

## The weight of words

### 1. (Introduction)

a. رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاخْلُكْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

b. *My Lord! relieve my mind. And ease my task for me. And remove the impediment from my speech so that they may comprehend what I am saying:*

إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ لِلَّهِ نَحْمَدُهُ وَنَسْتَعِينُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُهُ وَنَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شُرُورِ أَنْفُسِنَا وَمِنْ سَيِّئَاتِ أَعْمَالِنَا، مَنْ يَهْدِهِ اللَّهُ فَلَا مُضِلَّ لَهُ وَمَنْ يَضِلَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ. وَأَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ.

Indeed, all praise is for Allah. We praise Him, we ask for His help, we beg for His forgiveness, and we seek refuge and protection with Allah from the evils of ourselves and from the evil consequences of our sins. Whoever Allah [SWT] guides to the straight path, no force in the universe can misguide him. And whoever Allah [SWT] misguides, no one can guide them to the Truth. I bear witness that there is no deity, no object worthy of any act of worship except Allah [SWT], the One without any partners, associates or equals. And I bear witness that Muhammad [SAWS] is His slave and messenger.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ  
(3:102)

O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared, and die not except as Muslims.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا  
(4:1)

O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person, and from him He created his wife, and from them both He created many men and women; and fear Allah through Whom you demand your mutual rights, and do not cut the relations of kinship. Surely, Allah is an All-Watcher over you.

### 2.

#### 1. Assalamsmualaikum

a. اقرا باسم ربك الذي خلق

- b. Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists)
- c. Words are powerful my brothers and sister. The weight of uncertainty, ignorance, life, and death all can rest rest in the utterance of a single word. Language can and often is the straw capable of breaking the camel's back. It can be both subtle and bold. It is abstract yet without it reality would fall into a cacophonous disarray. Language undoubtedly is central to the islamic faith tradition. It is the bridge across which god himself articulates. In the beginning of surah al rahman Allah (sw) says.
- d. الرحمن. علم القرآن. Here mercy is depicted within its extreme; the unimaginably merciful, the incredibly merciful. And the Quran, of course, is the speech of Allah. The surah continues: خلق الانسان. He created the human being. An immediately after Allah says علمه البيان. Just like he said he taught the Quran, He said He taught the human being speech. So in constructing this idea of mercy allah present first the quran, a mu3jizah a miracle, his creation, and then the means by which they can construe their complexities, our language. The ability to speak is an incredible gift from Allah (swt), a gift we must respect, and understand.
- e. Words are a means by which grown men can be reduced to mere humans. So many of the prophet's companions no matter their economic position, their social status, or their assumed gender identity could stand in opposition to the qurans command of the arabic language. Those words shook them, restructured their mentalities, and in turn their actions. So heed me when I stress the importance of the words we speak and the various powers associated with their presence or lack thereof. We must realize that while sticks and stick break bones words...words can kill...they can raise whole armies...they can be the difference between a "parking dispute" and "islamophobia." they can change a land riddled with jaaaaahilyah, with ignorance, and transform it into one of the largest religious populations in human history. Be wary of what you say because while speech is a mercy it is also a responsibility. Allah reminds us in surah QAF:

اذ يتلقى المتلقيان عن اليمين وعن الشمال قعيد .2

- a. Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn (and noted them), one sitting on the right and one on the left.

### 3. ما يلفظ من قول الا لديه رقيب عتيد

- a. Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it).
4. We must fear the repercussions. we must fear our moment in front of god on the day of judgment.
5. What we understand language to convey and what it actually does, is often contrary to a 'popular belief.' A grand dissonance exists between our perceptions, our personal imaginaries, and the realities that we actually exist within. We must root our convictions in the omnipresence, in the consistence, of Allah (swt). For in rooting our decisions in culture in humans we root in land that changes. we ground ourselves in instability.

أَقُولُ قَوْلِي هَذَا، وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ لِي وَلَكُمْ وَلِسَائِرِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ، فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ،  
إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.

I say this, and I seek forgiveness from Allah for me and for you and for the rest of the Muslims. So ask Him for forgiveness, He is surely the One who forgives, the most Merciful.

6.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ، وَالصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، صَلَّى اللَّهُ  
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

I begin in the name of Allah, and all praises are for Allah. May Allah's peace and blessings be on the Messenger.

7.

8. There is an undeniable power associated with speech
  - a. Noam Chomsky in his book, Language of the Mind, very elegantly describes language as, "The human essence, the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man." Just as Chomsky proposes, communication is one of the most rudimentary manners in which persons can assert their existence. Society teaches us that language is an essential component of identity. Mastery of a language awards capability of expression and sense of self. This positions language at the crux of identity for it not only acts as a simple mode of communication but also as a mode by which culture, religion, and even race can be expressed.

Language is the space in which a person can portray their nuances on their own terms and the loss of this space represents a loss in both identity and agency. The words we speak are important especially as regards the social standing of individuals within a state. Language occupies a unique position, in that it facilitates the assertion of power through identity, and because it is the only mode of communication that truly matters, it lies at the core of numerous social, political, health, economic, and cultural injustices.

- b. Understanding language, a body of knowledge, and its various associations to power is quintessential to guarding our gift of communication.
- c. We see many cases by which the power of language is used to further oppression
  - i. “students who hope to go into “federal work in the defense and intelligence fields are strongly encouraged to pursue advanced study in a ‘strategic language’ such as Chinese, Arabic, Urdu, Farsi, or Russian.” But the targeting of these specific languages as “strategic,” namely, Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi, is a clear marker of the escalation of Islamophobia post-9/11.” -DINESH MCCOY, ANISHA PADMA AND NIKHIL UMESH
- d. Linguistic abuses of power come in many other forms. Historically language was coded or shifted to perpetuate the denigration of black populations.
  - i. The creation and maintenance of the ghetto and the racial hierarchization of waged work created a positive correlation between blackness and criminality. Redlining maps were used to assess risk in the housing market. The criteria of risk was subsequently associated to race, allowing realtors to present prospective homeowners ‘objective’ facts that undesirably tied estate value to black residents (Pietila, 2010, pg.71).
    - 1. When they said urban, they really meant black, they said welfare queen, when the reality meant black woman. This linguistic misrepresentation goes to show the extent to which words can direct whole institutions into sin.
- e. "Fear the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah."

- i. [Sahîh al-Bukhârî (1395) and Sahîh Muslim (19)]
  - f. Think twice brothers and sisters when we devalue the weight of our words. When we detract from the environments and contexts that shape their meaning. We must be conscious of god in our various endeavours.
9. Du'ua
- a. Ya Allah we ask that you grant youmna, a friend to many of us, a speedy recovery. Oh Allah please see to the safety of Nuna and Loujaine and all those suffering from the tyranny of ISIL and its associated parties.
  - b. Oh all gives those unjustly taken from us the highest places in jannah. Aid us in carrying on their legacies and honoring their names.
  - c. Allah swt protect us. Shield us when we lose the ability to do so ourselves. Grant us success in our ways and justice in the spaces we inhabit. Line our perceptions with an iron honesty and guard our conclusions from the inebriation of laziness the rashness of our egos. Give us patience. Patience and the wisdom to know when we no longer owe it.

*Wa aqimissalah*