

Contributions of Sri Lankan and Indian Scholars to Qurānic Studies in Tamil and Arabu- Tamil Languages: An Overview

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Abstract

In Asia , we find numerous commentaries and translations of the Qur'ān in all Indian and Sri Lankan languages including the Tamil and Arabu-Tamil languages. The following paper is a humble effort to shed light on the commentaries and translations of the Qur'ān written in these languages. The commentaries and translations of the Qur'ān, is the religious field in which the Tamilian scholars engaged their attention. They had religious consciousness while interpreting the Qur'ān. They always relied on the Qurān, the Ḥadīth and the views of the companions of the Prophet while making the interpretation and translation of the Qurān. This article pours light on evaluating Tamilians achievements in uplifting the Islamic studies and to record their contributions as a lesson for the future generations in uplifting the Ummah(Islamic Society).

Keywords: *Tamil, Arabu-Tamil, Sri Lanka, India, Studies on Quran , Commentaries.*

1.Introduction

The Qur'ān is a divine Book that Almighty Allah revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) in Arabic language at different times and contexts, beginning from his age of forty until sixty- three when Allah had taken him back unto Him. Along with other duties of the Prophet Muḥammad he was assigned to explain the Qur'ān, the duty he (PBUH) fulfilled well. In this way he also trained some of his companions who not only explained the Qur'ān but also they trained some of their followers to teach and explain it to the other Muslims. This golden series continued till our period where as the Muslims served the duty of explaining the Qur'ān orally or in written form.

Among the famous translators of the Qur'ān into English, Marmaduke Pikhthal occupies a high rank. He translated the Qur'ān to have a comparison with the Torah and the Gospel and to know its scientific and literary position through this comparison. But when he started this task and reached the heart of the topic, he recognised that the Qur'ān is true, admitted it to be revealed from Almighty and considered it as the complement to its antecedents from the divine books. Thus he believed in the Qur'ān and embraced Islam. In India and Sri Lanka , there are number of the Qur'ān translators, who translated it into various Indian and Sri Lankan languages.

Similarly, in Tamil, we find translations of the Qur'ān recently in more than twenty works. The term *tafsīr* is the verbal noun of the Arabic verb of the third form *fassara*, *yufassiru* that means to explain, to comment. Thus *tafsīr* means, a commentary or explanation or elucidation. This term was used for commentaries. In Islam, the word *tafsīr* has become a technical term for the commentaries and elucidation of the Qur'ān. This branch of learning is called 'ilm al-Qur'ān wa al-tafsīr' (The Science of the Qur'ān and Exegesis). The *tafsīr* or exegesis is the most important and basic form of interpretive science in Islam, as it is related to the Qur'ān on the one side and the Ḥadīth on the other. It is difficult to point out the exact period of the beginning of the exegetic science. It may, however, be safe to say that the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and later his companions been a debate in the pioneers of this type of genre.

The commentaries and translations of the Qur'ān, is the religious field in which the Tamilian scholars engaged their attention. They had religious consciousness while interpreting the Qur'ān. They always relied on the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and the views of the companions of the Prophet while making the interpretation and translation of the Qur'ān. They published their commentaries and translations along with the original text of the Qur'ān. So far more than 25 translations/commentaries were published in *Arabu-Tamil* and Tamil languages. *Arabu-Tamil* means its script is Arabic but the language is Tamil (like *Malay* in *Jawi* Script of Malaysia and Indonesia).

The First commentary on Qur'ān was written in *Arabu-Tamil* language not in Tamil language. The first Tamil translation of the Qur'ān was made by 'Abdul Ḥamīd Baqavī after a half century from the publication of *Arabu-Tamil* commentaries and translations. This paper aims to study the commentaries/translations written in *Arabu-Tamil and Tamil* languages.

The style of composing the exegesis differed from commentator to commentator. Normally, however, the commentaries wherein the text is explained phrase by phrase or sentence or at times word by word. The mufassir/commentator attempts to explain the verse, beginning from the title of the surah, followed by mentioning the reason for its revelation, and if needed be the reason for the revelation of any particular verse, within the surah. He then explains *Bismillah al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*, followed by his comments on the rest of the surah accordingly. These commentaries are compiled from various points of view like grammar, semantics, law, history, theology, philosophy or Sufi experience and inspirations¹.

It is rather difficult to trace the beginning of the *tafsīr* literature in India because no work comes down to us; which mentions its history. We may conjecture safely that when the scholars had written work on Ḥadīth and other Islamic subjects, they must have certainly produced *tafsīr* literature also. Many of the earliest commentaries on the Qur'ān may not have come down to us which cannot be the

¹ Ahamed Zubair K M A, "Commentaries and Translations of the Quran in Tamil Language", *The Indian Journal of Arabic Islamic Studies* 2, no.3(2017):202-203.

reason to reject the idea that Arabic commentaries on the Qur'ān were written from the earliest times².

2. Introduction of Research

This paper is conceived as a Quranic study of two countries Muslim pioneers of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu, India.

3. Research Background

As there were only a handful of researches have been done on Muslims contribution to Quranic studies, there has been a serious complexity in understanding the importance of Muslim Scholars' holistic approach. This study will help to fill this major gap while examining the methodology in translations of Muslim scholars of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu of India.

4. Research Objective

To understand the specific contribution and role of Muslim scholars towards achieving the Islamic goals .

To evaluate the non- Arab Muslims contributions' on par with Arabs' contributions.

To build unity, love and harmony among Ummah.

5. Research Methodology

Primary Sources

This research being a Quranic one, there is a necessity that it has to be based on primary sources and archival documents (such as "Quranic Commentaries and Translations in Arwi and Tamil Languages: A Survey" 2017, published by LAMBERT Academic Publishing Inc., Germany and etc.,)

This research will also include information that have been published and gathered from contemporary journals, such as , indian Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Jamal's Academic Research Journal and Proceedings of Islamic Literary Society, Chennai. Contemporary magazine articles were also used to support the research.

Secondary Sources

Articles, monographs and books by academic professionals would be used as principal secondary sources.

The entire Muslim *ummah*(Community) is but one society in the idealization of it as well as in the normative reality of the *Shari'a* which elucidates its constitution. From a social scientific view, however, the Quranic metaphor that describes the community and *Shari'a*are only part of the criteria by which we may arrive at a definition of a community. Tamil Muslims are identifiable and bonded only by a common language and religion. From the background study and analyzing and

² Salim Kidwai, *Hindustani Mufasssirein Awr Unki' Arabi Tafssirein* (New Delhi:Maktaba Jamiah,1996),15-16.

comparing both regions , the researcher identified the following Research Problem

“Contributions of Sri Lankan and Indian Scholars to Qur’anic Studies in Tamil Language: An Overview” has some similarities in their achievements”?

Therefore, to find out the answer to the above question, the researcher sets the following three aspects:

To identify the contribution of both pioneers in Quranic studies.

To evaluate their achievements in uplifting the Islamic studies and to identify the challenges faced by them

To record them and their contributions as a lesson for the future generation in uplifting the Ummah.

6. Material and Methods

This study is based on an interpretive approach. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. In addition to primary sources, qualitative consultations were conducted with selected Islamic specialists and related persons on this particular research area. Secondary sources such as published and unpublished records, reports and minutes were also consulted

7. Arabu-Tamil and Islam

Long before the birth of the Prophet of Islam, there were frequent contacts between Arabia and Tamil Nadu. The Sangam (Classical Period) Tamil literature bears evidence of the Arab contact with the Tamil Nadu. In the literary works like "Paththu Pattu" and "Ettuthogai", the Arabs are called "Yavanars". The rulers of these areas patronized Islam to flourish in Tamil Nadu, and even some of them donated lands to their places of worship. They include the Kings of Chera, Chozha and Pandyas. For the sake of worshipping, Muslims built mosques in various places of this country specially in South India. The first and foremost among such mosques is the one which can be seen even today in Tiruchirapalli, near the Railway Station, though now it is seen in a dilapidated conditions. The Arabic inscription stone available in that mosque, indicates that it was constructed in the year 734 (corresponding 116 AH, Islamic Era), and it was built by Muḥammad bin Ḥāmid bin ‘Abdullāh. With this proof we can conclude that Muslims lived in this region in the eighth century freely with all proprietary rights in this land.

8. Origin of Arabu-Tamil

Arabu-Tamil is resulted in the cultural synthesis between the Arabs and the Tamil speaking Muslims. *Arabu-Tamil* is a combination of Arabic and Tamil, with its script in Arabic. Even during the pre-Islamic period, there was commercial contact between Arabia and India and specially the South India. After the advent of Islam, the Arabs who had already contacts with the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu and Srilanka, some of them who had already settled there in that area, became the representatives of Islam. In course of time, there witnessed converts to Islam, from among the native population. When two communities bound by a common religion but separated by two different languages come into closer

contact, and their commercial activities flourish, they feel necessity for a link-language. This necessity made an interaction between Arabic and Tamil Languages, that resulted a new language to be born as *Arabu-Tamil*. The development of *Arabu-Tamil* is due to the Arab impact on the Tamil Muslim. *Arabu-Tamil* is a bi-product dialect of the Arabs' interaction with the local Tamilians written in Arabic script with high contents of Arabic vocabulary or in the other words Tamil in Arabic script is called *Arabu-Tamil*. It is written from right to left like Arabic script. From eighth century to the nineteenth century, this language enjoyed its popularity among Tamil speaking Muslims of Tamil Nadu. The *Arabu-Tamil* which consists of 40 letters, out of which 28 letters are from Arabic, and 12 more letters have been devised by adding some marks and dots to the original Arabic alphabet. So Arabu-Tamil is an Arabic-influenced dialect of the Tamil language written with an extension of the Arabic alphabet. Arabu-Tamil was used extensively by the Muslim minority of Tamil Nadu state of India and Sri Lanka.

9. Tamil and Muslims

Tamil is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly by Tamil people of the Indian subcontinent. It has official status in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Tamil is also an official language of Sri Lanka and Singapore. Tamils are a linguistic and ethnic group native to Tamil Nadu, a state in India and the north-eastern region of Sri Lanka. Tamil Muslim refers to the Muslims who have Tamil as their mother tongue. Apart from India and Sri Lanka, a large population of Tamil Muslims also live in some countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Mauritius and also in Gulf countries like UAE and Saudi Arabia. Tamil is also spoken by these Tamil minorities in those countries.

10. Islam in Tamil Nadu

Long before the birth and rise of Islam, there were frequent contacts between Arabia and Tamil Nadu, and there were Arab Colonies in South India. The classical Tamil literature, like in the literary works like Paththu Pattu, Ettuthogai, bears evidence of the Arab contact with Tamil Nadu. After its birth, Islam came to Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka through these contacts. After the rise of Islam, the Arabs continued to remain actively in contact not only as traders but also as missionaries. So Trade and Islam flourished actively and the Muslims were permitted to follow their religion freely. The companions of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) namely Saint Tamim al-dari al-Ansari (peace be on him), Saint Ukkaza (peace be on him) were buried in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Muslims of Tamil Nadu are famous figures and they contributed their best to the Tamil Culture and Civilization. The Rulers of these areas patronized Islam and Muslims to flourish in Tamil Nadu. Some of them even donated lands to places of Muslim worship (Masjid). They include the Kings of Chera, Chozha and Pandyas. Muslims built Mosjids in various places of this country. The first and foremost among such Mosjids is the one which can be seen even today near the Railway Station in Tiruchirapalli in the Tamil Nadu State of India. However, it is now in a dilapidated condition. The Arabic inscription stone available in that *Masjid* indicates that it was constructed in the year 734 (corresponding 116 AH, Islamic Era), and it was built by Mohammed bin Hamid bin Abdullah. This

proves that Muslims lived in this region in the 8th century liberally with all proprietary rights in this land³.

11. Islam in Sri Lanka

The Muslims are the second largest minority in Sri Lanka approximating to eight percent of its population. In Sri Lanka, the Arab settlements were along the coast of Jaffna, Mannar, Kendremalai, Puttalam, Colombo, Beruwala, Galle and at the eastern port of Trincomalle. A large population of the Moor population in Sri Lanka is descended from the traders who arrived from Arabia and the lands around the Persian Gulf.⁴

The similarities of the socio-religious paradigms of the Muslims of South India and Sri Lanka are quite enormous. These may be summarized as follows⁵:

1.The home language of Sri Lankan Muslims and those of Tamil Nadu is Tamil.

2.The Muslim Tamil (spoken at home) in Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu is a dialect in that it has substantial number of Arabic loan words.

3.There are close cultural systems between the Muslims of Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu.

12. Tafṣīr (Commentaries) in Other Languages

Tafṣīr was almost always written in Arabic but during the 19th century, the need was felt by Muslims to write commentaries in local languages so that those who do not know Arabic can still have access to the meaning of the Qur'ān. Tafṣīrs have been written in many foreign and Indian languages namely French, English, Turkish, Uzbek, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali and other languages. As for the tafṣīrs in India, they have been written in most of the Indian Languages while most of these tafṣīrs, were written in Urdu. In Urdu more than Twenty Eight tafṣīrs are available whereas in Tamil and *Arabu-Tamil* languages more than twenty five commentaries/translations are available. In Indian languages, next to Urdu more number of commentaries/translations are available in Tamil and *Arabu-Tamil* languages.

13. Commentary and its Methodology in *Arabu-Tamil* Language:

Tafsir is the Arabic word for exegesis or commentary, usually of the Qur'ān. An author of Tafṣīr is a *mufassir* (Commentator). The four traditional sources for the commentary of the Qur'ān is followed in the *Arabu-Tamil* commentaries namely⁶:

³Ahamed Zubair K M A, *Tamil-Arabic Relationship*,ed. John Samuel G (Chennai:The Institute of Asian Studies Press ,2010),271.

⁴ Mahroof M M M, “Spoken Tamil dialect of the Muslims of Sri Lanka :Language as Identity classifier”, *Islamic Studies* 34,no.4(1995):407-408.

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⁶ Bakshi Hazrat ‘Alī Aḥmed and Rizwānūr Raḥmān, *Glimpses of the Holy Qur’ān*,(New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2012), 131-132.

1. The Qur'ān: The highest form of tafsīr is when one verse of the Qur'ān is used to explain the other.
2. The Ḥadīth: The second highest grade of tafsīr is where Muḥammad (PBUH) commented on the meaning or phrases of particular verses of the Qur'ān, and those statements have been passed down to us. Many of the great collections of Ḥadīth have separate sections about tafsīr.
3. The reports of the Companions of the Prophet: The Ṣaḥābah, or the companions of Muḥammad, also taught and interpreted the Qur'ān. If nothing is found in the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth, the commentator has recourse to what these companions reported about various verses.
4. The reports of the Tābi'ūn, the next generation who learnt from these companions: these people grew up with people who had enjoyed everyday interaction with Muḥammad (PBUH), and had often asked about the meanings of verses or circumstances of their revelation.

The standard approach of Tafsīr depends on Interpreting the Qur'ān by it. This was followed by the commentators of the Qur'ān in *Arabu-Tamil* language.

Major Tafsīrs were served as the model and reference sources for the commentaries/translations rendered in Arabu-Tamil and Tamil languages. Such major commentators and major tafsīrs of the Qur'ān are as follows:

1. Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (838-923): *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*.
2. Ibn Kathīr (1301-1373): *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*.
3. Imām Abū 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (1214-1273): *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*
4. Maḥmūd Ālūsī al-Ḥanafī: *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm wa al-Saba' al-Mathānī*.
5. *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*- by Ḥasan bin Mas'ūd al-Baghawī (died 510 /1116) also known widely as *Tafsīr al-Baghawī*.
6. Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (died 1144): *Al-Kashshāf*.
7. 'Abdullāh bin 'Umar al-Baiḍāwī (died 685 /1086) – *Anwār al-Tanzīl*, also famous as *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*.
8. *Zād al-Masīr fī 'Ilm al-Tafsīr* - written by Ibn al-Jauzī.
9. *Tafsīr an-Nasafī* - written by al-Nasafī.
10. Tafsīr al-Jalālain by Jalāluddīn al-Maḥallī (in 1459), and Sheikh Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī (died 911 /1505).
11. *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-l-Ma'thūr* also by Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī.

14. The Commentaries and Translations in Arabu-Tamil Language on the Qur'ān

Meaning and explanation of the Qur'ānic verses were written as the commentaries in *Arabu-Tamil* language. This helped the Tamil speaking Muslims to understand the Qur'ān in a proper way and to make their life according to the Islamic principles or Qur'ānic principles. A few of the old commentaries composed and written by great scholars are still available today. Among the famous commentaries is the commentary written by Ḥabīb Muḥammad 'Alīm of Kayalpattanam, which was published in the year 1296 AH/1875 AD. Another one by Nūḥ Lebbai 'Alīm of Kayalpattanam, which was published in the year 1292 AH /1872 AD. Similarly in the year 1884 and 1910 AD two other commentaries of the Qur'ān came into existence.

The first Tamil translation of the Qur'ān was published in 1929. i.e. fifty years after the publication of *Arabu-Tamil* commentaries and translations, the Tamil commentaries got published. So there are eight commentators who bestowed their contribution to the Qur'ānic commentary in *Arabu-Tamil* language. They are

1. Sheikh Muṣṭafā 'Alī, Sri Lanka.
2. Si.Ka. Sheikh Ibrāhīm 'Alīm, Tirunelveli, Pettai.
3. Ḥabīb Muḥammad 'Alīm, Kayalpattanam.
4. Nūḥ Lebbai 'Alīm, Kayalpattanam.
5. Syed Muḥammad 'Alīm, Pudu Nagaram.
6. Pa.Ve. Khader Muḥidīn 'Alīm, Ramanathapuram.
7. Sulaimān bin Muḥammad, Sri Lanka.
8. Sheikh Uthmān, Sri Lanka.

Maulānā Si.Ka. Sheikh Ibrāhīm 'Alīm, belonged to the Mela Theru (Upper Street) of Pettai of Tirunelveli. Syed Muḥammad 'Alīm of Pudu Nagaram has written *Arabu-Tamil* Commentary in the year 1342 AH/ 1922 AD. He rendered the first five parts of the Qur'ān. Pa.Ve. Khader Muḥidīn 'Alīm of Ramanathapuram, in the year 1913 AH has rendered the *Arabu-Tamil* Commentary entitled *Tafsir Arwi Juz' Amma*, for the last part of the Qur'ān.

15. Uniqueness of the *Arabu-Tamil* Commentaries:

Qur'ānic commentary is one of the main fields in which, the *Arabu-Tamil* scholars of Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka engaged their attention for the tasks of commentary and translation. They were conscious of safeguarding themselves from misinterpreting the Qur'ān. They never allowed reasoning and rationalism to cloud their religious and spiritual vision. They relied on the authorities of the Ḥadīth and the explanations, views of the companions of the Prophet in their interpretations of the Qur'ān. And also took the views of the jurists and the leaders of creed (Aqā'id). They always published the translations along with the original Arabic text of the Qur'ān. These scholars felt that publishing translations alone without the original text might end up in the distortion of its meanings. The *Arabu - Tamil* scholars produced six authentic commentaries. These *Arabu - Tamil* scholars, referred their works as the translation of the tafsīr (and not of the Qur'ān). But the Tamil translation made in the middle of the twentieth century was referred as tarjamah (direct translation) of the Qur'ān⁷.

The six commentaries have been published in *Arabu-Tamil* language are as follows.

- 1) Fath-ul-Karīm.
- 2) Futūḥāt-ur-Raḥmānia fī Tarjamati Tafsīri kalāmī Rabbānia.
- 3) Fathur Raḥmān fī Tarjamati Tafsīri Qur'ān.
- 4) Fathur Raḥīm.
- 5) Raḥmat-ul-Mannān.
- 6) Fā'idah Qur'ān.

⁷ Bakshi Hazrat 'Alī Aḥmed and Rizwānūr Raḥmān, *Glimpses of the Holy Qur'ān*, (New Delhi: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 2012), 134-135.

16. A Study on *Arabu-Tamil* Commentaries

Fath-ul-Karīm by Nūḥ Lebbai (published in the year 1292 AH/1872 AD):

This commentary commences with the following introduction made by Nūḥ Lebbai ‘Alīm, we will see few of its verses. The Arabu-Tamil script is transliterated for the readers’ perusal in English is as follows:

“Bismillah yennum thirunamam kondu thurvakkerreen. Allah Taala, Bismillahi yendru chonnaal, adil Ma’navaagirathu undanathellam yennai konde undaayitru. Undaaga peraathellam yennai konde undaagum undaagum yengirada irukkum ...”

English Translation:

“I start with Bismillah, meaning of Bismillah is what all existing in this universe is due to Allah, what all going to happen in future also will be due to Allah...”

“Arindu koll Bismi yagiratuu Qurannukku thiravukolagavum, lawhul mahfooz palagaiyil Qalam yeludinathil mundinadaakavum Adam (AS) peeril erakkapattathil mundinadaakavum irukkum...”

English Translation:

“Learn that Bismi is a key to open the Quran, Bismi is a first word used by mystic pen on the tablet. And also this was the first word that was revealed on the Adam (AS).”

The commentator of this commentary, Nūḥ Lebbai son of ‘Abdul Qāder of Kayalpattinam, is a descendant of Madihur Rasūl Ṣadqatullah Appa. This was printed in two volumes in Bombay (Mumbai) in 1299AH/1881AD. This is more widely read as it is simple and concise. This translation mostly follows the pattern of the famous tafsīr Jalālain by Imām Jalāluddīn Suyūfī and Imām Jalāluddīn Maḥallī as far as the translation of the verses is concerned. But the explanatory notes are on the pattern of the famous earlier tafsīr like of Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn al-‘Arabī.

Fath-ur-Raḥīm:

Nūḥ Lebbai also wrote another commentary called Fath-ur- Raḥīm, which is shorter than his own commentary Fath-ul- Karīm, and it mainly deals with mystical aspects. It exists in six parts of 288 pages, printed at Bombay (Mumbai) in 1304 AH.

Futūḥāth-ur-Raḥmānia by Ḥabīb Muḥammad ‘Alīm (published in the year 1296 AH/1875AD)

This commentary was called as Futūḥāt-ur-Raḥmānia fī Tarjamati Tafsīri kalāmī Rabbānia. This was first printed in Bombay (Mumbai) in HusaIniA press, and published in 1296 AH. In this commentary, Qur’ānic Textual verses are printed in bold letters and below those explanations for that text are given in *Arabu-Tamil*.

Besides this, footnotes and side notes were printed on the sides of the each paper of commentary and thus 3/4 of the page is filled with *Arabu-Tamil* explanations of the Qur’ānic text. A copy of this commentary on the Qur’ān is preserved in the Zahira college of Colombo. So it was treasured in its library. The commentator of this commentary “Futūḥāt-ur- Raḥmānia” belonged to Kayalpattanam of Tamilnadu.

Fathur Raḥmān fī Tarjamati Tafsīril Qur'ān:

The honour of being the first Arabu-Tamil commentary goes to “Fathur Raḥmān fī Tarjamati Tafsīril Qur'ān”. This was written by Sheikh Muṣṭafā Walī (1050-1305AH/1836-1887AD) of Srilanka. He received his education from the scholars, ‘Umar Walī, Palayam Ḥabīb Muḥammad and Mubārak Maulānā (1211-1281AH/1796-1864AD) of Tamilnadu, only five juz’ (parts) of this Tafsīr have been published in the year 1291AH/1874AD in 653 pages. Kumusther Hasana Maricar, son of Kulanthai Maricar of Srilanka encouraged and assisted Sheikh Muṣṭafā Walī financially to write this Tafsīr in *Arabu-Tamil*.

Rahmatul Mannan:

Sulaimān bin Muḥammad of Srilanka has written a commentary called Raḥmatul-Mannān, which was printed in Colombo in 1315AH/1897AD.

17. Translation of the Qur'ān in Parts in Arabu-Tamil Language:

Many *Arabu-Tamil* translations of sūrahs like sūrah Yāsīn and sūrah Raḥmān have been published during the last hundred years by various *Arabu-Tamil* scholars. Sheikh ‘Uthmān of Srilanka translated the *Fā'idah Qur'ān* of Imām Shihābuddīn al-Ramlī into *Arabu-Tamil*, and published the same in single volume. It was published in 1280AH/1863AD. And it was considered the earliest translation of Qur'ānic sūrahs into *Arabu-Tamil*.

Pa.Ve. Khader Mohidīn ‘Alim has translated the last (30th) Juz’ in *Arabu-Tamil* language.

Dr. Sālim Kidwai⁸, has traced 156 *tafasīr* written in India with 83 traceable in various libraries of India itself, 110 in India Office Library, London, while 63 are left untraceable.

We will mention here few important tafsīr written in India.

1. Kāshif al-Ḥaqā'iq wa Qāmūs al-Daqā'iq
2. Tafsīr al-Multaqat
3. Sawāṭi' al-Ilhām
4. Jubb Shaghab

The commentaries and translations of the Qur'ān, is the religious field in which Tamil scholars' engaged their attention. They had religious consciousness while interpreting the Qur'ān. They always relied on the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and the views of the companions of the Prophet while making the interpretation and translation of the Qur'ān. They published their commentaries and translations along with the original text of the Qur'ān.

The first Tamil translation of the Qur'ān was made by ‘Abdul Ḥamīd Baqavī after a half century from the publication of *Arabu-Tamil* commentaries and translations.

⁸ Salim Kidwai,” Hindustani Mufassirin Awr Unki' Arabi Tafsirin”,(New Delhi:1996), 16.

18. Tamil Commentaries (Tafsīrs)

Tabṣīr-ul-Ḥamīd fi Tafsīril Qur’ān al-Majīd:

The credit as the first man from Tamil Nadu to write Tafsīr in Tamil goes to Maulānā S.S. ‘Abdul Khādir al-Baqavī (27.21.1921–04.06.1079) of Uthamapaalayam, Tamil Nadu. Maulānā ‘Abdul Khādir al- Baqavī was born as a second son to their parents S. Sahib Rawuther and Haseena Sahiba. He completed his Islamic and Arabic education from Madrasa Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt, Vellore in the year 1923. He acted as a sub-translator to A.K. ‘Abdul Ḥamīd al-Baqavī (1876-1955), who translated the first Tamil translation of the meaning of the Qur’ān in the year 1943. This commentary under discussion was published in 1937. Maulānā S.S. ‘Abdul Khādir al-Baqavī has written Tamil Tafsīr of the Qur’ān called **Tabṣīr-ul-Ḥamīd fi Tafsīril Qur’ān al-Majīd** in seven volumes. Each volume consists of about 1000 pages, and hence this work runs of 7000 pages.

He has also translated Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim. He acted as the Founder President of the South Indian Jam’iathul ‘Ulamā’ in Singapore.

The first edition of this work was published in 1934, second edition in 1954, third edition in the year 1966 and the fourth edition in the year 2010. The fourth edition got published by the support of the philanthropist al-Ḥājj S.M.M.M.U. Moḥammed Shu’aib of Kuala Lumpur, Malasiya.

Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur’ān:

Madrasa Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt is considered as the *Umm-ul-Madāris* of not only Tamil Nadu, but of the entire South India. A team of Islamic and Arabic ‘Ulamā’ of Bāqiyāt al- Ṣāliḥāt started to compile a Tamil tafsīr, they are:

- (1) Maulānā Kamāluddīn al-Baqavī
- (2) Maulānā Zain-ul- ‘Ābidīn
- (3) Maulānā Ṣadaqathullāh al-Baqavī, Aathur
- (4) Maulānā Moḥidīn, Tenkasi
- (5) Maulānā Moḥammed Khān al-Baqavī

The above team was headed by Maulānā Kamāluddīn al-Baqavī. Their work was named as Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur’ān and published by Madrasa Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt, Vellore district, Tamil Nadu. This work was published from 1992 onwards. The first volume of this work consists of 685 pages.

Tafsīr Ibn-i-Kathīr: Al-Ḥājj Muṣṭafā of Chennai has founded “Raḥmath Publication” in the Chennai city, Capital of Tamil Nadu with the intention of translating Islamic source from Arabic into Tamil. Mufasssīr Imām Ismā’īl bin ‘Umar bin Kathīr (1322-1372) of Syria, has written an Arabic commentary on the Qur’ān. A former teacher of Madrasa Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt of Vellore and also one among the translator of Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur’ān, Maulavī Moḥammed Khān al-Baqavī acted as the chief translator of this commentary Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Till today, there are four volumes of Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr in Tamil language got published.

Anwār al-Qur’ān: This work is regarded as an important commentarial translation of the Qur’ān in Tamil, comprising of 21 parts, published by Ādam Trust, Koothanallur, Tamil Nadu. The commentator of this work is Maulavī Ḥāfiz E.M. ‘Abdul Raḥmān Nūriyī Fāḍil Baqavī of Tenkasi.

Chapter Al-Baqara's commentary was published in the year 1966, chapter Āli 'Imrān's commentary was published in the year 1970 and the chapter al-Nisā's commentary was published in the year 1973. In this manner other chapters were also published. In July 2000 the entire volumes of all chapters were published as the first edition. The second edition of the entire chapters of the Qur'ān got published in the year 2007. The first four chapters (al-Fātiḥah, al-Baqarah, Āli 'Imrān and al-Nisā') of about five and half Juz got published as a separate volume (as the first volume). Likewise, seven volumes of this work got published.

19. Tamil Translations on the Qur'ān

Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān: Sheikh Yousuf Anṣārī of Kadayanallur of Tamil Nadu has translated twenty two parts (Ju'z) of the Qur'ān in Tamil. This Tamil translation becomes the primary source for Tafsīr Jawāhir al-Qur'ān in Tamil in the later years.

Tarjama-tul-Qur'ān bi Alṭafi al Bayan:

The first complete Tamil translation of the meanings of the Qur'ān was published in the year 1943, by the effort of Maulānā 'Abdul Ḥamīd Baqavī entitled Tarjama-tul-Qur'ān bi Alṭafi al Bayan. This work was reprinted five times since 1943. The translator of this work Maulānā 'Abdul Ḥamīd Baqavī is the father of A.K.A. 'Abdul Ṣamad Ṣāḥib, former Member of Parliament and the president of Indian Union Muslim League Party. Maulānā

A.K.A. 'Abdul Ḥamīd Baqavī (1876-1955) was born as a son in Aathoor, Salem in state of Tamil Nadu. In 1966, he completed his Islamic and Arabic education from Madrasa Bāqiyāt al-Ṣāliḥāt, Vellore. On 19-02-1926, after the completion of Jum'ah prayer he started this noble task of translating Qur'ān into Tamil. He finished his work on 24- 10-1942, i.e. after spending 16 years of tireless work.

Qur'ān Majīd: Cumbum Ṣadaqathullāh 'Alim Baqavī and 'Abdul Wahhāb of Tamil Nadu have translated the English meaning of the translation of the Qur'ān, translated by Yousuf 'Alī into Tamil. This work was published in 1983 by John Trust. There are 20 reprints of this translation published till today.

Qur'ān Tarjama: Maulānā 'Abdul Wahhāb and Maulānā Niẓāmuddīn Manbayee translated the meanings of the Qur'ān namely "Qur'ān Tarjamah" in Tamil in the year 1992. This work was printed by Threeyem printers, Chennai.

Sangai Mikka Qur'ān: Maulavī Moḥammed Iqbāl al- Madanī as the chief translator and with the members of Islamic Arabic scholars of Sri Lanka, translated the meaning of the glorious Qur'ān as "Sangai Mikka Qur'ān". With the financial support from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, this work got published in the year 1992.

Thiru Qur'ān: Moolam, Tamilakkam and Vilakkavurai: Jamā'at-i-Islāmī did not translate the Qur'ān into Tamil but they translated the translation and interpretation of the Qur'ān by the leader of their movement Sayyid Abul Aa'lā al- Maudūdī from Urdu to Tamil under the same Urdu title. This translation was not an independent one, but its language and style was magnificent. The Islamic Foundation Trust, Chennai has published the translation of the meanings of the Qur'ān namely Thiru Qur'ān: Moolam, Tamilakkam and Vilakkavurai (it means, al-Qur'ān al-Majīd: Source, Rendering into Tamil and Explanatory Notes). This work got published in the year 1996. This work is based on Tafhim al-Quran by Maulānā Abul A'alā al-Maudūdī. Maulavī Quṭbuddīn Aḥmed al-Baqavī,

Maulavī Syed Moīammed Fāḍil al-Baqavī and Maulavī Mastan ‘Alī al-Baqavī acted as the translators of the Translation Bureau.

Tarjamat al-Qur’ān al-Karīm: In the year 2002, Al-Bashārath Publishers, Chennai published this translation .Maulavī Sirājuddīn al-Nūrī of Dindigul, Tamil Nadu did this noble task.

Thiru Qur’ān: In the year 2002, Moon Publishers published the translation of the meanings of the Qur’ān in Tamil called as “Thiru Qur’ān”. The translators of this work are Maulavi Zain-ul-‘Ābidīn and Dāwūd Shā.

Mawāhib al-Qur’ān: It is the work of ‘Abdur Raḥmān Baqavī. This work is the translation cum explanatory notes on the two chapters of the Qur’ān. Sheikh Ibrāhīm al-Baqavī of Pettai, Thirunelveli had a desire to publish the meanings of the Qur’ān into Tamil language and he spends his wealth for this noble task, with zeal and enthusiasm. He printed and published many authentic translations of the meanings of the Qur’ān.

20. Works on Qur’ānic Studies written in Arabic Language

1. **Ijāz al-Qur’ān:** This work was written by Dr. P. Nithār Aḥmed, Former Head, Dept of Arabic, Persian & Urdu, University of Madras, Chennai.

2. **al-Mus’if fī Luḡhat I’irāb Sūrat-i-Yūsuf:** The author of this work is Dr. V. ‘Abdul Raḥīm, who served as Professor in Arabic, Islamic University, Madīnah Munawarrāh, K.S.A and presently serving as the Director of the Qur’ān Printing Complex of Saudi Arabia. The first non-Arab designated as the Director of this noble work in the Arabian territories. From the chapter of Yūsuf of the Qur’ān, the author describes how to learn the language of the Qur’ān through the method of applied Grammar.

3. **al-Tibyān li Ḥurūf-i-Luḡhat al-Qur’ān:** This work is also done by Dr. V. ‘Abdul Raḥīm. Some Qur’ānic chapters were added in the later part of the book. A reader can easily grasp the Qur’ānic language through this book.

4. **al-Budūr al-Ghurarah fī Asmā’i al-Qurrā’ al-‘Ashrah:** This work belongs to Madar- ul-Umarā’ ‘Abdul Wahhāb al-Madrāsī of Badruddaulah family. This work deals with the method of Qur’ānic recitation and the lives of 30 persons who were well- versed in reciting well accepted ten different tones of the Qur’ān.

5. **Zajr-ul-Umam ‘an Tarjamat al-Qur’ān bī Lisān al-‘Ajām:** This is the work of Maulānā Ziā’uddīn Aḥmad Amānī Ḥazrath (died in the year 1967). This work elaborates problems in bringing out the translations of the Qur’ān. He emphasised that the Qur’ān should be published with its primary source (Ummahā-tul- Kutub). This is a useful work for the Qur’ānic translators and research scholars on Qur’ānic studies.

6. **Tafsīr Ba’ḍ al-Suwar:** Dr. ‘Abdul Qādir has written this work. This work has been serving in the syllabi list of Manonmaniam Sundranar University, Thirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, for the oriental title (Afḍal-ul-‘Ulamā’) examination in Arabic.

7. **Al-Ṣalawāt al-Qur’āniyyah:** Qāḍī Ubaidullāh al-Madrāsī of Badruddaulah family has carried out this work.

8. **Ruqūm al-Qur’ān:** Sayyid Tājuddīn Tāj has rendered this work.

9. **Maṭlab al-Fur’qān:** Moḥammed Maḥdī Waṣṣāf has undertaken this book.

10. **Tarjamat Yā Ayyuhā al-Nās:** It is the work of Jamīl Bāshā al-Madrāsī.

11. **Auḍaḥ al-Bayān fī Asāmī al- Qur’ān:** It is the work of Syed Abū Turāb al-Madrāsī.

12. **Nathr-ul-Marjān fī Rasm-i-Naẓm al-Qur’ān:** It is the work of Maulvī Moḥammad Ghauth Sharaf-ul-Mulk Bahādur (1750-1822). It was divided into a *muqaddimah* and two *maqālās*. In the *Muqaddimah*, he discussed the outline of the art of

the script of the Qur'ān. The first *Maqālah* is divided into five chapters in which he discussed the important principles in the Qur'ān. The *Muqaddimah* and the first *Maqālah* consists of 93 pages.

The second *Maqālah* deals with the verses of the Qur'ān, chapter by chapter. It was printed by Osmānī Press and published under the auspices of Majlis-i-Ishā'at-ul-'Ulūm, Hyderābād in 7 big volumes. (Vol. I. in 710 pages, Vol. II. in 644 pages, Vol. III. in 510 pages, Vol. IV. in 735 pages, Vol. V. in 600 pages, Vol. VI. in 680 pages and Vol. VII. in 798 pages)

Dr. P. Nīthār Aḥmed, Former Professor in Arabic, University of Madras has rendered the translation of the meanings of the Qur'ān for three chapters in English. They are al-Kahf, Yāsīn and al-Rūm.

21. One and Only Commentary in Arabic on Tafsīr written by the Tamil Scholar:

The one and only Arabic commentary cum explanatory notes on the Arabic commentaries of the Qur'ān is Al-Ḥawāshī 'alā al-Baiḍāwī wa Durr al-Manthūr by Sheikh Ṣadaqathullāh Appa al-Qādirī al-Shāfi'ī (1042-1115 A.H. / 1632-1703 A.D) has written this valuable Arabic work on Qur'ānic commentary. This work is an explanatory commentarial Qur'ānic work of (i) Tafsīr Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl written by Imām al-Baiḍāwī (ii) written by Jalāluddīn al-Suyūṭī.⁹

Works on Qur'ānic Studies in Tamil Language: Tamil scholars of Tamil Nadu have produced more than three hundred works on Qur'ānic studies. Some important works on Qur'ānic studies in Tamil Language are as follows:

1. Al-Qur'ān Atthaatchi (Proof of al-Qur'ān)
2. Al-Qur'ān Thagaval Kalanjiam (Encyclopaedia on the Qur'ānic Studies)
3. Al-Qur'ān Vasanangal Arulapatta Kaaranangal (Reasons for the Revelations of Qur'ānic Verses)
4. Al-Qur'ānil Allah Solvathanna? (What Allah says in the Qur'ān?)
5. Arputhak kalanjiam Al-Qur'ān (Miraculous Work al-Qur'ān)
6. Arul Marai Quraanum Ariviyal Kandupidipukalum (Divine Al-Qur'ān and Scientific Discoveries)
7. Qur'ān Bodhanaigal (Teachings of the Qur'ān)
8. Qur'ān Koorum Narpathu Vishayangal (Description of Forty Matters in the Qur'ān)
9. Qur'ān Koorum Bani Israyeel (Description of Banī Isra'el)
10. Qur'ān Koorum Christhavam (Description of Christianity in the Qur'ān)
11. Qur'ān Koorum Nabimaargal Varalaaru (Description of the Stories of the Prophets in the Qur'ān)
12. Qur'ān Koorum Pengal (Mention of Women in the Qur'ān)
13. Qur'ān Koorum Seeriya Kudumbam (Description of Ideal Family in the Qur'ān)
14. Qur'ān Koorum Sorgam Naragam (Mention of Paradise and Hell in the Qur'ān)

⁹ Ahamed Zubair K M A, "Eminent Scholars of Sheik Sadaqathullah Appa's Family and their contribution to Arabic and Islamic Studies", *Thaqafathul Hind* 54, no.3&4(2003):67.

15. Qur'ān Oliyil Vignnaanam (Science in the Light of the Qur'ān)
16. Qur'ānum Naveena Vignnaanamum (The Qur'ān and Modern Sciences)
17. Qur'ānum Vaaniyalum (The Qur'ān and Astronomy)
18. Thiru Qur'ān Iyarkai Maruthuvam (Natural Medical Healing in the Qur'ān)
19. Thiru Qur'ānic Ullatakkam (Contents of the Qur'ān)
20. Qur'ān Oliyil Bibilum Quraanum (Bible and the Qur'ān in the Qur'ānic Perspective)
21. Vedavarigalum Thootharmozhigalum (Divine Wordings/the Qur'ān and Sayings of the Prophet/Hadīth)
22. Arul Maraiyin Naangu Aadhaarach Chorgal (Four Chief Words of al-Qur'ān) Tafsīr Yāsīn
23. Iraivanai Patri Iramarai (Mention of God on al-Qur'ān)
24. Iramarai Patri Iramarai (Mention of the Qur'ān in the Qur'ān)
25. Irai Thoothargal Patri Iramarai (Mention of the Prophets in the Qur'ān)
26. Vaanmarai Selvam (Heavenly Qur'ān)
27. Mikka Melaanavan (Meaning of Translation of Surathul a'alā in Tamil)

22 Conclusion:

Qur'ān-the God's final scripture revealed to the mankind is the source of the principles, the way of life, advices, and guidances. The Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) understood the Qur'ān completely and explained it to all his companions. Twenty five years after the death of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), the companions carried Islam to all corners of the world. They began to teach the new generations in Islam, regarding the explanation, understanding and interpretation of the Qur'ān. Thus the knowledge of the tafsīr spread throughout the world, Qur'ānic learning was recognized all over the world. They explained the meaning of verses and the historical context in which the verses were revealed. The companions were taught to seek their understanding of the Qur'ān first from the Qur'ān itself, then from the explanations and application of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH)

The Arabu-Tamil commentaries, translations, interpretations and explanations followed the methodology of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and his companions. i.e. (1) Tafsīr of the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān (2) Tafsīr of the Qur'ān by the Sunnah.

The Arabu-Tamil tafsīrs served as authentic tafsīrs of the Qur'ān, and the mufassirs followed the correct methodology and attained correct knowledge in the language of the Qur'ān. The Tamil tafsīrs were written by referring the Arabu-Tamil tafsīrs. The Arabu-Tamil tafsīrs referred the commentary on the commentaries of al-Baiḍāwī, and al-Durr al-Manthūr. The Islamic Revivalist Sheikh Ṣadaqathulla Appa (1632-1703) of Tamilnadu has written commentaries on the tafsīr of al- Baiḍāwī and al-Durr al-Manthūr namely, *al-Ḥawāshī 'alā al-Baiḍāwī wa-Durr al-Manthūr*. The first Arabu-Tamil Qur'ānic commentator Sheikh Muṣṭafā Wali was a student of 'Umar Wali. 'Umar Wali is the grandson of Sheikh Ṣadaqathulla Appa. Another Arabu-Tamil commentator Nūḥ Lebbai is a descendant of Sheikh Ṣadaqathulla Appa. Yet another Arabu- Tamil commentator Ḥabīb Muḥammad 'Alim is also a descendant of Sheikh Ṣadaqathulla Appa. So the explanatory commentary on the tafsīr of al-Baiḍāwī and Jalāluddīn al- Suyūfī served as model for Arabu-Tamil commentaries. Hence the Arabu-Tamil tafsīrs followed the correct methodology.

In brief, the Qur'ān is the divine Book of Allah who knows the past, the present and the future in complete. There are information and incidents of the past, present and future in the Qur'ān. It consists of commands and interdictions, and internal and external things. Man knows mere what he heard and read of the past and a little from the present.

The human knowledge is not perfect and right unless it is related to Allah. Therefore, it is impossible for one to translate and interpret a book like the Qur'ān that consists of the past, present and future, to any language. The translator should acknowledge that the Qur'ān is the speech of Allah who knows every things of the world internally and externally. Therefore, it may be concluded with the saying of Allah: Say: Though the sea became ink for the Words of my Lord, verily the sea would be used up before the words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof to help¹⁰. (al-Kahf: 109)

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¹⁰ Al- Qur'ān, *al-kahaf*, 109.