

## 40) Piety And Speech

The words we hear in this world are either from God, which show pure truth as found in the Holy Quran and the holy traditions, or they are the words of God's servants, which are of two kinds; they are either from such infallible ones as the prophets and their successors, in which there is no deviation or falsehood, or they come from those who are not innocent, which might be mixed with falsehood and deviation. For this reason, one who is not innocent should keep his words away from mischief or deviation and should observe Taqwa.

We may classify what we say (our speech) as to lawful and unlawful issues, laudation, pleasantry, ordinary speech...etc.

As for the lawful and unlawful subjects, man should issue or report a religious decree which is based on reality. If a person issues a religious decree without being well-versed in that area, the angels of heavens and the earth will curse him. The messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Reza (AS) as saying: "Whoever gives Fatwa (religious decree) without having the knowledge, the angels of heavens and the earth will curse him."<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Prophet (SAW) has also been reported as saying: "Be careful not to deny Allah." He was asked: "O Messenger of Allah! What does that mean?" The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: "When one of you says: 'God has said it and God Almighty says: 'you are lying, I have not said it'', or when one of you says: 'God has not said it, but God Almighty says: 'you are lying, I have said it.'"<sup>2</sup>

As for laudation and praising of people, Imam Ali (AS) has said: "The greatest folly is the exaggeration in praising and blaming people."<sup>3</sup>

As for pleasantry, it should be avoided as much as possible, for it destroys dignity, and causes worry, rancor and enmity.

As for ordinary speech, it is sometime mixed with falsehood, slander and backbiting.

All these words are addressed either to God, prophets, Imams and their successors, or to people. Hence, they are sometimes correct and at other times not. They are sometimes mixed with truth and at

other times mixed with falsehood. Sometimes they are harmful and at other times, they are life-giving. They are sometimes misleading and at other times guiding. It is for the same reason that the Lord of the universe says:

***“O you who believe! Be not like those who spoke evil things of Musa, but Allah cleared him of what they had said, and he was worthy of regard with Allah. O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and speak the right word.”***<sup>4</sup>

The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “Hold your tongue!”<sup>5</sup> It means to observe Taqwa in one’s speaking.

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) said: “What throws man into fire are two hollow things; the mouth and the private parts (lusts).”<sup>6</sup>

It is related that a man came to the Holy Prophet (SAW), saying to him: “Give me an advice!” The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “Hold your tongue!” The man asked again: “Give me an advice!” The Messenger of Allah (a.s.) said: “Hold your tongue!” For the third time, the man asked: “Give me an advice!” The Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “Hold your tongue! Woe to you! Will people be thrown into Fire on their faces except for what they have reaped by their tongues?”<sup>7</sup>

It is also reported that a man came to the Holy Prophet (SAW), saying: “Give me an advice!” The Holy prophet (SAW) said: “Serve Allah as if you see Him and count yourself among the dead.” Then the Holy Prophet (SAW) said: “Shall I inform you about a thing which is more effective than these? Then he pointed to his tongue.”<sup>8</sup>

He has also said: “Surely Allah is near the tongue of every speaker. Therefore, one has to observe Taqwa in what he says.”<sup>9</sup>

The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “Whoever observes the burden of responsibility and the suffering of the tongue and is abstinent as to his abdomen and lusts, shall enter Paradise.”<sup>10</sup>

Imam Ali (AS) has been reported as saying: “By Allah, I do not think that the fear of Allah benefits a man, unless he controls his tongue.”<sup>11</sup>

Imam Ali (AS) has also said: “Man is hidden under his tongue.”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, weigh your sayings and then present them to your wits! If what you want to say is for God and His way, say them, for what is there between the Creator and the creature of secrets, sciences and treasures comes through speaking and revelation, and if it is not so, then silence is better, because speaking is like wine which intoxicates that one.

Try then to say what causes guidance and not sedition and mischief. Try to say what promotes Islam and Muslims. Do not say anything that may create division and discord among Muslims and lead to

bloodletting. Do not say anything that may dishonor people. In this relation, the Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported as saying: “God will punish the tongue with a punishment that no other part of body shall be punished with. The tongue shall say: ‘O Lord! Will you punish me with a punishment that no other part of the body shall be punished with?’ It shall be said to the tongue: ‘From you came out a word that reached the east and the west of the earth and caused blood to be shed unlawfully, assets were looted unlawfully, and women were violated unlawfully. By My glory! I will punish you with a punishment that I have not punished any other part of the body with its like.”[13](#)

Imam Sajjad (AS) has been reported as saying: “The human tongue gains control over other parts of the body every day. So it will ask: ‘How did you spend the night?’ The other parts of the body shall say: ‘we are well if you leave us alone to ourselves. The parts of the body seek refuge with God, saying to the tongue: ‘we are rewarded and punished because of you.’”[14](#)

If you think carefully about this flesh (tongue), you will realize that its size is little, but it is the source of offences, mischief, and corruption.

All the lies told in global conferences, media, negative propaganda, false claims about God, prophets, Imams, religious authorities, and other vices like slandering, backbiting, reproaches, derisions, baseless debates, false evidences, and sarcastic statements come from the very tongue!

To sum it up, belief and disbelief, guidance and deviation, knowledge and ignorance, truth and falsehood arise from the tongue. It is for the same reason that the tongue is said to have a great role in illusions, rational science, imaginations, observations, tangibles, tastes as well as things heard and seen. Hence, God Almighty has ordered the Holy Prophet and the Imams to observe Taqwa in relation to tongue. Such companions of the Holy Prophet (SAW) as Abu –Tharr have recommended us to control our tongues, saying: “O seeker of knowledge! This tongue is a key to good and evil. Therefore, put a seal on your tongue in the same way that you put a seal on gold, silver, coins and your manuscripts.”[15](#)

There are many narrations on the merits of silence. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) has been reported by Imam Sadiq as saying: “Silence is an abundant treasure. It is an ornament for the patient and a cover for the ignorant.”[16](#)

Imam Reza (AS) has been reported as saying: “Some of the signs of jurisprudence are endurance, knowledge and silence. Surely, silence is one of the doors to wisdom. Verily, silence wins love. It is certainly a proof of every good.”[17](#)

Imam Baqir (AS) has been reported by Abu Hamzah as saying: “Surely, our followers are those who are silent.”[18](#) It means that today they are silent about what they do not know, about idle talk, and about what is harmful for their religion, their leaders, their lives and their brethren. Perhaps the Imam (AS) refers to dissimulation.

It has been related that some of the companions of the Holy Prophet (SAW) put pebbles in their mouths.

They brought them out whenever they felt what they were saying was for the sake of God, in the way of God and for nearness to God. They would also put a piece of paper before them to write about their daily deeds. At night, they would review it, saying to themselves: ‘Ah! Those who were silent were delivered and we have remained behind!’ [19](#)

- [1.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 2, p. 118.
- [2.](#) Ibid., p. 117.
- [3.](#) Ghurar al-Hikam.
- [4.](#) Qur'an, 33:69-70.
- [5.](#) Jami' al-Sa'adat, p. 373.
- [6.](#) Ibid.
- [7.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, p. 303.
- [8.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 303.
- [9.](#) Ibid.
- [10.](#) Ibid., p. 287.
- [11.](#) Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1 p. 561.
- [12.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 374.
- [13.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 62, p. 304.
- [14.](#) Jami' al-Sa'adat, p. 374.
- [15.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 301.
- [16.](#) Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 68, p. 294.
- [17.](#) Ibid.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 295.
- [19.](#) Safeenat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 50.

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