

IN THE LIGHT OF AHADITH

THE CHOICE OF RIGHT FRIENDS

A man is known by the company he keeps. As the saying goes, it has deep meaning in it. Man as a social animal cannot restrict himself to a lonely place but needs to have friends. In so doing he is able to exchange views and seek help when needed to solve his life problems. But at the same time he is likely to be influenced by characters and ways of living of his friends. One's ways of thinking and character can change under the influence of friendship with whom he moves around.

One way of recognizing one's character is to look at the sort of his friendly circle. Hazrat Ali a.s. is mentioned to have said:

SHOULD YOU EVER FALL IN DOUBT ABOUT
SOMEONE'S STANDING, RELIGIOUS OR WAY OF
LIFE, LOOK AT HIS FRIENDLY AND
MINGLING CIRCLE.

Islam therefore has strictly warned against friendship and association with indecent and undesirable people. Imam Raza a.s. has said:

DO NOT SIT AND ASSOCIATE WITH A
DRUNKARD AND DO NOT SALUTE HIM

Friendship with bad and impious people asks adverse influence and is likely to smear one's personality and good name. Human heart by nature is tender and can easily absorb effects surrounding things. What makes one's heart dead and unable to absorb good things? According to a saying of the Prophet of Islam, several causes are mentioned one of which is the company of the dead. On being asked to explain who are the dead, the Prophet replied 'the rich extravagant' In other words, the company of that class of rich people who live with extravagance in the sinful luxurious way of life. In so doing they tend to drift away from remembrance and true obedience of Allah.

Keep aloof from five kinds of people was the advice from the Fourth Imam Zainul Abedeen a.s. to his son:

- 1) Do not associate with the impious evil person because he would sell you out for even less than a morsel.
- 2) Do not associate with a stingy and niggardly person because he would dissuade you to spend even where need be
- 3) Do not associate with a liar because he would bring you nearer to those things which you are supposed to abstain from and he would draw you far from those things to which you are required to go near.
- 4) Do not associate with the senseless and foolish person because even if he plans to do you good, it would turn out to be harmful to you.
- 5) Do not associate with the one who breaks relationship with his relatives because in the holy Qura'n Allah has admonished such people in three places.

On the other hand the company and friendship of the good and righteous may inspire one towards noble character and to yearn for exalted status in society. Islam has much stressed the importance of friendship and company of the good and trustworthy. Friendship with those mindful of their religious duties and remembrance of Allah is recommended. The Prophet of Islam has said:

ASSOCIATION AND SITTING WITH THE PEOPLE OF
RELIGIONS IS TO ATTAIN A PLACE OF HONOUR IN
THIS WORLDLY LIFE AND THE HEREAFTER

Obviously being in close contact with the people of religion and jurisprudents, one comes to learn and understand the higher values of noble life and self-purification. This then enables one to attain an elevated status not only in this worldly but also other worldly life.

In reply to a question as to who could be described as the best friend, the Prophet said:
BY WHOSE APPEARANCE, YOU ARE REMINDED OF ALLAH'S
EXISTENCE AND BY WHOSE SPEECH YOU ARE ADVANCED IN KNOWLEDGE
AND BY WHOSE ACTIONS YOU ARE REMINDED OF THE LIFE HEREAFTER.