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TRANSLATABILITY OF METONYMY IN THE SELECT VERSES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SOME URDU TRANSLATIONS OF QUR'AN

AMBREEN SHERWANI

Research Scholar, Dept. of Linguistics,
Aligarh Muslim University



ABSTRACT

The Quran is full of rhetoric devices present throughout the book. The vocabulary, style, eloquence, effectiveness, and the rich poetic rhythm of this masterpiece, which lead to its linguistic and stylistic uniqueness, are the miracles of a Miracle, i.e. the Quran. One of such rhetorical devices is metonymy. "Newmark (125) points out that a metonymy occurs 'where the name of an object is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated'. This substitution is conditioned by the existence of a contiguity relation between the literal and figurative meanings and the existence of an implicit clue indicating that the literal meaning is not intended" (Ali, Brakhw, Fikri Bin Nordin et al. 589). Metonymy in the Holy Quran is not a useless substitution because it usually serves a purpose. As it is not easy to translate any rhetoric devices because of the poetic language used, metonymy also faces problems when rendered from Quran to any other language. The present paper has tried to show such problems of untranslatability of metonymy and also the cognitive model of metonymy has been focused.

KEYWORDS: Metonymy, Conceptual metonymy, Quran, Untranslatability, Idealized Cognitive Model

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INTRODUCTION

The Quran is the masterpiece of Arabic language from many standpoints such as linguistics and stylistics. The vocabulary, style, eloquence, effectiveness, and the rich poetic rhythm of this masterpiece, which lead to its linguistic and stylistic uniqueness, are the miracles of a Miracle, i.e. the Quran. As Arberry in the introduction of his book the Koran interpreted states, the Quran "is neither poetry nor prose but a unique fusion of both" (x).

Among the various rhetorical devices used in the Holy Qur'an, metonymy is the one which is the prime focus of this paper.

Metonymy, etymologically speaking, comes from the Greek word "metonumia" which means "a change of name" (Li 1998). Instead of referring to something directly, we can use some other terms related with it to refer to the specific thing. For example, we can use "Chomsky" for the book written by Chomsky.

E.g.,

1. *وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ*
And [mention] when We said to the angles, "Prostrate to Adam". (17:61)

The Qur'an uses Adam as a metonym for the whole human race.

2. *نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ*

He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book..... (3:3)

THE COGNITIVE VIEW OF METONYMY:

Newmark (125) points out that metonymy occur 'where the name of an object is transferred to take the place of something else with which it is associated'. This substitution is conditioned by the existence of a contiguity relation between the literal and figurative meanings and the existence of an implicit clue indicating that the literal meaning is not intended.

The notion of 'contiguity' is at core of most definitions of metonymy. Traditional approaches locate contiguity relationships in the world of reality, whereas cognitive approaches locate them at the conceptual level. Lakoff and Johnson (30) think of contiguity in terms of the whole range of conceptual associations commonly related to an expression. Lakoff (65) was the first who accounted metonymic contiguity within the framework of idealized cognitive models (ICM). The ICM concept is meant to include not only people's encyclopedic knowledge of particular domain but also the cultural models they are part of.

The view of metonymy reflected in standard definitions tend to describe metonymy as 'a figure of speech' that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated. The cognitive view of metonymy makes different assumptions.

Radden Gunter and Zoltan Kovecses (17) were the first who focused upon this cognitive model of metonymy. The cognitive view of metonymy espoused here makes different assumptions:

- i. Metonymy is a conceptual phenomenon;
- ii. Metonymy is a cognitive process;
- iii. Metonymy operates within an idealized cognitive model.

METONYMY IS A CONCEPTUAL PHENOMENON:

Metonymy is not just a matter of names of things, but essentially a conceptual phenomenon. As already pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (29), metonymy like metaphor is part of our everyday way of thinking is grounded in experience, is subject to general and systematic principles and structures our thoughts and actions. Lakoff and Johnson's example of the metonymy in '*She's just a pretty face*' illustrates the general conceptual nature of metonymy. We derive the basic information about a person from the person's face. The conceptual metonymy *the face for the person* is therefore part of our everyday way of thinking about people.

E.g.,

3. *مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِعِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ ۗ وَأَفْبِدَتْهُمْ هَوَاءً*

Racing ahead, their heads raised up, their glance does not come back to them, and their hearts are void. (14:43)

This type of metonymy is restricted to the world of conceptualization in which cultural models play an important role in understanding the whole ICM of metonyms. All the events are the part of the whole ICM of 'Day of Judgment'. Understanding the above example of metonymy, largely depends on our knowledge of the world and culture which they are part of, not on the linguistic meaning of the words out of context or on the pragmatic conventions for interpreting the language of these utterances.

METONYMY IS A COGNITIVE PROCESS

The traditional view defines metonymy as a relationship involving substitution. This view is reflected in the notation generally used for stating metonymic relationship, namely, X stands for Y. In the above example of '*She's just a pretty face*', the name, 'face' is this taken to be a substitute expression for person, so that the sentence is assumed to mean '*She's a pretty, person*'. But this cannot be the whole meaning since '*She is pretty person*', does not mean that she is pretty 'all over', but it suggests that most importantly she has a pretty face. This can be seen in the oddity of the sentence expressing a counter-expectation. "*She is pretty person but*

doesn't have a pretty face. The two metonymies, THE FACE FOR PERSON and THE PERSON FOR THE FACE, thus, complement each other. A person's face evokes the person and a person evokes the person's face. Metonymy doesn't simply substitute one entity for another entity but interrelates to form a new, complex meaning.

e.g.,

4. *وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ.*

If you could but see when the criminals are hanging their heads before their Lord, (32:12)

This metonymy refers to the temporal relations, sub-event, and whole event relations as scripts-based referents to the whole event of Judgment Day. It is not substituting the whole event by the sub-event but it is showing the sub-event of that whole event.

Metonymic relationships should therefore more adequately be represented by using an additive notation such as X plus Y, as suggested by Radden.

The metonymic process consists in mentally accessing one conceptual entity via another entity. This is the cognitive explanation Langacker (30) offers for metonymy. He conceives of metonymy as a reference-point phenomenon in which one conceptual entity, the reference point, affords mental access to another conceptual entity, the desired target. We will refer to the reference-point entity as the 'vehicle' and the desired target simply as the 'target'. In the example of 'She's pretty face, the pretty face serves as the vehicle for accessing the person as the target. Means, both the vehicles and the target are conceptually present. However, one of them is seen as being more salient than the other and is therefore selected as the vehicle.

METONYMY OPERATES WITHIN AN IDEALISED COGNITIVE MODEL:

The notion of 'contiguity' is at the core of most definitions of metonymy. Traditional approaches locate contiguity relationships in the world of reality, whereas cognitive approaches locate them at the conceptual level. Lakoff and Johnson (29) think of contiguity in terms of the whole range of conceptual associations commonly related to an expression. Lakoff (65) accounts for metonymic contiguity in the framework of idealized cognitive models (ICM). The ICM concept not only includes people's encyclopedic knowledge of particular domain but also the cultured models they are part of.

E.g.

5. *يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَا لَكُمْ إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ أَنْفِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقَلْتُمْ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ.*

O you who have believed, what is [the matter] with you that, when you are told to go forth in the cause of God, you adhere heavily to the earth? (9:38)

The notion of underlined metonymy is to refer to the whole concept of life preference and hesitation to go to Jihad. So, metonymy here is highly related to the cognitive models of cultural preference. And thus, the notion of ICM cuts across the world of reality and the world of conceptualization or world of language. On the basis of the three cognitive properties of metonymy discussed above we will define metonymy as follow:

"Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, *the vehicle*, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, *the target*, within the same *idealized cognitive model*".

TRANSLATABILITY OF METONYMY IN QUR'AN:

Translatability is defined as "the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change" (Pym & Turk 273).

A great deal of literature has been devoted to the question of the untranslatability of the Qur'an. In an article entitled 'Translating the Qur'an' Fazlur Rahman (24) asserts that the inspired language of the Qur'an "can never be completely satisfactorily translated into another language".

As Qur'an is impossible to translate into any language without losing its beauty, translators face many problems in translating the rhetorical devices used in the Qur'an. In the same way, metonymic translation also becomes challenging. The metonymy is not merely a rhetorical device, but it is that figurative trope used with its own conceptual structure and cognitive processes of understanding and comprehension. It is bound by the

socio-cultural framework within which it operates. Hence, translators used different methods to translate metonymy.

Following are some of the instances of metonymy used in the Qur'an and their equivalents used by some Urdu translators:

3. مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ

What is before the people and also what is hidden from them, (2:255, Saheeh International)

jo koch bændō ke samne he or jo koch ōnse ojhāl hē (**Moududi**)

jo age he ōnke or jo pi:che hā ōnke (**Junagardhi**)

The expressions 'between his hands' and 'behind him' are metonyms for something "perceivable by him" and something "hidden from him" respectively. The vehicle *أَيْدِيهِمْ* is used in the Qur'an to achieve the target 'perceivable', but the above three translators used different vehicles to achieve the sense i.e., 'in front of them'. Though the vehicles used are different, but still metonymy is present even in the translations.

4. وَاللَّهُ يَسْجُدُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

All that is in the heavens and the earth prostrates itself, (13:15, Saheeh International)

vo to Allah hi: hā jisko zāmi:n-o-a:smā ki hār ci:z taʊʃən vā kārhan sājda kār rāhe hā (**Maodudi**)

Allah hi ke liye zāmi:n or a:sma:n ki sari maxlu:q sājda kārti hā (**Junagardhi**)

The Qur'an has used the expression '*yasjud*' (prostrate himself or prostrate themselves) as a metonym for complete submission to His Will. Prostration is a sub-act of the whole act of submission to Allah; hence a specific vehicle of the ICM is used to represent the whole ICM i.e., the target.

The same metonym is used by Urdu translators also. Hence the translation is the literal one.

5. وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمْدُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ

And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [was ink], replenished thereafter by seven [more] seas, the words of God would not be exhausted. (31:27, Saheeh International)

Zāmi:n me jitne dārəxt he āgər vo səb ke səb qələm bən jāē or sāməndər (dāva:t bən jāe) jise sa:t māzi:d sāməndər rofnai mōhāyi kārē təb bhi Allah ki bā:tē (likhne se) xətm na hongī. (**Maodudi**)

'Saba' (Qur'an 31:27) and 'saba'een' (Qur'an 9:80) are used in the Qur'an as a metonym for several.

Such metonymies work within the cultural framework. In other cultural models, a number may not represent many but in Qur'an it does.

The Urdu translation of this metonymy is the literal one and hence doesn't capture the intended meaning.

6. فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا

So direct your face [i.e., self] toward the religion, inclining to truth. (30:30, Saheeh International)

pəsyəksu ho kār əpna rux ōs di:n ki simt mē jāma do (**Maodudi**)

pəs qayəm rəkh əpni təwājje ko di:n ke liye (**M. Ishaq**)

pəs a:p yək su hoke əpna mū:h di:n ki tərəf mōtavājje kārdē (**Junagardhi**)

The word 'wajha' (face) (Qur'an 30:30) is often used in the Qur'an metonymically in the sense of 'one's whole being'. So the 'face' is acting as a vehicle for reaching the target 'whole being' and ultimately to 'attention'. Within the ICM of 'whole being', the most eligible vehicle used in the Qur'an is 'face', but in Urdu the more salient vehicle is another member of the same ICM i.e., 'rux' (side or face or attention) as used in the first case which is again a metonymic expression and 'təwājje' in the second. But in the third both the vehicle and the target is present. Hence the translation loses the metonymy in this.

7. كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ

The people of Noah denied before them, and [the tribe of] Aad and Pharaoh, the owner of stakes. (38:12, Saheeh International)

in se pehle Nu:h ki qom, or ʃa:d, or mexō vala firʃōn (**Maodudi**)

In classical Arabic this phrase was used as a metonym for 'mighty domain' or firmness of power. "The number of poles supporting a Bedouin tent is determined by its size, and the latter has always depended on the status and power of its owner; thus, a mighty chieftain is often alluded to as 'he of many tent-poles'".

Urdu translator rendered this phrase literally, but the question arises whether the cognitive framework of Urdu culture has 'mekhon wala' in the ICM of 'mighty domain'. Hence, this may create problem for the learners to understand.

8. فِيمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ

It is for what your hands have earned, (42:30, Saheeh International)

tomhare apne hathō ki kəmai hæ (**Maodudi**)

This is an oft recurring metonym for man's doings and conscious attitudes in this world, meant to bring out the fact that these doings and attitudes are the 'harvest' of a person's spiritual character and have, therefore, a definite influence on the quality of his life in the hereafter. The nature of (the life in the hereafter) depends on, and is a result of, what one has previously earned. The trigger used here to achieve the target of deeds and actions is rendered literally in both the languages. And the vehicles used in both the languages are the part of ICM of these languages. Hence the translations are maintaining metonymy as well as giving the sense of meaning.

9. هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا

He holds its forelock [i.e., controls it]. (11:56, Saheeh International)

jis ki coṭi ṡske hath mẽ na ho (**Maodudi**)

This expression is a metonym denoting a person's utter control over someone. When describing a person's subjection to another person, the ancient Arabs used to say 'the forelock of so and so is in the hands of so and so.' It is the replacement of a kind of sub-event for the whole action. The conceptual model of 'subjection' carries in it the present phrase as one of the aspect of controlling someone.

10. وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ ذَاتِ الْأَوْجِ وَدُسُرٍ

And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails, (54:13, Saheeh International)

ṡr Nuh ko hæm ne ek tæxtō ṡr ki:lō vali (kæfti) pær səwar kær diya (**Maodudi**)

In this verse, when describing the story of Prophet Noah (peace be upon him), the Arabic word for ship is not in the verse but is implied by Allah's mention of planks and nails. The PARTS of the ship are used to represent the WHOLE ship. But while rendering it into Urdu, the translator made it more explicit by using the word 'kashti'. So the metonymic expression is being replaced by its sense.

11.فَمَنْ حَجَّ الْبَيْتَ أَوْ اعْتَمَرَ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِ أَنْ يَطَّوَّفَ بِهِمَا.....

So whoever makes hajj [pilgrimage] to the House or performs 'umrah - there is no blame upon him for walking between them. (2:158, Saheeh International)

'الْبَيْتِ' is used to represent 'the Ka'bah'. This is the metonymy in which a more GENERAL word is used for representing a SPECIFIC thing. Both Maodudi and Junagardhi use the expression 'Baitu Allah' while M. Ishaq uses the word 'Ka'bah'. In all these translations, translators have replaced the vehicle by target by translating the sense. Hence metonymy is not rendered in the translations.

12. وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِطْرًا

And We sent [rain from] the sky upon them in showers, (6:6, Saheeh International)

ṡn pær hæmne a:sma:n se xu:b barıf bærsaı̄ (**Maodudi**)

bheja hæmne badæl ṡnpær bohōt bærsne vala (**M. Ishaq**)

hæmne ṡnpær xu:b ba:riġē bærsaı̄ (**Junagardhi**)

In this verse, the word (السما – the sky) is used to refer to the intended meaning 'rain', which serves as an indication of the heaviness of the rain. A metonymic expression of INITIATOR i.e., 'sky' is used for the PRODUCT i.e., 'rain' is used. But the translations of Maodudi and Junagardhi render the sense of the expression hence eliminating the metonymy, while M. Ishaq replaced it with another member of the ICM of rain i.e., 'ba:dal' (cloud).

13. إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

Indeed, He is knowing of that within the breasts. (42:24, Saheeh International)

wo si:no ke chōpe hōe raz janta hæ. (**Maodudi**)

wo si:ne ki batō ko janne vala hæ. (**Junagardhi**)

There is a metonymy in which 'heart' is represented by 'breast'. The same pattern is followed in the translations also. Hence, the translation is the literal one and is not difficult for any culture to understand because 'chest' or 'breast' is often used for 'heart' in almost all the cultures.

14. *واَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ*
And forsake them in bed; (4:34, Saheeh International)
 Xwa:bgahō me ōnse əlehda rəho **(Maodudi)**
 ɔr ōnhe əlɛg bɪstərō pər choɾ do **(Junagardhi)**
 ɔr jɔda rəho ōnse sone ki jəgahō mē **(M. Ishaq)**

This expression in the Qur'an involves the metonymic transfer 'beds' that has its own frame of reference to the sacred association between spouses. The PLACE is used to represent the ACTION in this metonymy. The similar device is used in the translations also. 'khwabgah', 'sone ki jagah' and 'bistar' all are the metonyms of the sexual relation between spouses. Junagardi used the same metonym 'bistar' as in Qur'an but Maodudi used a different member of the ICM of sleep/sexual relation i.e., khwabgah (place of sleep) and M. Ishaq to did the same. Hence these translators also used the metonymy but through a different vehicle of the same ICM to achieve the same target.

15. *وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ*
And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them. (14:4, Saheeh International)
 həmnə əpnə pæʒa:m dene ke liye jəb kəbhi koi rəsul:bheja hæ, ōsne əpni qəm hi ki zəban me pæʒa:m diya hæ.... **(Maodudi)**
 həmnə hər hər nəbi ko ōski qəmi zəban me hi bheja h **(Junagardhi)**

This is common metonym used in most of the languages of the world. 'Tongue' i.e., the INSTRUMENT is used to refer RESULT i.e., language. Tongue is not substituting language but representing the result of the use of tongue i.e., language. The same device is used in all the Urdu translations mentioned above but in Sahih International, the sense is translated.

16. *الْفَارَعَةُ*
The Calamity! (101:1, Saheeh International)
 əzi:m hɑ:dɑ (khətkhətane vali) **(Maodudi)**
 khərkhərə dene vali **(Junagardhi)**
 ʃhokne vali **(M. Ishaq)**

Qara'a- When two things hit each other violently and make a disturbing noise. If it does not make you scared or startled, it is not a Qari'ah. It is also used for a tough situation when a loud noise has taken your peace away. This metonymy refers to the temporal relations, sub-event, and whole event relations as scripts-based referents to the whole event of Judgment Day. It is not substituting the whole event by the sub-event but it is showing the sub-event of that whole event.

CONCLUSION

According to the cognitive model of metonymy, "metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, *the vehicle*, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, *the target*, within the same *idealized cognitive model*". The ICM concept is meant to include not only people's encyclopedic knowledge of particular domain but also the cultured models they are part of. As already pointed out by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metonymy like metaphor, is part of our everyday way of thinking, is grounded in experience, is subject to general and systematic principles and structures our thoughts and actions.

In the Qur'an also, metonymy is playing the same role. It's merely not substitution of one expression by the other, but it shows the SPECIFIC of the GENERAL.

The same strategies are used by the translators also. In some cases, they opt for literal translation to rescue the beauty of the language of the Qur'an. In some cases, some other members of the same ICM of the target expression are used to maintain the metonymic usage. But in few cases, the sense is rendered and metonymy is not used in the translation.

As far as the suggestions to the translators are concerned, the translator should keep in the mind the culture of the people whom the translation is being done, before selecting the equivalents. The metonymy operates within a conceptual framework which varies from culture to culture.

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