

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah,
most Kind, most Merciful

Surah Maryam, 19:26

فَكُلِّي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا
فَإِمَّا تَرِينَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا
فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ
صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

So eat, drink, and be comforted.
Then if you see any human, say:
'Indeed I have vowed a fast to ar-Rahman,
so I will not speak to anyone today.'

Learning Objectives

- To examine the characteristics of Sayyidah Maryam
- To explain the importance of women as mothers through the example of Sayyidah Maryam
- To examine the Islamic *akhlaq* of speaking to others

Key Words

قَوْل

Qawl
speech

لِسَان

Lisan
tongue

Introduction



REFLECTION...

Alongside the accusations and suspicions of the people of her time, Sayyidah Maryam also faced the challenges of pregnancy and childbirth alone. Sayyidah Maryam only complained to Allah; she shared her worries and hopes, and asked for patience and strength only from Him. She

complained directly to Allah about the pains of childbirth and of her fears about her family's reputation.

The lesson we learn from her is that when we are struggling or faced with difficulty, we should also turn to Allah first, express our problems openly to Him, and ask for His help instead of complaining to the people around us.

Sayyidah Maryam spent her life in the worship and remembrance of Allah. She was in constant communication with her Lord, and connected with Him through *du'a*, *salah*, *dhikr*, fasting, and just by talking to Him, especially during her struggles. Whatever Sayyidah Maryam was going through and whatever difficulties she faced, she turned only to Allah for support and assistance.



When Sayyidah Maryam had grown into a young lady, Allah sent angel Jibra'il to inform her that she would give birth to a great prophet!

'But how, when I am not married?' She asked the angel.

Jibra'il assured her that nothing was impossible for Allah, and when He wishes to do something He just says 'Be!' And it is done.

Sayyidah Maryam became pregnant through a miracle. She then left *Bayt al-Muqaddas* and rested in a remote place. It is here that she gave birth to Nabi Isa, without any helper or friend.

The priests in *Bayt al-Muqaddas* were jealous of Sayyidah Maryam and her son. They began to spread rumours that she had done a great sin, and that she had broken some laws and boundaries of the faith. Allah commanded Sayyidah Maryam not to speak, and instead her baby, Nabi Isa, spoke from the cradle! The people were shocked to hear a baby speak!

This beautiful story is narrated in the Qur'an in *Surah Maryam* (19:16-35).

Sayyidah Maryam as a mother

Mothers are nurturers of the generations to come. The role of mothers is extremely important. In Islam, mothers are highly respected and given an elevated status.

To be good to one's mother is second only to obeying Allah. We see this from Nabi Isa, when he spoke from the cradle and after saying that he was a servant of Allah, he mentioned that Allah had ordered him to be good to his mother.

Mothers are the source of the qualities and values in their children. If a mother shows good qualities then her child will also learn these. Sayyidah Maryam was a source of honour and modesty as a mother in the way she spoke, dressed, and walked in society. She was very patient, and she truly loved Allah.

DID YOU KNOW?

What a mother eats has an impact on the physical development of her unborn child.

A mother's thoughts and actions also have an impact on the spiritual development of the unborn child. Imam Ali (a) has said that in terms of *akhlaq*, nature, and religiousness, a child is made by the mother. A mother should try and create the best possible environment for the child while she is pregnant.

Manners of speaking in Islam

The human tongue (*lisan*) is a wonderful and important organ but it must be controlled. Imam Ali (a) has said: 'The weight of the human tongue is light, but the power and the crimes of the human tongue are great.' We must learn to interact with one another and speak with one another with the best of *akhlaq*.

Islam has given special attention to speech (*qawl*), its style, its manners, and rules. The words that come out of our mouths reveal our intellectual level and our *akhlaq*.

The Qur'an gives us some lessons on how to speak with *akhlaq*:

1 Do not raise your voice (49:2-3)

Lowering the voice softens the heart, and this softness of the heart shows itself through the tongue.

2 Use good words (14:24)

Remember, all words spoken are noted by Allah (50:18).

3 Content of speech should be good (2:83), and should call to what is right (3:104).

When we meet people who are ignorant, a short and peaceful approach is often the best (25:63).

4 We must not forget Allah (33:41), and we must remember to say *inshallah* (18:23-24).

5 We should avoid:

- Nonsense and talk that does not add value (23:3)
- Backbiting (49:12)
- Praising ourselves (4:36)
- Breaking promises (13:20)

Making up rumours and lying about others is one of the greatest sins.

The Qur'an clearly tells us in *Surat an-Nur* (24: 15-16):



Surat an-Nur, 24:15-16

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ
عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ
قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيمٌ

When you were receiving it on your tongues, and speaking with your mouths something of which you had no knowledge, supposing it to be a light matter, while it was a grave [matter] with Allah. And why did you not, when you heard it, say: 'It is not for us to say such a thing. Glory be to You! This is a most serious slander!'



ACTIVITY...

Match the style of speech in the right column with the Arabic wording of the Qur'an in the left column.

Qawlan ma'rufa

(17:23) = Noble words (to parents)

Qawlan sadida

(17:28) = Gentle words

Qawlan baligha

(4:9) = Upright and just words

Qawlan karima

(4:8) = Kind words

Qawlan maysura

(20:44) = Mild and soft words

Qawlan layyina

(4:63) = Far-reaching words

The people at the time of Sayyidah Maryam were not aware of Allah's plan for the miraculous birth of Nabi Isa. On seeing Sayyidah Maryam pregnant they questioned her honour based on their limited understanding. In the same way, we may also sometimes misunderstand things that we see due to our limited knowledge, and this may make us fall into the trap of gossiping and *ghibah*. We should avoid making judgements on others. We must remember that our understanding is limited. We must also remind ourselves that no one is perfect and we all make mistakes.

Give two other ways to avoid gossiping:

Setting a rule of always speaking well or remaining quiet will also prevent useless talk.



Rasulullah (s) has said:

'Let the one who believes in Allah and the Hereafter utter good words, or let him be silent.'



Remind others not to gossip, and if they do not listen then walk away.

Rights of the tongue



Imam Zayn al-Abidin (a) has said:

'The right of the tongue is that you consider it too noble for rudeness; make it used to goodness, avoid interfering in things in which there is nothing to be gained, express kindness to people, and speak well concerning them.'



The triple filter test

In ancient Greece, Socrates was very learned. One day, someone said to him: 'Do you know what I just learned about your enemy?'

'Wait,' Socrates replied. 'Before you talk to me about this person, take a moment to consider what you are about to share. I call it the triple filter test. The first filter is truth. Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell me is true?'

The man answered: 'Well, no, actually I just heard about it and ...'

'Right,' said Socrates. 'So you don't really know if it is true or not. Now, let's try the second filter: the filter of goodness. Is what you are about to tell me about this person something good?'

'No, it's the opposite ...' he started to say. Socrates interrupted: 'So you want to tell me something bad about this person but you are not certain it is true. You may still pass the test though, because there is one more filter left: the filter of usefulness. Is what you want to tell me about this person going to be useful to me?'

'No, not really,' he admitted. 'It is just gossip about his personal life.'

Socrates concluded: 'Well, if what you want to tell me is neither true, nor good, nor even useful, why tell it to me at all?'



FIQH FACTS

Backbiting is speaking unkindly or mentioning faults about someone in their absence. As *mu'minin*, we should not do *ghibah* through any means, whether it is through our spoken words, written text, or actions with our hands. In Arabic, backbiting is called *ghibah*. In the Qur'an, Allah tells us that backbiting is so disgusting, it is like eating the flesh of our dead brothers!

The next time you want to share something with your friends, stop and have a think. Are you about to talk about someone else? Is what you are going to say nice or cruel? Is it *ghibah*?

Instead of talking about others behind their back we can speak to them directly in a polite way. Islam teaches us to sincerely advise others and be honest and kind to them with our words and actions.

Try it out!

DID YOU KNOW?

Sayyidah Maryam is the only woman who is mentioned by name in the Holy Qur'an. She is mentioned 34 times in 12 *surahs* and is also the only woman to have an entire *surah* named after her!



Faith in Action

At the time of Sayyidah Maryam's birth, the Bani Isra'il were awaiting the birth of the messiah. They expected Sayyidah Hannah to give birth to a boy and were disappointed when Sayyidah Maryam was born. Many of the Bani Isra'il wavered in faith and began to accuse Nabi Zakariyya of falsehood. We must never lose hope like this. We should pray to Allah and turn to Him for our wishes, and we should also have *tawakkul* in Him. *Tawakkul* is to understand that Allah does what is best for us, in His own time and way.

This week, after your *salah*, recite the following *ayah* three times to strengthen your trust in Allah:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

And whoever puts his trust in Allah, He will suffice him. (*Surat at-Talaq*, 65:3)

Always trust in Allah and He will grant you what is best for you.



ACTIVITY...

In Sura 5 verse 75, the Qur'an states that Maryam was a *Siddiqah*.

Investigate the meaning of *Siddiqah*.

Which lady in Islam is called *Siddiqah al-Kubra* and why?



HIGHER LEVEL

Activity 1

In the Qur'an, Allah mentions the qualities of Sayyidah Maryam including her chastity, her belief in Allah, and her absolute obedience to Him. Allah mentions Sayyidah Maryam by name and presents her as an example for all believers to learn from.

Sayyidah Maryam attained this high rank because of her submission to the severe test Allah put her through. Throughout her tests, she remained patient and strong in her faith. Rasulullah (s) describes Sayyidah Maryam as one of the four most excellent women in paradise.

Name the four noble women of Paradise and briefly explain why they were given this status:

Activity 2

The following verses of the Qur'an explain the etiquette of speaking, and teach us what we should and shouldn't say. Read these verses with their translation, and list them in the correct column in the table below. The first one has been done for you.

2:83
23:3

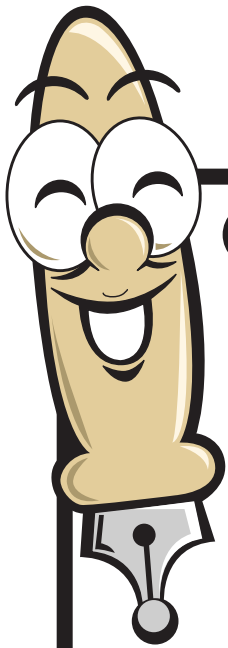
3:104
26:83

3:191
49:11

13:20
49:12

17:36
104:1

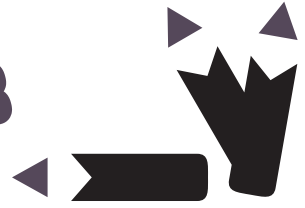
What we should say...		What we should not say...	
1. Verse : 2:83	What it says We should speak good words to people	1. Verse 23:3	What it says Avoid vain talk
2. Verse	What it says	2. Verse	What it says
3. Verse	What it says	3. Verse	What it says
4. Verse	What it says	4. Verse	What it says
5. Verse	What it says	5. Verse	What it says



KEY POINTS

- 1 Sayyidah Maryam was constantly in communication with Allah; she turned only to Him for support and assistance.
- 2 Sayyidah Maryam became pregnant miraculously. When the people accused her of indecency, Allah commanded her to remain silent and to allow Nabi Isa to speak.
- 3 Mothers are the source of good qualities and values in their children. Sayyidah Maryam was a source of chastity, modesty, patience, and love for Allah.
- 4 The human tongue is a blessing from Allah but it must be controlled. Islam has given special attention to speech, its style, *akhlaq*, and rules; the words that we speak reveal our intellectual and moral nature.

TEST YOURSELF



- 1 Complete the following *hadith* of Imam Ali (a):

'The weight of the _____
 _____ is _____
 but the _____ and the crimes
 of the _____
 are _____.'

- 2 What is the right of the tongue in Islam?

- 3 List three ways the people hurt Sayyidah Maryam with their speech; what could they have done differently?

- 4 According to Islamic *akhlaq*, briefly describe the tone of voice, style, and content of speech we should adopt.
