



## SAFEGUARDING THE TONGUE

It is very important and necessary to safeguard the tongue against improper use since most corruptions and vices are from misuse of the tongue. Sometimes an informal talk and backbiting spoils years of worship, good deeds and devotion to Allah Ta'ala, which is why many Awliya Allah have stated, "There is nothing more deserving of prolonged imprisonment than the tongue." Hazrat Sufyan bin Abdullah (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) has narrated that once he asked Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) as to what was the most harmful for him. Beckoning to his tongue, Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "This." [*Minhajul Abideen*]

The tongue is a great asset of man and a wonder out of the wonderful creations of Allah Ta'ala. Though it is insignificant its power is unrestrained, its sins heinous, its virtues are great and infidelity and faith do not find expression except through the tongue. The tongue can express what has been created and what has not been created, the known and the unknown. It explains what intellect brings in mind, whether truth or untruth. No other organ has got so much power to express the mind and in fact the power of the tongue is unlimited. However, the dangers of the tongue are just as many, including useless talks, quarrels, disputes, rebukes, scolding, harsh words, curses, false speaking, backbiting, self praise etc. There is no rescue from such dangers except through silence. It is for this reason that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "He who keeps silent gets salvation." He also said, "Silence is a rule and few people can observe it." In another Hadith Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) stated, "If a man can give me guarantee of the things placed between his two cheeks and his two thighs, I can give him guarantee of paradise." [*Ihya ul Uloom, Vol. 3*]

Hazrat Safwan bin Sulaiman (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) was once asked by Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), "Shall I inform you about the easiest divine service and the most comfortable thing to the body? ...Silence and good conduct." In another Hadith Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Let one who believes in Allah and the next world speak good or remain silent." He (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) also said, "May Allah Ta'ala show His Mercy on one who acquires rewards by talk or remains safe by keeping silent." Hazrat Isa (Alaihis Salaam) was once asked, "Teach us such a thing by virtue of which we can enter paradise." He replied, "Don't talk." They said, "We shall not be able to do it." Hazrat Isa (Alaihis Salaam) then replied, "Then do not talk except good." [*Ihya ul Uloom, Vol. 3*]

Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) stated, "Save your tongue from talks other than good, you can then defeat the devil. Allah Ta'ala is near every utterance of a man. So let him take care of what he utters." Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) further said, "He who talks too much commits blunders. He who blunders much commits many sins. For one whose sins are great, the hell-fire is good." Hazrat Isa (Alaihis Salaam) stated, "There are ten portions of divine service, nine of which are in silence and the remaining one is in loneliness." Hazrat Abu Zarr (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) narrates that Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once asked him, "Shall I not tell you about such an action which is light for the body but heavy in the Balance?" Hazrat Abu Zarr (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) replied, "Yes," upon which our Beloved Rasool (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said, "Silence, good conduct and giving up unnecessary things." [*Ihya ul Uloom, Vol. 3*]

Safeguarding the tongue is a difficult task of which Hazrat Yunus bin Abdullah (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) has said, "I have courage enough to observe fasting during the hottest days of Basra, but I

have no courage to stop my tongue from uttering useless and nonsensical words.” The tongue is the most dangerous part of the body and it must be safeguarded carefully. It requires great strength to keep it under control and Hujjatul Islam Hazrat Imam Ghazzali (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) gives five principles to protect it.

- Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) is reported to have said, “When a man gets up in the morning from his sleep the limbs of the body address his tongue saying, “Pass the day in truthfulness and righteousness; refrain from nonsense and loose talks. If you go aright we too shall go aright. On the other hand if you take the wrong path we too shall follow the same path.” What the tongue utters affects rightly or wrongly the other limbs of the body. Pure and nice words take the speaker nearer to Allah but heinous and nasty words cause him dishonour and disgrace.
- Time is precious. Recognize its value and spend it in the remembrance of Allah, because what is uttered with the tongue other than this remembrance, is generally useless and nonsense and thereby you are laying waste your precious capital of life i.e. time.

It is related about Hazrat Hassan bin Sinwan (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) that once, while getting down from the first floor, he asked the owner of the building how long ago that the floor had been built. However, immediately after posing this question he felt awfully ashamed and addressed his self, “You proud self! You are wasting your precious time in such useless matters!” Thereafter he wept for this action for a year.

Fortunate indeed are those who value the precious asset of time, and spend it in reforming themselves. On the other hand unfortunate are those who have let loose their tongues unbridled, which remain busy in uttering nonsense.

1. Protection of the tongue guarantees protection of righteous deeds. This is because those who leave their tongues unbridled remain uttering nonsense and unworthy words including the grievous sin of backbiting. Backbiting is a sin which destroys good deeds as lightning destroys cultivation and turns everything into ashes.

A man once told Hazrat Hasan Basri (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) that such and such a person had backbitten the Shaikh. Hazrat Hasan Basri (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) sent this man to the backbiter with a bag of dates as a gift, for the reward which he had transferred to the account of the Shaikh by backbiting him.

2. By safeguarding his tongue against its misuse a man remains safe from all sorts of trials and calamities. Hazrat Sufyaan Sauri (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) has said, “Never utter such things with your tongue that on hearing them the people may break your teeth.”

Hazrat Ibn Mutee (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) said, “Man’s tongue is like an arrow lying in an ambush ready to shoot at its target. So put on this tongue the bridle of silence to be safe from all calamities. There are many words which demand that they should not be uttered.” It is stated in *Ihya ul Uloom* that Hazrat Ibn Mysarah (Radiallahu Ta’ala Anh) has said, “The figure of a man who talks obscene things will be that of a dog on the Day of Qiyaamah.”

3. One of the causes of punishment inflicted on man in the hereafter will be the misuse of the tongue. This should be visualized along with the punishment appointed for the sins of the tongue. Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has stated, "I saw on the night of Me'raj a community who were eating carrion. I asked Hazrat Jibra'eel (Alaihis Salaam) who they were. He said that they were those who used to eat carrion in the world i.e. they used to backbite." On another occasion Rasoolullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said to Hazrat Ma'az (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh), "Protect your tongue from backbiting the bearers of the Qur'an (i.e. the Huffaz) and the seekers of knowledge (students) and do not tear (backbite) the people with your tongue lest the dogs of hell should tear you." Hazrat Abu Qulabah (Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh) has said, "Backbiting deprives the heart of the right guidance." [*Minhajul Abideen*]

It can therefore be seen that the Prophets and the Awliya Allah have placed great emphasis on controlling the tongue and talking as less as possible as this would bring us closer to our Creator and will be a means of salvation for us. We should therefore take heed of their words of wisdom and try to remain silent as much as possible while at the same time not engaging ourselves in lying, slandering, backbiting, swearing, arguing, useless talks etc. when we do talk. And the best way to do this is to think before we say anything, if what we are about to say is useless and unnecessary or not. In fact if we can do that and say "*Subhaanallah*" for every time we stop ourselves from uttering useless talks, imagine how much it would benefit us in this world and in the hereafter.

Think of the precious moments of our lives which we have wasted in loose talks and gossips. If we had spent these moments in seeking forgiveness, our repentance would have perhaps been accepted and our sins wiped off. If we had rehearsed during these precious moments the Zikr (Remembrance) of "*Laa Ilaaha Illallah*" we would have deserved untold rewards and recompense. If we had prayed during these moments for peace and security our prayers would have perhaps been granted and we would have received freedom both from the anxieties of the world as well as the hereafter. Is it therefore not a matter of great loss to spend the precious moments of life in useless and irrelevant gossips?

May Allah Ta'ala grant us the Taufeeq to utilize our tongues for beneficial acts such as uttering pious words, reciting Allah Ta'ala's Sacred Names or reading Durood Shareef, and may Allah Ta'ala save us from engaging ourselves in useless talk and backbiting, Ameen.

[*Compiled from Ihya ul Uloom and Minhajul Abideen by Hujjatul Islam Hazrat Imam Muhammad Ghazzali Radiallahu Ta'ala Anh*]