

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[Right Companionship: from Here to the Hereafter](#)

Allah Swt reveals in the Holy Qur'an:

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you treat your parents with goodness. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say “uff!” to them and do not reject them, but speak honorable words to them. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say, “My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up when I was small.”

And also in Holy Qur'an in Surah Luqman, Allah Swt says:

But if they struggle with you to make you ascribe to Me a partner about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them but accompany them in this world with kindness, and follow the way of the one who turns back to Me. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.

The subject of companionship is a big subject. The word *suhbah*, *sahabaha* occurs in the Qur'an almost 100 times. It has different facets to its meaning: companionship, to make friends, to accompany, to associate, to escort. Also in the form of “*sahib*,” which you may remember from old movies, it means master. You have this gamut [in the definitions] of a companion, from someone who accompanies you to someone who has mastery over you or you serve. Of course, we talk about *suhbat*, where we are in companionship. It's not just the meaning – the meaning could be called a *halkah* / circle – it is this relationship.

Nothing in life for the human being is unaffected by relationships; therefore, everything in life has to have an understanding of the dimension of relationships. Everything in life has to have an understanding of that. Not all relationships are the same, nor are they the same all the time. Nor can all relationships reach the depth that some relationships can. Certainly, not everyone can make the same commitments and have the same levels of faith and trust. The word and concept of companionship extends from the womb to the grave and beyond. We are told that we are companions, and we have souls in the *ghaib*, and that we have companionship in the grave. There is no place where companionship has no meaning. It has meaning in every aspect of our life.

At different times in our life, we may think of it in different ways. We want to have friends, companions, partners, fellow workers, and different things are emphasized at different times. Sometimes you are happy, and companionship means one thing. Sometimes you are lonely, and it means another thing. We have to understand the depth and fullness of it. In this world today, it includes some good things and some not so good things. Unless we have a strong sense of our own dignity and the meaning of life, we can dilute the meaning of friendship and companionship, and the subtleties of it.

Often, at the beginning of relationships, the companionship is very strong and very intense; then it becomes more and more subtle. We can find ourselves in the companionship of wrong people for the wrong reasons, or in the companionship of wrong people for what we think are good reasons. So you start with the basics, as we did in Qur'an. It begins with our family, our parents. It begins with our blood family, our sisters, our brothers, our parents, our children. It extends to our neighbors, our community, our village, our close friends, our school friends and teachers. And then it extends to the *ulema*, the *sahabah*, the *shaykh*, the *murshid*, the *muridīn*, and then the whole community of believers, the *ummah*.

The community of disbelievers we also have relationships with. In the grave, it includes good and bad relationships. Those buried next to you may be, *inshā'a-llāh*, good Muslims, good friends, as we hope in our cemetery. Maybe some people in this world are buried next to someone who is not such a good person. There is relationship even in the grave. In the Hereafter, our companions could be the people of hell or the people of Jannah. Of course, we hope it's the latter. How do we arrange for the good to happen? That's what we always want to do, whether in this world or not in this world. We want to have some fun; we want to enjoy life. We [also] want to be in good companionship here and in the Hereafter.

As we get older, we appreciate more and more those relationships and friendships. We want to understand them. Even from childhood, we should treat relationships with a great deal of seriousness, and kindness, and love and respect. Know what is true and what is false. Often young people get into bad relationships with people, for reasons that are very worldly. But if you treat people with good will, then usually good things will come about, as least for you. The Qur'an says: **“But if they struggle with you to make you ascribe to me a partner about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them.”** Even the Qur'an tells us you have to have respect and love for others and for your parents. If your parent says to you, “Do not be a Muslim,” or “Disavow your faith,” and you still treat your parent with love and kindness over the years, they will come to accept, if not Islam, then the love.

I was watching television the other day. This Pakistani woman was being forced to marry a relative. She's all over the news these days, and has written a book. She says it's the Pakistani culture that forces people to do that, yet she gave up her religion to become a Catholic. What a shame. Given the fact that she could articulate that these things were cultural, she couldn't find in Islam a reason to stay.

Allah says, **“Consort with them in the world kindly, and follow the path of who repents to Me.”** You have to deal with people in this world and be kind to them, but try not to make mistakes. Companionship has to do with lines we draw, with standards we hold, with ethics we have. Even if our parents are ill, or have dementia, or Alzheimer’s, or are incapacitated, we have to always treat them with kindness. We shouldn’t complain for taking care of them. We have seen examples here in our own community. May Allah reward all of you for your kindness, your patience and your love. Allah tells us they are the best companions for us when we are young; and in their old age, we are their best companions. In the world we live in today, we cannot say for sure that every parent was the best companion, I guess. We can say that our parents here were, and hopefully we are too, good companions for our children.

We look around the world and we can see where the problems lie. **“If one or both of them reach old age with you, say not ‘fie’ to them nor repulse them but speak to them a gracious word.”** Next to our parents are our brothers and sisters, we see with patience and love what examples of brotherhood and sisterhood we have here, *alhamdulillah*. We have to treat our brothers and sisters with love and affection and care for them. We have a duty toward our relatives and our extended family. We have a duty to our community, and we should take care of everyone. We should make sure they are not being taken care of just because they are our parents or are near to us, but they are being taken care of because caring for others is the right thing to do.

But, of course, there is that special relationship. We shouldn’t capitalize in any negative way on it; we should care for them because they are our companions. Even in the world today, it says that our parents took care of us when we were young, and we have to take care of them when we are older. I saw a news report this morning: some incredible percentage of people who are under the age of 35 are still living with their parents. The question I have is, “Are they paying rent?”

Our neighbors are also somewhat companions to us. We have some very good neighbors, across the road, at least. Whether a person is a Muslim or non-Muslim, we have the responsibility to see to some degree to their welfare and their benefit. Not to the degree of our family or extended family, but we have a duty through another agency, perhaps, through their family or friends. Allah says, **“Worship Allah and ascribe no partners to Him, and show kindness unto parents, to those near kindred, orphans, and the needy, and unto the neighbor who is kin to you, and unto the neighbor who is not kin to you, and to the fellow traveler and to the wayfarer, and to the ones whom your right hand possesses. Lo, Allah loves not those who are proud and boastful.”**

There is a subtlety here I want to bring attention to, and that is our own ego.

The subtlety is how we sometimes have the tendency to play off our own weaknesses on other people. The subtlety is the fact that if we are companions of one another, we must also be companions of others whom we don't know. If we treat others as our companions (not just our brothers and sisters and parents), we must understand the great benefit in doing that accrues to those of us who have that in our hearts, fulfilling our duties, but not with too much expectation of others. The second set of points we have to try to grasp is not to play off our own weaknesses and desires, wants, and confusions on others, bringing them closer than they should be, or putting yourself closer to them than you should be. Why? You don't know them as you know your parents. You don't know them as you know the members of this community, your brothers and sisters. And sometimes we don't even know the members of the community.

You don't know them as much as you know your Shaykh and the other members of the *ummah*. Don't exploit the natural tendency of companionship, and don't make assumptions about it that are not correct. We have other kinds of companions, too: our peer group, our school mates, the people we work with. But what Allah calls us and tells us about is very interesting. We should be very, very careful about whom we select and whom we have relationships and companionship with (especially our young people). If

we don't select them properly, for the right reasons, from the basis of our own values and beliefs, then we will be misled invariably. They will influence us in the wrong way, and we will have strange occurrences, and a sense of alienation. We will have loyalty to them more than we have toward our own parents, our own brothers and sisters, and those who love us and who have loved us our whole life. Our minds get twisted up. It happens; we have seen it happen.

We protect the stranger more than we protect the love in our homes, more than the love in our hearts. This is what leads to the hell of separation, the hell of ignorance, and the hell of anesthetizing the heart and the brain. *"Tell me," it was said, "with whom do you associate yourself? And I will tell you who you are."* That's how we know. Our way back out of that is to have companionship with those who love us and whom we love – not to mistake definitions of love and friendship and companionship, however – with those who will love you unequivocally, those who will serve you unequivocally, those who will live and die for you and fight beside you, who will be patient with you, who will hold you, who will speak to you the truth in a way you can understand it. [Then you can] listen to it for the sake of the truth, for the sake of what is right, and for the sake of Allah.

It is said that the best among your friends is the one who reminds you when you forget; and even if you remember, he helps you with your memory. What does that mean? It means there is not just communication, there is a subtle communication, like I am trying to get through today. There is a subtle communication in refining subtle understandings through tenderness and kindness; this is the most important thing. It is not to take the way of torpor and laziness, not to take the way of assumptions, of expectations that are unwarranted. Rather, [take the way of] the subtlety of the fragrance of the bouquet of flowers in the spring that we are in now. There should be expectations among friends and families, and we should all know what they are, and we should strive to fulfill them. We should have expectations of our children, of our parents, of our families and friends, but not transfer them to the neighbor, or to the person you just met, in reality or virtually.

They are not all transferrable. Just because you as Sufis may have the capacity to expand your love, doesn't mean it will be received properly, nor is it deserved.

There is another group of people with whom we should associate: those with real knowledge. Sometimes they are among us, and sometimes we have to seek them out. When we bring such people here, and when we seek them out, we all benefit. Those who are the nearest and dearest to us, those who have the most intimate, trusting and caring relationship with us, with whom we do not have to be on guard, with whom we have committed to understanding and to share our life are the true companions, the true partners, the true friends in this world and in the Hereafter.

The Qur'an is full of instructions and advice, commands and admonitions on how to have a human and humane relationship. But at the core of it, we have to be able to live peacefully and happily, to share the good life, to reach an understanding and agreement, to not be adversarial, to be companions and partners in life. These dimensions I have discussed are the goal. Companionship is promised in Paradise. We will be sitting together in the pleasant shade on thrones, or reclining in a beautiful environment; although, you don't want to recline and eat, because you can get choked that way. There's a *hadith* about not eating when you are lying down.

If we read more Qur'an and find the guidance there, we find many things. When the Prophet Yusuf (as) had been taken to prison for no reason, falsely accused, he made friends there. He talked to his friends about Allah Swt. In the grave people will live peacefully and have a happy life, or they will have punishment and the pressure of the grave will be strong against their chest. Muslims should be buried in their own cemeteries and receive blessings by those who are good. Life doesn't stop. When we rise from the graves on the Day of Judgment, every person will have to account and will be busy with their own problems, and everyone will face that accountability, and there will be no time to be worried about anyone else. On that day, our companionship and

fellowship may seem to be gone, but it tells us in the Qur'an, we will all pass the test because Allah sees into our hearts, not just our actions.

So we should be very, very careful in our relationships. There are young people here and older people here, and it applies to all of us. The similitude of a good companion is like the owner of musk. If you do not get anything, you will get the smell of it. The similitude of a bad companion is that like a blacksmith's bellows. If you are not affected by its black dirt, you will be touched by its smoke. You might think of it this way: walking into the kitchen on Wednesday or Saturday when people are cooking. When you come out of the kitchen, the kitchen comes out with you on your clothes. The Prophet (sal) also said, ***“Do not take a companion unless he or she is a believer, and do not let your food be eaten except by a goodly person.”*** In another *hadith*, the Prophet (sal) said, ***“Therefore you should look for one to associate with and be a friend of.”***

It means very clearly there are degrees and levels of companionship and friendship and association. If a person really is a Muslim, a *mu'min*, then that person wants to help and they do help. There are so many people trying to help other people in this world, some for good reasons and some out of compassion. Some have another agenda: maybe to change their religion. But the worst is the arrogant person who acts as if they are helping someone, but what they are doing is building their own ego and their own reputation. So this whole subject of companionship is extremely important, and one that should be contemplated not just by us but by our children. Understand, it's not something one enters into without real consideration and guidance, with the advice of those who are older and more knowledgeable, *inshā'a-llāh*.