

# Love and Friendship

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses the nature of friendship, love and their different types. It also attempts to articulate the status of love in Islamic ethics. Love for the sake of God which is a major concept in Islamic faith is introduced as internal good and a necessary element for happiness. The rights of friends like having good behaviour with them and sympathy in difficulties and helping them are discussed here with an emphasis on the Islamic texts and its philosophical background.

**KEYWORDS:** Islamic ethics, happiness, love and friendships and rights of friends.

## *Analysis of Love and Friendship*

The true meaning of 'love' is to seek union with something, a mode of being which is thought of as perfection in the view of the seeker.<sup>1</sup>

The fundamental origin of love in the human world is the search for perfection. Since the man is deficient with regard to possible perfections in his material life, and is endowed with the love of perfection in his nature, he longs for everything he thinks will lead to his perfection and excellence. The definition of love mentioned above comes from Khawajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi. This is a definition of 'human voluntary love'; however, there are other kinds of love to which it does not apply. For instance God's love for His servants, especially the pious and faithful, is not of this sort, since He is too perfect and immaculate to achieve anything from His servants. It

is sometimes said that “the air loves to move upward and the earth loves to move downward,” which means nothing more than their natural force and inclination, in a figurative sense. Love is also used for animals, but it means their instinctive acquaintance and sociability with one another. Among human beings, of course, there are two kinds of love: voluntary and involuntary, which is natural, like a mother’s love for her infant.<sup>2</sup> It is merely the former which falls under the domain of ethical evaluation – for it is voluntary.

Natural or instinctive love may be dealt with in ethics insofar as it is voluntary, regardless of whether it arises from birth, blood, beauty, and so on.

Since perfections are many, the objects of man’s love are accordingly many. Man’s desire to fulfil his material needs gives rise to his love for material affairs, and his longing for transcendence and spirituality leads him to his love of spiritual affairs. The amount of material love and the quality of spiritual love are to be examined; however it falls beyond the remit of practical ethics (practical wisdom).<sup>3</sup>

In short, a person is expected to exercise caution over his desires when attaching them to things, lest in the course of his loving he desires something which may turn out to be an obstacle to his perfection. The fact that a person has a variety of tendencies in the cradle of nature sheds more light on the significance of the issue, for, in the natural world an overemphasis on one tendency may become an obstacle to another.

Human beings are obliged by many verses of the Noble Qur’an to be watchful, lest they become entrapped in carnal desires, which burdens them with earthly matters, preventing them from flying toward heaven.

Many earthly loves and affections are without a doubt appropriate mechanisms for man’s life on earth and even for his transcendence; however, man is required to abstain from extremes. Man’s love and affection for his wife, children, parents, and even his property is an attachment with which God manages man’s individual and social life;<sup>4</sup> it is likely that such affections help man win divine rewards and give rise to his nearness (*qurb*) to God.

The least disfavour to parents, saying even so much as ‘Fie’ to them is prohibited by God.<sup>5</sup> Everybody should obey his parents affectionately and kindly, unless such

obedience leads him to corruption.

...وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا...

And if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. (Sūrah 29:8)

Beauty is one of the causes of love and man's natural affection towards something. How many boys have fallen in love with good-looking girls and how many handsome boys have left their so-called image in the minds of girls! Such love is lawful provided it does not contradict his or her real perfection. But if one's heart is preyed upon by such love to the point that it prevents one from transcending spiritually, it is strongly rejected by the Qur'an and Islamic traditions. This is why the Qur'an would rather a man or woman marry a slave who is faithful than to marry a free person who is faithless (a slave of Satan or a *kafir*).<sup>6</sup>

Although many traditions reckon beauty to be a sign of happiness<sup>7</sup> religious teachings have strenuously warned against loving a girl brought up with corruption, for such a girl may misuse her beauty to corrupt the spirit of her husband. "Stay away from good-looking girls who were brought up in impure families, for they are like flowers in the dunghills."<sup>8</sup>

However, the extent of affection for a good-looking face, family, tribe, country, and even knowledge is that it should fall within the scope of *shari'a* which constitutes the fundamental law of human salvation.

Accordingly, property, fame, beauty, health, and the like, which are naturally loved, are not contemptible as such; rather they may help one in the course of one's journey to the hereafter. What is risky is their catching one's eyes with the result that one loses one's heart to the short-lived blossoms of this world, instead of the beautiful long-lived flowerings of the hereafter.<sup>9</sup>

It is possible that the wisdom behind some of the laws of the *shari'a*, such as *khums* (one fifth tax) and *zakat* (legal alms) is to prevent Man from having too heavy affection for this life and its desires.

In view of the above definition, the scope of man's desires is proportionate to the scope of his knowledge. Many people who regard their properties as a way to

their perfection and happiness have wasted their lives on them! There are many who have chosen illusory perfections due to their faculty of imagination and have thus wasted their lives on them.

Rumi says:

*Their war and peace are caused by an illusion  
Their fame and infamy are caused by an illusion*

We have provided the above introduction in order to elucidate the meaning of 'friendship',<sup>10</sup> for, friendship is a kind of 'voluntary love'. Friendship is a affectional relationship between two or among a few friends. A man may like many people, but his friends are very few. In a relationship of friendship, the love is mutual; each of the two considers his union with the other as a way to his perfection.

Having a friend has long been admired as a human value; and poets, men of letters, and even philosophers have talked of its importance in one way or another. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle has dedicated about one fifth of the book to friendship, studying it in detail in Chapters 8 and 9.<sup>11</sup> Aristotle has discussed friendship further in one of the chapters of the *Eudemian Ethics*<sup>12</sup> in a manner not found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>13</sup>

There have been interpretations of Aristotle's words both in the East and the West.<sup>14</sup> Aristotle has had a tremendous influence on the writings of Muslim philosophers of ethics such as Ibn Maskawayh.<sup>15</sup>

Friendship has been highlighted among religious teachings. Having proposed a new kind of friendship as 'religious brotherhood',<sup>16</sup> the Qur'an created a new development in the pre-Islamic era of the ignorant Arab society, which only recognized 'friendship' as the union of their members around the pivot of family or tribe.<sup>17</sup>

The contents of 'brotherhood' are more focussed on discussion about "love for God's sake" (*hubb fi Allah*) in Islamic traditions. Even the major factor of salvation and faith is to choose one's friends on the basis of love for God's sake.<sup>18</sup> Generally speaking, there is much evidence showing that the holy Prophet and Imams out of the People of the Household did their best to circulate a culture of love among the

people. Imam Ali enjoins us to make sure to make a good friend and companion before we do anything important.<sup>19</sup> Where a journey in this world requires a friend, a *fortiori*, man is in need of good friends for his journey to the hereafter.

The older and more loyal the friend is, the better; however, old friends should not avert us from making new friends, nor should they turn us away from the aim of our perfection. In a nutshell, a friend should be a help in the course of one's achieving transcendence, rather than the be all and end all. This is why seclusion and solitude are sometimes recommended. When good friends are very few, it is better for a person to follow his journey toward God and perfection by himself.

Unfortunately, nowadays the concept of friendship, like many other concepts, is suffering from ambiguity and devaluation, so many people may randomly and without consideration call somebody their friend, unmindful what their soul might achieve or lose through such a friend. Unplanned and unconsidered friendships may lead to bitter and long lasting enmity even in this world, let alone the hereafter when, according to the Qur'an,<sup>20</sup> many friendships turn out to be enmities.

I wish the historians had written a little past people's friendship in order to familiarise our youths with its history and benefits. It is surprising, nonetheless, that they have focussed on recording enmities and wars, heedless of the spiritual and heavenly aspects of man's soul.<sup>21</sup>

### ***Different Friendships Among Human Beings***

Since friendship is rooted in love, in accordance with its roots. Friendship among human beings, according to Aristotle, may stem from three sources: pleasure, benefits, and virtue.<sup>22</sup>

Some friendships, particularly those among youths, stem from the sense of seeking pleasure. When together, people take pleasure and thus make a friendship as a shelter from the pain of sorrow and grief. Another kind of friendship depends on seeking benefits. For the favour and help that one may receive from a would-be friend, a man may be interested in him and decide to make friends with him. The third kind of friendship originates from the sense of seeking virtues, so that a person makes friends with somebody for the virtues he knows about him. This kind of

friendship is, of course, made among the righteous, for, they are the only people who have the inclination towards virtues. It is possible, however, that two or three of the above sources of friendship may overlap to create a friendship between two people.

The durability of each kind of friendship follows the extent of the duration of its origin. Friendships based on pleasure are easy come, easy go; for, pleasures do not last for long. However, difficult or late they may be made, friendship based on benefit are transient and unstable, for such benefits will soon come to an end. On the contrary, and however easy they may come, friendships based on virtue may last for long, for, virtues are deeply rooted in the seekers of virtues. As to the duration of all kinds of love which give rise to friendship, Khawajah Nasir al-Din Tusi said:

Pleasure may be cause of love which is soon contracted and soon dissolved, for, pleasure, despite its all-pervasive existence, is characterized by swiftness of alteration and passing away, as we have said, and persistence of decline spread from the cause to the effect. Profit is a cause of love that is slowly contracted and soon dissolved, for the bringing of profit – rare though it be – is swift to pass away. Good [virtue] is the cause of love which is soon contracted and slowly dissolved: soon contracted by virtue of the essential affinities between men of good, slowly dissolved because of the true union necessary to the nature of good which renders dislocation impossible. That which is compounded of all three is a cause of the love which is slowly contracted and slowly dissolved, for seeking to join both causes, i.e. profit and good, necessarily brings about both states.<sup>23</sup>

The ethical value of each kind of friendship depends on the ethical status of its source. The inclination to pleasure and the sense of seeking pleasure are not disapproved of unless they prevent a benefit or a man's ethical development. Accordingly, pleasure-based friendship is necessary for man's recreation and is free from any ethical problem as long as it does not involve the violation of any other ethical principles. In the course of seeking his perfection, a person may get tired and bored; the pleasure of companionship can refresh his exhausted soul for more efforts.

The ethical value of the second sort, i.e. benefit-based friendship, follows the ethical value of the expected benefit. If the benefits were knowledge, then the value

of that friendship is more than that which depends on money, wealth, position or reputation.

There is no room for doubt, however, about the ethical value of the third kind of friendship which is based on virtues. What matters in the ethical life of a person is winning such friendships. Those who make friends and get together on the pivot of virtues, keeping one another company in the course of their ethical journey, may increase their speed and add precision to their journey as they go through the process of perfection. Each friend can indeed see his deficiencies and faults in the mirror of his friend and may thus rectify them in the light of the other's advice. Making friends with the righteous and on the pivot of righteousness, talked of by Aristotle, revolves around the celebrated virtues of ethics such as bravery, chastity, wisdom, and justice.

This concept has won more depth and richness in the light of religious doctrines, since according to the monotheistic world-view, the base of all goods is God and thus the fraternity of the righteous will get established and endure only on basis of the love of God. Deepening the concept of friendship with the righteous, and establishing firm foundations for it, however, does not imply any denial of the value of righteous friendships that are established without heed to religion, since God is the true foundation of such friendships.

Being inspired by the Qur'anic concept of brotherhood developed in the light of the Twelve Imams' teachings as a key concept of "love for God's sake", Muslim scholars have proposed many useful points on the true friendship with the righteous. Al-Ghazali defines "love for God's Sake" as follows:

**Love for God's Sake is the feeling of affection for something that one would lack if one had no faith in God and the hereafter. If affection were there however little it may be, even if one has no faith in God and the hereafter, much of that is in fact for the sake of God.<sup>24</sup>**

Man's innate heavenly love for God may be seriously affected by the uproar of this earthly world. It is only the faithful who can light up their heart with it. The Qur'an reads: "... but the faithful have a more ardent love for God" (Sūrah 165:2). Love for God can be protected and strengthened only through submission to and faith in God. Having concealed the flames of such divine love in their heart, the

faithless put it out and thus are deprived of its exhilarating warmth in the chill of this life.

Drunk from their love for God, people of faith look at all God's creatures through the eyes of mercy and love. Out of all the creatures, man has a distinguished status, for he is made by God in the best form (Sūrah 4:96) and he is made His vicegerent on the earth (Sūrah 30:2) so as to undertake the divine Trust (Sūrah 72:33). A faithful man who loves God will definitely love and respect man who is His vicegerent. The love of the faithful for man is not merely dependent, as Aristotle said, on social needs, but rather on the love rooted in man for God. How can a man whose heart is replete with love of God hate or hold a grudge against a man? Accordingly, Islamic traditions particularly the Shi'a hadiths have repeatedly suggested that living a religious manner is naught but love for the sake of Allah.

هل الدين إلا الحب

Religion is naught but love.

Many traditions have talked of the significance of good humour and treatment, and even the holy Prophet Muhammad introduced the completion of ethical virtues as the only aim of his prophetic mission;

إنما بعثت لأتمم مكارم الأخلاق

I was sent down only to complete ethical virtues.

Evidently, the origin and context of ethical virtues is naught but the very love of human beings.

There is no doubt, nonetheless, that real faith in God necessitates a love for men, or rather all God's creatures. Therefore, wherever there is vengeance on or hatred for somebody or there is murder or violation of people's rights, whether property or of honour, the light of faith is extinguished there and the germs of atheism have grown up instead. In addition to love for man on account of his essential dignity, religious texts also talk of particular love for some men who carry more signs of God. The faithful will certainly show more respect to and love for the faithful than the faithless; such respect and love surely fortifies the stability of a faithful society.



The concept of “love for God” introduced by many Islamic traditions and regarded as one of the mainstays of faith, is a religious doctrine which cannot be found in secular ethics or even Aristotle’s theory of virtue. To love anything which is rooted in man’s love for God is called “love for the sake of God”, and it is the support of man’s moral transcendence. Man’s love for God leads man to the anger at that which gives rise to God’s wrath. Managing one’s love and anger (rather than one’s hatred and vengeance) on the basis of love for God will guarantee one’s faith and eternal salvation.

إن أوثق عرى الإيمان الحب في الله و البغض في الله

Surely, the firmest support of faith is love  
for the sake of God and anger for His sake.

As a result, both love for God and man are necessary. Love for God leads man to enmity towards tyranny, injustice, corruption, and so on. Nonetheless, one may see a sense of love for man even in the core of such enmity and its related vices. A faithful man makes his efforts to fight against tyranny out of pity and love for a tyrant, more so and prior to his decision to hate him or kill him out of rancour. Such a love for humanity is the mystery of why thousands of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim missionaries have made sincere efforts through history to lead people to the path of God, as well as efforts to fight against ethical vices penetrating the hearts of men.

After conquering Mecca the centre of his vindictive enemies, the holy Prophet of Islam enjoined his victorious troops not to persecute or harm any of his enemies, rather he tried to guide those led astray to a new life and righteousness instead.

Sometimes people are so corrupted and wicked that leaves no alternative to killing them to eliminate the corruption. Nevertheless, it is not the case that every corruption legitimises the killing of the corrupt person. Such punishment is imposed on those vices which threaten the whole foundation of a society or social union. Only in a few cases where one’s peaceful efforts are in vain that Islam has issued a death sentence of death on such wicked people.

However, it is worth noting that there are many precautionary measures pertaining to the death sentence, so that it may only be issued very rarely; furthermore, nobody is allowed to kill servants of God under the pretext of justice or

reformation. Those who sow the seeds of rancor among people under the pretext of religion and faith truly are the enemies of religion, for they destroy the relationship of affection among people, bringing hatred among them instead of anger for the sake of God; they thereby destroy the two mainstays of religion, viz. love and anger for the sake of God.

Thus, a friendship between two people made on the basis of faith and religious brotherhood is a prominent example of “love for the sake of God”. However, two people may make friends with each other heedless of their religious faith, which would nonetheless make it stronger and richer. Such friendship is included under “love for the sake of God”. Nevertheless, the more such friendship is based on religious faith and love for God, the more stable it will be. In fact, one can say that the ideal realisation of love is “love for God”. Although it is difficult for earthly human beings to reach this station, one should make an effort to move in this direction. Pure love of God, for which one should strive, may serve as a regulative ideal even if we do not achieve it in a perfect form.

This is the reason why family and social ties are given a religious basis, so that they may also contribute to love for God. The matrimonial bond, for example, should not just be based on nature, but should also be mingled with love on the basis of religious faith and love for God so that the family may be secure from natural disasters or hidden enmities which may manifest themselves on the Day of Judgment.

Religious regulations prohibiting the marriage of believers to non-believers (with some exceptions) may be justified as a means to encourage marriage to have this religious dimension.

The concept of “love for God” is wide-ranging, and should manifest itself in our love for all creatures, but our focus here is the love and friendship among people that is rooted in love for God.

In general, the Qur’an and oral traditions passed on from the Holy Infallibles suggest that it is better to manage our friendships in the context of religious life and within a faithful society. One may feel a sense of affection for all faithful people. However, one makes friends with only a few of them. In addition to mutual love, friendship requires some sort of empathy, sympathy, common taste, and mutual

understanding which naturally limits the scope of choosing new friends.

It is necessary here to note this bitter truth that in a faithful society there are hypocrites who carry the signs of faith in their appearance; they even bear the difficulties of religious life easily and appear to be outstanding members of a religious society. Their religious life is unfortunately a mere cover under the pretext of which they, consciously or unconsciously, seek to achieve wealth, power, and worldly reputation by means of religiosity; it is very likely that in their coming and going in Islamic society they rob the faithful of their faith.

In view of this bitter truth and the aforementioned points, Imam Sajjad (as) has recommended that when choosing friends, the faithful should watch out for the traps of deceitful religiosity laid by the hypocrites.

As Imam Sajjad (as) explains, some people have worldly objectives but fail to achieve them in a just manner; for example, because some people are afraid of risk in business or agriculture, or lacks the courage needed for a political life, such people sometimes seek to make use of religion as a means of achieving the goals they desire but they are not prepared to put God's will of Allah above their own wishes. No matter how great such people may appear in society they are not worthy of friendship.<sup>25</sup>

The recommendation of friendship for God's sake does not imply making friends with anybody who claims to have faith; rather it is necessary to observe the precautions recommended by reason and religion. Ibn Maskawayh says in support of the need for caution when choosing friends:

man, unlike other animals, affects various attitudes in order to show what is not true. He gives his money away, though he may be stingy so that it may be said that he is generous, and, in some situations he ventures on certain fearful dangers so that it may be said that he is courageous. The character of other animals, on the other hand, is plain from the start and free from affections.<sup>26</sup>

It is thus right for men to be circumspect when choosing such great gifts (as friends) lest we be trapped by the deceivers and hypocrites who may pretend to be benevolent and learned people; but who would prey upon us like wild animals. This,

the importance of friendship and the impacts of a friend on one's spiritual journey make wise men set some tests in order to find good friends. Religious traditions have also drawn attention to inspecting of the would-be friends.<sup>27</sup>

The essential standard for choosing friends both in philosophical writings and religious doctrines is that a friend must be free of ethical vices, such as cowardice, stinginess, and lasciviousness.

A miser would try to shirk his financial duties to friends and others, thus straining the friendship and little by little he would implant his vice in our heart. A coward discourages us from brave measures and as a result we would be hindered from realising ethical values which depend on courage. Furthermore, one should scrutinise a potential friend's gratitude, for, an ungrateful person would consider the his friend's favours to be a debt that has to be settled, and this reduces the friendship into a master-slave relationship. This is why our religious texts suggest that one should choose one's friends from among the faithful who give thanks to God for His gifts.

There is a famous quotation concerning the way to test people to choose a friend, which, according to Franz Rosenthal, is ultimately attributable to one of the most celebrated commentaries – namely Themistius' *On Friendship*. However Tusi ascribes it to a person whose name in Greek was not known but the translator of Tusi's book; G. M. Wickens identifies him as Isocrates.<sup>28</sup> We give a translation of the text according to Ibn Maskawayh leaving to the reader to sum up the points and decide whether they are practicable and how fruitful they are.

The way to safety from this danger, according to what we have learned from Socrates, is to inquire about the conduct of our prospective friend during his childhood towards his parents, brothers, and relatives. If his conduct was good, you can hope that he will be good; otherwise, keep away from him and do not have anything to do with him. Socrates said: Try then to inform yourself about this person's conduct towards the friends he had before you and add this to his conduct towards his brothers and parents. Then, follow this behaviour to find out whether he is grateful or ungrateful for the favours he receives. I do not mean by gratefulness the offering of such

reward as would actually be beyond his power, but I do mean that he may neglect to cultivate his inclination to show gratitude and thus fail to repay to the extent that lies within his power and capacity. He may also seize the favour that is accorded to him as if it were his right or not trouble himself to express his thanks in words. It is not too much for anyone to publicise the favours which are bestowed upon him, to praise the bestower and give him credit for it. There is nothing which thwarts the granting of favours more than ingratitude; and it is sufficient for you [to consider] the punishments which God has provided for those who are ungrateful for His favours even though He is too exalted to be harmed by ingratitude. [On the contrary] there is nothing which attracts favour and confirms it as much as thankfulness, and it is sufficient for you [to consider] what God has promised to the grateful even though He can dispense with their gratitude. Investigate, therefore, this character trait in your prospective friend and beware lest you be afflicted with an ingrate who despises the favours of friends and the beneficence of the sovereign.

Consider then his inclination towards relaxation and his dislike of activity which may entail the least hardship. For this character trait is bad: it resides in inclination to pleasures and leads one to fail to fulfil such obligations as are incumbent upon him. Observe definitely his love of gold and silver and whether he belittles their accumulation or is eager to keep them. For many companions affect love of one another and exchange gifts and advice until they come to a dealing among them which involves those two metals; they then growl at one another like dogs and end up with all sorts of enmity.<sup>29</sup>

It is important, however, that the process of testing does not become so rigid and clumsy that one remains friendless. Little faults can be ignored and we should abstain from exaggerating them.<sup>30</sup> The Persian poet Sa'ib says:

Abstain from excess in the testing of friends  
O Sa'ib, for soon you will be left friendless and helpless.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Rights of Friendship***

Friendship is a voluntary bilateral tie based on love between two or more people which is known as ‘the contract of brotherhood’,<sup>32</sup> which necessitates some rights for both parties. There are many detailed surveys on these rights,<sup>33</sup> the chief headings of which are as follow:

#### ***a. Good Humour***

Which in Islamic traditions is known as *busnal-khulq* when meeting one’s all beloved people such as parents and friends. Many traditions suggest that association between people is principally the product of good humour and good manners among them. Conversely, hatred and enmity is caused by the impetuosity of temper and misbehaviour.

The affection and intimacy necessary for friendship come from good humour. A real friend is one who reacts joyfully when meeting friends. Gloomy appearance and being bad-humoured with friends gradually change friendship into enmity. In any event, treating friends well and respecting them are among the foremost rights of friendship. However, we should try not merely to affect good-treatment; rather it must be rooted in our innate wishes. Consequently, although one should appreciate his friend’s favours, one should not flatter him.

#### ***b. Sympathy***

Real friends feel sympathy for one another over their problems and joys. When a man happens to be joyful, his real friends would express their joy and feel joyful for his joyfulness. Sympathy of problems is, however, more important than joyfulness. When a man happens to have problems such as need, poverty, or an illness, his friends are expected to feel sympathy and solve their problems.

#### ***c. Controlling One’s Tongue***

However small it is, man’s tongue can commit many great crimes. Sometimes a small word can put a friendship under great strain; hence we should keep a watchful eye on our tongues. Speaking ill of our friends or remaining silent when others speak ill of them may create hostility between us breaking up the friendship.

Worse is if one vilifies on a friend, tattles on him or gossips untruths about him or listens to others when they gossip about him. Worse still is *Mira'* and quarrelling with him when negotiating. *Mira'* (unnecessary dispute) is making use of one's skills of oratory in order to prove one's superiority over one's friend in public; this soon creates enmity and puts an end to a friendship.

Generally speaking, controlling one's tongue is a must in the ethical journey particularly for friends.

#### ***d. A Friend in Need***

Any help or favour offered to a friend should be in all sincerity without expectation of anything in return, and even before his request. When a person feels that his friend is in need of something he can provide, he must offer it without expectation. Stinginess when friends are in need of money is not very becoming of a friendship; rather, one is expected to be generous and open-handed.

A friend's need is not always financial; rather he may be in need of his friend's knowledge. Withholding knowledge from a friend not only is contemptible and deleterious to friendship, but is also silly behavior because money is lost through spending but knowledge is not like that.

Sometimes it is said that it is not necessary to observe the rules of etiquette among friends; they say:

عند الأحاب تسقط الأداب.

**Manners are not necessary among friends.**

The very point that friendship has its own peculiarities that differ from other relationships is quite right. When with friends, we feel comfortable and are said to make ourselves at home, so we do not have to be formal and are free from the usual ceremonies. We speak to them about our private life and life secrets freely, and do not do so with others. In fact, we recognise our friends as the very ego of ourselves, rather than as a stranger.

This point, generally speaking, is right; however, Islamic traditions have expressed anxiety over exceeding the bounds. It is always possible for a very sincere

friend to become an obstinate foe and use his information against us. Imam Sadiq said: “You may tell your secrets to your friend to the extent that he cannot harm you when disclosed, for a friend may become a foe.”<sup>34</sup> Why should someone make a mistake by overconfiding in a friend, which as Imam Sadiq has put so nicely, is irremediable?!

لا تتقن بأخيک کل الثقة فان صرعه الإسترسال لا يستقال.

Do not put all your trust in your friend,  
since when he breaks up with you, he cannot be sacked.<sup>35</sup>

### ***The Final Point***

The Qur’an has reminded us dozens of times of the relationship of affection between God and man and among men themselves. “Indeed, God loves the virtuous” (Sūrah 195: 2). “Indeed, God loves the just” (Sūrah 42: 5). “Indeed, God loves the God-fearing” (Sūrah 4: 9) ...

Contrary to Aristotle’s god, the God of Islam is not only beloved by men but also He loves men. The foremost virtue among human beings is “love of God” which is rooted in the constitution of human nature.

Poem:

When there was no orbit of the heavens  
I was drunk with your recollection and a wine-worshipper  
Even though no water, soil or fire were mixed up yet  
Or there was any trace of wine or vine.

### ***Notes***

1. Tusi, Khwajah Nasir, *The Nasirean Ethics (Akhlāq-i Nasiri)*, trans. G. M. Wickens (London, 1964), 196 & 259.
2. Ibid., 260.
3. Ibn Miskawayh has talked about the nature and kinds of such loves in more detail; however he has dealt less with their acceptable limits. See: Ibn Miskawayh, *Tahdīb al-*



- Akblaq*, trans. Halabi (Beirut: The American University, 1968), 188-199.
4. As for a mother's love for her infant, for example, Khawajah Nasir says: "Were this kind of love not innate in the nature of the mother, she would not nurture the infant and the human race would thus come to end." See: *Akblaq-i Nasiri*, 360.
  5. "Do not say to them, 'Fie' and do not chide them. But speak to them noble words" (Sūrah 23: 17)
  6. "A faithful slave is better than an idolater, though he should impress you." "A faithful slave girl is better than an idolatress, though she should impress you." (Sūrah 221: 2)
  7. "A good-looking face is the first level of happiness." See: *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim*, (Tehran: Tehran University, 1373), no. 1699.
  8. Al-Saduq, *Man La Yabduruh al-Faqih*, vol. 3 (Qum : Jama'at al-Mudarrisin Publications, 1413), 256.
  9. The Qur'an has enjoined us from gazing at the gifts of this world with desirous eyes: "Do not extend your glance toward what we have provided certain groups of them as a glitter of the life of this world." (Sūrah 131:20)
  10. In Persian literature, there is not much difference between "love" and "friendship". Sometimes they say "friendship" and mean "love" in its broad sense. In Arabic literature, however, they use "المحبة" (love) for the broad sense of love, but they use "الصداقة" for "friendship". In his *الصداقة و المحبة*, Abu Hayyan Tawhidi has compiled a collection of literary and philosophical points on friendship.
  11. See: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd edition, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 142-183
  12. In addition to his *Nicomachean Ethics*, there is a less familiar book the ascription of which to Aristotle is questionable. Some sections are a repetition verbatim of passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There are, however, discussions of friendship that are exclusively found in the *Eudemian Ethics*.
  13. This topic comes up in the seventh chapter of *Eudemian Ethics*.
  14. The interpretation of "friendship" of *Nicomachean Ethics* has been published separately, see: Pakalaq, Michael, *Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics*, (Oxford, 1998), vii and lx.
  15. The learned editor, Mr. Zariq, has included Ibn Maskawayh's words borrowed from Aristotle in his new edited version, and luckily the Persian translator, Halabi, has included them in his translation. See: the Introduction and footnotes of Ibn Maskawayh, *Tahdib al-Akblaq*, trans. Ali Asghar Halabi (Tehran: Asatir Publication,

- 1381).
16. "The faithful are indeed brothers, therefore, make peace between your brothers." (Sūrah 10: 49)
  17. One of the products of Islam in Arab society was the creation of affection and brotherhood among the Arabs. "And remember God's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with God's blessing." (Sūrah 103:3)
  18. One day holy Prophet Muhammad asked his companions, "What handle of faith is the firmest and most secure of all?" Everybody said something, but the holy Prophet said: "It is love and enmity for the sake of Allah." See: Fayd Kashani, *al-Mahajjat al-Bayda'*, (Beirut: A'lami Publications, 1983), 3:291.
  19. "O My son, ... first a friend, then a journey you may attend." *Nahj al-Balaghah*.
  20. "On that day, friends will be one another's enemies, except for the god-fearing." (Sūrah 43: 67) It might be for this reason that Abu Hayyan Tawhidi held that managing a meaningful and persistent friendship was impossible among different groups of the society except among the faithful. See: Tawhidi, Abu Hayyan, *al-Sadaqah wa al-Sadiq*, ed. Ibrahim Kailani (Damascus: n, 1964).
  21. This issue, Ibn Maskawayh said, was said by Socrates; however it may belong to Simplicius, the commentator of Aristotle's works. See: Ibn Maskawayh, *The Refinement of Character, Tahdib al-Akhlak*, trans. Constantine K. Zurayk (Beirut: n, 1968), 140, (both the main text and the footnote).
  22. As regards Aristotle on the kinds of friendship, see: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 144-150
  23. Tusi, *Nasirean Ethics*, 196
  24. al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 1, (Dar al-Ma'rifah, 2004), 599
  25. Majlisi, M. Baqir, *Bihar al-Anwar*, (Beirut: Al-Wafa Publications, 1983), 74:13, 84:1
  26. Ibn Maskawayh, 142
  27. Imam Hasan (as) said: "Don't make friends with anybody unless you have examined his inputs and outputs. After you have become satisfied with the terms of examination and with his companionship, you may make friends with him yet you may break with him if he is not indeed a friend in need".
  28. See: *Nasirean Ethics*, 295, footnote 1287. It is remarkable that Ibn Muskawayh ascribe the same phrase to Socrates.

29. Ibn Maskawayh, 142-143.
30. Ibid., 204.
31. Ibid., a quotation in footnote.
32. This term comes from the following verse: “the Faithful are indeed brothers. Therefore make peace between your brothers.” (Sūrah 19:49).
33. For instance, See: al-Ghazali, *Kimiya’ al-Sa’adah*, (Tehran: Ilmi wa Farhangi Publications, 1382), 401-413; Fayd Kashani, *Al-Mahajjat al-Bayda’*, 3:152 & 318; Ibn Maskawayh, *Tabdib al-Akblaq*, trans. Halabi, (n, d), 205-210; Khawajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, *Nasirean Ethics*, 326-334.
34. Majlisi, *Bihar al-Anwar*, 71:178.
35. Ibid.

