

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# The Importance of Holding the Tongue in Islam!

(Compiled by Abu Muhammad Yahya)

## 1. The Power of Words in Islam

The tongue is often underestimated in terms of its potential impact. However, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) warned that words can either lead to reward or punishment. In the hadith of Abu Huraira (Radhiyallahu Anhu), the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

"Whosoever believes in Allah and the last day, then let him say that which is good or remain silent" (Bukhari & Muslim)



This hadith underscores that the believer must weigh their words carefully. Every utterance should either be beneficial or, in the case where no benefit is seen, silence should be chosen. This guidance is crucial in maintaining the purity of both speech and intention.

## 2. The Safety of Silence

Silence is considered a safeguard against many dangers. Al-Hasan al-Basri (Rahimahullaah) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"May Allah have mercy upon a servant who speaks, and thereby gains a profit (i.e., he uttered something that earned him reward) or remains silent and safe."

Silence is protection from speaking inappropriately, saying something that causes harm, or speaking without benefit. By remaining silent, a person avoids engaging in backbiting, slander, gossip, or spreading falsehood, all of which are condemned in Islam.

## 3. Silence as a Source of Success

Abdullah Ibn Amr (Radiallahu Anhumu) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"He who remains silent will be successful." (Tirmidhi)

This statement is profound, as it highlights how the control over one's tongue is directly linked to success, both in this world and the Hereafter. By guarding one's speech, an individual is able to avoid disputes, arguments, and actions that might lead to sin. The success here is not just in worldly matters, but in the preservation of one's spiritual integrity and the reward with Allah.

#### 4. The Consequences of the Tongue's Misuse

The tongue, if not controlled, can lead a person into immense sin. As the hadiths illustrate, speech can cause harm and corruption in society, often more easily than actions. The Prophet (ﷺ) also said:

"The tongue of mankind is like the pen of a king and his saliva is its ink." (Ali ibn Abi Talib)

This statement highlights the great responsibility that comes with speech. Just as a king's pen holds power over the fate of his subjects, the words of an individual can influence others and have lasting consequences. Thus, the tongue must be safeguarded from being used for vain talk, harmful speech, or anything that contradicts the teachings of Islam.

#### 5. The Tongue and Accountability

Abdullah Ibn Mas'ood (Radhiyallahu Anhu) stated: "By He in whose hand is my soul! There is nothing on earth more in need of being imprisoned than the tongue!" (Ibn Abi Dunya)

This reflects the seriousness with which the tongue should be controlled. On the Day of Judgment, the tongue will be held accountable for every word spoken, whether beneficial or harmful. The tongue is the means through which a person can either gain the pleasure of Allah or incur His wrath. This immense responsibility calls for careful and intentional speech.

#### 6. The Tongue and Accountability

##### Backbiting and Slander:

The tongue's misuse in the form of **backbiting** (ghibah) and **slander** (buhtan) is severely condemned in Islam. Allah says in the Quran:

"Do not backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would detest it." (Quran 49:12)

Such actions destroy relationships, spread discord, and are destructive to the unity of the Ummah. It's imperative that the tongue is kept from speaking ill of others, especially in their absence.

##### Lying:

**Lying** is another grave sin that often starts with a slip of the tongue. The Prophet (ﷺ) warned:

"Avoid lying, for lying leads to immorality, and immorality leads to Hell." (Bukhari)

In the pursuit of truth and honesty, the believer must constantly monitor their speech to avoid falsehood, exaggeration, or any form of deceit.

##### Foul Language and Vulgarity:

Using foul language or engaging in **vulgar speech** is also harmful. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

"A believer is not one who abuses others, curses them, or speaks obscenely." (Tirmidhi)

The purity of speech is a sign of a pure heart. The use of inappropriate language lowers the moral and ethical standards of society and distances one from the path of righteousness.

## 7. The Wisdom of Silence

**Sulaimaan Ibn Daawood (Alaihis Salaam) said:**

"If speech was made of silver, then silence would be golden." (Ibn Abi Dunya)

This highlights the priceless nature of silence. When speech serves no purpose, silence is far more valuable. In a world where words are easily spoken, the ability to remain silent becomes a rare and virtuous trait.

The Salaf (righteous predecessors) placed great emphasis on the virtue of silence. Their statements on the matter provide valuable insight:

**'Umar ibn al-Khattab (رضي الله عنه) said:**

"Whoever speaks much will make many mistakes. Whoever makes many mistakes will have less modesty. Whoever has less modesty will have less piety. And whoever has less piety, his heart will die." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (26), Al-Bayhaqi, "Shu'ab al-Iman" (6/323).

**Abdullah ibn Abbas (رضي الله عنه) said:**

**"A man does not achieve the reality of faith until he controls his tongue."** Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (21), Al-Bayhaqi, "Shu'ab al-Iman" (6/323).

**Abdullah ibn Amr (رضي الله عنه) said:**

"Leave alone that which has nothing to do with you whatsoever, and do not speak about what does not concern you, and guard your tongue as you would guard silver!" Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (24).

**Abu Darda (رضي الله عنه) said:**

"Be silent for that is the best protection, and speak only good so you will be successful. Do not be excessive in your speech, lest your heart becomes hardened." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (50).

**Hasan al-Basri (رحمه الله) said:**

"The tongue of a believer is behind his heart; when he wants to speak, he first thinks. If it is beneficial, he speaks, and if it is harmful, he remains silent. Whereas the tongue of a hypocrite is in front of his heart; he speaks without thinking." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (71).

**Abu Ubaydah (رحمه الله) said:**

**"Silence is the best response to a fool."** Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (55).

**Sufyan ibn Uyaynah (رحمه الله) said:**

"The first step in knowledge is silence, then listening, then memorization, then acting upon it, then spreading it." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (63), Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, "Al-Jami' li Akhlaq ar-Rawi" (1/120).

**Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (رحمه الله) said:**

"There is nothing more deserving of being long imprisoned than the tongue." Al-Khallal, "Al-Amr bil Ma'ruf" (131).

Malik ibn Dinar (رحمه الله) said:

"Righteous people used to say: 'When a person controls his tongue, he is in control of his religion.'" Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (52).

Fudayl ibn Iyad (رحمه الله) said:

"Speaking about what does not concern you is a sign that Allah has abandoned you." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (17), Al-Bayhaqi, "Shu'ab al-Iman" (4/186).

Wahb ibn Munabbih (رحمه الله) said:

"The example of the tongue is like a savage beast; if you do not tie it up, it will attack you." Ibn Abi Dunya, "As-Samt" (64).

Muwwarraq al-Ijli (رحمه الله) sought for ten years: "To remain silent about what does not concern me."

## Conclusion

The **believer's success is deeply tied to guarding their speech**, as the tongue can either lead to **Jannah** or **Jahannam**. The purification of the tongue is an essential step in both personal development and the rectification of the Ummah. Holding the tongue from harmful speech, speaking only that which is beneficial, and remaining silent when speech serves no purpose are essential to attaining success. By controlling the tongue, an individual not only protects themselves from sin but also contributes to the collective well-being of the Ummah. The tongue is a gift that can either lead to immense rewards or bring about great harm and punishment. **Therefore, the believer must guard it with the utmost care, speaking good or remaining silent**, as a means to gain Allah's pleasure and protect themselves from all the consequences!

May Allah grant us the ability to **guard our tongues** and **speak only that which pleases Him**. Ameen.