

In Those Palaces

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Abstract: this is nice story is about a debate between Imam Naqi with Mutawakkil, an Abbasid khalif who decided to humiliate Imam among people, but finally he himself with his behaviors get humiliated.

The whole city was plunged into darkness. The sun had poured down its fire on the life of the city throughout the day, and was now sleeping quietly behind the mountain. The air no longer held the burning heat of the day. The people of Samera were resting at home after a tiring day of work.

Six armed agents were passing quietly and on foot through the narrow and silent streets of the city. Their leader, who was taller and bigger than the others, walked among the other five. One of them, who had covered his face with a cloth, pulled it up and with a laugh which was mixed with fear and excitement, said: "We must surprise him in such a way that he finds no chance to hide the weapons and letters."

Another agent who walked next to the leader glanced at him and said: "Sir.... If it is not too presumptuous, why has Mutawakil, the caliph, allowed this man, who is against the government, to stay alive for so long? If God forbid...."

The leader interrupted him with a sharp look and said: "You fool! It is too soon for us to know why his holy ship Mutawakil acts as he does!"

"You mean.... You mean that...."

"Yes.... Abul Hassan is respected by the people. He can not easily be eliminated. This is why his holiness Mutawakil has sent us to arrest him at this time of night."

Another agent, fastening a red shawl round his waist, said: "From the beginning, too, the banishment of Abul Hassan from Medina was due to the same reason. He is deeply loved by the people of Mecca and Medina.... It is really hard to get rid of such a person!"

The leader of the agents, seeming to remember something, suddenly grumbled: "That is enough Say no more.... We may be attacked in this darkness from behind the palms or from on the roofs! Put some space between yourselves in walking. Be quick!"

The agents pressed their swords and sticks in their hands and passed through several empty streets until they reached a house. The five agents made a ring around their leader. They listened utterly to what he said:

- "Quiet! Listen carefully! When I give the signal, you three must rush into the house at once from above the wall. You other two and I will keep watch outside so that if anyone wants to escape, we will kill him."

- "Sir! Would three of us be enough for this important task?"

- "Oh, you coward! Three men to arrest one man, and yet you say.... Nonsense! Be quick!"

The leader fastened his head cover, and stroked the hilt of his sword. He and the other two besieged the house. The faint lights of the houses were being extinguished one by one. Silence had thrown its shadow over the city in the hours before sunset.

A few moments later the leader gave a signal by splitting the air with the downward stroke of his sword. All at once three dark shapes climbed the wall, and leapt down into the yard of the house. The three of them, sword in hand, stood back to back, and slowly circling round, began to search the space around them. It was all dark except a small room from which a yellowish light emerged. Silence reined everywhere except in the same room from which a soft murmur could be heard.

On hearing this sound the three agents dropped their hands from the hilt of their swords and looked at each other in surprise, as if they did not know what to do. At last one of them whispered cautiously: "You keep watch for every movement. I will let the others in."

Then he fastened his sword, and taking stealthy half- steps, opened the door of the house and went out. A moment later the sound of steps echoed in the yard, and the leader, looking excited and satisfied, walked ahead of the other two. He made a signal and then led the way for the others and they rushed into the room.

There a man, with a scarf around his head and dressed in a coarse garment, was sitting on a floor covered with sand, facing the Qiblah and quietly reciting the Quran. He was neither old, nor young. He had a white and reddish face and large eyebrows. As he was murmuring the verses, tears flowed down his bony cheeks from his big eyes. Although three armed agents were standing above him, he calmly continued his recitation

of the Quranic verses in the same sitting position, the verses which spoke of the painful of the wicked and the happy future of the good.

The leader of the agents wondered what to do. Two of them went in shame to the window, and one of them gazed at the blue and starry sky with his dull and perplexed eyes. The other one took off his head cover, and squatted on the floor.

When the leader saw these things, he swallowed his yell and angrily ran towards the two agents, and kicked the knee of the one who was sitting and said:

- "You fool! What are you doing? Have you forgotten where you are?"

- Both agents suddenly came to themselves and moved away from the window.

- When the man who was reciting the Quran, finished his recitation, he quietly turned his head and looked at the agents. The leader moved his body, stroked his moustache, and stepped forward with a frown. He was angry at the calmness and indifference of the man, but this same coolness prevented him from being sharp. At last, with a slight cough, he said: "It is said that you.... You keep weapons here, and have collected some papers against.... Against the government of the caliph, Mutawakil. We We ask permission to search the house."

- When he heard no answer, he made a sign to his companions. They scattered everything about searching for weapons, papers and letters, but found nothing. The leader spoke his last words and said: "O Abul Hassan! You must come with us to his holiness Mutawakil. There is no time to change clothes.... Come as you are!"

The big door of the hall of the palace was opened, and Abul Hassan entered surrounded by the agents. The light of the hall was dazzling. The walls, which were covered with mirrors, were adorned with very valuable and most beautiful torches, making the walls look brilliant. The tall and large columns of the palace were decorated with the largest and most brilliant jewels and other ornaments. Mutawakil was leaning against his

high seat, laughing happily and drunken. He was dressed in green clothes of pure silk, and his head was covered with colorful clothes, and he was holding a gold cup full of wine.

Abul Hassan, dressed in that same simple and coarse garment and looking composed, walked with short but firm steps in front of the row of servants and stood by Mutawakil's throne. At first Mutawakil shifted his body where he sat, but finally he felt compelled to rise in respect for Abul Hassan.

The agents narrated for Mutawakil all that had happened. Mutawakil, who seemed to be looking for something to do, reflected for a moment and stroked the large rings on his fingers. Then all of a sudden he offered the cup of wine to Abul Hassan. One of Mutawakil's advisers laughed quietly and said to another: "Do you see the tenth Imam of the Shiite? He is now facing the demand of such a strong ruler as the caliph. One day his falsehood must eventually be proved."

Abul Hassan said calmly: "No wine has ever mingled with my blood and flesh!"

Mutawakil tried another tactic, and said:

"Then, Abul Hassan, recite a poem that will please me!"

"A poem? I rarely recite poetry."

"You have no alternative but to recite!"

Heavy silence fell on the hall of the palace. All glances were turned to the dialog between Mutawakil and Abul Hassan. The advisor laughed again and said to another: "This time his holiness's demand is much smarter than the first one."

- "Why do you say that?"

- "Hm.... Our Emir has demanded Abul Hassan to do something which is not forbidden like wine from Abul Hassan's viewpoint. Reciting a poem is something easy for him and he can not evade it. But..... ha...! The reciting of a man like him in a gathering of wine – bibbers will humiliate him."

As Mutawakil was looking at his courtiers and friends, he raised the corner of his eyebrow and a smile of victory appeared on his lips. Meanwhile Abul Hassan seemed to be ready to recite a poem. He looked Mutawakil up and down, and then glanced at the whole hall and its silent crowd. Then in a firm voice he began to recite the following lines:

“Do you know how kings spent the night?

In palaces and strong forts,

Above lofty peaks,

While valiant men

All night till dawn

Take watch over them.

But....

Alas! That palaces, forts and peaks proved of no avail!

For, they were lowered to the graves from those

Forts after all that power and pomp!

Oh! What an awful descent!

After they were buried in the grave,

A cry descended upon them like a whip,

Saying: O' you! Where are those crowns

And thrones and rich garments of yours?

Where are those faces which were

Finally covered with laces and screens?

This was a cry.

Which they were asked by the grave.

The grave said:

These are the same handsome faces on

42. *Safinah*, No. 13

Which worms roll about now.

Indeed, those who ate and drank

For such a long time in those palaces,

Are now all eaten

After all those eating.”

The poem ended, and it seemed as if Mutawakil, too, had reached the end. On hearing the poem he shed so many tears that they seemed to shake the columns of the hall and make the lofty roof of the palace collapse. The walls seemed to grow closer together, squeezing the human bodies.

That night the palace resembled a grave.

A Mixture of Good and Bad

What is good and, what is bad?

From whose point of view? From wisdoms', conscience's, or religion's?

Some parts of the cultural problems of a society are related to the different point of view. It means that people and nations know something good and something bad. They try to perform the good ones and avoid bad ones.

The problem is where good's and bad's border are not clear and youth, father and mother, coaches and elites don't know exactly what good things are to be encouraged and bad things are to be defeated.

When there isn't any standard such a mess is normal. Also in a religious community, if people and officials not to be familiar with religious point of views about goodness or badness, such confusion will remain permanently.

For instance, is friendship between boys and girls correct before marriage?

What about a private teacher for a child? Playing computer games?

Girls sport? Mixed classes in universities? Palmistry, horoscopy... Foreign animations or violent films for children?

As you know some of them are bad, some of them are good, some of them in special situation are good but in another situation and mode are bad.

There is also a cultural mixture (a mixture of local culture and a foreign culture) which can lead to a change in a local culture.

Anyhow we must be thoughtful!

Mixing good and bad will give an unpleasant face to people's relationship.

Now, unfortunately it seems that telling lie turns to be a social rule. Trickiness is called intelligence; duplicity and showing off are known as good moral "good-temper".

Imitating another culture is considered civilization.

Relying your custom and culture is called dogmatism. To make money, neglecting lawful and unlawful borders is plausible.

Yet the serious questions of what is good and what is bad still remain?

If we don't know the borders precisely, we may take a wrong thing as a correct thing.

Is such a mistake forgivable?