



MINDING THE TONGUE

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand that the gift of the tongue can be used for good or evil (it can take us to paradise or to hell)
- Understand the basic rule of not speaking to people unnecessarily (especially those from the opposite sex) including via electronic media
- Be reminded briefly of speaking to everyone especially adults with respect
- Know the basic rules of speech and communication

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 1

Minding the Tongue

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنَاً

"And speak good words to people" (2:83)

Undoubtedly, our tongue is one of our greatest blessings. The tongue with the ability to speak is a gift that Allah (SWT) has bestowed on man in His creation. This has been stated in the following verse in Noble Qur'an:

"He has created man: He has taught him speech (and intelligence)" ⁱ (55:3-4)

Humans are social creatures who cannot live in isolation. They naturally incline towards living together and communicating with one another. The main form of communication between humans in their social life is speech. In fact, it is the ability to speak which sets humans apart from other creatures. While most other abilities that a human possesses can also be found in other creatures, speech is something unique to mankind.

A PERSON IS CONCEALED UNDER THEIR TONGUE

It is a person's speech which introduces that person and gives us the best insight into what kind of person he or she is. We know little about a person until we listen to them speak. Once they speak, we then either see the ugliness or the beauty of their personality through their speech. This is why Imam 'Ali (as) has said:

"Beauty is in the tongue, and perfection is in the intellect"ⁱⁱ

Imam 'Ali (as) also says:

"Man is concealed under his tongue."

It is because of the above that a person's tongue can be the best or the worst part of a person. Luqmān - the wise man introduced in the Qur'an - was asked to bring the most expensive and valuable part of an animal. He went to the market and bought a tongue (of a sheep). The next day, he was asked to bring the cheapest and least worthy part. Again, he brought the tongue. When questioned, he said that the tongue may be the least or the most valuable part of the body, depending on how it is used.

One unique characteristic of the tongue is that most other body parts require a third party for a sin to occur (e.g. a lustful look at a scantily dressed woman). However, the tongue's sins require no third party. On the other hand, another unique characteristic of the tongue is that it is with the action of the tongue that one becomes a Muslim, once they recite the two testimonies.

MINDING THE TONGUE

Now that we know how important and also dangerous the tongue can be, we must know how to use it properly to avoid harming ourselves (our reputation) and also others' (feelings).

Since many feelings and relationships are based on the communication of speech, it is vital to regulate who we speak to, when we speak and where and how we speak – to the four questions to ask before speaking are:

1. **Who** – are we speaking to someone we are allowed to speak to?
2. **When** – are we speaking when it is necessary to speak?
3. **What** – is what we are saying important, true, good and useful/relevant?
4. **How** – are we polite, rude, angry, or sarcastic?

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GENDERS

From this, it is important to realize that we are not supposed to speak to people of the opposite gender (whom we are not related to) unnecessarily or casually. This is because, through our speech it is easy to flirt and flirting is enjoyable because it creates feelings – sometimes these feelings can develop into something more in either the boy or girl and due to mixed communication, there can be problems caused – the biggest problem is that of falling into sin.



This includes speaking to people of the opposite gender via phone, email, text messaging or any other form of communication that includes words and sounds or even vision.

The best test to judge whether the communication between the genders is good is to ask yourself the above questions – the most important is that is it necessary to speak and what is being spoken?

A person's Hijab is not only confined to their bodies and appearance, but especially to their speech and behaviour also. In this case both men and women have an equal responsibility to maintain chaste and modest speech.

Imam Kādim (as) also advised a man: "Mind your tongue and you will be honoured."ⁱⁱⁱ

In another narration, Abu Dhar (may God be pleased with him) is narrated to have said:

"Seal your tongue as you seal your gold and silver."

Allah (SWT) has also taught us how to speak to our family and also people in general. We must always be polite in our manner, avoid speaking in very loud and angry tone and always be mindful of the other person's feelings and respect. Especially when speaking to elder people, we must maintain full respect and dignity in how we speak to them.

Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an:

وَقُلُّوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنَاⁱ

"And speak good words to people" (2:83)

SOME RULES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN SPEAKING

1. Avoid all the plagues of tongue – this includes lies, swearing or vulgar words, sarcasm and insults, rudeness and other ill words
2. Don't be the sole speaker, also listen to the other person
3. Don't prolong your stories. The more you speak the more you slip, the more you bore people, and above all the more you harden your heart.
4. Don't say but what you know, and also don't say all what you know.
5. **Try to practice silence as much as possible (avoid speaking when it's not necessary to speak)**

RULES OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION



1. Avoid casual (unnecessary and unimportant) communication to people of the opposite gender
2. Use kind and proper words – not words that are rude, emotional or that arouse inappropriate feelings
3. Make sure what you speak or write is true, good and useful/relevant – avoid giving opinions on subjects you have little or no knowledge on.
4. Make sure you are not bullying someone online!

Review Questions

Q1. Hijāb:

- a. Is only about how we dress and how much of our bodies we cover
- b. Is also about how we speak and communicate with the other gender
- c. Is about how we look at the other gender and how we dress

Q2. When speaking to the other gender:

- a. We can speak to them normally as we speak to someone of the same gender
- b. We should speak to them as necessary and without flirting
- c. We should never speak to someone of the opposite gender as it leads to sin

Q3. According to Imam 'Ali (as), a person's real beauty is shown in their:

- a. Clothes
- b. Looks
- c. Speech

ⁱ [Sura Rahman 55:3-4]

ⁱⁱ [Beharul-Anwaar Vol. 1 p.96]

ⁱⁱⁱ [al-Kaafi 2:93]