

continuously in the atmosphere of the despondent. You might as well think it your duty to stay in deep water with one who would not make the least effort to swim. Get on shore & throw out a life-line, but do not remain & be dragged under.

If you find any one determined to talk failure & sickness & misfortune and disaster, walk away. You would not permit the dearest person on earth to administer slow poison to you if you knew it. Then why think it your duty to take mental potions which paralyze your courage and kill your ambition? Despondency is one phase of immorality. It is blasphemous & an insult to the Creator.

You are justified in avoiding the people who send you from their presence with less hope & force & strength to cope with life's problems than when you met them. Do what you can to change their current of thought. But do not associate intimately with them until they keep silent – at least, if they cannot speak hopefully.

Flattery: Do you go fishing? Not fishing with bait, a rod & reel. Fishing for compliments. Wanting to hear how pretty, smart, funny, nice & overall wonderful you are all the time. Instead of letting people offer up a compliment, you'd throw out a line (rod & reel) & hope to catch a whopper of a compliment. An example of one fishing expedition: Her: "I know you don't think I'm as pretty as her?" Him: "Oh, baby you are beautiful." Her: "Oh, you are just saying that." Him: "Baby, you are absolutely gorgeous"

You may have just gagged from that blatant cry for attention expressed above. Most women on Facebook live for such "trash" compliments. Cringe & lower your head in shame at how juvenile & ridiculous it is. Find your own self-worth. **Needing constant validation in order to feel secure is so unattractive.** Allow for well deserved words of appreciation (compliments). Don't offer hollow words of praise & use words carefully. Let people know that you pay attention & care about them. Next time your ego needs a little boost or you need some validation, don't go fishing. Just tell the person all the wonderful things you see about them & they will in return validate you.

This Buddha quote should be in the constitutions of the world: **"Better than a thousand hollow words, is one word that brings peace."** The pulse of the soul is in the tongue: Speak, that I may know you. God's Messenger was known as a truthful person even in the time before Islam. All the Makkans, including the unbelievers, called him the Trustworthy One, or the Truthful. His truthfulness was so well known that even after he proclaimed his Prophethood, his enemies would still **not** accuse him of lying. Truthfulness is the pivot or cornerstone of Prophethood. No lies, explicit or implicit, were said by him; he never deceived anyone.

The Prophet (p): **"The one who believes in God & in Judgment Day should say good things or keep quiet."** The oppressive sense of responsibility which fills every writer/speaker is relieved by the consciousness that they have written/spoken nothing as a liar, nothing in a petty spirit of opinionativeness, but have intended every thought for the furtherance of truth, the honour of God, the good of mankind.

Words that are hallowed. With this regard, praising the Prophets, the Quran declares: "Mention in the Book Abraham: Surely he was a most **truthful** Prophet." (19.41). "Mention in the Book Ishmael; surely, he was a **man of his word**, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet." (19.54). "Mention in the Book Enoch; surely he was a most **truthful** Prophet. We elevated him to an exalted place. (19.56–7). We also read in the Quran that a fellow prisoner addressed the Prophet Joseph, saying, "Joseph, O most **truthful** one!" (12.46). The Prophets had to be endowed with truthfulness as God wants everybody to be truthful & extols the truthful: **"O you who believe, fear God & be with the company of the truthful!"** (9.119)

Hollow political words. Talking isn't doing ...politicians need to understand this. It is a kind of good deed to say well; and yet words are not deeds. Words are proof of integrity, deeds still more. Healing words are doctors to a diseased temperament. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the vitriolic words & actions of the bad people, but for the **appalling silence** of the good people. The cultural predilection favouring adversarial argument instead of constructive discourse is **a major destructive force in society.** Filthy words do cause filthy consequences. Anytime an authority figure speaks hurtful words without care or compassion, the receiver is diminished – sometimes to the point of being incapacitated. That little rhyme about "words can never hurt" is completely false. Words don't just hurt, they haunt...for years.

Good people have lamented the escalation of confrontation & decreasing sense of "community" & interdependence in multiple arenas of modern day life. Evidence of this escalation has come in many forms. We are seeing with dismay the increasing use of lawsuits to resolve that which in an earlier era would have been resolved with apologies, compromises, or accommodation. It's shocking how pervasively "the argument culture urges us to approach the world – and the people in it – in an adversarial frame of mind." In a variety of ways we unconsciously contribute to both the appetite for and the rise in polarization, conflict & argument. Little of this serves the pursuit of truth. Most of it actually derails the very results we purport to seek.

The gravity of the responsibility of the word is such that the Quran warns against using speech to provoke enmity & conflict. This irresponsible use of words is so abhorrent that it attributes it to the speech of the ultimate evil: Satan. "Say to My servants that **they should only say those things that are best & decent. Satan tries to sow discord & enmity among them. Satan is to the human an avowed enemy.**" (17:53)

We tend to couch discourse in terms of win/lose dichotomies. We are unfairly put under a microscope – every utterance under all circumstances heavily weighed with the objective of testing to destruction. Who among us would be willing to withstand such scrutiny? **In human relations, acknowledging guilt or taking responsibility is the first step in setting things right.** Do not make a mountain out of a mole hill. Muhammad (p) stressed that the reflection of belief is the purity of the heart. In turn, the reflection of the purity of the

heart is the kind of words uttered by the individual. Never separate the life you live from the words you speak. Speak well & act honourably: the one is an excellence of the head, the other of the heart & both arise from the nobility of the soul.

The overcoming of levity, or irreverent speech; Light and frivolous talking; the repeating of crude jokes; the telling of vulgar stories, having no other purpose than to **raise an empty laugh**; offensive familiarity, and the employment of contemptuous and disrespectful words when speaking to or of others, and particularly of one's elders and those who rank as one's teachers, guardians or superiors—all of this will be put away by the lover of Virtue and Truth.

Upon the altar of irreverence absent friends are **immolated for the passing excitement of a momentary laugh**, and all the sanctity of life is sacrificed to the zest for ridicule. When respect towards others and the giving of reverence where reverence is due are abandoned, virtue is abandoned. When modesty, significance, and dignity are eliminated from speech and behaviour, Truth is lost. Irreverence is degrading even in the young, but when it accompanies grey hairs, and appears in the demeanour of the preacher—this is indeed a piteous spectacle.

Words have a profound impact on our life. **Words make or break relationships.** In fact, many broken relations between husband & wife, parents & children, siblings & friends are result of some inappropriate & trivial war of words between them. Words are like mirrors. Once spelt out, it is similar to a mirror getting broken. Repairing the damage is impossible.

The Bible speaks: **"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."** Proverbs 25:11 Ephesians 4:29 **"Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear"**.

Think before you speak, not as you speak. Use words to lift up someone, to heal instead of hurt. As your positive speech patterns replace your negative ones, the increased joy and peace in your relationships will simply amaze you.

Speech is easy, action hard. Actions are the stuff of life, words its frippery. Eminent deeds endure, striking words pass away. Actions are the fruit of thought; if this is wise, they are effective. **The oldest, shortest words - 'yes' & 'no' – are those which require the most thought.**

**Words are very potent things;
used by commoners & kings
Many varied roles they fill;
They can serve or slay at will
Words may mitigate, inflame;
Censure, stimulate, defame
Stab, enchant, exasperate;
Cheer, depress, extenuate
Words were made for you & me
Wordless what would mortals be?
But carefully choose the words you seek
It pays to think before you speak.**

Hollow? Words Hallow?

**HOWEVER MANY HOLY WORDS YOU
READ, HOWEVER MANY YOU SPEAK,
WHAT GOOD WILL THEY DO IF
YOU DO NOT ACT UPON THEM?**

THE PULSE OF THE SOUL IS IN THE TONGUE

A scholar said, Speak of Talking.

And he answered, saying:

You talk when you **cease** to be at peace with your thoughts; And when you can **no** longer dwell in the solitude of your heart you live in your lips, & sound is a diversion & a pastime.

And in much of your talking,

thinking is half murdered.

For thought is a bird of space,

that in a cage of words may indeed

unfold its wings **but cannot fly.**

There are those among you who **seek the talkative** through fear of being alone.

The silence of aloneness reveals to their eyes their naked selves & they would escape.

And there are those who talk, and without knowledge or forethought reveal a truth which they themselves do **not** understand.

And there are those who have the truth within them, but they tell it **not** in words.

In the bosom of such as these the spirit dwells in rhythmic silence.

When you meet your friend on the roadside or in the market place, let the spirit in you move your lips & direct your tongue.

Let the voice within your voice
Speak to the ear of their ear;

**For their soul
Will keep the truth of your heart...**

INDEED YOU WILL SPEAK A WORD PLEASING
TO GOD THAT YOU THINK TO BE
INSIGNIFICANT, BUT BECAUSE OF IT
GOD RAISES YOU BY MANY DEGREES.
INDEED YOU WILL SPEAK A WORD DISPLEASING
TO GOD THAT YOU THINK TO BE INSIGNIFICANT,
BUT BECAUSE OF IT,
HE WILL CONSIGN YOU TO HELL

When the tongue is well controlled & wisely subdued; when selfish impulses & unworthy thoughts no longer rush to the tongue demanding utterance; when speech has become harmless, pure, gentle, gracious & purposeful, and no word is uttered but in sincerity & honesty – then is virtuous speech accomplished. And it accomplishes great things: “My brother, Aaron, is more eloquent in speech than I, so send him with me as a helper. God said: “We will give you both an authority, so that they shall not reach you. With Our signs, you two and those who follow you will triumph.” (28:34, 35) And triumph they did via words of sincerity!!!

Words do two major things: They provide food for the mind & create light for understanding & awareness. Words can inform our mind, caress & comfort our feelings, excite & thrill our spirit, or warm & kindle the flame of our hearts. They can also slap our face, punch us in the stomach, rattle our nerves, kill our desire, or destroy our self-confidence. This is metaphorical, but these metaphors capture in words our physical reactions to what is said, and that is the power of language. It can emotionally move & affect us as powerfully as physical actions. Recognize & legitimize this great power in the way we should, and deal with language in whatever way we have learned & adopted.

Thank you...you're beautiful...I love you...all powerful words that can bless, soothe, inspire & embolden. You're fired...shut up...I hate you...words that can isolate, demoralize & devastate.

Words are fine tools. They help relationships to flourish. But words can also be heat-seeking weapons, deftly defending our psyche & attacking those who threaten our me-first kingdom. The world has come to applaud & exalt quick-witted retorts. Just look at a good comedian's shtick. Our own need to be in control, to be the expert, to show our competence, or to cover our vulnerability fuels our mastery of the quick, sarcastic, sharp, verbal attack. What comes out of our mouths is a reflection of what is going on in our hearts.

When we use words to damage others we are actually damaging ourselves. These wounds are important elements of who we are: our self-respect, self-esteem,

honour, dignity, relationships, brain chemistry, connection to God...and they were all injured & damaged. This common but damaging phenomenon is evident whenever we use words reflexively as self-protective maneuvers. But they are actually self-destructive word grenades.

Bullies escape punishment if they abuse verbally & do not leave physical bruises & broken bones to prove the presence of abuse. A careless word can shape – or misshape – someone's reality for years to come. Intimate conversations are not as valued as sexual intimacy, and dramatic or traumatic moments often leave us speechless. It's our responsibility & privilege to speak wholesome words of life.

The Prophets taught us how to use and appreciate the power of language with integrity. Integrity is the key word, because without it, the power of language is abused. Integrity, or honesty, in self-expression, eliminates deception, manipulation, judgmental accusations, abusive tongue lashings & lying. Our orientation toward this communication system, therefore, must be to preserve its integrity by being respectful & honest with the information that gets transmitted through it with the intention of understanding it and having intimacy with it.

The exchange of information should not be geared toward hostility & conquest. Thoughts aren't supposed to conquer feelings, feelings are not the enemies of thoughts.

In the world of instantaneous communication, miscommunicating is sometimes more likely than communicating. Humor, sarcasm & general human warmth can easily be sacrificed in this subculture of speed & technology. Words merely given in brief can be misperceived as terse or loaded. Comments meant to be taken lightly can be missed altogether. Many would argue that the invention of the emoticon has helped, though it certainly has not eradicated every obstacle.

The quick embrace & subsequent evolution of emoticons suggests at least a subtle awareness that in the breakdown of language something human is in fact lost. Professors readily lament the frequency with which “chat” language is creeping further into term papers. Their greatest concern is that many students don't even realize there is a difference. While it can be argued that email encourages a certain sloppiness in communicating, text messaging has forged the creation of an entirely new corrupted language—a language created with regard first for the technology as opposed to the speakers or the conversation itself.

Words & language both shape/affect our humanity. The corollary of this claim is the observation that cultural institutions & habits that corrupt our use of language are profoundly dehumanizing. When words are ransacked of meaning & replaced with concepts less distinct, we ourselves become something less distinct. Though technology is far from the only culprit, wherever the offense is committed, consequences are costly. In fact, one of the first steps to slavery is a loss of language.

“When you have killed a word,” writes Lewis, “you have also blotted from the human mind the thing that word originally stood for. Men do not long continue to think what they have forgotten how to say.” Those who allow their language to be corrupted, find their minds following suit. In the loss of words, something human is lost.

There is a connectedness between our words and our humanity. Those who stand alert in the world of words, who fight the corruption of language, and who learn to let their “yes” be “yes” and their “no” be “no” shall see something more. They may in fact see the God who first spoke a word “Iqra” (Study).

God sets forth a parable. A goodly word is as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed & its branches reach to the sky. Giving its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord. God sets forth parables in order that they may remember. The parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree uprooted from the surface of earth having no stability. Quran 14:24-26 Every word of this parable pulsates with Divine energy. This parable is capable of correcting a world steeped in telling lies. You can change your world by changing your words. Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Powerful imagery like this should be emblazoned in mosques & schools. Then watch as the world begins to spin on an axis of Truth. Pleasant words promote instruction.

In order to get by, we make invisible agreements with others; spouse, children, society, God; but the most important agreements we make are with ourselves. The first of the agreements we must keep is to be impeccable with our word. This does not mean keeping commitments, but realizing that what we say determines the person we are & the world we live in. What we say is creative; that is, we can use our words to create anger or jealousy, or use them to heal. Our words are seeds that go out into the world & come back to us as full-grown reality. Everything we think & say have the power to create its likeness.

Speak words straight to the point & true. (Al-Ahzab 33:70) We keep each other in a state of fear & doubt by our misuse of words. Gossiping is a horrible use of words, and can be compared to a computer virus with harmful intent. As societies grow decadent, the language grows decadent. By adopting the impeccability of our words, we become more resistant to the “word spells” that others may cast on us, but more importantly we are cleansed of emotional poison in our own minds. God makes it explicitly clear how our communication should be conducted. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns, as it were, instinctively to long words & exhausted idioms. We have too many high-sounding words, and too few actions that correspond with them...especially from politicians & “religious” leaders whose looseness with words is no less of a problem than looseness of the bowels.

In contributing to clarity & responsible thought, be careful in the use of words. This implies that just as God made us different on the outside even down to our fingertips, it follows

that our minds are also different. This would lead to differences of opinion...such differences should generate intellectual vitality & a cross-fertilization of ideas. This is in harmony with the facilitating nature of the religion of Islam which takes into account the reality of people's lives. However, there are those who are rigid, & take differences & make them degenerate into disputes & schisms. It then becomes a negative & evil force producing more rifts.

(4:148) “God does not like speaking evil publicly unless one has been wronged.” This verse embodies a moral directive of very high value to humanity. God does not consider speaking ill of people as praiseworthy. However, if a wronged person speaks out against a wrong-doer, they are quite justified in doing so. But...even though this is a person's right, it is more meritorious to continue to do good both in public and in private, and to ignore the misdeeds of others.

The complexity & range of communication possibilities distinguishes humans from other living creatures. It is a wonder to consider the range of emotion engendered by our relationship with our voice, from giddy delight to deep shame. Something in us understands the power of our voice to bear witness, to answer the call & perhaps most shattering of all, to call forth.

So the freedom of people is the untangling of their understanding or perception of meaning and giving them a new and better meaning of a word that they think they know or understand. That goes back to the Quran when Moses (p) said, “Loosen the knot from my tongue that they may understand my speech”. When you master words and the various shades of meaning of words, you can take one word and use it as a weapon of offense and you can take the same word with another shade of meaning and use it as a weapon of defense.

“And the believers are those who shun vain conversation.” (Al-Mu'minun 23:3) Based on this verse, ask yourself when was the last time you were in a state of truly “believing.” Words without thoughts never to heaven go – Shakespeare. As great minds have the faculty of saying a great deal in a few words, so lesser minds have a talent of talking much, and saying nothing.

Do not associate with pessimists. If you are unfortunate enough to be the child, husband or wife of one, put cotton (either real or spiritual) in your ears. Shut out the poisoned words of discouragement & despondency. No tie of blood or law should compel you to listen to what means discomfort/disaster to you. Get out & away, into the society of optimistic people. Before you go, insist on saying cheerful, hopeful bright things, sowing the seed, as it were, in the mental ground behind you. But do not sit down to see it grow. Never feel that it is your duty to stay closely &