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A Call to Prayers On A Cold Wintry Morning

It was a wintry morning with much snow falling coupled with the blowing of a strong cold wind. It was not easy to come out in the open air. Yet one could see people rushing to their work and students with books in their hands hastening to their schools.

In one of the mosques in Hamadan – Iran, religious students were assembling in order to attend a morning class. It was an important school of Islamic theology and the tutor was also a very great learned one. His discourses were indeed very thought-provoking and so were his students quite intelligent.

The tutor was none else but the world famous and a great Persian thinker and philosopher 'Ibn Sina', popularly known in Europe as Avicenna. His lectures and writings on various science subjects had become the standard text books for hundreds of years in the universities of Europe. Students admired his deep philosophical thinking. They felt honoured to sit in his class and hear his inspiring lectures.

That cold morning, students had already assembled in the mosque and were still anxiously awaiting the arrival of their learned tutor. They were wondering if the intense cold weather that day had delayed his coming.

A few minutes had passed when suddenly the students witnessed the graceful arrival of 'Ibn Sina', their great learned tutor. They felt very happy and stood up as a mark of reverence and respect for him. He sat down at his usual place and exchanged greetings with his students. He commenced his discourse in his usual lucid manner that held his students spellbound. He also gave satisfactory answers to their questions.

Among the students was one very young and enthusiastic by name 'Bahman Yar'. He was much more close and attached to 'Ibn Sina' the learned tutor. He was also the foremost among the clever and advanced students of the class. Every time he listened to the lectures of his tutor, he became more and more fascinated with his deep philosophy and knowledge on every subject. He would say to his class-mates: “I wonder why our tutor 'Ibn Sina' does not claim to be a prophet despite his supreme intelligence and magic personality”

It is said that one day by chance 'Ibn Sina' was standing at a baker and loaf-seller shop. His attention was drawn to a very smart young boy who was displaying signs of much intelligence. The boy was saying to the baker: “My mother is requesting for a little fire.” The baker responded: “Have you brought any pot to carry the fire?” “No! But I know how to carry it”, replied the boy instantly. So saying he applied some ash over his palm and stretched his hand to the baker who placed a piece of burning firewood over his palm. Without any hesitation, the boy took it and went home.

'Ibn Sina' was rather amazed to see the intelligence and courage of this boy. He thought of having him for special training and education under his personal care. The proposal was communicated to the parents who agreed and entrusted the boy to his full care. Thus 'Bahman Yar' since then was staying at no other place except at the house of his tutor and care-taker, 'Ibn Sina'. They were all the time to be seen together. The boy being highly intelligent derived the best of the knowledge that his tutor could impart.

Years passed and 'Bahman Yar' grew up not only in age but also in knowledge and understanding under the patronage of his tutor. The learned tutor was also very proud of this most capable student.

It was one of the coldest nights of the wintry season. Midnight had passed and the snow-falling was very heavy. Both 'Ibn Sina' and 'Bahman Yar' were sleeping in one room under warm thick blankets. The light in the room was already extinguished but the student was still asking intricate questions on some deep subjects. The tutor was replying in his usual impressive manner. Fascinated by the supreme knowledge and deep philosophy of his tutor, he again made the suggestion which he had made before:

“Oh my learned tutor!” he pleaded, “with all this high status of knowledge that you enjoy and being master of all the sciences, why not declare yourself a prophet? Sir! Don't you think that you even excel some of the previous prophets in knowledge and your status today is unparalleled in the world! Should you decide to claim prophethood, no one would dare challenge you. Let me assure you that I shall be the first to offer my allegiance and would serve you with full faith.”

Since 'Bahman Yar' was still young and immature, his above proposal to his tutor was rather emotional than logical. 'Ibn Sina' smiled but did not give any reply.

That night the cold weather had become extreme and there was heavy snow-falling. Both were already fast asleep. It was past midnight and suddenly 'Ibn Sina' woke up and raised his head out of the warm blanket. Incidentally he was very thirsty and the water-mug in the room was empty. So he decided to wake up his student to go out and bring him some water.

“Oh 'Bahman Yar'! My son 'Bahman Yar'! Please wake up and bring me some drinking water from outside”, he said repeatedly.

“Why is there no water in the water-mug near your goodself, Sir?” asked 'Bahman Yar.'

“No!” replied 'Ibn Sina.'

'Bahman Yar' raised his head and saw heavy snowfall outside. The thrilling sound of the strong cold wind also made him nervous to go out. Again 'Ibn Sina' grumbled:

“Oh 'Bahman Yar'! Why the delay? Bring me some water, I am too thristy.”

'Bahman Yar' dared not come out of the warm blankets to face the cold weather outside the room. He was, therefore, putting forward lame excuses to his tutor.

“Oh my respected tutor! It is harmful for you to drink water now that you have just come out of the warmth of thick blankets. It is better you go to sleep again till the early morning which is not far off”, said 'Bahman Yar'.

“My son! Bring me water, I am too thirsty. I myself am a medical expert and know better what is harmful than you do. I am unable to sleep, please bring me some water from outside”, again appealed 'Ibn Sina'

In response 'Bahman Yar' again put forward excuses and argued that he would catch cold and fall sick if he were to go out in that extreme cold weather. So saying he went back to sleep.

There was dead silence everywhere and no sound of anything was to be heard. Outside it was still pitch dark except the first light of Subhe Sadiq (true dawn) in the eastern horizon had commenced to appear. Suddenly the silence broke with a melodious voice of a muezzin – caller to prayer from the top of a minaret at the nearby mosque. After reciting some verses of the, Holy Qur'an, the muezzin in a loud voice said, “Allaho Akber” – Allah is the Greatest. “Ash–hado an la ilaha illallah” – I bear witness that there is no god except Allah.

Both the tutor and his student quietly listened to the melodious voice of the muezzin. The call to prayers then proceeded to the words “Ash–hado anna Muhammadan Rasoolullah” – I bear witness that Muhammed is the Messenger of Allah. On hearing this, 'Ibn Sina' thought of taking the opportunity of responding to the repeated proposal made to him by 'Bahman Yar'. He said:

“Listen to me, oh my son 'Bahman Yar'. Now I wish to reply to your repeated suggestion”. The student sat up to hear attentively of what his learned tutor abruptly wanted to say. 'Ibn Sina' then proceeded:

“You have been suggesting to me several times to claim prophethood, that people would put full faith in me and that you would be the first one to do so. Now look, you have been my close student for several years and benefited from me a great deal, yet you did not think it prudent to obey me by coming out of your warm bed for a moment and bring me water that I badly needed to quench my thirst. Instead you chose to put forward lame excuses.”

“But think of this man who is now calling to prayers at the top of the minaret after coming out in the coldest weather and making ablution with cold water in the early hour of this morning. It is for no other

purpose but in obedience to and respect for the command of Allah as conveyed by His apostle Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (S) some four hundred years ago.

“What a great difference there is between me and that Prophet sent by Allah!”

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