whilst referring to the people with a derivative of the term KUFR must warrant a translation of 'disbelief' and not 'ingratitude'.

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[80] - The rules, despite being based on the principles of usool ul fiqh, are also logical in application, so would normally be implemented by any translator who had bothered to take context and meaning into consideration, even if he does not recognize the importance of usool ul fiqh.

These rules are obvious in their meanings and simple in application. My results can be presented in the form of a single set of ayaat along with its translation:

﴿أَلْقِيَا فِى جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ - مَّنَّـعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ مُّرِيبٍ - الَّذِى جَعَلَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَـهاً ءَاخَرَ فَأَلْقِيَـهُ فِى الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيدِ﴾[81]

"Cast into hell every stubborn ingrate, who delays the good, one who exceeds the limits, one who is in grave doubt, he who made another god with God! Then, cast him into the severe punishment!"[82]

Despite the presence of all the above qaraa'in (contextual evidences) indicating 'Kuffaar' here means 'disbeliever' Bakhtiar still makes the non-sensical decision to translate it as 'ingrate'. It is deeply regrettably that Bakhtiar does not seem to notice any of the 'qaraa'in' (contextual evidences) that would aid her in arriving at the correct translation for the word 'kuffaar' in the above ayaat.

This single set of ayaat combines the above rules:

- It refers to the subject as 'kuffaar'

- It informs them that they will be the inhabitants of the Fire of Hell.

- It defines their 'KUFR' by stating an action that equates with clear 'kufr' in no uncertain terms: "*he who made another god with God!*".

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[81] - **Al Qur'an**, [50:24].
[82] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [50:24].

By insisting on still translating the word 'kuffaar' in this ayah as 'ingrates' instead of 'disbelievers', Bakhtiar convicts herself of:

- A haphazard non-methodical approach to translation

- Ignorance of the basic usool of tafseer needed to understand the intent of the ayah.

- Operating with total disregard if not contempt for the context of the ayah.
- Speaking about the Book of Allah without knowledge.

These results in and of themselves are sufficient to bring Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an into serious question.

1.7.3. Bakhtiar's Inaptitude to Fluently Communicate Meanings in the English Language:

The third set of samples I would like to present from Bakhtiar's translation concerns her inaptitude to fluently convey the message of the Qur'an in the target language, English. For the sake of clarity, I will not be discussing the accuracy of her translation from a theological sense in this section, nor its fidelity to the original message in the source language as we have done with the previous two examples. The purpose of presenting these particular samples is to explore only whether Bakhtiar's delivery in the English language is adequate. Below is a selection of ayaat with Bakhtiar's renderings presented for this purpose:

i. **Bakhtiar's rendering of the Qur'anic ayah: [19:43]:**

﴿يَٰٓأَبَتِ إِنِّى قَدۡ جَآءَنِى مِنَ ٱلۡعِلۡمِ مَا لَمۡ يَأۡتِكَ ﴾[83]

"O my father! Truly, I, there drew near me of the knowledge of what approaches you not."[84]

I do not consider it worthwhile providing commentary on the inadequacy of Bakhtiar's above rendering since it is abundantly apparent to anyone who is fluent in the English language that Bakhtiar's translation here is simply 'gibberish'.

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[83] - **Al Qur'an**, [19:43].
[84] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an,** [19:43].

For the sake of comparison, I will provide sample translations from three other well-known English translators of the Quran:

Saheeh International: "O my father, indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you."[85]

 Hilali / Khan: "O my father! Verily! There has come to me of knowledge that which came not unto you."[86]

Pickthall: O my father! Lo! there hath come unto me of knowledge that which came not unto thee."[87]

Umm Muhammad's translation here is simple and to the point, and the structure flows. The other translators also provide a straight-forward translation of the meaning. In reality it is not a complex ayah to translate. It is not clear how Bakhtiar ends up producing such an unintelligible string of words. In any case, her rendering certainly calls into question her ability to convey meanings from one language into another.

ii.   Bakhtiar's rendering of the Qur'anic ayah: [60:11]:

﴿وَإِن فَاتَكُمْ شَىْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَٰجِكُمْ إِلَى ٱلْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَـَٔاتُوا۟ ٱلَّذِينَ ذَهَبَتْ أَزْوَٰجُهُم مِّثْلَ مَآ أَنفَقُوا۟ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِىٓ أَنتُم بِهِۦ مُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ [88]

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[85] - Umm Muhammad, **The Quran**, Saheeh International, [19:43].
[86] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [19;43].
[87] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an,** [19:43].
[88] - Al Qur'an, [60:11].

"And if any slipped away from you of your spouses to the ones who are

ungrateful, then, you retaliated and give the like to whose spouses went

of what they (m) spent. And be Godfearing of God in Whom you are ones

who believe."[89]

Again, the above rendering by Bakhtiar would not be considered acceptable in the English language since the meaning is simply incomprehensible. Hilali & Khan, Yusuf Ali and Umm Muhammad on the other hand translated the above ayah as:

Hilali & Khan: "And if any of your wives have gone from you to the disbelievers, and you have an accession (by the coming over of a woman from the other side), then pay to those whose wives have gone, the equivalent of what they had spent (on their Mahr). And fear Allah in Whom you believe." [90] [91]

Yusuf Ali: And if any of your wives deserts you to the Unbelievers, and ye have an accession (by the coming over of a woman from the other side), then pay to those whose wives have deserted the equivalent of what they had spent (on their dower). And fear Allah, in Whom ye believe.[92]

Saheeh International: And if you have lost any of your wives to the disbelievers and you subsequently obtain [something], then give those whose wives have gone the equivalent of what they had spent. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers.[93]

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[89] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [60:11].
[90] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, 60:11.
[91] - The rendering by Hilali and Khan also serves as a strong argument for augmenting the translation with parenthesis or footnotes when the meaning is not clear from a literal translation.
[92] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an,** [60:11].
[93] - Umm Muhammad, **The Quran**, Saheeh International, [60:11].

Each of the above three renderings are all in good flowing English, in stark contrast with what Bakhtiar presents for the same ayah.

iii. Bakhtiar's rendering of the Qur'anic ayah: [74:14]:

﴿وَمَهَّدتُّ لَهُۥ تَمۡهِيدَا﴾ [94]

"And I made smooth for him, a making smooth"

This 'literal translation' is totally non-sensical in the English language and provides no meaning whatsoever. It is yet another example of Bakhtiar lacking the basic skills of sentence construction in the English language and being able to transmit the meanings effectively from Arabic into English to provide an intelligible rendering.

The same ayah has been translated with a much greater level of fluency by other translators:

Sahih International: And spread [everything] before him, easing [his life].[95]

Yusuf Ali: To whom I made (life) smooth and comfortable![96]

Hilali & Khan: And made life smooth and comfortable for him![97]

iv. Bakhtiar's rendering of [75:31]:

﴿فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ﴾ [98]

"for he established not the true nor invoked blessings"[99]

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[94] - Al Qur'an, [74:14].
[95] - Umm Muhammad, **The Quran**, Saheeh International, [74:14].
[96] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an,** [74:14].
[97] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an,** [74:14].
[98] - **Al Qur'an**, [75:31].
[99] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an,** [75:31].

This is probably one of the simplest ayaat that one can be faced with when translating the Qur'an, both in terms of its straight-forward grammatical structure as well as its very simple vocabulary. It is regrettable that when one looks to Bakhtiar's rendering, one cannot even decipher what she is trying to say here. What does it mean to "*establish not the 'true'*"? And why translate the verb [صَلَّى] which means 'to pray' as 'invoke blessings'?

Other Qur'an translators have simply translated the ayah as follows:

Sahih International: "And [the disbeliever] had not believed, nor had he prayed."[100]

Hilali & Khan: "So he (the disbeliever) neither believed (in this Qur'an) nor prayed!"[101]

Yusuf Ali: So he gave nothing in charity, nor did he pray![102]

Bakhtiar's poor English language skills are probably the most unexpected disappointment with regards to her translation. Those who purchase Bakhtiar's translation no doubt hope for a fluid translation written in an eloquent style. They will most likely have to continue on with their search for such a translation.

Bakhtiar's defenders may contend that given that she had chosen the methodology of 'literal translation', perhaps readability was never her main focus, rather it was the 'internal consistency and reliability' that she was prioritizing and hence her English language skills cannot be judged in a field where she herself chose not to make it the priority.

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[100] - Umm Muhammad, **The Quran**, Saheeh International, [75:31].
[101] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [75:31].
[102] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, [75:31].

To this we would reply with the following three points:

1. This excuse is invalid in Bakhtiar's case, since she herself concedes in the introduction to her translation:

   "When you translate from an original text into a target language, <u>you have to go with the rules of the target language</u>."[103]

   This proves without a shadow of a doubt that the problem does not lie in Bakhtiar's understanding of the importance of the English being comprehendible, since she herself emphasizes this point. The problem lies in her inability to deliver on this point.

2. Even if Bakhtiar had not acknowledged the importance of the translation being clear and intelligible such that it makes sense to the reader, this is something that basic logic dictates.

3. The purpose of *any* translation is for the reader to understand the message that he could not understand in the target language. If the reader still cannot understand the message, then what purpose did the translation serve?

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[103] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xxxv.

1.7.4. Evaluating Bakhtiar's Eligibility to Translate the Qur'an Based on the Lowest Level of Requirements Instead of the Highest Level or the Ideal.

There may be those who argue that the bar has been set too high for Qur'an translators, and that it is rare to find some-one who has good grounding in both the sciences required of the Mufassir, as well as enjoying an excellent command of the two languages involved in Qur'an translation. They may feel that it is unfair to hold Bakhtiar up to such high standards. The four sample renderings from Bakhtiar's translation, quoted in section [1.7.3] is for them since it demonstrates her inability to convey the message in an intelligible form, which is undeniably the most basic requirement of any type of translation. No one can possibly argue that the ability to render the ayaat of the Qur'an into <u>coherent English</u> is not an absolutely critical skill for the Qur'an translator.

Likewise, the other two case-studies from Bakhtiar's translation in sections [1.7.1.] and [1.7.2.], each focus on qualities that are indisputably essential for a translator of the Qur'an, such as proficiency in the Arabic language and the ability to select the correct translation for words like [kufr] based on the basics of usool ul tafseer.

 The glaring disparity between Bakhtiar's level of competence in the Arabic language and that of other well-known Qur'an translators is without doubt, the reason for the public criticism she has received. Her lack of proficiency in the Arabic language has been cited by her detractors as the main reason for their questioning of her qualifications to under-take the mammoth task of translating the Qur'an. Bakhtiar however, seems oblivious of her inaptitude and dismissive of their criticism. Instead, she prefers to view their denunciation of her translation as a gender-biased phenomenon.[104] Her suggestion is without merit since the translation published by Saheeh International,

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[104] - See: Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xl.

ten years prior to Bakhtiar's translation, was also the work of a woman, as Bakhtiar herself concedes elsewhere in her preface.[105]

The studies presented in section [1.7.] confirm that the 'finished product' of Bakhtiar's translation itself is a testament to the following:

1. Bakhtiar does <u>not</u> possess sufficient grounding in the Arabic grammar to accurately translate the Qur'an.

2. Bakhtiar's disregard (or ignorance) of usool al tafseer has been a major factor in her inaccurate translations of hundreds of ayaat in the Qur'an as detailed in the case study on [kufr].

3. Bakhtiar does not possess the competence required in the English language to deliver an intelligible translation.

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[105] - Bakhtiar repeatedly claims that her translation is the "first critical English translation of the Qur'an by a woman." She dismisses Umm Muhammad's translation published by Saheeh International, (which was first published in 1997 and hence preceded hers by a decade) due to the translator's name being misprinted as 'Ummat Muhammad' instead of 'Umm Muhammad' on certain editions which Bakhtiar does not identify.

1.8. The Significance of the Translator's Integrity in Translation: A Critical Study of Bakhtiar's Academic Integrity.

What remains to be discussed when we evaluate Bakhtiar in her role as a translator of the Qur'an, is the moral and ethical aspects which are alluded to in the lists of necessary qualities of a translator of the Qur'an. This is because translation cannot be seen as a single-faceted endeavor, rather it involves three components: the original text, the translator and the target text. Without doubt, the translator is the most critical component that brings the other two together. This is because he/she assumes a double identity, that of the 'receptor' and of the 'sender'. The translator therefore, plays an indispensable and irreplaceable role in any translation process, decoding the words and meanings and then attempting to transmit and convey those words according to the original author's intent.[106]

It is vital for any translator therefore, to show absolute fidelity to the meanings of the source text regardless of personal bias and ideological or doctrinal inclinations. It is also vital for the translator of the Qur'an to be considered as someone of high personal integrity so that the reader feels that he/she can be trusted not to exploit their position as 'mediator' between the author of the text (Allah) and the receptors of the translation.

In this section we will examine a selection of Bakhtiar's renderings to provide clarity on this serious matter as well as present a discussion on the allegations of plagiarism made against her by some well-known commentators on Qur'anic translations.

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[106] -Al-Jabari, Raed, **Reasons for the Possible Incomprehensibility of Some Verses of Three Translations of the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an into English**, 2008, p.219.

1.8.1. Interpolation of Doctrinal or Ideological Bias into the Text of the Translation.

From the distinguishing features of Bakhtiar's translation is the assurance she gives her readers that the translation she is presenting is *"free from any transient, denominational or doctrinal bias."[107]* She expounds on this claim by explaining the complex scientific methodology she has developed based on the 'Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an' that she had previously compiled. It is due to her concordance-based translation methodology, Bakhtiar assures us, that her translation does not allow for the infiltration of the personal opinions of the translator as other Qur'an translations seem to do. We will explore these claims in some detail in this section.

Through the course of this study numerous examples were found in 'The Sublime Qur'an' of words that Bakhtiar had 'translated' that are not a correct linguistic fit, and yet Bakhtiar seems to insist on using these questionable substitutes without any explanation. Many of these renderings have no linguistic connection to the word in the source language whatsoever. Furthermore, the choice of translation chosen by Bakhtiar in these instances have a significant effect on the meaning of the ayah changing it completely. It is perplexing why Bakhtiar, as a translator and as an academic who should aspire to adhere to the principles of academic integrity, would believe it is acceptable to make such huge changes to the meaning of the Book of Allah.

Below is a sample of some of Bakhtiar's unorthodox translations:

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[107] - Bakhtiar, The Sublime Qur'an, xvi.

1.8.1.1. Bakhtiar's translation of [فتى]

Bakhtiar chooses to translate the word [فتى] as "spiritual warrior" instead of 'boy', or 'young servant' in the following ayah

$$﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّى أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُباً﴾^{108}$$

Mention when Moses said to his spiritual warrior: I will not quit until I reach the place of meeting of the two seas even if I go on for many years.[109]

The word [فتى] appears in the seven other places in the Qur'an, Bakhtiar insists on persevering with her peculiar choice of translation in all of these ayaat. At first glance she seems to have made a linguistic error by assuming that the meaning of fata, ordinarily translated as 'boy' or 'young male servant,' is more to do with 'futuwwa' (chivalry and warriors). Yet even if we allow her this huge linguistic error, that still would not explain the basis for her inserting the extra word 'spiritual' into the translation and thereby translating 'fata' as 'spiritual warrior'.

I read through over a dozen different tafseers[110] of the eight ayaat containing the word [فتى] to see where she got this interpretation from but did not find anything to support her choices.

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[108] - **Al Qur'an**, [18:60].

[109] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [18:60], p.280.

[110] - The books of tafseer referred to here are:

جامع البيان عن تأويل القرآن، محمد بن جرير الطبري المتوفي عام 310 هـ

What was more alarming, was that the word 'spiritual' was not in italics in Bakhtiar's book, despite italicization being a translation tool she had vowed in her preface to utilize when adding extra words into the text of her translation that are not present in the Arabic original. An example of this is her usage of italics for the word *"Mention"* in the above ayah.

Bakhtiar's decision to not put 'spiritual' in italics caused me to direct my research away from the books of tafseer or classical Arabic language and more towards Bakhtiar's personal beliefs, and that is where I finally found the answers to the puzzle regarding her questionable choice of the words "spiritual warrior" to translate 'fata':

Before Bakhtiar ever tried her hand at translating the Qur'an, she was a prolific writer in the field of Sufism, with a special interest in 'spiritual war' or 'spiritual chivalry'. Amongst her works is a book she published in 2004, over a decade before the publication of her translation of the Qur'an, entitled: 'Moral Healer's Handbook: The Psychology of Spiritual Chivalry' available on Amazon[111] and elsewhere. Her brief biography on the website where her book is being sold mentions: "Through the works on psychology she (Bakhtiar) has become the leading authority on the Sufi origins of the

مفردات القرآن، الراغب الأصفهاني المتوفي عام 502 هـ
معالم التنزيل، لأبي محمد الحسن بن مسعود البغوي المتوفي عام 510 هـ.
المحرر الوجيز في تفسير الكتاب العزيز، لأبي محمد عبد الحق بن غالب بن عطية المتوفي بعد عام 541 هـ
الجامع لأحكام القرآن، الإمام القرطبي المتوفى سنة 671 هـ
تفسير القرآن العظيم، لأبي الفداء إسماعيل بن عمر ابن كثير المتوفي عام 774 هـ.
الجواهر الحسان في تفسير القرآن، لأبي زيد عبد الرحمن بن محمد الثعالبي المتوفي عام 786 هـ.
الدر المنثور في التفسير بالمأثور، الحافظ جلال الدين بن أبي بكر عبد الرحمن السيوطي المتوفي عام 911 هـ.
فتح القدير، الجامع بين فَنَّي الرواية والدراية من علم التفسير، محمد بن علي الشوكاني المتوفي عام 1250هـ
فتح البيان في مقاصد القرآن، محمد صديق حسن خان المتوفى: 1307هـ
محاسن التأويل، محمد جمال الدين بن محمد سعيد بن قاسم الحلاق القاسمي المتوفى: 1332هـ
تفسير القرآن الحكيم (تفسير المنار)، محمد رشيد بن علي رضا المتوفى: 1354هـ
تحرير المعنى السديد وتنوير العقل الجديد من تفسير الكتاب المجيد، محمد الطاهر بن عاشور التونسي المتوفى: 1393هـ
أضواء البيان في إيضاح القرآن بالقرآن، محمد الأمين بن محمد المختار الشنقيطي المتوفي عام 1405هـ
[111] - https://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/search?index=books&linkCode=qs&keywords=9781871031393.

Enneagram <u>as well as the psychology of spiritual chivalry (futuwwa, javanmardi)</u>."[112]

Bakhtiar re-enforces this point by stating in her introduction:

"What might help those who are sincere in His way of life to join together to overcome the inadvertent mistakes made by the commentators and interpreters of the Qur'an in the past? One way would be for the human self to struggle (jihad) to attain the highest human perfection possible. This struggle, known as the greater struggle, (jihad al-akbar), the goal of which is moral healing... Such a person is known as a spiritual advocate or fata for the male in Arabic and fata for the female in Arabic or javanmard for either sex in Turkish, Urdu and Persian."[113]

No doubt Bakhtiar, being a leading authority in the field of 'futuwwa' or 'javanmardi' as stated in the biography published with her books, must have very deep-rooted beliefs on the topic of spiritual warriors and spiritual chivalry. However, to insert these fringe beliefs into the translation of the Book of Allah in such a shameless manner is unethical and inexcusable. She provides no explanation for this interpretation despite promising the reader that the catalyst for her embarking on the 'band-wagon' of translating the Qur'an was to finally provide a translation free of all personal doctrinal views. We can state quite clearly that based on her translation of the eight ayaat containing the word 'fata' Bakhtiar has failed to deliver on her promise.

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[112] https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Moral_Healer_s_Handbook.html?id=j4wOAAAACAAJ&redir_esc=y

[113] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xxxvi.

1.8.1.2. Bakhtiar's translation of [حصورا]

Bakhtiar arbitrarily chooses to translate the word "حصور" (Hasur) that

describes the Prophet Yahya in soorah Aal-Imran as the *'Concealer of*

Secrets'[114] Her translation of the ayah is as follows:

﴿أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَى مُصَدِّقاً بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّلِحِينَ﴾[115]

*"God gives **you** good tidings of Yahya – one who establishes the Word of God*

as true – a chief and <u>concealer of secrets</u> and a Prophet

among the ones in accord with morality."[116]

Although there is nothing under the root 'H-S-R' that would suggest it means

anything other than 'one who restrains himself' or 'one who is chaste' Bakhtiar

chooses to define hasur as follows in her concordance:

"Hasur - masculine noun - concealer of secrets."[117]

This entry is at odds with all the other entries that share the H-S-R root, none of

which denote any concept of concealing secrets.

Her concordance reads as follows:

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[114] - A detailed discussion on the repercussions of this translation is presented in Chapter [2.1.] of this paper.
[115] - **Al Qur'an** [3:39]
[116] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [3:39], p.50.
[117] - Bakhtiar, **The Concordance of The Sublime Qur'an**, p.146.

H-S-R

703. HASIRA- verb I perfect - to be reluctant

4:90   were reluctant that they fight you or they fight.

704 HASARA- verb I perfect – to besiege

verb I imperative (uhsur) – to besiege.

9:5   take them and besiege them and sit in every

705. AHSARA – verb IV perfect – to restrain

verb IV perfect passive (uhsira) – to be restrained

2:196   restrained, then whatever is feasible of

2:273   Spend for the poor, those who were restrained

706. HASUR – masculine noun – concealer of secrets.

3:39   concealer of secrets and a Prophet among the

707. HASIR – masculine noun – jail

17:8   We will revert. And we made hell a jail for the[118]

What we see from the above entries is indeed a cause for concern, for it is blatantly clear that there is no science or linguistics behind Bakhtiar's sudden change in meaning of a word that shares the same H-S-R root. She diligently translates all of the words sharing that root as either *'besiege'*, *'restrained'* or *'jail',* all of which have

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[118] - Ibid.

similar connotations, except for 'HASUR' (entry #706) which she inexplicably translates as 'concealer of secrets'.

This study finds that this abrupt change of meaning is due to Bakhtiar's personal and rather unorthodox doctrinal beliefs about Prophet Yahya. [119] It is disappointing and shocking in equal proportions that Bakhtiar chose to change the meaning of HASUR not only in her translation, but she also chose to insert this peculiar rendering into her concordance. This dual tampering in both pieces of work serves to give the reader the (false) impression that there is some sort of linguistics and semantics behind her choice, rather than it being a whimsical interpolation based on a pre-conceived doctrinal bias.

The real danger here is that by claiming to use a concordance-based literal translation methodology, Bakhtiar is able to potentially change the meaning of any word in the Qur'an by slipping it into her concordance with her translation of choice. As long as the 'new translation' is in her concordance, it gives the impression that her chosen rendering is linguistically sound and lends credence to her choices.

This study argues that the danger warned of above is supported by far too much evidence to continue to be considered a hypothesis. This research has found multiple examples of Bakhtiar utilizing this method to infiltrate her personal beliefs and ideologies into the text of the translation. The scope of this paper does not allow for a full list of these interpolations[120] however, we will present two more such examples to support the findings of this study:

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[119] - See Chapter 2.1 of this paper where I present Bakhtiar's published views on Prophet Yahya. From the beliefs that she propagates about him is that he took on the identity of the Prophet Eesa, and was subsequently crucified in his place, and that this was a secret he had to keep hidden from the disciples of Eesa who never noticed the difference. The Prophet Eesa went onto live his full life and died somewhere in Kashmir. The translation "concealer of secrets that she interpolates into the text of her translation is selected by her to support her fringe views regarding these two great prophets. A fuller discussion on this matter is provided in section 2.1 of this paper.

[120] - More examples can be found in the second half of Chapter 3 of this paper under the section of 'context consideration'. The examples listed there, serve a dual purpose whereby, aside from

1.8.1.3. Bakhtiar's translation of [وعملوا الصالحات]

Bakhtiar presents what can only be described as a 'peculiar choice of words' when translating the commonly occurring phrase "و عملوا الصالحات". Her inexplicable translation reads: *"and did as the ones in accord with morality"*. There are no linguistics or nuance-based sciences to support Bakhtiar's mysterious and hugely inaccurate choice of rendering. One is left wondering why she could not simply translate it as 'and do righteous deeds' or 'do good works' or any other synonymous phrase that would accurately reflect the meaning of the original Arabic? Instead, her translations of this phrase in the Qur'an speaks of an abstract morality and removes all nuances related to any pious act of worship.

Regrettably, it seems to be a concerted effort on Bakhtiar's part, to remove the emphasis on doing physical actions (أعمال) and in doing so, negate the accepted formula: [faith + good deeds = the pleasure of Allah and His Paradise], which is a basic principle that runs through the entire Qur'an.

Bakhtiar's choice of translation here, again, therefore seems to be substantiated by her own doctrinal bias towards the Sufi Tareeqas, which she is affiliated with and her deep-rooted Sufi beliefs, which have been made manifest in the introductions to the over 30 Sufi texts that she has previously translated or authored and are widely available on Amazon. An example of her Sufi leanings can be exemplified by a book she authored in 2011 entitled, 'The Sufi Enneagram: Sign of the Presence of God (Wajhullah): The Secrets of the Symbol unveiled.'[121]

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explaining Bakhtiar's position on 'context' they also serve to support the findings in this chapter with regards to Bakhtiar's lack of academic integrity and her abuse of her position as a translator by not remaining faithful to the source text.

[121] - A review of the book by Nigel Jackson states, "Bakhtiar here expounds the genuine sacred science, the Sufic 'Knowledge of the Nine Points', revealed through contemplation of the Enneagram…

Her rendering of "و عملوا الصالحات" as *"and did as the ones in accord with morality"*

also supports what seems to be her deep-rooted personal stance; that a person can be intrinsically good despite refusing to engage in any specific 'religiously defined' good deeds such as prayer and fasting. Her translation fits well therefore, with her description of her own father, whom she introduces to her readers in the preface to her book saying, *"He was not religious, but spiritual, devoting his life as a physician to heal the suffering of people"*[122]

The elimination of 'good deeds in the form of salah and zakah is a theological position that Sufi-thought is well-known for. It is regrettable that Bakhtiar, despite claiming her translation is free of doctrinal bias, chooses to interpolate her beliefs into the text of her translation in such a clandestine manner. The revelation of these violations in translation, causes the reader to mistrust her other translation choices and discredits the entire translation.

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and effectively restores the true Sufic bases of this paradigmatic design (Naqsh), this work conveys …the Enneagram in its original Islamic Sufi context…Dr Bakhtiar has restored, clarified and transmitted the genuine Irfanic 'Knowledge of the Nine Points', preserved through the ages by the Khwajagan, the sages and masters of the Tradition." [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sufi-Enneagram-Presence-WajhullahUnveiled/dp/1567448356/ref=la_B001K7RCPS_1_11?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1517313370&sr=1-11]

[122] -Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xx.

1.8.1.4. Bakhtiar's translation of [نساء].

An example of Bakhtiar's ideological bias bleeding into her translation is her rendering of the following ayah:

﴿وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ تُقْسِطُواْ فِي الْيَتَـٰمَى فَانكِحُواْ مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ مَثْنَى وَثُلَثَ وَرُبَاعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلاَّ تَعْدِلُواْ فَوَٰحِدَةً...﴾[123]

"And if you feared that you will not act justly with the orphans, then, marry who seems good to you <u>of the women who have orphans</u>, by twos, in threes, or four. But if you feared you will not be just, then, one..."[124]

Here we find Bakhtiar, a self-propagated feminist, has decidedly interpolated the directive of the original text of the Qur'an, and by doing so, she has completely changed the intended meaning of the ayah. She has considerably restricted the permissibility of polygamy in Islam to only marrying widows, since that is what marrying *"the women who have orphans"* would indisputably indicate.

It is important to note that nothing in the source language, supports her interpretation, it merely says (نساء). In Bakhtiar's concordance she translates 'NISA' as either *'women'* or *'wives'* in every single entry, <u>except when it speaks of polygamy or marrying orphans</u> when she abruptly changes the meaning to *"women who have orphans"*.[125]

This is a flagrant attempt by Bakhtiar to eradicate from the Qur'an an Islamic concept that she is not comfortable with by abusing her position as a translator whose

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[123] - **Al Qur'an** [4:3].
[124] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [4:3], p70.
[125] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, p.501. See entries under [4:3] and [4:127].

job is to convey the original message of Allah, as accurately as possible. Editing the message to make it conform to one's positions is akin to heresy.

Herein lies one of the greatest problems in Bakhtiar's translation. Despite her many assurances that her translation *is "free from any transient, denominational or doctrinal bias"[126]* it is regrettable that numerous cases of doctrinal as well as ideological bias can clearly be seen in her translation.

The Qur'an has often been the object of personal interpretations being presented as text by orientalists and Muslims alike, but never by someone who so ardently wants us to believe that she has left all her personal beliefs and biases behind.

1.8.2. Plagiarism

In his critical review of English translations of the Qur'an, Kidwai lambastes Bakhtiar for claiming to put in place such elaborate arrangements and yet still present a translation that in many places is unmistakably similar to Arberry's earlier renditions. He says, "…she (Bakhtiar) claims to have drawn on her data base of around 1,000,000 Arabic particles… Notwithstanding all this hype, her rendering is, at times, almost the same as in Arberry's earlier translation of 1955. It is strange how she comes to reverberate Arberry despite the above stated elaborate arrangements by her for producing a new translation. Italicized portions of the following three passages point to the unmistakable similarity between her and Arberry's earlier versions."[127] Kidwai then presents a side by side comparison of three passages from Bakhtiar's

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[126] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvi.
[127] - Kidwai, Abdur Raheem **'Translating the Untranslatable',** pp146-147.

translation and that of Arberry's translation to support his allegations against Bakhtiar. [128]

The passages highlighted by Kidwai speak for themselves and call into question Bakhtiar's claim to be strictly adhering to a concordance-based literal translation, that she calls, 'formal equivalence'. Bakhtiar's decision to respond to Kidwai in her subsequent 2007 edition of The Sublime Qur'an is interesting. She dedicates a whole page of her introduction to his critique; the main thrust of her response being that the stark similarities between her translation and that of Arberry's are because all Qur'an translators are translating the same book, the Qur'an, therefore the similarities are inevitable. Bakhtiar says,

"...since all translators are translating the same text and in some cases using the same method of formal equivalence, they are similar and dissimilar to the same extent."[129]

Bakhtiar goes on to quote, at great length, the translations of the same passages from Soorah al-Hijr (15:51-56) mentioned above by other translators, namely, Pickthall, Umm Muhammad (Sahih International) and Yusuf Ali, in the hopes of absolving herself of any charges of plagiarism. Her rebuttal is weak and transparent, yet, ironically, she seems incredulous as to why her response had not been published by the Editor of the Muslim Book Review and consequently questions his judgement on the issue as well.[130]

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[128] - The three passages from the Qur'an selected by Kidwai to show her plagiarism are: [15:51-56], [4:153] and [20:114-115]. The comparison can be found in Professor Kidwai's valuable work **'Translating the Untranslatable'** where he presents a four-page review on 'The Sublime Qur'an'. pp146-147.

[129] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xli.

[130] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xlii.

1.8.3. My Findings on the Allegations of Plagiarism

Extensive comparison between the translation of Bakhtiar and that of Arberry, led me to a deeper comparative study between Bakhtiar's 'Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an' and 'The Concordance of the Qur'an' compiled by Hanna Kassis two decades earlier. Based on a detailed comparison of numerous selections from both concordances it became apparent to me that the plagiarism that Kidwai alludes to in Bakhtiar's translation, is actually not in her translation per se, but rather it is in her concordance.[131] Bakhtiar has lifted section upon section from Kassis' concordance verbatim, without so much as a mention. Intact within this academic theft are Kassis' errors and mistakes which Bakhtiar failed to remove before including them into her own concordance.

To understand the situation better it is imperative we understand a bit more about Kassis' concordance: Kassis based his concordance on the translation of the Qur'an by Arberry, his concordance therefore reflects Arberry's translation in every way. Bakhtiar plagiarized from Kassis' concordance freely as is evident from even a cursory comparison between the two concordances. Bakhtiar's plagiarism of Kassis' concordance explains the huge, and at times inexplicable, similarities between Bakhtiar's translation and that of Arberry's (since Kassis' concordance is based on Arberry's translation). This is a matter that is easily over-looked or attributed to a plagiarism of Arberry's translation as suggested by Kidwai, when in reality Bakhtiar's plagiarism is actually from Kassis' concordance. The effect of that plagiarism is the uncanny similarity between Bakhtiar's translations and that of Arberry's in many places.

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[131] - Since Kidwai's work was limited to a critique of the finished product of Bakhtiar's translation, it would have been outside the scope of his paper to examine and compare her concordance with that of Kassis and therefore could not have been expected to discover the reasons behind the innate similarity between Bakhtiar's translation and that of Arberry's which he deftly detected.

It is highly regrettable that Bakhtiar does not acknowledge how she benefitted from Kassis' work at any point. She limits her mention of Kassis' concordance, to only point out how they differ. The differences are in actuality not very substantial, as will be discussed below.

Since the scope of this paper does not allow for the presentation of a detailed comparative study between the two concordances, I will suffice by addressing the issue in a few summarized points which I hope to present in greater detail in a subsequent paper:

1. Bakhtiar's concordance is almost identical to that of Kassis in terms of grammatical structure: [perfect active, imperfect active, imperative, perfect passive, imperfect passive, verbal noun, active participle, passive participle.] Kassis explains his chosen structure in some detail in his preface.[132] Bakhtiar replicates Kassis' model[133] but without acknowledging that the model was borrowed from him, nor crediting his work as having influenced her work in any way, shape or form.[134] It goes without saying that by utilizing the same model, the task of replicating the translations becomes much easier since the hardest part of the work is already complete.

   It is tempting to come to Bakhtiar's defense by hypothesizing that perhaps her chosen structure is identical to that of Kassis because they both may have sourced their work from the same source, namely the 'mu'jam al mufahras li alfaz al Qur'an al Kareem' by Abdul Baqi. However, a closer

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[132] - Kassis, **A Concordance of the Qur'an**, xxv.
[133] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, lxviii.
[134] - Bakhtiar merely says*, "The only concordance of the Qur'an that is similar in structure is the Hanna Kassis Concordance of the Qur'an."* –[Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an, lxxii]. What is lacking here is an acknowledgement from Bakhtiar of replicating Kassis' model or at least admitting that she benefitted from it abundantly.

inspection of Abdul Baqi's book rules out this line of defense since his structure is significantly different to the structure of Kassis' concordance and by default also to Bakhtiar's.

2. Bakhtiar also follows Kassis in his decision to only use Romanized lettering, instead of using the Arabic alphabet as used in the 'mu'jam al mufahras' that she maintains her work is based on. It would have been more accurate if she had maintained the Arabic. It would also have been easier for her to maintain the Arabic, unless of course the source of her work was Kassis' concordance and not the mu'jam al mufahris, as she claimed.

3. Kassis specifies his special consideration in how he translated the active and passive participles in his introduction.[135] Bakhtiar proceeds to make the same points as Kassis, except that she takes pains to explain that this is something unique to her translation not given due consideration in other English translations.[136] She fails to mention that Kassis preceded her in this.

4. The main difference between the two concordances is that Bakhtiar arranges her work according to the ordering of the Arabic alphabet, (despite not using a single Arabic letter in her concordance) whilst Kassis arranges the words according to the English alphabet and has a separate section for words related to Allah. Bakhtiar's switching the alphabetical order does not have any major impact on the work, although it does serve to make a direct comparison

[135] - Kassis, **A Concordance of the Qur'an**, xxxiv.
[136] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, lxviii.

between the two concordances more challenging than if the alphabet ordering were also replicated by her.

5. Bakhtiar, in her futile attempt to claim that hers is the only 'complete' concordance of the Qur'an in the English language, hurls a hugely disparaging and slanderous accusation at Kassis' acclaimed work saying:

    "The Kassis Concordance does not list all words in the Arabic concordance and leaves out complete entries for 'to be' and 'to say' so it is not a complete representation of the words contained in the Qur'an in the way that this Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an is."[137]

6. This is not only a blatant fabrication, but also an indefensible slur by Bakhtiar on the work of someone she has clearly benefitted from. Kassis has indeed included both the verb 'to say' [qaala][138] in his concordance as well the verb 'to be' [kaana].[139] Indeed, ten whole pages are dedicated by Kassis to the verb 'to say'. Staying true to the methodology that he outlines in his preface, Kassis entered each word in its correct place in his concordance based on its Arabic root, so 'qaala' [قال] and its derivatives are entered under [q-w-l] due to their root being [ق-و-ل]. Likewise, 'kaana' [كان] and its derivatives are entered under [k-w-n] due to their root being: [ك-و-ن]. This is in line with

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[137] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, lxxii.
[138] - See: Kassis, **A Concordance of the Qur'an,** p.936-946.
[139] - Ibid, p. 673-674.

basic Arabic morphology (sarf), a subject that Bakhtiar would have had to master to be able to translate the Qur'an or compile her own concordance.

Regrettably, one is left unsure whether to consider Bakhtiar's slur as a concerted effort to intentionally detract from the historic nature of Kassis' eminent work, so that *her* concordance can be crowned as the only complete concordance in the English language, or whether her criticism was as a result of her sincerely being unaware of the basics of Arabic morphology and being ignorant of the roots of the words [قال] and [كان], which incidentally can be found in most secondary school level books of Sarf in the Arab world.

The reader of Bakhtiar's translation, upon discovery of the falsity of the very serious accusation she levelled against Kassis, is left perplexed about which is the lesser of the two evils, that the translator of their sacred text is a malicious slanderer and liar, or that she is grossly incompetent in the basics of the language of the Qur'an that she has translated, unable to even identify the roots of two of the most commonly mentioned verbs in the Qur'an [قال] and [كان], let alone the more complex ones.

1.9. Is Bakhtiar Eligible to Undertake the "Translation" of The Sublime Qur'an? – Conclusions.

In this Chapter we have presented arguments suggesting that a translator of the Qur'an must possess knowledge of the Arabic language and all its related sciences to a scholarly level. We provided the statements of scholars of the Qur'an as well as scholars from the field of translation studies to support our argument. We then presented a range of sample renderings from Bakhtiar's translation, filled with grammatical mistakes. These samples serve to demonstrate her lack of knowledge in the Arabic language as well as its rules of grammar and morphology, culminating in some very elementary level errors throughout her translation. Sufficient knowledge of the source language is undeniably a condition for any translator, especially one engaged in translating a sacred text. Therefore, Bakhtiar's failure in this regard, in and of itself is sufficient to render her ineligible to be a translator of the Qur'an.

We also argued that the translator must have knowledge of Usool ul Fiqh and Usool al tafseer to some degree to guide his/her translation choices. The example we presented was of Bakhtiar's decision to translate 'KUFR' as 'ingratitude' instead of 'disbelief', using its linguistic meaning rather than its sharia definition, thereby disregarding a basic principle from the 'usool' of tafseer.[140] Her inexplicable inter-changing between the two renderings (ingratitude and disbelief) was also addressed and presented with examples, bringing into question the validity of the scientific methodology that Bakhtiar claims to have used.

Possessing an excellent command over the target language is undeniably a necessary qualification of any translator. It is most regrettable that Bakhtiar, despite acknowledging the importance of presenting a fluid eloquent rendering in the target

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[140] - To underscore the repercussions of disregarding these 'usool', or being ignorant of them, we present some repercussions of Bakhtiar's mistranslation of [kufr] on 'aqeedah (theology) in Chapter 2.

language fails to deliver in this regard as well. Numerous examples of unintelligible ramblings from her translation are cited in this study.

The other 'quality' we focused our attention on in this chapter was that of academic and personal integrity as a translator. Bakhtiar proves herself to be unfaithful to the source text in numerous instances. She exploits her role as a translator by interpolating her own doctrinal and ideological bias directly into the text of her translation. Examples of these are her translations for the words [fata], [hasuran], [amal-as-saalihaat] and [nisaa]. We presented a detailed discussion on each of the above words. We further expounded on the ideological and doctrinal biases that her chosen rendering for these words supported. Finally, we traced these ideologies to Bakhtiar through her other works and public positions.

In the final section of this Chapter we discussed the allegations of plagiarism levelled against Bakhtiar by Kidwai regarding the similarities between her translation and that of Arberry's translation. This study traced the roots of these uncanny similarities and revealed its source to be Bakhtiar's plagiarism from Kassis' concordance, rather than directly from Arberry's translation of the Qur'an. We also noted our disappointment that not only did Bakhtiar not credit Kassis, but she tried to disparage his work by falsely accusing him of missing whole sections out. By disqualifying Kassis' work, Bakhtiar tried to (unrightfully) claim the mantle of the 'only *complete* concordance of the Qur'an', The existence of Kassis' concordance disqualifies Bakhtiar from making that claim. Unfortunately, this leaves an indelible stain on Bakhtiar's personal character as well as on her academic integrity and would leave many readers uncomfortable to read her works, whether on the subject of religion and spirituality or otherwise.

Although each of the above points is sufficient to render Bakhtiar ineligible from being a translator of the Qur'an, the regrettable combination of all of them leaves no room for doubt on the matter. I would however argue, that out of all the issues mentioned in this chapter, perhaps, it is her intentional exploitation of her role as a translator by interpolating the text that is the worst. When a reader 'allows' someone to be the translator of their sacred text, this is no small matter. It is an issue of 'blind-trust,' since the average reader does not possess the ability, in most cases, to scrutinize and check whether personal opinions have been covertly inserted by the translator into the text of the translation.

For this reason, when a translator chooses to work to their own agenda and interpolate their own ideas into the text, it is a flagrant betrayal of trust. The gravity of this betrayal is only intensified when the text being translated is the Qur'an, the Divine revelation of Islam.[141]

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[141] - It must be emphasized that the betrayal is not just towards the reader but to the Originator of the source text, which in this case is Allah. This is a lengthy topic which the scope of this paper does not allow me to cover in detail.

CHAPTER TWO OUTLINE:

A Critical Examination of What Makes Bakhtiar's Methodology

of Translating the Qur'an Unique?

2.1. Bakhtiar's Claims of Uniqueness:

    2.1.1 Introduction.

    2.1.2. No Commentary.

    2.1.3. Universality.

    2.1.4. Inclusive Language.

    2.1.5. Thou vs. You.

    2.1.6. Verse [4:34].

    2.1.7. Evaluation.

2.2. A 'Unique' Qur'anic System?

    2.2.1. Omitting the Original Arabic

    2.2.2. Re-numbering the ayaat

    2.2.3. Producing an English Recitation of The Sublime Qur'an.

2.3. Conclusions on the Uniqueness of Bakhtiar's Translation.

CHAPTER TWO: A Critical Examination of What Makes Bakhtiar's Methodology of Translating the Qur'an Unique?

2.1. Bakhtiar's Claims of Uniqueness:

2.1.1. Introduction

Bakhtiar claims to have identified six points that were missing in *all* previous translations of the Qur'an in English, which she aimed to overcome in her translation, and by which she hoped to set her translation apart from the rest. She states:

"I arrived at six points that I felt was missing in previous translations and which I aimed to attain in the translation of The Sublime Qur'an." [142]

Bakhtiar then starts to list and explain the points but only lists five. She fails to mention what point number six is. The fact that Bakhtiar has never divulged what her sixth point is, nor has she ever referenced a sixth point again throughout her work leads one to assume that perhaps despite initially trying to find six ways in which her translation differs from all other English translations she could not find more than five The points as mentioned by Bakhtiar are:

1. *No commentary*[143]

2. *Universal*[144]

3. *Inclusive Language*[145]

4. *Thou vs You*[146]

5. *Verse 4:34*[147]

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[142] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xv.
[143] - Ibid.
[144] - Ibid, xvi.
[145] - Ibid, xvii.
[146] - Ibid, xviii.
[147] - Ibid, xix.

After a brief explanation of this list, Bakhtiar inserts a bold and highly disputable disclaimer stating:

"*It should be noted that none of the reasons given as to how <u>this translation differs from all other English translations</u> has anything to do with my being a woman. They are all indications of gender-free intellectual reasoning.*"[148]

This disclaimer is intriguing as much as it is betraying to her propensity to make false claims that are quite easily falsified. The problem with her above statement is not so much whether her being a woman had anything to do with her 5 points, but it is her bewildering claim that her translation stands apart from "*all other English translations*" due them.

Below is a point by point analysis of her claims:

2.1.2. No Commentary

Bakhtiar claims that her translation differs from *all other English translations* because she has included **no commentary**. Not only is this claim false, but what makes it more unforgivable is that Bakhtiar is well aware that her assertion is untrue due to the exceptionally large number of English translators who have chosen to keep their translation commentary free, starting from the 1800's right through until the year of her publication in 2007. A few more "commentary-free" translations came out between 2007 and 2012 and again, Bakhtiar did not back down on her claim even when she published her 'revised editions' that were printed in 2009 and again in 2012.

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[148] - Ibid.

It is inconceivable that Bakhtiar was ignorant of *all* the commentary-free translations published over the last two centuries, hence it is indefensible for her to maintain such an obviously false claim if she was aware of *any* of them.

Below is a list of just some of the well-known English translators that kept their translations of the Qur'an free from commentary:

1. J M Rodwell (1861) [149]

2. A J Arberry (1955)[150]

3. N J Dawood (1956)[151]

4. Houssein Nahaboo (1987)[152]

5. Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan (1991) [153]

6. Abdal Haqq Bewely and Aisha Bewley (1999).[154]

7. Syed Vickar Ahamed (2005)[155]

8. Alan Jones (2007)[156]

9. Muhammad Mahmud Ghali (2008)[157]

10. Tarif Khalidi (2008)[158]

11. Talal Itani (2012)[159]

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[149] - Rodwell, **The Koran: The Suras Arranged in Chronological Order with Notes.**
[150] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**.
[151] - Dawood, **The Koran**.
[152] - Nahaboo, **The Holy Qur'an**.
[153] - Zidan, **Translation of the Glorious Qur'an**.
[154] - Bewely, **The Noble Qur'an: A New rendering of its Meaning in English**.
[155] - Vickar Ahamed, **English Translation of the Meaning of the Qur'an.**
[156] - Jones, **The Qur'an Translated into English**.
[157] - Ghali, **Towards Understanding the Ever-Glorious Qur'an**.
[158] - Khalidi, **The Qur'an: A New Translation**.
[159] - Itani, **Qur'an in English Clear and Easy to Understand**.

For there to exist in excess of ten other English translations that can also boast of the "no commentary" feat, and for Bakhtiar to still claim "no commentary" as a unique characteristic of her translation defies all logic and taints her integrity.

Amongst these *"commentary-free"* translations is the translation of Arthur J Arberry, entitled, "The Koran Interpreted" which was first published in 1955 and predates Bakhtiar's translation by over 50 years. This translation was discussed in Chapter One[160] due to the allegations of plagiarism from Arberry's translation levelled against Bakhtiar by Kidwai. [161] Bakhtiar's rebuttal against these charges and her detailed responses regarding Arberry's translation rule out the possibility that she is unfamiliar with his book. For Bakhtiar to then claim that she did not notice that Arberry did not utilize any commentary in his translation and to assert that she is the first to do so is damning to her own integrity as an academic

2.1.3. Universality

Bakhtiar claims that her translation differs from *all other English translations* because her rendering is uniquely **universal,** contrary to all previous English translations. She says:

"The Qur'an tells the Prophet, the mercy to all humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following this example, in addition to this translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature.

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[160] - See section [1.8.2] of this work for a more thorough discussion on this topic.
[161] - Kidwai, **Translating the Untranslatable**, 146.

For example, based on a study done about Prophet Yahya,[162] the word hasur (3:39)

has been correctly translated in The Sublime Qur'an as "concealer of secrets" and

not the usual "chaste" of other English translations. This opens up the study of who

this Prophet actually [is][163] and adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope

of the Qur'an so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular

group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its

message."[164]

There are a few points to note from Bakhtiar's above explanation of how her translations is different to all other translations due to being uniquely "*universal*":

1. From the above quote it is logical to assume that Bakhtiar got her point number two (*universal*) and point number three (*inclusive language*) confused. This would explain why Bakhtiar has written about making the language *inclusive* under the section heading "*Universal*". This would also explain why nothing in her above statement even remotely discusses the concept of a "*universal*" translation.

2. The example that Bakhtiar gives to exemplify the universality of her translation is nonsensical. I would contend that mistranslating *hasur* to mean "concealer of secrets' instead of "chaste" does nothing to render the translation "universal".

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[162] - Unbelievably Bakhtiar uses the Arabic name "Yahya" here when explaining how her translation is universal, only to contradict herself on the very next page where she insists that all the names of the Prophets must be translated to their Anglicized counterparts in order for a translation to be considered inclusive and universal. Bakhtiar gives the example of 'Jesus' instead of 'Eesa', and 'Mary' instead of 'Maryam'. This is yet another example of her not sticking to a uniform scientific method of translation as she claims she has done.

[163] - Omitted in Bakhtiar's original.

[164] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvii.

3. Indeed, it could be argued that the translation "chaste" is a far more "universal" translation since chastity is a virtue that all the religions have preached *universally* in all places and in all times, as opposed to being a "concealer of secrets" which is far more subjective and not necessarily a "universal" virtue.

4. Astonishingly, Bakhtiar asserts that her inaccurate choice of translation *"adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Qur'an so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people."[165]* Unfortunately she does not support her claim in any way, nor does she explain how she feels she has achieved this. One is left wondering at this juncture, which group of people does Bakhtiar think would feel 'excluded' by describing a Prophet of God as "chaste"? Also, how would mistranslating [hasuran] as "concealer of secrets" promptly make these people feel "included" in the message of the Qur'an?

5. We are also left wondering what happened to the 'scientific linguistic methodology' Bakhtiar claimed she was relying on thus far. It is to be noted that in the above passage that we quoted, Bakhtiar has clearly admitted to preferring her personal choices and bias over the unbiased scientific method she claims to have been bound by throughout her translation, and which is the cornerstone of her claim to accuracy!

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[165] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvii.

6. It is telling that Bakhtiar is unable to come up with a fitting example of how her translation is more "universal" than all the other English translations of the Qur'an and has to resort to such an inaccurate one.

7. In her concordance Bakhtiar arbitrarily defines hasur as follows:

"Hasur - masculine noun - concealer of secrets."[166] This is at odds with her entries under all the other words that share the H-S-R root none of which denote any concept of concealing secrets.[167]

The question that remained unanswered for me was, from where does Bakhtiar pull this bizarre translation for "*hasur*" and why is she so keen to highlight it in her preface as an outstanding example of her *universal* translation despite its absurdity?

I eventually found the answer to this question after following up on all Bakhtiar's citations and references.[168] Nothing could have prepared me for what I was to discover:

Bakhtiar was basing her translation of the Qur'anic ayah [3:39] on the work of a common conspiracy theorist by the name of Agron Belica.[169] who had expounded his unsubstantiated claim that the Prophet Yahya (John) had taken on the identity of the Messiah Eesa (Jesus) at some point in his adult life and had 'concealed this secret' from everyone, including the faithful Disciples of Eesa, who somehow, also didn't realize the sudden change of identity and appearance of their beloved Prophet and

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[166] - Bakhtiar, **The Concordance of The Sublime Qur'an,** p.146.
[167] - Bakhtiar's concordance entry was quoted in full in Chapter 1 of this paper.
[168] - Amidst Bakhtiar's Prefatory Notes is an ambiguous reference to Agron Belica's work: **The Crucifixion: Mistaken Identity?** See Bakhtiar, The Sublime Qur'an, xxii.
[169] - Agron Belica is a self-described writer/ musician whose current occupation is a split between writing Hip Hop music and writing ad hoc articles in conspiracy theory blogs and discredited news websites See**: www.globalnewscentre.com/agron-ace-belicaa-e-m-g/#sthash.ZI3vWXlL.kDYQZIyx.dpbs**

Saviour from the person of Jesus Son of Mary into the Prophet John over night! According to Belica this therefore meant that it was Yahya who was crucified by those who rejected Jesus, and it was he who survived the crucifixion. As for Jesus, then according to Belica's theory, he continued to live on until around the age of 45 dying somewhere in Kashmir![170]

Bakhtiar uncategorically supports Belica's unsubstantiated theories going so far as to publish her own review of his book in an online newspaper in which she states:

"*In reality, according to the intellectual endeavor of the author* [Agron Belica]*, it was "he who lives" (Yahya), the Concealer of Secrets (hasura), as the Qur'an refers to him who was placed on the cross and lived, a view held by early Christian Gnostics as well, but later declared to be a heresy. The Concealer of Secrets concealed the secret of his identity and that of the Messiah in order to save the Messiah. The Messiah was then allowed to carry on his prophetic mission perhaps traveling even as far as Kashmir where many believe that he is buried. At the same time that Mary retired to a sanctuary, Zechariah becoming her protector, Zechariah prayed for an heir. The son of Mary was close in age to the son of man (the Concealer of Secrets fathered by Zechariah). They may have even been cousins who resembled one another. They both began their prophetic mission around the same time yet neither revealed themselves as to who they actually were*"[171]

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[170] - See: Agron Belica's **Crucifixion - Mistaken Identity? John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ**, 2009.

[171] -Bakhtiar's complete review of Belica's book can be found at:
http://www.globalnewscentre.com/agron-ace-belicaa-e-m-g/#sthash.ZI3vWXlL.kDYQZIyx.dpbs

Bakhtiar concludes her book review by commending Belica on his conclusions saying:

"Agron Belica brings harmony to ancient mysteries. He shows the possibility of how thing may be in the Presence of the Oneness of God and he does so through scriptures – the Qur'an, Hadith and the New Testament. This is a book that should be read by everyone who wants to discern the Reality of the story of the Messiah."[172]

The above 'book review' by Bakhtiar reveals a conspiracy theory-loving nature, but more worryingly her temerity to openly inject these unsubstantiated heretical beliefs into the text her Qur'anic "translation". To further understand Islamic theology as it pertains to the great Prophet Eesa, Bakhtiar, rather than encouraging the reader to study the hadith or tafsir literature, instead encourages them to turn to the works of a conspiracy theorist who is peddling theological fiction that would be considered heresy according to the followers of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Incredibly we find that despite Bakhtiar's interpolation of such whimsical notions into her translation of the Book of Allah, she still has the audacity to claim that her translation is "*free of any transient political, denominational or doctrinal bias*".[173] An assertion that is beginning to seem about as fantasy-based as some of the theories that her translation is based on.

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[172] - Ibid.
[173] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvi.

2.1.4. Inclusive Language:

Although the reader would assume that "inclusive language" is part and parcel of the claim to a "universal rendering" Bakhtiar highlights the characteristic of using "inclusive language" as a distinctively separate point by which she claims her translation differs from all previous translations.

Bakhtiar says, *"Examples of this would be the translation of the derivatives of k f r, literally meaning: To hide, to deny the truth or cover over something. Most English translations use the verb "to disbelieve" or "to be an infidel" making the active participle "one who disbelieves" or "one who is an infidel". In the present translation the more inclusive viable terminology is used, namely, "to be ungrateful." The Qur'an itself declares its timelessness and universality. Therefore, its understanding or interpretation must also be eternal and for all time, inclusive of all humanity rather than exclusive to one group of people."*[174]

Bakhtiar appears to be making a case for the translation of the Qur'an to be more inclusive, her choice however of the root word [k f r] for this exercise is bewildering to say the least, since she is extending the punishment with which Allah has threatened those who deny Islam to now include *anyone who is ungrateful to Allah*! Her rendering therefore includes absolutely everyone at some time or place!

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[174] - Ibid, xvii.

My questions to Bakhtiar would be:

- Why would anyone want to be included in the meaning of kufr?

- How would her decision to define kaafir as 'one who is ungrateful' draw someone to the faith knowing that the punishments mentioned in the Qur'an for the kaafireen would now include them too if they were 'ungrateful'?

- How is using "inclusive language" on the subject of "kufr" favorable to anyone in anyway?! Wouldn't most people prefer to be 'excluded' from the term and not be included within it!

We will cite a few different translations of relevant ayaat to support this point:

1) Al Baqarah [2:98]

﴿ مَن كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِّلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴾[175]

1. Who is an enemy to Allah, and His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael! **Then, lo! Allah (Himself) is an enemy to the <u>disbelievers.</u>**

   As translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall[176]

2. Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and apostles, to Gabriel and Michael**, - Lo! God is an enemy to those <u>who reject Faith.</u>**

   As translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali[177]

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[175] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:298].
[176] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [2:98].
[177] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [2:98].

3. Whosoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael **- surely God is an enemy to the <u>unbelievers</u>.**

As translated by Arthur J Arberry.[178]

4. Whoever had been an enemy of God and His angels, and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael, **then, truly, God is an enemy <u>of the ones who are ungrateful</u>.**

As translated by Laleh Bakhtiar[179]

Bakhtiar's misplaced 'inclusive translation' makes all those who are ungrateful *included* in Allah's threat of being an enemy to them. Certainly, this is not something anyone would like to be included in.

2) Aal 'Imran [3:131]

<div dir="rtl">

﴾وَاتَّقُواْ النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَفِرِينَ ﴿[180]

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1. **Fear the fire which is prepared for those who reject faith**

As translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali[181]

2. And ward of (from yourselves) **the Fire prepared for disbelievers**.

As translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall[182]

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[178] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**, [2:98].

[179] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, Al Baqarah [2:98].

[180] - **Al Qur'an**: [3:131].

[181] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [3:131].

[182] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [3:131].

3. And guard yourselves against **the fire which has been prepared for the unbelievers.**

As translated by A H Shakir[183]

4. And be God fearing of **the fire that was prepared for the ones who are ungrateful.**

As translated by Laleh Bakhtiar[184]

Bakhtiar's 'inclusive' translation in this ayah condemns all those who are ungrateful to the fire of Hell instead of just those who disbelieve. Her inclusive translation is most certainly not an incentive on entering the faith as she claims.

3) Al Baqarah [2:89]

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُواْ مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم مَّا عَرَفُواْ كَفَرُواْ بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَفِرِينَ ﴾[185]

1. When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them -- and they afore times prayed for victory over the unbelievers -- when there came to them that they recognized, they disbelieved in it; **and the curse of God is on the unbelievers.**

As translated by A J Arberry. [186]

[183] - Shakir, **The Qur'an**, [3:131].
[184] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [3:131].
[185] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:89].
[186] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**, [2:89].

2. And when there cometh unto them a scripture from Allah, confirming that in their possession - though before that they were asking for a signal triumph over those who disbelieved – and when there cometh unto them that which they know (to be the truth) they disbelieve therein. **The curse of Allah is on the disbelievers.**

As translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall[187]

3. And when a scripture came to them from God, confirming what they have—although previously they were seeking victory against those who disbelieved—but when there came to them what they recognized, they disbelieved in it. **So God's curse is upon the disbelievers.**

As translated by Talal Itani[188]

4. Mention when a Book from God drew near them, that which establishes as true what was with them, —and before that they had been asking for victory over those who were ungrateful— so when drew near them what they recognized, they were ungrateful for it. **Then, the curse of God is on the ones who are ungrateful!**

As translated by Laleh Bakhtiar[189]

In this third ayah we see how Bakhtiar's rendering serves to 'include' all those who are ungrateful as recipients of the Allah's curse. It remains unclear why Bakhtiar considers this good and inviting to those outside of the faith.

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[187] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [2:89].
[188] - Itani, **Qur'an in English, Clear and Easy to Understand**, [2:89].
[189] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [2:89].

From the above three examples it becomes abundantly clear that Bakhtiar's rendering of '*kufr*' to mean '*ingratitude*' instead if '*disbelief*', and '*kaafir*' to mean '*those who are ungrateful*' instead of '*disbelievers*', causes some serious repercussions, amongst which are the following:

1- Allah declares Himself as an enemy to *all mankind,* (and not just those who disbelieve) since everyone is ungrateful to some degree.

2- *All of mankind* are destined for the hellfire since the ayah clearly states according to her rendering that the hellfire was prepared *for all of those who have been ungrateful.*

3- The curse of Allah is on *everyone*!

What makes this rendering all the more ludicrous is that for some absurd reason Bakhtiar is proud of including all of mankind in her definition of 'kufr' and takes pains to draw attention to this fact in her preface by pointing out that she is the *only* translator to include all mankind (who have ever been ungrateful) in their damnation to eternal Hell![190]

After presenting her baffling explanation of her all-inclusive rendering of [kufr] Bakhtiar goes on to say, *"Applying the above criteria to the word aslama, "he submitted to God," in the eight times that it appears in the form of islam, it is translated according to its universal meaning as "submission to God," and the forty-two times that its form as muslim appears, it is translated according to its universal*

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[190] - For a complete discussion regarding Bakhtiar's rendition of '*kufr*' as '*ingratitude*' see section [1.7.2] of this paper where I discuss the theological repercussions of her translation in more detail.

meaning, "one who submits to God."[191]

The above statement when taken in light of her previous example on kufr is of course an oxymoron, since mankind cannot all be damned to the Hellfire for all of eternity and be promised an eternal abode in paradise all at the same time. Bakhtiar does not seem to comprehend the obvious contradiction that she so boastfully presents and so zealously defends.

It is also amusing to note that Bakhtiar's irksome tendency to muddle her claim to *universality* and *inclusive language* is again on display here. We find that half way through her section on *inclusive language* she starts calling it *universality* again! One would be more inclined to forgive Bakhtiar her constant jumbling between the two and justify it as a case of her viewing the two characteristics as synonymous had she not made a point to specifically separate between the two and list them as two distinct characteristics that in her view distinguishes her translation from all other English translations!

Bakhtiar then cites another example of her use of inclusive language by saying, "*Another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English-speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Qur'an to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.*[192]

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191 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvii.
192 - Ibid, xviii.

While I could allow for Bakhtiar's personal preference to translate "Allah" as "God" I would still have to make the following points:

1) Bakhtiar makes a pitch for "God" instead of "Allah" as part of her larger argument as to how her translation is different from all previous English translations by utilizing "inclusive language" of which "God instead of Allah" is mentioned by way of example. Bakhtiar however cannot be credited for distinguishing her translation from all other English translations in this regard either, since there are so many English translations that use "God" instead of "Allah" that having the temerity to make this claim is itself an indication of Bakhtiar's irksome tendency to bluster about the uniqueness of her translation baselessly. Below is a list of just some of the other English translations that also use "God" instead of "Allah":

    1.   J M Rodwell (1861)[193]

    2.   E. H. Palmer (1880)[194]

    3.   A J Arberry (1955)[195]

    4.   N J Dawood (1956)[196]

    5.   Muhammad Asad (1980)[197]

    6.   Ahmed Ali (1984)[198]

    7.   T. B. Irving (1985)[199]

    8.   M. M Khatib (1986)[200]

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[193] - Rodwell, **The Koran, The Suras arranged in Chronological Order with Notes**.
[194] - Palmer, **The Qur'an**.
[195] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**.
[196] - Dawood, **The Qur'an**.
[197] - Asad, **The Message of the Qur'an**.
[198] - Ahmad Ali, **The Qur'an: A Contemporary Translation**.
[199] - Irving, **The Qur'an: The First American Version**.

9. Q. Arafat (1991)[201]

10. Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan (1991)[202]

11. M.A. S. Abdel Haleem (2004)[203]

12. Ali Unal (2006)[204]

13. Alan Jones (2007)[205]

14. Edip Yuksel (2007)[206]

15. Tarif Khalidi (2008)[207]

16. Assad Nimer Busool (2011)[208]

17. Talal Itani (2012)[209]

2) What is more troublesome than Bakhtiar's pretentious claim above, is the notion that she propounds in her next paragraph, where she contends that all the English speaking Muslims who refer to their God as "Allah" are going directly against the Qur'anic narrative of Surah Ibrahim [14:4]. Bakhtiar says,

    "*However well-intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Qur'anic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.[210]*

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[200] - Khatib, **The Bounteous Koran, A Translation of Meaning and Commentary**.
[201] - Arafat, **The Qur'an The Conclusive Word of God**.
[202] - Zidan, **Translation of The Glorious Qur'an**.
[203] - Abdel Haleem, **The Qur'an: A New Translation**.
[204] - Unal Ali, **The Qur'an With Annotated Interpretation in Modern English**.
[205] - Jones, **The Qur'an Translated into English**.
[206] - Yuksel, **The Qur'an: A Reformist Translation**.
[207] - Khalidi, **The Qur'an: A New Translation**.
[208] - Busool, **The Wise Qur'an: A Modern English Translation**.
[209] - Itani, **Qur'an in English, Clear and Easy to Understand**.
[210] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xviii.

This is a huge indictment of hundreds of millions of Muslims who would not have it any other way than to refer to their Creator by the name He has chosen for himself!

3) We find that Bakhtiar, despite making such a forceful argument for not using Arabic names, and thereby never using the name Allah even once in her translation, defies all logic by choosing to use the Arabic name of Satan and refers to him often as **Iblis**, as displayed in the following sample from Bakhtiar's translation:

"And mention when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves to Adam! So they prostrated themselves but Iblis. He had been among the jinn and he disobeyed the command of His Lord."[211]

Bakhtiar's failure to demonstrate any sort of consistency in her translation methodology makes her assertion that using Arabic names goes against the direct commands of the Qur'an and the Sunnah all the more farcical.

4) "Iblis" and "jinn" are not the only Arabic words that are not Anglicized in Bakhtiar's translation, "Yahya" is also left in its Arabic transliterated form and not changed to John, however quite perplexingly Isa and Maryam are changed to "Jesus" and "Mary". This hodgepodge of contradictory translation absolutes is probably one of the clearest evidences that her claim to using a non-biased elaborate scientific method for a super accurate translation is baseless. One cannot help but feel incensed when one remembers Bakhtiar

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[211] - Ibid, [18:50].

dismissing all other existing English translations in her preface as lacking in "internal consistency and reliability."[212]

Nevertheless, Bakhtiar endeavors to advance her argument for using "God" instead of "Allah" by saying,

"In addition, it [using the name Allah] creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English-speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God – Allah and God.[213]

5) Here, once again, we find Bakhtiar displaying her proclivity to assert that translators who are not in line with her translation policies are guilty of expounding polytheism! One would contend however, that with her translation policies being as jumbled as they are it is near impossible to align with them in the first place!

Still on the offensive against English speaking Muslims who use the name "Allah" Bakhtiar betrays her disdain for them by saying:

"It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.[214]

The concept of English speaking Muslims using the name "Allah" does not, for some reason sit well with Bakhtiar, since it appears to give impetus to her accusing them of wrongfully feeling like they have a monopoly on the

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[212] - Ibid, xiii, xiv, xxi.
[213] - Ibid, xviii.
[214] - Ibid.

name Allah. Her opinion on this matter should not affect her translation methodology, however Bakhtiar tries to justify her opposition to using the name 'Allah' by suggesting it is not inclusive. This is a feeble and transparent argument that Bakhtiar herself betrays later in her preface by admitting her personal objection to the use of 'Allah' instead of 'God' by Muslims who speak English.

2.1.5. Thou Vs You

Continuing her list of claims as to how her translation differs from *all other English translations* Bakhtiar attempts to assert she is alone in understanding the linguistic challenges of rendering the rich Arabic "you" in all its distinct versions into the poorer English language that in its modern form does not allow for such clear distinctions.

She says, *"In regard to the second person singular (thou) as opposed to the second person plural (you), unlike the English Language, the Arabic language is very specific. There are fourteen personal pronouns in Arabic as opposed to six in English. Arabic includes the nominative "thou"; the objective, "thee"; and the possessive, "thy". Whenever the Prophets are spoken to directly, the pronoun used is thou or thee. This is also the way the Qur'an addresses Mary."*[215]

She goes on to say*, "Whereas to many the use of thou, thee and thy, is what they call "King James" English, from the theological point of view, it is important to keep the distinction. Using the second person singular (Thou, Thee, Thy) confirms the Oneness of God, the singular God, the One God." Whereas when the pronoun "you"*

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[215] - Ibid, xviii.

or the second person plural is used for God, we are indicating that there are plural gods. This is the only sin that the Qur'an says in unforgivable.[216]

Notwithstanding all Bakhtiar's hype about the superiority of using "thou, thee, thy" vs "you and your", incredibly we find her still resorting to using "you and your" throughout her translation! Bakhtiar justifies this choice by saying, "*In order to avoid this [sin of shirk], in the English only translation of The Sublime Qur'an where the pronouns "you" or "your" are used referring to "thou," "thee" or "thy," "you" or "your" appear in bold so the reader becomes aware of the original pronoun.*"[217]

I would like to address her above propositions in a few brief points:

1) "Thou vs You" is the fourth of Bakhtiar's six characteristics by which she claims her translation differs from *all other English translations of the Qur'an*. It is presented in the form of a pitch as to the importance of using "thou, thee, thy" vs "you" and "your". Bakhtiar however, is far from being the only translator who lays claim to preferring the "thou, thee, thy" rendering, and she most certainly cannot take credit for being the first of them.[218] Below are just some of the other English language translations that use "thou, thee, thy":

   1. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (1930)[219]

   2. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934 / 1937)[220]

   3. Sher Ali (1955)[221]

   4. Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1957)[222]

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[216] - Ibid.
[217] - Ibid, xix.
[218] - Especially since she ends up using "you" and "your" in the end as explained in point 3 below.
[219] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**.
[220] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**.
[221] - Sher Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**.

2) Bakhtiar levels an astonishing accusation against all translators of the Qur'an who choose not to use the "thou, thee, thy" rendering, by accusing them of committing the unforgivable sin of shirk,[223] she says, "*Using the second person singular (Thou, Thee, Thy) confirms the Oneness of God, the singular God, the One God.*" *Whereas when the pronoun "you" or the second person plural is used for God, we are indicating that there are plural gods. This is the only sin that the Qur'an says in unforgivable.*"[224]

Bakhtiar's comments undeniably betray her shallow grasp of Islamic theology in general and her befuddled understanding of the concept of shirk in particular. Modern day English does not have the syntax to distinguish the nominative "you" from the accusative or genitive "you" as is possible in the Arabic. Given the way the English language operates, <u>shirk or the absence of it is inferred primarily by context and secondly by intent.</u> To postulate that using "you" is indicative of there being plural gods (shirk), is baseless, misleading and downright ridiculous. The context of each ayah is more than sufficient to inform the reader as to whether they are being ordered with monotheism or polytheism!

I will cite a few renderings in different translation styles of **Al-Baqarah [2:32]** by way of example to make my case:

﴾ قَالُواْ سُبْحَانَكَ لاَ عِلْمَ لَنَآ إِلاَّ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿

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[222] -Daryabadi, **The Holy Qur'an**.
[223] - Presumably she is not including herself in this accusation!
[224] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xviii.

Here the ayah is quoting the angels of Allah when they address Allah.

Pickthall, who is one of the translators who utilizes "thou, thee, thy" throughout his translation renders the ayah as follows:

"They said: Be glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise."[225]

Itani who prefers the usage of modern English in his translation renders the ayah as follows:

"They said, "Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. It is you who are the Knowledgeable, the Wise."[226]

Bakhtiar renders the ayah as follows:

"They said: Glory be to **You**![227] We have no knowledge but what **You** had taught us. Truly, **You**, **You** *alone are* The Knowing, The Wise."[228]

From the above three translations I would contend that no reader of Itani's translation would assume that the angels of Allah were making shirk with Allah since the context makes it more than obvious that they are directing their speech to their One and Only Lord, Allah, despite his usage of "You" instead of "thou, thee, thy". The capital letter "Y" in "You" goes a long way in aiding this understanding.

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[225] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an**, [2:32].
[226] - Itani, **Qur'an in English, Clear and Easy to Understand**, [2:32].
[227] - Italics and bold type are from Bakhtiar.
[228] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [2:32].

3) Furthermore, if any one hypothetically got confused by the likes of Itani's translation and inferred from it that the angels were indulging in the unforgivable sin of shirk in this ayah, Bakhtiar typing the "You's" in bold would do little to bring them back to tawheed!

4) Bakhtiar's assertion that by putting the "you" or "your" in bold font makes the reader aware of the original pronoun is simply not a legitimate claim. She says, "*In order to avoid this [shirk], in the English only translation of The Sublime Qur'an where the pronouns "you" or "your" are used referring to "thou," "thee" or "thy," "you" or "your" appear in bold so the reader becomes aware of the original pronoun.*"[229]

The problems with Bakhtiar's scheme here are both **theoretical** as well as **practical**:

- **In theory** the idea would never work because if "you" is put in bold when it refers to "thou" as well as "thee" as well as "thy" then how will it aid the reader to understand which one of the three was intended? Despite all Bakhtiar's hoopla about the bold type it actually adds nothing to the meaning; one ends up in exactly the same predicament with her bold type fortified rendering as one would in a rendering that has no bold type. If Bakhtiar was really so concerned about this issue, the addition of parenthesis with an abbreviation for nominative, accusative and genitive would have been more effective although still totally unnecessary.

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[229] - Ibid, xix.

- **In practice** Bakhtiar botches up the whole idea of using her favored bold type to aid the understanding of Tawheed since she does not limit the bold type to when "You" refers to Allah. Instead she also includes prophets and on occasion even the disbelievers in her bold type of the word "you", as displayed in her rendering of At-Teen [95:7]:

"What will cause **you** to deny the Judgment after that?"[230]

It is clear that "**you**" in the ayah refers to the disbelievers and not to Allah or His messengers, (since neither of them would deny the Judgment!) but for some reason it is still in bold, further confusing the reader. It is tempting to argue that indeed it is Bakhtiar's rendering that would cause an ill-informed reader to confuse between the bold type "you" referring to Allah and the bold type "you" referring to prophets, disbelievers et al, possibly leading to the polytheism that she warns of!

In conclusion, I find on the issue of "thou" vs "you":

- Bakhtiar is pretentious in her claim that she is the first to use a system that accurately translates the different Arabic pronouns for "you" since it has been used by many before her.

- She is peddling false fears of causing people to fall into shirk by not using "thou, thee, thy" or worse still, accusing her fellow translators of committing shirk by not using her favored method.

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[230] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [95:7].

- The reader is left incredulous that after hyping up the usage of "thou, thee, thy" Bakhtiar herself does not utilize it in her translation but instead resorts to an ad-hoc bold font of "you, your" that is used arbitrarily.

- Bakhtiar's usage of bold font is erroneous in its execution. Since she does not limit its reference to "Allah" alone, it does precious little to help in cultivating tawheed and averting shirk, which according to Bakhtiar, was the main motivation behind her hyped up bold type. In this regard we can safely say that her entire "thou" vs "you" scheme was a huge fail on numerous counts.

2.1.6. An-Nisaa [4:34].

Bakhtiar dedicates over 10 pages of her 14-page introduction making a case for what she sees as her ground-breaking rendering of Al-Nisaa [4:34]:

﴿ وَاللَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلاَ تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلاً إِنَّ اللهَ كَانَ عَلِيّاً كَبِيراً ﴾

"And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places <u>and go away from them</u> (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great."[231]

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[231] - Ibid, [4:34].

The reader is presented by Bakhtiar, with every type of argument possible, from linguistics to human rights violations, to support this rendering in her introduction. Most of these arguments are self-contradictory, however, by way of example, to demonstrate how chronically un-versed Bakhtiar is in the basic nuances of the Arabic language, I will present two of her most commonly presented arguments in support of her infamous rendering along with a full refutation of it:

<u>Argument One:</u>

Bakhtiar argues that since [idhrib] is the imperative form of the verb [d r b] it therefore becomes a direct command from Allah to the Prophet that he **must** beat his wives! She says,

"As the Qur'an refers to the Prophet as a mercy to humanity and the model whose example should be followed, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Qur'an that related to his life (there are commands specific to other Prophets as well)[232] yet we find an exception in [d r b] according to the interpreters over the centuries."[233]

She continues this argument by saying,

"We have to ask ourselves, why did the Prophet not beat his wives even though it was a command in the Qur'an?"[234]

Bakhtiar's comments reveal her unbelievably poor grasp of the Arabic language and even flimsier grounding in Qur'anic discourse styles and 'usool al fiqh', all of which are essential for anyone who has undertaken the huge responsibility to

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[232] - Parenthesis is Bakhtiar's.
[233] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xxviii.
[234] - Ibid, xxxii.

translate, and thereby, interpret the meanings of the Book of Allah as discussed in chapter one of this paper.

The majority opinion amongst the scholars of Arabic language is that the default meaning of a command in the form of an imperative verb, is to indicate **obligation**, however this is only in the absence of a clear indication "qareena" or contextual evidence, that would imply one of the many other meanings of a commanding imperative verb. The 'qareena' can be from the context or the language itself.

From amongst the many meanings that an imperative verb can imply are the following:

1. **Permissibility**:

   In the event of other indications (qaraa'in) being present a command may be reduced to permissibility as demonstrated in the following ayaat:

   i.   Al Qur'an: [5:2]:

   ﴿ وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُواْ ﴾ 235

   *"But when you come out of ihram, then [you may] hunt."*236

   It must be clearly understood that hunting is not an obligatory command that must be executed by every pilgrim when they come out of the state of "ihram", rather the ayah is returning the ruling of hunting to what it originally was outside the state of ihraam, which is (ibaahah) or permissibility.237

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235 - **Al Qur'an**, [5:2].
236 - **Saheeh International translation** [5:2].
237 - The majority of the scholars of Usool have held the view that a command following a prohibition (al 'amr ba'd al-hadhr) returns the ruling to its original state which in this case is permissibility.

ii.   Al Qur'an, [62:10]:

﴿ فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَوةُ فَانتَشِرُواْ فِي الأُرْضِ وَابْتَغُواْ مِن فَضْلِ اللهِ ﴾ [238]

"And when the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty, and remember Allah much, that ye may be successful."[239]

Likewise, the address to the believers in this ayah to "disperse through the land and seek the bounty of Allah" after completing the Friday prayer is to render the activity <u>permissible</u> despite the presentation of the imperative verb.

2. **Recommendation:**

A command may likewise convey a recommendation if there are indications (qaraa'in) to warrant this conclusion. This is, for example, the case with regard to the Qur'anic command that requires the documentation of loans:

﴿يأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ إِذَا تَدَايَنتُم بِدَيْنٍ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَاكْتُبُوهُ﴾ [240]

"Oh you who believe,

When you give or take a loan for a fixed period, write it down."[241]

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[238] - **Al Qur'an**, [62:10].
[239] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [62:10].
[240] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:283].
[241] - **Saheeh International translation** [2:283].

However, from an indication (qareena) that occurs in the next ayah in the same surah, it is concluded that the command here implies a recommendation (nadb) only. This ayah reads:

$$﴿فَإِنْ أَمِنَ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِى اؤْتُمِنَ أَمَنَتَهُ﴾$$

And if one of you entrusteth to another let him who is trusted deliver up that which is entrusted to him (according to the pact between them)[242]

Here the use of the word "trust" (amaanah) signifies that the creditor must trust the debtor even without any writing.[243] The 'amr' therefore indicates a recommendation and not a command.

3. **Threat**:

A command may, according to the indications (qaraa'in) provided by the context and circumstances, imply a threat as in the Qur'anic address to the disbelievers:

$$﴿ اعْمَلُواْ مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴾^{244}$$

"Do what you wish, He is All-Seer of what you do!"

This is quite obviously not a command but rather a severe threat to the disbelievers.

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[242] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [2:283].
[243] - See: Kamali, **Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence**, 189.
[244] - **Al Qur'an**, [41:40].

4. Contempt (ihaanah):

A command may simply imply contempt (ihaanah) such as the Qur'anic address to the disbelievers on the Day of Judgement

﴿ ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ – إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنتُم بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ ﴾[245]

"Taste (this) Verily you are the mighty, the generous!"

This 'command' is of course not intended as anything but a contemptuous mockery of those who disbelieved.

5. Inability of the addressee to execute the command:

This is clearly demonstrated in the following ayah:

﴿ فَأْتُواْ بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُواْ شُهَدَاءَكُم مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ إِن كُنتُمْ ﴾[246]

"And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside Allah if ye are truthful."[247]

The idea that Allah is actually commanding man to produce a surah similar to the surahs of the Qur'an and that this is now obligatory on mankind because an imperative verb was used, is a view that does not need to be refuted due to its obvious absurdity!

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[245] - **Al Qur'an**, [44:49].
[246] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:23].
[247] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [2:23].

There are many more examples that can be found in the books of Usool, of imperative verbs in the Qur'an that do not signify commands but rather signify one of their many other intended meanings.[248]

For Bakhtiar to then postulate that because "idhrib" is the imperative form of the verb "d r b", it would be a direct command from Allah to His Prophet ﷺ to beat his wives is either a glaring display of the uttermost ignorance of basic Arabic grammar and ilm ul usool, or an outrageous exploitation of the assumed ignorance of the reader, whichever the case, it is an unforgivable violation of the responsibility of translating the words of Allah.

Argument Two:

Amongst Bakhtiar's arguments in defense of her rendering of [4:34] is a feeble attempt to practice the principle of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an", where one ayah of the Qur'an is understood in the light of another. She says, "*He [the Prophet] knew that according to [16:126] one is commanded to chastise with the same chastisement that that person has been given. "And if you chastise (aqaba) then chastise with the like of that with which you were chastised..." [16:126], a verse revealed before [4:34] so that the Prophet would have been aware of it when [4:34] was revealed. Therefore, conceivably if a husband harms his wife by beating her, according to [16:126], his wife... could reciprocate (the beating) to her husband. He (the Prophet) clearly believed that it was not within the Sunnah to do such a thing."*[249]

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[248] - This is well-documented in the books of Arabic Grammar as well as Usool ul Fiqh.

[249] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xxxiii.

I will address Bakhtiar's argument in a few points:

1. It is amusing to note how this is the only place in her entire translation of the Qur'an that Bakhtiar endeavors to employs the basic principle of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an". In fact it is the only time she allows herself to even making tafsir! Until this point Bakhtiar has remained adamant that her translation is only a literal rendering of the words of the Qur'an using the methodology of "formal equivalence" or literal translation, which she claims, enabled her to present a translation free from any type of interpretation or tafsir. However, when she reaches [4:34] her chosen and much lauded methodology of "formal equivalence" does not seem to produce the rendering she wishes to present so now the reader in painstakingly taken through all the different arguments and types of 'tafsir,' (including *her version* of tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an) that would give credit to her chosen rendering.

2. It is regrettable that Bakhtiar in her sole attempt at "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" fails so miserably. Her errors serve to highlight how disgracefully ignorant she is of the principles (usool) of tafsir, which as mentioned in Chapter One are a condition of being allowed to translate the Book of Allah. Below are a few basic concepts pertaining to the science of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" that have eluded Bakhtiar:

    i. Tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an cannot be done by making exegesis of a verse in the light of another totally unrelated verse that has nothing to do with the first.

ii.   The value of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" is measured based on the competence of the mufassir who is making the tafsir. Regardless of the importance of the subject matter, the tafsir is attributed to the one who made it, since he is the one who made the link between the two ayahs. Based on his ijtihad he concluded that one particular ayah makes tafsir of another.

iii.   Anyone other than the Prophet ﷺ (or a sahabi or taabi'ee narrating on the authority of the Prophet ﷺ), his decision to interpret an ayah in the light of another is based on his ijtihad which is based on his own opinion (ra'i) and his ability to derive the intended meaning (istinbaat). This firmly places a large chunk of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" in the category of "tafsir bil ra'i".

Based on the above points we can state the following:

1)   Bakhtiar has no business attempting this form of tafsir, or any other form of tafseer for that matter, since by her own admission she has no foundation in any of the Qur'anic sciences in general. Add to that her gross ignorance of usool ul tafsir and usool ul fiqh, as displayed by her indefensible mistakes highlighted in this paper, it becomes obvious that her attempt at tafsir has no value due to her scandalous level of ignorance.

2) Her effort to legitimize her unorthodox rendering by claiming it is supported by "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" is a transparent attempt to validate her baseless translation.

3) Interpreting [4:34] in the light of [16:126] is of no consideration according to the science of tafsir since we have already established that the value of "tafsir ul Qur'an bil Qur'an" is measured based on the competence of the mufassir who is making the tafsir, and Bakhtiar has repeatedly proven ill-equipped for this task.

4) Furthermore, the action she has done in the name of 'tafseer ul Qur'an bil Qur'an' is actually anything but that. In actuality what she has tried to do is find a contradiction between two ayaat of the Qur'an and then try to resolve the self-made contradiction by invalidating the obvious (dhaahir) meaning of one of the two ayaat!

5) The Prophet ﷺ himself warned us about people who will try to contradict one part of the Qur'an with another in the following hadeeth:

Once, the Prophet ﷺ passed by a group of people arguing over the Qur'an. He commanded them, "Verily the nations before you were destroyed by this action of yours; they would try to contradict part of the Book of Allah with other parts. Indeed, the Book of Allah came to confirm its verses with each other (and not to contradict them). Therefore, do not reject its verses due to

other verses. When you know something from it (the Qur'an), say it, and if you do not know it, then leave it to one who does know!"[250]

Bakhtiar would do well to heed this Prophetic advice.

6. Finally, it must be noted that despite all the notoriety and media coverage that Bakhtiar has received due to her claim to being the first to 'discover' the 'correct' meaning of [4:34], her claim is patently false. Bakhtiar was preceded by a number of commentators and translators who also chose to translate this ayah with a similar rendering. Amongst these are:

- Asma Barlas.[251] [252]

- Edip Yuksel[253]

- Ahmad Ali.[254]

Despite Bakhtiar's concerted effort to portray her rendering of [4:34] as a the fruit of her literal translation methodology, and not based on a pre-conceived ideological bias, she is betrayed in this regard by her own words in an interview given by her to the New York Times, where she conceded:

"I decided it [the word d-r-b] either has to have a different meaning or I can't keep translating,"[255]

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[250] - Reported by **Ahmad, an Nasaa'i** and is collected in **al-Mishkaat** no 237.
[251] - Barlas, Asma. **Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'an**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.
[252] - Barlas, in particular emphasizes the point saying, "this is not the only way to read the word 'daraba'. She goes onto to say, "In fact it is questionable whether the term daraba even refers to beating, hitting or striking a wife, even if symbolically" [Ibid. 188].
[253] - Yuksel, Edip, **The Qur'an: A Reformist Translation**. 2007.
[254] - Ali, Ahmed, **The Qur'an: A contemporary Translation.** Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p.78.

In the interview Bakhtiar admits to spending the next three months scoring through Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon until she found a translation that fit with her ideologies. This is the greatest proof that Bakhtiar's claim to be using a concordance-based literal translation to produce a translation free from personal ideologies is a farce, employed to give credence to her translation choices which are discriminatively picked to align with her ideological and doctrinal biases.

2.1.7. Evaluation of Bakhtiar's claims:

After examining each of Bakhtiar's six points[256] by which she claims her translation is *"different to all other English translations"*, it is evidently clear that NONE of her points were unique to her translation, As for her insistence of presenting five unique points (**no commentary, universal, inclusive language, thou vs you,[4:34]**) then I have presented not only a full 'point by point rebuttal' of each of these five claims in great detail, explaining how they are actually not conducive to the translation of the Qur'an, but I have also listed the names of the translators (and their translations) who also included the above five characteristics in their renderings, thereby nullifying Bakhtiar's claim that due to these five characteristics her translation was bringing something new to the English translations literature of the Qur'an.

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[255] - http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/25/us/25koran.html?ei=5088&en=835924e5b6d16c52&ex=1332475200&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all

[256] - We are reminded at this point that Bakhtiar only ever presented 5 points despite boasting of having six unique differences. [See: Bakhtiar, The Sublime Qur'an, xv].

2.2. A 'Unique' Qur'anic System?

Following this paper's arguments to negate Bakhtiar's five claims to the 'uniqueness' of her translation. It seems a fitting juncture to present a discussion on another shade of 'uniqueness' that is yet to be explored; that of Bakhtiar's unorthodox choices with regards to presenting the Qur'anic System (nidhaam ul Qur'an) in her translation. Whether these choices are entirely 'unique' cannot be fully verified, they are however most definitely unusual and seem to stoke controversy amongst those who are familiar with the rulings of Qur'an translations and the theological legalities surrounding it. Some of Bakhtiar's positions are obviously more worrisome than others. We will however provide a discussion on each of them below. These choices include:

- Omitting the Original Arabic from her translation
- Re-numbering the ayaat.
- Producing an English Recitation

2.2.1. Omitting the Original Arabic from Her Translation

Bakhtiar presents her peculiar reasoning behind the unorthodox decision to not include the original Arabic text as follows:

"*As there was no Arabic program for the Macintosh computer when I began this great undertaking in 2000 CE, I transliterated the words according to the system of transliteration developed by the American Library Association, Library of Congress 1997 Romanization Tables in preparing the accompanying Concordance of the*

Sublime Qur'an. I then placed its English translation that I would not repeat for another Arabic word."[257]

There are a number of points to be made here:

1) Despite the raging debate on the permissibility of translating the Qur'an or not, one thing that all sides agreed upon was that if the Qur'an is to be translated, then the original Arabic should accompany the text of the translation. This is to protect the Qur'an from interpolation and fabrications.[258]

2) Bakhtiar's above-mentioned explanation as to why she chose to omit the Arabic text is baseless. When she began *"this great undertaking,"* it was her duty that she selects a medium by which she can fulfill the obligations of a translator of the Qur'an. No one coerced her to use a Macintosh if she found herself unable to provide the Arabic text due to this decision. To expect to be excused of the obligation of providing the Arabic text for such a flimsy reason is not only disappointing but also highly unprofessional.

3) What makes the reader more dubious about the reasoning provided for not including the Arabic text and replacing it with the transliteration is that in actual fact, <u>Bakhtiar does not even provide the transliteration in the final version of 'The Sublime Qur'an'</u>. The 2007 edition upon which this paper is based provides neither the Arabic text of the Qur'an nor the transliteration. It merely provides Bakhtiar's translation. Although the transliteration is not enough in the view of this researcher, it would go

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[257] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiv.
[258] - as-Zarqaani, **Manaahil al Irfaan**, vol.2, p160.

some way in validating Bakhtiar's claim that the only reason she could not include the text in Arabic was due to her use of the Macintosh which was incompatible with the Arabic type set.

4) One is tempted to dismiss this failing as another example of Bakhtiar's ignorance of the conditions of translating the Qur'an and not read into it too deeply or suspect any bad intent. However, one is forced to re-examine her decision, when one takes into consideration Bakhtiar's decision to use the very first page of her book, "The Sublime Qur'an" to publish a certification of authenticity from Al-Azhar University.

Aside from the name of 'Al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy' which is written in bold in English, the entire certificate is purely in the Arabic Language. One would assume, as Bakhtiar surely did, that the majority of those purchasing her translation will be non-Arabic speakers who will therefore not understand what is stated in the certificate.

It would be fair to say that a great many of these readers would unwittingly assume that Al-Azhar is certifying her translation as authentic and correct. The certificate is in fact certifying the authenticity of the **Arabic text**. It is inconceivable that anyone would hypothesize that the certificate from Al-Azhar on page one of her book, is certifying the authenticity of an Arabic text when an Arabic text is not even present in her entire book.

Unfortunately, this appears to be a deliberate attempt by Bakhtiar to bring false credence to her translation. It also leaves us wondering which Arabic text was given to Al-Azhar for certification? And, why does the reader never hear about this Arabic text again in either Bakhtiar's preface or her introduction? It further nullifies

Bakhtiar's excuse of not being able to provide an accompanying Arabic text due to her Macintosh issues since she was clearly able to source an Arabic text of the Qur'an to gain Al-Azhar's certification which she could subsequently have included in the final publication.

2.2.2. Re-numbering the Ayaat of the Qur'an.

Bakhtiar also makes a rather questionable judgement with regards to re-numbering the ayaat of the Qur'an. Regarding this decision she states:

"*In terms of presentation, most English translations of the Qur'an presently available translate and present the translation Sign by Sign (or verse by verse), much like a translation of the Old or New Testament. The numbering system, added later, does not always mark the end of a verse. Often the sentence continues to the next verse. In order to put less emphasis on a verse number and in order that the reading may be uninterrupted, the reader will find a very different format from the usual English translation formats. As the Qur'an was revealed in the oral tradition and is still recited in Arabic as it was revealed, this English translation is arranged to match the oral recitation.*"[259]

One cannot help but be curious as to the reasons behind Bakhtiar's sudden emphasis on the Arabic recitation of the Qur'an as it pertains to the numbering of the ayaat in her translation. Here is a translator who has gone to lengths to highlight to her readers the importance of *the "unique universal and inclusive"*[260] English translation she is providing, that is free of the Arabic language, going so far as to not even

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[259] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xx.
[260] - Ibid, xvi, xvii.

include the name "Allah" in her work because it is too Arabic, instead, resorting to the name "God". This same translator would then have us believe that "*since the Qur'an is still recited in Arabic as it was revealed*," and since "*often the sentence continues onto the next verse*" in the Arabic original, she saw it within her rights as a translator to re-number the ayaat in the English translated version.

Bakhtiar rationalizes her extraordinary decision by explaining that the re-numbering is "*In order to put less emphasis on a verse number and in order that the reading may be uninterrupted.*"[261] Perhaps Bakhtiar is unaware that when reciting the Qur'an in its original Arabic, or even when reading a translation of its meanings, the emphasis on the verse number is already negligible and is mostly present to help in referencing a particular ayah. It does not interrupt the recitation in anyway, nor has it ever done so.

That leaves us with the question, what was Bakhtiar's real reasoning for re-numbering the ayaat in her translation? Some critics of her translation may feel that this single action of Bakhtiar's, out of all the others is the greatest indication of her desire to impair the possibility of measuring up the accuracy of her translation against the original Arabic. Others, however, may go further and see her act of re-numbering the ayaat, when coupled with her decision to omit the Arabic text completely, to be an attempt to deliberately facilitate the insertion of an inaccurate and theologically biased translation.

Despite not knowing the real reason for Bakhtiar's decision to re-number the ayaat, one thing we can state without any doubt is that the act of re-numbering the ayaat of the Qur'an, in and of itself, would have no bearing on the authenticity and preservation of the original Arabic Qur'an since the numbering of ayaat is not, for the

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[261] - Ibid, xx.

most part, an accurate science; we know how many words are in the Qur'an and even how many letters. For this reason, the idea, that fiddling with the ayah numbers would have any impact on the preservation of the original Arabic Qur'an is a fallacy. That being said, this decision remains an example of Bakhtiar's questionable judgement at best and darker motives at worst.

What makes the whole act of re-numbering more bizarre and incongruent is that Bakhtiar explains her actions by saying:

"In order to put less emphasis on a verse number and in order that the reading may be uninterrupted, the reader will find a very different format from the usual English translation formats."[262]

She claims that her main motivations in re-numbering the ayaat is to remove the emphasis from the verse number so that the reader can focus on the message uninterrupted. This is in direct contravention of Bakhtiar's decision to then include a whole lot more numbering in her book, that is less important than the actual ayah numbers.

Bakhtiar says,

"The number and name of each Chapter (surah) appears at the top of each page of this edition of the translation along with the Stage (manzil, division of the Qur'an into seven parts so it can be read in its entirety in a week), Part (juz' or para, division of the Qur'an into thirty parts so that the entire Qur'an can be read during the month of Ramadan), Section (ruku', an indication to bow the head), and the Signs (ayat) on that page."[263]

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[262] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xx.
[263] - Ibid.

To clarify the above, what Bakhtiar is essentially stating is that she will be adding extra numbers, (in addition to the ayah number) to each page showing:

- the number of the surah

- the number of the manzil

- the number of juzz

- *and* the number of the ayah.

This decision is a direct contradiction of her previous statement quoted above, to put less emphasis on numbers since they interrupt the reading experience, which was the raison d'être for her changing the traditional format of the numbering of the ayaat in the first place.

Additionally, when one delves into the actual text of The Sublime Qur'an one finds even more numbers than those Bakhtiar admits to including in her preface. In addition to the chapter (surah), stage (manzil), part (juz') and verse (ayah), she also includes something called "Section". Which is yet another number to detract and interrupt the reading experience that she claims to be so averse to.

Therefore, if you were to open up The Sublime Qur'an randomly on any page, for example page 283, you would find the following written across the page, (and every page in the book): **Chapter 18 The Cave (al Kahf) Stage 4 Part 16 Section 111 Signs 18:83-18:96.**[264] Now, that is unarguably a lot of numbers for someone who changed the numbering of the ayaat and its traditional format specifically to put *less* emphasis on numbers.

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[264] - Ibid, p.283.

Like with many other decisions Bakhtiar makes in her book, we are not left with clear answers as to the real intent behind them. One thing that is apparent, however, is that the reasoning that is presented by Bakhtiar cannot be true because it is contrary to all her other actions. Bakhtiar is therefore either not truthful about the real reason for re-numbering the ayaat or if it was for the reason she asserts, namely to put less emphasis on numbers, then she fails miserably in this regard on account of all the other extra numbers she then chooses to include.

2.2.3. Producing an English 'Recitation' of the Sublime Qur'an:

Bakhtiar's decision to follow up the publication of her translation of the Qur'an by releasing an audio DVD of her "recitation" of the English translation gives us a small window into understanding her vision for her translation, or at the very least, her view on its position vis-à-vis the Arabic original.

No doubt, Bakhtiar's understanding of the role of a Qur'an translation would have an impact on much of her translation methodology and would have played a big part in her decision to employ formal equivalence rather than dynamic equivalence and other methodological decisions.

Bakhtiar mentions in her preface that she devoted seven years to working on the literal translations of the words for her concordance to aid her in producing her translation and she is to be commended on her effort and devotion. Translating the Qur'an is, no doubt, a monumental positive contribution to mankind in a time and age when Arabic is no longer comprehensible to the majority of the Muslims of the world. This is even more true for the Non-Muslims, amongst whom there has been a

sustained and growing interest in Islam and its sacred scripture whether for personal study or academic pursuit. It must be acknowledged however, that the product of any translation itself, is simply <u>one</u> interpretation, amongst many, of the meanings of the Qur'an rather than a substitution for the original text. It is vital, therefore, that a distinction is made between the Qur'an and a translated Qur'an.[265]

Bakhtiar blurs this line by producing a DVD of her own "recitation" of the English translation. The DVD has been available through her website[266] as well as on Amazon[267] since 2008. More recently she has offered the entire series for free on her personal YouTube channel.[268] It is to be noted, with some dismay, that Bakhtiar chose to entitle this piece of work as "*An English Recitation of the Sublime Qur'an,*" dropping the word 'translation' from the product description altogether. Her choice of wording underscores her insistence on the equivalence of her English translation to its Arabic original, and its capacity and potential to act as its substitute for the non-Arabic speaking masses. This is indeed an unorthodox position that goes against the opinions of the scholars in the field of Qur'anic Studies as well as the experts in the field of translating sacred texts.

This is best understood in light of the definition of the Qur'an, which is defined by the scholars in the field as follows:

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[265] - See: Gutt, **Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context**, 1991, p125
[266] - http://www.sublimeQur'an.org/blog
[267] - https://www.amazon.com/Sublime-Qur'an-English-Recitation-Parts/dp/1567447643/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1514931754&sr=8-1&keywords=sublime+Qur'an+dvd
[268] - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbFyY0OZbd8oTYwm94z58uQ

"The Qur'an is the Arabic Speech (kalaam) of Allah, which he revealed to Muhammad, in both wording and meaning, and which has been preserved in the mus-hafs, and has reached us by mutawaatir transmissions, and is a challenge to mankind to produce something similar to it."[269]

If we deconstruct this definition and examine each statement in it separately we find that calling the English recitation of the translation of the meanings of the Qur'an, *"The Qur'an"* or *"The English Qur'an"* is negated by every single part of the definition. Below is a brief deconstruction:

1) *'The Qur'an is the Arabic…'*

This statement is the most obvious out of the seven parts of the definition that negates any translation being entitled as Qur'an. The statement is clear that the Qur'an can only be in Arabic. Its translation therefore cannot be considered as "Qur'an or Qur'anic recitation". This is supported by the Qur'an itself in over 10 different places where Allah refers to the Qur'an as an 'Arabic Qur'an',[270] as stated in Surah [12:2]:

$$﴿إِنَّآ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ قُرْءَٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا﴾ [271]$$

Verily, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an[272]

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[269] - Az-Zarqaani**, Manaahil al 'Irfan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**, Vol 1, p.21.
[270] - See Qaadhi, **An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan**, p.26.
[271] - **Al Qur'an**, [12:2].
[272] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [12:2].

Az-Zarqaani claims the matter is so clear that it is close to having reached the status of 'ijma (consensus) amongst the scholars. He says, "It is almost unanimous that it is forbidden to recite the Qur'an in any language other than Arabic, be it Persian or other than that, whether this recitation is in the prayer or out of it.[273]

2) '...Speech (kalaam) of Allah'

This statement intrinsically links the words of Allah with Allah himself. All translations, translated recitals or tafseer and commentary, even in the Arabic language, are inevitably disqualified from being the 'The Qur'an' in any way shape or form.

3) '...which He revealed to Muhammad...'

All of the other types of Speech spoken by Allah are therefore excluded from the term Qur'an. Only the Speech of Allah revealed to Muhammad is included. This excludes Allah's Speech to the other Messengers or to the Angels or anyone else. An English translation recital would quite obviously be disqualified by this condition as well.

4) '...in its wording and in its meaning...'

This statement further restricts the application of the term 'Qur'an' by stipulating that both the words of the Qur'an and its meanings must be from Allah.[274] Even if one was to hypothesize for a moment, that the English

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[273] - Az-Zarqaani, **Manaahil al 'Irfan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an**, Vol 2, p.126.

[274] - The Qur'an consists of manifest revelation, (wahy dhahir) which is defined as communication from Allah to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, conveyed by the Angel Jibreel, in the exact words from Allah. This was always received by the Prophet ﷺ in a state of wakefulness, and thus no part of the

translation was a 'formal equivalent' of the Arabic, which is what Bakhtiar's opinion is with regards to The Sublime Qur'an, this part of the definition negates the application of the term 'Qur'an' to any translation or translated recital, on the grounds that its words are not from Allah, even if the meanings are.[275]

5) *'...which has been preserved in the masaahif...'*

Masaahif is plural for 'mus-haf'. In this part of the definition it specifically refers to the 'masaahif of Uthman' that were written in his life-time[276]. This statement excludes any ayah that was not originally in those 'masaahif'. Traditionally this part of the statement is employed to exclude abrogated verses of the Qur'an that were not part of the Masaahif of Uthman. It need not be explained that translations would also be disqualified by this statement.

6) *'...and has reached us by mutawaatir transmission...'*[277]

Every 'harf'[278] in the Qur'an has been transmitted to us through mutawaatir chains of narration. The ulema are in agreement that the entire text of the Qur'an is mutawaatir, that is, its authenticity is proven by universally accepted testimony. Hence nothing less than 'tawaatur' is accepted as

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Qur'an originated in internal inspiration or dreams. This differs from (wahy baatin) which is internal revelation which consists of 'ilham or inspiration. [See Kamali, **Principles of Jurisprudence**, P.18.]

[275] -Traditionally this part of the definition had mostly been used to exclude the 'Hadeeth Qudsi' from the term Qur'an since the Hadith Qudsi's wordings belongs to the Prophet ﷺ and only the meaning is considered to be revelation from Allah. Using this part of the definition to now exclude all translations must be added to scholarly discourse on the topic since it is a pertinent part of the discussion that perhaps was not seen as relevant when the traditional works on Uloom ul Qur'an were first penned.

[276] - Zayd ibn Thabit, the scribe of the Prophet ﷺ, was employed in the task of compiling the text along with a band of trusted companions of the Prophet ﷺ. The text after being verified as accurate was compiled in a single volume, and identical copies of it were sent to the different corners of the Muslim lands. All remaining variations were destroyed. [See Kamali, **Principles of Jurisprudence**, p.22].

[277] - If something is reported by a Mutawaatir chain of transmission this means that it was reported by such a large number of people that it is inconceivable that they could have gathered to fabricate a lie.

[278] - Literally a letter or particle in the Arabic language.

evidence in establishing the authenticity of the variant readings of the Qur'an.[279] A translation by its nature is not only not transmitted to us through any chain but also is not agreed upon as the standard in any way. This condition makes it impossible to consider a recital of the translation as "Qur'an".

7) *'...and is a challenge to mankind to produce something similar to it.'*
There is no challenge with regards to translations since there is no inimitability (i'jaaz) involved.

One could argue in Bakhtiar's defence by pointing out that she does acknowledge, to some extent, the inimitable nature of the Arabic Qur'an by affirming that it is superior in both beauty and style when she says:

"Clearly no translation of the Qur'an can compare in beauty and style with the original Arabic, which has been described as: "by turns, striking, soaring, vivid, terrible, tender and breathtaking." Recognizing this, a translation of a sacred text which will never equal the original, still has certain criteria it should meet.[280]

This general acknowledgement from Bakhtiar of the superiority of the Arabic style and beauty, cannot be used as evidence to negate her assertion that the recitation of the English translation, despite not being equal in terms of beauty and style, can still replace the Arabic original due to its equivalence in the message. Bakhtiar's position is apparent in her decision to produce a DVD of her 'recitation' of her

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[279] - See Kamali, **Principles of Jurisprudence**, p.21.
[280] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiii.

English translation and is further reinforced by her regrettable decision to brand it as the *"recitation of the English Qur'an"* choosing to drop the word translation altogether. Furthermore, on her personal Youtube channel, Bakhtiar goes so far as to post a content description saying:

"The Complete Qur'an English Recitation is in 30 parts (para). It is the recitation of the Sublime Qur'an."[281]

The disparity between Bakhtiar's view of the written translation and that of her recital of that translation[282] is not a new phenomenon, indeed this has been the position of many of the different sects of Islam historically,[283] where their beliefs about the written Word was different to the recited Word.[284]

The definition of '*the Qur'an*' along with its detailed deconstruction, cited above, is sufficient refutation of Bakhtiar's view-point and all subsequent ideologies built upon that view.

The importance of understanding Bakhtiar's personal view on this issue cannot be over-stated since it is intrinsically linked to her methodology of translating the Qur'an. Understanding her personal perception of her translation goes a long way in explaining her comments regarding her rendering of [4:34] and other ayaat where she emphasizes how women have been waiting 1400 years for someone like her to appear and challenge the traditional understanding of the meanings of the Qur'an, and to

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[281] - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEvbmtK21YM]

[282] - The disparity being that she seems to acknowledge that her written translation in the form of her book 'The Sublime Qur'an' is a translation of the original, albeit a formally equivalent one, and she openly calls it that. But tends to definitively distance herself from this position when it comes to her recitation of the translation referring to it both on her website [www.sublimeQur'an.org/blog] and on her Youtube channel [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEvbmtK21YM] as "The Recitation of the Complete English Qur'an.'

[283] - See: al-Harbi, Ahmad ibn Awad, **al-Maaturidiya: Diraasat wa Taqweem**, Also, see: Noor, Khalid, **Manhaj Ahl as-Sunnah wa Manhaj al-Ashaa'irah Fi Tawheedullah Ta'aala**.

[284] - A fuller discussion on this matter can be found in the books of Islamic Theology.

provide them with clarity on the true message of the Qur'an, one that, according to Bakhtiar, was intentionally usurped by male commentators of the Qur'an.[285]

It must be noted that all the audio recitations of the original Arabic Qur'an available are reciting the same Qur'an. There is no discrepancy in what is being recited despite differences between the qiraa'aat. Although in the last 50 years various translations have been inserted between the Arabic recitation of each ayah in audio format, it has almost always been an accompaniment to the actual Arabic recitation of the Qur'an. For Bakhtiar to strip away the Arabic, and to substitute it entirely with her English translations and then to market it as a 'recitation' of the Qur'an shows clear disregard for all scholarly discourse on the topic and reveals an unabated desire to have her readers believe that her English translation is equivalent to the Arabic and can be used as a substitute for it. This is hugely problematic from many angles as we have mentioned and will be discussed more thoroughly under the section of formal equivalence in Chapter Three.

If we turn our attention away from Bakhtiar's perception of her translation and focus for a moment on the action itself, that of 'reciting' the Qur'an in English we find that even the decision to have a 'recital of a Qur'an translation' is indeed an unorthodox position to hold and is squarely dismissed by the scholars of all the well-known madhaahib.[286] I quote the formal positions of the four madhaahib because Bakhtiar promises in her preface to work within their frame-work.

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[285] - See Bakhtiar's website: http://www.sublimeQur'an.org/about.html.
[286] - Madhaahib, (sing. Madhab) juristic or theological school of thought.

<u>Al-Maalikiyyah:</u>[287]

It is mentioned in Haashiyah ad-Dusooqi 'alaa sharh ad-Dardeer which is a maaliki book "Recitation of the Qur'an in other than Arabic is not allowed."[288]

<u>Ash-Shafi'iyyah:</u>[289]

As-Suyootee says on the issue, "And it is not permissible to recite the meaning of the Qur'an, because Jibreel conveyed it word for word, therefore it is not permissible to recite its meanings."[290]

Imam an-Nawawi said, "It is not allowed to recite the Qur'an in any language other than Arabic, regardless of whether a person is capable of speaking Arabic or not, and whether such recitations occur during prayer or not."[291]

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[287] - The founding scholar of this Madh-hab, Maalik ibn Anas ibn 'Aamir, was born in Madeenah in the year 717 CE. His grandfather,'Aamir, was among the major Sahaabah of Madeenah. Maalik studied Hadeeth under az-Zuhree who was the greatest Hadeeth scholar of his time. Maalik's only journeys outside of Madeenah were for Hajj, and thus he largely limited himself to the knowledge available in Madeenah. Imaam Maalik's method of teaching was based on the narration of Hadeeths and the discussion of their meanings in the context of problems of that day. After Maalik completed al-Muwatta', he used to narrate it to his students as the sum total of his Madh-hab, but would add or subtract from it slightly, whenever new information reached him. He used to strictly avoid speculation and hypothetical Fiqh and thus his school and its followers were referred to as the people of Hadeeth (Ahl al-Hadeeth).

[288] - **Haashiyah ad-Dusooqi 'alaa sharh al Kabeer** (lil Dardeer), Ad-Dusooqi, Muhammad bin Ahmad, vol.1, p.233.

[289] - Imaam ash-Shaafi'ee combined the Fiqh of Hijaaz (Maalikee thought) with that of Iraq, (Hanafee thought) and created a new Madh-hab which he dictated to his students in the form of a book called **al-Hujjah** (The Evidence) in the year 810 CE. This book and period of his scholarship are usually referred to as al-Madh-hab al-Qadeem (the old school of thought) to differentiate it from the second period to his scholarship which occurred after he reached Egypt. In Egypt he absorbed the Fiqh of Imaam al-Layth ibn Sa'd and dictated al-Madh-hab al-Jadeed (the new school of thought) to his students in the form of another book which he named al-Umm (he Essence). Because of his exposure to a completely new set of Hadeeths and legal reasoning, in al-Madh-hab al-Jadeed, he reversed many of the legal positions which he had held while in Iraq. Imaam ash-Shafi'ee holds the distinction of being the first Imaam to systematize the fundamental principles of Fiqh which he recorded in his book called **ar-Risaalah.**

[290] -Az-Zarqani, **Manahil al-Irfan Fi Uloom ul Qur'an,** p.126.

[291] - Ibid, vol.2 p.160.

<u>Al-Hanabilah:</u>[292]

It is mentioned in Al-Mughni "And recitation (of the Qur'an) is not allowed in other than Arabic."[293]

Ibn Taymiyah said, "…The scholars of the religion held the view that it is impermissible to recite (the Qur'an) in a language other than Arabic, whether a person is capable of reading Arabic or not, because this (translation) removes the fact that the Qur'an is a revelation from Allah". In another place, he said, "As for the Qur'an, it is not to be recited in other than Arabic, whether a person is capable of doing so or not. This is according to the majority opinion, and it is the correct opinion, without a doubt."[294]

<u>Al-Ahnaaf</u>:[295]

Aboo Hanifah is reported to have made some allowances in this field but has been heavily refuted by his contemporaries from within his own madhab, and his two most illustrious students Aboo Yusuf and Ash-Shaybani restricted the generality of their teacher's rulings.[296] It is reported that Aboo Hanifah himself reversed his initial

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[292] - The scholar to whom this Madh-hab is attributed is Ahmad ibn Hambal ash-Shaybaanee, who was born in Baghdad in the year 778 CE. He became one of the greatest memorizers and narrators of Hadeeth of his time Imaam Ahmad's greatest concern whilst formulating his madh-hab was the collection, narration, and interpretation of Hadeeth. His teaching method consisted of dictating Hadeeths from his vast collection known as **al-Musnad,** which contained over 30,000 Hadeeths, as well as the various opinions of the Sahaabah concerning their interpretation. He would then apply the Hadeeths or rulings to various existing problems. If he could not find a suitable Hadeeth or opinion to solve a problem, he would offer his own opinion while forbidding his students to record any of his own solutions. As a result, his Madhhab was recorded, not by his students but by their students.
[293] - Ibn Qudaamah, **Al Mughni**, vol.1, p.526, Maktaba al Qahira, nd.
[294] -See Qattaan**, al Mabaahith FI Uloom ul Qur'an**, p.319-320 and Qaadhi, An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan, p.353.
[295] - This Madh-hab is named after its founding scholar, Abu Haneefah, whose real name was Nu'maan ibn Thaabit. He was born in the year 702 CE. Kufah, (Iraq). Abu Haneefah was considered among the minor Taabi'oon (students of the Sahaabah.) Imaam Abu Haneefah based his teaching method on the principle of Shoorah (group discussion). He would present a legal problem to his students for debate and discussion and tell them to record its solution whenever they arrived at a unified position. Because of their leaning towards hypothetical Fiqh and solving its solutions they became known as the Ahl ar-Ra'i (the people of opinion).
[296] - See Qaadhi, **An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'aan**, p.352.

ruling and this is now considered to be the correct view of the Hanafi school.[297] Az-Zarqani quotes the Hanafi president of Al-Azhar at the time, as saying: "The Imams are unanimous that it is not permissible to recite the Qur'an in other than Arabic outside of the salat, as for inside of the salat is even more severely prohibited."[298]

Ibn Taymiyah eloquently summarizes the position of the scholars on this matter saying, whilst the jumhoor of ulema[299] have forbidden the Qur'an to be recited in other than Arabic, they have maintained the permissibility of translating it into other languages. Likewise, they have permitted translation of the tafseer of the Qur'an for the sake of letting the message and guidance contained within them be known and understood by those who do not know Arabic. But just as the tafseer is not the Qur'an and cannot be recited then likewise the translation of the meanings of the Qur'an are not the Qur'an and cannot be recited.[300]

Bakhtiar claims that her work is guided by all of the Hanafi, Maliki and Shafi'ee Schools of Law.[301] We have provided above the opinions of the foremost scholars of each of the above schools of law and she has decidedly gone against all of them with her actions despite claiming to work within their legal frame-work.

It must be emphasized that the reasoning behind the absolute objections to substituting the original Arabic Qur'an and its recitation with a recitation of its translation is not just a theological matter based on the infringement of the definition of the Qur'an, as detailed above. But also, from a methodological point of view, it gives the false impression that a translation can accurately convey the complete meaning of the Qur'an. This is a dangerous idea which causes the reader of a

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[297] - Kamali, **Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence**, p,19.
[298] - Az-Zarqani, **Manahil al-Irfan fi Uloom ul Qur'an** vol.2, p.128. Az-Zarqani quotes from Majallatul Azhar, Vol.3, pp.32,33,66 and 67.
[299] - 'jumhoor ul ulema' refers to a substantial majority of well-renowned scholars through Islamic history.
[300] - Ibn Taymiyah, **Al Jawaab As-Sahih**, Vol.1, p.190.
[301] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xx.

translation to forget that each translation only represents one person's understanding of the text, each is significantly different from the others, and none is the Qur'an itself. There is but one Word, but there are as many interpretations of that Word as there are translators and readers.[302]

2.3. Conclusions.

Bakhtiar claims that her translation is unique in five ways: (no commentary, universal, inclusive language, thou vs you and her rendering of 4.34). In the first part of this chapter we presented a detailed discussion on all the above five ways providing not only a refutation to her claim that her translation was unique in these five ways, but also clarifying that the methods themselves were incompatible with the translation of the Qur'an and were a cause of great inaccuracies with huge repercussions on Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

We did note however, in the second part of this chapter, that Bakhtiar's translation does remain 'unique' in another sense. This is due to a number of unorthodox choices she makes with regards to the Qur'anic system. Amongst these choices is her decision to remove the accompanying Arabic text from her translation, to re-number the ayaat of the Qur'an, and her decision to produce an English 'recitation' of The Sublime Qur'an. We presented a discussion on each of the above points, noting the effects of these decisions on the methodology of her translation and its message.

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[302] - See: Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse, Exegesis and Texture**, p.179.

This study finds that each one of these decisions are troublesome even when explored in isolation. However, when viewed in light of each other, the impact is compounded and Bakhtiar's silent call to re-frame the stature of the translated Qur'an, as an equal substitute to the Qur'an, becomes deafening.

CHAPTER THREE OUTLINE:

The Methodological Problems in Bakhtiar's Translation

3.1. Introduction.

3.2 Methodologies of Translation:

> 3.2.1 Word Focused Translation.

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3.3. Bakhtiar's Methodology of Translating the Qur'an [In Her Own Words]

> 3.3.1. A Scientific Study into the Feasibility of Formal Equivalence.

> 3.3.2. Allocating a Different English Equivalent for Each Arabic Word in the Qur'an.

> 3.3.3. Translating each Arabic word with the English 'equivalent' that was pre-allocated to it, whenever it appears in the Qur'an.

> 3.3.4. Using Arabic words in their Romanized transliterated form without any translation, commentary or explanation of the meaning.

> 3.3.5. Bakhtiar on Footnotes, Commentary and Italicization.

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> 3.5.1. Bakhtiar's Arguments in Favour of Formal Equivalence and its Effects of its Application on the Qur'an translation

> 3.5.2. The Effects of Employing Formal Equivalence Whilst Omitting Footnotes and Commentary.

> 3.5.3. The Intrinsic Problems of Bakhtiar Mismatching her Methodology with her Target Audience.

3.6. The Role of 'Context' in Translation.

> 3.6.1. The Definition of 'Context' and its Role in Translation.

> 3.6.2. Types of Context and its effects on Translation.

CHAPTER THREE: The Methodological Problems in Bakhtiar's Translation

3.1 Introduction.

At first glance it seems very simple to deduce Bakhtiar's methodology since she goes to great lengths in her preface to explain the copious methodology she engaged to produce her translation. However, after a closer inspection of her claims, it becomes apparent that the task of deducing her methodology is not as simple as she would like us to believe. In this chapter I will first provide a brief over-view of the methodologies of translation utilized by translators in general with an explanation of key terms. Following this, we will look at where Bakhtiar's methodology fits within this frame-work.

There are significant discrepancies between the methodology Bakhtiar claims to have used and her application of that methodology. However, since even her 'claimed methodology' itself has glaring inaccuracies from the linguistic as well as the theological point of view, we will provide a critique of it separately, citing examples of its inaptitude for the task of translating the Qur'an, followed by a critique of Bakhtiar's application of the methodology.

Since it is impossible to appreciate the repercussions of each one of Bakhtiar's methodological choices without a presentation of examples from within her translation work to demonstrate these effects, we will present a selection of samples of her execution of each part of her methodology and the consequences it had on the translation presented. Where the mistranslation has far-reaching effects on Islamic theology and jurisprudence we will present a complete case-study of the word and the repercussions related to the methodology by which it was translated. In all cases we

will provide a selection of comparative translations, no less than three, from well-renowned translators to provide a basis of comparison.

3.2 Methodologies of Translation:

Methodologies of translating a text can be defined as 'the way we translate', whether we translate literally or freely, the words or the meanings, the form or the context, the letter or the spirit, the manner or the matter, the form or the message, the direct meaning or the implied meaning, in context or out of context, and so on.[303]

Experts in the field of translation studies broadly divide translation methodology into two categories. The first is a 'word-focused' translation, the second a 'meaning-focused' translation.

3.2.1 Word Focused Translation:

This is a literal translation with emphasis on the linguistic accuracy of each word. This method of translation seeks to translate each word or phrase from the source language into an identical word or phrase in the target language, with the same number, grammatical class and type of language. Context is only considered at the most basic level to ensure, for example, the conjugations of the verbs are correct and in line with the noun preceding or following it. The translator following this methodology will give precedence to the accuracy of individual words at the expense of fidelity to the full context and meaning of the phrase. The entire concentration is on the source language and the target language is made to follow, imitate and mirror it blindly, perfectly and precisely. Ghazala points out that this methodology is generally popular with students of the language due to its simpler outlook on the translation

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[303] - Ghazala, Hasan, **Translation as Problems and Solutions**, p.2.

process.[304] Other terms coined for this methodology and its sub-divisions, by various

linguists are:

1. Formal Equivalence.[305]

2. Literal Translation.[306]

3. Semantic Translation. [307]

4. Non-Pragmatic translation[308]

3.2.2. Meaning Focused Translation:

The emphasis of this methodology is on translating the meaning of the text as

accurately as possible. It is the translation of the meaning in context. Whilst

consideration is given to the grammar of the source language to attain the meaning,

precedence is given to the grammar in the target language at the point of presenting

the translation. Metaphor and other tools of language are accounted for in the form

of footnotes or parenthesis. It is therefore commonly described as the 'full

translation of meaning.' Other terms used by the linguists in the field of translation

studies for this methodology include:

1. Dynamic Equivalence.[309]

2. Free Translation.[310]

3. Communicative translation.[311]

4. Pragmatic translation.[312]

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[304] - Ibid, p.5.
[305] - Nida, **Towards a Science of Translating**, Brill, 1964.
[306] - Newmark, Peter, **Approaches to Translation**, Oxford, Pergamon Press. 1981.
[307] - Newmark, Peter, **A textbook of Translation**, Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall, 1988.
[308] - See: Hatim & Mason, **Discourse and the Translator**, 1990. Bell, Roger**, Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice**, London, Longman, 1991. Baker, Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies, 1998. Snell-Hornby, Mary, **Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach**, 1998.
[309] - Nida, Eugene, **Towards a Science of Translating**, Brill, 1964.
[310] - Newmark, Peter, **Approaches to Translation**, Oxford, Pergamon Press. 1981.
[311] - Newmark, Peter, **A textbook of Translation**, Hemel Hempstead, Prentice Hall, 1988.

3.3. Bakhtiar's Methodology of Translating the Qur'an [In Her Own Words]

Bakhtiar goes to lengths in her preface to explain the laborious method she formulated for her translation of the Qur'an. She cites a baffling set of figures when referring to the number of words and particles, often going into the tens of thousands. She says,

> "*This resulted in 5866+ unique English equivalents. I then added the some 38,090+ particles (adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions or interjections not listed in the al-Mu'jim) to the 52,889 I had to complete the data base.*"[313]

How Bakhtiar reached these numbers is a mystery as she has not presented any clue regarding what exactly she is referring to when she cites the 52,000+, nor what calculations were made to arrive at these figures. She refers to a great many numbers but provides a lot less detail with regards to the exact mechanism and structure of how it all came together.

In this section we will sift through Bakhtiar's words and the methods she claims to have employed to re-construct her methodology.

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[312] - See: Hatim & Mason, **Discourse and the Translator**, 1990. Bell, Roger, **Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice**, London, Longman, 1991. Baker, Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies, 1998. Snell-Hornby, Mary, **Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach**, 1998.

[313] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xv.

3.3.1. A Scientific Study into the Feasibility of Formal Equivalence:

A large part of Bakhtiar's methodology involves being a scientific study into the mechanics and possibilities of formal equivalence. It is undeniably a disturbing prospect for the reader when the translator of his/her sacred text expresses that the translation process was in part a scientific 'experiment' into the feasibility of using formal equivalence to translate the Qur'an. Bakhtiar describes the process by which she arrived at her chosen methodology of translating the Qur'an as follows:

"I began this translation as a scientific <u>study to see if it was possible</u> to apply these principles to a translation by finding a different English equivalent for each Arabic verb or noun in order to achieve a translation of a sacred text that has internal consistency and reliability."[314]

Here Bakhtiar informs the reader not only about the type of study her Qur'an translation stemmed from but also why she embarked on it. She frames the process as a *'scientific study'* with the goal of discovering whether *"it was possible to apply these principles of translation by finding a different English equivalent of each Arabic verb or noun…"*

It is highly unsettling for any individual who considers the Qur'an to be the Divine word of Allah, sent to guide them from the darkness into light, to grapple with the fact that the translator's main <u>stated</u> goal for translating their sacred text, was more of an experiment in scientific linguistics than to provide any type of guidance to those who have not been able to comprehend it due to language barriers. Bakhtiar's articulation of this point, although she might be commended for her brutal honesty, is still a cause for concern since it removes the gravity of the 'spiritual burden' that

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[314] - Ibid, xiv.

would ordinarily accompany a translator of the Qur'an when the task is perceived as a trust rather than an experiment.

Bakhtiar goes on to present her argument for formal equivalence saying,

"This translation, then, is one of formal equivalence in order to be as close to the original as possible. This is the most objective type of translation, as compared to a translation using dynamic equivalence, where the translator attempts to translate the ideas or thoughts of a text, rather than the words, which results in a much more subjective translation."[315] [316]

3.3.2. Allocating a Different English Equivalent for Each Arabic Word in the Qur'an

Bakhtiar's entire effort centres around her unfettered assumption that for a translation to be accurate there needs to be an equal number of words in the original language as there are in the target language, and wherever possible, her main objective is to allocate an English word to each Arabic word in the Qur'an and translate it as such each time it appears. About this part of her methodology Bakhtiar says in her preface:

"A translation of a sacred text which will never equal the original still has certain criteria it should meet. I found that when the context is the same, <u>if the same English word is not used for the same Arabic word throughout the translation,</u> it becomes difficult for one who wants to learn to correlate the English and the Arabic to be able to do so."[317]

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[315] - Ibid.
[316] - A full discussion on formal equivalence is presented in section [3.5.2.].
[317] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiii.

It is telling, that from early on in Bakhtiar's work there are clues that point to the fact that she her translation project seems to be more of an Arabic language student's attempt to produce a translation for the benefit of other Arabic language students, rather than a translation of a sacred text by a scholar of Arabic language and Islam, endeavouring to convey the message of the Qur'an to those who are seeking guidance by providing an accurate rendering of the message of the Qur'an. Bakhtiar also adds in this regard:

"This Arabic-English version of the Sublime Qur'an is the best way for a student of classical Qur'anic Arab[318] to learn to read the Qur'an because of the internal consistence and reliability of the translation."[319]

This statement from Bakhtiar is another clue that betrays the original intent of her rendering of the Qur'an into English and that is her incessant reference to enabling a student of classical Arabic to learn the language, tailoring her translation more towards a linguistic study of the Arabic language rather than providing an accurate rendering of the meaning of the words of Allah. Unfortunately, her mind-set seems to influence many of her methodological choices, and these will be explored in more detail in section [3.5.].

Bakhtiar goes on to say,

"The Arabic language is much more precise than present translations would indicate and God used a different word in each case. Therefore, a translation should

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[318] - Perhaps Bakhtiar intended the word "Arabic" instead of "Arab" here.
[319] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xiii.

do the same to the extent possible in order to give the English reader more of a sense of the depth to the Qur'an."[320]

The idea that the depth of the Qur'an can be sensed more by a reader not fluent in Arabic simply by resorting to utilizing more words in the target language, at the expense of providing a more accurate translation, is wholly without merit. Many times, the English language simply does not have as many different words as the Arabic language does for a particular matter. This error of judgement in Bakhtiar's methodology is explored more deeply in section [3.7.] of this chapter where a case-study on the translation of the word [heart] is presented to demonstrate the extremely negative repercussions of this methodological choice.

3.3.3. Translating each Arabic word with the English 'Equivalent' that was pre-allocated to it, whenever it appears in the Qur'an.

Bakhtiar's statement regarding allocating an English equivalent to each Arabic word, is also problematic in that she asserts that her ideal in translation is to use the same English word to translate an Arabic word <u>whenever</u> the context linguistically allows. This is not only restrictive to the meaning and the fluidity of the translation of the Qur'an but also incorrect from the view of a writer. Many a time a writer comes across a context, similar to one previously mentioned in his or her work. If the writer was to always use the same word whenever possible the product would be unbearably dry and unreadable. Although Bakhtiar justifies this decision by explaining that this is the only way to bring consistency to the translation. We find that in reality this

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[320] - Ibid.

decision only renders her work more inaccurate due to the non-equivalence between the two languages, as will be discussed in detail further in section [3.7] on context-consideration.

It is erroneous on Bakhtiar's part, to believe that the rich Arabic language, which has so many different nuances and connotations for each word, should be translated with the a pre-allocated English equivalent in every place that particular Arabic word appears so long as the context allows. This is a common mistake amongst translators who choose to utilize the literal methodology since it is the only way they can produce what they consider a 'linguistically equivalent' translation.

To put it simply, as a translator of the Qur'an, Bakhtiar's main objective should be to convey the <u>meaning</u> of the words of the original text as accurately as possible in the target language. This objective should over-rule all others. Bakhtiar, on the other hand, admits to having a different main objective; that of producing a linguistically consistent translation by employing a methodology which amongst other things, places importance on using the same words in English for each Arabic word as much as possible. The objectives of her methodology, without doubt, compromise the objective of accuracy and faithfulness to the intended meanings of the text of the Qur'an.

Barnwell[321] argues, in her discussion of the problems encountering Bible translation to African languages, that the translator's goal is to translate the meaning of the message. This is the first priority of faithfulness, to express the exact meaning of the original message. The whole purpose of translation is that people should understand the message. A translation that does not serve this purpose is worthless.[322]

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[321] - Barnwell, **Towards Acceptable Translations, Notes on Translation**, p.19
[322] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.182.

One may say in Bakhtiar's defence that she claims to only utilize this process "*when the context is the same*". But the context 'being the same' is a highly subjective matter, especially since Bakhtiar does not define what she means by 'context' in this regard nor does she inform us how she would be able to identify similarity in context from dissimilarity.[323] Scholars have written volumes discussing and debating where the context is the same in the Qur'an and where it differs. Either way, it is an error of judgement on Bakhtiar's part as a translator to put any objective ahead of accuracy in conveying the meaning of the original text.

3.3.4. Using Arabic words in their Romanized transliterated form without any translation, commentary or explanation of the meaning:

Whilst explaining her methodology of translating the Qur'an in her preface Bakhtiar mentions the importance of maintaining 'inclusive language,' which, in her opinion, necessitates a no transliteration policy.[324] Bakhtiar expresses her disproval of Qur'an translators who have resorted to this in their translations and singles out her usage of 'inclusive language' as one of the unique characteristics by which her translation of the Qur'an differs from all previous translations.[325]

In terms of application however, Bakhtiar finds herself unable to apply her methodology. An example of this is when Bakhtiar abruptly throws in the word 'Saqar' in place of its translation:

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[323] -This is discussed in greater detail later in this Chapter.

[324] - This is when a translator may resort to using the Romanized lettering for the Arabic term instead of seeking to 'translate' it due to it not having an equivalent term in the target language or because it is a proper-noun and is best left untranslated. A common example in many Qur'an Translations are the names of Prophets, like Yusuf instead of Joseph.

[325] - See Chapter 2 of this paper for a full discussion on this topic.

$$\langle\!\langle \text{سَأُصْلِيهِ سَقَرَ} \rangle\!\rangle^{326}$$

I will scorch him in Saqar[327]

Then again in the same soorah:

$$\langle\!\langle \text{مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرَ} \rangle\!\rangle^{328}$$

What thrust you into Saqar?[329] [330]

A third instance of this is in sooratul Qamar:

$$\langle\!\langle \text{ذُوقُواْ مَسَّ سَقَرَ} \rangle\!\rangle^{331}$$

Experience the touch of Saqar![332]

The majority of readers who are unfamiliar with Arabic are left wondering who or what is the: "Touch of Saqar"?

One might be inclined to come to Bakhtiar's defence on this point and say that 'Saqar' is one of the names of the Hellfire and is therefore untranslatable. If this is Bakhtiar's reasoning behind not translating the word 'Saqar' then surely all the names of the Hellfire should <u>not</u> be translated for the same reason; to provide 'internal consistency and reliability' as proposed by Bakhtiar in her preface. Unfortunately, we find this is not the case, as is apparent in the examples below. Bakhtiar translates the ayah in soorah Humazah:

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326 - **Al-Qur'an**, 74:26
327 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, 74:26 p.566.
328 - **Al Qur'an**, 74:42.
329 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, 74:42, p. 567.
330 - It is note-worthy that this is exactly the same rendering that is presented by Arberry albeit with a different spelling for Saqar: He says, 'What thrusted you into Sakar?'- [Arberry, 74:42] He is the only other well-known translator of the Qur'an into English to choose to <u>not</u> translate the word 'Saqar'. It is regrettable that it is Arberry's translation of the Qur'an that Bakhtiar has been accused of plagiarizing. This discussion was presented in more detail at the end of chapter one under the section of 'Plagiarism'
331 - **Al Qur'an**, [54:48].
332 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [58:48], p.515.

$$﴿كَلَّا ۖ لَيُنۢبَذَنَّ فِى ٱلۡحُطَمَةِ وَمَآ أَدۡرَىٰكَ مَا ٱلۡحُطَمَةُ﴾^{333}$$

No indeed! He will be cast forth into <u>the Crusher</u>!

And what will cause thee to recognize what <u>the Crusher</u> is?[334]

Likewise, in the case of the ayah in soorah al Qaari'ah Bakhtiar's rendering is as follows:

$$﴿فَأُمُّهُۥ هَاوِيَةٌ﴾^{335}$$

"his abode of rest will be <u>the pit</u>."[336]

In both the above cases, Bakhtiar seems to effortlessly translate the word 'Hutamah' and "Hawiyah" both of which are also names of the Hellfire, into English. This nullifies the justification that her lapse in methodology in terms of translating the word 'Saqar' was due to it being a name.

This would normally not be much of an issue in a translation, if the translator did not go to lengths to critique the methodology of Romanization as Bakhtiar did. Presenting the Arabic word in transliterated form, without any translation, is inconsistent with Bakhtiar's self-professed methodology of translating <u>all</u> Arabic words into English and Anglified versions for proper nouns. Bakhtiar goes so far as to insist that even in the case of the Prophets' names, Angelified equivalents must be used to maintain an inclusive translation (eg. Jonah instead of Yunus and Mary instead of Maryam etc.)

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333 - **Al Qur'an**, [104:4-5].
334 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [104:4-5].
335 - **Al Qur'an**, [101:9].
336 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [101:9].

Bakhtiar rationalizes that it is due to her desire to strictly adhere to the above translation methodology that she chose to not even mention the name 'Allah' once throughout her entire translation of the Qur'an but replaced it with the Western name 'God', as detailed in Chapter Two.

Bakhtiar admonishes previous Qur'an translators for using Arabic terms in English translations, including the name of Allah, to which she is thoroughly opposed. Bakhtiar concludes her criticism by saying to them,

"Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Qur'an says he is the model, or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language."[337]

It remains puzzling that despite holding such strong opinions on the issue Bakhtiar still feels the need to use Arabic terms in their Romanized version for words such as 'Saqar', which other translators have effortlessly translated as follows:

Yusuf Ali: "What led you into Hell Fire?"[338]

Pickthall: What hath brought you to this burning?[339]

Hilali & Khan: "What has caused you to enter Hell?"[340]

This brings us however to a far more important point; that if Bakhtiar could make an exception to her principles and her methodology of translation for one of the names of the Hellfire, then why not afford the Muslims to make the same exemption for something that means far more to them, that being the name of their God, Allah?! We

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[337] - Ibid.
[338] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [74:42].
[339] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [74:42].
[340] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [74:42].

are unable to discern what Bakhtiar's deeper reasoning behind not mentioning the name Allah in her translation really is, but her claim that it was due to strictly following a fixed methodology with a 'no-compromise' policy on including Arabic terms in their Romanized version seems unsubstantiated and flimsy.

Regrettably this turns out to be another glaring example in Bakhtiar's book, of "*lacking internal consistency and reliability,*" an accusation she ironically hurls at all previous and contemporary Qur'an translators without exception.

3.3.5. Bakhtiar on Footnotes, Commentary and Italicization:

Bakhtiar draws our attention to another part of her methodology when she speaks of her decision not to use any footnotes or parenthesis. She says:

"The Qur'an is not a historic text, frozen in the time period of its revelation. To this end, there are no parenthetical phrases in the Sublime Qur'an further interpreting and elaborating a verse, thus allowing the translation, as the Qur'an itself is, to be free of any transient political, denominational or doctrinal bias."[341]

The effect of utilizing 'formal equivalence' as a translation methodology whilst also not providing any footnotes or parenthesis to shed some light on otherwise ambiguous meanings is discussed in more detail in [3.5.2.] of this paper under the chapter heading, 'The Effects of Employing Formal Equivalence Whilst Omitting Footnotes and Commentary.'

However, our purpose of mentioning this translation methodology here is to explore Bakhtiar's reasoning behind it. She explains that in her opinion, the use of parenthesis is a way of *'further interpreting and elaborating a verse'* something she explains she does not wish to do, so as to leave the meaning open to the personal

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[341] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvi.

interpretation of the reader. Bakhtiar expresses here, how she is averse to inserting extra words into a translation of the Qur'an, that are not originally in the source text of the Arabic Qur'an.[342] Her claim could have been accepted at face value had she not then chosen to do exactly that; to insert extra words into her translation of the Qur'an, that are not originally in the source text of the Arabic Qur'an. The only difference being that she chooses to insert them using italics rather than parenthesis.

She says,

"Words not appearing in the Arabic, but necessary for understanding in English, have been put in italics, in some cases to emphasize the <u>intent</u> of the Qur'an. An example is that often the Qur'an refers to someone being struck blind, deaf and dumb. The meaning refers to someone who is "unwilling to see, hear or speak," and not someone who is physically disabled. Therefore, the word "unwilling" appears in italics."[343]

There are a few points to be made here:

1. Bakhtiar is indulging in exactly what she has criticized other translators of the Qur'an of doing, namely inserting words into the text based on their own understanding that are not originally in the source text of the Arabic Qur'an.

2. It is slightly insulting to the intellect of the reader that Bakhtiar feels she can criticize an action, explain why she does not agree with parenthesis, and then hope that no one will notice that her italics serve exactly the same purpose as the parenthesis she just criticized. Ultimately the purpose of the parenthesis is

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[342] - This is a criticism she has expressed often for other translators who have used parenthesis, despite their explanation that the purpose of the parenthesis or footnotes was to provide clarity on the meanings of the ayaat that might not ordinarily be understood through a simple translation.
[343] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xvi.

the same as that of the italics. Criticism of one necessitates criticism of the other.

3. Bakhtiar has the audacity to claim that her use of italics is to emphasize the 'intent of the Qur'an'. We would like to ask, what gives Bakhtiar the right to determine what the intent of the Qur'an is? Especially given the fact that she has already stated she will not consider the books of tafseer as a source for reference in this regard, because they are merely the 'sayings of men' and hold no special value.[344] If the scholars of the Qur'an and its tafseer don't have the right, according to Bakhtiar, to speak on what the intent of an ayah is, then is it not hypocritical to lend her own opinion on the matter?

4. Despite Bakhtiar clearly stating that her methodology with regards to extra words would be to put them in italics, and despite her specifically selecting the ayah that mentions being struck blind, deaf or dumb as an example of why she had to add 'unwilling' in italics, it is highly regrettable that when we refer back to her actual translation of the ayah we find the interpolation of 'unwilling' is <u>not</u> in italics:

﴿صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمْيٌ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ﴾[345]

"Unwilling to hear, unwilling to speak, unwilling to see, then, they will not return to *the way*"[346]

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[344] - See: Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xxxvii.
[345] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:18].
[346] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [2:18], p.3.

As we can see in her translation of the above ayah, Bakhtiar does <u>not</u> put the word 'unwilling' in italics. It is regrettable that despite claiming to do so in her preface, Bakhtiar chooses to <u>not</u> italicize her interpolation, but rather goes onto incorporate it into the main text of her translation without allowing the reader to know that the added word 'unwilling' is not part of the Qur'an, rather it is her own understanding.

We do not know whether Bakhtiar unintentionally forgot to italicize the extra words that she inserted into the translation of the ayah, or whether she consciously chose to not put them in italics. Either way it serves to prove that her methodology with regards to adding extra words into the translation, sets a very dangerous precedent indeed. There is a fine line between adding commentary and between passing the commentary off as 'The Divine Word'. Bakhtiar crosses that red line here.

5. I would argue that the methodology of adding parenthesis or footnotes to present extra words or explain them is far clearer and less susceptible to errors than italicizing the extra words. However, whether it is through the process of italicization or the use of parenthesis, the goal of adding in words to help the intent of the Qur'an be known is the same for both. For this reason, it is disingenuous on the part of Bakhtiar, to criticize others for something she chose to do herself, albeit with a different presentation.

6. The discerning reader is left incredulous because despite forgetting to italicize 'unwilling' three times in the ayah, Bakhtiar goes on to italicize the word *'the'* in the same ayah. For this reason, the excuse of forgetting to utilize italics must be ruled out as a defense.

7. What is even more troubling is that Bakhtiar chooses to italicize the word *'the'* whilst not italicizing the word 'path' in the phrase at the end of the ayah, (فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ). The Arabic of the ayah simply says, 'So they will not return'.

   The words 'to the right path' is inferred from the context, but none of those words are present in the Arabic. To not italicize them all would perhaps lead the reader to believe that the meaning is so inherent from the context the need to italicize them is no longer necessary. This would be a fair argument in the case of most translators. However, this argument remains unacceptable in Bakhtiar's regard for the following reasons:

   a) She clearly states <u>all</u> added words will be italicized as part of her methodology.

   b) Bakhtiar (tries to) demonstrate her strict adherence to this methodology by italicizing every small added particle like 'the' and 'a' throughout the course of her translation, (despite their italicization not making any difference to the meaning whatsoever). However, when it comes to more significant words that impact the meaning of the ayah, she chooses not to italicize them depending on whether she wants them to be considered a part of the text or not.

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c) Her picking and choosing in this regard does more to discredit her methodology and stain her integrity as a translator than it does to provide any real insight on the matter of inserted words in the text.

8. If we spend a moment looking at the actual effect of the interpolation of the word 'unwilling' into the text, we find that her interpretation does not conform with the scholarly positions with regards to the 'intent of the Qur'an' on this ayah neither from the tafseers that specialize in the linguistic nuances of the Qur'an nor the tafseer that is based on narrations.

   As with most cases in the Qur'an, it is the context that informs the reader of what the ayah means. Here the context clearly informs us that the ayah is speaking about the hypocrites, those who claim faith but in reality, disbelieve. Whilst all commentators and interpreters of the Qur'an are in agreement[347] that the 'intent' of the ayah is not to label them as physically deaf, dumb and blind in the sense of physically being disabled, (as Bakhtiar suggests the reader may assume in her concordance.)[348]

   Rather it becomes quite clear from the context, as well as the tone of the language that this ayah is informing us of the end result of their hypocrisy. That as a result of turning away from the truth after clearly recognizing it, they will now not be able to recognize it anymore. It is a type of 'tashbeeh'[349], they are metaphorically deaf, dumb and blind (in that they can no longer see, hear or speak the truth) as punishment for their life-long denial of the truth

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[347] - See footnotes 350-355 for details of the commentators.
[348] - Bakhtiar, **Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an**, lxvii.
[349]- 'Tashbeeh' is a linguistic tool often employed in the Qur'an to liken something to another that it is not normally likened to in the form of a parable or a metaphor.

despite recognizing it when it first came to them. This is supported by the selection of ayaat immediately preceding it.[350]

This tashbeeh is similar to the case of one of the ayaat preceding it:

﴿فِى قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۖ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْذِبُونَ﴾ [351]

In their hearts is disease, so Allah has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie.[352]

Just as it is understood that the disease that is in their hearts is not 'heart disease' but a metaphorical one that causes the heart to not want to obey its Lord. Likewise, it is understood that the hypocrites are not physically blind, deaf or dumb.

Bakhtiar's interpretation therefore misses the mark since the ayah is expressing the punishment for their turning away from the truth. It is not a description of how they interact with the truth since that was already expressed in the ayaat [2:14-18.]

Al Tabari[353], Al Qurtubi[354], ash-Shawkaani[355], Az-Zujaaj[356] and Az-Zamakhshari[357] all express that as a result of turning away from the truth after being guided to it their punishment is that they are now blind to recognizing the truth and guidance, deaf from hearing and receiving the guidance and dumb in that they can no longer comprehend it to be the truth nor can they speak the truth about it.

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[350] - See **Al Qur'an**, [2:14-18].
[351] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:10].
[352] - **Saheeh International Translation** [2:10].
[353] - At-Tabari, **Jami' ul Bayaan Fi Ta'weel al Qur'aan**, Vol.1, p.330.
[354] - Al Qurtubi, **Al Jami' li Ahkaam ul Qur'an**, Vol.1, p.215.
[355] - Ash-Shawkaani, **Fat-hul Qadeer**, Vol.1, p.146.
[356] - Az-Zujaaj, **Ma'aani al Qur'an wa i'raabihi**, Vol.1, p.93.
[357] - Az-Zamakhshari, **Al Kashaaf**, Vol.1, p.75.

The problem with Bakhtiar's methodology as it pertains to including extra words in the text of her translation is not just that she applies the italics on a whim and disregards it where convenient, but also, many times she adds words to clarify what she wants the reader to believe is the intent of the Qur'an, based on her own understanding and it is not really the intent of the Qur'an. Her own personal understanding is never supported by any linguistic or theological arguments.

An example of this is in the ayah:

$$ \text{﴿ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُواْ يَكْذِبُونَ ﴾}^{358} $$

"…and for them *is* a painful punishment

because they had been lying *against themselves*."[359]

As we can see from Bakhtiar's translation above, she uses italics for *"is"* and *"against themselves"*. It is the latter that is of consequence to us. There is nothing in the language, the tafseer literature, or indeed in the context to support her interpretation that the lies they are being punished for are against themselves. Rather the context actually quotes their lies when it mentions four ayahs later,

$$ \text{﴿وَإِذَا لَقُواْ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ قَالُوٓاْ ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْاْ إِلَىٰ شَيَٰطِينِهِمْ قَالُوٓاْ إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴾}^{360} $$

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[358] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:10].

[359] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [2:10].

[360] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:14].

"And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe"; but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say, "Indeed, we are with you; we were only mockers."[361]

In short, the methodology of using italics to add words that are not originally in the Arabic text is a very dangerous one because it gives Bakhtiar free rein to interpolate her personal interpretations into the Qur'an as often as she sees fit, either by inserting her interpretation of the ayah in italics, or by just inserting it in and not even bothering to italicize it if she thinks the meaning is inherent enough, examples of both have been given above. Both these problems are further exacerbated by Bakhtiar's decision to also omit the Arabic text of the Qur'an and change the numbers of the ayaat[362], all of which makes comparing the translation to the source text far more challenging.

3.4. A Summary of Bakhtiar's Methodology as Derived from Her Translation:

From the above quotes taken from Bakhtiar's preface and Introduction we can summarize what she considers to be her methodology in the following points:[363]

1. Bakhtiar chooses 'formal equivalence' as her main translation methodology.

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[361] - **Saheeh International Translation**, [2:14].

[362] - A detailed discussion was presented on these two points in Chapter [2.2]

[363] - It must be noted that this section is deriving the different aspects of Bakhtiar's methodology, as claimed by her. An evaluation of all these points will be presented in the forth-coming pages along with a discussion on Bakhtiar's application of this methodology as well as the repercussion of it on accuracy as well as on Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

2. She produces a Concordance based translation, where the words of the Qur'an are translated individually in alphabetical order and these translated words are then strung together to translate the ayaat.

3. Her concordance is based on her translation of the 'mu'jam al mufahris li alfaaz al Qur'an al kareem by Abdul Baqi.'

4. Context-consideration is not factored into Bakhtiar's methodology due to her heavy reliance on the literal word meanings

5. High up on Bakhtiar's list of priorities is allocating a separate English word for every Arabic word mentioned in the Qur'an. Bakhtiar feels this allows the reader to get a better sense of the nuance-rich nature of the source text.[364]

6. Working alongside the above methodology, is her objective of using the same English word for each Arabic word each time it appears in the Qur'an.[365]

7. Bakhtiar does not approve of using Romanized transliterated Arabic words and believes all words should be translated into the English Language to make the translation more universal and inclusive.

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[364] - What Bakhtiar means by this is that if there are two words in Arabic language that have a similar meaning, but the English language only has one word for this matter, she will try to find two separate English words so that each Arabic word can be allocated its own corresponding English equivalent. An example of her application of this methodology is discussed later in the chapter through the presentation of her translation of [fu'aad] and [qalb] as a case-study.

[365] - This is a separate methodology to the previous one, although it is connected. What Bakhtiar means here is that once she has allocated an English 'equivalent' to each Arabic word in her concordance, then she feels that whenever that word is mentioned in the Qur'an the same equivalent that she selected the first time should be utilized to provide internal consistency. So, every time the verb [جاء] is used, for example, it should mean the same thing.

8. She insists that all proper names should be Westernized, so Jacob should be used instead of Yaqoob, Joseph instead of Yusuf etc.

9. She extends the above methodology to include the name of Allah, so Allah is replaced with God every time it appears, but the other names of Allah are simply translated into attributes instead of being used as a name.

10. Bakhtiar insists on <u>not</u> providing any footnotes or parentheses to further elaborate on ayaat that may not be clear to avoid giving her own interpretation on the Qur'an.

11. She chooses to use italics when she feels extra words are needed to elaborate on the 'intent of the Qur'an'.

12. She does not see it necessary to refer to the books of tafseer or linguistic commentary as part of her methodology of translation.

13. Bakhtiar feels that previous translations have been influenced by a male dominated arena in the translation field and hence certain concepts need to be re-visited and looked at with a 'fresh-eye.'

Each of these methodologies will be addresses along with their repercussions in section [3.6] of this chapter.

3.5. The Methodology of Formal Equivalence and its Effects on Qur'an Translation.

In this section we will explore some of the reasons Bakhtiar provides for selecting formal equivalence as the spine of her translation methodology. However, due to the fact that Bakhtiar maintains that she takes context into consideration in her application of formal equivalence, we will explore the potentiality of that position along with examples and case studies. We will also examine Bakhtiar's actual application of her methodology, in the form of a case-study. Finally, we will examine the impact of her decision to not add foot-notes and commentary whilst trying to maintain formal equivalence as her methodology.

3.5.1. Bakhtiar's Arguments in Favour of Formal Equivalence and its Effects on Qur'an Translation.

Bakhtiar has stated that her methodology of translating the Qur'an was 'Formal Equivalence' which is considered a more literal word-for-word translation and tends to emphasize fidelity to the lexical details and grammatical structure of the original language over presenting a coherent structure in the target language. Bakhtiar claims that although the method of formal equivalence was also used to translate the King James Version of the Bible in 1611CE, she was however unaware of this at the time of her translating the Qur'an, only to discover it later when a friend mentioned it to her. In effect, Bakhtiar initially viewed herself as a pioneer of this methodology until she later heard about the King James Version of the Bible from her friend. Bakhtiar says:

"Beginning this process seven years ago with the words instead of the first sentence, I later learned that this was much the method, called formal equivalence, used in the translation of the King James Version of the Bible first published in 1611 CE."[366]

Bakhtiar argues in favour of the method of formal equivalence as opposed to dynamic equivalence by stating that it is the most accurate and objective type of translation possible. She says speaking about her translation:

"This translation, then, is one of formal equivalence in order to be as close to the original as possible. This is the most objective type of translation, as compared to a translation using dynamic equivalence, where the translator attempts to translate the ideas or thoughts of a text, rather than the words, which results in a much more subjective translation."[367]

If we examine Bakhtiar's assertions regarding the superiority of formal equivalence in translating the Qur'an, we find the contrary to be true. Indeed, most experts in the field of translating sacred texts would disagree with Bakhtiar. In fact, as far as formal equivalence goes, we find that there has been no unanimous agreement among translation theorists as to whether the concept of equivalence in translation even exists.[368]

Catford, who defined linguistic equivalence as 'the replacement of textual material in one language (source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (target language)[369] back in 1965 has been duly criticized by subsequent scholars such as Snell-Hornby, who states Catford's concept is too general and

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[366] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, p.283.
[367] - Ibid.
[368] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.5.
[369] - Catford, **A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics**, p.20.

abstract and is no more than a circular definition that leads nowhere.[370] Likewise, Abdul Raof categorically states that Catford's definition cannot be validated for languages like Arabic and European languages which are both linguistically and culturally incongruous.[371]

Therefore, when Bakhtiar claims she has achieved formal equivalence this is a flawed claim since it is based on the premise that all languages are symmetrical, which is clearly not the case. Hatim and Mason state clearly that complete 'equivalence' is not an achievable goal since there is no such thing as a formally or dynamically equivalent target language version of a source language text.[372]

Nida postulates a solution, explaining that it is 'approximation' rather than 'equivalence' which the translator should be seeking to achieve because "there are no such things as identical equivalents."[373] Simms stresses that inter-lingual translation is impossible in a pure form, since just as there is no such thing as pure synonymy within a language, there is no such thing as pure lexical equivalence between languages.[374]

Bell, also has no doubt on the matter, stating that "The idea of total equivalence is a chimera."[375] Abdul Raof Hussein concludes, "A translator who aspires to achieve total lexical and/or textual equivalence is chasing a mirage, total equivalence at any level of language is impossible, relative equivalence at any level is possible.[376]

Therefore, when Bakhtiar declares that she has used the method of formal equivalence, this is something that is implausible when referring to Arabic and English. As Nida explains, "Languages differ considerably from one another

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[370] - Snell-Hornby, **Translation Studies: An integrated Approach**, p.19.
[371] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.5.
[372] - Hatim and Mason, **Discourse and the Translator**, p.8.
[373] -Nida, **Toward a Science of Translating**, p.157
[374] -Simms, **Translating Sensitive Texts: Linguistic Aspects**, p.6
[375] -Bell, **Translation and Translating, Theory and Practice**, p.6.
[376] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.7

syntactically, semantically and pragmatically. At the heart of translation lies the problem of meaning. Every human language has ad hoc linguistic mechanisms to express meaning and change of meaning not only through change of words but also through change of word order. There may be cases where meanings may overlap between some languages, but these meanings cannot be totally equivalent. Therefore, all translations represent varying degrees of paraphrase.[377]

The basic principle of translation means that no translation in a receptor language (target language) can be the equivalent of the model in the source language.[378] Since no two words in any two languages ever have precisely the same designative and associative meanings.[379]

For all these reasons, in the case of translating the Book of Allah, Muslim scholars' objection to calling the translated Qur'an "a Qur'an" is justified; 'a translation of the meanings of the Qur'an' is what they want to call the translated version. Their concern has been supported by Greenstein's[380] claim that translation is an aid to reading the source, not a substitution.[381]

We therefore conclude that Bakhtiar's decision to attempt to present a translation of the Qur'an based on the methodology of formal equivalence is not only flawed but rather it goes against the majority of what translation theorists and experts in this field believe is possible. This is especially true with regards to translating the Qur'an when the source language and the target language are so incompatible and incongruent.

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[377] - Nida, **Translating a Text with a Long and Sensitive Tradition**, p.195.
[378] -Nida and Taber, **The Theory and Practice of Translation**, p27.
[379] - Nida, **Translation Possible and Impossible**, In 'Turjuman', Vol.3, No.2, 1994, p.160.
[380] - Edward L. Greenstein is an American Israeli author and critic of Biblical translation methods and has authored numerous works on the subject including: Essays on Biblical Method and Translation, 1989.
[381] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.13

The problem is further magnified when translating into a language with limited spirituality and poor nuance like English which does not have an equivalently nuanced syntactical richness in its grammar and syntax, nor equivalently nuanced semantic richness in its vocabulary.[382] Hence, striving for "internal consistency" at all cost, as Bakhtiar claims to do, automatically sets up the translation to fail from the very beginning.

It is Bakhtiar's failure to acknowledge the simple fact that there just aren't enough nuanced words in English to capture all the numerous nuances of the usage of a word in Arabic to achieve both "formal equivalence" and accuracy in meaning simultaneously.

For the translation to remain faithful to the spirit of the word and deliver the message that was intended in the source language it must be permitted to internally become "inconsistent" linguistically. This means that the translator would allow herself to use the word that best fit in the context even if it was different from the word she had previously used in another chapter in what would seem like a similar context.

We note that Bakhtiar's main grievance with previous translations was their "internal inconsistency". She accused the other translators of being "inconsistent" when they sought to use the most fitting word that would most accurately convey the meaning of the source text in their translation rather than blindly stick to the same word used previously to maintain the self-imposed restriction of "internal consistency". Such "inconsistency," is an inevitable and mostly inconsequential

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[382] - Ibid.

matter when the prime goal is dynamic Equivalence – and nothing should stand in its way.[383]

It may be argued by some that the first 'translations' of the Qur'an were literal translations into the Persian language, with an attempt at equivalence. So why disavow a modern-day translation of the Qur'an by Bakhtiar due to its utilization of formal equivalence when this was the original type of translation of the Qur'an?

I would respond to this by saying:

1- The claim that the first translations that were in Persian utilized formal equivalence is incorrect. It is documented that the first Persian translation was done at the command of the Samaanid King, Abu Saalih Mansoor ibn Nuh (d.364 AH.) Far from utilizing formal equivalence this translation was actually accompanied by a translation of Imam at-Tabari's (d.310 AH.) tafseer, part of which is still available in manuscript form.[384]

2- These translations were undertaken by Persian converts to Islam, and although some of them were based on a word-for-word strategy where sentence structure and syntax of Qur'anic verses were kept intact, the Persian words were written under the Arabic text without any regard to the Persian word order. [385]

The monumental difference between these first-attempt translations and Bakhtiar's translation was that the Persian "translations' were not only conceived as complementary assistance to the original Arabic text and not considered as

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[383] - See Zahir Ibrahim's letter on his blog: **Humanbeingsfirst.blogspot.com**
[384] - **World Bibliography**, pp. XXVIII-XXXIV.
[385] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.20.

translations in and of themselves, but they were also supplemented with extensive commentaries (tafasir) as well. Bakhtiar on the other hand prides herself on not providing any commentary whilst trying to limit herself to a formally equivalent translation. Bakhtiar states, (incorrectly):

"Introducing the non-Arabic speaker to the words of the revelation without any commentary is as formal equivalence dictates. Related to the eternality of the Qur'an, each reader of the translation would then be able to ask: As this is the eternal word of God, what does it mean to me today? What does it say to me? How can I self-identify with it? How do I feel when I read it?..."[386]

The question more likely crossing the mind of Bakhtiar's readers when faced with her translation which is devoid of any explanation, is not "What does it mean to me?" And, "what does it say to me?" as Bakhtiar suggests, but more simply, "What does it mean?" and, "what could it be saying?" This confusion would be a direct result of Bakhtiar's attempt at 'formal equivalence' coupled with her omission of any form of commentary leaving the message of the Qur'an obscure and open to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. 'Self-identifying' with the message is only possible and beneficial when the message is comprehensible and more importantly faithful to the meaning of the source text. This is something, that in the case of the Sublime Qur'an, unfortunately is not the case as will be demonstrated in section [3.6.5].

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[386] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, xv.

3.5.2. The Effects of Employing Formal Equivalence Whilst Omitting Footnotes and Commentary.

It is important to address Bakhtiar's assertion quoted above, that presenting the translation *"without any commentary is as formal equivalence dictates"* since we find the majority of those who worked on translating a sacred text with formal equivalence were uncompromising about the need to furnish it with some sort of a commentary or footnotes to make it more intelligible.

Abdul Raof elaborates on this point explaining that the only way to penetrate this highly fortified text is to explicate its intricate multi-layered meanings through either 'within-the-text' exegetical material, as in the translation by Hilali and Khan (1983) or through marginal notes and commentaries, as in the translations by Ali (1983) and Asad (1980). "The purpose of commentaries is to plug cultural gaps and are useful translation strategies; they are translation trouble-shooters that can counter ambiguity and illuminate the fog of the target language."[387]

The 'fog in language' when translating sacred texts is a common theme to be addressed by linguists and translators alike. It is the single greatest challenge that faces the reader of the translation. A footnote or even an extended commentary can function as a torch that can penetrate the fog of both language and culture-specific religious words and concepts; by doing so, we can guarantee that at least some misconceptions diminish.[388] Bakhtiar seems oblivious to this challenge and does not provide any assistance to the reader to decipher even the more complicated concepts and semantics.

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[387] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.140.
[388] - Ibid.

Religious concepts in particular are culture-bound and can be categorized as semantic voids. Although there are some shared concepts in Arabic and other languages "total matching cannot be assumed"[389] as in the concepts of as-salaat (prayer), al-Hajj (pilgrimage) and al-'Umra (the lesser pilgrimage). The essence of these very concepts is completely different in Arabic from other languages. Therefore, a translation of these religious concepts without a footnote explaining them cannot be communicatively sufficient. An example of this is Bakhtiar's rendering of 'al-umra' in her translation of [2:196]:

$$ \langle\!\langle \text{وَأَتِمُّواْ ٱلْحَجَّ وَٱلْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ} \rangle\!\rangle^{390} $$

"And fulfill the pilgrimage to Makkah and <u>the visit</u> for God"[391]

Bakhtiar translates "al-umra" simply as "the visit". Her translation strips the word bare of all religious connotations and spiritual nuances, leaving it practically meaningless to anyone who is not already aware of the concept. If one imagines this verse being 'recited' in English by Bakhtiar without the accompanying Arabic, as is available on her DVD, it is unlikely that the audience will even conceptualize that a lesser form of the formal pilgrimage is intended by her chosen translation of *"the visit"*.

It is commonly argued that footnotes and commentary take away from the perception of the 'Divine essence' behind the sacred text because they are reminders of the earthly nature of the translator and the translated writing. It is however unrealistic on the part of the translator to expect his translation to reach such levels of fidelity to the language, structure and fine nuances that the reader forgets it is a

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[389] -Beekman and Callow, **Translating the Word of God**, p.175.
[390] -**Al-Qur'an** [2:196].
[391] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, 2:196.

translation altogether. Newmark rightly asserts that there is no reason why the reader should not be aware of the translator's informed assistance both in the work and the comment. The artistic illusion of the translator's non-existence is unnecessary.[392]

3.5.3. The Intrinsic Problems of Bakhtiar Mismatching her Methodology with Her Target Audience.

One of the fundamental causes of the failure of the methodology of formal equivalence as employed by Bakhtiar appears to be that she has not sufficiently comprehended the different translation theories and how they work. She seems to have chosen a target audience of people who will benefit from a fluid and eloquent style with clear meanings that are easily understandable, but this doesn't correspond with the methodology of translation that she selected, which is more for a linguistics student who is not as concerned with the fidelity of the text or the intent of the message, as much as he is concerned with the allocation of equivalent words that he can then learn and identify throughout the text.

The concept of a mis-match between the audience and the methodology of translating is eloquently expressed by Abdul Raof when he explains that Qur'an translators need to have a sound awareness of translation theories which is of paramount importance to their exegetical awareness. Before they embark on their delicate task, they need to define the nature of their end product, i.e., whether the translation is going to be 'source text-oriented' or 'target audience-oriented'. In the case of the latter, the Qur'an translator needs to provide an informative rendering with the same ease and pleasure, i.e., the same interest and enjoyment that the original text

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[392] - Newmark, **A Textbook of Translation**, p.93.

has[393] so that the target text can affect and 'touch the heart' of its target audience in the same way the original affects its source readers [394] This is one of Bakhtiar's most obvious flaws; that she uses formal equivalence which is a 'source text-oriented' methodology of translation and tries to present it as an 'audience-oriented' translation.

3.6. The Role of 'Context' in Translation.

The problem that Bakhtiar's methodology keeps stumbling upon is 'context-consideration' On the one hand you have her chosen methodology of formal equivalence, which disregards context outright. On the other hand, you have Bakhtiar claiming that despite using formal equivalence she does still consider the context. For this reason, we will present a full discussion on what context-consideration actually means and how successful Bakhtiar was in this regard.

3.6.1.   The Definition of 'Context' and its Role in Understanding the Qur'an.

To be able to successfully explore the role of 'context' in Bakhtiar's methodology of translating the Qur'an it is imperative that we first understand the word as it is defined in the language as well as its definition according to the scholars of Usool ul Fiqh and the scholars of Tafseer:

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[393] - Savoury, **The Art of Translation**, p.52.
[394] - Abdul Raof, **Qur'an Translation Discourse Texture and Exegesis**, p.182.

<u>Linguistic Definition of [Context]:</u>

The Oxford Dictionary defines 'context' as:

1. The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood.

   1.1.   The parts of something written or spoken that immediately precede and follow a word or passage and clarify its meaning.[395]

<u>The Definition of [Context] and its Importance in Understanding the Qur'an According to the Scholars of Usool ul Fiqh:</u>

Ibn Daqeeq al 'Eed[396] says:

"It is the context (as-siyaaq) and contextual evidences, (al-qaraa'in) that shed light on what the speaker intended from his words. It is only through them that guidance is provided in clarifying the ambiguous matters (mujmalaat).[397]

Likewise, Al-'Itaar ash-Shafi'ee's defines [context] saying: Contextual evidence is that which comes after the speech and that which precedes it and clarifies the intent of the speech.[398]

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[395] - **Oxford English Dictionary**: [context].

[396] -Ibn Daqeeq al 'Eed [1228 – 1302 CE] was a judge, a senior scholar of Usool ul Fiqh and a well-regarded authority on it. He is also considered a mujtahid. He spent much of his time in Egypt in the capacity of a judge and teacher. He was also a prolific writer in the field of Usool ul Fiqh and Hadeeth. Amongst his most notable works is: ihkaam ul ihkaam and al ilmaam bi hadeeth al ahkaam.

[397] - Ibn Daqeeq al 'Eed, Taqi ud-Deen, **Ihkaam ul Ahkaam, sharh 'Umdatil Ahkaam**, Ahmad Shakir, 'Aalam ul Kutub, Beirut, 2nd Edition, 1987 CE, Vol. 2, p.21.

[398] - Al Itaar, Hasan bin Muhammad bin Mahmood Ash-Shafi'ee**, Haashiyatul Itaar 'alaa sharh al jalal al Muhalla 'ala jam' ul jawaami**', Dar ul Kutub al 'ilmiyah, Beirut, nd. Vol.1, p.30.

Al-Banaani states: [Context] is that which informs on the specific intent of the speech, from that which preceded and from that which came subsequently.[399]

Al-Banani and Ibn al Attar define [context] in almost identical words. Ibn Daqeeq doesn't provide an explanation of where the context is to be found, perhaps because in his opinion it is a matter that is well-understood, however, his definition provides us with the role of context in clarifying the ambiguous matters (mujmalaat).

Definition of [Context] and its Importance in Understanding the Qur'an According to the Scholars of Tafseer:

Ibn Juzay' said whilst explaining the 'wujooh of tarjeeh' (the reasons for preponderance) "It is the [context] that testifies to the correctness of the statement, the [context] is that which precedes the statement and that which comes after it."[400]

Az-Zarkashi, said, "It is the 'context' that guides one by clarifying the ambiguous matters (mujmalaat) by removing the speculation surrounding them and providing a definitive (qat'ee) understanding. The context also serves to negate the probabilities (muhtamalaat) that are not intended. It further aids in specifying (takhsees) of that which is general ('aam) and to confine (taqyeed) of the absolute, (Mutlaq) and varying the implications (dalalah). [Context] is indeed the greatest of the contextual evidences (qaraa'in ad-dalalah) to provide clarity on the implications of the speech and on the intent of the speaker. Therefore, whosoever neglects context then he has erred in method as he has erred in his argument.[401]

[399] - Al Bunaani, Abdur Rahman bin Jaadullah, **Haashiyatul bunaani 'alaa sharh al Jalal al-Muhalla 'alaa matn jaami' al jawaami**, Dar ul Fikr, Damascus, nd, Vol.1, p.20.

[400] - Ibn Juzay, Abul Qaasim Muhammad bin Ahmad al Kalbi, **At-Tas-heel li 'Uloom at-Tanzeel**, Dar ul Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, Beirut, 1st Edition, 1995, Vol.1, p.20.

[401] - Az-Zarkashi, Badr ud-Deen Muhammad ibn Abdullah, **Al Burhaan fi 'Uloom il Qur'an**, Revised by Muhammad Abul Fadhl, Dar ul Turaath, Cairo, 3rd Edition, 1984, Vol.2, p.200.

The Mufassiroon have given a lot of attention to considering the matter of context and its indications, and their works of tafseer bear witness to this fact.

<u>Definition of [Context] and its importance in understanding the Source text according to the experts in the Field of Translation Studies:</u>

Firth asserts that "The complete meaning of a word is <u>always</u> contextual, and no study of meaning apart from a complete context can be taken seriously".[402]

Malinowski emphasizes the importance of contextualizing a translation, saying "Therefore, the 'context of situation' is indispensable for understanding of the words[403]. One translates ideas not words; to be accurate, one translates words that are in context."[404]

Malinowski further claims that any text with metaphor, (and the Qur'an is full of metaphor), baffles any attempt at a simple and direct translation. It is hopeless, in his opinion to open up the meaning of a statement by mere linguistic means without resorting to context.[405] He also stresses that the real meaning of source language words can only be conveyed by the context in which they appear, i.e., they become intelligible when they are placed within their context of situation.[406]

Hatim and Mason's positions[407] echo that of Newmark's[408] in this regard. Both stress the importance of context in determining the correct meaning. Linguistic experts in the field of translation studies are quite clear that it is the 'context' that determines the meaning of a text, and therefore, translation is a process of re-

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[402] - Firth, **The Technique of Semantics**, 1935, Techniques of the Philological society, p.37.
[403] - Malinowski, **The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages**,1923, p.307
[404] - Newmark, **Further Propositions on Translation**, 1974, p.67
[405] - Malinowski, **The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages**, 1923, p.300.
[406] - Ibid. p306.
[407] Hatim and Mason, **Discourse and the Translator**, 1990.
[408] - Newmark, **Approaches to Translation**, 1981. Newmark speaks at length throughout this book about the importance of context in determining the correct meaning.

establishing the meaning of the text in the target language, based on its context in the source language.[409]

As we can see from the above, both the experts in the field of translation studies as well as the scholars of Usool ul Fiqh and Tafseer are unanimous regarding the need for context-consideration when trying to understand the meanings of the Qur'an and translating them.

From the above we conclude that a translator must fully comprehend the meaning of a text along with its fine nuances before he/she is able to translate it correctly. To determine the meaning of the text, a translator must study the context. The context refers to the total environment in which a word, an expression, or a sentence appears. The meaning of a lexical unit of a text[410] can be found not only in the surrounding words of the same sentence, but also the other parts of a text.

3.6.2. Types of Context and its Effects on Translation

Halliday[411] proposes that the concept of 'context' can be sub-divided into 3 distinct parts:

1. Context of culture,

2. Context of situation

3. Co-text or Textual Context

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[409] - See: Salem, Ahmed**, The Role of Context in Solving the Problems of Translating Polysemous English Words into Arabic**, Abdullah Fadhel Centre for English & Translation Studies, 2014.
[410] - A unit of text to be translated, often abbreviated as [UT] is the size of the segment that the translator decides to work with to be able to make sense of the text. This could be a sentence, a paragraph, or more or less, depending on the methodology of translating he selects. [See: **Translationdictionary.com/article2124**].
[411] - Michael Halliday, born 13 April 1925 is a linguist from England who developed the internationally influential systemic functional linguistic model of language. Halliday is notable for his grammatical theory and descriptions, outlined in his book "**An Introduction to Functional Grammar**", first published in 1985.

Context of culture and context of situation are outside of language itself,[412] but their ramifications are just as tangible as that of co-text or textual context. There is a close interdependent relationship between language and each of these three shades of context. The choice of language used by the translator reflects the context-consideration or the lack of it.

Textual Context: also known as 'co-text', is what we have discussed thus far. Textual context can either be immediate or remote. Immediate context refers to the words or sentences that immediately precede of follow the text, as previously stated, and clarify the intent of the whole text. Remote context on the other hand, pertains to the existence of words or phrases elsewhere within the text. It may refer to the author of the original text, using the word elsewhere in the text, or there may be special reasons to use that word or phrase.

When it comes to translating the Qur'an, this would be solved through 'tafseer ul Qur'an bil Qur'an.'[413] A commonly cited example of this in the books of usool ul tafseer is when the Prophet ﷺ was asked about the meaning of 'dhulm' in the ayah:

$$﴿ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓاْ إِيمَٰنَهُم بِظُلْمٍ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ ٱلْأَمْنُ وَهُم مُّهْتَدُونَ﴾﴿^{414}$$

"Those who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice (dhulm)"

The Companions asked, "Oh Messenger of Allah! Who amongst us does not do injustice (to his soul)? The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Have you not read the statement of Luqman:

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[412] - Mater, Ahmed, **The Role of Context in Solving the Problems of Translating Polysemous English Words into Arabic**, 2014, p.25.
[413] - This is explained in more detail later in this chapter.
[414] - Al Qur'an, 6:82.

$$\langle\!\langle \text{إِنَّ ٱلشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ} \rangle\!\rangle^{415}$$

"Verily Shirk is a great injustice!"[416]

In other words, the Prophet ﷺ quoted them another verse in the Qur'an to explain to them that the 'injustice' mentioned in the first ayah referred to 'shirk' (associating partners with Allah).

Context of Culture: Translation is a kind of activity which inevitably involves at least two languages and two <u>cultural traditions</u>."[417] As this statement implies, translators are permanently faced with the problem of how to treat the cultural aspects implicit in a source text, and of finding the most appropriate technique of successfully conveying these aspects in the target language. These problems may vary in scope depending on the cultural and linguistic gap between the two languages concerned.[418] According to Nida, "for truly successful translating, biculturalism [in the translator] is even more important than bilingualism".[419] When the cultural factors are incompatible in the target cultural context, the translator has to choose different strategies to cope with this cultural clash, studying the culture of the text is the first step, reflecting it in the target language is the ultimate goal.

The cultural implications for translation may take several forms ranging from lexical content and syntax to ideologies and ways of life in a given culture. Considering the cultural implications for a translated text implies recognizing all of these problems and taking into account several possibilities before deciding on the

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[415] -**Al Qur'an**, [31:13].

[416] - Reported by **al-Bukhaaree, Kitab ul Eeman**, Chapter of dhulm less than dhulm, Hadith no. 32.

[417] - Toury, G. 1978, revised 1995. "**The Nature and Role of Norms in Translation**." The Translation Studies Reader. London: Routledge. P.200.

[418] - Nida, **Principles of Correspondence**, 1964, p.130.

[419] - Nida, **Language, Culture and Translation**. Journal of Foreign Languages, (1998). p.204.

solution which appears to be the most appropriate in each specific case.[420] Experts in the field of translation studies have long emphasized the vital partnership between the different types of context since a language reflects the culture of a society, not only in its option of vocabulary, but also in its syntax and way of organizing ideas.

In an original untranslated text, the author communicates with his/her readers in a language that they are familiar with. The cultural aspect of the language and its background therefore, are not foreign to the audience. The process of communication in this situation remains quite harmonious. However, the process of translation often breaks this harmony.[421]

When it comes to Qur'an translation, context of culture is just as vital as textual context. Understanding it necessitates that the translator relies heavily on the works of tafseer. An example of ayaat from the Qur'an where the translation would be affected by ignoring context of culture are:

﴿يَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلْأَهِلَّةِ ۖ قُلْ هِىَ مَوَٰقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَٱلْحَجِّ ۗ وَلَيْسَ ٱلْبِرُّ بِأَن تَأْتُواْ ٱلْبُيُوتَ مِن ظُهُورِهَا وَلَـٰكِنَّ ٱلْبِرَّ مَنِ ٱتَّقَىٰ ۗ وَأْتُواْ ٱلْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَٰبِهَا ۚ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ﴾[422]

"They ask thee about the new moons. Say: They are appointed times for humanity, and the pilgrimage to Makkah. It is not virtuous conduct that you approach houses from the back. Rather, virtuous conduct was to be Godfearing, and approach houses from their front doors. And be Godfearing of God so that perhaps you will prosper."[423]

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[420] - James, Kate, **Cultural Implications for Translation**, Translation Journal, 2002.
[421] -See: Mater, Ahmed, **The Role of Context in Solving the Problems of Translating Polysemous English Words into Arabic**, 2014, p.21.
[422] - **Al Qur'an**, [2:189].
[423] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [2:189].

As is apparent in the above ayah, leaving the translation in a cultural void severely effects the quality of understanding available to the readers, who are left perplexed as to why the back door would have been used in the first place. If the translator himself is in a cultural void whilst trying to convey the meaning and intent of the author, then what hope is there for the correct transmission of meaning, tone or tenor to the readers? It is therefore, vital that the translator immerse himself into the context of culture. In terms of Qur'an translations this would be through the medium of tafseer literature as well as seerah,[424] both of which are indispensable aids for the understanding of Qur'anic context of culture.

Context of Situation or 'situational context', refers to the factors of situation and circumstances influencing the meaning of a text. These factors are a little harder to be recognized than the linguistic ones. Examples of this would be for the translator of the Qur'an to be aware of tensions between the Pagans of Makkah and the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or the betrayal and deceit of the hypocrites in Madinah and the Muslim stance towards them. This would allow the tone and the tenor of the language used to be put into perspective and it could then be reflected accurately in the Target Language. An example of this is apparent in the translation of the following ayah:

﴿۞وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ أَجْسَامُهُمْ ۖ وَإِن يَقُولُوا۟ تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ۖ كَأَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ۖ يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ هُمُ ٱلْعَدُوُّ فَٱحْذَرْهُمْ ۚ قَاتَلَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ ۖ أَنَّىٰ يُؤْفَكُونَ﴾[425]

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[424] - Seerah is the life study of the Prophet ﷺ and his sayings and actions, physical, verbal and tacit.
[425] - **Al Qur'an**, [63:4].

"When thou hast seen them, their physiques impress thee. And when they speak, thou hast heard their saying. It is as if they had been propped up timber. They assume that every Cry is against them. They are the enemy so beware of them. God took the offensive. How they are misled!"[426]

The tenor and metaphors used in this ayah are beyond comprehension without a glimpse into the situational context. This clearly demonstrates that 'equivalence' cannot be achieved without exploring the situational context through tafseer. The level of understanding that the reader of the translation will acquire from the ayah in a 'situational context void' will in no way be equivalent to the understanding the reader of the original text will go away with.

3.6.3. Where Translation Studies meets Traditional Islamic Scholarship on the Issue of 'Context'

Textual context, what is called 'siyaaq al-nass' is as old as the first works of tafseer and should not be considered a new phenomenon to Qur'an translators. It is considered impossible to interpret, and by default translate the Qur'an in its absence. This principle is emphasized as much by experts in the field of translation studies as it is by scholars of tafseer and usool ul fiqh, as we have discussed.

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[426] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [63:4].

'Context of Situation', is traditionally referred to as 'Maqaam' in the books of balaagha (rhetorical studies) and in more recent literature as 'siyaaq al mawaaqif'. It can also be traced back to the earliest works on rhetorical studies. The importance of balaagha, especially 'ilm ul ma'aani (the science of meaning) and ilm ul bayan (the science of eloquence) for tafseer in general is universally recognized.[427]

"One of the most important contributions of classical scholars of balaagha was their recognition of the concept of 'maqaam' and its role in determining the meaning of the text. In doing so they were a thousand years ahead of their time, since recognition of 'maqaam' (the context of situation) was only arrived at recently in modern western linguistic thinking. When Malinowski coined his famous term 'the context of situation' in 1923 he was unaware that Arab rhetoricians had used a similar term a thousand years earlier."[428]

Another crucial feature which relies on context-consideration is 'al-ishtiraak' (polysemy) in individual words. Qur'anic polysemy, also known as 'wujooh ul Qur'an' (multiple meanings of words in the Qur'an) is a well-studied field in tafseer. This science was developed early on in the first century after the hijra and became developed quickly, resulting in scores of texts that were produced over five or six centuries.[429]

When a word in the Qur'an has more than one meaning, (wajh), the proper way of reading it is to bear the context (siyaaq) in mind when determining the correct meaning of the word. This principle clashes head on with Bakhtiar's methodology of allocating a specific English word for each Arabic term. A detailed discussion on the repercussions of this methodology is presented in section [3.7] of this Chapter.

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[427] - Abdel Haleem, **The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an**, Journal of Qur'anic Studies, Edinburgh University, 2018, p.1.
[428] - Ibid, p.2.
[429] - Ibid, p.3.

3.6.4. Conclusions regarding the Need for Context-Consideration in Qur'an Translations.

Seeking the equivalence of meaning is therefore seeking the equivalence of all three types of context to some degree. In translation, equivalence should not be based on one aspect of meaning alone at the expense of the others. All three aspects of equivalence must be pursued by the translator simultaneously.

When it comes to translating the Qur'an, 'context of situation' and 'context of culture' can only be retrieved through the books of tafseer, of which there are many shades and specialties. It must be emphasized that it is the very language of the Qur'an that makes context-consideration essential, since the Qur'an uses highly concise modes of expression that do not explain everything. For example, 'hadhf' (omission) is a very apparent feature of the Qur'an. It would be impossible to know what was omitted without recourse to both context of situation and textual context through the books of tafseer.[430]

The study the asbaab un nuzool,[431] a critical aspect of any work of tafseer is also an important factor in providing context of situation. Likewise, any historical background to the surah that does not fall within the strict definition of asbab-un Nuzool is also invaluable in this regard.

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[430] - Abdel Haleem, **The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an**, Journal of Qur'anic Studies, Edinburgh University, 2018, p.2.

[431] - The Sabab un-Nuzool is the direct cause of revelation for that particular surah or ayah. These ayat may be revealed in response to a question or because of a specific incident or occurrence. In addition, the specific incident must have occurred shortly before the revelation of the ayah and the ayah must have been revealed in direct response to its occurrence. The books of tafseer pay particular attention to authentically narrated asbab un Nuzool due to the great impact it has on the meaning of the ayah.

Since the reflection of 'situational context' and 'context of culture' is impossible in the target language without recourse to tafseer, any type of meaningful equivalence is equally impossible without it. This has been discussed in greater detail under the section of Tafseer and Translations in chapter one of this paper.

3.6.5. An Evaluation of Bakhtiar's Stance on Context-Consideration

Although Bakhtiar does make a passing remark about context when she explains her methodology of using the same English word for each Arabic word,[432] unfortunately, her passing reference to context does not bear much weight for the following reasons:

1. Bakhtiar fails to define what she means by context. There are different types of context that can be considered such as, linguistic context, situational context or cultural context, to name a few. She does not make any comment on which ones are acceptable to her or indeed what level of precedence 'context' in general will be given and whether her other translation methodologies will override context-consideration.

2. Perhaps the reasoning behind the lack of detail Bakhtiar provides with regards to context-consideration and how it will fit into her methodology of translating the Qur'an is due to her self-proclaimed reliance on the methodology of formal equivalence. Formal Equivalence by its very

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[432] - Bakhtiar says: *"I found, when the context is the same, if the same English word is not used for the same Arabic word throughout the translation, it becomes difficult for someone who wants to learn to correlate the English and the Arabic to be able to do so."* [**The Sublime Qur'an**, xiii.]

definition negates context-consideration. Bakhtiar is unable therefore, to provide further details on how she allowed context to play a part in her methodology since the action in most cases would not have been possible to implement.

3. Bakhtiar's concordance-based translation methodology necessitates that it is the words that are translated first. The words are presented in alphabetical order in a vacuum in which they are stripped of their surrounding text. These words are then linguistically translated and re-inserted back into the text and then strung into a phrase in the target language. At most, contextualization could be viewed as a highly diminished appendage in this methodology but more times than not, it is simply a victim of it, and is totally sacrificed.

Bell's explanation of the translator's dilemma with regards to context vis-à-vis formal equivalence sums up Bakhtiar's situation quite accurately. He explains that "The translator has the option of focusing on finding formal equivalents which 'preserve' the context-free semantic sense of the text at the expense of its context-sensitive communicative value *or* finding functional equivalents which 'preserve' the context-sensitive communicative value of the text at the expense of its context-free semantic sense.[433]

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[433] - Bell, **Translation and Translating, Theory and Practice**, 1991, p.7.

This is exactly the choice that Bakhtiar, and every Qur'an translator is faced with. For Bakhtiar to claim that she chose both context-consideration as well as the formal equivalence methodology shows that either, she herself has not adequately understood the terms and their application, or that she believes her readers will be unaware of the contradictory nature of her claim.

By exploring her translation in more detail, as we will in the sections that follow, it becomes apparent that Bakhtiar gave precedence to the methodology of formal equivalence, and by default did <u>not</u> consider the context in her translation. We can therefore conclude that one of the more serious flaws of Bakhtiar's translation methodology is her disregard for 'context' when translating the words of the Qur'an. Context, as we have established, is one of the most crucial pillars upon which any work of translation stands and therefore her methodological choice is the source of many of her errors in translation. Her choice, no doubt reflects her confidence in 'formal equivalence' as a methodology. Her arguments in favour of this methodology were discussed in section [3.5].

3.7. De-Contextualizing as a Translation Methodology and the Challenges It Poses: [A Case Study].

In this section we will examine Bakhtiar's claim to maintain contextualization as part of her methodology. We will explore the challenges of this method by presenting a case study on her translation of the word 'fu'aad' and 'qalb'.

3.7.1. An Evaluation of Bakhtiar's Claim to Contextualize Her Translation.

If Bakhtiar was to argue that she does not de-contextualize the text as part of her methodology but rather takes context into consideration, her claim can quite easily be disproved since she has already dismissed tafseer as merely 'the words of men'. By disregarding the largest source of authentic information on each of the three types of context discussed she has unwittingly admitted to de-contextualizing the words as part of her methodology.

Even if she was to then argue that she chose to *only* contextualize the words of the text from a <u>linguistic point of view</u> without looking to the books of tafseer, this would also be an inaccurate claim, since in many instances, the words of the Qur'an possess more than one meaning (wajh) that can 'linguistically work' in the sentence. We would ask Bakhtiar, who then has the authority to determine the final meaning of the words of Allah?

Bakhtiar gives the impression that she is empowering the reader, to allow them to come to their own personal understanding of the text. This claim is misleading in more ways than one, <u>since the reader can only try and draw their own understanding of the text based on the words that appear in front of them</u>. Those words have been selected by the translator who is effectively acting as the mediator between God's message and the recipient of that message. An example of this is when Bakhtiar chose to translate the word 'Kufr' as 'ingratitude' instead of 'disbelief' and 'kaafiroon' as 'those who are ungrateful' instead of 'disbelievers'.[434]

Earlier in this paper we examined some of the instances in which Bakhtiar chose to abandon the methodology of 'Formal Equivalence' (although she, herself never concedes this fact), and some of the problems she subsequently faced. In this section

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[434] - A detailed discussion on this point was presented in Chapter 2 of this paper.

we seek to discuss the challenges that Bakhtiar's version of 'Formal Equivalence' posed to her translation, most notably due to her not allowing the context of the ayah to be a factor in her translation. Although Bakhtiar does mention context in a passing comment in her preface, <u>it becomes apparent that in application context has not been considered at all for the following reasons:</u>

1- Bakhtiar fails to define 'context', nor does she seem to have a clear framework in place to guide her application of what it means to work within it.

2- Her methodology of first compiling her concordance where she starts with the words first, rather than to study the word within the context of the ayah is a clear admission from Bakhtiar of <u>not</u> allowing context to play any significant role.

3- Bakhtiar's translation of the Qur'an itself, is the most poignant witness against her use of context, as the examples we have presented demonstrate.

4- Bakhtiar's methodology of using the same English word to translate each Arabic word reveals her inability to appreciate or even acknowledge the semantic inequivalence between the two languages or that context should have a role in the meaning of the word each time it appears. This methodology that she boasts of is a clear rejection of context-consideration.

5- Her choice to continue to use the same English word to translate the same Arabic word each time it is presented in the Qur'an is also in direct contravention to context-based translation. It over-looks the polysemous nature of a great many words and reveals a disregard for 'ilm ul wujooh'.[435]

6- Bakhtiar's very choice of 'formal equivalence' as her methodology in translation confirms her decision to give precedence to 'word equivalence' over 'meaning accuracy' which is gained from context.

Bakhtiar goes to great lengths to convince the reader not only of the superiority and accuracy of Formal Equivalence, but also of how rigidly she observed the methodology. However, her self-imposed condition to use the same English word to translate an Arabic word whenever the context allows, as part of her implementation of 'Formal Equivalence' causes her many difficulties throughout the translation since the two languages aren't equivalent in any way as we have previously established earlier in this chapter. The severest consequence of this choice is a de-contextualized translation.

The English language, in many instances has only a single word for a particular matter. The same concept in Arabic may have many different words. For Bakhtiar to faithfully stick to the unrealistic and unfortunate decision to use a separate word for each separate Arabic word has caused her in many instances to completely change the meaning of the Qur'an and its message due to de-contextualization.

Below is a case-study on the word 'fu'aad' to clarify this point:

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[435] - This is the science that studies the different meanings and connotations of polysemous words.

3.7.2. Case Study on A De-Contextualized Translation Methodology:

1. The English language has only one single word that refers to the 'heart'.
   There is no other word available in English that can replace the 'heart' when
   it refers to the organ that resides in the chest of a human being.

   The Arabic language however, has more than one word for the heart. From
   the words that mean 'heart' in the Arabic language are: [قَلْب] 'qalb' and [فُؤَاد]

   'fu'aad'. Both these words come together in the following ayah in the
   Qur'an:

   ﴿وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَـٰرِغًا ۖ إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِى بِهِۦ لَوْلَآ أَن رَّبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا
   لِتَكُونَ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ [436]

   Bakhtiar, being faced with her 'different English word for every Arabic
   word methodology' translates the above ayah as follows:

   "And it came to be in the morning that <u>the mind</u> of the mother of Moses was

   that which is empty.

   Truly, she was about to show him, if We had not invigorated <u>her heart</u> so

   that she became among the ones who believe."[437]

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[436] - **Al Qur'an**, [28:10].
[437] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [28:10], p.367.

It is extremely difficult to not cringe at Bakhtiar's above translation since it is filled with linguistic errors.[438] However, we will for a moment, leave aside all the grammatical mistakes and inaccuracies in Bakhtiar's translation of this ayah and focus solely on the difficulty she faced when having to grapple with two separate words in the Arabic language that both mean 'heart' present in the same ayah at the same time.

Here, Bakhtiar was faced with the choice of compromising her self-imposed condition of using a different English word for each different Arabic word, and thereby being able to translate the ayah accurately by utilizing the word 'heart' in English to translate both 'qalb' and 'fu'aad' (which is what all previous translators have done), or to rigidly stick to her principle on this matter and thereby have to compromise on the accuracy of the meaning that she presents, for the sake of maintaining this 'internal consistency'.

It is regrettable that Bakhtiar chose the latter option. Determined to stick to her methodology she chose to replace 'heart' with 'mind'. The reasoning for this links back to another one of Bakhtiar's translation methodologies discussed earlier, that of using the same English word for each Arabic word whenever it appears in the Qur'an, as long as the context permits it linguistically. The problem with this methodology is that many times the context will allow many words linguistically but the correct one will be the word that the context allows not only linguistically but will also be theologically and doctrinally accurate.

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[438] - The most glaring of them being when she translates [وَأَصْبَحَ] as *"And it came to be in the morning…"* instead of recognising the word [وَأَصْبَحَ] as the 3rd person masculine singular (form IV) perfect verb from the sisters of Kaana. [فعل ماض من اخوات "كان"] with the correct translation for it being 'became'…

…Likewise, when Bakhtiar misunderstands and thus mistranslates the [إن] from: [إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِّ]. She translates إن as a particle of emphasis (harf tawkeed) instead of as a conditional particle, (harf shart), and therefore translates the ayah saying: '*Truly, she was about to show him…"*

Although 'fu'aad' can indeed mean mind in other places in the Qur'an as in the ayah:

$$﴿وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِۦ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ ٱلسَّمْعَ وَٱلْبَصَرَ وَٱلْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْـُٔولًا﴾^{439}$$

"And follow up not of what there is not for thee knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked."[440]

This is certainly not the case in all the different places it appears in the Qur'an. To sweep all the instances it appears in the Qur'an with one brush is not recognizing the different shades of meaning that each word carries with it and the effects of context on discerning that meaning.

The scholars of tafseer have much to say about the difference between *'qalb'* and *'fu'aad'*, in their commentary on the ayah [28:10], however it is not authentically relayed from any of them that 'mind' is intended here for the word 'fu'aad' rather than 'heart', since both 'qalb' and 'fu'aad' clearly meaning 'heart' in this ayah. This is further emphasized if we look at the renderings of some other contemporary translations of the ayah, which read as follows:

Sahih International: And the <u>heart</u> of Moses' mother became empty [of all else]. She was about to disclose [the matter concerning] him had We not bound fast her <u>heart</u> that she would be of the believers.[441]

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439 - **Al Qur'an** [17:36].
440 - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [17:36].
441 - Umm Muhammad, **Saheeh International, The Qur'an,** [28:10].

Pickthall: And the <u>heart</u> of the mother of Moses became void, and she would have betrayed him if We had not fortified her <u>heart</u>, that she might be of the believers.[442]

Yusuf Ali: But there came to be a void in the <u>heart</u> of the mother of Moses: She was going almost to disclose his (case), had We not strengthened her <u>heart</u> (with faith), so that she might remain a (firm) believer.[443]

Hilali & Khan: And the <u>heart</u> of the mother of Musa (Moses) became empty [from every thought, except the thought of Musa (Moses)]. She was very near to disclose his (case, i.e. the child is her son), had We not strengthened her <u>heart</u> (with Faith), so that she might remain as one of the believers.[444]

Arberry: On the morrow the <u>heart</u> of Moses' mother became empty, and she well-nigh disclosed him had We not strengthened her <u>heart</u>, that she might be among the believers.[445]

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[442] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [28:10].
[443] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [28:10].
[444] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [28:10].
[445] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**, [28:10].

3.7.3. The Repercussions of a De-Contextualized Translation: [Case Study Contd.]

The repercussions of Bakhtiar's choice to mistranslate 'fu'aad' is not limited to the incorrect meaning of this one ayah alone, being conveyed to her readers. Rather, it reverberates far deeper since it is based on a set of contradictory translation policies which together constitute Bakhtiar's unworkable methodology, and hence the negative repercussions of her mistranslation of the word 'fu'aad' in this ayah has a cumulative effect that runs throughout her translation of the Qur'an. We will elucidate on the chain of effects in a list of points below:

3.7.4. The Chain of Effects of Bakhtiar's De-Contextualized Translation:

1. Bakhtiar chooses to change the meaning of fu'aad to 'mind' in the ayah in Soorah al Qasas so as not to repeat the word 'heart' which she had already allocated as the 'equivalent' to 'qalb'. She does this to implement her 'one English word per Arabic word methodology'.

2. Bakhtiar is then faced with the difficulty of reconciling this self-imposed condition with the other self-imposed condition she stipulated in her preface, which was to continue to present the same translation for a particular Arabic word, every time that word would appear throughout the Qur'an if the context allowed it linguistically. This, in Bakhtiar's opinion would be an indication that her translation was one of 'internal consistency and reliability' unlike all previous translations.

3. Bakhtiar would have found herself 'stuck' between these two competing and incompatible policies in many instances. With regards to the ayah in Soorah al Qasas Bakhtiar would find herself in a particularly vulnerable position since she cannot stay faithful to both methodologies without compromising on the accuracy of her translation by *mistranslating* the word 'fu'aad' to another word other than 'heart' so as not to repeat the allocation for the word 'heart' to more than one Arabic word. She therefore allocates the word 'mind' as the 'equivalent' for 'fu'aad'.

4. Bakhtiar now has no option but to mistranslate the word 'fu'aad' as 'mind' in every single place that it appears in the Qur'an to stay faithful to the second methodology mentioned above, which is that every time the word appears she utilizes the same allocated 'equivalent' to translate it.

5. Since, in her concordance Bakhtiar has already allocated the word 'fu'aad' to 'mind' the only way she can also simultaneously and harmoniously implement her second translation methodology, (which is to translate fu'aad as mind in every place) is if she also mistranslates it as 'mind' even in places where it should really be translated as 'heart' as dictated by the context.

6. The difficulty lies in the fact that the word 'fu'aad' appears in the Qur'an in its singular and plural forms a total of sixteen times. Some of the time the context dictates that the word means 'mind' as in ayah [17:36], and in other places in the Qur'an the context dictates that the word means heart, like in ayah, [28:10].

7. Faced with this dilemma, Bakhtiar, evidently decided to replace the word 'heart' with 'mind', in _all_ the sixteen places in the Qur'an that the word 'fu'aad' appears, to maintain her internal consistency, despite the fact that the context of most of these sixteen ayaat do <u>not</u> permit the word 'mind' to be a plausible alternative to 'heart'.

8. In the process of glossing over every 'fu'aad' in the Qur'an with her translation of 'mind' instead of 'heart', Bakhtiar inadvertently distorts the Islamic aqeedah. Below are two examples of this:

3.7.5. The Effects of De-Contextualization on Aqeedah (Islamic theology):

i. Bakhtiar translates 'heart' as 'mind' in [104:6-7] to maintain her de-contextualized translation methodology:

$$﴿نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ ، ٱلَّتِى تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلْأَفْئِدَةِ﴾^{446}$$

"It is the fire of God, that which is kindled eternally,

that <u>peruses the minds.</u>" [447]

By disregarding the context and continuing to translate [af'idah] as 'minds' instead of 'hearts', Bakhtiar inadvertently transforms the Hellfire into a <u>mental torture rather than a physical one</u>, and by doing so deviates from the authentically transmitted beliefs of Islam on this issue. What aggravates the

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[446] - **Al Qur'an**, [104:6-7].
[447] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [104:6-7], p.598.

mistranslation of 'heart' even further is that she also mistranslates [تَطَّلِعُ] as 'peruses', which denotes the meaning of 'browse, read through, scan, analyze'.[448]

The Hellfire, based on Bakhtiar's decontextualized translation, is reduced to a fire that 'browses' or 'scans' the minds of men and is portrayed more as a mental discipline than any real physical creation. This is in direct contradiction to the way the hellfire is described in many places in the Qur'an where it is clearly established as a physical entity that will burn the skin and the bodies of its inhabitants as mentioned in Soorah Nisa [4:56]:

$$﴿إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ بِـَٔايَـٰتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُم بَدَّلْنَـٰهُمْ جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُواْ ٱلْعَذَابَ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا﴾^{449}$$

Sahih International: Indeed, those who disbelieve in Our verses - We will drive them into a Fire. Every time their skins are roasted through We will replace them with other skins so they may taste the punishment. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted in Might and Wise.[450]

Yusuf Ali: Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.[451]

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[448] - See **Oxford English Dictionary**: [PERUSE].
[449] - **Al Qur'an**, [4:56].
[450] - Umm Muhammad, **Saheeh International: The Qur'an**, [4:56].
[451] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [4:56].

Bakhtiar's mistranslation of [104:6] therefore, has far-reaching effects that spill over into many of the other fields of Islamic sciences. <u>These effects are a direct consequence of her methodological choices in her translation.</u>

It should be noted that the other notable English translators of the Qur'an did not fall into this error since the dilemma Bakhtiar faced was self-created by her. None of her predecessors set similar contradictory translation policies as part of their methodology and were therefore not subjected to the difficulties Bakhtiar had to grapple with, nor did they subsequently go on to make similar compromises in accuracy with its huge reverberations on Islamic aqeedah that Bakhtiar did. Below is a selection of translations of the afore-mentioned ayah:

Pickthall: (It is) the fire of Allah, kindled,

Which leapeth up over the hearts (of men).[452]

Yusuf Ali: (It is) the Fire of (the Wrath of) Allah kindled (to a blaze), That which doth mount (Right) to the Hearts.[453]

Hilali & Khan: The fire of Allah, kindled, Which leaps up over the hearts.[454]

Arberry: The Fire of God kindled, roaring over the hearts.[455]

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[452] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [104:6-7].
[453] - Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Qur'an**, [104:6-7].
[454] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [104:6-7].
[455] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**, [104:6-7].

ii.   We see in Bakhtiar's translation of [53:10-12] another example of the negative repercussions of her choice to follow through with her translation methodology. Her subsequent insistence of translating 'fu'aad' as 'mind' instead of 'heart' each time it appears in the Qur'an leads us to the next serious doctrinal crisis, as presented in her translation of the ayah:

$$﴿فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَآ أَوْحَىٰ ۞ مَا كَذَبَ ٱلْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ ۞ أَفَتُمَٰرُونَهُۥ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ ﴾^{456}$$

"Then, He revealed to His servant what He revealed,

The mind lied not against what it saw.

Will you altercate with him about what he sees?"[457]

There are a lot of opinions regarding the meaning of this ayah in the books of tafseer, so technically there is more leniency towards any inaccuracies from Bakhtiar's translation to be absorbed without falling outside of the accepted opinions on the meaning of the ayah.

The opinions advanced by the scholars of tafseer, hadith and Islamic history (seerah) can be broadly summarized into the following categories:

1. The Prophet ﷺ saw Allah with his heart alone and not with his eyes.

2. The Prophet ﷺ saw Allah's veil of Light with his eyes and his heart.

3. The Prophet ﷺ saw Allah's veil of Light with his heart alone and not his eyes.

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[456] - **Al Qur'an**, [53:10-14].
[457] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [53:10-12], p.510.

4. The ayah refers to the Angel Jibreel (AS) and not Allah so it means that the Prophet ﷺ saw Jibreel (AS) and not Allah with his eyes and heart.

The common theme between the above opinions despite their latitude is that the Prophet ﷺ saw either Allah or the Veil of Light of Allah, or the angel Jibreel with either his eyes or his heart. <u>None of the opinions espouse that the Prophet ﷺ 'saw' with his mind alone,</u> an opinion that would be tantamount to the whole incident being dismissed as merely a vision, dream or hallucination.[458]

It is unfortunate that despite having a wide latitude of acceptable opinions on this issue, we find that Bakhtiar's translation is so inaccurate that it still falls outside the pail of what is deemed acceptable due to her replacing the word 'heart' with 'mind' in this ayah. The reason for this is that in doing so, she now relegates what the Prophet ﷺ saw into a mere dream, or hallucination; something he 'saw' with his mind alone. This is similar to what he was accused of by his detractors from amongst the pagans of Quraysh who did not want to acknowledge this incident in particular, and wahy in general, to be any more than a figment of his imagination, or at most a vision.

Again, we find the well-known translators of the Qur'an are unanimous in their translation of these ayaat in terms of rendering 'fu'aad' as 'heart' in surah [53:10]:

Sahih International: And he revealed to His Servant what he revealed. <u>The heart did not lie [about] what it saw</u>. So will you dispute with him over what he saw?[459]

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458 - a hallucination is commonly defined as
''a sensory experience of something that does not exist outside the mind.' See: Dictionary.com.
459 - Umm Muhammad, **Saheeh International, The Qur'an**, [53:10-12].

Pickthall: And He revealed unto His slave that which He revealed. <u>The heart lied not (in seeing) what it saw.</u> Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he seeth?[460]

Hilali & Khan: So did (Allah) convey the Inspiration to His slave [Muhammad SAW through Jibrael (Gabriel)]. <u>The (Prophet's) ﷺ heart lied not (in seeing) what he (Muhammad ﷺ) saw.</u> Will you then dispute with him (Muhammad ﷺ) about what he saw [during the Mi'raaj: (Ascent of the Prophet ﷺ over the seven heavens)].[461]

Arberry: Then revealed to his servant that he revealed, <u>His heart lies not of what he saw;</u> what, will you dispute with him what he sees?[462]

Bakhtiar's mis-translation of this ayah therefore, lends support to hugely heretical opinions regarding the night journey to the heavens in particular, and revelation, 'wahy' in general. Amongst the heretical opinions that would find support from her translation of [53:10] is that of Baruch Spinoza.[463]

Spinoza was of the opinion that the reason for the existence of 'prophet-hood' lies in the fact that the Prophets possessed a more vivid imagination than other people, however, this imagination according to Spinoza did not equate to the perfection of

[460] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [53:10-12].
[461] - Hilali & Khan, **The Noble Qur'an**, [53:10-12].
[462] - Arberry, **The Koran Interpreted**, [53: 10-12].
[463] - Baruch Spinoza, (1632-1677 CE) born Benedito de Espinosa, was a Dutch philosopher of Sephardi/Portuguese origin. He was raised in a Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam but developed highly controversial ideas regarding the authenticity of the Hebrew Bible in particular and the nature of God and all divine books in general. He was a leading philosophical figure of the Dutch Golden Age. His Magnum Opus, "Ethics" was published posthumously in 1677.

thought or intellect.[464] Spinoza's opinions in this regard consolidate and develop his formal position on the matter; that the Prophets possess a greater capacity for a vivid imagination, not a more perfect intellect.[465]

Based on this theory, he further proposed that since prophet-hood was built upon a vivid imagination, that meant it wasn't related to knowledge in any way. Rather, it differed from one prophet to another depending on a host of variables; from the difference in their views, to their temperament and their sense of decorum. In other words, the revelation, (wahy), that Allah sent down, according to Spinoza was susceptible to change according to the understanding of the Prophets and their views.[466]

He further propounded that the prophetic legislation was therefore not an extension of the divine revelation, rather it was an extension of the prior imagination of the prophets. Spinoza postulated that this logically necessitates "that we are not obligated with belief in the prophets except with regards to the purpose of revelation and its true essence".[467] As for other than that, then each individual is free to believe in whatsoever he wills with complete free-will.[468]

Spinoza furthered his case on this issue saying, "If it is established that prophet-hood isn't based on divine knowledge, and is merely the perfection of the Prophet's ﷺ imagination, then this means that the station of 'Prophet-hood' doesn't elevate the prophets to a level of greater knowledge, rather it leaves them upon the opinions that

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[464] - Spinoza mentions that the certainty that the Prophets had in the proofs of their authority over the people is propped up by three matters:
 1) A vivid imagination
 2) A sign or a miracle that indicates prophet-hood
 3) A soul that is inclined towards justice and goodness.
[465] - Spinoza, **Ar-Risaalah fil Laahoot wa Siyaasah**, translated by Hasan Hanafi, 2005. p.141.
[466] - Ibid. p.162.
[467] - Spinoza explained what he intended by his expression " غاية الوحي وجوهره "or the "purpose of revelation and its true essence" by saying that the revelation to Cabel doesn't teach us anything except that Allah had warned him and required him to live a better life, and this alone is the goal of the revelation and its essence, not teaching free-will or any other philosophical theories.
[468] - Ibid, p.162.

they had previously formulated. Consequently, we have a solution for their firm belief in matters related to pure theory."[469]

As a result of the above, we are not expected, in Spinoza's view, to believe in the prophets in matters of legislation that are related to pure theory. Obedience therefore stays confined to what Spinoza calls "justice and beneficence" (al-'adl wal-ihsaan). [470]

This last statement of Spinoza's is very similar to what Bakhtiar herself expresses in her introduction when she argues her case for her questionable rendering of [4:34] in the Qur'an[471] explaining that the traditional rendering of the ayah doesn't fit with goal of the Qur'an which is justice and kindness to all and therefore needs to be revised.

Although Spinoza was famous for these philosophies, this belief was not actually a product of his original thoughts, rather he was simply propounding the traditional philosophers' position on the issue. Indeed, the Jewish jurist and philosopher Musa bin Maimoon had already expressed this opinion in his works.[472] Likewise, Ibn Tufail mentioned that Al-Faraabi was of this view in his book on civil policy,[473] and it is well-known that Spinoza had read Ibn Tufail's books.[474]

We don't need to refute Spinoza's theory regarding the imagination of the Prophets being the basis of prophet-hood and revelation, since no intellectual evidence was ever presented by Spinoza nor by any of the other proponents of this

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[469] - Ibid. p.151.
[470] - Ibid. p. 162.
[471] - See Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, p.xxxiv.
[472] - Ibn Maimoon, Musa, **Dalalatul-Ha'ireen**, Beirut, Dar ul Kutub al 'Ilmiyah, 1st Edition, 2007, p.222.
[473] - Ibn Tufayl, Hayy bin Yaqdaan, edited by Faruq Sa'd, Beirut Dar ul Afaaq al-jadeedah, 6th Edition, 1995, p.113.
[474] - Faraabi's words on the superiority of philosophy resembles Spinoza's position on the matter. It transpires later in Spinoza's book, that he doesn't just prefer philosophy to prophet-hood alone, rather he prefers it to religion on the whole, since with philosophy one reaches the truth but with religion one only reaches obedience.

theory and there is no purpose in discussing theories that are not supported with any evidence since they are tantamount to mere desires.

These same claims were revived however, amongst the orientalists in the 1960's. Watt, claimed regarding the wahy sent down to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, "What seems to a man to come from outside himself may actually come from his unconscious."[475] Kenneth Cragg, another modern orientalist, expresses much the same sentiment, only adding that the wilderness exacerbated the Prophet's ﷺ imaginative visions.[476] Rodinson, recasting these ideas in modern vernacular, insisted that the Qur'an was an example of auditory visual hallucination.[477]

I am <u>not</u> of the opinion that Bakhtiar subscribes to this orientalist narrative, she has however, provided the orientalists who propound these ideas with much fodder with her translation of [53:10], and has effectively, albeit unintentionally, lent support to an opinion that previously was unsubstantiated by the Qur'an and its translations, indeed it was refuted outright in the Qur'an:

﴿بَلْ قَالُوٓاْ أَضْغَٰثُ أَحْلَٰمٍ بَلِ ٱفْتَرَىٰهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِـَٔايَةٍ كَمَآ أُرْسِلَ ٱلْأَوَّلُونَ﴾[478]

Nay, they say, These (revelations) are but muddled dreams – Nay, he hath but invented it! – Nay, he is but a poet! Then let him bring us some miracles like (the prophets) of old (were given)[479]

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[475] - Khalifa, Mohammad, – **The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism**, Longman, London, 1983, p.12
[476] - Njozi, Hamza Mustafa, **The Sources of the Qur'an, a Critical Review of the Authorship Theories**, WAMY, Saudi Arabia. n.d. p.5
[477] - Khalifa, Mohammad, **The Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism**, p.12.
[478] - **Al Qur'an**, [21:5].
[479] - Pickthall, **The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an**, [21:5].

iii.   The final example we will give in this regard of the negative repercussions

from Bakhtiar's decision to translate 'fu'aad' as 'mind' instead of 'heart'

whilst ignoring the context, is her rendering of the following ayah:

﴿وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ جُمْلَةً وَٰحِدَةً ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَ ۖ وَرَتَّلْنَٰهُ تَرْتِيلًا﴾[480]

"And those who were ungrateful[481] said:

Why was the Qur'an not sent down to him all at once?

<u>Thus, We will make firm thy mind by it</u>.

And We chanted a chanting."[482]

Bakhtiar, inadvertently, and unintentionally degrades the Prophet's ﷺ
mental capacity with her choice of translation. There is a monumental
difference in meaning and implication between saying [لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ فُؤَادَكَ] which
means, "So as to strengthen your heart by it" and between saying [لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِۦ
عقلكَ] or [ذهنكَ] which means "so as to strengthen your mind by it"
which is what Bakhtiar is presenting! As with the repercussions mentioned in
our previous point, again, I do not believe Bakhtiar intended to insult the
Prophet ﷺ in any way by this rendering, it is nevertheless a negative
consequence of her misguided methodology.

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[480] - **Al Qur'an**, [25:32].
[481] - We will discuss Bakhtiar's translation of [ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ] as *"those who were ungrateful"* at length in Chapter 5.
[482] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an**, [25:32].

As we can see from the above 3 instances in Bakhtiar's translation of the Qur'an where the word fu'aad was mistranslated to 'mind', the negative repercussions include:

a. Reducing the Hellfire into a mental torture rather than a physical one.

b. Consigning what the Prophet ﷺ 'saw' on the night of the ascension to the heavens, which subsequently formed part of the revelation, as merely something that took place in his mind, akin to a dream or a vivid imagination.

c. Degrading the mental capacity of the Prophet ﷺ.

3.8. Conclusions on the Methodological Problem in Bakhtiar's Translation.

1- Bakhtiar goes to great lengths to convince the reader not only of the superiority and accuracy of 'Formal Equivalence', but also of how rigidly she observed the methodology. This is a false representation as we have demonstrated since she ceases using formal equivalence whenever she feels like inserting a different word in its place. This is sometimes due to other aspects of her methodology clashing with formal equivalence, and sometimes, it is more to do with her desire to interpolate her bias into the translation, such as in the case of her renderings of [hasuran] and [fata] and [nisaa] which were discussed in chapter one.

2- The concordance-based translation methodology that Bakhtiar produced necessitates that context-consideration is completely disregarded. None of the three types of context (context of text, context of situation or context of culture) mentioned by the scholars in the field of translation studies have any role to play in her methodology. This is one of the main down-falls of Bakhtiar's translation methodology and the source of a huge number of inaccuracies.

3- Bakhtiar's decision to (attempt to) employ Formal Equivalence whilst simultaneously choosing to omit all footnotes and commentary turns out to be disastrous for the translation and leaves large parts of the text unintelligible.

4- It is utterly disingenuous of Bakhtiar to stipulate a methodology of utilizing italics to insert words not in the source text that are needed to make the text intelligible, after criticizing previous translators who used footnotes and parenthesis for the same reason.

5- Bakhtiar's is either unable or unwilling to apply her methodology with regards to italics accurately in her translation. She thereby ends up not italicizing the more important interpolations that often reflect her personal opinions and instead seems to focus on italicizing small particles like 'the' and 'a' which make no difference to the meaning or intent of the ayaat. Her selective usage of this methodology renders the whole exercise null and void since no-one can be sure when she is employing it and when she is not.

6- Bakhtiar fails to acknowledge the incompatibility and inequivalence between the Arabic and English languages. The greatest proof of this is her translation methodology of allocating a different English 'equivalent' for every Arabic word. This methodology is a major source of inaccuracy in her translation, as demonstrated in this chapter, and often causes her to knowingly select a word that does not reflect the meaning of the source language. She does this often in her translation, and in doing so gives precedence to her methodological choices over and above the objective of an accurate rendering of the Qur'an.

7- Bakhtiar's above methodology is further exacerbated due to a second self-imposed condition where she stipulates that each English 'equivalent' she has allocated to an Arabic word must be continuously used to translate that same Arabic word whenever it appears in the Qur'an. This methodology effectively multiplies the errors of the previous methodology (mentioned in point 6 above), by causing each error to run throughout the entire translation of the Qur'an as often as the word appears. This causes a huge number of inaccuracies throughout the translation, not to speak of its effect on related sciences such as theology and jurisprudence, all of which is made apparent in the case studies presented in this chapter.

8- There is a clear mis-match between the audience Bakhtiar is targeting and the methodology of translating that she selects. This is due to Bakhtiar not fully understanding translation theories and their effects of the readership.

9- It is also apparent that in many places Bakhtiar's intent is noble but misplaced however her translation methodologies have inadvertently supported orientalist positions on foundational concepts like revelation (wahy).

10- The detailed case study presented above on 'qalb' and 'fu'aad' prove the following points without a shadow of a doubt:

a) The premise that one can translate a book as complex as the Qur'an by translating the words individually first, in the form of a concordance is flawed, since each word has a multitude of nuances that are very much dependent on the context and grammatical structure of the ayah. To singularly look at the possible linguistic meanings of a word, when it has been stripped bare of its context and accompanying grammatical structures is setting up the translation to fail before one has even started.

b) Bakhtiar's translation methodology of allocating a different English 'equivalent' for every Arabic word is a major source of inaccuracy in her translation. This is because in attempting to accomplish this fete she has in many instances had to replace a perfectly good translation with another word that is not even vaguely synonymous due to a lack of synonyms available in the English language for a particular Arabic word, as demonstrated above with the case-study on her translation of 'heart' and 'mind'.

c) The problem is further exacerbated by another one of Bakhtiar's self-imposed translation methodologies, namely, that once an English equivalent has been allocated to an Arabic word, that same English word is to be utilized each time that Arabic word appears, (when she feels the context allows it linguistically), throughout the text of the Qur'an. This policy is the one that gives her translation the death blow in terms of accuracy because each time she makes a mistake in allocating an incorrect word 'equivalent', that mistake is then compounded by the number of times that word appears in the Qur'an.

d) Since the Qur'an is the Sacred Book of the Muslims and is the primary source for all subsequent Islamic Sciences, whether it be jurisprudence (fiqh) or theology (aqeedah) or the principles of jurisprudence (usool ul fiqh), making changes to the meanings of the Qur'an has significant consequences on all of these sciences as we have discussed in the section on 'negative repercussions'.

e) It is apparent from the above that what Bakhtiar would classify as 'attaining internal consistency and reliability' comes with a chain of consequences, those consequences include not faithfully delivering the original message of the Qur'an but changing it in accordance with her policies. Languages are never fully equivalent as stated by Nida. Bakhtiar's acknowledgement of this fact would have saved her from a multitude of errors.

f) Bakhtiar claims to have started with her concordance first and then moved onto translating The Sublime Qur'an based on the translations she compiled for each word in the Qur'an in her concordance, it is disappointing that she did not identify how her translation methodologies would cause a chain of mistranslations that would wreak havoc on the meaning of the Qur'an, despite this being something that could have been identified by her with even the most cursory glance at her concordance.

Allah says in the Qur'an:

﴿فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَٰقَهُمْ لَعَنَّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَٰسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ ٱلْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِۦ وَنَسُوا۟ حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا۟ بِهِۦ ۚ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَىٰ خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۖ﴾ [483]

Bakhtiar translates this ayah as follows:

"Then, for their breaking their solemn promise, We cursed them and We made their hearts ones that harden. <u>They tamper with the words out of context</u> and they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of in it. Thou wilt not cease to peruse the treachery of them, but a few of them."[484]

It is deplorable that after Bakhtiar herself has translated the above ayah, that she still chose to render so much of the words of Allah out of context.

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[483] - **Al Qur'an**, [5:13].
[484] - Bakhtiar, **The Sublime Qur'an,** [5:13].

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section we will summarize our research findings and expound on our conclusions. This will be followed by our recommendations and a brief discussion on how this study contributes to knowledge in the field of Qur'an translations:

Eligibility to Translate the Qur'an:

Through this research we determined that for a translator to be eligible to translate the Qur'an he/ she must possess certain qualities and proficiencies:

1. Proficiency in the Arabic language to a scholarly level whereby the translator is well-acquainted with all the linguistic sciences such as nahw, sarf and ishtiqaaq.

2. Proficiency in the target language, such that the translator is able to accurately transmit the meaning from the Qur'an intelligibly from the source language into the target language.

3. A good grounding in usool al tafseer and usool al fiqh, such that the translator knows when to give precedence to the shariah connotation of a word and when to allow the linguistic definition to be used in the translation. Likewise, for the translator to be able to discern when the rulings are to be interpreted and transmitted in the target language in general terms ('aam) and when to use specific terms (khaas) he/she would need grounding in the usool. This applies to all the other usool mentioned earlier.

4. The translator must acknowledge the role of tafseer in arriving at an accurate understanding of the words of Allah. Since the best one to explain the words of Allah is Allah Himself through tafseer al Qur'an bil Qur'an followed by tafseer by the Sunnah and then tafseer by the statements of the Companions. For the translator to deny the role of tafseer in interpreting the meaning of the Qur'an leaves a gaping hole which by default is then filled with the opinions of the translator that are not based on knowledge.

5. To be eligible to translate the Qur'an the translator must demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that they possess academic integrity whereby the reader can trust them to accurately transmit the words of the author (Allah) without any additions, deletions or interpolations of any doctrinal or ideological beliefs that they may hold. This is a crucial aspect of eligibility that cannot be overlooked since only due to the integrity of the translator can the reader trust that the translation he/she is reading is a true reflection of the words of his/her Creator.

6. Part of the above-mentioned integrity that is necessary is that the translator must not be involved in plagiarism or any other action that would stain his/her academic reputation, since any blemish in this regard calls into question his/her professionalism in this field.

7. The ideal candidate would possess an understanding of all the sciences required for a Mufassir as well as a translator of the Qur'an. The above-mentioned summary however, lists the bare minimum of what is required from an individual to be eligible to translate the Qur'an.

Bakhtiar's Eligibility to Translate the Qur'an:

Based on the above-mentioned summary of the minimum requirements for an individual to be eligible to translate the Qur'an, we conclude that Bakhtiar is <u>not</u> eligible to translate the Qur'an due to the following reasons:

1. Her level of Arabic is not sufficient for the task. The greatest proof of this is her translation itself, which is filled with elementary level grammar mistakes that totally change the meaning of the ayaat. Since the Qur'an is the basis of all the other Islamic sciences, any mistranslations due to her incompetence in the Arabic language has huge repercussions in all the related fields. This is evident from the impact of Bakhtiar's translation on a range of theological issues presented in this research, ranging from the concept of 'eemaan and kufr' to the implication of the Hellfire being only a mental torture and not a physical one.

2. Her inability to convey the message from the source language into the target language in an intelligible way. Many times, her renderings make no sense in English. Many samples from her translation were cited in this regard, that

demonstrated her incapacity in no uncertain terms. <u>The purpose of translation is for the reader to be able to understand the message of the source text. If this is not achieved, as in the case of Bakhtiar's translation, then the purpose of the translation is defeated</u>.

3. Bakhtiar's ignorance in the field of usool ul tafseer is the root cause for her flawed methodology. From the repercussions of disregarding this essential science is that Bakhtiar considers it within her rights as a translator to select the linguistic meaning of words in the Qur'an rather than to prioritize its shar'iah definition. This is demonstrated in the case-study we present on Bakhtiar's translation of the word 'kufr' which she mostly translates as 'ingratitude' instead of 'disbelief'. The repercussions of these errors have wide implications in the field of Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

4. Bakhtiar's position on tafseer is self-contradictory and is the source of many of the inaccuracies in her translation. It is self-contradictory because she rejects the words of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ and the scholars of tafseer who come after them on the basis that they are 'merely men', however, she is open to accepting the opinions of the general masses on what the meanings of the ayaat *could* be and believes that Qur'an translation should be a 'democratic process'[485]. She does not however extend the courtesy of this 'democracy' to the Companions and the scholars in the field of tafseer. This self-contradictory position shows an innate bias against traditional Islamic scholarship that she is unable to hide. Her position of <u>not</u> referring to

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[485] - Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an, lxix.

tafseer is the source of many of her inaccuracies because her rendering does not benefit from tafseer of the Qur'an by the Qur'an, tafseer by the Sunnah or tafseer by the statements of the Companions.

5. Bakhtiar's lack of academic integrity is a leading cause for her to be disqualified as a translator of the Qur'an and renders her ineligible for the task. This is demonstrated in several ways:

    i. Bakhtiar's plagiarism of parts of Kassis' concordance of the Qur'an followed by her slanderous disparagement of it in the pursuit of seizing from Kassis the title of producing the only complete concordance of the Qur'an in the English language is as shocking as it is disappointing.

    ii. Bakhtiar's unfaithfulness to the source text is undeniably the greatest cause of her ineligibility to be a Qur'an translator. She repeatedly exploits her position as a translator to interpolate her doctrinal and theological bias into the text of the Qur'an. This is a heinous crime for any translator of the Qur'an but is that much more scandalous due to the lengths that Bakhtiar goes to in her preface to highlight to her readers that her translation will be 'free of all doctrinal and denominational bias'. The case-studies presented in this paper on Bakhtiar's translations for the words: 'fata' 'hasur' 'nisaa' and 'amal-us-saalihaat' address different interpolations made by Bakhtiar to support her ideological and doctrinal leanings and clearly prove her agenda beyond a shadow of a doubt.

iii. Bakhtiar's breach of her own promise to use italics when adding extra words that are not in the original text. Her decision to interpolate her own understanding of ayaat and not italicize them despite vowing to her readers to do so in her preface calls her integrity into question yet again.

iv. Bakhtiar demonstrates her lack of integrity in another subtler way by her decision to publish a copy of the 'Al-Azhar Islamic Research Academy's certificate of authenticity' for the Arabic text on the first page of her book, despite not including a single Arabic word in her entire book. The certificate is highly mis-leading and in bad taste since it is a lowly attempt to bring false credence to her translation and only serves to stain her integrity as a translator and an academic.

Bakhtiar's Claim's to Uniqueness:

1. Bakhtiar claimed in her preface, that her translation is unique in five ways: (No commentary, universality, inclusive language, 'thou vs you' and her rendering of [4:34].) Her claim to uniqueness for each one of these five situations is discredited in this paper and a list of other translators who preceded Bakhtiar in the use of these same 'unique' characteristics is provided for clarity.

2. Not only is Bakhtiar's translation not 'unique' due to these five points but in each case, as a consequence of utilizing these five methods, her translation is rendered less accurate:

i.   This is clearly displayed in the case of her 'inclusive' translation where she inadvertently 'includes' all of mankind within the framework of 'kufr' due to her translating the word as 'ingratitude', and thus 'includes' them all in the ayaat pertaining to the hellfire.

ii. Likewise, Bakhtiar's attempt at making her translation 'universal' by mistranslating 'Hasur' as 'concealer of secrets' instead of 'chaste', is another example of further inaccuracy and interpolation caused by one of her 'unique' methods.

iii. With regards to Bakhtiar's claim to uniqueness due to using 'thou vs you', Bakhtiar is quick to level accusations at the Qur'an translators who preceded her who do not use 'thou, thee, thy'. Bakhtiar goes so far as to accuse them all of committing 'shirk' (polytheism) for translate 'anta' [أنت] as 'you' when referring to Allah. Ironically, Bakhtiar herself goes on to use 'you' and 'your' in this edition of her translation, abandoning her 'thou, thee, thy' policy, leaving the discerning reader perplexed as to whether she intended to excommunicate herself from the faith when she proclaimed it as an act of 'shirk'?!

iv. Bakhtiar's decision to omit all commentary is not only <u>not unique</u> but is also one of the main reasons her translation fails to convey the meaning of the source text in many situations, as demonstrated in the section discussing context-consideration.

v. The last of Bakhtiar's claims to uniqueness, which incidentally is also her claim to fame, is her much debated rendering of [4:34]. A complete deconstruction of her supporting arguments presented in this research makes it quite clear that her 'novel' rendering is baseless. She is also not to be credited as being the first to come up with this rendering since it has previously been rendered as such by other translators and interpreters of the Qur'an. Despite this, Bakhtiar has gained much fame from claiming precedence in this regard.

3. We noted however, that Bakhtiar's translation was 'unique' in other ways that perhaps she did not intend. This was due to the unorthodox views she held on matters pertaining to 'nidham ul-Qur'an' (the Qur'anic system): These include re-numbering the ayaat, removing the Arabic text and producing an English Language 'recitation' of her translation:

i. Bakhtiar's re-numbering of the text of her Qur'an translation, and her accompanying argument for this action reflects an indecisive person who cannot follow through in achieving a purpose or someone who is masking the true reasons for their actions. This is because, after explaining that she is re-numbering the ayaat to put less emphasis on numbers, so as not to let the reader be distracted by them, she subsequently adds in <u>five</u> other categories of numbers signifying the 'rukoo' and 'manaazil' amongst other things. This informs the reader that Bakhtiar was either not being honest in her reasoning for re-

numbering the ayaat, or she forgot her vision for less numbers at some point and decided to add more!

ii. The decision to simultaneously remove the Arabic text of the Qur'an only compounds the problems of re-numbering the ayaat discussed above, making it physically much harder to 'check' Bakhtiar's rendering against its corresponding ayah in the source text. According to many scholars, including the Arabic text of the Qur'an along with the translation is a condition of its acceptability. Bakhtiar chooses to disregard this recommendation in this edition.

iii. By choosing to produce a 'recitation' of her English translation, Bakhtiar blurs the line between the Qur'an and the translated Qur'an. This action seems to be an encouragement from Bakhtiar to her readers to treat her translation as an equivalent to the Qur'an. This is especially apparent in her decision to market the product simply as 'An English Recitation of the Sublime Qur'an', dropping the word 'translation' altogether. Her subsequent release of the DVD version, followed by her YouTube channel broadcasting her recitation for free are both highly controversial due to the unstated equivalence being propagated.

This is a very dangerous stance because it wrongly portrays that her version of the translation is the actual meaning of the Qur'an and can be 'recited' and listened to as a substitute to the Qur'an. A study of the

definition of the Qur'an, presented in this paper, clearly refutes this notion.

4. We conclude that Bakhtiar's translation is <u>not</u> unique for any of the five reasons that she claims uniqueness in her preface. However, she does undeniably hold unorthodox views regarding 'nidham ul Qur'an' which she incorporates into her work, some of which can be considered unique, or at least, very rare. This does put her work in a league of notoriety, but not for the reasons she claims in her preface.

Bakhtiar's Methodology of Translating the Qur'an:

Bakhtiar alludes to some of her methodological choices in the preface to her translation. Other parts of her methodology become apparent only through a closer examination of her translation. In this research we deduced Bakhtiar's methodology from her own words (in the preface and introduction of her book) and through case-studies where we pursued aspects of her translation through-out the whole of her translation. In this way, we were able to deduce not only what her methodology actually is, but also how faithful Bakhtiar was to the methodology she claims to have used.

In chapter three we presented a summary of her methodology from her own words followed by an evaluation of it. Here we will simply provide a summary of the conclusions we arrived at.

1. Formal Equivalence:

Bakhtiar claims to have chosen 'Formal Equivalence' as her main translation methodology. Hers is a concordance-based translation, where the words of the Qur'an are translated individually in alphabetical order and these translated words are then strung together to translate the ayaat.

The findings of this research as it pertains to Bakhtiar's use of formal equivalence are as follows:

i.   Although Bakhtiar asserts that her concordance is based on her own translation of the 'mu'jam al mufahris li alfaaz al Qur'an al kareem by Abdul Baqi', on closer examination, it becomes apparent that large sections of her concordance are taken verbatim from Kassis' concordance, (mistakes intact) which was published over two decades prior to hers. This revelation serves to solve the mystery that Kidwai alludes to when he notes the uncanny similarity between Bakhtiar's translation of the Qur'an and that of Arberry's earlier rendering. Incidentally, Kassis' concordance was based almost entirely on Arberry's translation as mentioned by Kassis himself in his introduction. <u>This is, of course the missing link between the two translations and the reason for their previously inexplicable similarities as explained in detail in Chapter One of this paper.</u>

ii.   Despite claiming to observe Formal Equivalence throughout her translation, <u>this research reveals, through a closer study of her translation, that Bakhtiar only used formal equivalence when it conformed with her ideologies.</u> Many examples have been cited in this paper where Bakhtiar chose to abandon this methodology when it did not provide her with the rendering that fit with her doctrinal and ideological biases.

iii. It is regrettable that Bakhtiar continues to claim that she has observed formal equivalence rigidly and meticulously when it is apparent that she has not.

iv. We conclude that Bakhtiar's insistence that only a translation built on formal equivalence can provide an unbiased rendering is a farce. She proposes that while all other methodologies of translation allow the translator to select the meaning he/she sees fit, according to their personal opinions, it is only formal equivalence that maintains the scientific neutrality that removes the personal choice of the translator out of the equation. This theory propagated by Bakhtiar in her preface is disproved in this paper, not only through the numerous case-studies presented in the course of this research that reveals Bakhtiar 'selecting' the translation best aligned with her ideologies, but also by her own words in an interview given by her to the New York Times, where she concedes that she said, "I decided it [the word she was translating] either has to have a different meaning or I can't keep translating,"[486] She admits to spending the next three months scoring through Lane's Arabic-English Lexicon until she found a translation that fit with her ideologies. This proves without a shadow of doubt that formal equivalence is merely 'a veil' behind which Bakhtiar hides to give credence to her translation choices which are discriminatively picked to align with her ideological and doctrinal biases.

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[486] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/25/us/25koran.html?ei=5088&en=835924e5b6d16c52&ex=1332475200&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all

2. Context-consideration:

i.   Bakhtiar's failure to define 'context' is a leading cause for her failure in this regard. She seems unable to fathom that her translation methodology of formal equivalence necessitates disregard for contextualization altogether. Experts in the field of translations studies as well as scholars of Qur'an studies agree that contextualization is one of the most important factors for an accurate interpretation and translation of the Qur'an. Both sets of experts allude to the different types of context-consideration necessary, namely; textual context, situational context and context of culture, and all are unanimous regarding its critical role.

ii. Although Bakhtiar insists that 'context' has been taken into consideration, this is highly improbable if not outright impossible in a concordance-based translation where the words are stripped bare of their context prior to their translation. <u>Formal equivalence by its very definition rules out context consideration.</u>

iii. Bakhtiar's methodological decision to relinquish tafseer literature in its entirety necessitates that 'context of culture' and 'situational context' are both also totally disregarded in her interpretation and translation of the Qur'an since they cannot be achieved in the absence of tafseer.

iv. This research presents multiple case-studies from Bakhtiar's translation to demonstrate the negative effects of a decontextualized translation methodology on the accuracy of her translation as well as its repercussions on Islamic theology.

v.   The next two methodologies deduced from Bakhtiar's preface, [no.3 and no.4, summarized below] are from the greatest proofs presented in this paper that 'decontextualization' is a pillar of Bakhtiar's methodology.

3. Allocating a separate English 'equivalent' for every Arabic word present in the Qur'an.

4. Utilizing the English equivalent allocated to the Arabic word, <u>every time</u> that Arabic word appears in the Qur'an.

i.   By self-imposing these two conditions on her methodology, Bakhtiar reveals her inability to comprehend the inequivalence between the English and Arabic languages. Experts in the field of translation-studies have repeatedly warned against utilizing such simplistic methodologies since it obliterates the nuances of the word in context and inevitably produces an inaccurate, and in many cases, an unintelligible translation.

ii. The case-study [on 'fu'aad' and 'qalb'] in this research follows this aspect of Bakhtiar's methodology and clearly demonstrates how these two methodological choices failed Bakhtiar, causing numerous inaccuracies throughout the entire translation.

iii. Bakhtiar's decision to put accuracy second to methodological consistency has far-reaching consequences in the field of Islamic theology as demonstrated in this research. Her renderings inadvertently provided

support to the arguments of Spinoza and others like him from amongst the proponents of disbelief in the Islamic concept of 'prophet-hood'.

iv. <u>We conclude that Bakhtiar's decision to prioritize her fidelity to her professed methodology over and above her fidelity to accurate transmission of the meaning of the Qur'an, is in flagrant violation of her role of a translator of the Qur'an</u> where her highest priority should have always been to the message of the Qur'an and conveying it's meaning as accurately as possible even if it meant that the elaborate methodological goals she had set herself were not always met.

5. Romanization:

1. Ostensibly Bakhtiar does not approve of using Romanized (transliterated) Arabic words. She insists that all Arabic proper names should be substituted by their Westernized 'equivalent', (Jacob instead of Yaqoob etc) In her opinion, this would serve to make the translation more 'universal and inclusive'.

2. Romanization, Bakhtiar contends, goes against the command of the Qur'an itself, which orders all Prophets to speak to their people in their own language. For this reason, she argues, that no exceptions can be made to this methodology, which must be applied to all names without exception including the name of Allah, which she presents as 'God'.

3. <u>This research finds that Bakhtiar did indeed make numerous exceptions to her methodology on Romanization</u> and presented Romanized versions of the name of 'Iblees' and some of the names of the Hellfire, such as 'Saqar'. <u>This reveals an inconsistency in Bakhtiar's application of her methodology</u> and proves that contrary to her statement on the matter which calls for a total disallowance of Romanization of names, she did allow herself to make exceptions to her general rule.

4. <u>In this research we conclude that Bakhtiar's justification and rationale behind not using Allah's name in the entire translation is questionable, since if she allowed herself to make an exception to introduce the real name of the devil than surely Allah's name is worthier of making this exception.</u>

6. Selective Italicization of 'extra words' in place of Parenthesis and Footnotes.

i. Bakhtiar insists on <u>not</u> providing any footnotes or parentheses to further elaborate on concepts that may not be clear. Her reasoning behind this methodological position is to avoid presenting her own interpretation on the Qur'an and allowing for the 'self-identification' of each reader to the message.

ii. This paper argues that the Qur'an is a multi-faceted complex text with many religious terms that are not translatable unless accompanied by some sort of footnote. Bakhtiar's decision to 'translate' these words such

as ''umra' to '*the visit*' and 'tayammum to '*aim at*' without providing any commentary or footnotes causes the meanings to be literally 'lost in translation'.

iii. The problems caused by not providing the required commentary is further exacerbated by Bakhtiar's selective use of formal equivalence that does not prioritize the meaning of the verse. <u>This research concludes that the combination of these two methodologies has a devastating effect on the translation often resulting in a medley of words strung together in an unintelligible sentence.</u>

iv. Despite Bakhtiar's shunning of parenthesis, to ostensibly prevent her own interpretation from seeping into the translation, Bakhtiar makes the rather questionable judgement to then employ italicization which enables her to do exactly what she professes to have avoided through her shunning of parenthesis. The irony is not lost on the reader when she explains that her methodology of italicization allows her to clarify '*the intent of the Qur'an'*, something Bakhtiar has been vocal about criticizing other translators for when they used parenthesis for the same purpose.

v. <u>This paper reveals how Bakhtiar's vow to put **all** words not appearing in the source text but necessary for understanding the English in italics is continuously and repeatedly broken.</u> Bakhtiar selectively italicizes extra words, normally particles, which wield minimal effect on the intent of an ayah. It is highly problematic that she then abandons this methodology

when adding extra words that impact the meaning of the ayah to a greater extent.

vi. <u>This research, through following Bakhtiar's usage of italicization within her translation reveals how this methodology was exploited repeatedly by Bakhtiar to interpolate her personal interpretation of the ayaat into the text of the translation.</u> Extra words that influence the intent of an ayah are routinely added into the translation sans italicization. Other less meaningful additions of particles such as 'the' and 'a' are painstakingly italicized providing an aura of precision and diligence.

vii. <u>This research concludes that Bakhtiar's methodology on italicization serves to provide a veneer of precision.</u> A false sense of confidence is instilled in the reader whereby he/she assumes that every word that is *not* italicized must be from the original Arabic Qur'an. The fine attention to the details of italicizing every extra 'the' and 'it' leaves the reader unsuspecting that the more consequential 'extra words' that would alter the meaning of the Qur'an, have been inserted into the text of the translation by Bakhtiar devoid of the promised italicization. <u>This is a particularly significant misrepresentation that only serves to mislead the reader and is yet another stain on Bakhtiar's integrity as a Qur'an translator.</u>

Final remarks:

Bakhtiar's methodology was deduced in this paper through a study of her own words as well as through a study of her application of her claimed methodology. The combination of these studies revealed a significant and extensive disparity between what Bakhtiar claimed her methodology was and what her application revealed about the reality of what it actually was. Our above-mentioned conclusions on Bakhtiar's methodology are based on the results drawn from her translation which have been presented extensively throughout this paper to support the arguments propounded.

After completion of this research into Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an and her methodology of translating it, it is evidently clear that not only is she ineligible to translate the Qur'an due to her incompetence in the required languages and related sciences as is evident by the numerous linguistic errors in her translation, but also due to her complete and utter lack of academic integrity as a translator which is manifested through her plagiarism as well as her determined infidelity and ideological interpolations to the source text of the Qur'an.

Bakhtiar's methodological choices delineate a translator unable to comprehend the inequivalence between the languages nor recognize the critical role of contextualization in translation. Her translation methodologies, upon inspection and study have revealed a translation not only inundated with errors due to her incompetency, but one that is also littered with interpolations of Bakhtiar's own doctrinal and ideological biases carefully concealed under the veneer of a 'scientific concordance-based literal translation.'

As a world-famous Qur'an translator, Bakhtiar has been trusted by thousands of English speaking Muslims and Non-Muslims all over the world. They have trusted in her integrity as a translator, just as they have trusted in her promise to deliver a translation free from personal or doctrinal bias. Bakhtiar has not only betrayed their trust, but she has also betrayed the source text of the Qur'an. The greatest testimony to that betrayal is her translation itself, "The Sublime Qur'an."

Recommendations:

Studies in the field of Qur'an translation are still relatively under-represented when one considers the central position translations of the Qur'an have taken in the lives of most English-speaking Muslims. This urgently needs to change. Fully acknowledging how reliant Muslims are on translations to access the meaning of the Qur'an necessitates that specialists in Qur'anic studies devote more time and effort to developing this field of study. Although some valuable surveys of Qur'an translations have been published over the last few decades, in general these have been greatly summarized and for the most part, have been limited to the end-product of the translation itself.

It is hoped that more translations will be subjected to a study of their methodology. And where no methodology is detailed, it will be derived from within the translation in much the same way it was done in this study. Tafseer literature has seen a great many works detailing the methodology of the 'mufassiroon'. Qur'an translations have not benefitted from the same level of scrutiny. This has left a significant gap in the study into the Qur'an translators' methodologies itself.

It is my hope that with this research I have contributed to some degree in bridging that gap by presenting not only a critical study of Bakhtiar's translation methodology but by providing a model that can be replicated and adapted for future studies into the translation methodologies of other translators. Likewise, it is my hope that in presenting a study of Bakhtiar's eligibility to translate the Qur'an, we have also provided a benchmark by which to gauge the eligibility of other Qur'an translators.

Transparency on the issues of eligibility and methodology of each translator are essential and should be made widely available to all English-speaking Muslims so that they can make an informed decision regarding which translator to 'trust' with

conveying to them the message of their sacred text. For this reason, studying the methodologies of the Qur'an translators must remain a priority for those who specialize in Qur'an studies and are proficient in the English language, so that a compilation of these studies can be produced in the not too distant future. It is my hope that this paper serves as a stepping stone to realizing this vision.

All Praises are for Allah, with Whose blessings all good deeds are accomplished. I ask Allah to make this work of benefit to the Muslims at large and I ask Him to make it a source of goodness and mercy for me on the Day I meet Him.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i:

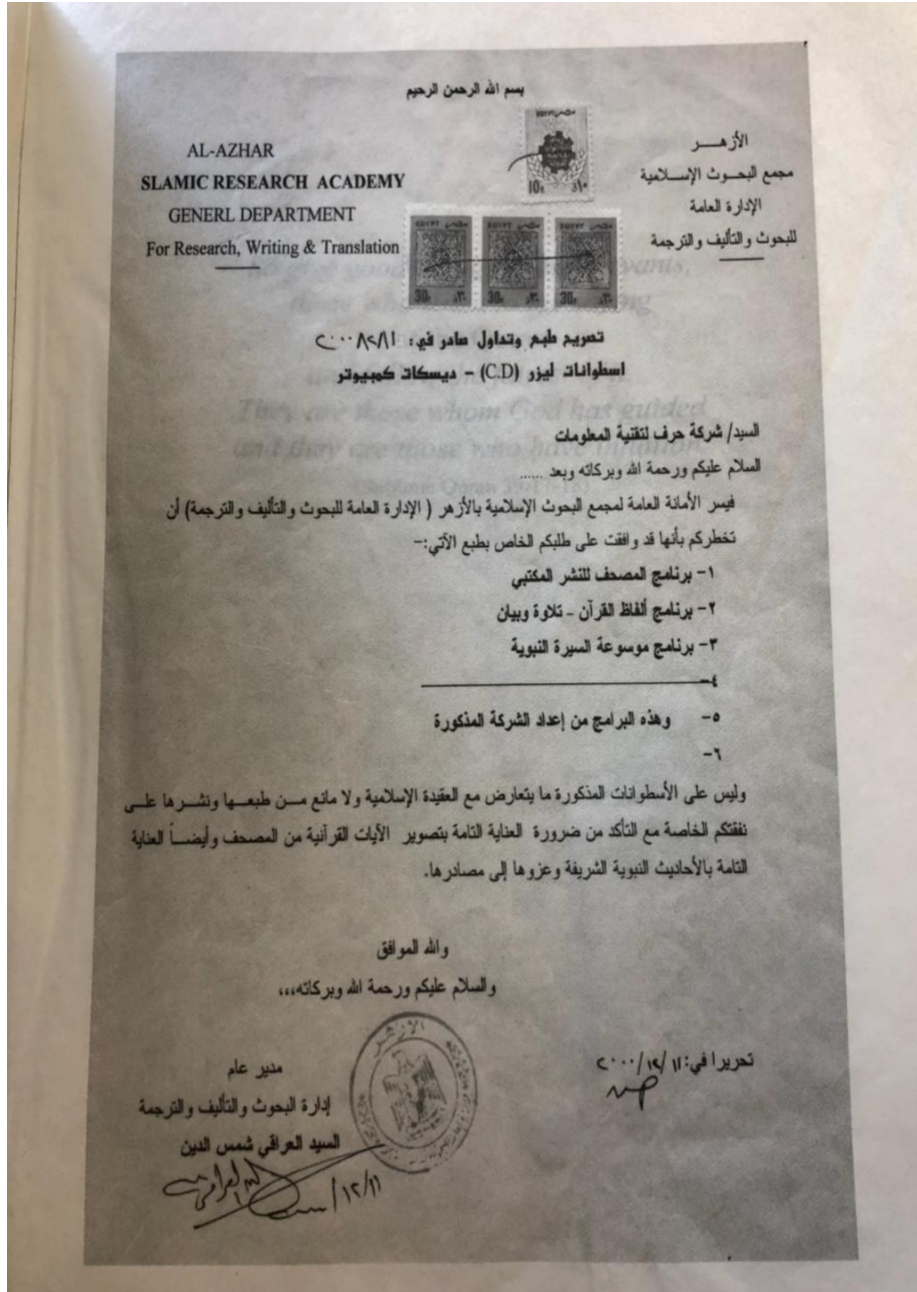## The Sublime Quran English Translation Revised Edition, 15th Edition, 2012.

Translated by Laleh Bakhtiar.
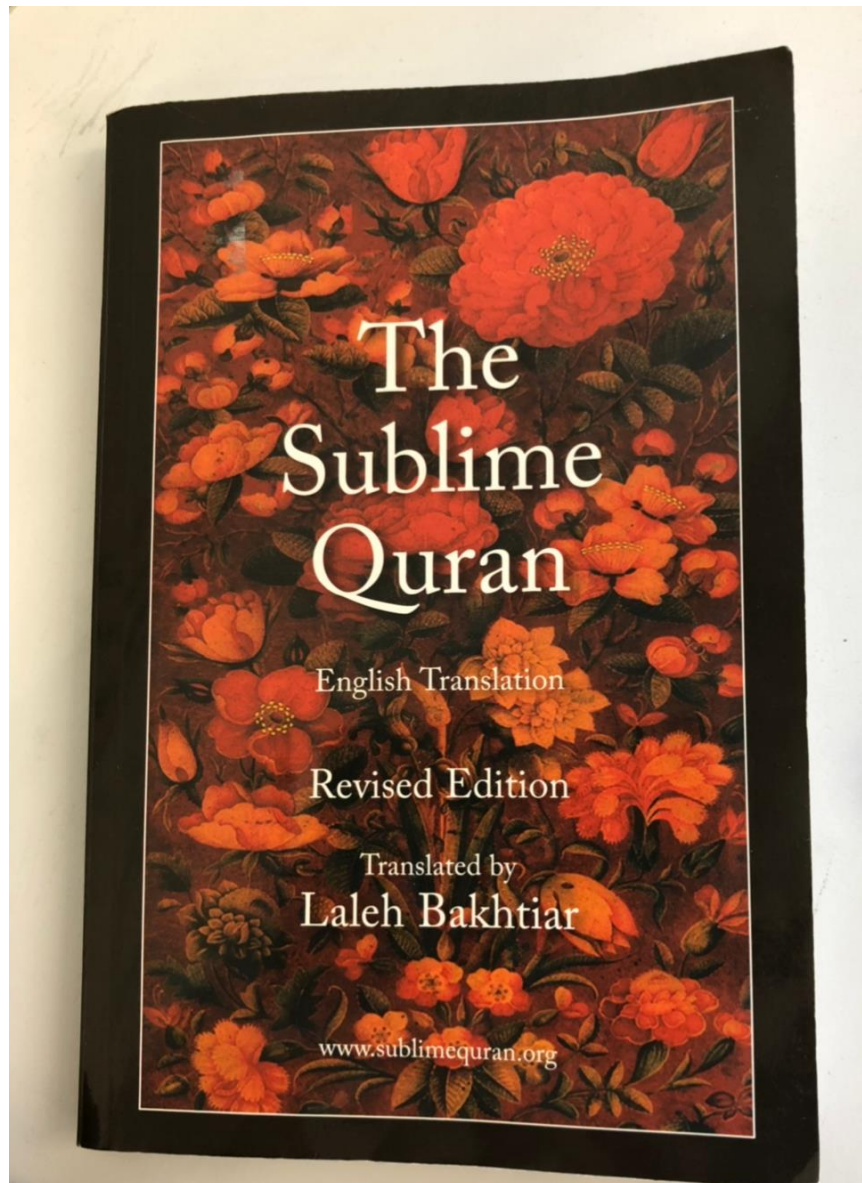
Appendix ii:

Al Azhar Certificate

[Displayed on page iii of The Sublime Quran].

Appendix iii:

Transliteration Table (Romanization)

Romanization	Alone	Final	**Arabic Letters of the Alphabet** Medial	Initial
omit	ا	ا	ا	ا
b	ب	ب	بـ	بـ
t	ت	ت	تـ	تـ
th	ث	ث	ثـ	ثـ
j	ج	ج	جـ	جـ
ḥ	ح	ح	حـ	حـ
kh	خ	خ	خـ	خـ
d	د	د	د	د
dh	ذ	ذ	ذ	ذ
r	ر	ر	ر	ر
z	ز	ز	ز	ز
s	س	س	سـ	سـ
sh	ش	ش	شـ	شـ
ṣ	ص	ص	صـ	صـ
ḍ	ض	ض	ضـ	ضـ
ṭ	ط	ط	ط	ط
ẓ	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ
' (ayn)	ع	ع	ـعـ	عـ
gh	غ	غ	غـ	غـ
f	ف	ف	فـ	فـ
q	ق	ق	قـ	قـ
k	ك	ك	كـ	كـ
l	ل	ل	لـ	لـ
m	م	م	مـ	مـ
n	ن	ن	نـ	نـ
h	ة ، ه	ـة ، ه	هـ	هـ
w	و	و	و	و
y	ي	ي	يـ	يـ