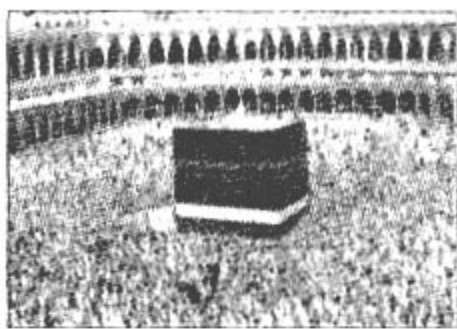


ISLAM

Right use of speech

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan



People are generally in the habit of speaking more and thinking less. The Quran is critical of this unhealthy habit. In chapter Al-Nisa, the Quran says: *There is no good in most of their secret talk, except in the case of those who enjoin charity and kindness, or reconciliation between people. If anyone does that, seeking the pleasure of God, We will give him an immense reward. (4:114)*

This Quranic verse sets the standard for secret as well as open talk, namely, soundness and utility. One can live up to this standard by being sincere in what one says and speaking after analysing a matter. What one says should stem from a positive mind. According to this verse, man must refrain from futile talk. He should never indulge in talking just

for the sake of talking. Now the question is what is the best manner of speaking? And what content of one's speech may be regarded as worthwhile? The Quranic criterion for it is based on three principles. All three are described in the above verse of the Quran, which sets them forth as follows:

1. Charity that is, speaking with the true giving spirit.
2. Kindness, that is, speaking with the spirit of well-wishing towards others.
3. Conciliation that is, speaking in such a way as to create an atmosphere of harmony among people.

This constitutes a well thought-out speech and is the only legitimate use of one's tongue. This speech is useful to both the speaker and the listener. For the speaker's part, it conveys sincerity and positivity, while for the listener it is fruitful in all respects. The tongue is like a double-edged sword. Its right use can create the spirit of love, while its wrong use will create hatred and intolerance in society.