

## A Poem on Friends and Relations<sup>1</sup>

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In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

May Allah bestow His blessing upon the noble Prophet.

I ask Allah for help and competency

as I compose my poem about relationships with family and friends.

Oh my Lord, bestow peace upon Prophet Muhammad,

the person who first encouraged cordial relationships among fellow humans.

Oh my friend, pay attention to what's going on in the world,

and also be careful to visit friends and relatives.

People who use their brain are real human beings, even in the eyes of those who lost their mind.<sup>2</sup>

This is advice to improve relationships between friends and family members.

If you are going to pray, you must first perform your ablutions,

and pay attention to the congregation to benefit from your fellow Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

If Our Lord offers you blessings, who will prevent them?

If He doesn't offer you blessings, stop accusing your fellows.

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<sup>1</sup> The term *yan uwa* (singular: *dan uwa*) covers a broad semantic field, ranging from children of a common mother to other siblings, extended family members, neighbors, fellow Muslims, friends, associates, and fellow human beings. Thus, we have translated *yan uwa* using these terms throughout the poem.

<sup>2</sup> Here the poet means that those who do not use their brain are the ones who are mad, even in eyes of those who suffer from mental illness.

<sup>3</sup> Performing ritual prayers in a group or congregation is a highly desirable act in Islam. Uthman bin Affan, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, reported that he heard him saying: "Whoever performs ablutions in order to pray and performs the ablution perfectly, then walks to perform the prescribed prayer in congregation or inside the mosque, Allah will forgive his sins." See *Sabih Muslim*, Hadith No. 571.

Anyone who needs to hear some truth, let them here this:

If you are interested in reconciling people, begin with friends.

Those interested in ḥaqīqa (the absolute divine truth) do not fear gossip.

Those who conduct themselves righteously don't blame their fellow human beings.

If you see people who are blessed [with material wealth], don't envy them!

If you see they are blessed with something valuable, congratulate them, my friend!

I am sure that wealthy people don't envy you,

and they don't care about spying on<sup>4</sup> their fellow human beings!

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The person who is kindhearted to his relatives and friends, no one will call him hostile,  
even if he is ignorant, as long as he cares about his fellows.

Oh my brother, exercise moderation in your pursuit of the things of this world!

Beware of ignorance when you are around friends and relatives!

If you desire anything, seek knowledge about it first,

for without knowledge, there can be no growth.

These days, nobody cares!

Even if they have knowledge, they don't care about their fellows.

These days, one hardly makes an effort!

Only rich folks have people around them!

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<sup>4</sup> Islam forbids spying on people. The Quran says: "O you who believe! Avoid much suspicions, indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite against one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate it (so hate backbiting). And fear Allah. Verily, Allah is the One Who accepts repentance, Most Merciful." See Quran 49:12.

Today, materialism has sealed our hearts!

We don't value devotional acts and cordial relationships with people.

The flaw of the poverty of the heart

prevents people from visiting poor relatives.

Today, full blood siblings and half siblings are unimportant.

Today, a wealthy person is closer to a relative, oh my friends!

Conversations about the ḥadīth [traditions of the Prophet] have already been abandoned.

Surely, truth has been neglected.<sup>5</sup>

Follow your teacher, for it is a source of blessings.

Be trustworthy so that you may benefit your fellows.

Surely, you should know the rights of your neighbors!

At home and on the farm, stop cheating your fellows!

Do not oppress anyone at home or at the market.

Be just so that you may benefit your fellows.

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If you are going to have a discussion, think it over carefully!

Beware of the devil for he negatively affects relatives.

If you use your commonsense, you'll think it over. Do some work and seek advice!

One who reflects and thinks things over doesn't spoil relationships!

You who are poor, stop blaming the rich!

You who are wealthy, stop blaming friends and family!

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<sup>5</sup> The poet argues that Prophet Muhammad's teachings about cultivating good relationships have been abandoned.

Students, devote yourself to your teacher as you would to a father.

His wife, too, consider her as your mother!

Be loyal to your teacher and you will be blessed.

Abide by the teachings of the Prophet and you will benefit your fellows.

Avoid spying on people, gossiping, and quarreling,

and avoid hypocrisy between friends and relatives.

If you are deeply religious, avoid deception.

Those who value sincerity do not cheat their fellows.

Protect friendly relationships and stop blaming people in our era.

Beware that spreading rumors harm your fellows.

Everything I said earlier and what I will say later,

all are God's sayings. There is nothing new!

Take care of yourself, your life, and your wealth may endure

Limit your words to be on good terms with your friends and family.

Let go of a struggle when there is no clear way forward for you.

Difficult people cannot be on good terms with their fellows.

Oh my dear beloved one, if you hear this advice,

see the truth here and lend a hand to your brother!

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Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out,

be it with a naming ceremony or a wedding, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with cash or in-kind assistance, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with the household or farm, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with a loan to pay off a debt, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with optional charity [ṣadaqa] and gifts, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with the pilgrimage [ḥajj] as well, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

in matters of sharia [legal aid], lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out,

tell your brother to be righteous and refrain from evil acts.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with clothing or food, lend a hand to your brother.

Oh my brother, if you are in position to help out

with building a house or erecting a fence, lend a hand to your brother.

Even if it is a blind man that you guide along the road,

you will be rewarded. You've made a major contribution to society!

Everyone has the capacity to assist,

even if it's spreading manure [as fertilizer], assist a brother.

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Give optional charity of a book to someone who seeks knowledge,

and look after the stranger who has no family.

Look after the orphan who has no provisions,

and no kin, no father and no mother.

All his necessities, provide them for him.

Render help so that you may be rewarded abundantly.

When there is a flood or a fire outbreak, please render help.

When a thief harms a person, please help your brother.

Stop showing off that you are better than someone else in any business.

Leave off ostentation, if you want to prosper.

One may desire to lend a helping hand,

but may have nothing to give to his friends or family.

One may desire (to be with) friends and family,

but may not have the means to visit them

due to lack of food or lack of clothing,

or transportation costs.

Another person [who want to visit fends] may be afraid to be seen as begging,

and he may not have any gift to take to his relatives.

It is desirable [in such cases] that one remains resolute and courageous!

All accusations and criticisms should not prevent one from visiting friends and relatives!

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If the heart is willing, but necessity prevents,

then how can one assist his relatives and be beneficial to them?<sup>6</sup>

If you have no solution to a problem, just be patient!<sup>7</sup>

You will be rewarded for your good intent toward your fellows.

Anyone who is committed to the absolute truth should ask a scholar.

Anyone who wants prosperity in life should help his fellows.

Oh my Lord, Oh Allah, please help me!

Allah, may our land be populated with those who love their fellows.

The composer of this poem is Ismaila.

Caryar Kunfa is my father's hometown and Mafara, my mother's.

If anyone asks her name, don't hide it from him

Nasru l-Sa 'adatu [is her name] at home or at the market.

If the wealthy folks follow [the wisdom in the poem], their wealth will increase.

If students follow [the wisdom in the poem], their knowledge will increase.

Oh Allah, bless all those who follow [the wisdom in the poem].

Bless us too and accept and reward us for our cordial relationships.

Oh Allah, I implore you to offer me Paradise,

and to offer it to my mother, father, and all my kin.

With praise and thanks to Allah, the poem ends here

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<sup>6</sup> The poet wants to inform the readers how we can be beneficial to our relatives even if we do not have the means.

<sup>7</sup> The poet used a Hausa adage that says: *sai baƙuri ga cutarda babu magani* (If you cannot provide a solution to a problem, then all you can do is be patient).

with sixty-six stanzas that I have dedicated to my relatives.

The writing of the poem, dear relatives, is completed with praise and thanks to Allah