

# Significance of Translating the Arabic Language to Tamil Language in Sri Lanka

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**Abstract:-** There is great importance for the translation process in human life generally, due to the transferring of information between civilizations. Translation is defined as the process through which data and information are transferred between languages for scientific and cultural exchange. This study concerns introducing the significance of translation in a multi-cultural country and finding out the possible way to build up and promote coexistence in Sri Lanka via translation processes. The researcher used descriptive and analytical methods to complete this study. To meet the objectives of the study, the primary and secondary data were used with qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study concluded that translation is essential in multilingual and multicultural countries such as Sri Lanka. It can bring about co-existence and peace and build sustainable development. At a time, when Sri Lankan Muslims are facing various problems, translation will play the role of conveying Islamic teachings in Arabic into local languages and making understanding among the people of Sri Lanka.

**Keywords:-** Arabic Language; Coexistence; Significance; Sri Lanka; Tamil Language; Translation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is a small country with many races, religions, languages, and cultures. It is the moral duty of the nation to use this as a factor for the development and progress of the nation. This is a small country that exemplifies pluralism. Pluralism is a very natural aspect of the cosmic order. Religious riots and ethnic violence have taken place throughout the history of Sri Lanka, undermining religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Instead of being considered a factor in the development of the country, these natural differences have become a dividing factor and an obstacle to the coexistence between the communities and the development of the country. As a result, Sri Lanka is facing a series of religious and ethnic conflicts on many fronts. Solutions for this issue have been proposed by many parties but to date, this issue has not been resolved.

In this context, building peace, coexistence, tolerance, understanding, and trust between the religions, are strongly expected. Sri Lankan communities have to spread the message that the people of this country live in peace, unity, and harmony beyond all racial differences and convey the message that all people completely reject fundamentalism. Therefore, Sri Lankans must share their ideas and feelings with them. As a country with multi-languages, translation is a vital way to ensure it.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Islam is a peaceful religion, and it does not belong to a particular nation or ethnicity and blesses all the people in the world. Islam does not forcibly impose on the people to follow it. But, there are many reasons non-Muslims are animosity toward Islam. Obscurity in the principles of Islam is the main reason. Sometimes, the approaches of some Muslims influence the promotion of this problem. So, Muslims of Sri Lanka have to convey the message of Islam to other communities in Sri Lanka and attempt to make them understand.

## III. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are formulated as follows;

- To introduce the significance of translation in a multi-cultural country.
- To find out the possible way to build up and promote coexistence in Sri Lanka via translation processes.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The nature of this research requires the researcher to use descriptive and analytical methods to complete this study and reach the required results. To meet the objectives of the study, primary and secondary data were used. Generally, the research is done under a qualitative and quantitative approach.

## V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Definition of translation

The translation is an important means of achieving communication between one society and another. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran "O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." (Alquran 49:13). Through the noble verse, it is clear that knowing the other and meeting him from a mental and cultural point of view is among what the Islamic Sharia encourages, and there is nothing or idea that concerns the human race but that it is included in Quran or Hadeeth literature to raise the status of man, and help him to succeed living on earth.

"Translation is the comprehension of the meaning of a text and the subsequent production of an equivalent text, likewise called a "translation" that communicates the same message in another language. The text that is translated is called the source text, and the language that it is translated into is called the target language. The product is sometimes called the target text. The translation is the word for Greek

and the translation word is made up of two think one is Trans+Lation, trans means across Latin means to bring. Thus we can say that translation is the S.L to Converted to T.L. Translation is a creative process of reproducing the text from S.L to T.L . It is like a change one set of clothes to another where the context is the same.” (Warwal, 2014)

"Generally, translation is a process of rendering meaning, ideas, or messages of a text from one language to another language. Some considerations follow this process, which is mainly related to the accuracy, clarity, and naturalness of the meaning, ideas, or messages of the translation. It means that it is an important thing to consider whether the readers of the target text accept equivalent information as the readers of the source text does. These considerations are clarified in some definitions of translation stated by some experts." (Nugroho, 2021)

Due to its prominence, translation has been viewed differently. According to Ghazala (1995), "translation is generally used to refer to all the process and methods used to convey the meaning of the source language into the target language" (Ghazala, 1995) "Ghazala's definition focuses on the notion of meaning as an essential element in translation. That is when translating, understanding the meaning of source text is vital to have the appropriate equivalent in the target text thus, it is meaning that is translated in relation to grammar, style and sounds" (Osman, 2017).

### B. Importance of Translation

Translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and it is a needed subject not only for linguists, language teachers, and professional translators but also for those who work for social harmony and peace. It is used as an important tool for the development of the human race. And the Importance of Translation has been thought about and practiced for ages. Translation has become an Indispensable necessity all over the world in all movements of life such as academically, administratively, politically, economically, socially, and culturally. Modern society has varied needs, interests, and attractions; it is interested in all the fields like art, literature, science, and technology. It is not contented with its intense knowledge in a single field. It tries to gain knowledge from other fields. It is possible only through translation. If there are no works on translation, knowledge, as well as literature in every language, could remain isolated or segregated from others. Without translation, there would be no international summits, laws, games, etc., no science and technology, no war and peace, no social harmony and no education, etc. And without Translation, a language seems incomplete. Translation introduces knowledge from one language to another. Society can improve its knowledge by reading Translations. (Ashraff, 2020)

No one denies the importance of translation in transferring the intellectual heritage among nations, and its impact on the growth of human knowledge throughout history. The translation is a complex intellectual, mental and linguistic process that requires double creativity from those who perform it. The Islamic civilization, like other civilizations, did not start from zero but was established in

the shadow of other civilizations. The translation and transmission movement in Islamic civilization represented the artery that provided it with the knowledge and sciences of other nations: such as India, the Persians, and the Greeks. (Assaas, 2020).

Its importance lies in the following aspects:

- A correct translation of religious texts helps in a correct understanding of religions without any misinterpretation, which contributes to properly communicating religious beliefs to others. This helps to avoid understanding and to strengthen dialogue between different civilizations and religions. Avoid sectarian and religious conflicts, which generate a lot of violence and terrorist acts.
- Helping to spread religion, its beliefs, and principles in different parts of the world, and properly deliver it to as many people as possible from other cultures and civilizations in the world.
- Introduction to Sri Lankan multicultural communities Significance of translating Arabic Islamic literature (Kalemaatt, 2021)

### C. Solving profane propaganda against Muslims in Sri Lanka through translation practices

Sri Lanka's population is comprised of 75 percent Sinhalese and 24 percent Tamil speakers (11% Sri Lankan Tamils, 9% Moors, and 4% Indian Tamils), with smaller communities of Malays, Burghers, and others. The Sri Lankan civil war, which ended in 2009, was triggered in part by the introduction of language policies that created divisions along ethnic and linguistic lines. In 1956, the Official Language Act No. 33 declared Sinhala as the only official language, replacing English which had been imposed under British colonial rule. In 1958, in response to the grievances of the Tamil-speaking people, the government passed the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act, in which Tamil was declared an official language in the Tamil-majority North and East. The 13th Amendment in 1987 to Article 18 of the 1978 Constitution stated that "the official language of Sri Lanka is Sinhala" while "Tamil shall also be an official language," with English as a "link language." While this recognized both Sinhala and Tamil as official languages, the wording was still contentious, as some perceived it as referring to Tamil in a secondary sense. In response, in 1988, the 16th Amendment to the constitution corrected the position by stating, "Sinhala and Tamil shall be the languages of administration throughout Sri Lanka." (Martyn, 2013) This shows that the Sri Lankan communities have a vital language-related issue throughout their ages.

In another way, Sri Lankan Muslims face different problems in their religious context. The main issue is their identity by the word 'Muslim'. "The Sri Lankan Muslim identity was and is a reactive politico-cultural identity that was constructed as a response to late colonial Sri Lankan politics. It was largely "constructed", evolved, and transformed in response to the Sinhala and Tamil ethnonationalism that emerged as a result of anti-colonial movements originating from the late 19th century." (Abdul Razak, & Saleem, 2021) Other communities in Sri Lanka don't know Islam which is established in the Arabic language. Arabic isn't familiar to Sri Lanka as an official

way. No one from non-Muslim communities is encouraged to learn it. There are various circumstances in expressing conflicts against Islam and Muslims in Sri Lanka. All think that Arabic is a religious language, which is used for Islamic purposes and practices only. And, the Islamic literacy works in the Arabic language, were not translated into local languages especially, into the Sinhala language.

In this context, the Muslim community should consider translating Islamic concepts and principles into local languages. It has a strong and huge potential in building up a good understanding of Islam and its values. Because the translation will play as a mediator among the unrested groups. "The contact amongst two different cultural systems inevitably leads to a confrontation amid two heterogeneous value systems deeply embedded within the respective communities. The translator, who is intervening on a primary and secondary basis as a mediator in minimizing the lacuna existing amid the two cultures, should thus resolve the clash of cultural entities by preserving the cultural homogeneity with minimal distortion to the respective cultural dimensions." (Nagodawithana, 2020).

But the Sri Lanka Muslims didn't concern with this process except for a small range. According to a survey done by researchers, below 150 Arabic books were translated into Tamil and few textbooks were translated into Sinhala Even though the Holy Quran is the first source of Islam and was translated into Tamil, still wasn't translated into the Sinhala language in the proper way, accepted by the whole community. But, it should be considered that "Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran and the Islamic teachings, therefore a great responsibility lies upon the shoulders of Arab translators to translate these religious texts into different languages." (Al-Harashsheh, 2013).

This problem does not depend on non-Muslims only, but on new Muslims, even though they live with Muslims. "It was observable, a situation where Muslim converts do not accept some basic principles of Islam. Many converts, especially from Buddhism and Hinduism, are still idolatry worshipers. Some are reluctant to accept the doctrine of one God, which is the basic tenet of Islam. Some view the Prophet Muhammad as a god. In such a way, their previous religious thoughts mostly influenced them. A significant number of Muslim converts have the same opinions. The reason for such a view is the lack of clarity about Islam. That is why the parties concerned should pay more attention to this matter. As a community, Muslims should have to feed them a clear and accurate Islamic knowledge, and every individual must understand and act on the fact since it is a social duty." (Razick, Fowsar & Rushana, 2020)

## VI. CONCLUSION

The translation is a scientific medium. It also helps to create communication and understanding between people with different languages. Muslims have been involved in the translation industry since the dawn of Islam. Scientific sources which were on the verge of extinction got into the hands of human beings through translating processes. The translation is essential in multilingual and multicultural

countries such as Sri Lanka. It can bring about co-existence and peace in the country and build sustainable development. At a time, when Sri Lankan Muslims are facing various political, economic, social, and religious problems, we need to create clarity about Islam among other communities and try to eliminate misunderstandings. Realizing and recognizing Islam and Muslims can be achieved by translating Islamic teachings in Arabic into Tamil and Sinhala of local languages.

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