

MULLA NASIRUDDIN AND THE TRUTH

Editorial Note:

We humans have a great fascination for stories. There are stories and stories: romances, mysteries, war stories, detective stories, science fiction, political plots, international rackets, espionage, violence, sex –. They are read mostly as a 'time-pass'.

But there are stories which have some message or moral to convey. G.K. Chesterton in his famous book "Orthodoxy" has devoted a full chapter on the messages of fairy tales. The Chapter's title is "Ethics of the Elfland". John Bunyan in his immortal "Pilgrim's Progress" wrote the spiritual journey of a Christian soul in a story form.

Eastern spiritual and religious writings have a unique way of conveying profound teachings through stories. Zen masters tell stories, apparently absurd, but having a deep inner meaning, moral and message. Hindu religious writings are perhaps the biggest store houses of meaningful stories. Christ says, He speaks in parables. This CORNER will bring to you such stories, parables, examples and jokes, and also show the message hidden within. Today, we are beginning with two jocular stories from the annals of Sufi masters.

We humans have a special gift from God, namely, HUMOUR. We can laugh. Laughter is a form of ecstasy and bliss. A joke can revitalise a depressed man. It can convey a message most effectively. A humorous story is therefore a most powerful weapon to make something stick and clique in us.

Sufism is one of the numerous branches of mysticism prevalent amongst the humanity. Although it has certain doctrines and practices of its own, many of its messages are universal. To convey them, the Sufi masters created a funny character, Mulla Nasruddin, and spun several humorous stories around him. Some of them sound like tea-time jokes; some seem to be too absurd to be funny. But each has a deep lesson, a hidden truth. The joke generally is on Mulla Nasaruddin himself. Often he turns out to be a big fool at the end; but in the process he picturises the follies and frailties of the humans.

Here are two.

1. WHERE IS MY KEY?

Mulla Nasaruddin was standing on a road with a question - sign on his face as if he has lost something. He started looking on the ground, and going round and round to find out that thing. A good neighbour was passing by.

"Hail Mulla Saheb. Are you searching for something?"

"Yes my good sir," Mulla said, "I have lost my bunch of keys".

The helpful neighbour also started looking on the road. Both of them tried even to look beneath the heaps of dust on the road, but in vain. Suddenly, the neighbour, remembering the idiosyncrasy of Mulla asked, "Mulla Where did you loose your bunch of keys? Are you sure you lost it here?"

"No, my dear friend," Mulla said, continuing calmly his search, "not here. I lost it in my home".

"Then why in the name of heavens you are searching in here?" asked the exasperated neighbour.

"Because, there is more light here", said Mulla. How foolish, you may think. But there is a deep message - in fact more messages than one.

Humanity and God are Lost

The humans have lost their humanity and are searching for it at the wrong place thinking that it will be found in the broad day light on the road. Wrong is not only the place of search but also the search-light. Humanity is 'at home', within the heart, not out on the road; and the floods and floods of light there will not enable the humans to find it. They have to awaken the divine light within.

That lost humanity is God Himself.

Lure of the Material

The story depicts another colour if we take the lost key as the true happiness, not the material short-lived happiness and carnal pleasures, but the peace and bliss and ecstasy which never dies. Instead of searching for it within the heart and working for it, we humans are lured by the road-light of physical pleasure; we exert for that temporary pleasure; we invent gadgets; we bring in push-button technologies; we boast of our scientific achievements; we forget that this is not the light - howsoever dazzling - to find ever lasting spiritual bliss. That bliss is not on this material road, it is at home. To find it reach your home and exert to find it. That is Mulla's message.

Dry Scholasticism, Not the Real Light

There is still another facet to the story. The joke is directed to that "scholarly" world, which tries to understand the mystical truths through the light of the ordinary non-saintly intellect. That light not only has a very limited expanse, but is faulty. Idris Shah in his excellent book "The Sufis" points out to this moral in the story. The search for truth by means of intellect is bound to fail, because the place and method of the search is wrong. Mulla will never find his keys in this light howsoever bright it looks. Truth is within the heart and requires the spiritual light to be awakened "at home".

The "scholarly" searches of Religion based on such intellectual equipments as philosophy, etymology, history, geography and limited vision and thinking are bound to fail. They have failed in case of our Religion and brought us, the Parsis, on the brink of extinction. You Parsis. Don't be misled by the lure of "scholastic" road light. Go back home. The truth is there and so also the Parsi survival.

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2. MULLA NASIRUDDIN, THE SMUGGLER

Not always Mulla turns out a fool at the end. At times he makes fool of the whole world.

Mulla lived in a town. Often would he take a couple of donkeys laden with grass and cross the border of the town to enter the neighbouring territory. The custom officers at the border had a strong suspicion that Mulla was smuggling out some goods, but they could not find any. Mulla

had only a heap of grass which they examined very very closely. There might be small rings of gold or tiny diamonds. They even burned the grass, but in vain. Mulla's several crossings of the border did not reveal any smuggled goods and he entered the neighbouring territory several times after giving a big respectful salute to the officers. But there was always a cunning smile on his face. Their police instinct told them, Mulla was smuggling SOMETHING, but they knew not what.

Long time after Mulla had stopped his comings and goings from that town and had gone to stay at some other place, one of those customs officers who had by then retired, suddenly met him.

"Tell me, Mulla", the ex-officer asked, "what was that you were smuggling in those days?"

Mulla looked up and with his same cunning smile said "*Donkeys*".

Can you think out the message behind the story?

It is this: the truth was all along directly staring at the officers. The goods were before their eyes - the donkeys. They were too apparent to be suspected. The heap of grass was misguiding them. They thought something was hidden in it. They tried their best to find forgetting all along that the big donkeys were themselves the smuggled goods.

That is what we humans often do to find out the truth. *The truth is directly before our eyes but we ignore it.* We forget that here it is. We search for it, adopt long procedures to find it and yet fail.

For instance. wait let the Holy Bible speak:

"Men by their wickedness suppress the truth. Ever since creation - God is clearly perceived... but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened Claiming to be wise they became fools". (Romans I).

God is perceived and proclaimed by His Prophets and Saints and Sages and Seers. They show us the ways to perceive Him. But we humans with our futile thinking and senseless minds tried to dispense with God. He appeared in the hearts of the Faithful, in the divine Persons of Virgin Mary and Jesus, in the miracles of the Yogis and Fakirs and Sufis and Aabeyd Sahebs, and in His amazing presence in a speck of dust and in a grain of corn and in a blade of grass and in the chirp of a bird, and in the roar of sea and in the music of spheres - yet this negligibly sized creature, the human, thought that it can think out the truth. Therein it failed. Its egoistic intellect precluded it from seeing the Truth and God, who were (and are) as obvious to the humans as was the donkeys to Mulla Nasiruddin's custom officials - But they searched and searched in the heap of grass and Mulla went on radiating his cunning smile -.

We Parsis are no wiser. *The truth of the miracle of Baheramshah Shroff is shining brightly.* He is the solution of all the doubts and the replies to all the questions which we come across in the understanding of our Daena and its Institutions and practices. *It is IIm-e-Khshnoom.* Yet we close our eyes to it. We search for the Religious Truth's in Western "Scholasticism", an attempt doomed to fail from the very start.

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