

UNDERSTANDING ARABIC LANGUAGE: A GUARD FOR THE BELIEVER'S AQĪDAH

Fatima Muhammad Dabarako and Dr. Muhammad Salama
International Open University (IOU), The Gambia

ABSTRACT

The role of the Arabic language in the adequate reception of the message of Islam is indispensable. Allāh mentions in many places in the Qur'ān that the Qur'ān is in the Arabic language, revealed to the Messenger (ﷺ) in the language of his people that they may comprehend it. For any Muslim to know Allāh the Almighty and appreciate His powers and attributes, and consequently have faith with certainty, he or she must attain knowledge of the Arabic language which correctly conveys the intended meanings of the message from the Lord to His servants. Although excellent translation works are available that aid non-Arabs to establish a contact point with the Qur'ān, the impact of receiving Allāh's message in its original language far exceeds what translation works can provide. The Arabic language is broad, rich and eloquent in a manner that causes it to excel over all other languages. It is for this reason that many scholars in the past and present consider learning the Arabic language an individual obligation. Every Muslim is required to know the language of the Qur'ān as much as he needs to discharge his obligations as a Muslim. Many Muslims today read the Qur'ān daily but have little time to read translations or an in-depth explanation of the Qur'ān. Thus, the reading is usually for the purpose of receiving blessings and the chances of receiving the Message of Allāh and implementing the same, are lost in the

process. This research uses the qualitative approach and is exploratory in nature, as it analyzes texts from the Qur'an and Aḥādīth, including classical texts, to shed light on the importance of teaching Muslims the Arabic language. The results are discussed thematically to highlight the need for Muslims to learn the language of the Qur'an in order to secure their beliefs and have certainty of faith.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Aqīdah, Wājib, Qur'an, and Aḥādīth.

Corresponding author: Fatima Muhammad Dabarako can be contacted at fatimadabarako@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Arabic is the language chosen by Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, for communicating His message (Al-Qur'an and As-Sunnah) to His servants, so that they may worship Him alone. It is the language of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his people.

الرَّحْمٰنُ تِلْكَ آيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِينِ اِنَّا اَنْزَلْنٰهُ قُرْاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ

Alif, Lām, Rā. These are the verses of the clear Book. Indeed, we have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand.

It is therefore impossible to understand the message of Allāh without knowledge of the Arabic language. Its knowledge is key to the protection of the believer's faith from misguidance that would otherwise be obscure to the Muslim mind. Arabic is not only the language of the Qur'an but also the language of worship since Muslims must perform prayers (Ṣalawāt) and

remembrances (Adhkār) in the words taught by the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) has ordered in a ḥadīth:

وَعَنْ مَالِكِ بْنِ الْحُوَيْرِثِ - رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ - قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - { صَلُّوا
كَمَا رَأَيْتُمُونِي أُصَلِّي } رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ

Narrated Malik bin Al-Huwayrith – may Allāh be pleased with him: Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) said: "Pray as you have seen me praying."

The prayer was ordained for the purpose of remembrance of Allāh as Allāh says:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

Indeed, I am Allāh. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.

This recalls the need to understand what is being said in prayers in order to have the required concentration. For this reason, many scholars of the past and present have stated that learning the Arabic language is an individual obligation, at least to the level that it aids the individual in fulfilling his obligations of worship. It is noteworthy here that presence of mind is vital to every act of worship, and that is why understanding the words one recites during worship becomes necessary. Consequently, Allāh forbids the one who is unaware of what he says, from performing the prayers. Allāh says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying...

The reason for revelation indicates abstaining from worship in a drunken state. It consequently implies mindfulness is vital in prayers (Ṣalawāt). As emphasized in verse Q20:14 earlier mentioned.

وَعَنْ عُثْمَانَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ». رَوَاهُ مُسْلِمٌ

Uthmān b. ‘Affān reported Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, “Whoever dies knowing that there is no god worthy of worship but Allāh will enter Paradise.

The Shahādah should be accompanied by the knowledge of what is being said so that it can be put into practice. Imām ash-Shāfi’ī stated, that “it is upon every Muslim to learn from the Arabic language whatever is within his reach [which] he strives for until he bears witness by that there is no god worthy of worship except Allāh, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. And he mentions the remembrances in it [Arabic]. He is expected to make Takbīr, Taṣbīh, Tashahhud and the likes [in it].”

Having knowledge of Allāh as the only deity implies consciously worshipping Him. To do that, the knowledge of who Allāh is, His abilities and powers should be known to the individual. This leads to belief with certainty. Allāh Himself commands knowledge first before worship:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

So know, [O Muhammad], that there is no deity except Allāh

Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said, "There is nothing He grants them (His servants) in the worldly life greater than belief in Him".

This research explores the dangers of not understanding Arabic, the language of the Qur'ān as it relates to the Aqīdah of the Muslim, due to a poor reception of the message of Islam. When matters of Aqīdah are not clearly understood, the certainty of faith may be at risk. The heart may then become disturbed by doubt and obscurity.

Definition of Terms

Arabic Language: The Arabic language discussed in this paper refers to the Arabic of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The Arabic that was understood in the time of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) was the medium by which people communicated at that time. It is today referred to as classical Arabic.

Aqīdah in the language of Arabic is to unite something, coming from the word 'Aqd, Ta'āqud to knot something. It is usually used interchangeably with Tawḥīd. Tawḥīd also means to unify something (Waḥḥadah). With regards to Allāh, it is to single out Allāh with regards to what is exclusively His. This relates to His Lordship (Rubūbiyyah), His Names and Attributes, and Worship (Ubūdiyyah). Hence, Aqīdah requires all of these as well as the abstinence from its opposite which is Shirk. Aqīdah is therefore, the belief that is not tainted by doubts, or suspicion. Therefore, it includes faith and Tawḥīd for the purpose of this paper.

Wājib: That which is obligatory, doing it brings reward and abandoning it makes one sinful.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Arabic language has a vast lexicon with regard to the range of human feelings, emotions, thoughts and expressions. The importance of the Arabic language in connecting the servants of Allāh to their Creator is well established by the fact that the Qur'ān is Arabic and the Prophet (ﷺ) and his people, who were the first to receive the Message were Arabs. The use of Arabic language [for worship] is required of a Muslim no matter what His native tongue is. Ṣalāh is the connection between a servant and His Lord, which is the essence of Aqīdah itself. If a Muslim does not learn Arabic, he would most likely be worshipping without concentrating on the prayer since he does not understand what he communicates with His Lord. Therefore, the chances of reflecting on the words of Allāh are minimal. Arabic is the language of our religion [Islam]. Scholars agreed that comprehending the Qur'ān correctly would require understanding Arabic as it was understood at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān. Arabic language is the emblem of Islamic civilization.

Many Muslim nations had Arabic as their lingua franca until colonization took place and Muslims had to juggle English/French with Arabic. This situation has had a consequential effect on the faith of the Muslims. Thus, deficiency in the Arabic language and its sciences has led to misguidance of seekers of jurisprudence, from the right path. Aliyu N. declares that “a decline in religious knowledge in Northern Nigeria is characterized by crude recitation and memorization of the Qur'ān without necessarily understanding the meaning of what has been memorized, due to the ignorance

of Arabic language”. Qari A.H. states that Aqīdah is sometimes translated as religion, faith, Sharī’ah, or Sunnah [from the perspective of opposing innovations], as the greater jurisprudence and as Oneness of Allāh [Tawḥīd] or a collection of all. Faith that is devoid of doubts nor is it shaken by suspicion, because its foundation is knowledge. Usman I. questions the possibility of comprehending the commandments as well as the prohibitions of Allāh if Arabic is not learned. Mohammad N. et al, concedes that Muslims in general and Arabs have for long believed that the Arabic language is a God-given language that is unique in majesty, beauty, expression of thoughts and most importantly eloquent. Indeed, the Arabic language is the clearest and plainest of languages in expression and is more comprehensive as well because it gathers categories of explanations. It is perhaps the reason why Allāh chose it as the language of the Last Book revealed, guarding the whole Book.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research takes a qualitative approach. It takes insights into verses of the Qur’ān and Aḥādīth and how a Muslim is expected to interact with them. Discussions will be deepened by drawing into real-life experiences in order to explore the impact of the Arabic language on the lives of the believers. Therefore, most of the data collected was textual as well as anecdotal. Kothari asserts that qualitative research deals with human behavioral sciences aimed at unfolding the reasons behind certain behaviors. This kind of research is subject to the researcher’s insights and impressions. It would be applied because it seeks solutions to existing problems of misunderstanding the religion as well as the inability to attain certainty of belief due to the

ineffective reception of the message of Islam, which could be a consequence of ignorance of the language of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

According to Wotkyns "qualitative research sees the reality from the participants' view". Qualitative research commonly employs the use of terms like dependability, transferability, credibility, findings, results, approval, and meanings. Following the research design adopted for this study, it is hoped that the research will provide reliable data, credible enough for decision-making and replication. Fossey, et al. stated that qualitative research aims to bring about an understanding of human behavior as it relates to the world around it. The quality of research depends on its interpretation of data. Golafshani quotes Lincoln and Guba who stated that qualitative research is judged by its dependability. For this purpose, opinions of scholars of classical works would be drawn on. On the other hand, Patton argues that qualitative research would be reliable on the grounds that it is valid. The validity of this research will be proven by the cases it shall study because they are real-life events that took place in the past or recent times.

4. ANALYSIS

The Qur'an was revealed to Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) in Arabic as a guidance to those who believe. The most important concept of all that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) called to is the very purpose of man's creation, to worship Allāh alone. Allāh says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.

Therefore, the whole essence of coming to this life is for faith reasons. The exception made in the verse shows that the creation of man is exclusively for the purpose of worship, highlights the importance of faith in the life of man. In an authentic ḥadīth, the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) defines faith:

قَالَ: فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ. قَالَ: أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ، وَتُؤْمِنَ بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ .

Inform me about Īmān (faith)." He (the Prophet (ﷺ)) answered, "It is that you believe in Allāh and His angels and His Books and His Messengers and in the Last Day, and in fate (qadar), both in its good and in its evil aspects."

وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

The six articles of faith begin with belief in Allāh the Almighty. Allāh teaches us about Himself and how He should be worshipped. Allāh says:

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ

Worship Allāh and associate nothing with Him

For man to achieve worship correctly, Allāh informs the believers about Himself in many verses of the Qur'ān.

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ۚ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allāh to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He

gives life and causes death." So, believe in Allāh and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allāh and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.

Shaykh Al-Uthaymīn commented on the above verse, "The obligation on the servant concerning his religion is following what Allāh says and what His Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) says, as well as the Rightly-Guided Successors after him from the Companions, and those who followed them in righteousness."

For learning purposes, the Scholars have divided Tawḥīd into three in separable parts:

Ar-Rubūbiyyah: Allāh's Lordship of the whole worlds. Everything in the heavens and the earth belong to Him and are subservient to His orders.

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾

And to Allāh belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allāh as Disposer of affairs.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

[All] praise is [due] to Allāh, Lord of the worlds -

Al-Ālūsī commented on this verse:

It is as if Allāh is saying: O my servants, if you were to praise, and venerate for the perfection of essence and attributes, then indeed I am Allāh. And if you were to praise for perfection in kindness, nurturing and provision, then I am the Lord of the worlds.

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent.

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is exalting Allāh, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

However, the mere acknowledgement of Allāh's Lordship of His creation is not sufficient. This is why the divisions of the Tawhīd are actually inseparable. Allāh states,

وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

If you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" they would surely say, "Allāh." Then how are they deluded?

Every human being seems to acknowledge Allāh's Lordship and only a few would deny this even among the disbelievers. In recent times, perhaps the easiest example is those atheists who totally deny the existence of Allāh. Allāh mentions the fact that this knowledge of Allāh is the Lord is inbuilt and in fact acknowledged by even the disbelievers. Allāh says,

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

And they rejected them, while their [inner] selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness. So, see how the end of the corrupters was.

Sheikh Al-Uthaymīn commented on the above verse,

Only very few stubborn human beings have denied this kind of Tawḥīd. Although they deny it in appearance, they inwardly acknowledge it.

Asmā' Was-Sifāt: Allāh has Names and Attributes that are unique to Him in their meanings and degrees even if they may be similar to those of His creation in names. His Names and Attributes help the believer to know his Lord and call upon Him accordingly.

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۖ وَذُرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

And to Allāh belong the best Names, so invoke Him by them. And leave [the company of] those who practice deviation concerning His Names. They will be recompensed for what they have been doing.

Al-Qurtubī said: Allāh called His names Husna because they are beautiful to hearing and to the heart. They point to His unity, His generosity, His presence, His mercy and His superiority.

Allāh gives a clear description of Himself:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿٢﴾ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

Say, "He is Allāh, [who is] One, Allāh, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent."

This Sūrah has the best description of Allāh in a remarkably simple and clear language. It contains Names and Attributes of Allāh. Consequently, only the one that suits this description deserves to be worshipped. A narration from the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) says:

وعن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال في: {قل هو الله أحد} "إنها تعدل ثلث القرآن". ((رواه مسلم)).

Abu Hurayrah – may Allāh be pleased with him – reported: The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Sūrat Ikhḷāṣ is equivalent to one-third of the Qur'ān."

Ibn Jawzī commented on this ḥadīth,

It is said that it [Sūrat ul Ikhḷāṣ] is so for the one that recites it, in terms of the rewards he earns for reciting it. It is also said that it is due to what it contains of meanings and sciences. And that is because the science of the Qur'ān is divided into three: Tawḥīd, stories, and laws. And this Sūrah contains Tawḥīd and makes it a third. And this is clear.

Allāh describes Himself as Aḥad, which implies that Allāh is One and Alone. Though the word translates to one, it also indicates the fact that He is Alone in His essence and actions. Not requiring any partner nor helper. Allāh is As-Ṣamad. Ibn Anbar stated:

There is no difference among the scholars of Arabic language, that As-Ṣamad is the Master whom there is none above Him. To whom people look forward to, for their needs, and their affairs. And according to Abu-Hurayrah, He is not in need of any one but everyone needs Him.

Sūrat ul Fātiḥah for examples has mentioned a number of Names and Attributes of Allāh:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

The Sūrah starts by mentioning Allāh, with a name that indicates He alone should be worshipped (الله). Ar-Raḥmān and Ar-Raḥīm are both Names and Attributes of Allāh. Both are on an exaggerated pattern, that indicates how extremely merciful Allāh is.

Many Names and Attributes of Allāh have appeared in the Qur'ān and the authentic Sunnah on the pattern of فَعِيل which points to continuity of the Attributes such as:

البصير، السميع، الحكيم، الحميد، الرحيم، الكريم، العظيم

Thus, the servant may ponder over the meaning of these glorious names and benefit from them. For example, Prophet Ibrāhīm makes du'ā to Allāh saying,

وإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾

And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.

Verse two indicates all praise is for Allāh who is the Lord of the worlds. The one who understands these words and ponders over them feels humble before Allāh and realizes none deserves that level of glorification and admiration but Him. Then the two Names and Attributes are mentioned again. This reminds the servant that Allāh's mercy is all-encompassing, enjoyed by all and especially the believers. The Muslim that attains such understanding and reflections while praying will naturally love his Lord more and be more inclined towards His obedience. The believer who understands the wordings of the Qur'ān each time he prays, his faith is reinforced.

الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣﴾ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,

Al-Ālūsī said;

[It is as if Allāh is saying] If it were for hope and your desires for the future then, I am the Most Beneficent Most Merciful. And if it were for your fears, then I am the King (Owner) of the Judgment Day.

Sūrat ul Fātiḥah is read in every Rak'ah, which the Qur'ān itself refers to as the seven most repeated verses. The impact this Sūrah can have on a person who recites or listens mindfully can be great. However, the one who does not understand its wordings may go through it without benefiting from it. Sūrat ul Fātiḥah summarizes for the believer who Allāh is, and how He should be sought. The Sūrah also gives a comprehensive summary of what is expected of the believer (to worship Allāh alone and rely upon Him alone) and who the People of the Book are, so that the Muslim makes sure that he/she does not make mistakes similar to those of the People of the Book. The language of the Qur'ān is indeed rich, concise and clear. And there are many names and attributes of Allāh mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

Al-Ubūdiyyah: Worship is for Allāh alone. Allāh has ordered man to worship Him alone without associating partners with Him.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٦٢﴾

That is because Allāh is the Truth, and that which they call upon other than Him is falsehood, and because Allāh is the Most High, the Grand.

The believers are also reminded in their daily prayers through Sūrat ul Fātiḥah the fact that Allāh alone should be worshipped and He alone should be sought for help:

إِلَيْكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

It is You we worship and You we ask for help.

Al-Ālūsī stated that worship is the highest form of humility. It is not permissible, neither in the Sharī'ah nor rationally to worship, except Allāh Most High. This is because He is the only one deserving of it because He is the helper and supporter which is of the greatest blessings of life and existence and all that follows [of other blessings].

Qatādah stated that this verse contains Allāh's command to us to worship Him and to seek His aid concerning all of our affairs.

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said in a narration:

وعن معاذ بن جبل ، رضي الله عنه ، قال: كنت ردف النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ، على حمار فقال: " يا معاذ هل تدري ما حق الله على عباده، وما حق العباد على الله. ؟ قلت: الله ورسوله أعلم. قال: "فإن حق الله على العباد أن يعبدوه، ولا يشركوا به شيئاً، وحق العباد على الله أن لا يعذب من لا يشرك به شيئاً، فقلت، يا رسول الله أفلا أبشر الناس؟ قال لا تبشرهم فيتكلوا" ((متفق عليه))

Mu'ādh bin Jabal – may Allāh be pleased with him – reported: I was riding pillion with the Prophet (ﷺ) on a donkey. He (ﷺ) said, "O Mu'ādh, do you know what the right of Allāh upon His slaves is, and what is the right of His slaves upon Allāh?" I said: "Allāh

and His Messenger know best". Upon this the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Allāh's Right upon His slaves is that they should worship Him Alone and associate nothing with Him; and His slaves' right upon Him is that He should not punish who does not associate a thing with Him." He (Mu'adh) added: I said to the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ): "Shall I give the glad tidings to people?" He (ﷺ) said, "Do not tell them this good news for they will depend on it alone".

Since worship is the purpose of the creation of man and Jinn, the fulfillment of that purpose attracts Allāh's mercy and rewards, all of which cannot be achieved except by an understanding of the Message of Allāh to mankind [the Qur'ān and the Sunnah], which are all in clear Arabic language. Allāh further makes clear what is the opposite of Tawḥīd and gives examples that catch the attention of the listening ear. Allāh says,

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمْعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذَبَابًا وَلَوْ
اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ ﴿٧٣﴾

O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allāh will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.

Allāh mocks the idolaters for what they worship, their choices are an insult to their own intelligences and a humiliation of themselves since these objects of worship are not able to create even a fly, neither are they able to help themselves if a creature as small as a fly were to take something from them. How then,

does their worship benefit them? Allāh further criticizes their thoughts of Him.

Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah stated, "Indeed worship implies neediness of the one that helps and is deserving of being sought for help and that is from the meanings of divinity (Ulūhiyyah).

مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَزِيزٌ (٧٤)

They have not appraised Allāh with true appraisal. Indeed, Allāh is Powerful and Exalted in Might.

At-Ṭabarānī says:

It implies that those who worship others along with Allāh do not venerate or glorify Allāh in worship as He should, by their associating others with Him. They are not sincere to Him in worship nor do they truly know Him. Like the saying, I do not know about a person's value whom people talk about Him is less of His value while they [the speakers] actually intend to honor him.

The last sentence of At-Ṭabarānī is stunning and brings home the fact that it is impossible to intend honor while belittling. And consequently implies, that belittling an honorable person indicates ignorance of the part of the doer. Had the idolaters known the powers of Allāh and how exalted He is as compared to the weakness of what they worship, they would have seen their own foolishness. The precision in Allāh's description of the line of thoughts and self-humiliation of the idolaters is amazing. Allāh mentions,

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا وَلَا
يَمْلِكُونَ مَوْتًا وَلَا حَيَاةً وَلَا نُشُورًا (٣)

But they have taken besides Him gods which create nothing, while they are created, and possess not for themselves any harm or benefit and possess not [power to cause] death or life or resurrection.

The above verse further talks about the weaknesses of the idols worshipped which further exposes the ignorance of their worshippers. If they are unable to create while they themselves were created (sometimes by their worshippers) and these idols have no powers to bring good nor avert evil then where lies their reasoning of making them objects of worship? The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) explains this,

وَعَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: كُنْتُ خَلْفَ النَّبِيِّ -صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ- يَوْمًا، فَقَالَ: (يَا غُلَامُ! احْفَظِ اللَّهَ يَحْفَظْكَ، احْفَظِ اللَّهَ تَجِدْهُ تُجَاهَكَ، وَإِذَا سَأَلْتَ فَاسْأَلِ اللَّهَ، وَإِذَا اسْتَعْنَيْتَ فَاسْتَعِنْ بِاللَّهِ) { رَوَاهُ التِّرْمِذِيُّ، وَقَالَ: حَسَنٌ صَحِيحٌ

Ibn 'Abbas – may Allāh be pleased with them both – narrated, 'One day I was riding behind the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said, "O lad, be mindful of Allāh and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allāh and you shall find Him with you. When you ask (for anything), ask it from Allāh, and if you seek help, seek help from Allāh."

This Ḥadīth actually deepens Tawhīd of the individual where Allāh is sought and turned to in every situation while being certain that Allāh alone can fulfill our individual needs. The translation does not completely evince the eloquence of the Prophet's (ﷺ) words, it only gave the meaning as an indication that the consciousness of Allāh attracts Allāh's special care for

His servant. The ḥadīth also obliges the individual to have self-respect and being free from the need of others. Thus, a total reliance on Allāh the Almighty.

Understanding Arabic Aids, the Correct Recitation and Understanding of the Qur'ān

The starting and stopping places in the Qur'ān greatly influence the meanings of the verses and affect the understanding as well as the reflections on such verses. A person's Aqīdah can be tainted due to wrong recitations. Such principles of starting and stopping (Waḥf Wa Ibtidā') can easily be taught if the individual learns the Arabic language. Otherwise, he will have to contend with the stopping signs in the Qur'ān as guides to prevent misreading and therefore changing the meaning of the Qur'ān.

For example, the verse:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ

And with Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them except Him.

If the reciter stops on *وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا* then the meaning will be affected. It would mean: "And with Him are the keys of the Unseen; none knows them" The listener would assume that Allāh (Astaghfirullāh) has no knowledge of the Unseen. This is a serious matter that would affect Tawḥīd (Asma Was-Sifāt). The reciter who understands what he reads would be conscious of the accuracy in the conveyance to the listening ear which is not possible for the one that is ignorant of the Arabic language. Similarly, a major error that affects the meaning of what is being recited (Lahn Jaly in Tajwīd) may change the meaning of what is

being recited. If the reciter has knowledge of the Arabic language, then he is more likely to safeguard his recitations from error. For example:

وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۗ

And remember when you were few and He increased you...

If the ث in the word فَكَثَّرَكُمْ gets replaced with a س the meaning changes to:

And remember when you were few and He broke you... The verse in that case would not be instilling reliance of the servant upon Allāh which is the exact opposite of what verse conveys. Hence, the knowledge of the Arabic language would ensure correct recitation as well as correct beliefs.

Allāh talks about the bees in the Qur'ān, the feminine verbs were used to refer to the worker bees. Consistently Allāh referred to these bees as females. A non-Muslim woman learning about Arabic and the Qur'ān, found this particularly interesting, because the knowledge about the worker bees being female must have been only from Allāh over 1400 years ago. This, for her, points to the Divinity of the author of the Qur'ān. Her knowledge of the language of the Qur'ān and the linguistic accuracy of it is awe-inspiring.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Impact of the Qur'ān Due to the Arabic Language

The fact that the Qur'ān impacts the hearts more in the original Arabic language is known to the average Muslim and

consequently, the heart receives the intended message of Allāh. It is for this reason that Allāh says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢﴾

Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand¹.

Understanding the Qur'an is a requirement because the Qur'an was revealed for the purpose of guidance. Allāh says:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢﴾

This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh².

Allāh also said:

حَم ﴿١﴾ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢﴾ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Ḥā Meem. By the clear Book, indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand³.

Imam Shāfi'ī stated: Allāh established His evidence in His Book which we read and then He affirms that we benefit from it⁴.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ

O you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying...⁵

¹Q12:2 <https://tanzil.net/#12:12>

²Q2:2 <https://tanzil.net/#2:2>

³ Q12:1-3 <https://tanzil.net/#12:1>

⁴ Khadduri, Ar-Risālah

⁵ Q4:43 <https://tanzil.net/#4:43>

This expresses the importance of mindfulness in Prayer, through contemplation of the words of the Qur'an.

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ، قَالَتْ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ - صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ - "إِذَا نَعَسَ أَحَدُكُمْ فَلْيَرْفُدْ حَتَّى يَذْهَبَ عَنْهُ النَّوْمُ فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَذْرِي إِذَا صَلَّى وَهُوَ نَاعِسٌ لَعَلَّهُ يَذْهَبُ يَسْتَعْفِرُ فَيَسِبُ نَفْسَهُ"

It was narrated that 'Aishah – may Allāh be pleased with her – said: the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

If anyone of you becomes drowsy, let him sleep until he feels refreshed, for he does not know, if he prays when he feels drowsy, he may want to say words seeking forgiveness but (instead) he ends up cursing himself.⁶

Sūrat an-Najm is the first Sūrah revealed with a place of *Sajdah* (prostration): Ibn Kathīr recorded that when Sūrat an-Najm was revealed, the Prophet (ﷺ) prostrated, those with him prostrated along with him, this was in Makkah. The only man who did not prostrate was Umayyah b. Khalaf, who took a handful of sand and prostrated on it. Umayyah was later killed as a disbeliever.⁷ This is an example of the impact the Qur'an has on the human mind that leads to submission whether consciously or unconsciously. The disbelievers prostrated along with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), as they understood the message because they were Arabs and hence, an instant response to the message of Allāh.

Similarly, the story of a young man in Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Mansur Al-Salami, who reformed after attending a religious

⁶Graded as Saḥīḥ; Sunan Ibn Mājah 1370.

⁷Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, Vol.9, p305.

lecture that impacted him due to the verse that was recited. The presenter read the Verse,

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾

And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind."⁸

Shaykh Mansur welled up in tears and said that he now understands why seeking happiness in friends, family and sports does not last. The remembrance of Allāh is the most important. This instant realization was due to an understanding of the language of the Qur'ān, which made it possible for him to have a firsthand reception of the words of Allāh. Thus, Aqīdah was reinforced in the young man's mind.⁹

عَنْ حُدَيْفَةَ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَرَأَ الْبَقْرَةَ وَالْإِنشَاءَ فِي رَكْعَةٍ لَا يَمُرُّ بِآيَةٍ رَحْمَةٍ إِلَّا سَأَلَ وَلَا بِآيَةٍ عَذَابٍ إِلَّا اسْتَجَارَ.

It was narrated from Hudhaifah – may Allāh be pleased with him – that: The Prophet (ﷺ) recited Sūrat Al-Baqarah, Al 'Imrān and An-Nisā' in one rak'ah, and he did not reach any verse that spoke of mercy but he asked Allāh for it, nor any verse that spoke of punishment but he asked Allāh for protection therefrom.¹⁰

This kind of interaction with the Qur'ān is only possible when the reciter and (or) listener understands the Arabic language.

⁸Q20:124 <https://tanzil.net/#20:124>

⁹YouTube; The Story of Shaykh Mansour Al-Salami
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zMUUv1GWi4&t=107s>

¹⁰ Sunan an-Nasā'i 1009.

Therefore, for one's belief and worship to be correct, the knowledge of the Arabic language is a requirement to the degree of one's ability and access to it. This is because Allāh does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear. Ibn Abbās – may Allāh be pleased with them both – said: After thirteen years of revealing the Qur'ān Allāh admonished the believers to feel awe when reading or listening to the Qur'ān, concerning the verse¹¹;

لَمْ يَأْنِ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allāh...?¹²

5.2 The Impact of Sunnah Due to Arabic Language

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًّا ۝

And thus, We have revealed it as an Arabic legislation.

The Sunnah and the whole of the legislation of the Sharī'ah came in the Arabic language.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them, and Allāh sends astray [thereby] whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

¹¹Shaykh Yusuf Al-Qaraḍāwī, How to Approach the Quran.

¹²Q57:16 <https://tanzil.net/#57:16>

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And even if We had revealed it to one among the foreigners. And he had recited it to them [perfectly], they would [still] not have been believers in it.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was an Arab who spoke Arabic like the people of his time. However, the Prophet (ﷺ) was the most eloquent among his people. Allāh chose to reveal His book to the man with the best character and eloquence that was required of him. Hence, it was common to find the Prophet (ﷺ) speak, and the Companions would have to seek the Prophet's explanation for what he had said. For example:

عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "كل أمّتي يدخلون الجنة إلا من أبى" قيل: ومن يأبى يا رسول الله قال: "من أطاعني دخل الجنة، ومن عصاني فقد أبى"

Abu Hurayrah – may Allāh be pleased with him – reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Every one of my Ummah will enter Jannah except those who refuse". He was asked: "Who will refuse?" He (ﷺ) said, "Whoever obeys me, shall enter Jannah, and whosoever disobeys me, refuses to (enter Jannah)".

The Messenger of Allāh describes (ﷺ) the one who disobeys him as someone who dislikes entering Paradise and practically refuses to enter it rather than calling his banishment from Paradise a consequence of his sins. Some Aḥādīth were such that their meanings are not only metaphorical, but they hold deep meanings and yet, are easily understood.

5.3 The Impact of Classical Works Due to the Arabic Language

Most classical works of Islamic literature are in Arabic Language. Since the Qur'ān and Sunnah are Arabic, the Islamic civilization expanded in the language of Arabic and the traditions of its people. For this reason, Arabic became a binding language that brought the Muslim nations together; by it, they could comprehend one another and become one nation of Muslims with similar lifestyles under the same religious guidance and culture.

6. FINDINGS

This research has found that a Muslim must understand the Arabic language sufficiently enough to aid the understanding of Aqīdah (faith and Tawḥīd) and thus, performance of acts of worship. Indeed, the servant must realize the obligation of knowing his Lord, because knowing his Lord and worshipping Him is obligatory (Wājib). Whatever is required to achieve an obligation becomes obligatory. Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said:

Just as the eye is unable to see except by the illumination of the light ahead of it. Similarly, the intellect is not guided except by the illumination of the Message (revelation).

Therefore, the importance of the Arabic language which remains the vessel that carries the message of Islam cannot be ignored. Prayer is the most important pillar after the Shahādah itself. Concentration and pondering in prayer determine the quality of the prayer along with the various movements as taught by the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ), which is only achievable

when the person praying understands what he utters. The research has also found that there is a great difference in the benefits a believer derives from reading the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) when the believer understands Arabic compared to the one who does not. The Arabic language equips the believer with the tools for learning greatly from the classical sources and therefore, he gets a first-hand reception of the message of Allāh and benefits from the efforts of the classical scholars. However, this obligation does not necessitate the obligation to converse in Arabic unless his responsibilities require that.

7. CONCLUSION

The Arabic language is a language that unites Muslims across the globe because it is the language of the message of Allāh to His servants. According to the scholars of Islam, the Arabic language is a leading condition from the conditions of learning religious knowledge. This is because it is said that language is the vessel of knowledge. Hence, Arabic is the vessel that carries the knowledge of Sharī'ah. The Qur'ān itself indicates that it is Arabic. The Prophet (ﷺ) was an Arab and the most eloquent of his people. The growth and development of the Islamic civilization was also Arabic. Therefore, learning Arabic is an important matter in religion. Time factor is the major limitation of this research as the research topic is wide enough to warrant a more comprehensive work. However, the verses, Aḥādīth and life experiences discussed are sufficiently inclusive.

REFERENCES

- Alhirtani, Nahla A.K. 2018. "The Influence of Arabic Language Learning on Understanding of Islamic Legal Sciences." *International Education Studies*.
- Alhirtani, Nahla A.K. 2018. "The Influence of Arabic Language Learning on Understanding of Islamic Legal Science-A study in Sultan Idris Education University." *International Education Studies*.
- Aliyu, Nura. 2018. "Colonialism and Islamic Book Culture in Northern Nigeria." *International Journal of Historical Studies* (International Journal of Historical Studies).
- Al-Qaradawi, Shaykh Yusuf. 2001. *How to Approach the Quran*. Cairo: Al-Falah Foundation, for Translation, Publication and Distribution.
- C.R., Kothari. 2004. "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research." *New Age International Publishers*.
- Daphne Watkins, Deborah Gioia. 2015. *Mixed Method Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellie Fossey, Carol Harvey, Larry Davidson. 2002. "Understanding and Evaluating Qualitative Research." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*.

- Erwin Pinayungan Daspang, PutriAni Dalmunthe, Mavrawati Pahutar, Syahrul Wirda. 2022. "Personality Formation of Faith in the Quran." *Journal Pendidikan Islam* 1-10.
- Far', AbdulGhaniy Haydar. 2013. *Lughatul Quran Wat-tawassul Al-Hudariy fi daw'u Al-aqidah*. Al-Nasser University.
- Mahyudin Ritonga, Hendro windodoo, Munirah, Talqis Nurdinato. 2021. "Arabic Language Learning Reconstruction as a response to Strengthen Al-Islam Studies at Higher Education." *International Journal or Evaluation and Research in Education* 355-363.
- Najm, Urwah Umar bilbaid and Al-Sayed Sayed Ahmad. 2018. "Muqaddimah Mu'jizah 'An 'lmi Al-Waqf Wal-Ibtidai fil Quranil Karim." *Majallah Al-Ulum Islamiyyah Al-Dauliyyah*.
- Norahida binti Mohammad, Mohamad Zaidin bin Muhammad, Muhammad Zaid Ibn Ismail. 2017. "Education in the Perspective of Muhammad Rashid Rida." *International Journal of Academic Research in Bussiness and Social Sciences*.
- Nurdiansyah, Ashar. 2019. "Al-Mufradat Al-Istilahiyya fi Kitabu Tauhid Maqasid Al-Aqidah Al-Wasitiuyyah Li Syaikh Al-Islam Ibnu Taymiyyah." *Rayah A-Islam*.
- Qari, Prof. Abdul Gani Haydar. 2013. *Lughatul Quran Wa Tawasil Al-Hudari*. Sina': Univeristy of Sina'.

Qari', Ustadh Doctor AbdulGaniy Haydar. 2013. "Lughatul Quran Watawasil Al-Khudari fi Daw'u Al-'Aqidatul Islam Ru'ya Mustaqbaliyyah." *University of Education*.

Tashakkori, John W. Creswell and Abbas. 2007. "Differing Perspectingon Mixed Method Research." *Journal of Mixed Method Research*.

Uthman, Ibrahim. 2019. "The Role of Arabic Language in understanding the teaching of Islam with Particular Reference to the Quran." *Journal of Humanities and Culture Studies*.

Yashu, Dr. Hasan. 2013. *Hajatul 'ulumul Islamiyyah Ilal Lughatul Arabiyyah*. Mowasarat.com.

Zarabozo, Jamal Ad-Din M. 1999. *How to Approach and Understand the Quran*. USA: Al-Basheer Publications and Translations.