

A Critical Approach to English Translations of Imam Ali's Instructions to Mālik al-Ashtar

S.Manafi Anari, Ph.D.*

Abstract

Nahjul-Balāghah, Peak of Eloquence, ranks amongst the great literary masterpieces of mankind in both its informative content and splendid style. Linguistically speaking, its delicate expressions and blossoming statements contain great ideas uttered in elaborately decorated wonders of eloquence and rhetorics. Such wonderful utterances throw light on Imam Ali's great knowledge of God, man and the world, as well as his superiority in rhetorics.

Imam Ali's letter to Mālik al-Ashtar in Nahjul-Balāghah embraces a long set of instructions concerning government and the role of the ruler in the society from Islamic point of view. Although these instructions were written about fourteen centuries ago, they are so comprehensive and upright that in any age they can be considered as guidelines guiding the rulers how to rule over the people. The aim of this article is to have a critical approach to English translations of these instructions in order to find out to what extent the translators have been successful in transferring into English those enlightening ideas in the splendid original Arabic text.

*.Allamah Tabātabā'i University

Key Words: eloquence, masterpiece , rhetoric, instructions, criticism

Introduction

Imam Ali's Epistle to Mālik al-Ashtar represents the fundamentals of a constitutional law for an Islamic government. The instructions contained in this Epistle are so substantial that they transcend the limits of time and place, and thus, they can constitutionally be practised in any age in a society aspiring to establish a government on the basis of Ali's system of rule. Although this Epistle is originally addressed to Mālik al-Ashtar, who had been appointed governor of Egypt by Imam Ali, it is instructive to all human beings, especially to those in social, political, judicial, and governmental positions in the society. As A. Ansarian (1983: 7) points out, it gives a genuine criterion to distinguish between the right and the wrong, and the Islamic and non-Islamic rules. It constitutes the true measure of all claims to legitimacy.

From linguistic point of view this Epistle is a literary masterpiece in its original Arabic. Syntactically speaking, it manifests splendid style of eloquence and rhetorics in the surface structure. Semantically speaking, it communicates glorious ideas and messages as guidelines for all mankind in general, showing how to lead a virtuous life, and for virtuous leaders and rulers in special, guiding them how to rule over the society in order to establish justice in it , to provide well-being for all the people, to meet the requirements of the masses, and to bring about prosperity in the regions.

This article aims at surveying the English renderings of that literary work by contrasting some portions of it with the translations and comparing these with each other to determine to what extent the translators have been successful in their attempts to convey those instructive messages of the highly adorned original text in the corresponding equivalents of the receptor language. The evaluation procedure is based on the criteria of translation quality assessment, especially on those related to assessing the translations of literary and religious texts. The article aims not at pointing out all the merits and demerits of the entire renderings of the Epistle; rather, it concentrates upon a critical approach to some parts of them through a contrastive analysis comparative study.

Translating Literary Texts

A literary text has its own formal and stylistic beauties, as well as its semantic richness and potential meanings. When the translator chooses a particular reading of a literary text and translates his own understanding or interpretation of it into the receptor language, much is lost from the formal beauties and the semantic richness of the original. There are various views concerning what is always lost when translating a literary text. Regarding the translation of poetry, some authors maintain that it is the poetry itself which is lost when it is translated into another language. Robert Frost, as is cited by Whitaker (2001), believes that "poetry is what is lost in translation ." Poetry in any language has its

own linguistic characteristics which cannot be translated into another language . Based on this idea, no translation of , say, Sa'di's poems, or any other Persian poetry, in any language , can allow, among the receptors, all those responses or functions allowed among the source-language readers.

Although it is impossible to have the same style in two different languages, the translator of a literary text must try to reproduce the meaning in the receptor language in a style which is the closest natural one to that of the original , as the stylistic specialities all convey meaning and are of effect. Even the sound of a language has its own meaning and effect which cannot be transferred into the target language . "... it should never be assumed that no meaning is conveyed through the sound of a language" (Duff, 1981: 95 , quoted by J. Janecka , 2001:1) . Therefore , it is true to say that something is "lost" in translation, especially in the translation of literary texts, since it is impossible to reproduce of the original text in the receptor language; and it is in this sense that the 'untranslatability' of a literary masterpiece can be argued. 'Polyvalence' or multiplicity of responses allowed by a literary text among the source-language readers is another thing which is partially lost in the translation and it cannot be entirely conveyed in a single 'equivalence' in the receptor language. This could be due to the stylistic characteristics of the original text, or because of the differences between the two languages in the

areas of meaning, since, as Barnwell (1984: 12) puts it ,
“one form may express several different meanings.”

Translation Criticism

According to M.H. Abrams (1993: 39), in literary criticism, “criticism is the overall term for studies concerned with defining, classifying, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating works of literature”. In translation studies, as Katharina Reiss (2000:3) says, “translation criticism requires a comparison of the target and source texts”. Serious attempts have recently been made to discuss the ways in which translations can be evaluated. Some authors believe that making judgements about translations should be done objectively. As B. Hatim and I. Mason (1993: 4) point out, such authors (e.g. Reiss 1971, Simpson 1975, House 1976, Wilss 1982) have attempted to establish translation criticism on a proper footing. “To replace the impressionism and unsubstantiated opinion which often characterises judgements about the merits and demerits of particular translations, these authors propose methodical and systematic criteria for evaluation, based on ST analysis and consideration of available translation procedures.” To define objective translation criticism, Reiss (2000) says: “In the present context objectivity means to be verifiable as in contrast to arbitrary and inadequate. This means that every criticism of a translation, whether positive or negative, must be defined explicitly and be examples” (P.4) Following this notion, I have defined explicitly some merits and demerits of the

English translations and verified all my judgements by examples quoted from them. But there are some others who maintain subjectivity cannot be eliminated from translation. Even the pros of objective evaluation do not reject subjective assessment completely. Hatim and Mason, who seem to be cons of eliminating subjectivity from translation assessment, say (pp.4-5): "On this point, we agree with Reiss (1971:107): ... 'any analysis, however concerned it may be to achieve total objectivity, ultimately amounts to interpretation,' and with House (1976:64): 'It seems so be unlikely that translation quality assessment can ever be completely objectified in the manner of the results of natural science subjects.' According to Hatim and Mason what can be done, however, is to elaborate a set of parameters for analysis which aim to promote consistency and precision in the discussion of translating and translations.

A translation must communicate the meaning of the original text in the closest natural equivalent in the target language in such a form that it is understandable to receptors. Thus, testing a translation should be based on three main points: 1) accuracy of the meaning, 2) clarity or intelligibility of the message, 3) naturalness of the form.

Contrastive Analysis and Comparative Study

In this part we contrast some portions of Imam Ali's instructions to Mālik al-Ashtar with three different English translations, compare them with each other, and scrutinize each rendering analytically and critically in a descriptive

manner. The judgements made about the merits and demerits of each translation are not according to impressionism or unsubstantiated opinions; rather, they are based on careful and thorough examination and analytical consideration of each equivalence.

Translation A has been done by Seyyid Mohammad Askary Ja'fary, translation B is that of Seyyid Ali Reza, and translation C belongs to William C. Chittick.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

بِناَمِ اللَّهِ كِه رَحْمَانِ وَ رَحِيمِ اسْت

- A. In the Name of All Merciful and Kind God.
- B. In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
- C. In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

In the first translation, the word 'God' has been used after the two attributes: 'Merciful and Kind God'. From grammatical point of view, this structure has no problem, but theologically speaking, it is better not to use it in translating Islamic texts, and that is why almost all the English translators of the Qur'ān have employed the word 'God' or 'Allah' before the two attributes in their translations of this Qur'ānic verse. In English language it should be said 'God the Wise', 'the man wise' and 'the wise man', but not 'the God Wise', 'the Wise God' or 'man the wise', because when we say 'God the Wise', the expression implies that there is only one God and He is Wise, while 'the man wise' and 'the wise man' have this implicit meaning that there are

some other men who are not wise. Another problem with the first translation is that 'All Merciful' is not hyphenated. The prefix 'all-', when forms a compound adjective, is used with a hyphen, and it means 'in the highest degree', such as 'All-merciful', All-wise, etc. The word 'kind', which means 'friendly and thoughtful to others', is rarely used as an English equivalent to 'رحيم', though it is not incorrect, since it is synonymous with 'compassionate' and 'merciful', the two preferable English equivalents to 'رحيم'.

In translation B, the word 'Allah' is retained, while in C the word 'God' is used. they are both acceptable, as in Persian we use both 'Allah' and 'Khudā' (خدا) and take both of them to be correct. Many English translators of the Qur'ān have retained the word 'Allah' in their renderings, while there are others who have used the word 'God' instead. According to M. Pickthall, the first English Muslim who translated the Qur'ān into English, the word 'Allah' has neither feminine nor plural, and it has never been applied to anything other than the unimaginable Supreme Being. Pickthall believes that there is no word corresponding to 'Allah' in English, and that is why he has retained the word 'Allah' throughout his English translation. He has used the word 'God' where the corresponding word 'ilāh' is found in the original Arabic text.

Translation C is equal to the second one, as the words 'Merciful' and 'Compassionate' are synonymous, corresponding to both 'رحمان' and 'رحيم', and so they can be inter-

changed with one another in the translation , though the two original Arabic words embrace different shades of meaning, referring to different aspects of Allah's attribute of Mercy.

هَذَا مَا أَمَرَ بِهِ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ عَلِيُّ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَالِكُ بْنُ الْحَارِثِ الْأَشْطَرِّ فِي عَهْدِهِ إِلَيْهِ حِينَ وُلِّاهُ مِصْرَ:

این است آنچه بنده خدا علی ، امیرمؤمنان ، مالک اشتر فرزند حارث را ، در فرمان خود به او ،

به آن دستور داد ، آنگاه که وی را به فرمانداری مصر منصوب کرد ،

A. These are the orders issued by the creature of God, Ali, The son of Abu Talib to Malik, the son of Ashter when he appointed Malik as the governor of Egypt

B. This is what Allh's servant Ali, Amirul Momineen, has ordered Malik bin Harith-al-Ashtar in his instruments (of appointment) for him when he made him governor of Egypt

C. This is that with which 'Ali , the servant of God and Commander of the Faithful, charged Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar in his instructions to him when he appointed him governor of Egypt:

Concerning the style of the original Arabic text, translation C is the most stylistic one. Among the three renderings, C is the closest one to the original in both its style and conveying the message. Translation A is on the opposite side of C regarding the style of original. In this rendering there are both semantic and structural adjustments as well as over-translation , undertranslation and mistranslation in comparison with the given Arabic: the active voice in the original has been translated into passive; ' the son of Abu Talib',

which is not expressed in the original , is redundant in the translation; the equivalent to ‘امير المؤمنين’ is missing in it ; and ‘Malik’ is stated as ‘the son of Ashter’ whereas ‘al-Ashtar’, which means ‘the man with inverted eyelashes’, is, according to the original Arabic text , the surname of Malik, due to a wound he received in battle , not that of his father , al-Hārith.

In translation B , ‘امير المؤمنين’ is transliterated into English . This term, like many other Islamic terms, has not a precise corresponding equivalent in English , though its transliteration may not be intelligible to many English speakers, either. Although ‘Commander of the Faithful’ in translation C is acceptable, it does not convey all the meaning contained in the original. A preferable way in such cases is to translate the term into the closest natural equivalent in the receptor language and also use its transliteration within parentheses after the equivalent .

جَبَايَةَ خَرَاجِهَا ، وَجِهَادَ عَدُوِّهَا ، وَاسْتِصْلَاحَ أَهْلِهَا ، وَعِمَارَةَ بِلَادِهَا .

تا خراج آن را گرد آورد ، با دشمن آن بجنگد ، به اصلاح (حال) مردم آن بپردازد و شهرهای آن را آباد سازد .

A. to collect Zakaath there, to fight against the enemies of Islam and the Egypt, to work for the welfare of its people and to look after its prosperity.

B. for collection of its revenues, fighting its enemies, seeking good of its people and rendering its cities prosperous.

C. to collect its land tax, to war against its enemies, to improve the condition of the people and to engender prosperity in its regions.

The word 'zakāt' in translation A is different from 'kharāj' (خراج) in the original. 'Kharāj' can be translated as tax, land tax or revenue, but 'zakāt' refers to the alms, alms tax, poor-due or obligatory taxes on certain agricultural products, on the cattles, and on the gold and silver currencies. There is illegitimate redundancy in 'the enemies of Islam and the Egypt'; and 'to look after its prosperity' is not an accurate equivalent to the corresponding original text. In translation B, 'seeking good of its people' is a literal rendering, but it is acceptable. Translation C is the best of the three, and there is no deficiency in it.

أَمْرَهُ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَإِثَارِ طَاعَتِهِ وَاتِّبَاعِ مَا أَمَرَ بِهِ فِي كِتَابِهِ : مِنْ فَرَائِضِهِ وَسُنَنِهِ الَّتِي لَا يَسْعُدُ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا بِاتِّبَاعِهَا وَلَا يَشْقَى إِلَّا مَعَ جُحُودِهَا وَإِضَاعَتِهَا.

او را دستور داد که از خدا پروا کند، طاعت او را (برکارهای دیگر) ترجیح دهد و پیروی کند از آنچه او در کتاب خود، از فرائض و سنن خویش دستور داده است، که هیچ کس سعادتمند (رستگار) نشود مگر به پیروی از آنها، و هیچ کس بدبخت (شقی) نگردد مگر با انکار آنها و با نادیده گذاشتن از آنها.

A. I order you Malik to always keep fear of God in your mind; to give priority to His worship and to give preference to obey His Order over every other thing in life; to carefully and faithfully follow the commandments and interdictions as are given out by Holy Book and traditions of the Holy

prophet (A.S) . Because success of man to attain happiness in this world and the next depends upon these qualities and a failure to achieve these attributes brings about total failure here and hereafter.

B. He has ordered him to fear Allah to prefer His obedience and to follow what He has commanded in Qurān out of His obligatory and elective commands without following which one cannot achieve virtue , nor be vicious save by opposing them and ignoring them .

C. He charged him to fear God , to prefer obedience to Him (over all else) and to follow what He has directed in His Book—both the acts He has made obligatory and those He recommends—for none attains felicity but he who follows His directions, and none is overcome by wretchedness but he who denies them and lets them slip by .

The first sentence in translation A is in the first person while the original Arabic text is in the third person . In this rendering there are mistranslations and illegitimate expansions as well as some legitimate ones: In comparison with the given Arabic text, ‘I order you Malik’, ‘interdictions’, ‘traditions of the Holy Prophet’, ‘these qualities’ and ‘these attributes’ all are mistranslations , and some other words and expressions such as ‘always keep fear of God in your mind’, ‘to give priority to His worship and to give preference to obey His Order over every other thing in life’, ‘carefully and faithfully’, ‘in this world and the next’, and ‘here and hereafter’ are expansions some of which can be considered as illegitimate redundancies.

Translation B has not so many problems. 'He has ordered' is in the present perfect tense, whereas the original Arabic text is in the simple past. It is better to change 'His obedience' to 'obedience to Him' in order to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding. The word 'Qur'ān' should be replaced by 'His Book', and the word 'opposing' by 'denying' or 'rejecting'.

Translation C is the most accurate, intelligible and unquestionable of the three given renderings. It is the most faithful to the original, and there is no portion awkward, burdensome, unnatural, obscure, misleading or incomprehensible in it.

وَأَنْ يَنْصُرَ اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ بِقَلْبِهِ وَيَدِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ فَإِنَّهُ جَلَّ أَسْمُهُ قَدْ تَكَفَّلَ بِنَصْرِهِ مَنْ نَصَرَهُ وَإِعْزَارِهِ مَنْ
أَعَزَّهُ.

و (او را دستور داد که) خدای سبحان را با دل و دست و زبان خود یاری کند؛ زیرا خدا - که
بزرگ است نام او - به عهده گرفته است که یاری کننده خود را یاری کند و عزیز دارنده خود
را عزیز گرداند .

A. I order you to use your head, heart, hands and tongue to help God (creatures of God) because the Almighty God holds himself responsible to help those who sincerely try their best to help Him (His cause and His creatures).

B. And to help Allah the glorified with his heart, hand and tongue because Allah whose name is sublime takes responsibility for helping him who helps Him and for protecting him who gives Him support.

C. (He charged him) to help God—glory be to Him—with his heart, his hand and his tongue, for He—majestic is His Name—has promised to help him who exalts Him.

The first translation is continued in the first person. The words in parentheses indicate that the translator believed such concepts to be implicit in the original text, and that is why he has made some semantic expansions within brackets in order to make explicit the information imagined to be implicit. Extra expressions such as ‘use your head’ and ‘sincerely try their best’, which can be regarded as overtranslations, have been added to the rendering. There are also two cases of undertranslation or illegitimate reduction in this translation: the two Arabic expressions ‘سبحانه’ and ‘واعزاز من اعزه’ have not been translated into English. Another problem with this translation is that ‘فانه جل اسمه’ has been rendered ‘the Almighty God’ which is not an accurate rendering.

Particle ‘قد’ (*qad*) in Arabic language is mostly prefixed to the preterite of a verb to indicate the termination of an action. Therefore, the Arabic expression ‘قد تكفل’ in the original text should preferably be translated into present perfect tense, as it is done in the given Persian version and in translation C. Of course, the two expressions ‘God holds himself responsible to’ and ‘takes responsibility for’, in translations A and B, are semantically acceptable, though they are in the simple present tense. There is still another minor problem with translation A, and it is the

noncapitalization of the pronoun 'himself' referring to God in 'God holds himself responsible to'. To say more about this point, it should be mentioned here that capitalization of any pronoun which refers to God is preferable. But if the reference is mistakable and it is probable that noncapitalization will cause misunderstanding or distort the meaning, then capitalization is necessary.

The tendency to make a translation longer than the original text is mostly due to the fact that the translator wants to translate everything or he is obliged to make explicit any information implicit in the source-language text. This is, of course, different from adding extra information to that which is in the original; rather, it is a kind of legitimate expansion or redundancy in the translation in order to make it syntactically natural and semantically comprehensible to the potential readers in the receptor language. An example of such a legitimate expansion is at the beginning of translation C: the expression '(He charged him)', which is explicit in the translation, contains the information implicit in the original Arabic text.

Translation C has a problem in the last part: 'to help him who exalts Him' is not a correct equivalent to the corresponding original text. It should be replaced by an accurate rendering such as 'to help him who helps Him and to exalt him who exalts Him.' The form of this problem indicates that it is probably a printing error or an equivalent to a different original text.

وَأَمْرُهُ أَنْ يَكْسِرَ نَفْسَهُ مِنَ الشَّهَوَاتِ وَيَزَعَهَا عِنْدَ الْجَمَحَاتِ ، فَإِنَّ النَّفْسَ أَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ اللَّهُ .

و او را دستور داد که نفس خود را از شهوات رام سازد و آن را به هنگام سرکششها باز دارد ؛ زیرا که نفس بسیار به بدی و ا می دارد ، مگر آنکه خدا رحم کند .

A. The Lord has further ordered you to keep your desires under control to keep your “self” under restrain when extravagant and inordinate yearnings and cravings try to drive you towards wickedness and sin, because usually your “self” tries to incite, coerce and drag you towards infamy and damnation unless the Merciful Lord comes to your help.

B. He also orders him to break his heart away from passions and to refrain it at the time of their rise, because the heart leads towards evil unless Allah has mercy.

C. And he charged him to break the passions of his soul and restrain it in its recalcitrance, for the soul incites to evil, except inasmuch as God has mercy.

The first English rendering contains mistranslations, doublets, repetitions as well as justifiable and unjustifiable expansions or redundancies:

According to the given Arabic text, ‘the Lord has further ordered you’, try to drive you towards wickedness and sin’ and ‘ the Merciful Lord comes to your help’ are mistranslations; ‘extravagant and inordinate’, ‘yearnings and cravings’, ‘wickedness and sin’ and ‘infamy and damnation’ all are doublets, that is , the two words in each pair are almost synonymous; ‘to keep your desires under con-

'troll' is semantically repetition of 'to keep your 'self under restrain', and the words 'coerce' and 'drag' repeat the meaning of 'incite'. All these doublets and repetitions contain unnecessary expansions or redundancies. However, one may consider some or most of these repetitions to be for emphasis and intensification and take them to be justifiable. The repetitious style of the translator indicates that he believes in using doublets and repeating synonymous words and expressions perhaps to show emphasis.

The second translation also contains some problems, but not as many as the first one. This translator has used the first verb in the simple present tense, while the original is in the simple past. He has translated the word 'نفس' to 'heart' which is not an accurate rendering.

Translation C is the closest one to the original Arabic text and also to the Persian version in terms of meaning and style. It is natural in its style and accurate in conveying the meaning of the original text.

ثُمَّ اَعْلَمَ يَا مَالِكُ اَتَى قَدْ وَجَّهْتُكَ اِلَى بِلَادٍ قَدْ جَرَتْ عَلَيْهَا دَوْلٌ قَبْلَكَ مِنْ عَدَلٍ وَجَوْرِ. وَاَنَّ النَّاسَ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ اُمُورِكَ فِي مِثْلِ مَا كُنْتَ تَنْظُرُ فِيهِ مِنْ اُمُورِ الْوَلَاةِ قَبْلَكَ، وَيَقُولُونَ فَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَقُولُ فِيهِمْ.

اینک بدان ای مالک که من تو را به سرزمینی می فرستم که پیش از تو در آن دولتهایی، دادگر و بیدادگر، وجود داشته اند. و اینکه مردم به کارهای تو همان گونه نظر می کنند که توبه کارهای حکمرانان پیش از خود نظر می کردی، و درباره تو همان خواهند گفت که تو درباره آن حکمرانان می گفتی.

A. Let it be known to you, Mālik , I am sending you as a governor to a country which had seen many, governments before this . Some of them were benign, sympathetic and good , while other were tyrannical, oppressive and cruel. People will judge your government as critically as you have studied the activities of other governments and they will criticize you in the same way as you have censured or approved other rulers.

B. Then , know O' Mālik that I have sent you to an area where there have been governments before you, both just as well as oppressive. People will now watch your dealings as you used to watch the dealings of the rulers before you, and they would criticise you as you criticised them.

C. Know , O Mālik, that I am sending you to a land where governments, just and unjust , have existed before you . People will look upon your affairs in the some way that you were wont to look upon the affairs of the rulers before you . They will speak about you as you were wont to speak about those rulers.

The first sentence in translation A is expanded through semantic restructuring . Although this kind of expansion is legitimate and justifiable , it is not necessary or obligatory in many cases. The translator could translate the original without such an expansion , as is done in the second and the third translations . Semantic restructuring is required when an expression in the source-language text is so condensed that it needs to be expanded and semantically restructured

in the receptor language , so that it may not be misunderstood by the potential readers.

In translation A, 'as a governor' may be regarded as a justifiable redundancy, but it is not needed and can be omitted , because although it is implied somehow in the original text , the implication is in such a way that it is not necessary to be explicit. The words 'benign ', 'sympathetic' and 'good' are semantically interchangeable; and 'tyrannical', 'oppressive' and 'cruel' are synonymous with one another. Therefore, using just one from each group is enough and avoids repetition, because this kind of highly repetitious style , though it may be with the aim of producing emphasis, can distort the naturalness of language and create burdensomeness. Simplification of such a highly repetitious style, when it exists in a source-language text , is required in the translation as a legitimate reduction . The word 'other' before 'were' is grammatically incorrect; it must be 'others were'. The meaning of 'you have studied the activities of other governments' is not the same as that which is in the original text, nor is 'you have censured or approved other rulers' a correct equivalent to the corresponding original.

The only problem with the second rendering is the ambiguity produced by the pronoun 'them' at the end of the translation . In the original Arabic , the objective pronoun at the end of the text refers to 'rulers', while the reference of its corresponding equivalent in the second English translation is mistakable; it is not clear whether it refers to 'people' or to 'rulers'. In order to avoid this ambiguity, it is

preferable to replace 'them' by 'those rulers', as is done in translation C . Identification of a pronoun, whether subjective or objective , is required in the translation when it seems to be mistakable and it is probable that non-identification will cause ambiguity or misunderstanding.

There is no deficiency or problem in translation C. It is accurately corresponding to the original Arabic text in both meaning and style .

وَأَمَّا يُسْتَدَلُّ عَلَى الصَّالِحِينَ بِمَا يُجْرَى اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَلَى أَلْسِنِ عِبَادِهِ . فَلْيَكُنْ أَحَبُّ الدُّخَائِرِ إِلَيْكَ
ذَخِيرَةَ الْعَمَلِ الصَّالِحِ .

و همانا صالحان را از آنچه خدا در مورد آنان بر زبان بندگان خود جاری می کند می توان شناخت . پس محبوبترین ذخیره ها بیش تو (باید) ذخیره عمل صالح باشد .

- A. You must know that a good and virtuous man is known and recognized by the good that is said about him and the praises which God has destined him to receive from others. Therefore , make your mind the source and fountain head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds .
- B. Surely the virtuous are known by their reputation that Allah circulates for them through the tongues of the people . Therefore the best collection with you should be the collection of good deeds.
- C. And the righteous are only known by that which God causes to pass concerning them on the tongues of His servants. So let the dearest of your treasures be the treasury of righteous action .

Translation A is in a highly repetitious styles as it was so in many of its previous parts . It contains some mistranslations , doublets and unnecessary repetitions and redundancies. 'You must know that', at the beginning of the translation , is an unnecessary redundancy; 'good and virtuous', 'known and recognized' and 'source and fountain-head' all are doublets, that is , in each pair the second word is interchangeable with the first, as they are synonyms of each other . 'A good and virtuous man' , in addition to its being in a repetitious style, is not a correct equivalent to 'الصالحين', because it is in singular form, while the original is plural. 'The good that is said about him' is an unjustifiable redundancy, and 'the praises which God has destined him to receive from others' is not an accurate rendering of the corresponding original text. The last sentence of this translation embraces both unnecessary repetitions and inaccurate information in comparison with the original Arabic text.

Translation B also embodies a number of problems some of which are worth mentioning: the word 'أنا' in the original text is a particle of restriction and it is often rendered 'only', as is done in translation C; the word 'surely' is a contextual equivalent to it . Some other words and expressions such as 'their reputation', 'through', 'the people' and 'the best collection' do not convey precisely the same meaning as in the original. To know the precise renderings of these items you can see translation C, which is accurately

corresponding to the original and contains no problem whatsoever.

فَأَمْلِكْ هَوَاكَ ، وَشُحَّ بِنَفْسِكَ عَمَّا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ ، فَإِنَّ الشُّحَّ بِالنَّفْسِ الْإِنصَافُ مِنْهَا فِيمَا أَحَبَّتْ أَوْ كَرِهَتْ.

بر هوای خود مسلط باش و نفس خود را از آنچه برایت حلال نیست بازدار ، که بازداری نفس منصف بودن است در آنچه آن دوست دارد یا ناخوش دارد .

- A. This can only be attained by keeping a strict control on your desires and yearnings, however they may try to incite and coerce you . Remember that the best way to do justice to your “self” and to keep it out of harm is to restrain it from vice and from things which the “self” inordinately and irrationally desires.
- B. So , control your passions and check your heart from doing what is not lawful for you, because checking the heart means detaining it just half way between what it likes and dislikes.
- C. Control your desire and restrain your soul from what is not lawful to you , for restraint of the soul is for it to be equitable in what it likes and dislikes.

As stated in criticizing the previous quotations, the first rendering has a repetitious style and it contains justifiable and unjustifiable expansions and redundancies in this part, too . The first long sentence, which is composed of so many words, is highly and illegitimately expanded, containing some doublets such as ‘ desires and yearnings’ and ‘incite and coerce’. This sentence does not communicate the same message as is in the original text. The last sentence is not an

accurate rendering , either. It embraces unjustifiable expansions, inaccurate information and a doublet, 'inordinately and irrationally', which is a mistranslation . The original text says 'أحبّت او كرهت' which means 'likes or dislikes', but in translation A, this saying has been rendered into 'inordinately and irrationally desires', which conveys a message different from that contained in the original .

In translation B, the Arabic word 'نفس' has been rendered into the English word 'heart', which is not a precise rendering. The word 'soul', as is used in translation C, is a correct English equivalent to 'نفس' in this context . The word 'doing' is redundant in this rendering; it can be omitted from the translation without loss of significance .

In translation C, there is a justifiable reduction, the legitimate omission of the English equivalent to the Arabic prefixed particle 'ف' from the beginning of the translation . 'ف' is a prefixed particle of sequence principally used in connecting sentences. In English language it signifies 'and', ' then', 'therefore', ' so', etc. No other point worth mentioning is comprehended in translation C.

Conclusion

What we have said up to here in our contrastive analysis and comparative study, seems to be enough in criticizing the English translation of Imam Ali's instructions to Mālik al-Ashtar . Although we discussed just some parts of the

translations , they can be considered as samples representing the merits and demerits of the entire renderings.

Translation A, which is done by Seyyid Mohammad Askary Ja'fary, is in a highly repetitious style , with numerous doublets, some mistranslations , unnecessary repetitions, justifiable and unjustifiable expansions and redundancies. Most of the doublets and repetitions seem to be produced with the aim of showing emphasis, but in some cases they distort the naturalness of language and create burdensomeness. It is probable that by so many expansions the translator wants to produce explanatory equivalents in order to make the translation clear and intelligible to the potential readers, but many of such expansions are unjustifiable redundancies which produce ambiguity or distort the message.

Translation B , done by Seyyid Ali Reza, contains some structural adjustments , justifiable and unjustifiable, and also some disputable lexical problems. This rendering is much better than the previous one in style , accuracy, clearness and intelligibility.

Translation C, which is that of William C. Chittick, is a masterpiece as far as translation is concerned. Among the three renderings discussed , this one is the closest natural equivalent to the original , and it is this one that can somewhat represent the eloquence and rhetorics of the original, though there can be no ideal translation of such a highly rhetorical text.

Sources

1. Abrams, M.H., *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, sixth edition, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Orlando, 1993.
2. Ansarian, A., 'Introduction' to *Imam Ali's Epistle to Mālik Ashtar*, soroush Press, Tehran, 1983.
3. Askary jafery, S.M, *Nahjul-Balāghah* (translated into English), published by Korasan Islamic Centre (Karachi) , reprinted by Sheikh Hasan sa'eed, Founder of Chehel Sotoon Library and Theological School , Tehran , 1977.
4. Barnwell, Katharine , *Introduction to Semantics and Translation*, Summer Institute of Linguistics, Horsleys Green, 2nd Impression, 1984.
5. Chittick , W.C., 'Imam Ali's Instructions to Mālik al-Ashtar' (translated into English), in *The spiritual Life*, Be' that Foundation, Tehran, 1982.
6. Hatim , B. and I. Mason . *Discourse and the Translator*, Longman, London , 1993.
7. Imam Ali's Instructions to Malik al-Ashtar , revised by Subhi Saleh, translated into Persian in *An Approach to the English Translation of Islamic Texts (I)* , by S. Manafi Anari , SAMT, Tehran , 1999.
8. Janecka, Joanna, "The Power of Sound" in *Translation Journal* , Volume 5, No. 4, Internet , October 2001.
9. Manafi Anari,S., *An Approach to the English Translation of Literary and Islamic Texts (II)*, Published by

SAMT, and Allamah Tabātabā'i University , Tehran, 2001.

10.Pickthall, M., *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān* , Salehi Publications , Tehran, dateless.

11.Reiss, Katharina , *Translation Criticism – The Potentials and Limitations* , translated by E.F. Rhodes (2000) , Manchester: St Jerome and American Bible Society, 1971/ 2000 .

12.Reza, S. Ali, *Nahjul-Balāghah* (translated into English), published in Karachi , 1971, republished by An-sariyan Publication, Qum, 1981.

13.Whitaker, Rick , “The Art of Translationg” in *News and Articles*, Internet, 2001.

