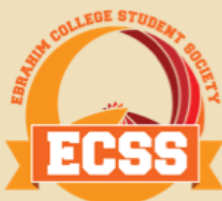




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ISSUE 2

Companionship



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Pious Company, Like a Good Cup of Tea

Once, my colleagues and I were seated in the presence of my Shaykh and mentor, Mawlana Abdul Hamid Ishaq, *may Allah ta`ala preserve him*. It was his noble habit to summarise great eternal truths with simple everyday examples and phenomena. That day, he spoke to us about the importance of pious, righteous company. He compared it to making a cup of tea.

You first begin with cold water. Needless to say, cold water isn't suitable for your purpose. You pop the water in a kettle and heat it up. Slowly, the water comes to a boil. You pour the boiling liquid into a cup or mug. At this point, the water is clear, transparent and colourless. You put the teabag into the boiling water. The clear, boiling liquid will begin to change, its transparency clouded by the contents of the teabag. The water transforms from tan to taupe as the hot liquid percolates through the teabag. After some time, when you feel the tea has reached your preferred strength, you add fresh, creamy milk. You see the dark, ominous water turn milky white. The tea is not ready yet for consumption. It needs a little sugar, just a little, to sweeten the beverage. Now, it can be enjoyed and relished. The beverage puts you into a good mood which you share with your near and dear ones.

Entering into the company of the pious is somewhat similar. You begin as 'cold water', indifferent and unconcerned with spiritual purity. The warmth of *nur* is yet to permeate your being. Your initial state is 'clear and transparent', thinking yourself to be pure of sin and spiritual illnesses. You have no idea of the problems lurking inside you. After establishing constant contact and once you begin frequenting gatherings, slowly but surely, you begin to 'warm up'. You become infused with a new mission in life, a new purpose and motivation. You start to look back at the life of heedlessness and sin. You become disgusted with it. Your revulsion with your former self and determination for change and repentance brings you 'to the boil'. You are ready to be initiated into *tazkiya*.

This is where The Righteous introduce you to your reality. Through their gatherings, you see the extent of your evil and sin. You become acutely aware of your 'dark, ominous' history. Through admonition and chastisement, prescriptions of *dhikr* and worship, sincere repentance and spiritual exercises, you slowly turn 'milky white', infused with *nur* and purity, resplendent with fine actions and outstanding character.

Your life has changed. You are free of the shackles of unrepented sin. You look forward to each day, an opportunity to gain *qurb*. Before, you found it extremely difficult to carry out obligations. Now, the Commandments have become second nature and you look forward to optional worship.

Despite improving greatly, compared to your previous life, you are still not ready. One thing is missing: the 'spoon of sugar', the sweet, delicious, passionate love of Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. You carry out His Commandments because you love Him. You feel His passion coursing through your veins and permeating every fibre of your body. You see Allah the Magnificent in the Signs of the heavens and earth. You yearn to meet Him, to gaze upon His beauty and glory. The sweetness of His love fills you and overflows, spreading to those around you. While you live, you are a mercy and light to humanity. When you pass away, the world will sorely miss you as your spirit soars to its Sustainer.

Mufti Khalidul Haq al-Ameen



On the authority of Abu Mūsa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The likeness of a righteous friend and an evil friend is the likeness of a (musk) perfume seller and a blacksmith. As for the perfume seller, he may either impart something on you, or you may purchase something from him, or you may benefit from his pleasant fragrance. And as for the blacksmith, he may either burn your clothes, or you may be exposed to his unpleasant smell." [Bukhari and Muslim]

This is one of the many narrations from the Prophet ﷺ that touches the heart with a striking simile, splendid in its style & rhetoric, yet simple in its ingenious explanation. The simple, yet effective explanation has a profound effect on the heart and mind.

The first sentence presents the objective of the hadith; friendship and companionship. The Prophet ﷺ distinguishes between a righteous friend who may benefit you and an evil friend who may harm you. The second sentence highlights the preferred company, the righteous friend who keeps the heart content and the spirit in harmony. He/she provides encouragement during times of hardship and provides motivation in times of ease. But most importantly, the righteous friend improves one's Islamic character and *īmān*.

Companionship forms an integral part of our life whether it is with family, friends, colleagues or acquaintances. In every phase of our lives, we find ourselves making the choice of whom to befriend; at kindergarten, primary school, secondary school, college, university, work, and so on.

Allah ﷻ created human beings as social creatures and Islam regulated social life according to the established rules of *shari'āh*. Numerous studies suggest that peer pressure is vital in the way humans behave, particularly in youth, driving them towards smoking, drugs, alcohol and indecent sexual behaviour. Thus, this distinction between the types of friends is vital in aiding an informed decision. In fact, the Prophet ﷺ has frequently stressed on the importance of one's friends or immediate social surroundings, he said:

"المرءُ على دين خَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مَنْ يُخَالِلُ"

"A man is on the religion of his close friend, so each of you should look to whom you take as close friends." [Tirmidhi]

Imam Ghazāli has categorised friendship in his *Bidāyat al-Hidāya*:-

1. A brother for the sake of your Hereafter: He is like nourishment, which you cannot live without. Continue to seek support from him in religious practices.
2. A brother for the sake of your worldly life: He is like medicine, which you need from time to time. Seek good character from him.
3. A brother who is simply agreeable company: He is like an illness that is never needed at all, yet you become afflicted by it. Seek being safe from his wickedness & evil.

An Arabic proverb which sums up the company one keeps:

Do not ask about the person rather ask about his company,

For every person is recognised by the company he keeps.

"عن المرء لا تسأل وسل"

عن قرينه فكل قرين بالمقارن يقتدي"

Ali رضي الله عنه said regarding a true friend:

Verily, your true brother is he, who is with you,

Who will harm himself in order to benefit you.

And who, when the troubles of the time break you,

will shatter his self to pieces in order to gather you.

إِنَّ أَخَاكَ الْحَقَّ مَنْ كَانَ مَعَكَ

وَمَنْ يَضُرُّ نَفْسَهُ لِيَنْفَعَكَ

وَمَنْ إِذَا رَيْبُ الزَّمَانِ صَدَّعَكَ

شَتَّتَ فِيهِ شَمْلَهُ لِيَجْمَعَكَ

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “No two friends share each other’s company, except that the kinder and more caring of the two toward the other is more beloved to Allah, Mighty and Majestic.”

And lastly, Allah ﷻ says:

﴿الْأَخْلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

The greatest companionship that we possess is the one which is never apart from us; whether we're at home or traveling, whether we're asleep or awake, whether we're experiencing hardship or ease in our life and most importantly at our death and beyond. Our Lord, Protector, Master and Creator is beside us always, yet we are devoid of the sweetness of His presence due to our inability to appreciate and comprehend Him. Allah Almighty says: “*I am the Companion of the one who engages in remembrance of Me.*” (Shu’ab al- Iman).

As you take a step towards getting to know Allah as He deserves to be known, the company you choose will either carry you forth towards this divine relationship or slow you down. So choose wisely...

ونسألُ اللهَ - تعالى - أن يملأَ قلوبنا حُبًّا ورحمةً لكل المؤمنين

Saleha I. Bukhari, Alimiyyah Five



Dear Friend

Dear Friend,

Many years we have lived and many we have been together.
It is in my lonely moments do I begin to ponder.
Recalling all our memories I smile, only now do I realise.
How much these years mean to me and how I see you through my eyes.

Our first memory was a very awkward but funny beginning.
It was a lonely start, but I know you'll be there for my ending.
They say opposites attract and we are the same personality.
Who knew that we, together, would defy a saying of society.

Dear Friend,

Everyday I felt like a nobody and felt unworthy of another.
I searched everywhere, but for every attempt, nothing could I uncover.
Then you came into my life, finally I was accepted.
I found a hand, a friend, no more did I feel neglected.

Dear friend,

Fearful to approach people, to connect, within me I found no solace.
My soul, lost was weak, my heart hopeless, void of any promise.
When you came into my life, my breath eased, a calm overcame me.
Together we were a spectacle, the world envious of our camaraderie.

Dear Friend,

To belong, for my words to be heard was all I ever wanted.
I cried out for help and it was you who listened and responded.
With you as my aid, I finally opened my eyes, living each day.
I still cannot comprehend it, my salvation began with "are you okay?"

Dear Friend,

You said all my pain, along with all of its unbearable sorrow,
The tears that escaped me, the absent breaths which left me hollow;
Was my hope, relentlessly fighting the despair, to save and set me
free.

It will shape me and form the man that I am destined to be.

Never will I forget you, your words, your liberating affection.
Your sacrifice, support, your unconditional trust and compassion.
To be there for others as you are for me, my newfound ambition.
From the depths of all that I know, thank you for accepting me,
my cherished companion.

A Scribe, Alimiyyah Two



Fruits of the Same Tree

The day of departure has come; the pain of farewell is vivid on our smiles. But hope is flourishing in our hearts as we embark on our own separate journeys. And with every new step brings new company.

Know that this is neither the first nor the last of your journeys. For every stage of your life there will be farewells to one companion and greetings to another. After all, what is companionship except greetings and farewells?

Should you ever feel lonely in this new adventure of yours then remember our individual paths are branches of the same tree, struggling towards the same light. Like this, we are clinging to the straight path, but our individual routes are different.

Strive and keep on striving, until the day we have fully ripened. And when the day has come for the fruits to finally be plucked from the tree, I pray you and I are gathered in the same basket.

Ibn Saleem, Alimiyyah Three

Reflections on Good Companionship

To attain the true fruits of good *suhba*, we must be in the company of those whom we wish to emulate. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“A person is upon the religion of his friend, so take care to whom you befriend.” [Tirmidhi & Abu Dawud]

To copy those around you is an integral part of our disposition as humans, even whilst two people walk together on a path their footsteps soon coincide, so what of their hearts?

It has been said that, in our time, the worst of company can be accessed by a few deft strokes on a keyboard, and the souls can be exposed for hours to detrimental discourse which clouds the mind and blackens the heart. May Allah ﷻ protect us from that.

Many a time Shaytan beautifies evil to the believer by intermingling it with good, so it appears fair-seeming to the onlooker, until it becomes difficult for one to distinguish between the twain. We live in a time where morality is fluid and in flux, where people’s desires become a justification to carry out an act. So, we must be cautious as to what narratives feed our minds, since they can affect our beliefs and actions. Even a book can be a bad companion.

Sheikh Akram Nadwi حفظه الله mentioned the reason why Islam seems to appear backward, medieval and at times evil to people. He said it is because they are looking at it through their diseased and corrupted hearts which disfigures and contorts it beyond recognition, like a funhouse mirror at the circus. If one wishes to see Islam purely for what it is then he must gaze at it through a medium which is also pure. To a sick person, delicious food is tasteless. So, one must keep the heart pure as otherwise, if it is corrupt, a sound mind will not avail you; your mind may know the truth, but the heart will not accept it.

Therefore, it is vital to hold fast to those who have seriousness in terms of their religion and have gracious character traits, as they will better your behaviour, by comparing yourself with them you will find what is wanting in yourself.

These are a few lines of a *qasīda* which illustrates this beautifully;

There is no delight in this life except the company of the

Godly, They are the Sultans, the Elite, the Princes.

Be with them and uphold the high manners of their gatherings,

And leave your own desire behind when they put you forward.

Take advantage of your time, attending with them always,

*Know that the Divine Pleasure singles out those who are
present.*

مالذة العيش إلا صحبة الفقراء ~

هم السلاطين و السادات والأمراء

فاصحابهم و تأدب في مجالسهم ~

وخلي حظك مهما قدموك وراء

و استغنم الوقت و احضر دائما معهم ~

و اعلم بأن الرضاء يخص من حضرا

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Allah Almighty has angels who travel the highways and by-ways seeking out gatherings of remembrance in the earth. When they find a gathering of remembrance, they enfold them with their wings stretching up to the heaven. Allah ﷻ asks them, ‘From where have you come?’ They reply, ‘We have come from Your slaves who are glorifying You, praising You, proclaiming Your oneness, asking of You and seeking refuge with You.’ He says, and He knows better than them, ‘What are they asking Me for?’ They reply, ‘They are asking You for the Garden.’ He says, ‘Have they seen it?’ They reply, ‘No, our Lord.’ He says, ‘How would it be if they were to see it?’ Then He asks, and He knows better than them, ‘What are they seeking refuge from?’ ‘From the Fire,’ they reply. He asks, ‘Have they seen it?’ ‘No,’ they reply. Then He says, ‘How would it be if they were to see it?’ Then He says, ‘I testify to you that I have forgiven them, I have given them what they ask Me for, and I give them the refuge which they ask of Me.’ They say, ‘Our Lord, among them is a wrongdoer who is sitting with them, but is not one of them.’ He says, ‘I have forgiven him as well. The one sitting with these people will not be wretched.’” [Muslim, Tirmidhi, al-Hakim]

These gatherings can be for the recitation of the Quran, passing on knowledge, *dhikr* and singing in praise of Allah ﷻ and his Prophet ﷺ. There is a hadith which states:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ أَلَا إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا مَلْعُونَةٌ مَلْعُونٌ مَا فِيهَا إِلَّا ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ وَمَا وَالَاهُ وَعَالِمٌ أَوْ مُتَعَلِّمٌ

Abu Huraira رضي الله عنه reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, “Indeed the world and all it contains is cursed except for the remembrance of Allah and what facilitates it, the scholar and the seeker of knowledge.”

We should strive to always be together in blessed gatherings, doing good works. Allah ﷻ says in the Quran, “And hold fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and do not separate.”

The greatest benefit can be found whilst working together. I find that when I revise by myself I do not achieve as much as when I revise with my fellow sisters – there is *barakah* in *jama'ah*. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: “There are no three men in a town or in the desert among whom prayer is not established, but the Shaytan has taken control of them, so you must adhere to the *jama'ah*, for the wolf only eats the sheep that wanders away on its own.” [Abu Dawud and Nasa'i]

The following couplet is about such people; the purpose of their gatherings is Allah and there is much benefit found in their companionship.

We are the chains of transmission, we have attestations,
Every benefit can be found in our company.

نَحْنُ الْأَسَانِدُ لَنَا شَوَاهِدٌ ~
كُلُّ الْفَوَائِدِ فِي صُحْبَتِنَا

InshaAllah by spending time with such righteous people, we will come to realise that there is the company of One whose companionship presides over any other. By spending moments alone with Him we will find sweetness only in His Divine Presence; we may have a taste of it in this life, but in the next it will be “better and longer lasting for those who have *īmān* and trust in their Lord”. [42:36]

I will end on this couplet which outlines the best *suhba*:

Allah, by His Companionship, we have won,
And from the path of conjecture, we have dissociated.
The rank of Proximity has grieved us,
But by His Pleasure, we have reached our goal.

والله بصحبته فزنا وصراط الوهم لقد جزنا
ومقام القرب لقد حزنا برضاه بلغنا المقصودا

Sarah Aslam, Alimiyyah Five

The Fulfilment of Friendship

A beautiful ayah from the Qur'an comes to mind when thinking about the companionship between spouses, Allah ﷻ says in *Surah Baqarah*, verse 187:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ

Allah ﷻ has made wives a covering for their husbands, and in return, husbands are a covering for them. When Allah ﷻ mentions the fact that the husband and wife are a covering for one another, He ﷻ is speaking of a bond which transcends mere company, in fact they become an emblem of protection, safety and contentment for each other.

Admittedly, marital life is not sheer perfection and like any phase in the *dunya*, this companionship will stumble across obstacles, and it is up to us to decide whether we immerse ourselves in a fantasy associated with marital life, or create a visible goal to head towards.

Thus, we can take a few lessons from this ayah. Firstly, our clothing protects us from the worst of weather conditions. Just as our clothing protect our bare, frail bodies from external conditions, a wife hide her husband's deficiencies or weakness, and for her, he does the same. Like this, during her difficulties and the pain she endures, he becomes her *libās* (clothing) and shields her from the oncoming obstacles through his constant reassurance and encouragement. Conversely, in moments of stress, she should become his haven and breath of fresh air as well as a hub of comfort and rejuvenation.

In *Surah Nisa*, verse 34, Allah ﷻ mentions the duty of care and responsibility that He has placed upon the husband for the welfare of his wife, *subhanAllah* how harmoniously Allah has planned, taking into consideration the *fitra* of the man and woman.

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

Furthermore, it is through the company of a husband and wife that we are reminded of Allah ﷻ and the signs that He has placed for us to give *shukr* and devotion to Him;

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

In the creation of spouses do we reveal the greatness of Allah ﷻ. Not only has Allah ﷻ created these souls as individuals, but also destined them for one another, so that that peace, harmony and coolness can blossom between them.

We should remind ourselves of this when we reach difficult and turbulent times, perhaps even feel emotionally down, that this bond reflects our submission to Allah ﷻ and only through a relentless determination can we establish a legacy just like the examples of our pious predecessors.

Lamia Begum, Alimiyyah Two



الصحة الطيبة

اتفقت الأديان السماوية والشرائع الإلهية من اليهودية والنصرانية والإسلام على أن أول إنسان خلقه الله ﷻ هو آدم ، فأسجد له ملائكته وعلمه الأسماء كلها ، يتجول في الجنان ويعيش فيها بأمن وأمان ، لكن بعد برهة من الزمن بدأ يشعر بالوحشة فرفع إلى ربه يد الضراعة (وكذلك يفعله كل نبي) أن يؤنس وحشته ويزيل سأمته وينفّس كآبته فاستجاب الله هذا الدعاء وخلق لآدم زوجا اسمها حواء .

فالإنسان يحتاج إلى الأُنس والصحة ويميل من طول الوحدة والعزلة ، ولله در القائل :

وما سُمِّي الإنسانُ إلا لأنسه ~ ولا القلبُ إلا أنه يتقلب

فالإنسان ابنُ بيئته وله حظ من اسمه والجنس يميل إلى جنسه ، وكل قرين بالمقارن يقتدي ، فمن صاحب

الأخيار ، انشرح صدره واستنار ، وأما من خالط الأشرار تسرّب إليه بعضُ شرهم أو قادهوه إلى المعاصي والعار .

وروى الشيخان عن الصحابي الجليل أبو موسى الأشعري رضي الله عنه قال ، قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم :

"إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الْجَلِيسِ الصَّالِحِ وَالْجَلِيسِ السَّوِّءِ ، كَحَامِلِ الْمَسْكِ وَنَافِخِ الْكَبِيرِ ، فَحَامِلِ الْمَسْكِ إِمَّا أَنْ يُحْدِثَكَ إِمَامًا أَنْ تَبْتَاعَ مِنْهُ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رِيحًا طَيِّبَةً ، وَنَافِخِ الْكَبِيرِ إِمَّا أَنْ يَحْرِقَ ثِيَابَكَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْهُ رِيحًا خَبِيثَةً"

شبه النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم الجليس الصالح بحامل المسك الذي إما أن يهديك مسكا أو تشتريه منه ، أو

على الأقل تنثني عنه ويتضوع المسك منك . وكذلك الجليس الصالح فإنه يدلك على الخير ويرشدك إلى ما هو أصلح لك

في دنياك وعقبك ، وإذا اعوججت يقومك ويغفر زلتك ويقيل عثرتك ويستتر عورتك .

ثم شبه النبي ﷺ الجليس السوء بالحداد الذي يصهر الحديد وينفخه فيتطاير الشرر ، فإما أن تحترق ثيابك أو

تجد منه ريحا كريهة ، وكذلك الجليس الطالح ، إما يفسد عليك دينك وإما يخلل فكرك . وليس بمحال إذا أمرك بالمنكر

ونهاك عن المعروف كذلك .

وإذا استبعد ذلك من المراهقين مستبعد ذكرنا له نص الحديث الذي يقرر ثبوت العدوى في الحسيات فقال النبي

ﷺ (لا عدوى ولا طيرة) أي لا يُعدِّ بعضكم بعضا ولا تشاءموا بالطير وقال في حديث آخر (لا يُوردن ممرضٌ على

مصحٍّ) ففي هذا الحديث نهى النبي ﷺ صاحب الإبل المريضة أن يوردها على الإبل الصحيحة وما ذلك إلا للعدوى

بتقدير الله تعالى ، والذي يجدر بالذكر ههنا أن النبي ﷺ قد قرر ثبوت العدوى في المعنويات أيضا ، قال رسول الله ﷺ : (الرجل على دين خليله ، فلينظر أحدكم من يخالل)

فالإنسان مجبول على الاقتداء بخليله وصاحبه ، وقال أحد المفكرين : "الأصدقاء ثلاثة ، الأول : كالغذاء لا بد منه ، والثاني : كالدواء يُصار إليه وقت الحاجة ، والثالث : كالداء لا يُحتاج إليه قط" ، فالأول هو الجليس الصالح ، والثالث هو الجليس السوء ، والثاني هو الجليس الذي به بعض صفات السوء ولكن يرتجى منه الخير .

وقديما قالوا : " الرفيق قبل الطريق والجار قبل الدار" . لأن السفر يطول والحال يحول ويمر المسافر بمراحل يكون في حاجة إلى سمير ومؤانس ، لذا حذروا من السفر بمفرده أولا ثم أوصوه باختيار الرفيق الطيب ثانيا لتكون الرحلة ممتعة والعودة بحسن الصحبة مثمرة . والجار إن لم يكن يحسن الجوار يشق عليك المكث في تلك الدار .

ولنا في سيرة النبي ﷺ أسوة حسنة ، فالرب عز وجل لم ينزل القرآن على الأوراق وبالتالي أمر بتوزيعها على الأمة بل نزله على الصادق الأمين محمد ﷺ ليعيش بالقرآن بين أظهرهم ، يصاحبونه في جلواته فيعاينون حركاته وسكناته ويستنون بسنته ويهتدون بهديه وحق لهم أن يقالوا " أصحاب رسول الله " فقد صحبوه في كل أحواله ، سراءه وضراره .

وسلفنا الصالحون تعلموا العلم لكنهم لم يدرسوا بالمحاضرات وقراءة المجلدات والنظر إلى المطولات فحسب بل بالتلقي عن الأساتذة الثقات والتتلمذ عليهم عن طريق المشافهة ، فالعلم لا يُحمل عن صحفي ولا يؤخذ القرآن من مصحفي .

أما الوحدة فخير من جليس الشر ففي العزلة حينئذ راحة من خلاط الضر ولذلك قال الإمام الحميدي

لِقَاءِ النَّاسِ لَيْسَ يُفِيدُ شَيْئًا سِوَى آلِهِ ذِيَانٍ مِنْ قَيْلٍ وَقَالَ
فَأَقْلِلْ مِنْ لِقَاءِ النَّاسِ إِلَّا لِأَخْذِ الْعِلْمِ أَوْ إِصْلَاحِ حَالٍ

ابن عسکر البريطاني

The three heavenly religions and divine revelations of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are unanimous in the belief that the first man created by God was Adam عليه السلام. In the Islamic narrative, Allah ﷻ made the angels prostrate to him and taught him the names of all things. He was roaming freely throughout Paradise, living therein in peace and security. Even so, after a short time, he began to feel lonely and raised a beseeching hand to his Lord (as did every prophet) asking Him to remove his loneliness, alleviate his desolation and lift his melancholy. Allah ﷻ responded to this supplication and created a wife for Adam named Hawa' عليها السلام.

Thus, the human being is in need of socialisation and companionship while he is weary of lengthy periods of solitude and isolation. How excellent is the one who said:

*The human being was not named so except on account of his sociability,
Neither was the heart named such except for the fact that it changes.*

(This couplet plays on the shared root letters of the words 'human' and 'sociability' in the Arabic language, as well as the words 'heart' and 'change'.)

Man is a product of his environment and takes after his (Arabic) name. It is said proverbially that birds of a feather flock together and every associate at some point follows the ways of its counterpart. Hence, the one who accompanies the eminent will feel his heart expand and fill with light while the one who mingles with the degenerate will find himself influenced by their vice and perhaps they may lead him to acts of disobedience and dishonour.

Imams Bukhari and Muslim report on the authority of the great sahabi Abu Musa al-Ash'ari رضي الله عنه that the Prophet ﷺ said:

'The likeness of a righteous companion and an evil one is that of a perfume seller and a blacksmith. As for the perfume seller, either he will give you something or you will

purchase something from him or you will benefit from his pleasant fragrance. As for the blacksmith, he will either burn your clothes or you will be exposed to his unpleasant smell.’

The Prophet ﷺ likened the righteous companion to a perfume seller who will either gift you some perfume or you might buy it from him, or at the very least you will leave him with a pleasant fragrance emanating from you. Similar is the case of a righteous companion; he will point you towards good and direct you to what is best for your worldly and otherworldly affairs. When you stray he will be there to set you on a right course. He will forgive your mistakes, overlook your errors and conceal your shortcomings.

The Prophet ﷺ then likened the wretched companion to a blacksmith who smelts iron and forges it causing sparks to fly. He might burn your clothes or, at best, you will experience an unpleasant smell from him. Likewise the wretched companion will either corrupt your religion or distort your thinking. And it is not outside the realm of possibility that he will instruct you with evil and prevent you from good.

For any youth who believes such a penetrating influence is far-fetched, let us remind him of the clear text of the *hadīth* which affirms the reality of contagion with respect to tangible matters. The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘There should be no contagion nor superstition.’ Meaning, do not infect one another nor engage in fortune-telling practices. He ﷺ said in another narration, ‘Let not the diseased animal be watered alongside the healthy.’ In this *hadīth*, the Prophet ﷺ clearly prohibits the owner of a diseased camel from watering it near the healthy ones for no other reason than contagion in accordance with the will of Allah ﷻ.

It is worth noting here that the Prophet ﷺ also affirmed the occurrence of contagion in regards to conceptual matters. He ﷺ said, ‘Man is upon the religion of his friend, so let one of you look to whom he befriends.’ It is from human nature to imitate those whom one befriends and accompanies.

A philosopher once said, ‘Friends are of three types. The first is like the nourishment which one cannot do without. The second is like medicine, resorted to at the time of need. And the third is like the malady, never sought out by anyone.’ The first is the example of a righteous companion and the third a wretched companion. As for the second, he is the companion who has some negative traits but good can be expected from him too.

There is an old saying: '[Seek] a comrade before taking to the road and a neighbour before [choosing] an abode,' for the journey is tedious and circumstances ever-changing. The traveller passes through various stages wherein he is in want of a conversation partner and an affable companion. For this reason the people of old warned against travelling alone in the first instance and secondly, advised the traveller to seek out a good comrade so that the journey would be pleasant, with good company increasing the chances of returning productive. As for the neighbour, if he is not a good one, it would become difficult to stay in that house.

We have an impeccable example of companionship in the life of the Prophet ﷺ. Allah ﷻ did not reveal the Qur'an in parchments, instructing the Prophet ﷺ to distribute them among the ummah. Rather, He sent it down upon Mohammed ﷺ, the Truthful, the Trustworthy, so that he ﷺ may live by the Qur'an in their midst. They would accompany him throughout his undertakings, observing him in motion and at rest, following his practices and being guided by his teachings. Hence they were most deserving of being labelled 'The Companions of the Messenger', since they truly did accompany him in all of his affairs, the good times and the bad.

Our pious predecessors also strove to acquire knowledge but they did not limit themselves to learning via attending lectures and by reading voluminous books or sifting through encyclopaedic works and sufficing with that. Rather, they took instruction from authoritative teachers and benefitted from tutelage under them, learning the tradition orally. Indeed, deep knowledge is not taken from a journalist, neither is Qur'an learned from its transcriber.

As for solitude, it is certainly better than bad company, for isolation in this case at least offers respite from being affected by vice. Based on this, Imam Humaidi said:

*Mixing with people offers nothing but senseless time-wasting and gossip.
So limit frequenting them, except for seeking knowledge or increasing in piety.*

*Originally penned by Ibn Askar, the Brit
Translation by Sabiha Bismillah, Alimiyyah Four*