

## Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi's Approach to Western Civilization

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### Introduction:

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi was one of the eminent and reputed scholars in the Muslim world. He had a multidimensional personality. He was a unique historian, a genuine sermonizer, a biographer, a popular author and scholar. One of the salient features of his writings is his authentic and thought provoking criticism of western civilization. Many Muslim scholars have depicted the picture of modern western civilization in an awe inspiring and apologetic style, but the analysis and critique of the western civilization presented by Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali is considered as one of his great maneuver.(1)

He acquired a deep insight of the western civilization by the literature of Muslim scholars like Muhammad Iqbal, Abul Ala Mududi, 'Islam at the Cross Roads' by Muhammad Asad, and from the literature of western authors, e.g. History of 'Conflict between Religion and Science', Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of European Morals', Robert's 'The making of Humanity'<sup>2</sup>, etc. Moreover, he insinuated of Western civilization by the several tours of Europe, which provided him the chance to study the West and its lifestyle intimately. He expresses his feelings about his tour of Europe in such words:

"The tour of Europe had given me the opportunity to see, at first hand, the major centers of Western Civilization about which so much had been said in the book. I also made use of the material available in the British Museum and other well-known libraries in the European countries I visited." (3)

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali had the occasion to meet and converse with different orientalists in Europe. In one of his letters, he evinced his reflections about the western civilization that, neither I have manifested an excessive realistic portrayal, nor with prejudice, and this is the matter of fact that without personal observation it is difficult to deliver any judgment about the goodness and falsehood of this civilization.(4) It was the result of his frequent visits of Europe and America that he depicted an apt picture of the West in front of the Muslims living abroad and in the Muslim countries, and warned them regarding the merits and demerits of western civilization.

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e Faris, Ibne Zaid and Ibne Hajib. Second opinion is that man is the inventor of the language; gradually the man has been able to produce a handsome collection of words under the influence of his inner self and environment. Finally through this process a language was developed. Another opinion also exists that initially the words were gifted by the Allah and then extending and combining these words the man has formed a language, but this opinion is just a way of expressing Asha'ri school of thought in other words" (23)

### **Significance of Arabic Language:**

1. The Quran mentions at many places that the Quran is in Arabic Language and its revelation in Arabic is the benevolence of Allah. (24)
2. The holy prophet wrote the letters to the rulers of different realms to preach Islam. All letters were written in Arabic language while the language of the most of addressees was not Arabic. Language of Heraclites was Roman and language of the Persian Empire was Persian. Two disciples of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Hazrat Sohaib and Hazrat Salman Farsi were well versed in Roman and Persian languages respectively. It was easy to get the letters written in the respective languages of two kings of vast kingdoms by the reliable disciples but the Holy Prophet preferred Arabic.
3. Companions of the holy prophet conquered Egypt, Syria, Iraq and many other territories and these lands were brought under the administrative control of the Islamic State. Juma and Eid sermons were delivered by the companions of the Holy Prophet in Arabic while the languages of the audience were not Arabic. No effort was made by the companions to deliver the sermons in non-Arabic while it was not much difficult.
4. It is the religious need of every Muslim to learn Arabic so that he might be able to recite Quran and perform prayers and to get very basic knowledge of Islamic teachings.

internal evidences to prove that Arabic is a revealed language. Arabic phonology, etymological fertility, commendable syntax and system of word generation are unchangeable. The detailed and intensive study of Arabic Language results to believe that it is God gifted language rather than a human fabricated language. (21)

#### **REVELATION OF ARABIC: LOGICAL GROUNDS :**

Ibne Hazam says that with Quran and Hadith, reason and human intellect also demonstrates that first language must be revealed. He writes: "The rational necessity for this is as follows: Had speech been established by direct human codification, it would have been necessary for the people who set down its code to have had complete mental faculties, rational discipline, comprehensive knowledge, and direct experience with all thing found in the world along with knowledge of the limits, similarities, differences, and natures of those thing. However, we know by necessity that the interval of time between the first appearance of a person and the time when that person attains such a level is a considerable number of years, requiring education, protection, and the care of others. A person becomes independent only many years after being born. There is no way for a parents, responsible people, and nursemaids to cooperate in life without having a language by which they understand each other's essential needs. These include their tilling, herding, and planting activities, also the means by which they protect themselves from the heat, cold, and wild animals, as well as their ways of treating illness. Every individual has to have gone through the experience of childhood, which we have already mentioned is a state of inability and dependency on others. Moreover, the idea of codification necessitates that there was a time beforehand when language was not in existence, since it came about as the result of the activity of those who codified it. Yet, every activity requires speech in order to carry it out, so how were the codifiers of language supposed to go about the business of codifying it without having a language already at their disposal? This is an impossible situation." (22)

#### **Opinion Of Muslim Scholars About Revelation Of Arabic Language:**

There are two schools of thought about considering Arabic language a revealed language. Mualana Sayyid Suleman Ashraf writes that:

"Primarily there are two opinions about the Arabic language, first is that it is revealed and God gifted. When Allah Almighty created Adam, He also educated him the words for conversation and when he was sent down to earth, he was continually being granted words according to needs and consequently it became a complete language. This is the opinion of Imam Abul Hassan Al-asha'ri and also of Saeed bin Jubair, Jalal ud din Sayuti, Ibn

Arabic had been faded out. An impure Arabic developed due to the intermingling of various languages. The patent Arabic was again revealed to Ismail عليه السلام.

"الهم اسماعيل هذا اللسان العربي الهاما" (15)

With the passage of time, once again, this patent Arabic language became tainted. Third time this patent Arabic was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

"عن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله تعالى عنه قال يارسول الله مالك افصحنا ولم تخرج من بين اظهرنا؟ قال كان لغة اسماعيل فدرست فجاء بها جبرئيل فحفظنيها فحفظتها" (16)

"Hazrat Omar says that I asked the Holy Prophet that, why yourself is more eloquent among us despite you never travelled out? He answered that the language of Ismail was eliminated and Jibril came to educate it and I learnt it by heart."

The Holy Quran too revealed in patent Arabic. The Quran mentions it in several verses.

﴿وَأَنزَلْنَا لِقُرَيْشٍ لَّغَةً تَبَرَأُوا بِهَا لِمَن دُونِهَا وَيَسْتَأْذِنُوا بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِينٍ﴾ (17)

And sure it is revelation of the Lord of the worlds, which the true spirit has brought down; upon the heart that yourself may be one of the warners, in plain Arabic speech

﴿وَلَقَدْ نَعَّمْنَا أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يَعْلَمُهُ بَشَرٌ لِّسَانِ الَّذِي يَلْحَدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِي وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ﴾ (18)

And we know well that they say: Only a man teach him. The speech of him at whom they falsely hint is outlandish, and this is clear Arabic language.

Arabic being a Quranic Language is sacred, blessed, revealed and protected till doomsday. Maualna Zakariyya writes:

"انا نحن نزلنا الذكر وانا له لحافظون . This is his promise to protect the Quran from any change or amendment. And it is vivid that protecting the Quran essentially includes protection of Arabic language because Quran is in Arabic language."(19)

Furthermore it is also a matter of fact that the life span of Arabic is not limited till doomsday, but it is an eternal and everlasting language because it is the language of the inhabitants of the paradise. It is reported that the Holy Prophet said that كلام اهل الجنة عربي (20)

### Internal evidences on revelation of arabic:

The comprehensive and all-encompassing vocabulary of the Arabic language with a variety of meanings with one word or vice versa and accuracy and the ideal association of meanings with words are

The words "واختلاف السننكم والوانكم" portrays that اختلاف السننكم and الوانكم is the same phenomenon as the human race has been spread out from the one man and similarly diverse languages were emerging from one language i.e. Arabic.

### Arabic In Traditions Of The Holy Prophet:

Some traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are presented here to testify the aforementioned claim that Arabic is a divine language.

1. It is narrated that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

"عن ابن عباس رضي الله عنه ان آدم عليه السلام كان لغته في الجنة العربية، فلما عصى سلبه الله العربية فتكلم بالسريانية فلما تاب رد الله عليه العربية" (12)

In the paradise language of Adam ﷺ was Arabic and when he committed an error, Allah took out Arabic from his mind and he started to talk in Soriyani language and when his penitence was granted, he was returned back Arabic language.

- 2.

"لما اذنب آدم عليه السلام الذنب الذي اذنيه رفع رأسه الى العرش فقال أسألك بحق محمد الا غفرت لي فأوحى الله اليه وما محمد؟ قال تبارك اسمك لما خلقتني رفعت رأسي الى عرشك فرأيت فيه مكتوبا: لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله" (13)

"When Adam ﷺ committed the sin, He raised up his head towards the throne and sought forgiveness in the name of Muhammad ﷺ. He inquired about that who was Muhammad? He replied: Your name is blessed, when yourself created me at that time I looked at your throne and found written: لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله"

This hadith informs that Adam ﷺ had been able to read instantly after his creation. The first sentence that he read was لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله and this is Arabic no doubt.

- 3.

"خلق الله آدم وطوله ستون ذراعا ثم قال اذهب فسلم على اولئك من الملائكة فاستمع ما يحيونك تحيتك وتحية ذريتك قال: السلام عليكم فقالوا: السلام عليك ورحمة الله" (14)

This hadith also describes that the language of the first man Adam ﷺ was Arabic, because after his creation, he was directed to offer salutation (salam) to angels and he fulfilled the commandment. Salam and its reply, consist of Arabic words.

### PATENT ARABIC (عربي مبین):

Pure and patent Arabic was revealed to Adam ﷺ but after the expansion of the human race, its emerging needs and diversified experiences, the human race added new words to enrich the treasure of its language and resultantly new languages were formulated and patent

in Arabic. Therefore, it seems that the language of all prophets was Arabic. But if we keep in mind the style of Quranic phraseology, we can easily deduce that Quran is translating their words in Arabic and there is no indication in any verse that these prayers were educated to them by Allah. All verses that are communicating the conversations of Hazrat Maryam, Hazrat Luqman and Ashab-e-Khaf etc, can be understood in the same pattern. (8)

Some traditions present a new view that language of revelation for every prophet was Arabic and the prophet was responsible for communicating it, in the language of the audience. Hazrat Abu Hurairah narrates:

"والذي نفسي بيده ما انزل الله وحيا قط على نبي بينه وبينه الا بالعر بية ثم يكون هو بعد يبلغه قومه بلسانه" (9)

I swear by who is the Lord of my soul, never a revelation was sent to a prophet but in Arabic Language then he deciphers it to the language of his homeland.

4. Allah Almighty says in another verse:

﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ﴾ (10)

And when Allah made the prophets take pledge: (saying), "If I give you a book and wisdom, then comes to you a messenger verifying what is with you, you shall have to believe in him and you shall have to support him." He said, "Do you affirm and accept my covenant in this respect?" They said, "We affirm" He said "Then bear witness and I am with you among the witness."

This verse states that Allah Almighty took a firm oath from the spirits of all prophets that if the noble prophet Muhammad (pbuh) appears during their times, they will believe in the veracity and prophethood of him and also instruct others to obey. All the prophets promised to believe, to support and to follow him. The language of this covenant is Arabic as vivid from the words of Quranic verse. This verse is another proof to authenticate the claim that Arabic is the revealed language. It is not logical if we say that Allah Almighty asked the question *أَقْرَرْتُمْ* from the prophets in their own languages that result to ask the question in thousands of languages and also to receive the responses in thousands of languages.

5. The Quran says:

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافُ السِّنِّتُمْ وَالْوَانِغُمْ﴾ (11)

And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth and differences of your languages and colors.

not your Lord" They said " of course You are, we affirm" lest you should say on the day of doom, "We were ignorant of this".

This verse depicts the occasion of the heavenly covenant called Covenant of *السنت* when all human souls congregated, and Almighty Allah asked that Do you believe that I am your Lord. They all gave a reply of affirmation without any intimidation and coercion that You are, no doubt. This conversation occurred even before the existence of human being. It can easily be derived from this verse that every human being knows language to speak since primitive epoch before his existence. Secondly as this conversation transpired in Arabic, therefore Arabic is the revealed language that can be called natural ingredient of the souls of human being.

2. The Quran gives detailed information regarding the creation of the man. In this context, Quran asserts.

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا﴾ (4)

Then the Adam learnt certain words from his Lord and he relented towards him.

This verse clearly proves that Adam عليه السلام was taught some speech and, it is obvious that the names must be imparted through a language and, it is agreed that the language of the seraphs is Arabic. Allama Jala ud Din Sayuti (R.A) writes:

"قال ابو الحسن احمد بن فارس في فقه اللغة: اعلم أن لغة العرب توقيف ودليل ذلك قوله تعالى: وعلم ادم الاسماء كلها" (5)

Abul Hassan bin Faris says in his book *Fiq hul Lugha* "You must know that Arabic Language is revealed language as the Quran states ﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا﴾

3. The Quran states the story of Hazrat Adam عليه السلام that Satan trapped him and his wife by enticement. Consequently, they committed the error of eating the forbidden tree and both of them were banished from the paradise. This situation of the displeasure of Allah was unbearable for them as they had never experienced the wrath of Allah so, they sought the repentance. Allah educated Adam the following words of apology. The Quran says:

﴿فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ﴾ (6)

Then Adam learnt certain words (to pray with) from his Lord  
Adam learnt what words? Quran conveys.

﴿رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ﴾ (7)

Our Lord! We have wronged our souls, and if thou do not forgive us, we shall of a surety be of the losers.

The words that were taught to Adam and Eve comprised of the Arabic language as Quranic verse affirms. However, a doubt might be raised that all benedictory statements of prophets narrated by the Quran are



## Arabic: The Revealed Language

Usman Ahmad\*

Allah Almighty is the sole Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer of all the worlds. He created the man and bestowed him with the capability of expression. Allah says in the Quran.

﴿ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴾ (1)

He created man. He taught him distinctness.

In these verses the creation of the man has been narrated contiguous to the conferment of the faculty of speech to him, which discloses vividly that the man had the ability to express his sentiments, experiences and knowledge since the day of his inception. It is also a matter of fact that expression without a language is merely impossible. Therefore علمه البيان encompasses the meanings of علمه اللسان. It is also established that expression of inner feelings or knowledge gained by experiences is possible by two means: Verbal and inscriptive. Therefore علمه البيان includes endowment of both skills of expression; speaking and writing, of human being by Allah. In Surah Al-Alaq, the Quran informs explicitly:

﴿ أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ وَقَرَأَ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمَ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴾ (2)

Recite thou in the name of thy Lord who has created everything. Has created man from a clot and thy lord is the most bountiful. Who has taught man by the pen.

It is evident from these verses that the first man of the universe was well versed in reading and writing since the beginning, as the words اقرأ and علم بالقلم describe. Consequently, we can infer that the first language was revealed divinely to the first man; Adam ﷺ.

Now the question arises that what was the first revealed language. Thorough study of the Quran and the Hadith leads towards the fact that the language revealed to the first man was Arabic. The manifestation of the Quran and Sunnah will be rendered to invigorate the current debate.

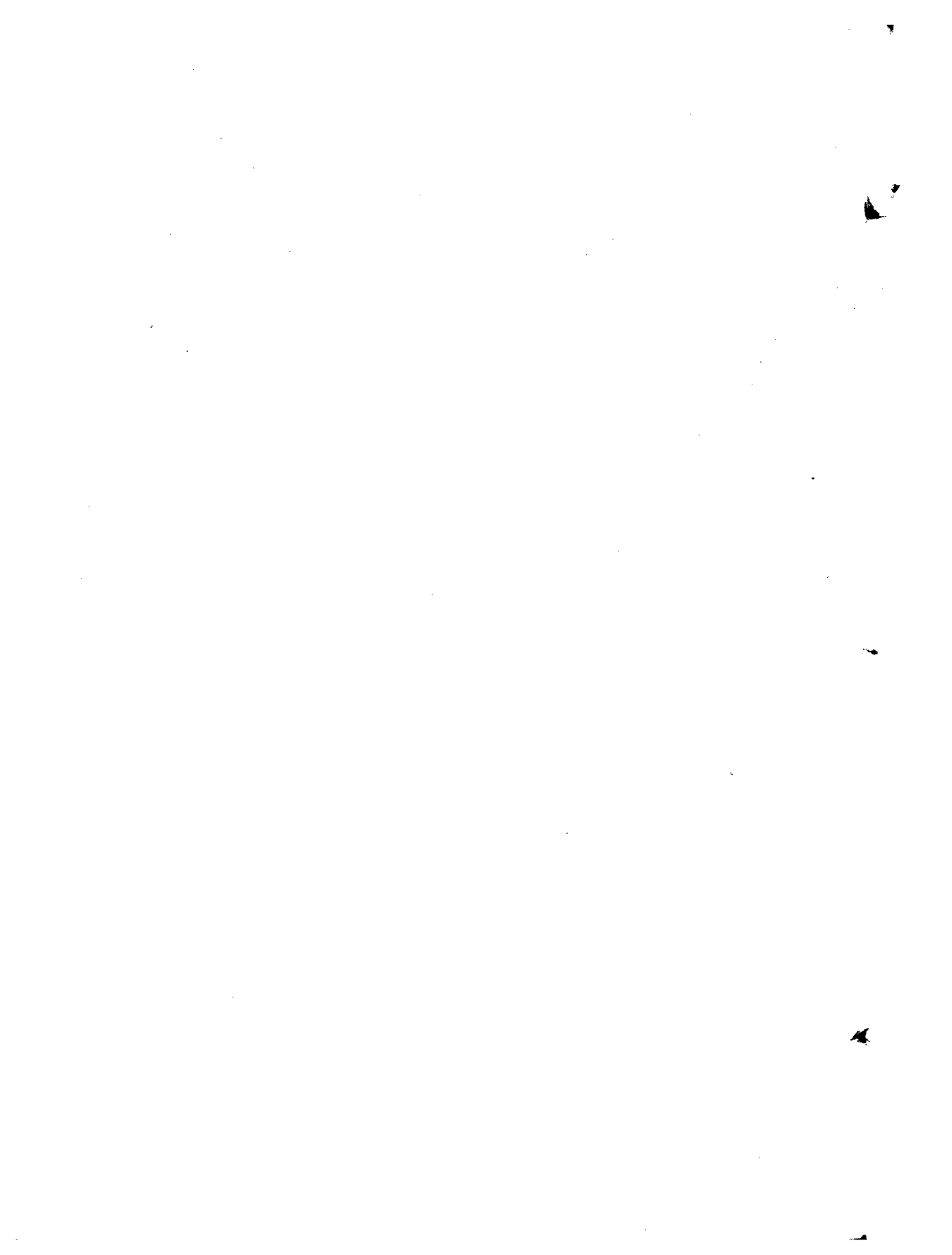
### Quranic Verdict About Revelation Of Arabic:

1. The Quran says:

﴿ وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴾ (3)

And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, that is, from their backs, their progeny, and made them testify about themselves, "Am I

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