

“SPEAK NO EVIL”

by [the late] **Vimala Channabasappa**

Speech is a very important aspect of human civilization. In Hindu culture, speech is considered so important that Goddess Saraswati is called ‘Wani’ (voice) and ‘Bhasha’ (language). Because speech is a major means of communication, we need to use speech and written language very carefully. “*Matu adidare hoyitu; muta odedare hoyitu,*” states Kannada folk wisdom. Speech is as precious as a pearl and as fragile. Use them both carefully lest they break. A broken pearl cannot be put back together. So also a word used carelessly cannot be withdrawn and the harm done by the use of a careless word cannot be undone. Use your speech more discreetly; use your words wisely.

This is even more important with written language. Written words almost become history. In today’s world, written words seem to acquire so much validity that they are considered history even if they happen to be lies. I know of instances where individuals have done exactly that, and intentionally. Some have denigrated others, so that they themselves look better by comparison. Both are wrong. In this way, they become sinners.

At the beginning of our daily puje, we make a Sankalpa or determination, saying: “*Mama kayika vachika manasika jnyatajnyata samasta papa kshayatham Shreemad Ishtalinga, Pranalinga, Bhavalingadishtaneshta Pujam Karishye.*” In other words, we pray to God that the sins of our body, mind, and speech, committed knowingly or unknowingly be forgiven. It would be better still to “See no evil; Hear no evil; and Speak no evil.” At least try to do so. We are what we think. We are what we say. We are what we do. So, tell no lies. Never hurt others with your words or deeds.

*Do not steal, do not kill, do not tell untruth,
Do not get angry, nor show disgust towards others
Do not boast about yourself, nor rebuke others.*

We all know of these commandments from **Basavanna**’s vachanas. If we try to bring these words of wisdom into practice, all our lives would be better. Not only should we not steal, kill, or utter lies, we should avoid getting angry and hurting others’ feelings.

“*Satyam bruyat, Priyam bruyat, ma bruyat satyam apriyam.*” My father often used to quote this Sanskrit saying to us. It means: Speak the truth, Speak the pleasing, do not speak the truth if it is unpleasant. If we follow this ancient wisdom, most of our human relations would be improved. “*Ayya endade Swarga, yelawao endade Naraka, Deva bhakta jayajeeya emba nudiyalage Kailasavidudu,*” says Basavanna. Being polite and humble, saying respectful words brings one closer to God.

*When you speak, your words should be like a string of pearls,
When you speak, your words should be like the luster of a ruby,
When you speak, your words should be like the flash of a crystal beam,
When you speak, your words should be such that God would say Bravo.*

said **Basavanna**. How wonderful it would be if our words are as beautiful as pearls, as brilliant as rubies, and as pure as crystals. **Lord Shiva** will be certainly pleased.

[**Note:** I found this piece recently among the mountain of papers at my mother’s house. She must have written this some years ago. I thought that it was appropriate for the **Basava Wani**. Hope you do not mind its inclusion here. – **Editor.**]

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