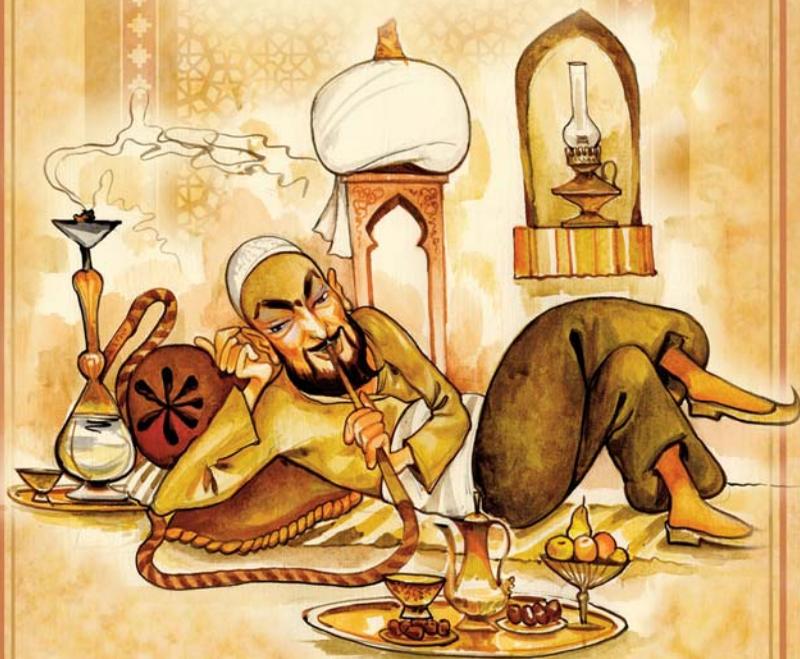


Molla Nasreddin



anecdotes

Molla
Nasraddin

Anecdotes



Who Brings Bad Luck?

Here is what is told of Molla Nasraddin's first encounter with Tamerlane.

Molla Nasraddin was quite homely.

Once early in the morning Tamerlane accompanied by his retinue was on their way hunting. He came across Molla Nasraddin. Upon seeing him, Tamerlane became angry:

'If I encounter such an unsightly man early in the morning, the hunt will be unsuccessful. Take this man and jail him.'

Poor Molla was instantly captured and sent to a dungeon.

However, that day Tamerlane's hunt turned out successful. Upon his return, he ordered to set Molla free and have the man brought to the palace. When Molla stood before him, Tamerlane said:

'Molla! I thought that, seeing someone so homely on our way hunting, we were destined to bad luck. But it was on the contrary. This is why I have had pity on you and

have let you go.'

'My lord, despite there being no fault of mine, you had me jailed, and now you are setting me free. Thank you!

Now, I would only like to ask you one question.'

'Ask your question.'

'In the morning, having taken me for a nefarious man, you had me thrown in a dungeon, when in fact it was the act of encountering me that made your hunt more successful than ever. I also left my house early in the morning to earn daily bread for my family. Yet I came across you, and was out of luck. I remained hungry, as did my family back in the house. Now, tell me in all honesty: which one of us brings bad luck?

Why Would You Climb up all the Way to the Sky?

There is another recount of Molla Nasraddin's first meeting with Tamerlane.

They say Tamerlane ordered that Molla be brought before him. When Molla came, he saw that the room was

full of people. Everyone was sitting on the floor in a circle. Only Tamerlane was sitting on a very tall ottoman.

Molla bowed before him and said:

‘Hail thee, o Almighty!’

‘I am not God,’ said Tamerlane. ‘I am...’

Molla did not let him finish:

‘May I fall victim in your name, Saint Azrail!’

‘What are you saying!’ said Tamerlane. ‘How am I Azrail?’

‘For I do not understand,’ replied Molla, ‘if you are neither God, nor an angel, why you would not come down and sit next to all these people, as the mere mortal you are. Why would you climb up all the way to the sky?’

Passion For Exaggeration

Molla Nasraddin owned a small lot of land. Every year, he would plant wheat, harvest fifty or sixty poods of crop and thus feed his family.

After Tamerlane came to power, taxes rose fivefold. Village headmen enjoyed impunity and taunted the people

as they pleased.

It was then Molla's turn. The village headmen grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and said:

'This year, you have had five hundreds poods worth of harvest, which means you are to pay a tax accordingly.

Molla plead with him long and in vain:

'By God, I have only harvested fifty poods!'

The headman would not leave Molla alone, and Molla had nothing to do but to go into town and complain to

Tamerlane.

Tamerlane listened to his complaint, and then shouted at him:

'How dare you! You are old enough to have grown a yard-long beard, yet you are not ashamed to lie!'

Molla stood up and headed towards the door without saying anything.

'What happened?' asked Tamerlane. 'Where are you going?'

'My lord,' replied Molla, 'it turns out that the village headman is innocent. If a sovereign calls a beard that can fit in a handful "yard-long", what to expect from a

headman who calls fifty poods “five hundred”?’

Gift for Molla

One time cucumbers in Molla’s vegetable garden ripened earlier than in his neighbours’.

“I must take a pack of these to Tamerlane,” thought Molla. “Perhaps he will have mercy on me and offer me a good present.”

He woke up early in the morning, picked some cucumbers, loaded them on a donkey and went into town. At that time, Tamerlane was also riding somewhere. He was all alone and came across Molla.

‘Hey you!’ he said. ‘What are you carrying and where?’ ‘These are fresh cucumbers,’ answered Molla, ‘and I am taking them to Tamerlane as a gift.’

Tamerlane had not met Molla Nasraddin before and noticed that Molla did not recognise him either.

‘What kind of friends are you with Tamerlane,’ he asked, ‘if you do not even know each other? You are neither brethren, nor coeval. Why do you care about him so

much?’

‘Until now,’ chuckled Molla, ‘I have thought I was the only fool in the world, but now I see that you are even more of a fool.’

Tamerlane was hurt, but still unwilling to reveal himself, he asked:

‘Very well, but what makes you think that I am fool?’

‘To think that you have lived so long and do not know me! I am Molla Nasraddin, and I could not care less about people like Tamerlane.’

‘If you are Molla Nasraddin,’ wondered Tamerlane, ‘and you could not care less about Tamerlane, why are you taking these cucumbers to him?’

‘I am taking them, so that it is easier for me to cadge something from him to make my children happy.’

‘That is fair, but why do you think that Tamerlane would give you something?’

‘First, as I have heard, he is not particularly wise. If you compliment him first, you can saddle him up like a donkey and he will have no clue. Second, why would he not give me something; it is not like he would be giving out

his inheritance, rather he would give me what belongs to us, the people!

Tamerlane became very cross, but restrained himself and asked:

‘Very well. What kind of gift do you expect from Tamerlane in exchange for these cucumbers?’

‘I do not know, but I am lucky, I can swindle him out of fifty or even a hundred coins.’

‘You are aiming for too big a reward, my friend. I doubt he would give you that much.’

‘To hell with him then. I shall accept thirty or forty.’

‘No, that is also too much.’

‘All right, I shall call it twenty or twenty give. Half a loaf is better than none.’

‘What if he does not give you anything?’ asked Tamerlane, hiding his anger.

‘Then I shall cut off my donkey’s tail and place it on the graves of Tamerlane’s ancestors.’

Tamerlane did not speak another word and continued his journey, as did Molla.

Tamerlane took a shortcut and arrived into town first.

Then Molla arrived.

Tamerlane covered his face and ordered that Molla enter.

First he looked at the cucumbers, then he asked:

‘Well, what is it that you want from me in return?’

‘What can I want from you, my lord, may God give you health! Nothing; except, perhaps, fifty or a hundred coins.

‘No, that is too high a price.’

‘If you think it is too high, let it be thirty or forty.’

‘No,’ answered Tamerlane. ‘That is also too high.’

Molla recognised Tamerlane’s voice as belonging to the same man he had encountered earlier that day. Without a sign of embarrassment, he said:

‘All right, let us call it twenty or twenty-five.’

Tamerlane lifted his cover and asked:

‘What if I give you nothing?’

‘My lord, I have already said that I am Molla Nasraddin, and I stand by my word. If you give me nothing, my black donkey it out in the court and still has its tail on.’

FIRST FIGURES

Molla had a fig tree growing in his garden. One time the tree yielded abundant harvest. Molla decided to offer his first harvest to Tamerlane.

He woke up early in the morning, picked a basketful of fresh fruit and solicitously took it to his sovereign.

Tamerlane's servants did not let Molla into the palace.

They grabbed his basket and took it to their master themselves. Molla sat at the palace gate and began to wait. Meanwhile soldiers were escorting a group of prisoners to hand them over to the palace guards. Suddenly they noticed that one prisoner was missing; he must have escaped on the way due to their inattentiveness. In order to avoid punishment, they seized Molla to make up for the missing person and handed him over. Poor Molla cried and begged, but to no avail. After beating him for some time, they threw him in a dungeon, which became the sad reward for his figs.

Days, weeks, months passed. Molla still languished in prison.

Once Tamerlane visited the prison and asked Molla what he had been arrested for. Molla recounted his story.

Tamerlane ordered to release him and then said:

‘I liked your figs very much. What would you like from me in return?’

‘Long live the sovereign!’ answered Molla. ‘You have already given me so much that I am ashamed to ask you for more reward. I am asking you to give me a sharp axe.’

‘What will you do with it?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘Well, now I have only one thing to do, which is to cut down my fig tree.’

It will Only get Worse

As we have said, there are many different stories about Molla Nasraddin’s first encounter with Tamerlane. Here is yet another story.

Tamerlane has heard much about Molla and with the intention to show his aldermen that he is smarter and more ready-witted than Molla, he invited the latter to the

palace.

Thus Molla was brought before Tamerlane. Tamerlane intentionally made Molla wait by the door and then agreed to receive him. Until then, Molla had never seen Tamerlane and had no idea that he was lame. Upon entering, Molla saw that Tamerlane was sitting with just one leg stretched. Molla thought that he had assumed this position out of disrespect for Molla.

He sat down across from Tamerlane and also stretched his leg. Tamerlane took offence at that, thinking that Molla was mocking his disability. Hence he also decided to hurt Molla's feelings.

After talking about different things, Tamerlane said to Molla:

'I have heard much about you, and until now I have always thought that you were a truly intelligent man. But I have been talking to you all morning and examining you, wondering if you really stand far from a long-earned ass.'

'You are right, my lord! Right now there is not that much distance between me and a long-eared ass,' an-

swered Molla without a sign of embarrassment, and, pointing at the distance between himself and Tamerlane, he added: 'I would say about a yard.'

Tamerlane's face turned red, but he could not say a word in response. He ordered that the dinner be served. After eating some food, he began belching right in Molla's face who was looking at him in feigned surprised. Tamerlane decided that he had prevailed over Molla, and quickly exclaimed:

'Molla, you are supposed to say "Bon appetit!" Where I come from, belching means being satisfied.'

'Bon appetit,' said Molla. Then he filled his mouth with food and sneezed in Tamerlane's face, covering him in chewed food.

Tamerlane became angry and stood up.

'You are a very ill-mannered person!'

Molla did not seem embarrassed.

'My lord, you are supposed to say "Bless you!" This is what they say to people who sneeze where I come from.

If you do notand we begin quarrelling, it will only get worse.'

Molla's Petition

Every year Tamerlane distributed his military elephants among different villages for the people there to look after them. The elephants would trample down all the crops and destroy them.

Once, an elephant was brought to a village where Molla lived. Within a matter of days, the elephant exasperated the entire village. Finally, the village richmen decided that it was necessary to pay a visit to Tamerlane in order to ask him to relieve them of this disaster. The question was who would take on the responsibility of speaking before the ruler. No one seemed to have enough courage. Thus everyone began pleading with Molla Nasraddin:

‘You must take on this task.’

Molla did not want to go, but they insisted so much that, after giving it a thought, he finally agreed, though on the condition that he would not have to go all by himself.

They set off together. Upon reaching the town, they spend much time asking to be let in the palace. In the end, they were let inside.

Molla saw that they were not alone; next to him, there were other people who had come to complain. Molla sat down without saying anything and began waiting for his turn.

Tamerlane proceeded to addressing the complaints. If he did not like the complaint, he would order that the complainant be imprisoned. When Molla's fellow villagers saw this, they began sneaking out of the palace one by one. Suddenly Molla found himself standing all alone. Just as he wanted to run away, Tamerlane stopped him:

'Where are you going? What did you want to tell me?'

Molla stared at the door, sighed and responded:

'May God give my lord health! We, your loyal servant villagers, are living good lives thanks to you, and your prayers are always with you. This year we were asked to receive a guest you had sent us, an elephant, a very nice, smart and kind one. He is very well-behaved and helps us look after our crops and with other tasks. We are very grateful for him. It is just that the poor thing is lonely and bored. He does not sleep the nights. Therefore our people delegated me here to ask you to send us another

elephant, so ours can have a friend and would not be bored any more.

Tamerlane was touched by Molla's words and ordered that a female elephant be sent to the village where

Molla lived the next day.

When Molla left the palace, his fellow villagers surrounded him and started asking questions:

'Well, Molla, did you manage to have anything done?'

Molla looked askance at them and replied:

'I did; very much so! For the sake of friends who are always ready to offer support in a difficult situation, just like you people, I would sacrifice my life and even more. Congratulations! Tomorrow they are sending us a female elephant!'

Kitchens and Palaces

When Molla Nasraddin moved from his home village into a city, he rented rooms in different houses for many years. Finally, he made some money and borrowed some as well, and built himself a house with a tiny kitchen.

Tamerlane was informed of this and decided to pay Molla a visit with his court circle in order to mock him.

Tamerlane examined the kitchen and told Molla:

‘You have got a nice house and it seems suitable for you, though I did not like the kitchen at all. How could you build such a kitchen? Even two mice cannot play around here, for one of them will surely end up in a trap.’

‘The size of my kitchen is an evidence of how I care about you,’ answered Molla.

‘I do not quite understand you,’ said Tamerlane.

‘What is not to understand? If people like me built huge kitchens, there would not be space for people like you to build huge palaces.’

WANTING TO SEE THE LORD HIMSELF

They say Tamerlane kept Molla Nasraddin in his palace for a while. Once during that time a foreign envoy arrived to meet with Tamerlane. The latter was hunting, so the vizier ordered the servants to receive the guests with all due honours.

The cook prepared exquisite meals from partridge, francolin and pheasant for the guest.

This continued for days, when finally the envoy felt he had had enough poultry. He decided he wanted some beef. He called the cook and tried to explain to him in his language what exactly he wanted. The cook did not understand a word. The vizier was immediately informed.

The vizier sent for Molla Nasraddin and told him:

‘Molla, you understand things better than any one of us.

Will you please find out what our guest wants?’

Molla came to see the envoy and used his hands to ask what he wanted.

The envoy began speaking in his language, but Molla did not understand him. At the end, the guest touched his temples with his hands, stretched out his index fingers and moaned.

Without saying a word, Molla went back to the vizier.

The latter asked:

‘Well? What does our guest need?’

‘By God, I did not understand a word he said, but at the end he held his head and howled so loudly that I guessed

he wanted to see my lord.'

Let Them Send us a Ruler

They recount that during Tamerlane's rule, there was a mutiny in one town. The rebels seized the town governor and threw him into a dungeon together with his guards. When Tamerlane found out, he became furious and immediately mobilised his troops to repress the mutiny and punish the rebels. The citizens locked all gates and began

holding the line. Despite all his attempts, Tamerlane failed to retake the city. He tried to storm it a few times, but each time met with failure. Then he decided to call a messenger and told him:

'Get ready to set off. I shall write a letter, and you will take it to my vizier. We must do away with these rebels this week.'

Tamerlane took a pen-feather and began writing. He wrote for a while, before turning to his retinue:

'I wrote asking for another cavalry detachment, an infantry detachment, a detachment of archers and soldiers

armed with mangonels. Tell me if we would need anything else to deal with this city.'

Molla Nasraddin was in the retinue as well, and Tamerlane took him to the campaign.

'To deal with his city,' said Molla, 'we do not need any of what you listed in the letter. Ask them to send us a wise ruler. If they manage to find one, the matter will be solved without combat.'

Dangerous Beggar

Tamerlane ordered Molla Nasraddin:

'The city is full of beggars, and they are so impudent and shameless that when they grab someone, they will not let go until the person gives them money. Get a piece of paper and a pen and make a list of these insolents, and I shall have them sent away.'

Molla took a piece of paper and a pen and added

Tamerlane's name as the first on the list.

Tamerlane look at the paper and flew into a rage.

'Do not be cross, my lord! Was it not you who ordered

me to make a list of the most insolent beggars? This is what I did.'

'What are you saying?' answered Tamerlane. 'How am I, Tamerlane, a beggar? And an insolent one, on top of things?'

'Why are you angry, sire? Murder will out, as they say. You are a beggar, and one of the most insolent ones!'

'So you think that I should be sent away?'

'Yes, sire! Other beggars are not as dangerous as you. They receive something for the people by begging for it, while you receive it through, by having people insulted and lashed.'

Molla's Modesty

One day, Tamerlane told Molla:

'Molla, today I am in a very good mood. I want to offer you a gift, but I do not know what you would enjoy.'

'Hail the sovereign!' answered Molla. 'Whatever you offer me as a gift will please me.'

'Very well then. I shall name things, and you choose,'

offered Tamerlane. ‘Ten gold coins, a horse, a herd of sheep, or a garden – what would you like?’

‘If you are asking me what I would like, then I would like for you to prove that you truly are a fair ruler.’

‘How so?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘If you allow me to have those ten gold coins in my pocket, mount the horse and herd the sheep into the garden, then you will prove you are fair.’

‘You have got some appetite. What if I do not give you anything?’

‘That way,’ answered Molla, ‘you will just prove that you are no one but Tamerlane.’

Whom was Molla Laughing at

One day Tamerlane became frustrated with someone and ordered to Molla to cane the person:

‘Give him a good one hundred strokes right now!’

Molla laughed. Tamerlane became even more frustrated and shouted:

‘Why are you laughing? Follow my order! Give him five

hundred strokes!’

Molla burst out in laughter.

Tamerlane saw red:

‘Is that so? Give him a thousand strokes!’

Molla shouted with laughter. Tamerlane sprang to his feet like a madman.

‘Is it me that you are laughing at?’

‘No, sire! How dare I laugh at you? I am laughing at the Almighty. How could He possibly bestow the reins of governments on someone like you, who has not the slightest clue about caning nor knows numbers. How can one single person receive a thousand strokes?’

Tamerlane's Questions

Once Tamerlane told Molla:

‘I want to ask you an abstruse question. What in the world has not yet been ready, is not getting ready and will never be ready?’

Molla replied:

‘That would be the fee that you promised to pay us

when you hired us.'

List of Fools

Once Tamerlane ordered that Molla compile and submit a list of all the fools who served in his palace.

Molla realised that upon receiving this list, Tamerlane would mock the nobles for his amusement. But he also realised that these people would turn into his enemies. He thought for a long time, then took a piece of paper and wrote titled it "The fools of Tamerlane's palace". In the middle of the sheet he wrote only one word in large letters written: "Tamerlane" and gave the paper to Tamerlane.

When the ruler saw no other name but his on the paper, he got in a rage and asked:

'What is this?'

'A list of fools,' replied Molla.

'Is what you are saying that there is only one fool in this palace and that is me?'

'Yes, my lord! I have not found anyone more foolish

than you.'

'How will you prove that I am a fool?' shouted Tamerlane.

'Long live the sovereign!' replied Molla. 'It was your idea to have a list of all fools living in your palace compiled by me. This means that you knew that some, if not all, of the nobles living here are fools. If you know they are fools and you still continue to allow them to live in the palace and treat them with full honour, this makes you the biggest fool.'

Tamerlane saw that he could not respond to that. After thinking for a bit, he told Molla:

'Very well. What if I prove that every single one of them is intelligent and not foolish?'

'Your name will still be the only one on the list.'

'How so?'

'For the list was to be compiled on your order. If it turns out that there are no fools in the palace and everyone is intelligent, this will make you a real fool, for you accuse intelligent people of foolishness.'

Tamerlane realised that he had committed a gaffe again

and said, completely enraged:

‘What if I prove that there is only one fool in this palace
and that is you?’

‘Then I would still include only your name on the list.’

‘Why?’

‘For an intelligent person would not confide making a list
of fools to a fool.’

‘And what if I invite an executioner and have him tear
your tongue off?’

‘Then I would cross out your name and write mine, so
no one ever again acts as foolish as telling you the truth.’

AUBERGINES

Once Molla was dining at Tamerlane’s palace. To test
Molla, Tamerlane said:

‘I love aubergines more than anything in the
world.’

‘So do I, sire,’ said Molla.

A little later, Tamerlane said:

‘Aubergines are not at all that delicious. If I did

not eat any for years, I would probably not even think of them.'

'Neither would I, sire,' replied Molla.

Sometime later, Tamerlane said:

'Every time I have aubergines, I get palpitation and a headache.'

'So do I, sire,' echoed Molla.

'But the damned things are very good for your health,' Tamerlane spoke again. 'When I have them, I start seeing better.'

'So do I,' Molla assented.

At the end of the dinner, Tamerlane called the cook and told him:

'If you ever serve me aubergines, I shall have you skinned just like you peel these aubergines. I want you to know once and for all: I cannot stand them!'

Molla immediately pushed away his plate and said:

'I cannot even look at them, sire.'

'Oh, Molla,' said Tamerlane, 'what a strange man you are! You agree with everything that I say about these bloody aubergines. What is this?'

‘It is, in fact, very clear, my lord!’ replied Molla. ‘This is exactly how it should be. After all, it is you who pays my salary and receives my service, not the aubergines.’

The Apology is Worse than the Misdeed

Once Tamerlane asked Molla:

‘Molla, what does the expression “The apology is worse than the misdeed” mean?’

‘Long live the sovereign! It is a Persian saying which means that sometimes the apology does more evil than the wrongdoing.’

Tamerlane did not understand, so Molla began to explain.

‘Let us suppose that a man did something wrong, and then has come to apologize, but his apology turns out more destructive than the deed that he is apologising for.’

Tamerlane did not understand again.

Despite all his efforts, Molla failed to make Tamerlane comprehend the meaning of these words. Finally,

Tamerlane became angry and said:
‘What a fool you are! There are only a few words, and you cannot explain them. I am hereby giving you a deadline: you must be able to provide me with an explanation when I finish counting to one hundred. If you do not, I shall order that you be beheaded.’

Molla did not say a word, approached Tamerlane and pinched him painfully on his thigh. Tamerlane uttered a shriek and turned to Molla:

‘Have you lost your mind? What are you doing?’

Molla bowed to him and said:

‘I apologise, my lord! I day-dreamed that I was at home and that you were my wife.’

‘What is this nonsense?’

‘I beg you not to be mad, sire!’ replied Molla. ‘This is exactly when the apology is worse than the misdeed.’

Molla and the Nobles

Every noble in Tamerlane’s palace hated Molla Nasraddin. All of them tried to soil his reputation in front of

Tamerlane, but each time they ended up in a pretty puddle themselves.

Once a few nobles were trying to convince Tamerlane that Molla Nasraddin had such a horrible breath that no one could sit next to him.

Molla walked in unexpectedly on this conversation. Tamerlane noticed that before Molla's arrival, the nobles were talking by the hour, but the moment he came, everyone became silent and pale.

To get to the truth, Tamerlane told Molla:

'Come closer, Molla. They are telling me that you have got into a trouble.'

'Sire, all of them are my dear friends,' said Molla. 'They could not have told a lie. Tell me what they are saying about the trouble I have got in?'

'They are telling me that you have a bad breath.'

'Alas, my lord, they are telling you the truth. Until now, I have witnessed all of their wrongdoings; I never shared them with anyone and kept it all to myself. Now there is so much of it inside of me, that the stink comes out through my mouth.'

Molla is Going on a Campaign

Once Tamerlane decided to attack someone. On the day when his troops were about to go on a military campaign, he told Molla:

‘You must also get ready! You have done enough eating and sleeping. This is the age of war and not the of talking. You are coming on this campaign with me.’

Despite all his efforts, Molla could not escape the campaign. Finally, he found a bow, mounted a donkey and arrived at Tamerlane’s palace. Tamerlane laughed to his heart’s content and then asked:

‘What is this, Molla? Could you not find a horse?’

‘I could not, sire. The donkey did not let me. He said: “If his majesty cannot part ways with you, neither can I.

Wherever you go, I must be with you.”’

Tamerlane realised that Molla had fooled him again, but did not want everyone around to realise that as well.

‘Very well. I see you have a bow, but you have no arrows.’

‘That is correct, I do not,’ replied Molla.

‘How do you intend to shoot at the enemy?’
‘I shall use the arrows that they shoot at us.’
‘You are incredibly foolish! What if the enemy does not
shoot at us?’
‘If the enemy does not shoot at us, they will be no war.
So why would I need arrows?’

Molla will Escape Death

Once Tamerlane asked Molla Nasraddin:
‘Molla, tell me honestly, would you like to be a ruler?’
‘God forbid,’ answered Molla. ‘Have I no mercy on my-
self?’
‘Why?’ asked Tamerlane.
‘For my entire modest life, I have witnessed the passing
of two of my masters. God willing, I shall witness the
passing of two more. But no master of mine has wit-
nessed the death of Molla Nasraddin.’

Molla is Looking for Treasure

They say that when Molla was at Tamerlane's service,
something interesting happened.

One rich man liked his neighbour's garden very much.
He wanted to somehow become its owner. The neighbour
did not agree to sell their garden and would always
say:

'No, dear neighbour, I am not selling this garden
for I have applied much effort to grow it. I have invested
my entire wealth in this garden. Every day I walk around
it and rejoice.

The rich man realised that his neighbour would not sell
the garden. Then he took the money that he wanted to
use to pay for the garden to the town governor, the
judges and the chief vizier of the court to bribe them.

Then he made a court claim, saying:

'I dreamed that my neighbour's late father owned one
hundred gold coins to my late father, and now I demand
that the neighbour either pay his father's debt, or cede
his garden to me.'

The neighbour was summoned to court. He begged for justice, but to no avail. The court ordered the garden repossessed.

The neighbour complained to the town governor, but he upheld the court's decision. The destitute man took his case to Tamerlane. Tamerlane demanded that the grand vizier examine the case and pass a sentence.

The vizier also confirmed the court's decision.

The poor man lost all hope. The neighbourhood residents suggested that he see Molla Nasraddin and tell him everything, for only Molla could improve the situation.

The man went to see Molla and told him his story.

'Cheer up,' said Molla. 'Tomorrow at dawn come to Tamerlane's palace. Getting your garden back to you will be as easy as unloading a donkey.'

The next day, the poor man came to the palace and saw Molla having tucked up his coat and digging for something under the palace wall with a stone hammer. He asked in surprise:

'Why, Molla, what are you doing?'

'Get a shovel and a stone hammer and give me a hand,'

replied Molla. ‘Your garden is going to come out of here.’

The poor man thought that Molla had gone mad.

And Molla chuckled and said:

‘I understand that you think I have gone mad, but I have not. With this sort of people, this is the only way to act. Get a stone hammer!’

The man got a hammer and began helping Molla. It turned out that they were digging right under the wall of Tamerlane’s bedroom.

Tamerlane woke up to the noise. The palace servants took alarm. They came out and saw that Molla had dug the wall enough for it to collapse any minute. The servants notified Tamerlane. He stood up and came to talk to Molla himself.

‘Are you out of your mind? What are you doing?’

‘I had a dream that late father had buried seven jugs of gold under this wall. Get a stone hammer and dig with me. I shall let you have half of what we find.’

‘Do not be going off your head,’ said Tamerlane. ‘Come out of there. This palace was built hundreds of years ago,

before even your father's grandfather was born.'

'I know,' said Molla.

'If you know, why do you keep digging?'

'I keep digging, for I had that dream.'

'Do you not know that not every dream reflects the truth, you fool?'

Molla got up and set back his shoulders.

'This is exactly what I wanted you to say. Now listen.'
He recounted the man's story to Tamerlane, and then asked:

'Now tell me, sire: why is it that dreams of rich and stately people do reflect the truth, while dreams of poor people do not?'

Tamerlane did not know how to answer.

Molla continued digging under the wall and said:
'Either you reverse the court's decision, punish the people who made it and give the man his garden back, or I continue digging till I find my gold.'

Tamerlane had no choice but to reverse the decision.

Weather Merer

Once upon a time Tamerlane took Molla along while going hunting. Suddenly the sky turned dark and the sun disappeared behind the clouds. Tamerlane asked Molla:

‘What do you think, Molla: will it rain or not?’

‘I do not know, sire, I am no good at astrology.’

Meanwhile a herd of sheep was heading back
from pasture.

‘Go and ask the shepherd,’ said Tamerlane to
Molla. ‘Perhaps he knows.’

Molla rode up to the shepherd and asked:

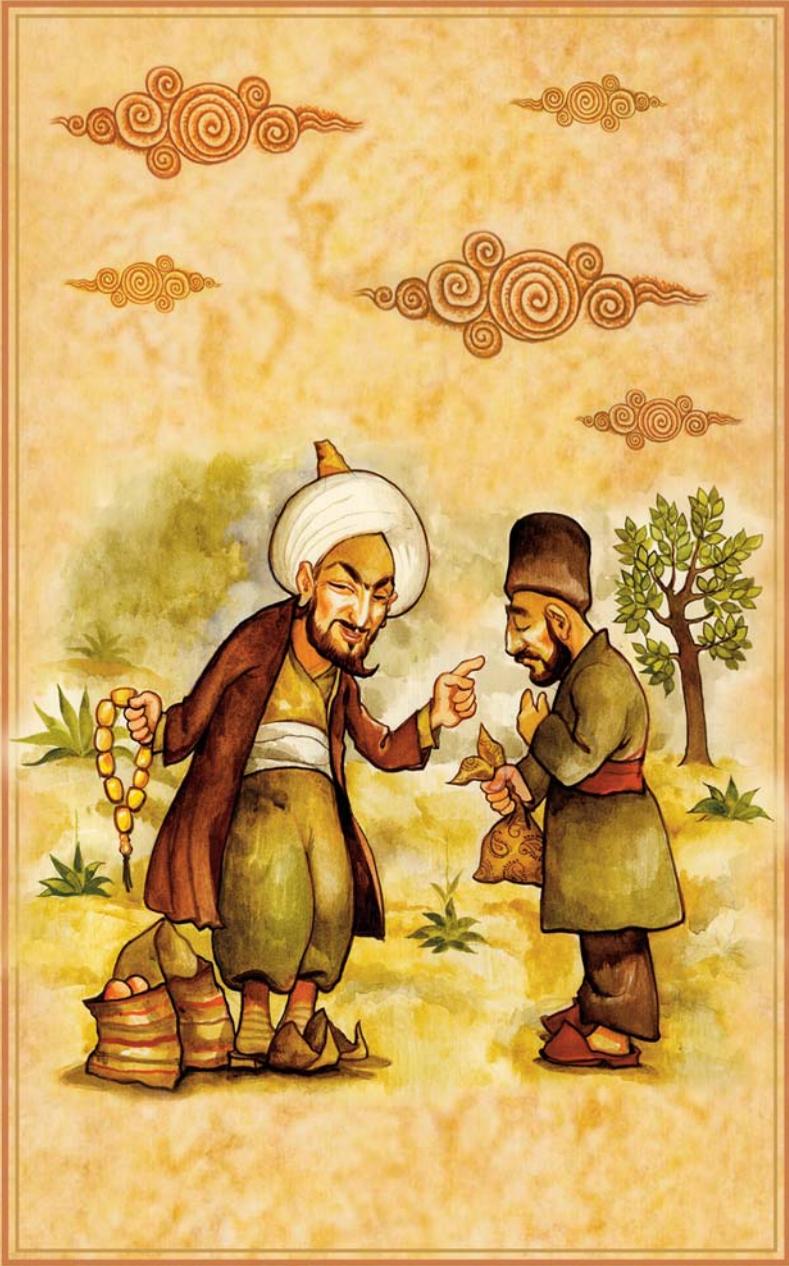
‘Do you know if it will rain or not?’

The shepherd lifted his mule’s tail, examined it,
stroked it and said:

‘Go and tell your master that according to what
my mule is showing me, the clouds will soon disperse
and there will be no rain.’

Molla went back and repeated the shepherd’s
words to Tamerlane.

‘Animals are better at predicting weather than



humans,' noted Tamerlane. 'If the shepherd said so just by looking at his mule's tail, this must be true. Let us keep going, there will be no rain.'

However, as soon as started moved, rain poured. It was so dense that one could seemingly climb up the raindrops like ropes. Everyone was soaked to the skin.

Tamerlane became cross and shouted at Molla: 'What is this? You told me there would be no rain!' 'My lord! It was not me who said there would be no rain! This came from the mule's tail; the shepherd voiced them and you confirmed them.'

'What are we going to do now?' asked Tamerlane. 'Nothing,' replied Molla. 'What can we do? A sovereign whose astrologist is a shepherd and whose weather meter is a mule's tail will always face with failure.'

Fear of Being Ticked

They say that Tamerlane, wanting to know how courageous Molla was, ordered his executioners thus:

'Hang Molla immediately!'

The executioners carried Molla away, while he remained completely silent. When they brought him to the door,

Tamerlane asked:

‘If you have anything to bequeath, do it now, for these are your final minutes.’

‘I have nothing to bequeath. I just have one request.’

‘What is it?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘It tickles me when someone touches my neck,’ replied Molla. ‘So I am asking you to hang me not by the neck, but by the waist.’

Who is Taller?

Once upon a time, Tamerlane took Molla Nasraddin to accompany him during a walk. On the way, they met an old ploughman. Tamerlane passed by, but Molla stopped and greeted the ploughman.

When they walked on, Molla asked Tamerlane:

‘My lord, why did you not greet that ploughman?’

‘Why should I? It was his duty to greet me, and not my duty to greet him.’

‘No, sire, I believe you should have been first to greet him.’

‘Why?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘For he is a ploughman.’

‘So what of it? He is a ploughman and I am a ruler.

Who is superior to whom?’

‘A ploughman is superior, of course.’

‘How so?’

‘For if a ploughman does not plant, grow, harvest and provide, then rulers such as yourself will all die of hunger.’

Molla's Far-sight

Once upon a time, Tamerlane asked Molla:

‘How much do you love me?’

‘I am Molla Nasraddin and you are the great Tamerlane.

This means that I can love you as much as Molla Nasraddin can ever love Tamerlane.’

‘Very well! Will you face death for me?’

‘Even if I cannot, your executioners will assist me,’

replied Molla.

‘What if I ask you to go and jump in the sea, would you do it?’

Molla, upon hearing this, stood up immediately. Tamerlane asked him:

‘Where are you going?’

‘Long live the sovereign!’ replied Molla. ‘Jumping in the sea and drowning for your sake is a big honour. But allow me first to learn how to swim, and then we shall do as you wish!’

Counsellor

Once upon a time, Molla asked a qadi who was a frequent guest of Tamerlane’s:

‘Who is your counsellor?’

The qadi looked at Tamerlane with servility and, bowing low to him, said:

‘Our great sovereign Tamerlane!’

One of those present whispered to Molla:

‘Molla, ask him who his prophet is.’

‘Who would it be?’ said Molla. ‘One who considers Tamerlane his counsellor would consider Genghis Khan or the likes his prophet.’

Tamerlane's Alias

Once Tamerlane asked Molla:

‘Molla, you know well that in the olden times, every Arab caliph had his own alias: Muwaffaq bi'll- h, Mu- ta- im bi'll- h, Mutawakkil bi'll- h, Mu- ayyad bi'll- h and so on.’

‘I do,’ replied Molla.

‘If I wanted to choose an alias, would you choose one for me?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘There is no need in search, nor in choosing,’ replied Molla. ‘The people themselves have already chosen you a suitable alias.’

‘What is it?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘Naudhubillah,’ replied Molla.

Molla's Care

According to a legend, once Molla Nasraddin was appointed the governor of the town where he lived.

Two days after he took up his duties, guards arrested two burglars and brought them before him. One was arrested at night, the other one during the day.

Molla examined the case and freed the burglar arrested at night while having the burglar arrested during the day imprisoned.

The owner of the house burglarised at night complained to Tamerlane that Molla was not just in examining the case.

Tamerlane ordered in writing that Molla have the night burglar arrested and punished accordingly.

Molla received the order, read it and thought: "The laws must have changed, and I am unaware."

He had the night burglar arrested and incarcerated, while freeing the day burglar and letting him have the stolen property repossessed from the owner.

This time, the other owner went to see Tamerlane to

complain of Molla's actions.

Tamerlane became angry and demanded that Molla
come and see him.

'What are you doing?' he asked. 'Why did you free that
burglar?'

'I did so at your order,' answered Molla.

'What do you mean by that?' Tamerlane became even
angrier. 'When did I ever write to you that he had to be
freed?'

'Hail the sovereign!' said Molla. 'One of them burglarised
a house during the day, the other one at night. From the
times of our ancestors, we know well that burglars oper-
ate at night and never during the day. Hence the one
who burglarises houses during the day violates our cus-
toms and traditions. This is why I sentenced the day bur-
glar to imprisonment and freed the night burglar. Then I
received an order signed by you and saying that it is the
one who burglarises houses at night who needs to be
imprisoned. I thought that the law must have changed.
Therefore I had the night burglar arrested and the day
burglar freed.'

Tamerlane became furious.

‘You shall immediately get the latter arrested as well!’

‘Oh, but sire!’ objected Molla. ‘This would be unjust. If they cannot burglarise houses at night, nor during the day, what else can these poor people do? When can they go about their business?’

From Whose Side?

They say Tamerlane would always be accompanied by special guards made up of the bravest young men.

Once Tamerlane ordered that the bravest young men from Molla’s village be sent to him.

The villagers knew how bloodthirsty Tamerlane was and no one dared to volunteer to join the guard.

Finally, the village elders came to Molla to ask him to rid them from this evil and to take service with Tamerlane.

Molla agreed. The elders took him to Tamerlane and presented him as the bravest man of their village.

Tamerlane looked first at Molla, then at the elders who recommended him, and realised that there was some—

thing fishy about this whole affair.

As for Molla, he waited in silence for whatever misery he was going to be up against.

Tamerlane decided to test Molla's bravery and sent for the best sure shot archer.

At Tamerlane's order, the archer stretched his bow and sent an arrow towards Molla.

The first arrow flew in between Molla Nasraddin's legs. Seeing that things are turning bad, Molla first wanted to shout saying that he was not all that brave, but then he quickly recollected himself, realising that Tamerlane would punish the elders.

He closed his eyes, waiting for his death to come.

The second arrow flew under his armpit.

With the third arrow, Molla's hat flew off.

Molla did not faint, but he still stood without making a single move.

Tamerlane was convinced that Molla was truly brave and called him up.

Seeing that the test was over, Molla, without quailing one bit, approached Tamerlane.

The latter, admiring Molla's courage, ordered to provide
Molla with a new fur coat and a new hat.

'Long live the sovereign!' said Molla. 'Why are you offering me this fur coat and a hat?'

'Your own coat and hat were shot through.'

'Well, if this is your will, may I also be offered a pair of underpants?'

'But we did not inflict damage to your underpants.'

'It is true that damage has been inflicted not on your part, but on mine.'

Molla the Archer

Once upon a time, Tamerlane took Molla Nasraddin to a square where soldiers were practicing archery.

'Molla,' asked Tamerlane. 'Have you ever drawn a bow in your life?'

Molla was ashamed to say he had not, so he said:

'In my younger years, I was a good archer. Now that I am old I do not handle a bow any more.'

Upon hearing this, Tamerlane ordered that a bow be given to Molla. Despite his plea, Molla could not refuse. At the end, he was obliged to take the bow and shoot. The arrow fell about fifteen feet away from the target.

Molla, keeping his head, exclaimed:

‘This is how your commander shoots!’

He shot another arrow which also missed the target; still taking things on the chin, he continued:

‘And this is how your councillor shoots!’

Thus every time when Molla shot and missed the target, he would name different names.

His last arrow hit the target, so Molla shouted:

‘And this is how Molla Nasraddin shoots!’

Molla's Confession

Once upon a time, Tamerlane gave a big formal dinner party. Molla was among the guests.

Tamerlane saw that Molla was having a pleasant conversation with one man. To shame Molla, he approached

him and said:

‘Who knows what mendacious compliments expressing here!’

‘What I am to do, sire?’ replied the unruffled Molla. ‘One cannot do without lies when he talks to his friend about how just your majesty is.’

Power of Fear

Once upon a time, someone brought Tamerlane a goose. Tamerlane asked Molla to tell the cook to fry the goose. When the goose was fried and Molla took it to Tamerlane, the former could not resist from eating a leg. When Tamerlane saw that the good was only one-legged, he asked:

‘Molla, where is the second leg?’

‘What do you mean by “the second leg”?’ replied the unruffled Molla. ‘Geese are always one-legged!’

‘What is this nonsense you are talking?’ Tamerlane became angry. ‘Wherever have you seen one-legged geese?’

‘I can swear that I have,’ persisted Molla.

Tamerlane was enraged. Molla realised that things were going bad for him when he suddenly looked out the window and saw a few geese on the riverbank who were basking in the sun, standing on one leg. He immediately turned to Tamerlane and said:

‘You, as a ruler, always insist on being right. But would you please look at these geese: are they one-legged or not?’

Tamerlane looked out, saw red, grabbed a bow and shot at the geese right from the window. The geese flew in different directions.

‘See now if they are one-legged or two-legged,’ said Tamerlane.

Molla replied calmly:

‘If I were to shoot at you like you did at them, you would become four-legged at once.’

Court Crow

Once upon a time, Tamerlane invited Molla to go hunt-

ing with him. The messenger said that Molla was on his way. They waited for him for a long time. Finally, Molla showed up with a carrion crow sitting on his hand.

Upon seeing Molla, Tamerlane could not help but chuckle and asked:

‘Why, Molla, what is this crow? Do you intend to go hunting with a crow?’

‘Is that forbidden?’ Molla asked in turn.

‘But a crow is not a hunting bird.’

‘It can hunt, and very well so. I know carrion crows who hunt better than falcons. They attack not only birds, but also humans.’

Seeing as how Tamerlane was puzzled, Molla pointed at the court nobles and added:

‘Just look around!’

Good Job

Tamerlane arrived in town and threw a feast where civil servants and rich men of the town were invited. Molla was among them.

Sitting near Tamerlane, no one dared to speak a word. Sharbat was served. First, Tamerlane took a sip. One of the rich men wanted to warm himself into Tamerlane's good graces and say 'Enjoy your drink!', but became so flustered that he said instead: 'Good job!'

Tamerlane became cross at this out-of-context word and wanted to reprimand the rich man. Before he said anything, Molla came for the man's help:

'Do not be mad, sire! In our town, 'good job' means 'enjoy your drink'.

Molla Reinstates the Truth

Once upon a time, Tamerlane wanted to intimidate and shame Molla Nasraddin in front of the court, so he turned to him and said angrily:

'I was told that yesterday at a meeting I was complimented and called a fair sovereign. You were there as well, but you said nothing of my virtues.'

The unruffled Molla said:

'No, sire, this is not true! Not only yesterday, but never

in my life have I attended meetings where people would talk about your virtues.'

Molla Evaluates Tamerlane

Once upon a time, Tamerlane took Molla Nasraddin with himself to a bathhouse. Tamerlane was wearing an expensive bathing apron. They were bathing and discussing various matters. Finally, Tamerlane asked:

'Molla what kind of man am I, valuable or not?'

Molla thought for a little bit and said:

'I would say that you are worth ten tumans.'

'What are you saying?' Tamerlane objected. 'My apron costs ten tumans.'

'I did include the apron in that price!'

Molla's Race

Once upon a time, Tamerlane invited Molla to participate in a horse race. Molla brought his bull, covered it with a horsecloth, haltered it and arrived at the square.

Seeing this, Tamerlane asked:

‘Why, Molla! Why have you mounted a bull? Can it ever catch up with a horse?’

‘By God, I have not mounted it in a while,’ replied Molla.

‘But when it was still a calf, the bloody rascal raced so fast that not only a horse, but a bird was not able to keep up with it.’

Why Paradise is Bigger than Hell

Once upon a time, Tamerlane in his conversation with Molla asked him:

‘Molla! What is bigger: Paradise or Hell?’

‘Paradise is bigger,’ replied Molla.

‘How do you know that it is bigger?’

‘For there are more poor people than wealthy people.’

Tamerlane's Room

Once upon a time, Tamerlane gave Molla a few peaches

and said:

‘Take them to my room.’

Molla took the peaches to the cemetery and left them in
a tomb.

Tamerlane came home, but did not find the peaches he
was looking for.

Furious, he called Molla:

‘Molla, where are the peaches?’

‘Hail the sovereign!’ replied Molla. ‘I did exactly as you
ordered – I took the peaches to your room.’

‘Well, where are they? I looked for them and found
nothing. Where did you put them?’

‘Oh, great sovereign! This is not your room. I left them
in yours.’

‘What are saying?’ said Tamerlane in surprise. ‘How is
this not my room? Then where is mine?’

Molla stood up and said:

‘Come with me, and I shall show you.’

He took Tamerlane to the cemetery:

‘Look, this is your real room. There, in the palace, you
are nothing but a guest!’

Tamerlane's Greatness

Once upon a time, a conversation sparked about Tamerlane's greatness. Those present were talking about his might and power and praising him. Finally, the town governor said:

'Regardless of how many rulers there are in this world, Tamerlane is the most outstanding one!'

Molla who was sitting in the corner without saying a word suddenly spoke:

'Do not praise him too much. He may stand out, but if you place him next to a camel, the camel will stand out more!'

They are Countless

Tamerlane was told that one of the nobles in the palace had gone mad. Tamerlane called Molla and told him to find out how many people had gone mad and who exactly. Upon receiving the order, Molla thought for a bit and said:

'Hail the sovereign! You had better order that I report how many sane people there are in the palace, for they are easier to count. How do you expect me to count the madmen? They are countless!

Power of an Ant

Tamerlane would cover all his state expenses with taxes, mercilessly stripping poor peasants off their money.

Taxes were countless, one coming after another.

The peasants of the village where Molla Nasraddin lived were equally paying their last money as taxes.

Finally, Molla Nasraddin felt he could no longer endure this atrocity. He came before Tamerlane and put forward very harsh accusations.

Molla's behaviour made Tamerlane angry, and he shouted:

'How dare you speak thus in the presence of such a great sovereign as myself?'

Molla answered calmly:

'Oh, sovereign! Do not scare us with your greatness.

You are great and we are lesser, but do remember that even if a hedgehog is covered in needles, a tiny ant can do it quite a bad turn.

Molla's Precaution

Once upon a time, Tamerlane was examining a case against the town governor. It turned out that while collecting taxes from citizens, he was not keeping accurate records.

Tamerlane became angry and forced the governor to eat all tax books.

Instead of him, he appointed Molla as the new governor.

After a while, Tamerlane decided to check Molla's records and told Molla to report to him with tax books.

Molla arrived. Tamerlane saw that the books were made from thin lavash which Molla used to keep records.

Tamerlane asked angrily:

'Is there no more paper in the whole country?'

'Long live the sovereign!' answered Molla. 'I knew you would get angry and force me to eat the tax books, but

my stomach is not as strong as my predecessor's as to digest so much paper. Here is why I decided to take precaution.'

Consequences of Hunger

Once upon a time, Tamerlane was offered a very good donkey. In order to play up to the ruler, adulators began shower praising this donkey. Molla, who was also present there, also expressed his opinion:

'It is true that the donkey has been well-praised, but everyone forgets its one important quality. In this beautiful creature, I see an enormous talent. If I could get my hands on this donkey, I would teach it to read.

Tamerlane found this very interesting.

'If you do this,' he said to Molla, 'I shall give you anything you wish.'

'Long live the sovereign!' bowed Molla. 'Can you say that I have ever promised anything without getting it done? I shall oblige! This animal is very intelligent and talented, and it can learn. There are just certain condi-

tions.'

'Tell us, Molla, what those conditions are,' said Tamerlane.

'The first condition is that I shall need a period of two months. The second condition is that you will have to provide me with enough money for those two months to buy textbooks, notebooks and other school supplies... I think a gold coin a day would be enough.'

Tamerlane agreed and ordered that Molla be given as much money as he required.

Molla brought the donkey home and began teaching it.

Two months passed. On the last day, the people gathered on the town square. Molla brought the donkey and stopped in front of Tamerlane.

They placed a table in front of the donkey, and Molla put a book he was carrying on it.

Upon seeing the book, the donkey began leafing through it. After every three or four pages, he would turn to Molla and howled.

Everyone around them was surprised. Tamerlane

was very content, and he asked Molla:

‘Molla, I can give you anything that you want, just tell me how you managed to teach a donkey to read?’

‘Long live the sovereign!’ answered Molla. ‘I made a book from gazelle skin and strewed some barley on its pages. Fifteen days later I proceeded to the second stage of learning. For two days, I kept the donkey hungry, and on the third day, I would put the skin-made book in front of it. The donkey used its tongue to leaf through the pages and eat the barley. Then I replaced the skin-made book with an ordinary book. A month passed thus. Then began the third learning stage. That was when I started given the donkey the book without barley. The donkey looked for it, and when it did not find anything, it would let out a howl. Then I gave it some barley. This is how I taught the donkey leaf through the pages and howl. Now it has been hungry for two days. Today’s examination is a consequence of the two-day hunger.’

Either the Donkey, or Tamerlane

Once upon a time, Tamerlane was offered a donkey, and Molla had run out of his money at the time. Tamerlane told Molla:

‘Well, Molla, why are you not saying anything? Perhaps this donkey has no talent?’

Molla felt that there was something in for him here, so he rushed to answer:

‘Why not? This donkey is even more intelligent than the previous one. If you give it to me, I can teach it to speak.’

Tamerlane became curious and said:

‘All right, you can have it. State your conditions.’

‘My conditions would be a bit unprofitable for you,’ replied Molla, ‘for this time the task is particularly challenging. I shall need five years, with a gold coin paid to me every day.’

Tamerlane agreed.

Molla counted how much gold he would need for the

following five years and after receiving the entire sum, he brought the donkey home. His wife saw Molla coming home with another donkey and asked:

‘What is this?’

‘Hold it, woman,’ answered Molla. ‘Take this money and feel free to spend it. Let us see what comes next.’

He told his wife the whole story.

‘Have you lost your mind?’ said his wife. ‘Or your head?’

How can a donkey possible learn to talk?’

‘Why, woman,’ objected Molla, ‘I thought that only Tamerlane, who believed my words, was a fool. Now I see that both of you are birds of a feather. Of course, a donkey can never talk!’

‘And if it cannot talk,’ said the wife angrily, ‘why did you agree to teach it?’

‘You are asking an odd question. Do you not see that I have brought a sackful of money?’

‘Very well, but in five years your time will be up. What would you have to say?’

‘Do not be silly, woman! Take the money and buy whatever we need. God is merciful! In these five years

someone will hopefully kick the bucket, either the donkey, or Tamerlane!

Molla Nasraddin's Son

They say once Tamerlane sent for Molla's son to be brought before him. He saw that the boy resembled his father very much: the height, the face, the nose, the mouth – everything was like Molla Nasraddin's.

“I wonder if this boy is as smart as his father,”
Tamerlane thought.

He took out a gold coin and handed it to Molla's son, but the latter moved his hand away.

‘Why are you not taking the coin?’ asked
Tamerlane.

‘I am afraid of my mother. She told me not to accept money from strangers.’

‘Good for you!’ said Tamerlane. ‘But I am not the kind of stranger that your mother warned you against. I am the ruler!’

‘I see that you are the ruler,’ said the boy, ‘but

my mother will not believe me.'

'Why not?'

'She will say: "If it had really been the ruler, he would not have given you one coin, he would have given you plenty."'

Tamerlane's Dreams

Tamerlane had a habit: if he dreamed of someone ignoring his order or being rude to him, he would demand that the man be beheaded the next morning.

When Molla Nasraddin heard about that, he gathered his belonging and fled to his village. His fellow villagers gathered around him and asked:

'Molla, why did you flee from Tamerlane? While you served at the court, you were helping us: you relieved us of heavy taxes, and some of us were even completely exempt from them.'

'It is true that when Tamerlane was awake, I could still reason with him. But I would not like to be in his dream and cause his rage, and I would certainly be unable to

please him. This is why I fled while it was not too late.

Molla and a Young Man

On one winter evening, Molla came to a teahouse located in his neighbourhood. He noticed a very upset young man sitting in the corner. Molla became curious and approached him. They talked for a little while, and

Molla asked him:

‘Tell me, brother, whatever happened to you? Why are you so aggrieved?’

The young man signed and began his story:

‘Uncle Molla! I am embarrassed to admit this, but I am in love with the daughter of a merchant, and the girl is in love with me, too. We have made a promise to each other, but her father is very rich, whereas I, as you see, am quite poor. I gave it a good thought, and yesterday I finally went round to the merchant’s and asked to marry his daughter. The merchant look at him from my head to my toe and said: “You must prove how much you love my daughter. For this, you must go to the river, break

the ice, get into the ice-hole and stay there until the next morning. If you do this, I shall let my daughter marry you.” The power of my love was so strong that I said “Yes, sir”, and left. I waited until it got very dark and got neck-deep into the ice-cold water. It was snowing. The wind groaning. At dawn, I came out of the ice-hole and went round to the merchant’s house. I arrived and said: “Merchant, I have fulfilled your demand, now it is time that you fulfil my demand.” The merchant again examined at me from my head to my toe and said: “You are lying! Prove to me that you remained in water until this morning.” I swore that what I had said was true and added that I saw the light of a burning candle in one house in the distance. The merchant laughed and said: “So our agreement has been violated! You were looking at that fire and keeping warm.” Though I tried to persuade him, saying that the candle was burning miles away from me and I could not possibly feel its warmth, it was all in vain. The merchant was not convinced. I complained to the governor, not knowing that the merchant had had an arrangement with him. The governor thus

pronounced the merchant wrong and chased me away.

Now all I have left to do is sitting here and grieving.’

Molla carefully listened to the young man’s story and

said:

‘Tomorrow night, pay me a visit. This is not a joke!’

After leaving the teahouse, Molla went to talk directly to

Tamerlane. He bowed to him and said:

‘O, ruler! I have the honour of inviting you for dinner at

my house tomorrow night.’

Along with Tamerlane, he also invited the governor and

the merchant.

The next day, Tamerlane, the governor, the merchant and other guests came to see Molla Nasraddin. He re-

ceived them very nicely, but soon disappeared some-

where. Tamerlane looked around, but saw no

preparations for a feast. He was puzzled when he saw

such lack of hospitality.

Long story short, they waited for two hours. Molla was

nowhere to be seen. Finally, Tamerlane called Molla’s

wife and asked:

‘Sister, where did Molla go?’

‘He is over there in the garden, making you rice.’
Tamerlane, accompanied by all the guests, went into the
card and saw that Molla had hung a giant copper pot on
a tree spire and is sitting and waiting under it with a
burning candle in his hand.

‘Molla, what is this?’ asked Tamerlane. ‘What are you
doing?’

‘Hail the sovereign!’ said Molla calmly. ‘I put some water
in the pot, and I am waiting for it to boil, so I can make
some rice for you.’

The sovereign became angry and said:

‘Do you take us for fools or are you one yourself? How
can you possibly warm up water with the flame from this
candle, not to mention the great distance?’

Molla became even angrier with the ruler and said:

‘Why not, if it is possible to keep warm while looking at
a burning candle from a distance?’

‘What do you mean?’ asked Tamerlane.

Molla recounted him the young man’s story, and the lat-
ter was able to marry the merchant’s daughter.

Astrologist

One day Tamerlane told Molla:

‘Molla, I shall need an astrologist in my palace, but I cannot seem to find the right one. Can you be an astrologist?’

‘I can,’ replied Molla, ‘but only with my wife.’

‘How so?’ asked Tamerlane.

‘This has become a tradition now,’ said Molla, ‘that my opinion never corresponds to my wife’s opinion. For example, if I look at the sky at night and say: “It will rain tomorrow”, she will always look at the clouds and say: “No, it will not.” Afterwards each of us insist on their prediction, and we would rather die than give in. Or if she says that this year there will be abundant harvest, I shall immediately say: “No, there will not.” It has been many years now that it always either her prediction that comes true, or mine. There is never a third option. This is why I would prefer to work as an astrologist together with my wife.’

How Molla was Slandered

Tamerlane was told that Molla Nasraddin had spoken about Tamerlane's brutality during a meeting. Tamerlane became angry and sent for Molla:

'What is this I hear?' he asked. 'They say you spread rumours about my brutality everywhere you go? If you think that your head has become too heavy for you to carry, I can take of that that.'

'Long live the sovereign!' replied Molla. 'You know well yourself that I only talk to people about interesting and new things; the kind of things that no one yet knows about, nor has heard of, nor has spoken about. Your brutality is known to the world, and this is all people talk about. There is nothing new I could add to that, hence there is no reason for me to talk about it. I have been slandered!'

Right to a Beard

They say everyone has their own habits. For instance,

Molla liked to run his hand down his beard. Tamerlane wanted to make Molla suffer a bit and thus ordered:
'I prohibit you from running your hand down your beard. If you violate my order, I shall have your beard shaven and your hands cut off.'

Knowing Tamerlane's stern temper, Molla reluctantly gave up his favourite habit.

Some time passed. Once Tamerlane asked
Molla:

'Molla, what can I do for people to believe in my justice?'

'At first, your majesty, give every man back his right to a beard.'

At Molla's Melon Plantation

Once in the evening, Molla was picking melons at his plantation. Suddenly three strangers approached and greeted him.

Molla replied to their greeting and immediately cut a few melons in pieces.

‘Help yourselves!’

The strangers ate and were about to leave when Molla stopped them and said:

‘Now have some melons for your children.’

Upon hearing this, two of the strangers took two melons each, while the third one took three.

Molla bowed to the third one and said:

‘Long live the sovereign; I knew it was you who paid me a visit with your nobles.’

The stranger asked in surprise:

‘How did you know that I am the sovereign and these are my nobles?’

‘From your greed.’

Who is to Blame?

Once upon a time, Tamerlanetook Molla hunting. Everyone mounted well-bred horses while Molla was given such a lazy old nag that it could barely drag itself.

On the way back, it rained heavily. All the hunters flipped their horses with the whip and galloped away.

Regardless of how much Molla tried to spur up his, it just would not speed up.

Hence Molla got undressed, hid his clothes under his saddle and gave his horse free rein. Tamerlane and his companions had hidden in a cave. Until Molla reached it, it stopped raining. Molla got dressed and entered the cave.

Seeing as how Molla's clothes did not get wet, Tamerlane became surprised and asked:

‘Molla, how did you manage to remain dry?’

‘Can anyone get wet on an ambler such as mine?’ replied Molla. ‘It took the bit between its teeth and took me to a shelter in a heartbeat.’

When they came back, Tamerlane ordered to place the nag in his best stables.

After a few days, Tamerlane again set off hunting and, remembering the last trip, he mounted the same nag. However, as soon as the hunters left the town, they got caught in unimaginable downpour. Tamerlane kept whipping the nag, but it did not look like it wanted to move. Long story short, Tamerlane came back to his

palace soaked to the skin.

As soon as he came back, he demanded to see Molla
and attacked him:

‘What is this? You lied to me, you made a fool of me!

‘What happened, sire?’

‘How dare you even ask! You intentionally praised that
nag, so I end up wet as a shag.’

Molla laughed and replied:

‘It was not my fault! It was not the nag’s fault either. It
was entirely your fault! Why did you not undress, like I
had done, and did not hide your clothes under the saddle
until the rain stopped? This is the reason why I did not
end up wet as a shag.’

On the Same Path

The town governor considered Molla his biggest enemy
and always looked for a chance to play a mean trick on
Molla. But regardless of how much he schemed, Molla
always made a quick get-away, and the governor looked

like a fool in the end.

Once Molla's donkey died and the poor man became despondent. But he endured his loss in silence. The town governor found out about this and was very happy to finally find a chance to pick on Molla. He therefore sent for Molla.

After greeting Molla, he simulated despair and said:

'Why, Molla, what misfortune has befallen you? They say you lost your donkey which you loved more than you loved yourself and which was worth you. Why did you not share your grief with your dear friends, such as us?'

Molla realised that the governor had invited him just so he could poke fun of him and said without a sign of embarrassment:

'You are right, governor! I really did love that donkey. It was my donkey and my horse at the same time. I cannot say that it was closer to me than you, but it was a good friend to me. Alas, the poor thing suddenly fell ill and died.'

The governor realised that Molla was gaining the upper hand again and regretted inviting him. Trying to get rid

of him at any cost, he said:

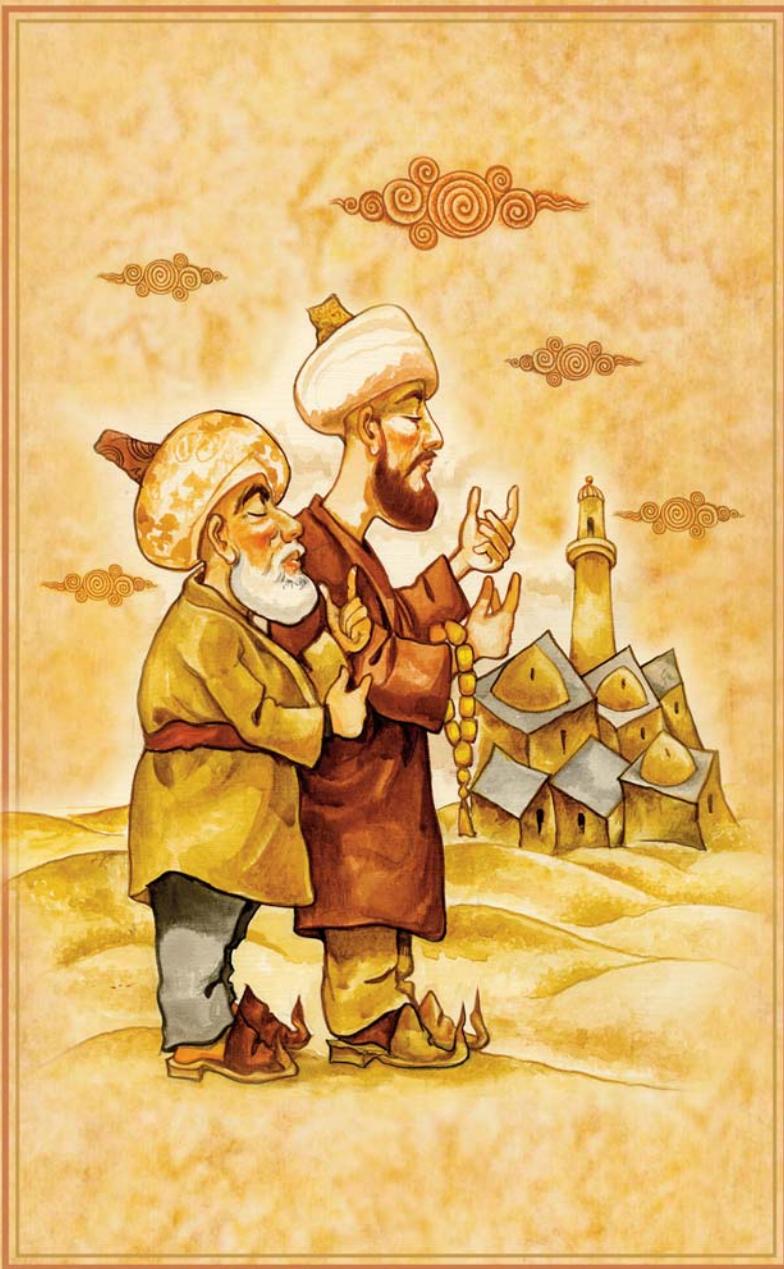
‘Do not grieve much. The morning sun never lasts a day. We are all bound to end up in the same way. What can we do?’

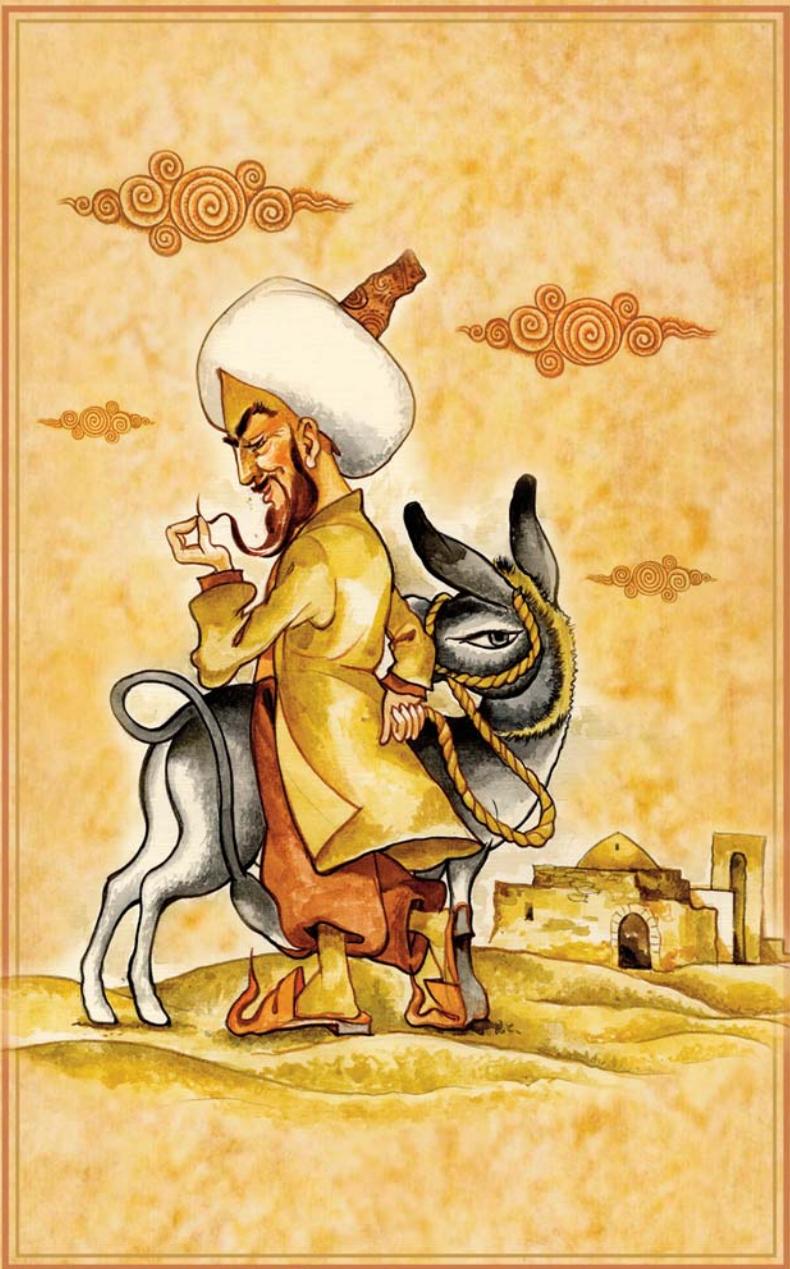
‘If only you were always healthy,’ replied Molla. ‘God has taken my donkey, but may he prolong your life, for you are as close a friend to me as my donkey was. Long you live! It is not just the donkey that I am grieving about, for I know that you are on the same path, and the concern of losing you soon upsets me just as much.’

The Ruler's Joy

They say that the village where Molla was born used to be quite a picturesque place. The climate here was mild, with many sources and gardens surrounding the settlement.

On one hot summer day, Molla heard that the town governor had arrived in their village on vacation. Molla became worried about his home village thinking how much money it would have to spend to accommodate





the governor's needs.

A week passed, and Molla found out that the governor had already left. Molla went to see him in town and noticed that the governor looked quite content.

'Hello, dear governor! Did you pass a good time? Are you happy with how my home village treated you?'

'I cannot describe how pleased I am! I did not even notice how this week flew by. On the first day, there was an enormous fire in the village, and half of the houses burnt down. The people were screaming and running around so much that I nearly split my sides with laughter.

Several people even burnt to death.

'On the second day, a dog went wild and bit ten or fifteen people. Just you think how amusing that was and how much pleasure it gave me.

'On the third day, there was a flood so grand that words cannot describe it. The entire harvest of wheat was floating in the water, and people were floating next to it. Some of them were forever carried away by the stream.

'On the fourth day, one villager lost his mind and killed about five or six people.

‘On the fifth day, a house collapsed and the entire family was buried under the rooms. Some died, some had their arms broken and heads crushed.

‘On the sixth day, a woman hanged herself. We were all having such a wonderful time! I have never had so much entertainment in my life.’

Molla listened to everything the governor said and noted: ‘Luckily, you are back, and you did not spend more than a week there. Had you stayed longer, not a stone would have been left standing in our village by now.’

Molla Sings

Once upon a time, Molla went to a bathhouse. He was in a great mood and, while swimming in the pool, he began to sing quietly. Molla was alone in the pool, and his voice sounded very pleasant to himself. It felt mind-blowing, so he thought: “It turns out I have a rather beautiful voice! I had no idea that such a talent was hidden in me.”

He left the bathhouse, went directly to the town gover-

nor and said:

‘I have discovered unexpectedly that I had a beautiful voice, and I would like to sing for you!’

‘Go ahead,’ replied the town governor, ‘sing away. Let us see what you can do.’

‘But I cannot sing just like this,’ said Molla. ‘For that, I would need a pool half-filled with water.’

‘How can I get you a pool here? I cannot possibly have it installed here,’ said the governor.

They thought for a long time and finally decided to bring a big clay jug half-filled with water.

Molla stuck his head into the jug and began to sing.

Upon hearing Molla’s voice, the governor stopped up his ears and ordered to his servants:

‘Douse your palms in the water and hit Molla until the jug is empty.’

The servants began to slap Molla, and after each slap he held up his hands and thanked God.

After the beating, the governor asked Molla:

‘Molla, why were you thanking God?’

‘For you have not had a pool installed here. Otherwise

the water would have never finished.'

Hair of the Town

They say that when Molla moved from the village to the town, he began having strange experiences. One of them took place thus.

Upon seeing the pinion walls and towers of the town for the first time, he was looking at them in awe for a while. When one of the officials noticed it, he decided to poke fun of Molla, and asked him:

'What is it, Molla? Why are you staring at these walls like a stuck pig?'

'By God, I am a humble villager who came to this town for the first time. I see that there is everything: houses, streets, shops, and gardens. And everything seems perfect! Though I cannot understand one thing: what are these things – some over here and some down there – that seem to be stretching to the skies?'

The official, realising that Molla was pointing at the towers, said:

‘What is there to understand? This is our town’s hair standing on end.’

Molla understood that the official was jeering at him. His eyes shifted between the official and the towers, and he did not know what to say.

At this moment, the town governor and a few other people appeared on one of the towers.

‘I am speechless,’ said Molla, ‘you town is indeed beautiful, but as I see, you are not taking good care of it.’

‘Why do you say so?’ asked the official.

‘Just look at how many lice there are on just one hair.’

Com-patriot

Once upon a time, Molla came home and walked in on a burglar who had broken into his house.

Molla became frightened, but the burglar, upon seeing Molla, became even more frightened. Finally, the burglar recollected himself and wanted to flee. Molla, having no other choice, attacked him.

They wrestled for a while, sometimes Molla pressing

down the burglar, sometimes the burglar pressing down Molla. Finally, Molla prevailed. He knocked the burglar down, tied his legs together and left his hands free. He left the tied-up burglar in his house and ran to the ruler and his guards.

The ruler listened to Molla and asked:

‘Who is now keeping an eye on the burglar?’

‘No one,’ replied Molla.

‘Very well. You said that who had tied only his legs and that there is no one around him. Do you not think he could untie himself and run away?’

Molla thought and agreed that the ruler was right.

‘Sire,’ replied Molla, ‘you are absolutely right. But even if I did not think that he could run away, then he would definitely not think of that himself, for he is my compatriot!’

It is true that when they came round to Molla’s, they came across the burglar still with his leg tied. Indeed, he had not thought to untie his legs and flee.

The Sovereign's Magnanimity

Once upon a time, Molla took three walnuts to Tamerlane. On his way to the palace, he could not resist and ate two walnuts, thus presenting Tamerlane with only one.

Tamerlane appreciated Molla's care and gave him a present. Molla also appreciated this exchange and some time later, he took a pood of beetroot to Tamerlane with the hope of wheedling him out of something again. On this way, he came across an acquaintance who asked him:

'Where are you off to, Molla, and what are you transporting?'

'By God,' replied Molla, 'everyone says that Tamerlane is a very mean person, but I have not seen anything but good from him. Last time I brought him a single walnut, and he rewarded me generously for that. Now I am taking him some beetroot, hoping that he would offer me enough for me to forget about poverty once and for all.'

'It would be great,' said Molla's acquaintance, 'if it turned

out that way for you. I am afraid, though, that it would be the opposite. I think I know and have seen more than you, so my advice to you: do not take him any beetroot, take some good figs instead.'

The acquaintance's words brought Molla to reason. He went to the market and used all the money he had on a basket of ripe figs and took it to Tamerlane.

When Tamerlane saw the figs, he ordered that his servants throw them all at Molla.

The servants began throwing the figs, trying to target Molla's head. Each time that a fig smashed against his head, Molla thanked God.

Finally Tamerlane asked:

'What are you thanking God for?'

'Long live the sovereign!' answered Molla. 'I was thinking of bringing you a pood of beetroot, but on my way here, I ran into an acquaintance of mine, who advised that I bring you figs instead. Now I am thankful to God that I had come across that man. Had I had beetroot in my basket, then, owing to your magnanimity, I would have ended up without eyes, or even a head.'

Fearful Child

Once upon a time, Tamerlane was speaking with his generals. Each of them narrated their personal story about a battle. One general said:

‘When we were storming a city once, all of the citizens had abandoned it. The houses were burning like candles, and this rejoiced everyone.’

The other general recalled:

‘When we were going on a campaign, we had over a thousand elephants and many cannons. The shots were so loud that...

Suddenly one of the children who were present there began crying.

The general got angry and shouted at him:

‘What is wrong with you, you little scoundrel?’

Molla had had enough of stories involving brutality and gore, so he said:

‘What is the matter? The child has just become scared of your loud cannons.’

Ruler's Clothes

One day, the town governor called up Molla and said to him:

‘You walk around talking nonsense and embarrassing us. I can forgive you this on the condition that tonight you write a poem and read it tomorrow to the local high society.’

Despite Molla’s efforts to persuade the governor that he was no poet, the governor did not want to hear anything. Molla thus realised that the town governor had aimed at discrediting him in the poet community. He spent the whole night and managed only to dream up nonsense without rhythm, rhyme or sense.

In the morning, the poets gathered. Panegyrists began with their lengthy odes dedicated to the ruler, and for each ode the ruler rewarded them with gifts and money. It was now Molla Nasraddin’s turn. Not in the least embarrassed, Molla read his “poem”. All those present began to laugh, screw up their faces and jeer at Molla, and when he finished, the ruler said:

‘Nicely written! It is worthy of who you are.’

Then he ordered that the servants bring in a donkey
saddle.

The ruler said:

‘Here is a gift for your poem.’

Laughter continued.

Molla took the saddle without a sign of embarrassment,
bowed to the ruler and said:

‘I see, sire, that you have been pleased by my poem.’

‘That is right, Molla,’ said the ruler. ‘I swear, of all the
poems I have heard today, yours I liked the best.’

‘There is no need to swear; I believe you!’ said Molla. ‘If
it were not the case, you would not offer me your best
clothes as a gift.’

Village Headman

Once upon a time, town rakes felt like playing a trick on
Molla. They stole his donkey and tried to persuade him
that his donkey had become a headman in a village
somewhere.

‘I believe you, folks,’ said Molla, ‘for every time my donkey heard the word “village headman”, it would raise its ears. He must have decided to be one himself a long time ago.’

Wonderful Hare

Once, Molla was left without any money. He tried to earn something, but to no avail. Having lost all hope, miserable, he walked around the market until he noticed a hunter selling two hares. He rejoiced and walked up to the hunter. He used his last money to buy the hares and brought them home. His wife asked:

‘What is this?’

‘Never mind, woman!’ answered Molla. ‘This is a money trap. Today with their help, I am going to somehow cheat the town governor.’

‘How so?’ asked the wife.

‘Listen up! I shall tie one of the hares here. You will cook delicious rice and bring two ripe melons from our

garden. You will keep everything ready. I shall take care of the rest.'

The wife began cooking rice. Molla tied one hare to a pole, took the other one and went to see the town governor. Molla greeted him and said:

'Sir, I have a good hare; I have spent several years teaching it to talk. Now, to be honest, I am not doing very well, so I am obliged to sell it. But I do not want it to end up in bad hands, which is why I brought it to you.

If you want, you can buy it.

The governor looked at the hare and asked:

'What do you mean by teaching him to talk?'

'It understands everything I say to it, and then goes and tells everything to my wife.'

The governor did not believe him.

'This is impossible.'

'It is hard to believe,' replied Molla, 'but if you want, we can do this now.'

The governor agreed.

Molla bent down and told the hare in the ear:

'Go home and tell my wife to make delicious rice and

buy a couple of melons. The governor and I are coming home soon.'

Having said this, Molla let the hare go, and it ran. The two talked for a bit, and Molla then offered:

'Let us go now.'

The governor and Molla came to his house and saw that the rice had already been cooking, the melons were waiting to be eaten in the corner and the hare was tied to a pole.

Molla pointed at the hare with his head and asked his wife:

'Woman, did the hare come?'

She quickly realised what was happened and said:

'Indeed. And I have done everything you asked for.'

'How much do you want for this hare?' asked the governor.

They negotiated for a while, and Molla sold the hare for a good price.

But the things did not turn out just as Molla had wished.

The governor wanted to give the hare a task right away, untied it and said to its ear:

‘Go home and tell my wife to cook something delicious.

Tonight Molla and I shall be dining together.’

Despite all Molla’s efforts to convince the governor to put the matter off until tomorrow, the governor did not give in.

‘No, I must invite you for a good dinner tonight.’

He set the hare free, and it ran away in a minute.

The happy governor sat down and said:

‘Let us have some of this rice, and we can have dinner at my place.’

The rice was served and Molla went into a deep thought as to what he was to do that night.

The evening came. Molla was trying his best to get rid of the governor and to flee somewhere for a few days, but the governor would not leave him alone and forced him to come along to his place.

They came home and saw that the ruler’s wife was taking a walk in the garden with her maids.

‘Woman,’ said the governor, ‘has the hare come?’

‘What hare?’ she looked surprised. ‘What kind of hare?’

‘Do you mean that has a hare not come to tell you that

tonight we were having a guest?

The governor's wife quickly moved back, thinking that her husband had lost his mind.

'What hare? Are you sure you have not fallen ill?'

The governor told her everything. Fortunately, she was even less intelligent than her husband, and she began to lament:

'Ah, what a shame! What a cute hare that must have been! If we had a hare that could quickly communicate my messages to you and vice versa, all the women will be jealous of me! What did you do with it?'

'I sent it home for it to communicate you a message,' replied the governor.

They started to argue with the wife, and Molla kept thinking how to escape his debt.

The ruler noticed that Molla had been thinking about something; he doubted Molla and asked:

'Well, Molla, would you tell us where the hare is?'

The governor's wife suddenly interrupted her husband:

'What if the hare did not recognise our house and went

elsewhere?’

Her words gave Molla the excellent idea he had been looking for.

‘Well, governor,’ asked Molla quickly, ‘when you sent the hare to your house, did you tell it where it was?’

‘No,’ said the governor. ‘That is exactly what I did not think of doing.’

The governor’s wife attacked him:

‘You have always been a fool. How could you let such a wonderful hare go?’

Find

Once upon a time, Molla was ploughing a field. Suddenly his plough hit something solid. Molla bent down and saw a big jug full of gold coins. The poor did not know what to do: if he did not take the jug to the ruler and the latter found out about the find, the ruler would make Molla regret it and will have him skinned. But Molla did not want to let the jug go either.

After thinking for a while, he brought the jug to his place and told everything to his wife.

‘Woman, give me something to eat. I shall refresh myself and take the jug to the ruler. Otherwise he will find out and scatter our ashes to the four winds.

‘Just listen,’ his wife insisted, ‘why do you want to give this gold to the ruler? How would he even find out? Let us keep the money and spend it little by little.’

Molla disagreed.

The wife brought him something to eat and when he began to eat, she quickly took the jug out of the sack, placed a big rock in it instead and tied it tightly.

Molla eat, shouldered the sack and went directly to the palace. When he entered, he saw that the ruler was having a conversation with several people.

‘What is it, Molla?’ asked the ruler. ‘What brings you here?’

Without saying a word, Molla turned the sack upside down and suddenly saw a big rock falling out.

The ruler and those who accompanied him looked at Molla in surprise.

The latter understood what had happened and said without any embarrassment:

‘O, ruler! The law stipulates that stones used for weights must be officially weighed. The real weights have never made it to our village, and everyone uses whatever stone they can find. We the villagers are asking you, if you could be so kind as to weigh this stone for us!’

Molla's Worth

Before spring started, Molla bought a goat to get his children to have milk. He mounted a donkey, tied the goat to his saddle and set off.

Some robbers noticed him and decided to steal his goat. After following him for a while and turning on a deserted street, one of the robbers sneaked up to the goat, untied it, tore the jingle off its neck and tied it to the donkey's tale, and ran away with the goat.

The half-asleep Molla had no idea what had happened. Sometime later, the second robber blocked his way and began questioning him:

‘Good day, uncle Molla. What is this? Why did you tie a jingle to your donkey’s tale?’

Molla turned around and saw that the goat had been gone. What was left for him to do? Except his hands and head to tear his hair.

‘Just now,’ said the robber, ‘a man was walking here with a goat. That must have been your goat. Do not be upset! I shall watch your donkey, and you go and get that scoundrel, take your goat from him and come back.’

Molla left the donkey with the robber and ran to retake the goat.

The robber mounted the donkey and showed a clean pair of heels.

The poor Molla ran everywhere he could, but the goat was nowhere to be seen. Devastated, he went back only to see that the goat had been gone as well. He figured that the man was the robber himself and that he had tricked him. Having lost all hope to find his goat and donkey, he went home. After walking for a while, he finally came across a well. He saw a crying man sitting by the well.

‘What happened?’ asked Molla. ‘Why are you crying?’
‘I am a childless man,’ said the person, ‘but I am very rich. I decided to move to a city and live the rest of my life there. This is why I sold everything I had, collected all the gold coins I made into a sack and set off. May he be damned who dug this well! When I reached it, I tripped on a rock, fell and dropped my sack of gold into the well. Now I am too scared to go down and have nothing to do but to wallow in grief.

Molla sat next to him and also cried.

‘And why are you crying?’ asked the traveller.

Molla recounted everything that had happened to him. ‘It is no use to cry over spilt milk,’ said the traveller. ‘Get up, let us tie our belts together; you will go down the well, get my sack, and I shall give you enough money to buy five donkeys and a herd of goats.’

Molla agreed. They tied their belts together and the traveller said:

‘You should undress, or else your clothes will get wet, and by the time you get home, you will have caught cold and become ill.’

Molla took all of his clothes off. He tied the belt around himself and went down into the well. This is exactly what the traveller needed. He quietly tied the other end of the belt to a rock, took all of Molla's clothes and took to his heels.

Molla certainly did not find anything in the well. He started screaming so that the traveller pulled him out, but no one answered. Molla struggled his way out of the well and saw that the traveller and Molla's clothes were gone.

He then grabbed a stick to defend himself from robbers and ran. On his way, he came across the town governor and his people. Upon seeing them, Molla threw away the stick, lay on the ground, closed his eyes and began shouting:

‘Come! I have been waiting for you all day!’

The governor recognised Molla and asked:

‘Why, Molla, whatever happened to you?’

‘As if you do not know!’ replied Molla. ‘Cut the charade! One of your friends took my goat, the other one took my donkey and the third one stole my clothes.

I know that you have now come to steal myself. Go

ahead, steel me; I cost about twenty five to fifty coins!

Fig Jam

Once upon a time, a certain rich man invited Molla for dinner. When the food was served, Molla looked at it and said:

‘The food looks great; there is only jam that is missing. I wish there were some fig jam here.

The host told his servant:

‘Go and tell them to serve some fig jam.’

The servant left. Molla waited for a long time, but jam was not brought, and the host had forgotten about it.

The dinner was over. The host told Molla:

‘Molla, you know good poems. Can you please recite for us a poem by Hafiz?’

Molla began reciting, but intentionally skipped the best stanzas.

When he finished his recitation, the host told him:

‘Molla, you recited well, but do not think that I did not noticing you skipping the best stanzas.’

‘What can I do, this is how the world works: you do what you see others do. I saw that you forget what you promise, so I thought that perhaps this was a rule in your house.’

‘What do you mean?’ asked the host.

‘The best side dish to your dinner tonight would have been some fig jam, but both you and your servant forgot about it. This is why I also skipped the stanzas that were as sweet as that jam. When you remember the jam, I shall remember those stanzas.’

Molla's Sacrifice

Once upon a time, a certain well-respected man invited Molla to his place. Molla saw that the town governor was among the invitees. The host fawned upon him left and right.

The table was set, and the host seated the governor in the place of honour. Molla noticed that the governor was served a special plate, different from all the others’.

Molla secretly pushed his own plate toward the governor

and pulled the governor's plate toward himself.

The worried host said immediately:

'Molla, do not touch that plate, you may regret it.'

'I know,' replied Molla. 'This is exactly why I am taking it, or else, God forbid, mister governor will eat from it and fall ill, or something worse will happen, and our town will be left without a governor. And if I die, what of it? May my life be sacrificed to our governor!'

Eating Slowly is not Difficult

Once upon a time, Molla was invited again. He was quite hungry and was eating very fast. When the dinner was over, Molla told the host:

'I am very happy with you. May God empower you to organise another feast like this one, and I would be even happier.'

'No, Molla,' said the host jokingly. 'I shall not invite you any more. You ruin the special ambiance of the feast.

You eat so fast that no one can keep up with you.'

'May God rest your father's soul! Eating slowly is not

difficult! You may throw another feast and invite me again. I promise you to swallow a bite, then run to the bathhouse, take a long bath, then come back and take a second bite.'

Runway Cow

Once upon a time, Molla's cow ran away. The poor man wandered the streets and repeated the same thing publicly over and over:

'I wish that my cow came across anyone except the qadi! Oh, I just wish my cow came across anyone, but not the qadi!'

'Why, Molla, why are you afraid of the qadi so much?' the people asked him. 'What would happen, if it were him that came across your cow?'

'You are all ignorant!' replied Molla. 'You know nothing, and I know everything about the civil code. If the qadi sees the cow, he will eat, according to the law. And if I have anything to say against that, he will fine me, too.'

Molla the Perjurer

In his younger years, Molla was at one point hard up. Sometimes he would not even find money for bread. On one of these days, someone came to his door and said: 'I defamed a person saying he owed me one hundred poods of wheat. Let me take you to the qadi; you will commit perjury in my favour, and I shall give you ten coins for that.'

'No, thank you!' replied Molla. 'Ten coins will not pay for a hundred poods of wheat. Give me twenty, and I shall come along.'

They negotiated for a while until the cheat agreed to pay fifteen coins, and took Molla to the qadi.

The qadi first asked the plaintiff, then the alleged debtor, and then Molla.

'Are you a witness?'

'Yes,' Molla answered.

'Did you see it with your own eyes?'

'Yes!'

'Very well. Then tell me what exactly you saw.'

‘I saw with my own eyes this man giving one hundred poods of barley to that man.’

‘According to him, the man owes him wheat, but you have just “barley”.’

‘Indeed, I did. If he had been not such a skinflint, I would have said “wheat”.’

The qadi realised what was going on and asked:

‘How is he a skinflint?’

‘Lately,’ replied Molla, ‘I have been out of luck. This man came to my house and said: “Come with me. You will commit perjury, and I shall reward you with ten coins for that.” I asked for twenty, but he did not want to give me more than fifteen, so I thought to myself: “If he is being so stingy, I would say “barley” instead of “wheat”.’”

Molla's Falcon

One evening, Molla was heading home from the field. Two young boys were having a fight on the street. Molla approached them and saw that they were holding a crow. Each of them was pulling it towards himself saying

‘It is mine’. Molla pitied the crow and asked:

‘What happened? Why are you fighting?’

One of the boys said:

‘I saw this crow get into its nest and told him: “Look, this is where the nest is.” Then I bent down so he could get on my back and get it, and now he says that the crow is his.’

‘Of course, it is mine,’ said the other boy. ‘If it were yours, you would have caught it yourself.’

Seeing as the boys were about to tear the poor bird in pieces, Molla took it from them, gave them a dime and said:

‘Poor crow! Give it to me. I shall set it free, so it can fly where it wants. And you take this money and buy yourselves some halva.’

The boys were happy; they took the money and ran along, and Molla let the bird go.

The bird flopped its wings, flew and landed on the back of a female buffalo that was grazing nearby.

Molla looked at it and said:

‘Good job, crow! It is exactly like a hunting bird!’

Would you look at how it has caught such a huge prey!'

Molla sneaked up quietly, grabbed the crow, seated it on his arm, like a falcon, and went home with the buffalo.

After the sunset, the owner of the buffalo, after asking around, came to Molla's and demanded his buffalo.

'What makes it yours?' asked Molla. 'Even our ancestors hunted game using falcons. I let out my bird and it caught me a buffalo.'

They argued for a while, and finally the matter reached the qadi. He summoned Molla and said:

'Why are you not giving this man back his buffalo?'

'Mister qadi,' replied Molla, 'fortunately, we are alone here, so we can talk about this one-on-one. Hear me out. I have calculated that milk from this buffalo can be used to churn ten pounds of butter every month. If I were to give you five of those ten pounds, can you use your law books to consider my crow a falcon and this buffalo my prey?'

'Go and have the butter ready,' said the qadi.

Molla left. After a few days, the qadi summoned both the

buffalo's owner and Molla. Making references to books and codes, he concluded that the buffalo belongs to Molla.

After days, weeks and finally a month, qadi sent people to Molla to inquire about the butter. Molla took the jug, filled it with liquid manure from the buffalo, then covered it with a layer of butter two fingers in width and brought it to the qadi.

'Molla,' said the qadi, 'do not forget to bring some next month as well.'

'Be sure,' said Molla, 'that I shall bring you a jug of exactly the same butter every month.'

When Molla left, qadi instantly opened the jug. He tasted the butter once, then twice, and the third time he felt that the butter had a very strange taste. He picked it once more and saw that the jug was filled with manure.

He became so angry that he immediately sent for Molla. Molla came, and the qadi said to him:

'Molla, you have gone so far as to feed me manure!'

'First of all,' objected Molla, 'it is not me who

feeds you manure, mister judge, it is you who eats it all by himself. Secondly, you began eating it when you used the law to rule that a crow is a falcon and a buffalo is its prey.'

Hen and Chickens

Molla Nasraddin would exasperate all the clergy in town.

Finally, they got together to go and see Tamerlane in order to complain about Molla.

Molla realised that things were turning bad for him. He mediated upon it, then took a hen with chicks and went to see the vizier. He offered those to the vizier as a present and asked the vizier to defend him in front of Tamerlane.

The next day, on Tamerlane's order, Molla Nasraddin and the clergy appeared before him.

They restated their complaints. Then the vizier stood up, stepped forward and began praising Molla Nasraddin.

Tamerlane listened to the vizier and asked Molla Nasraddin:

'All right, what can you say in your defence?'

‘Long live the sovereign!’ replied Molla. ‘The hen and chicks have said it all in my favour. There is nothing I can add!’

Governor's Duty

One morning, two neighbours saw that a dog had defecated on a no man's land between their houses. None of them felt like picking after the dog. The argument led into a fight, and the two went to complain about each other's actions to the town governor.

The town governor was at odds with Molla Nasraddin and this is why he commended this case to him. Molla was invited and the people gathered. The governor addressed himself archly to Molla:

‘Molla, these two men have had an argument. The matter is very important, hence I have sent for you. You are able to solve such issues fast and fairly.’

Molla heard both parties and realised that the governor had called him there only to offend him. Not in the least embarrassed, he told the two neighbours:

‘A dog has defecated on the street. You are not respon-

sible for it, the ruler is. And the ruler has a representative here, who is the town governor. This is why it is not your job to pick up after the dog, but the governor's!

Molla's Court

Once upon a time, when Molla was a town qadi, a security guard came to him and asked:

'Mister judge, one bull hit another bull on the street and killed it. What does the law say? What shall we do?'

'Go and invite the owners of both bulls,' said Molla.

'The bull that killed belongs to you,' said the guard, 'and the bull that got killed belonged to one of your neighbours.'

'What shall I do now?' thought Molla aloud. 'I cannot charge an animal blood fee.'

'Oh, I think I have made a mistake,' bethought the guard.

'The bull that killed is your neighbour's and the one that got killed was yours.'

Upon hearing this, Molla exclaimed:

'Really? Then this is quite another matter. Hand me that book, let us see what it says.'

Who is Right?

Once, when Molla Nasraddin was a town governor, two complainants who had had an argument with each other came to see him. Molla attentively listened to the first

one who finished his story and asked Molla:

‘Now, what do you think? Am I right or not?’

‘You are right, fellow,’ said Molla.

The first complainant sat down. The second one began speaking, trying to prove that his opponent had been lying all along. He also asked:

‘Now, what do you think? Am I right or not?’

‘You are right, fellow,’ said Molla.

Molla’s son was also there. Upon hearing his father’s words, he asked:

‘You say to each of them that he is right. How can this be?’

‘You are also right, son,’ replied Molla.

‘Then who is wrong?’ asked the son.

‘The fool who made me the town governor.’

Owl

Once, Molla fell ill. To cure him, they invited a doctor who was very maledictory; no one had ever heard a kind for from him.

The doctor examined Molla and said:

‘Molla, you know well that everyone dies on God’s will.

We are born once and die once. I can see that your cause is lost. You had better call up your family and decide on a will.’

Molla convoked everyone, and they gathered in his room.

‘Here is what I am leaving you in my will. Please remember this regardless of whether I die or continue living. You can bring whatever beast in my house,’ he said and pointed at the doctor, ‘but do not let this owl fly in here ever again.’

Strange Illness

Once a man came to Molla and said:

‘Molla, I have become ill and no one can pick a remedy for it. Perhaps you would know of a method.’

‘What is your illness?’ asked Molla.

‘All my body hair hurts.’

‘How odd! I have never heard of such an illness. Very well! Have you eaten anything out-of-place recently?’

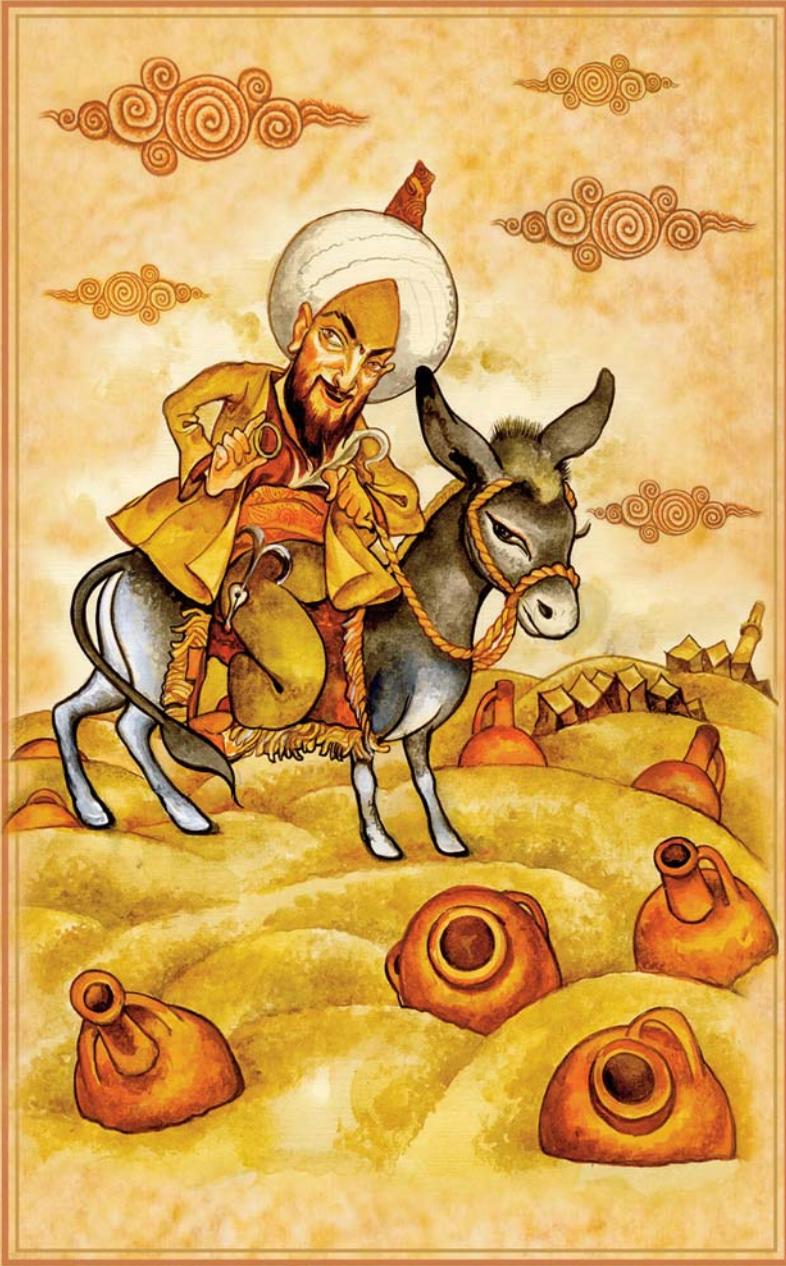
‘I had an ice sandwich.’

‘Your illness is not human and your food is not human. I suggest your see a veterinarian!’

Molla's Knife

Once upon a time, Molla hid a knife up his waist and went to a madrasah . On his way, the wind blew his overcoat open and revealed the knife. At the time, the royal court forbade carrying any guns. Molla was arrested and taken to the town governor. He asked:

‘Have you not heard the royal order? Why are you car-



rying a gun on you?’

‘Sire, this is not a gun, this is a knife. I need it during my lessons at the madrasah.’

‘So why do you need this knife during lessons?’

‘I am using this knife to correct errors in books.’

The governor became cross:

‘A knife to correct errors?How can you fix errors with a knife?’

Molla sighed deeply and said:

‘Sometimes book writers do such grave mistakes that even a knife is not enough to fix them, only an axe.’

Cost of a Slap

Once upon a time, when Molla was on his way somewhere, a stranger came up to him from behind and slapped him on the back of his neck. Molla turned around and noticed that he did not know the man that had hit him. The man, having recognised Molla, became embarrassed, turned red and began to apologise:

‘I am sorry, I have made a mistake! I took you for an acquaintance of mine and hit you as a joke.’

Molla was quite angry, so he dragged the offender to the qadi. It just happened so that the offender was one of the qadi’s friends. The qadi, having examined the affair, wished to save his friend from Molla’s revenge whatever the cost. He turned to Molla and said:

‘Molla, he made a mistake and that is why he hit you. If you do not want to forgive him, just hit him back and you two will be even.’

Molla did not agree. Then the qadi said:

‘If so, then let this man pay you a gold coin as a fine.’

The offender began persuading them that he had no money on him. The qadi sent him home and secretly let him know that there was no need to come back.

Molla waited for an hour, then two, until he was convinced that the offender would not come back. Having realised what had happened, he went up to the qadi and said:

‘Qadi, does the law say that a slap costs one gold coin?’

‘Yes,’ said the qadi.

Molla swung his arm, hit the qadi hard in the ear and
said:

‘I do not have time to spare. When he comes back, feel
free to have that gold coin.’

“It Was You Bit Him”

They say, Tamerlane appointed Molla to be the town
qadi for a while.

Once, two complainants came to see him. One
said, point at the other:

‘Qadi, this person bit my ear.’

The other one began swear to God:

‘He is lying! I am innocent. He bit himself.’

Molla was perplexed; can a man possibly bite his
own ear? He thought for a while and then said:

‘Go and come back in half an hour.’

They left. Molla immediately stood up and went
home. He entered a room, locked the door and began
testing if it was possible to bite his own ear.

Despite all his efforts, nothing came out of it.

Finally he whirled so rapidly that he fell and crashed his head and face. He managed to get up, tend to his own wounds and went back to the court, groaning.

In half an hour, the complainants came, and one of the said again:

‘Qadi, by God, it was him who bit me.’

‘I did not,’ objected the second one. ‘He is lying; he bit himself.’

Molla became angry with him:

‘No, it is you who is telling brazen lies! If he bit his own ear, how come he did not crash his head? This alone shows that it was not him, it was you who bit him.’

Molla's Aba

Molla sold his donkey at the market and had to go back to his village on foot. The road was long, it was beginning to grow dusky, and he did not know what to do. At this time, he noticed that their village headman was heading somewhere and was getting his horse ready.

Molla immediately took off his aba and said:

‘Master, if you can, is it possible that you take my aba along?’

‘All right,’ said the headman. ‘But why are you not going there yourself?’

‘Because I have no horse,’ replied Molla.

‘Very well,’ said the headman. ‘I shall take your aba.

Whom in the village should I pass it to?’

‘No one. It would get off itself and find its way home.’

‘Do not be pulling my leg, Molla! How can an aba get off and go?’

‘It cannot possible go alone! It will carry me inside and I shall help it off.’

Reproaching the Governor

Once Molla had an argument with another person and was brought before the town governor. It turned out that a few days ago Molla had already been brought before him.

On seeing Molla, he said:

‘Shame on you, Molla! This is the second time you are

coming here.'

'What is wrong with that?' asked Molla.

'What do you mean?' asked the ruler. 'Do you not know that an honest man would not end up here?'

'You see,' objected Molla, 'this is only my second time here, while you spend your every day here.'

Theory and Practice

A new governor was appointed for the town where Molla lived. All this governor thought about was food. On the very first day, he brought together all the respected citizens and asked them to make a list of all the dishes that they knew.

Molla thought and invented his own platter. Two days later, the governor invited him and asked:

'Well, what will you suggest?'

'Hail the governor!' replied Molla. 'I invented a whole new dish for you.'

'What is it?' asked the governor.

‘You are supposed to dip garlic in honey and eat it,’ said Molla.

The governor ordered that the cook prepare this dish for dinner. In the evening, the dish was served.

The governor hardly had a few pieces until he felt nauseous. He became angry and demanded to see Molla.

‘I command you to eat your own dish.’

Molla had no choice and began eating.

‘Well, do you find it delicious?’ asked the governor. ‘Why are you looking around? It was you who invented this dish.’

‘Indeed, I did,’ replied Molla. ‘But it was only a theory; I had never applied it in practice. Now I see that for my invention, the practice contradicts the theory.’

Error in a of Butter

Once upon a time, Molla came to see the qadi. The qadi took his time reviewing the case. Finally Molla realised that nothing could be done without a bribe. He went to

the market, bought a jar, filled it with clay to the neck, covered it with a thin layer of butter and took it to the qadi.

As soon as the qadi saw the butter, he signed the paper that Molla needed, and saw him off.

After Molla left, the qadi decided to get the butter out of a jar and into a different container. He immediately discovered the dirty trick. He became angry and sent an assistant to find Molla. The assistant found Molla and told him that the qadi had an important matter to discuss. Molla realised that his trick had been uncovered, but he still went to the qadi. The latter, on seeing Molla, hissed angrily:

‘Molla, give me back the paper. I believe there is an error in it. It needs to be corrected.’

‘You should not bother, qadi,’ replied the laughing Molla.

‘I have read the paper. There are no errors. The error must have been in the jug of butter. You would not have worried so much about an error on the paper.’

Wear as You Please

Once upon a time, while heading back home by night, Molla noticed a man lying on the street. He approached him and recognised the man to be the town's qadi who was very drunk. Molla undressed him and took away his clothes.

In the morning, when the qadi sobered up, he saw that he was completely naked. He somewhere may it back home and vowed to punish whoever had stolen his clothes.

In the morning, the qadi asked his servant to go to the market and see if anyone was wearing the qadi's clothes.

In that case, the servant was to arrest the person and bring him before the qadi.

In the same morning, Molla Nasraddin intentionally put on the qadi's aba and turban and also went to the market.

The qadi's servant recognised his master's clothes, grabbed Molla and took him to the qadi.

As soon as he entered the qadi's chamber, Molla saw

that there were many people sitting there. Before the qadi spoke, Molla said:

‘Good day, qadi!’

‘Good day! Wait until I finish with these people, and then we may talk.’

‘No, qadi,’ replied Molla, ‘I cannot wait, for I am in rush.’

Last night, as I was heading back home, I noticed a drunken man on the street, wearing an aba and a turban. I thought that if robbers had seen him, they would have stolen all his clothes. Therefore I undressed him myself and took all the clothes home. Here they are. I am asking you to find their owner and give them back to him.’

The qadi realised that the matter was turning against him; he looked at the people around him and at Molla and, not willing to embarrass himself, said:

‘I would love to see the fool whom these clothes belong to. I let you take them and wear them as you please.’

Molla Finds Donkey

Molla had lost a donkey. Someone said to him:

‘Your donkey was appointed town governor.’

After thinking for a bit, Molla replied:

‘You are telling the truth. There has always been a sign of supremacy on its muzzle, and they have been old friends with the ruler. Let me go and see what will happen to me next.

He bought a halter and got a lapful of barley before going to the town governor’s office. When he entered the office, he saw the governor surrounded by many people.

Molla showed the governor the barley and began making smacking sound with his lips.

The governor looked at him utmost surprise.

Molla said, looking at everybody else:

‘Just you look at how it is putting on airs! It thinks that now that it is the town governor, its owner means nothing any more. As if just yesterday, it was not a simple donkey!’

Then Molla approached the governor, pulled him by his beard and haltered him.

The governor screamed. His servants entered the room,

attacked Molla and gave him a good beating.

Molla was shouting in the meantime:

‘You have made my donkey the town governor, and yet this was not enough! Now you are beating me up. Though this is not your fault. This is the ruler’s fault. His friendship with my donkey has led to it being taken away from me.’

Qadi's Head

The town’s qadi hated Molla with all his heart. Once Molla had to go and see him on business. Upon approaching the qadi’s house, Molla noticed that the qadi had quickly jumped back from the window. Molla knocked on their door. A servant came out and asked:

‘Who are you here to see?’

‘I am here to see the qadi,’ replied Molla.

‘Master is not at home,’ said the servant. ‘He went to the market.’

‘Tell your master,’ suggested Molla, ‘not to leave his

head on the window next time he goes to the market, or else people would will that he is at home.'

Out of Harm's Way

Molla's house was next to the qadi's. One day it was raining heavily. Molla saw the qadi running home. He looked out the window and shouted:

'Qadi, you used to say that rain is God's blessing. And running away from God's blessing is a sin. So why are you running?'

The qadi slew down and was soaked to the skin by the time he came home.

A few days later, it rained again. Molla was one his way back from the market and having been caught in the rain he started running.

The qadi saw him from the window and said:

'Molla, one should not run away from God's blessings. So why are you running?'

'No, qadi,' replied Molla, 'you do not understand! I am not running away from God's blessing, but I am afraid to

crush it under my feet. It is a sin to stamp on God's blessings, so I am in fact escaping the sin.'

Dream

Once upon a time, when Molla was still a qadi, a sly rich man came to him to complain of his poor timid neighbour, saying:

'I had a dream that he owed me money. Now I am asking him to repay his debt, and he will not do so.'

Molla thought a little bit and said:

'You are right, sir! If you had a dream about it, he must indeed owe you money. But it is a fiendish difficulty to make sense of these damned law books. They make no provision for repaying a dreamed up debt. Go and have a sleep! If you have the same dream, come and see me without waking up, and I shall have him pay you back.'

Divorce

Once a certain man came to see Molla Nasraddin and

told him:

‘I am here to ask you to divorce me from my wife.’
‘As you wish,’ replied Molla, and got a piece of paper
and a pen.

He sat down and asked:

‘What is your wife’s name?’

The man who came to ask for divorce tried hard, but
could not remember his wife’s name, so he finally said:

‘I do not know.’

‘Very well,’ said Molla, ‘but how old is she?’

The man gave him a blank look, thought for a while, but
could not remember how old his wife was, so he finally
admitted:

‘By God, I do not know that either.’

‘All right. Where is she from then?’ asked Molla.

‘Molla, I have no idea of that either.’

Molla put away the paper and pen and said:

‘Judging from your love story, I can see that God di-
vorced you two a long time ago. So why did you even
come here?’

Molla's Division

Once the qadi was visited by three plaintiffs. The qadi listened to them and learned that all three worked together to buy seventeen donkeys, and now they cannot divide them accordingly, given that one man had paid half of the sum, the second man had paid a third and the third man had paid one-ninth.

The qadi thought for a very long time, but did not come to a decision. Finally, unable to find a way to solve the problem, he sent for Molla Nasraddin. Molla mounted his donkey and arrived at the qadi's. He listened carefully to the complaints and asked:

'How would you like to divide these donkeys?'

'We would like,' replied the plaintiffs, 'for everyone to get as much as they contributed to the purchase, on the condition that all donkeys remain intact.'

Molla stood up and called them:

'Let us go and see the donkeys.'

They exited into the yard together. Molla added his own donkey, so there became eighteen of them; then he

began the division.

‘No, Molla, we do not need your donkey,’ the complainants told him. ‘Why would you do damage to yourself? You should divide them such that everyone gets what they deserve.’

‘Molla Nasraddin is no fool,’ responded Molla with chuckling, ‘as to give you his own donkey. Have some patience. You will now receive your donkeys, and I shall get to keep mine.’

Then he asked the first complainant:

‘Did you say you had paid half of the sum?’

‘Yes,’ he answered.

Molla separated nine donkeys and gave them to him.

‘Here is your share.’

Then he told the second one:

‘You have paid a third, have you not?’

‘Yes,’ he answered.

‘So you deserve to have six donkeys, do you not?’

‘Yes, and even more.’

Then Molla asked the third man:

‘You have paid one-ninth. This makes it two out of eighteen. Is that correct?’

‘Yes, it is,’ answered the man.

Molla gave him two donkeys, mounted his own and left.

Either-or

Once upon a time, Molla was visited by three men who
told him:

‘Molla, we are friends with each other. We have four
pennies that we just cannot divide amongst ourselves.

Can you help us?’

‘Either divide them between two of you and let the third
one wait until you get two more pennies, or give me one
penny, and you can divide the other three amongst
yourselves’

Molla's Decision

Once upon a time, two men came to see the qadi. The
two had bought a camel. One of them had paid three-
quarters of the sum and the second one paid a quarter.
The money they were making from transferring loads on

the camel they would divide thus: the one who paid more would get three-quarters and the one who paid less would get a quarter.

Once, while crossing a river, the camel drowned. The person who paid more began demanding reimbursement from the other person, for he had endured a bigger damage. His companion was a poor man who had nothing to pay.

Despite qadi's efforts, he was unable to solve the case. In addition, the poor man said:

'While it is true that he had paid more for the camel than I had, it is also true that he has been making three times as much off of it.'

The qadi called Molla Nasraddin. While listening to the complaint, Molla noticed that it was the rich man that was talking, and the poor one was standing silent. The rich man was trying his best to have the case resolved in his favour.

Molla asked:

'When the camel drowned, had it been carrying any load?'

‘No, he had not,’ they answered.

‘So,’ said Molla to the rich man, ‘the camel did not drown because of the weight of the load, but because of its own weight. Most of the camel’s weight, that is three-quarters, belongs to you, and one quarter to him, which means that it was your share of weight that led the camel to death. Now you must pay your companion the money that he had contributed to the purchase.’

‘No,’ objected the rich man, ‘my share was not heavier.’

‘If your shares were equal,’ said Molla, ‘why are you demanding money from him?’

‘Because I had paid more.’

‘And this means your share was heavier.’

The qadi saw that Molla had it right. He ordered that the rich man pay the poor man for his share.

You are Even

Once upon a time, a beggar found a dry bread crust and walked up to the doors of a tavern. He had never tasted

roasted beef in his life and here, looking at the roaster with shish-kebabs was exhaling unbelievably good smell, he began nibbling on his bread. He was noticed by the cook who, just before the beggar wanted to leave, grabbed him by his hand and demanded:

‘You must pay for the shish-kebab!’

‘Good sir,’ pleaded the beggar, ‘have I eaten your shish-kebab that you are asking me to pay?’

‘No,’ replied the cook. ‘But you have eaten your bread while smelling it.’

The beggar pleaded more with the cook, but the cook would not give in and finally took the beggar to the qadi. Molla also happened to be there. The qadi listened to the cook and told Molla:

‘I dare not resolve this case. This is in your line.’

‘This poor man did not eat your shish-kebab,’ said Molla, ‘so what do you want from him?’

‘Though he did not eat any, but he was there watching it and smelling it,’ replied the cook. ‘I am charging him exactly for that.’

‘You are right, sir,’ decided Molla. ‘He must pay.’

The cook rejoiced, thinking that Molla was going to take a few coins from the beggar and give them to him.

Molla took his own wallet from his pocket and shook it in the cook's ear.

'Do you hear this?'

'What?' asked the cook.

'The jingling of the money.'

'Yes, I hear it.'

'So you're even then. Now leave.'

'He has not paid me anything!'

'He watched and smelled your shish-kebab. You watched and listened money jingling. You're even.'

Payment

A poor elderly man lived in the same neighbourhood as Molla. For his entire life, all he did was go to the nearest forest, chop wood, carry it to the market on his back and make a modest living out of it.

One day he was heading back from the forest with a big bundle of wood and, exhausted, he decided to take a

break. He placed the load on the ground. When the poor man wanted to continue his way, he was no longer able to lift the bundle, for it was too heavy, and he was old and weak.

Meanwhile someone was passing by. The old man asked the person to help him lift the bundle to be placed on the old man's back. Before tending to him, the passer-by asked the old man:

'If I help you load this bundle on your back, what will you give me?'

'What do I have, dear, to give you? Nothing,' said the old man.

The other man, without saying anything, loaded the bundle on the old man's back, and then demanded:

'Now give me the nothing you promised me.'

The old man beseeched him for a long time:

'What do you want from me, good man? Why do you not leave me in peace?'

The man did not let the man alone and started a commotion:

'What do you mean by "what I want"? I asked you what

you could give me if I helped you take on this bundle, and you said “nothing”. I lifted your load, now give me that “nothing”.’

The old man kept pleading with him, but the man did not want to hear anything. At the end, he took the poor old man to the qadi.

The qadi was unable to solve this case and invited Molla Nasraddin for assistance:

‘For God’s sake, Molla, take on this case. Only you will be able to solve it.’

Molla sat down on a matras, listened to both men, then turned to the plaintiff and said:

‘You are right! If he promised you “nothing” for your assistance, you are entitled to it. But I can see that the man is poor and, besides, not everyone has “nothing”.

Would you agree if it were me who gave you that “nothing”, instead of him?’

The plaintiff agreed.

Then Molla lifted the edge of the matras and said: ‘Stretch your hand and see what is under the matras.’ The plaintiff fumbled underneath but did not find any—

thing.

‘Well, what did you find?’ asked Molla.

‘Nothing,’ answered the man.

‘That is exactly the “nothing” you were promised. Take it and have a good day.’

Molla is Fasting

Molla had never fasted, and his wife would always reproach him for that. Once, on the seventeenth day of the holy month of Ramadan, she began reproaching him, as usual. Molla promised that he would start fasting the next morning.

At night, his wife woke him up. Molla eat plenty and went back to sleep. In the morning, he put some bread into his saddlebag, loaded it on his donkey and went to the field to work.

He was able to stand it until noon, but then felt gnawing hunger and inability to go on with his fast. He took the bread out of his bag and began slowly eating it.

A passer-by noticed him eating. He began shaming

Molla:

‘Molla, you should be ashamed of yourself! You are a grey-bearded man already, yet you do not fast.’

‘There is nothing to be ashamed of,’ replied Molla. ‘It is time to break the fast.’

‘Molla!’ exclaimed the passer-by. ‘What do you mean? It is barely noon!’

Meanwhile Molla’s donkey howled. Molla pointed at it and said:

‘Can you not here the muezzin calling?’

God’s Eye

Once Molla Nasraddin was asked:

‘Molla, do you know if God has eyes?’

‘He does,’ replied Molla, ‘but only one and on the very top of his head. This is why when He looks down at the earth, He does not see people. Sometimes He stretches His arm, grabs someone, lifts the person above His head and examines them. If He likes the person, then God watches them for a while, and if not, He throws them

back and the person comes head over heels back to the world.'

Molla's Knowledge

Once Molla came to mosque, went up the minbar and exclaimed:

'People! Who has questions? Ask me and I shall answer them!'

The people started showering Molla with questions. But he had the same answer for all:

'That, I do not know.'

In the end, someone became angry and said:

'If you do not know anything, why have you gone up the minbar? You are not even aware that ignorant people do not belong there.'

'I have come up as high as my knowledge permits me. If I were to go up where the real ignoramuses belong, I would be somewhere among clouds.'

Molla's Vow

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin and his son sailed off somewhere. On their way, they were caught in a terrible storm. The waves were bouncing the boat as if it were a little lath. Molla who had not seen the sea before, raised his eyes to the sky and prayed:

‘O, Almighty God! Appease this storm and save us from trouble! I vow, as soon as I reach home, to go to mosque and light a candle the size of a mast.

His son looked at him, then at the mast of the boat and said:

‘Father, where are you going to find such a big mast?’

Molla immediately covered his son’s mouth with his hand.

‘Quiet! Or God will hear you. Let Him calm this storm and get home safe and sound. And there is nothing easier than abandoning a vow.’

Molla’s Indignation

Once upon a time, Molla loaded his donkey with sacks of

wheat and took them to the mill. On the way there, he
had a thought:

“Would it not be nice if the wheat in these sacks turned
into gold?”

Suddenly he saw that one of the sacks tore and that the
grain was falling on the ground. He raised his eyes to the
sky and said:

‘O, Heaven! I do not need your gold! You can choke on
it! Why would you spill my grain?’

Ground Full Chaff

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin’s son asked him:
‘Father, today at the madrasah, the akhoond told us that

God had made the first man from earth. Can it be?

Does this people there were no people before?’

‘No, there were not,’ confirmed Molla.

‘If there were not any people, does this mean that no
one planted barley or wheat?’

‘Yes, no one did,’ confirmed Molla again.

‘And if there was no barley or grain, was there no chaff either?’

‘No, there was not,’ replied Molla.

‘How could one stick earth together without any chaff?’ asked the son. ‘When I ask the akhoond this question, he said: “There is nothing too hard for God. If he could use earth to make a human, chaff means nothing to Him.”’

Molla thought for a bit and told his son:

‘So is the akhoond saying that the earth that made the first human already contained chaff?’

‘Yes, this is what he is saying,’ replied the son. ‘But I do not believe him.’

‘If that is indeed the case, then why does akhoond’s face have wrinkled so much? For when you mix chaff with earth, it never chaps!’

Molla's Disagreement

An akhoond went up the minbar once and said:

‘He who prays twice tonight will be sent a houri with her head in the East and her feet in the West.’

‘Honourable akhoond,’ objected Molla, ‘we do not need such a prayer, or such a houri. We shall not live enough to walk from her head to her toes.’

Obnoxious Cattle

Once upon a time, a female buffalo got into Molla’s garden.

Molla, his wife and his son got sticks and ran out to chase it away. Before they had time to approach it, Molla noticed a dervish walking in the garden. He stopped and yelled back to his family:

‘There is cattle that is more obnoxious than a buffalo here. Let us get rid of it first.’

Take Back Your Tuman’

A certain man gave Molla five tumans and said:

‘Take these five tumans and pray for me every day after your fifth prayer.’

Molla gave him back a tuman and said:

‘To tell you the truth, nights have become very short and

long pointless mundane conversations have become plenty, so I cannot get up so early as to do a morning prayer. So take back a tuman.'

“Do not take, but Give”

Once upon a time, a certain mullah fell into a pool during ritual pre-prayer cleansing. The pool was quite deep, and the mullah could not swim. He would either go underwater or reappear on the surface, not forgetting to scream for help. The people gathered.

'Give us your hand,' they were telling him, but the mullah did not extend his hand to anyone and kept floundering.

No one knew what to do until Molla Nasraddin came along. He immediately had an idea. He came up to the pool and extended his hand:

'Mullah, take my hand!'

The drowning man seized Molla's hand tightly, and Molla pulled him out.

The people were puzzled. One of them asked the mul-

lah:

‘Why did you not give us your hand when we were all screaming “give us your hand” to you, and when Molla told you “take my hand”, you immediately grabbed onto him?’

The mullah did not speak. Molla Nasraddin spoke instead:

‘You ought not to be surprised. You were screaming “give us your hand” and he did not. I said “take my hand” and he did. Mullahs are not used to the word “give”; rather they are used to the word “take”.’

Donkey's Tail

Once upon a time, there was an argument between Molla and a certain dervish who was trying to pass himself for a scholar.

Molla Nasraddin defeated the quack and proved him to be a liar and an ignoramus.

The dervish realised that the matter had turned against him, but in order to embarrass Molla Nasraddin back, he

said:

‘If anyone should be quiet, it is you. You cannot do anything right!’

‘You are right,’ replied Molla. ‘I cannot do what you can, but at least everyone knows what I do. Perhaps you should tell everyone who you are and what it is that you do.’

‘I am related to the Prophet,’ said the dervish, ‘and every night I leave this sinful world to ascend to the sky.’

Molla Nasraddin pretended that he believed this and asked:

‘Very well. Have you ever been on the fourth layer of the sky?’

The dervish said haughtily:

‘I have, many times.’

Molla pretended to believe this as well and asked:

‘When you ascended, did you feel anything soft touching your lips?’

The dervish, not sensing a trick on the part of Molla, said quickly:

‘Yes... I did...’

Molla winked at the crowd around them.

‘That was my donkey’s tail.’

Molla's Wisdom

Once upon a time, Molla had an argument with a dervish who was posing as a wise man.

Molla asked him a few questions, but the dervish was unable to answer any of them. Finally, the dervish became angry and said:

‘I can ask you questions that even your grandfather would not have been able to answer.’

‘There is no such thing in the world,’ replied Molla, ‘that I would not know. Ask me your questions and let us see!’

‘Do you know,’ asked the dervish, ‘where the centre of the earth is?’

Molla stuck his cane on the ground and said:

‘Here!’

‘Prove it!’ shouted the dervish.

‘I have already proven it,’ objected Molla. ‘If you do not

believe me, you can do calculations and verify for yourself.'

The dervish asked his second question:

'How many starts are there in the sky?'

'As many as hairs on my donkey's body.'

'And where is your proof?' asked the dervish.

'If you do not believe me,' replied Molla, 'you can go and count for yourself.'

'And how many hairs do I have in my beard?' asked the dervish.

'As many as there are on my donkey's tail,' replied Molla.

The dervish was enraged.

'You are lying!'

Molla answered him calmly:

'I am not lying. Here is your beard; here is my donkey's tail. Count the hairs on both one by one, and if the count is not even, you are welcome to criticise me.'

Dog's Prayer

Once upon a time, a certain man came to see Molla Nasraddin and said:
‘Molla, there is a dog on our street that does not let me be. I am so afraid of it that I cannot leave my house. I have heard that there exists a special prayer in Arabic that can get a dog to shut its jaws and to no longer be able to bite a human. Can you please teach me this prayer?’

‘I suggest you carry a stick on you at all times instead. I do not believe that a dog from your street understands Arabic.’

Molla's Sacrifice

Molla had a camel. Once, the camel fell ill. The people who knew about animal diseases examined the camel and told Molla that it would die soon.

‘If it is to die anyway,’ said Molla, ‘perhaps I should sacrifice it to glorify God.’

Molla slaughtered the camel. After that, wherever he

went, he would talk about having made a sacrifice to
God.

Finally, he was told:

‘Why, Molla, if it is not a big deal! We are fed up with
this story. You talk about it at every wedding and at
every feast.’

‘Be it at every wedding, at every feast, at every funeral,
at the market and on the street, I shall always talk about
this. Abraham sacrificed a lamb instead of his son, but
there is not one day when mullah would not talk about it.

As for me, I sacrificed a whole camel! How can I not
talk about it?’

Evil Moon

Only a few days were left until the beginning of the fast.

Molla came to see the qadi and asked:

‘Qadi! How can we know when the fast is starting?’

‘As soon as the month of Ramadan starts,’ replied the
qadi.

‘And how can we know when Ramadan starts?’

‘It starts with the new moon.’

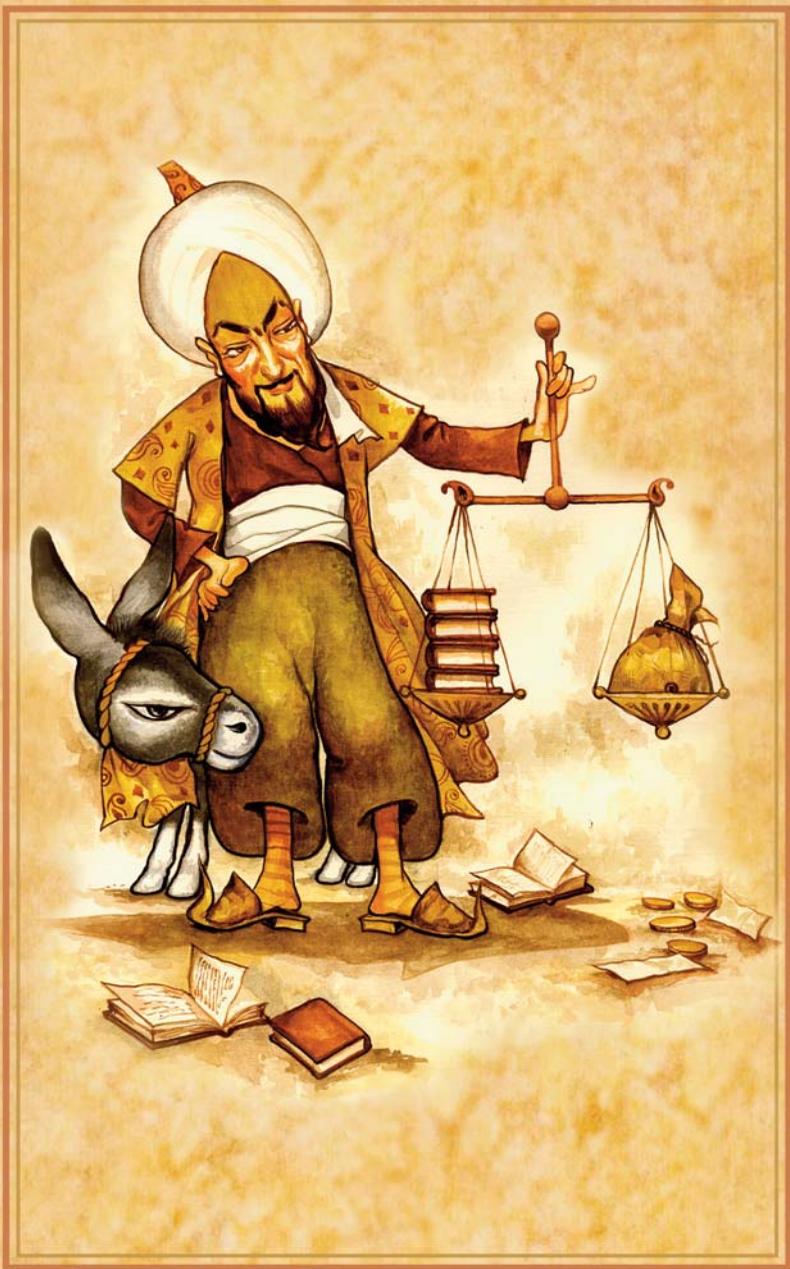
‘So until we see the new moon, it is not obligatory to
fast?’

‘No, it is not.’

From that day on, Molla never looked at the sky and
thus never fasted.

This continued until the end of Ramadan.

On the last day of the month, Molla was due to go
somewhere. In order not to look at the sky by accident
and not to see the moon, he was walking with his eyes
fixed on the ground. He came across a puddle and tried
to walk around it. Suddenly he saw the reflection of the
moon in the puddle. Molla became angry and exclaimed:
‘A pretty business this! What an impudent thing you are!
Why are you shoving yourself in my sight? Well, I have
news for you. You can jump into a puddle or even into a
sea, I shall still spite you and not fast.’



Soporific

Once Molla's wife told him:

'Molla, our child cannot sleep for a minute any day, any night. He cries so much that I feel completely exhausted. I am begging you to write down a prayer or find a remedy for him to finally get some sleep.'

Molla grabbed a copy of the Koran and gave it to his wife:

'Here, take this Koran. When the child starts crying, read him a bit. He will calm down and fall asleep.'

'How so?' asked the wife. 'Does a child fall asleep while listened to the Koran being read?'

'Woman, you do not know anything,' replied Molla. 'I noticed that when they read the Koran in the mosque, everyone falls asleep.'

Worst Punishment

Molla was completely out of money. His wife would not leave him alone:

‘What was the point of so much schooling that you have had? Go and worked as a mullah in the neighbouring villages, and being back some flour and wheat.’

Molla himself saw that there was nothing else to do, so he had to go visit the villages. But wherever he went, he was told that there was already a mullah in the village, so his services were rejected.

He finally reached a village where he saw a few peasants killing a fox they had caught. Molla approached them and said:

‘Why are you killing it?’

‘Molla,’ said one of the men, ‘this fox did not leave a single chicken alive on our farms. We have finally caught it. We must kill it now.’

‘You cannot handle it,’ said Molla. ‘Hand it to me, and I shall punish it, so that it remembers this day for the rest of its life.’

The peasants thought for a bit and handed Molla the fox.

He took off his turban, put it on the fox’s head, then covered it with his aba and set it free.

‘Molla, why did you let it go?’ the peasants asked him.

‘What kind of punishment is that?’

‘You do not understand,’ replied Molla. ‘There is no worse punishment than this. Now it is a mullah. Whichever village it goes to, it will be chased away. And for its entire life, it would be in need of food, until it finally dies of hunger.’

Goat

Once, as a young man, Molla Nasraddin was left without a penny. He could even buy a loaf of bread. Molla thought for a long time what to do, until he finally decided to sell his only goat:

However the goat was so thin that it interested nobody. Nasraddin would walk it around the market until it got dark, but was unable to sell it.

When it became dark, Molla took the goat to the akhoond who was responsible of funerals. The akhoond came up to the door and asked:

‘Who are you and what do you want?’

‘Dear akhoond,’ replied Nasraddin, ‘I am a stranger in

this town and am completely alone. I feel that I shall soon pass away and that the sands are running out. I have nothing, and this goat is my only hope. I would like you to have it slaughtered tonight and eat it, and when I die, I would like you to take care of my funeral.'

The akhoond immediately let the goat into his yard and promised Nasraddin that he would take care of everything. Nasraddin spent the night in someone else's garden and the next evening he showed up at akhoond's door again. When he saw goat skin hanging in the yard, Molla realised that the akhoond had already eaten the goat's meat.

He knocked on the door. The akhoond came out and asked:

'What happened? Why are you here?'

'Dear akhoond, I am in trouble.'

'What trouble?'

'Last night, as I was heading home, I saw the ruler's guards by my house. They arrested me and took me to the ruler. He gave me a donkey and a list of one hundred villages and demanded that I visit all of them and

find out how the people there live, who persecutes them, who cheat the poor, who gives promises and forgets about them later. Now I have come to tell you to get ready, for we are setting off tomorrow.'

'Why should I go?'

'Why should you not? What if I die on the way or in one of the villages, who will be in charge of burying me?'

'What are you footling about? What do I care about those villages?'

'Akhoond, tell me please: did you take my goat?'

'I did.'

'Did you promise to have me buried?'

'So what? Do you truly think that because of one scraggy goat I shall follow you everyone until you die and need to be buried?'

'First of all, my goat was not scraggy. Had it been scraggy, you would not have slaughtered and eaten it! Secondly, I am not going on my own free will. This is the ruler's order. If we do not go, he will have us arrested and imprisoned. And thirdly, if you are recanting your promise, then I shall go and complain to the ruler

this instant, saying that you are one of the people he is looking for. You cheated me, a poor man, and ate my goat. And now you are going back on your promise and are refusing to obey the orders of the ruler.'

The akhoond's eyes grew rounder from fear.

'Very well,' he said. 'Will you leave me alone, if I pay you for the goat?'

'But I am still hoping that you will take care of my burial! If it happened so that you cannot come along, which I am very sorry to heard, then there is no choice but for you to pay me. I shall find some other akhoond. But I must tell you that I paid much for this goat at the time.'

Thus Nasraddin got five times the price he had been asking for the goat.

Between a Qadi and a Merchant

Once upon a time, Molla came across a qadi and a merchant. They wanted to jeer at him, so they asked:

'Molla, have you ever made a mistake while leading a

prayer from a minbar?'

'Yes,' replied Molla, 'it has happened twice. The first time, instead of saying that those who misappropriate other people's property will burn in hell, I said that all qadis will burn in hell. The second time, instead of saying that those who do bad deeds belong in hell, I said that all merchants belong in hell.'

The qadi and the merchant looked embarrassed.

'You have no manners,' said the qadi angrily. 'You have always been a brute.'

'Yes, an ill-bred one,' added the merchant.

Molla was walking between the two. As soon as they started insulting him, he turned first to the right, then to the left, and said calmly:

'I am by no means an ill-bred brut, but I am standing between them right now.'

Molla's Beard

They say Molla's moustache and beard were thin. Once the qadi wanted to embarrass Molla for that and said:

‘You are not a man, anyway.’

‘Why do you say so, qadi?’

The qadi ran his hand down his ginger beard and said:

‘A man must have a nice ginger beard, like mine, and not like yours, with a few hairs here and there.’

‘It is all my fault,’ replied Molla. ‘And he who falls by himself does not cry.’

‘Why is it your fault?’ asked the qadi in surprise.

‘When God created the world,’ explained Molla, ‘I came late for the beard distribution, so my choice was a big ginger beard and a few hairs that had fallen off the other beards. God handed me the ginger beard. I thought and decided that it was better to have a thin beard than a big ginger one like yours.’

Molla Punishes Himself

Once upon a time, Molla shaved his beard off. The qadi, upon noticing such an unmanly look, asked Molla:

‘Molla! What have you done? Shame on you! What kind of a cleric are you, if you have no beard?’

‘Qadi,’ replied Molla, ‘at the time when I was a cleric, I sinned so much that I can never pray for forgiveness enough. So, in order to have the forgiveness, I decided to shave my beard off.’

Satan's Nest

One day Molla shaved his beard again. Someone asked him:

‘Molla, why did you shave off your beard and deprived angels of their dwelling?’

‘My dear,’ replied Molla, ‘I am yet to see angels in my beard. In fact, that thing has always been Satan’s nest.

Just like yours.’

Molla's Grumble

Once upon a time, Molla was heading back from the town to the village on foot. Tired, he addressed himself to God with a prayer:

‘O, Almighty! I am exhausted! Would it be possible to

send me a horse to take me home?’

At this point, someone jumped on Molla’s back. Molla raised his head towards the sky and said:
‘It has been sixty years that you are my Lord, but you have still not learned to make sense of words.’

Molla’s Precaution

Molla bequeathed:

‘Bury me in an old tomb.’

‘Why?’ asked his wife.

‘When the angel of death comes,’ replied Molla, ‘I shall show him the old grave and perhaps escape being interrogated by him.’

God’s Door

Once upon a time, someone stole Molla’s gate. He looked for the thief but could not find him. Finally, he came to the mosque and detached its door. He loaded it on his back and was just about to leave with it, when he

was stopped by the door-keeper:

‘What are you doing?’

‘You people say all the time that God knows everything,’
replied Molla. ‘If this is true, then He must know who
has stolen my gate. When He lets me know who the
thief is, I shall give Him back His door.’

Nasraddin'-Style Division

Once upon a time, a group of children chipped in and
bought some walnuts. When they began dividing these
walnuts, they got into an argument. Finally, they came to
see Molla and asked:

‘Uncle Molla, can you please divide these walnuts
amongst us?’

‘How would you like them divided?’ asked Molla. ‘In a
godly way or Nasraddin-style?’

The children decided that it was better to divide them in
a godly way and replied:

‘In a godly way, of course.’

Molla began dividing. He gave one boy ten nuts, the

second one received one nut, the third one a hundred nuts, the fourth one sixty, the fifth one five, and the sixth one did not get anything.

The children were surprised.

‘Uncle Molla! This is not fair division!’

‘This is how God would divide it! You can see that from how He has divided wealth amongst people. But if you would like me to divide them Nasraddin-style, then each of you will get thirty nuts, and I shall get thirty as well.’

God's House

Molla disliked sayyids and dervishes that he could not stand even seeing them. Once, as he came home from the market, he lay down to rest. Suddenly he heard a knock on the door. He asked many times who it was but no one answered.

Finally Molla stood up, opened the door and saw a sayyid wearing a green turban and a green belt.

‘What is it?’ asked Molla with a clouded brow. ‘What do you want?’

‘I am a guest of God,’ answered the sayyid. ‘And I want to spend this night at your house.’

Molla quietly went out on the street and locked the door of his house. Then he took the sayyid by hand and led him down the street.

The sayyid followed him without saying anything. Molla brought the sayyid to a mosque and said, while pointing at it:

‘This is God’s house, may it be ruined! If you are a guest of God, this is where you should stay. Why are you butting into my house? I am not God’s trustee!’

God’s Nephew

There was empty land in front of Molla’s house. At a certain point he started noticing that every night someone defecated in front of his door.

He removed the faeces one or twice, but at the end, he had enough. He thought that he absolutely needed to catch the scoundrel and teach them a lesson.

One night, Molla exited the house, took a stick and hid

behind a wall, waiting.

After some time, he noticed a man sneaking up to his house. The man looked around, squatted down and began releasing products of his vital activity.

After waiting a little, Molla attacked the man from behind the wall.

The man, on seeing Molla, recollected himself and said, trying to scale Molla:

‘I am God’s nephew! I shall curse him who touches me!’

Molla dropped his stick and said:

‘Welcome! But your uncle lied to you!’ he pointed at the mosque and continued: ‘There, this is your uncle’s house, from now on, that is where you will go. And this house is mine; it has nothing to do with God.’

Molla is Counting Days of Fast

In order not to lose count of the days of Ramadan, Molla placed a little jug in a niche and every morning, as soon as he woke up, he threw a pea in it.

One morning, his youngest daughter noticed him doing that. She liked what she saw. The next morning, after Molla threw in another pea and left, the girl took a handful of peas and threw them into the jar. Molla was unaware.

Once, Molla's neighbours came round and asked: 'Molla, do you know how many days has it been since the beginning of Ramadan?'

'Hang on,' replied Molla. 'I shall tell you in a minute!' He proceeded into a different room. There, he took the jug and began counting. He counted one hundred and twenty-two peas and thought: "If I say this figure, they will laugh at me. I should probably divide it in half." He went back and said:

'Today is the sixty-first day of Ramadan.'

'Why, Molla!' objected the neighbours. 'The month of

the fast has only thirty days. How did you come up with sixty-one?’

‘I actually tried to be precise,’ replied Molla. ‘If I were to tell you according to how many peas there were in the jug, I would have had to say one hundred and twenty-two.’

They Make a Pair

Once upon a time, when the Muslim fast corresponded to the Armenian fast, Molla saw an Armenian who was eating roasted chicken. After greeting him, Molla sat next to him uninvited and began eating the chick with him.

The Armenian looked at Molla’s turban and aba and said:

‘My dear fellow, you are Muslim and furthermore a cleric, how dare you disregard the fast?’

‘Well, why are you disregarding your fast yourself and eating this chicken?’ asked Molla.

‘I always disregard the Armenian fast.’

‘Very well. And I always disregard the Muslim one.’

“I Should Sin”

Molla did not fast, but would still get up before dawn and ate his fill together with his wife. He also demanded new dishes from her every morning.

Finally, the wife grew fed up and said:

‘How long will this go on? You are not fasting during the day, but you still get up before dawn and eat. Either observe the fast, or do not get up before dawn.’

Molla became angry and replied:

‘Do you think at all? Not observing the fast is sinful enough, and you also want me not to eat before dawn, and that would be another sin. No, my dear, I cannot sin that much.’

Molla Gets Even with God

Once an akhoond said from the minbar:

‘He who fasts on the tenth day of Muharram until noon shall commit such a good deed that it would be equal to a seventy-month-long fast.’



Molla heard that and on the tenth day of the month of Muharram of that year, he fasted until noon. After that, he did not observe the fast.

One day, during the fast, someone saw Molla eating and asked him:

‘Are you not ashamed not to be observing the fast?’
‘Have you not heard what the akhoond said? I fasted on the tenth day of Muharram, which is equal to a seventy-month-long fast. I used up a month this year and I have another sixty-nine months to go until I get even with God.

End of Fast

On the last days of the fast, Molla went to a neighbouring village. He reached the village square and saw all the villagers watching the sky carefully. Molla approached them and also stared at the sky.

‘Here it is! Here it is!’ exclaimed one of the villagers.

‘Where?’ asked another one. ‘There is nothing there!’

‘Look more carefully,’ said a third one. ‘It may appear

there.'

It turned out that they were looking for the new moon in order to find out when the month of the fast ends. Molla did not know this, and when he finally grew tired of looking at the sky, he asked one of those present:

'What are you trying so hard to see there?'

'The moon,' they replied.

'The moon,' asked Molla again.

'Yes,' they said. 'Why?'

'Just to think, how stupid people can be,' noted Molla. 'In our village, when people see the moon, be it the size of a waggon wheel, they are too lazy to even turn their heads. And here people are looking for it as if it were a needle.'

Molla's Piety

Once upon a time, Molla was performing ritual cleansing by the river. Suddenly his shoe came off his foot, fell in the water and was carried away.

Molla ran after his shoe, but realised it was too late to

catch. So he cut short his cleansing and addressed himself to the skies angrily:
‘Take you cleansing! I do not need it. But give me back my shoe.’

Molla at a Prayer

Once upon a time at mosque, when people were praying, one of the praying men standing behind Molla, pushed him so hard that Molla barely managed to stay standing.

Molla then head-butted the person standing in front of him and knocked him down.

The person turned around and asked angrily:

‘What are you doing, Molla?’

‘Ask the person standing behind me.’

Architect's Mistake

Once upon a time, Molla went to the bathhouse. He was alone there, so Molla decided to sing. He sang a song or

two, and believed that he had quite a good voice. He
thought:

“If I have such a marvelous voice, why should I hide it
from the rest?”

The next day, he went up the minaret, covered his ear
with his hand and began calling people to prayer. In re-
ality, Molla’s voice was rough and detestable, thus when
he started singing, he ended up producing husky and
abrupt sounds.

All those who were passing by the minaret ran
away, covering their ears. Finally, one of the passers-by
could not restrain himself from shouting:

‘Get down. We have had enough! Who sent you
to call everyone for prayer with that nasty voice of
yours?’

Molla realised that his voice was indeed unbear-
able. He looked around and said:

‘What can I do? When this minaret was built,
the damned architect did not arrange for a bathhouse in
it. If there were a bathhouse here, I would sing in it, and
then everyone would know what a charming voice I have

got.'

Molla the Preacher

Once upon a time, Molla was asked to go up the minbar and hold a sermon. Molla did not like doing that, so he answered:

'Leave me be! I cannot preach.'

He kept refusing, but the people would not leave him alone. In the end, Molla was obliged to go up the minbar and address to the people, saying:

'Do you know what has happened?'

'No, we do not,' answered the people.

Molla started descending from the minbar and said: 'Well, if you do not know, then there is nothing for me to explain.'

The next day the people agreed to get Molla to preach at all costs. They kept insisting, and he realised that he would not be left alone, so he went back up on the minbar and asked:

'Do you know what has happened?'

‘Yes, we do,’ a few people answered right away. ‘Well, if you do, then there is no point in explaining it to you again,’ said Molla and descended from the minbar. Everyone realised that their plan had just failed. On the third day, having come to an internal decision, they made Molla go up the minbar again. Molla asked the same question:

‘Do you know what has happened?’

One part of the audience said ‘yes, we do’, the other part said ‘no, we do not’.

Molla, realising that he was being tricked, recollected himself and said:

‘Then let those who know explain it to those who do not know!’

Silly Question

Molla went to a neighbouring village to visit an acquaintance. Upon arrival, he met some people who were nagging him into telling them a story from the life of saint. Molla tried to get rid of them, but he could not. Finally,

he was forced to go up the minbar.

What could he tell him? He began with the story of

Jesus's ascension and finished it thus:

‘And from that day on, Jesus remained there, on the
fourth layer of Heaven.’

The people dispersed. When Molla was on his way to
the yard, a woman approached him and said:

‘Molla, you have just said that Jesus remained on the
fourth layer of Heaven. But what does he eat there?’

Molla thought for a bit and realised that the woman had
caught him off guard. Without a bit of embarrassment,

he replied:

‘This is the third day that an important cleric such as me
is visiting your village. And for all this time, you have
never bothered to ask me what I have been eating. Now
it had fallen into my mind to lie a bit – and here you are
with your question about what he eats there.’

Molla's Prediction

On one cold winter evening, respectable elders gathered in one house to pass the time. A conversation about heaven and hell sparked. Everyone kept saying how horrible hell was and how magnificent heaven was. Meanwhile Molla showed up there. He entered the room, approached the fire place and began warming his hands. The elders continued their conversation. Molla listened to them for a bit and said:

'What a shame that you believe so! If the Apocalypse happened in the winter, only a fool would choose heaven over hell.'

Valuable Book

Once upon a time, Molla came to a wedding and saw that there was no one at the door to receive guests and guard the footwear. Molla was afraid that if he entered the room, his shoes would be stolen. This is why he took a handkerchief out of his pocket, wrapped his shoes in it,

and took them in the room.

One of the guests sitting next to Molla thought that Molla was carrying an expensive book and asked:

‘Is that a book?’

‘Yes,’ replied Molla, ‘and a very valuable one. This is why I cannot leave it on its own. Wherever I go, I always take it with me.’

‘What is the book about?’ asked the guest.

‘Theology.’

‘Where did you buy it?’

‘From a shoemaker!’ replied Molla.

Molla Promises Bliss

A certain man brought Molla a cooked lamb head. He waited for Molla to eat it all and then asked:

‘Molla, can you please pray for me?’

‘You brought me this lamb head, so when you pass away, may God reward you with the head of a righteous inhabitant of Heaven.’

Molla's Turban

Molla's fellow villager received a letter from a relative who lived in the town. The peasant came to ask Molla to read him the letter. Molla saw that the handwriting was so intricate that he could not make it out, but in order to get rid of the peasant, he said:

'Find someone else to read it for you.'

'No, Molla,' replied the peasant, 'I shall not leave you alone. Where would I find anyone who could read me this letter? It is you who must read it for me.'

'First of all,' objected Molla, 'I do not know Persian. Second of all, the letter is written in Turkish. And thirdly, I just cannot read it.'

The peasant became angry:

'Fine. You do not know Persian, or Turkish, or even how to read in these languages. Then why in the world did you dude up in that turban the size of a millstone?'

'If you think a turban helps your read,' replied Molla, 'then take it and put in on, and let us see if you can read at least a word.'

Molla Carew About the Hair

Once upon a time, a certain dervish heard about Molla's glory and vowed to trick him and get Molla to give him what he wanted.

Everyone waited until Molla came to the market. As soon as he showed up, the dervish greeted him:

'Hello, Uncle Molla!'

'Hello, honourable dervish!'

'Molla,' said the dervish, 'I have a few questions for you. As I see, you are a scholar, and you shall thus give me all the accurate answers.'

'My pleasure,' said Molla. 'What are your questions?'

'Who is Adam?'

'Our grandfather.'

'And who is Eve?'

'Our grandmother.'

'So we are all grandchildren of the same grandparents?'

'Yes, that is correct.'

'So we are all either brothers, or cousins, is that right?'

‘Absolutely.’

‘If that is right,’ said the dervish, ‘they you must share with me everything you have got.’

Molla realised that the dervish was a sly fellow and said calmly:

‘You are right, my friend. Here you are,’ and he handed him a penny.

‘Molla!’ exclaimed the dervish. ‘Am I only entitled to a penny from all your uncountable wealth?’

Molla whispered to him:

‘Take what I am giving you and leave. If all the other cousins hear about it, there will be so many heirs that you will be entitled to less than a penny.’

The crowd laughed.

‘What are you all laughing at?’ asked the dervish. ‘At least, I managed to get a penny from him.’

Molla realised that this had been a bet and said:

‘You did get it from me, honourable dervish, but you must now give it back to me.’

‘Why is that?’ asked the dervish.

‘For I am also either a brother, or a cousin to you. This

means that I am also entitled to part of the heritage.

Now please be as kind as to give me my share.'

This was how Molla got his penny back.

Molla and Sayyid

Once upon a time, Molla came back home from work tired. His wife served him a cup of tea and began preparing dinner. Molla was slowly sipping on his tea and looking at the boiling pot.

Just before the wife served dinner, someone knocked on the door. Molla became frustrated: "Who in the world would bother us at this hour? They will not even let us have the little stew we have prepared." Molla was grumbling, while the person kept knocking on the door.

Molla screamed a few times: "Who is there?" but no one answered. Finally, the wife said:

'It will not kill you to get up and see who it is forcing their way so furiously.'

'I swear to God, woman,' replied Molla, 'I have no strength to go up and down those stairs. Why do you

not go and find out yourself?’

‘What?’ exclaimed the wife. ‘Will you, a man, not be ashamed to sit where while I, a woman, am opening the door?’

Molla had no choice but to get up, while muttering curse words, walk down the stairs and open the door. It turned out that they were visited by a sayyid. Molla asked him:

‘What is it? What do you want?’

‘I am a sayyid,’ he replied, looking affectionately at Molla, ‘for the sake of my ancestors, I am asking you for my share.’

Molla became so angry that he almost went mad. He lost his patience and shouted:

‘I asked many times who was behind the door. Why did you not answer?’

‘I wanted you to come out here,’ replied the sayyid, ‘to ask you if you could let me spend the night here.’

Molla realised that this was one of the most impudent sayyids and said:

‘Is that what you want? Follow me then.’

Molla led the sayyid upstairs. When they reached

the room, Molla turned and said:
'May God help you, brother, but we have neither
food, nor a place to sleep for you.'

'If not,' the sayyid looked offended, 'why did you
make me come all the way up. You could have told me
downstairs.'

'I did so in order to show you what it feels like
to go up and down the stairs, to understand that it is not
the most pleasant thing and not to make this mistake in
the future.'

Residue

In Molla's neighbourhood, there used to live a dervish.
Molla would also jeer at him. The dervish was so afraid
of Molla that did not dare utter a single word in front of
him, but would always look for an opportunity to get
back at him.

Once, Molla's wife sent Molla to buy some olive oil.
Molla sat by the window and started looking outside
hoping to see someone on their way to the market who

Molla could ask do him a favour.

Then he saw the dervish passing by. Molla called him up
and asked:

‘Dervish, where are you going and whom are you hoping
to fool this time?’

‘To hell with you!’ replied the dervish. ‘I am on my way
to the market, but the fooling is always on you.’

‘I am sorry to bother you,’ said Molla, ‘but would you be
able to buy me some olive oil?’

‘Sure, why not. I shall.’

Molla gave the dervish the money and a con-
tainer.

The dervish rejoiced at the opportunity to get
back at Molla, so he filled the bottle with castor oil in-
stead of olive oil and brought it back.

As soon as Molla uncorked the bottle, he re-
alised everything immediately and thought:

“Very well, dervish, let us see who will have the
last laugh.’

After a few days, Molla was passing by a tea-
house and saw the dervish inside. Without revealing

himself to the dervish, he came back home, got some black pepper, mixed it with some snuff tobacco and poured the mix into a snuff-box. Then he took another snuff-box, filled it with real snuff tobacco and went to the teahouse.

On seeing Molla, the dervish finished chattering and sat next to Molla before the latter started jeering at him. Molla seemed to have forgotten the oil story and was discussing other issues with the dervish. Sometimes he would take out his snuff-box and sniff the tobacco.

The dervish asked Molla if he could take a sniff, and Molla secretly switched the boxes.

The dervish inhaled with pleasure, but the pepper made his eyes suddenly widen unnaturally. He almost choked, but managed to turn to Molla and exclaim:

‘What did you give me to smell?’

Molla replied calmly:

‘On that day, you brought me some oil, so now I am giving you back the residue.’

Molla Answers Questions

A traveller learned that Molla Nasraddin was an intelligent and wise person. He came to Molla's village to ask him for help with some difficult questions.

When he reached Molla's village, the latter was still in the field ploughing his lot.

The traveller took him for an ordinary ploughman, so he approached him and asked:

'They say a certain Molla Nasraddin lives in this village. Do you happen to know him?'

'Yes, he does live here, and yes, I do know him.'

'Where can I find him?'

'He does not appear before anyone. To be able to see him, you will have to live in this village at least for two months.'

The traveller gave it a thought and said:

'What can I do? I need him urgently.'

'What is the matter?' asked Molla.

'I am a traveller. They say he is a very intelligent man. And I have a few questions that I would like to know an-

swers for.'

Molla saw some pomegranates in the voyager's saddlebag and said:

'Indeed, Molla Nasraddin is an intelligent man. We are all his compatriots and his students. We have learned much from him. But why would we bother Molla Nasraddin? You can ask me, and I may be able to answer your questions.'

The traveller agreed and was just about to ask Molla his questions when the latter added:

'I have one condition: you see how hot it is today, and I am in the middle of working. I am tormented by thirst, and you are distracting me. Therefore, for each answer you must give me a pomegranate.'

The traveller agreed and gave Molla a pomegranate for each answer. Soon there were no more pomegranates left. Molla realised this, stood up and shook off the lap of his overcoat.

'But I have one more question left,' said the voyager.

'Do you have any more pomegranates?'

‘No, I have none.’

‘If there are no more pomegranates, there cannot be more questions.’

God's People

Once upon a time, Molla was working in the field. At noon, he laid his cloth and sat down to eat. Meanwhile a few people approached him. They greeted Molla and stared at his food.

‘Please,’ said Molla, ‘fell free to sit next to me and help yourselves.’

All the passers-by sat down and began eating. Everything that was on the cloth disappeared instantly, and Molla remained hungry.

The men stood up, thanked Molla and prepared to leave.

Molla then asked them:

‘Brethren, you have not told me who you are.’

‘We are God’s people,’ they said.

When the men left, a few cavalrymen rode up to the spring located nearby. They slaughtered a sheep, pre-

pared some shish-kebabs and sat down to eat.

Molla approached them and said:

‘May you have eternal joy, brethren! Excuse me, but could you tell me who you are and where you are going?’

‘We are the Shah’s people,’ they replied.

Molla looked at them, then in the direction of the newly-departed God’s people, then raised his eyes to the sky and said:

‘If you cannot maintain your people like the Shah maintains his, then why do they call you God?’

What a Quarter Means

Once upon a time, when Molla was young, he decided to get into trade. He found a younger companion, bought a jug of milk and went into town to sell it. After selling the milk, they decided to buy a jug of syrup to take back to their home village and sell it there.

This was what they did.

After filling the jug with syrup, they still had twenty-five

dinars. Because Molla was two years senior, he got to keep the money.

They took the syrup and set off. After a while, Molla said:

‘Knock on wood! A successful sale of milk and a successful purchase of syrup.’

‘If we go on like this,’ said Molla’s companion, ‘then in a month or two, we shall have been able to make some capital. And then we shall no longer be in need.’

After riding for some time, Molla Nasraddin said:

‘My friend, we have already made some money anyway. I would like to have a cup of our syrup to celebrate that.’

‘Never mix business and friendship,’ his companion replied. ‘We bought this syrup together. According to my calculations, a cup would cost a quarter. If you want to drink some, you have to pay.’

Molla took out the quarter from his pocket, handed it to his companion and drank a cup of syrup.

Then the companion felt thirsty. He gave Molla back the quarter and drank a cup as well.

After some more time, Molla paid the quarter back to his

companion, and drank another cup of syrup.

Then his companion did the same.

All in all, until they reached their village, the jug was empty, but they had a quarter left.

Big Building

Once Molla came into town and while walking around its streets, he noticed a big beautiful building. He liked it so much that for a minute he was gazing at it in admiration. It turned out that the building belong to the city inspector.

When he saw that Molla was fascinated by his house, he became proud of himself and, in order to jeer at Molla, he approached him and asked:

‘What is it? Why are you examining my house so much?’

‘What a beautiful building!’ replied Molla. ‘I liked it very much. But I find it excessively big. So I was thinking who would need to construct such a big building.’

‘What do you think this building is?’ asked the inspector.

‘By God, it seems to me that it is a residential building,
but...’

‘No, you are wrong,’ the inspector interrupted him. ‘This
is not a house, it is a caravanserai.’

Molla figured that this man had been poking fun of him
and, not in the least embarrassed, he replied:

‘Now it makes sense: this is where horses and donkeys
live, and that is why they needed to make this building so
large.’

Molla and a Rich Man

One morning Molla said after his prayer:

‘O, Almighty! Until today, I have never asked You for
anything. Now I would like to test You. If You truly exist,
let me have one hundred gold coins.’

His wife, who was standing nearby, said:

‘Perhaps not one hundred, but a bit less.’

‘No, we already have had an agreement, and if it is
ninety-nine, I shall not accept it.’

A rich neighbour of Molla’s overheard this conversation

and decided to play a joke on Molla. He put ninety-nine gold coins into a burse and threw it down Molla's chimney the next morning.

Molla noticed the burse, grabbed it, opened it and saw that it was full of gold. Molla counted, recounted and finally realised that there were exactly ninety-nine coins in the burse.

Without even changing countenance, he said:

'It is all right; whoever gave ninety-nine coins can give another one. I can wait until He has a coin to spare.'

Molla hid the gold in his pocket. The rich neighbour saw that the trick did not work the way he had been expecting, so he walked directly to Molla.

'Well, my friend,' he said, 'give me back my gold coins.'

'What coins?' asked Molla. 'Are you out of your mind? Do I owe you anything?'

'The coins that came down the chimney today were thrown there by me. I heard your prayer yesterday and wanted to see if you would stick to your word.'

'I was not praying,' objected Molla, 'and the

coins did not come down the chimney. The money I was counting was my wife's inheritance. She just received it yesterday.'

Their argument continued. The rich man saw that Molla was not giving his money back, so he said:

'Let us go before the qadi.'

'Certainly,' said Molla, 'I am not escape the court, but I am a rather old man; I cannot go there on foot. Find me a good mule to ride.'

Hoping to get his gold back, the rich man brought Molla a good mule.

'My wife washed my jubba last night,' said Molla, 'and I cannot wear it wet.'

The rich man brought Molla a new jubba. Molla put it on, mounted the mule and went to see the qadi. At the qadi's, the rich man told the story as it was and demanded his gold back.

The qadi turned to Molla:

'Molla, what do you have to say?'

'Dear qadi,' replied Molla, 'please ask him first if he is sane.'

The rich man became angry.

‘What are those words? I am certainly sane.’

‘Very well, but can a sane person throw ninety-nine gold coins down someone else’s chimney?’

The rich man began retelling the story about how he wanted to test Molla on being able to live up to his word.

‘Mister qadi,’ said Molla, ‘these gold coins were the property of my wife’s late father. My neighbour must have seen my counting them this morning and now wants to take them away from me. This is what all merchants are like. I am afraid to think that he may say that the mule I came here on is also his.’

‘But of course it is!’ shouted the rich man.

‘Do you see, qadi? I told you that he had gone mad, and you did not believe me. Just you wait, soon he will say that even the jubba I am wearing is also his.’

The rich man completely lost his temper.

‘Of course, it is mine!’ he shouted.

Molla said calmly.

‘Mister qadi, please be the real judge and show your justice.’

The qadi decided that they rich man must have indeed gone mad and sent him away.
Molla took the gold, the jubba and the mule and went back home.

His Own Servant Master

Molla had a rich and greedy neighbour who never helped poor people, or contributed to the grief or joy of others in any way.

Once Molla had to go and see him on business. Molla came up to the rich man's house and knocked on the door. The rich man saw Molla from the window and hid.

The servant came out and said:

‘Master is not home.’

Molla knew that the servant was lying, and as he was walking back home, he thought: “It does not worry me.

One day he will come to ask me for something.”

Days and then weeks passed. Once the rich neighbour had to see Molla for an important matter. Molla saw from the window that the neighbour is heading round.

He went up to the door and began waiting for the neighbour to knock.

When the rich man began knocking, Molla answered from behind the door:

‘I am not home.’

‘Molla, this is not very neighbourly,’ said the rich man.

‘How are you not home?’

‘By God, neighbour, this is how the world is set up: we must follow examples of others.’ A few days ago, I went round to your house, and you made your servant tell me that you were not home. So I followed your example, except that I do not have a servant, so I had to say it myself. What could I do? I am not as rich as you to afford having a servant. I am my own servant and master.’

Town Folk Temper

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin was visited by a guest from a village. The guest tied his horse in the yard and entered the house, and a conversation initiated be-

tween the two.

Suddenly they noticed that the horse had torn off the
bridle and left.

Molla went out on the street and shouted for everyone to
hear:

‘If anyone has seen a donkey, let me know and I shall
reward you.’

‘Why, Molla,’ said the guest, ‘why are you calling my
horse a donkey?’

‘You do not know the temper of the town folk,’ replied
Molla. ‘They never have enough of anything, and if they
find out that a horse is on the loose, they will never give
it back. So let us call it a donkey; perhaps that way they
will get it back to us.’

Molla Borrows Money

Molla sold a merchant some wheat on credit and now
had to make daily drips to town to collect the money
somehow. The merchant, in turn, kept making sly ex-
cuses not to pay him the debt, so Molla would come

back empty-handed.

Once, Molla came to town again. He pleaded with the merchant, but the merchant made a thousand excuses to extend the deadline for the next day.

In the evening, Molla set off for his village. He had not eaten anything since morning, and his legs were weak in the knees because of hunger. He thought for a while, then went up to the baker's stall and asked for a pound of bread on the condition to repay tomorrow, but the baker refused.

Molla, seeing how even a street vendor would not sell him anything on parole, figured that the merchant would definitely not pay him back the next day. When the vendor looked the other way, Molla secretly filched two flatbreads from the stall and went his way. He reached a roadside source, ate the stolen flatbreads, drank his fill and started thinking.

'O, Almighty!' he said. 'You know well that I am no thief. You know well that I do not have a penny in my pocket and that I am very hungry. You saw that the merchant did not pay me back and that the baker did

not let me have any bread. Now it is up to Your will:
You can forgive me, or You can take my money from
the merchant and give it to the baker.’

Who is the Vendor?

Molla decided to do some business. He borrowed a donkey, some marinade and scales from a marinated vegetables vendor, and set up a stall on the street. The donkey had a bad habit: as soon as Molla arrived at a place full of people, it would start howling so loudly that Molla could not even promote his merchandise. This happened for several days, until one day when the donkey howled again, and Molla angrily pulled its ear and said:

‘You are unbelievably ill-mannered! Would you let me howl once? Tell me which one of us is selling this God-damned marinade after all, you or me?’

Molla's Revenge

One night, a burglar broke into Molla's house and stole

everything that there was. Molla woke up in the morning and saw that the house was all empty, so he vowed to have his revenge.

He waited until evening and when it finally got dark, he grabbed a ladder and left

Molla had a rich merchant as a neighbour. Molla placed the ladder to reach the neighbour's window and got into the room. In order for passers-by not to notice the ladder, he pulled it inside. The owner of the house was woken up by the noise and walked in on Molla standing in the room with a ladder on his shoulder.

'Molla,' he said, 'what are you doing here?'

Molla realised that he had been busted, but decided to play a fool and answered:

'I am selling a ladder.'

The merchant became angry:

'This is not a market, you know.'

'A ladder can be sold anywhere,' said Molla. 'The most important thing is that there is a good buyer.'

Donkey's Head

While walking around the market, Molla approached a jewellery stall. He liked the items that were displayed, so he stopped to examine them.

The jeweller noticed it and felt proud. To poke fun of Molla, he said:

‘What are you glaring at?’

‘On this gold and gemstones,’ replied Molla. ‘I understand that this is a jewellery stall?’

‘No,’ said the jeweller with arrogance, ‘your eyes must see badly. This is not a jewellery stall, but a butcher’s. I am selling ass heads here.’

Molla was not embarrassed:

‘I guess your trade is going well.’

‘How do you know?’ asked the jeweller.

‘For at such a big stall, you are down to only one ass head here,’ replied Molla, pointing at the jeweller’s head.

TOMORROW

Once upon a time, Molla owed money to one merchant. He tried and worked much, but still could not pay off his debt. Each time that the merchant came for the money, Molla would tell him:

‘I do not have your money today, please come tomorrow.’

One time, when the merchant came by, Molla was away.

The merchant found Molla’s son and asked him:

‘Does your father intend to pay me back the money?’
‘Why would he not?’ replied the son. ‘The whole world knows that my father is not the kind of man who goes back on his words. But right now he is not very lucky with money.’

‘I have heard enough of that!’ said the merchant angrily.

‘The question is: when?’

‘Do you see this black rock in our yard?’ asked Molla’s son. ‘When a flower grows on it, you can come for your money.’

The merchant cursed both Molla and his son and left.

Soon Molla was back. His son told him what had happened and added:

‘Now you can be in peace: a flower will never grow on this rock, which means that the merchant will not come back for his money.’

Molla thought for a bit and said:

‘You should not have set such a precise date. What if one day the rock feels like it can grow some flowers, and the merchants will thus come back. Where are we going to get the money? In such cases, it is best to say “Come back tomorrow”, for as long as the world exists, there will always be tomorrow.’

Molla's Logic

Molla bought some peaches at the market and brought them home. Before eating the peaches, he took small scales and began weighing each peach.

‘Why are you weighing a peach before eating it?’ his wife asked.

‘For I weighed them before buying as well,’ replied Molla.

Harmē

Molla visited the town for the first time in his life. While wandering in the streets, he visited the market. There he came across a grocer's shop. Molla did not know what that meant, so he entered and saw a man sitting down with wooden trays of raisins, peaches, almonds, pistachios, and many other delicious things around him. But this man was not having any of this delicious goodness. First Molla thought: "This man must be blind and thus unaware of the things laid before him!" Molla approached the man and saw that the man was watching him. Then, having stood around a bit longer and having thought about it, he decided that the man must have been blind from birth, that is, watching but not seeing. To check if his guess was accurate or not, Molla went up to the shopkeeper and stuck two fingers in front of the man's face. The man shouted:

'What are you doing? You almost poke my eyes out!'

Molla was surprised:

'Are you able to see?'

‘Why would I not be?’ asked the shopkeeper.

‘If you can see, why are you not eating all this?’

‘If I eat it,’ answered the shopkeeper, ‘I shall cause harm
to myself.’

When Molla heard this, he grabbed a handful of raisins
and began stuffing his face.

‘What are you doing?’ shouted the shopkeeper.

‘Why do you care?’ replied Molla. ‘I am causing harm to
myself.’

Camel's skull

One day Molla had no money for food. His wife gave
him a hank of thread, the only thing she had, to sell it in
order to have enough money for a loaf of bread.

Molla took the hank to the market, but despite his ef-
forts, he could not find a buyer. No one wanted to pay
the money enough for a loaf of bread.

Molla became cross:

‘To deal with hucksters, you have got to be a huckster.’

He found a camel's skull, wound the thread all around it

and started making another circle around the market. One of the vendors noticed that Molla was selling a big hank, so he called him up. Even though the vendor offered him a price lower than what a hank of that size would usually cost, Molla did not negotiate further. The vendor became suspicious, and he asked Molla: 'Molla, is there anything else in that hank besides thread?'

'Yes,' replied Molla. 'A camel's skull.'

The vendor decided that Molla was joking, calmed down, paid the money, and Molla left.

The next day, he called Molla up and said to him:

'Molla, you should be ashamed of yourself!'

'First of all, when I was selling that hank, I told you there was a camel's skull inside. If you knew it, why did you buy it? Second of all, you offered such a low price that even if it was a skull inside and not a full live camel, you still did not lose.'

Old Chap Businessman

Once upon a time, Molla was on his way home after a journey far away. The journey was long, and the poor man had become very tired from walking. There were still a few hours of road left until he reached his village, when a mounted man caught up to him. They said hello to each other and started talking, as they advanced together. During the conversation, it became known that the mounted man was a businessman. It had already been a few months that he left his hometown and had been visiting different places where he made trade deals. The man told Molla which town he was from and which neighbourhood he lived in.

They travelled without stopping until they reached a source. The businessman dismounted from his horse and was aided by Molla in taking out his food and water, wrapped in a cloth, from his saddlebag. He sat down by the source and proceeded to eat.

Molla was very hungry. His stomach growled and he drooled at the sight of the food. The happy Molla

thought that his fellow traveller would invite him to join the little feast. "I wish I could have just a little bite that would last me until I reach home."

But this was not how things went.

Not only did the businessman not make a sincere offer to Molla to come and join him, he did not even utter conventional words of politeness.

He put a big piece of meat in his mouth and said while chewing on it:

'I have not eaten anything since this morning and been jolted by my horse so much that I am starving.'

'And I have not eaten anything since last night,' replied Molla, 'and I have been walking all day. This has certainly made me very hungry.'

The businessman ignored these words, sent another big piece of meat into his mouth and asked:

'Where are you heading from?'

"Perhaps I should give this one what for," thought Molla, "and maybe then he will finally feel sorry for me and invite me to help myself to his food."

'We are from the same town,' said Molla.

‘Is that right?’ asked the businessman. ‘Then can you please tell me what is new in town?’

‘Everyone is doing well.’

‘Are there news from our house?’

‘My way home lies through your street. I pass by your house every day. Everyone is doing well.’

The businessman ate to his heart’s content, wrapped everything back into the cloth and began washing his face in the source. He was going to mount his horse and continue the journey. Molla thought to himself: “All right, old chap businessman, you just continue being a businessman and not giving me even a bread crust, but watch me being Molla Nasraddin and getting back at you. Let us see who screws whom.’

‘If I were you,’ said Molla to the businessman, ‘I would go directly to my house from here.’

‘Why?’ asked the businessman.

‘By God, I cannot tell. On the day when I left the town, your cat died.’

‘Why?’

‘It had eaten too much at the funeral.’

‘Whose funeral?’

‘Your wife’s. She had died a week before that.’

‘My wife died?’ the businessman almost lost his mind. ‘What happened to her? How did she die?’

‘She could not get over your son’s death.’

‘Our son’s death?’

‘Yes. During the recent earthquake, your house collapsed and your son died, trapped underneath.’

Upon hearing all this, the businessman mounted his horse like a madman and left his food behind.

Molla quietly unfolded the cloth and, smiling contentedly at his trick, began eating the man’s food with appetite.

What to Pay for?

Once, Molla was shopping for a pair of trousers for fifteen tumans. Before paying, he thought: “I have not worn my old pants out as much, as much jubba.”

‘Brother,’ he said to the shopkeeper, ‘I shall leave these trousers; put them away. I shall exchange them for a

jubba of the same price.'

The shopkeeper handed him a jubba. Molla put it on and wanted to leave without paying.

'Molla,' said the shopkeeper, 'you forgot to pay.'

'To pay for what?' asked Molla. 'I gave you back the trousers.'

'But you did not pay for those trousers,' objected the shopkeeper.

'You are a strange man, sir,' said Molla with surprise, 'why would I pay for those trousers, if I was not taking them with me?'

God Willing

Once upon a time, Molla went to the market for holiday presents. On his way there, he came across an acquaintance who asked him:

'Where are you going, Molla?'

'To the market,' replied Molla.

'Oh? All is well, I hope?'

'I am going to buy presents and some sweets for the

holiday.'

'Say "God willing",' reminded the acquaintance.

'The money is in my pocket and the brain is inside my head. What does God have to do with this?'

At the market, Molla was pick-pocketed. He put his hand in his pocket and felt that there was not a single penny there.

Sad and sore, Molla went back to his village empty-handed.

The same acquaintance saw him and asked:

'Molla, did you buy what you needed?'

'It was God's will that I not buy anything. It was God's will that I be pick-pocketed. When you left your house this morning it should have been God's will that you break your legs. May the cat get your evil tongue, God willing!'

Molla Becomes a Merchant

Molla would buy eggs for 10 dinars each and would sell

them for 9 dinars each. One of his friends asked him: 'Molla, what is this business? You are losing money!' 'It is all right,' replied Molla. 'I am doing this only, for I would like others to be saying: "Molla has become a merchant, too."' "

Shopkeeper's Laugh

Molla owed a shopkeeper some money. And the damned money was by no means easily to find. Molla tried very hard, but did not succeed at repaying the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper would show up at Molla's door every day, had loud arguments with him and humiliated him in front of all the neighbours.

This is when Molla finally decided to fool the shopkeeper. He ploughed up an unsown piece of land in his yard and planted thorns there. In the evening, he saw that the shopkeeper was heading directly to his house, murmuring curses like a witch

Molla sent his wife to open the door and hid under the window. The shopkeeper approached the door, knocked

and, on seeing Molla's wife, shouted:

'Where is Molla?'

'What is your business?' asked the wife. 'He is away.'

'I shall sit down here,' said the shopkeeper, 'and I shall not move until I get my money back.'

'Do not be angry, shopkeeper,' said the wife who had been instructed to say so by Molla. 'There is no point in waiting, my dear. Everything has been settled for us. Molla has found a way to make money. God willing, we shall get rich very soon and repay you.'

'Where will you get the money?' the shopkeeper lived up. 'And where will you give it back to me?'

'Do you see these thorns?' asked Molla's wife. 'It was Molla who has planted them.'

'So what?' asked the shopkeeper, a bit puzzled. 'How is that of my concern?'

'Just listen! It was not randomly that we have planted these thorns. Every morning and evening, a herd of sheep passes by our house. And each time, on their way from here, bits of their fur would get tangled in these thorns and left behind, which we shall then collect. I shall

comb it first, then spin it and finally knit stockings from it. Molla will sell them and thus, we shall repay you. So you need not get angry.'

The shopkeeper could not help but laugh at what he had heard.

On hearing the shopkeeper's laughter, Molla leaned out of the window and said:

'It looks like things are improving for you if you are laughing so hard, you scoundrel, you!'

Debt

Molla knew a shopkeeper. Everything that Molla needed around the house he would buy on credit from him, and then repay him once he earned enough money.

Once he owed the shopkeeper sixteen tumans. Molla worked very hard, but was unable to repay the shopkeeper.

The latter would show up at Molla's door every day to demand the money, and Molla had been sick and tired of him.

Once, when Molla was having a conversation with his friends, the shopkeeper showed up again and used hand gestures to let Molla know that if Molla did not pay him back, the shopkeeper would humiliate him in front of his friends.

Molla kept turning his back to the shopkeeper in order to get him to leave. But the shopkeeper did not seem like he was going to leave any time soon. Finally, Molla was so fed up with him that he told him in front of everyone:

‘What an annoying person you are! I only owe you sixteen tumans. Come on Friday and take ten tumans. Come the Friday after and get another five. That leaves one tuman.’

‘Yes, it does,’ confirmed the shopkeeper.

‘Very well,’ said Molla, ‘then how come you are not ashamed of bothering me every single evening because of one tuman?’

Molla's Turkey

Once upon a time at a market, Molla came across a man selling a parrot, so he asked him:

‘What is this?’

‘It is a parrot.’

‘How much is it?’

‘Fifty tumans,’ replied the vendor.

Molla did not say a word, went back home, got a turkey and took it to the market.

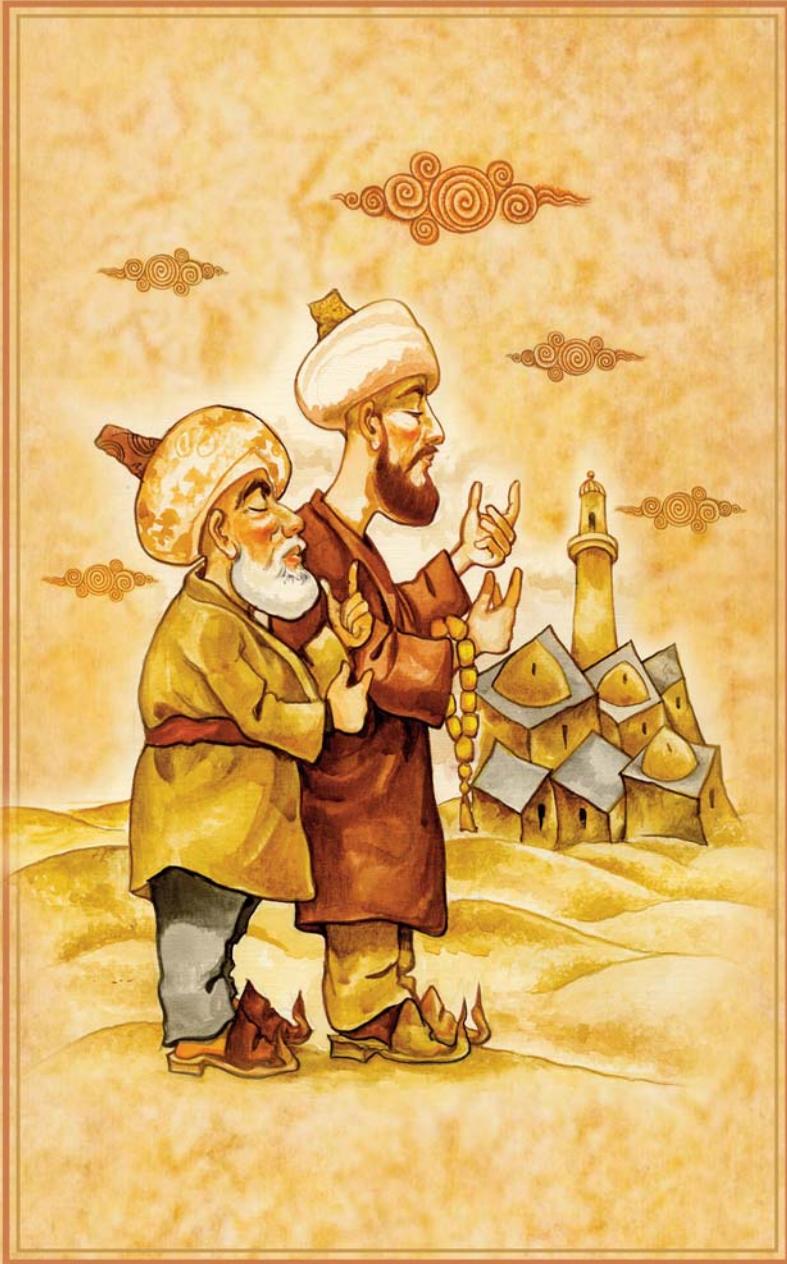
‘Molla,’ he was asked, ‘how much for your turkey?’

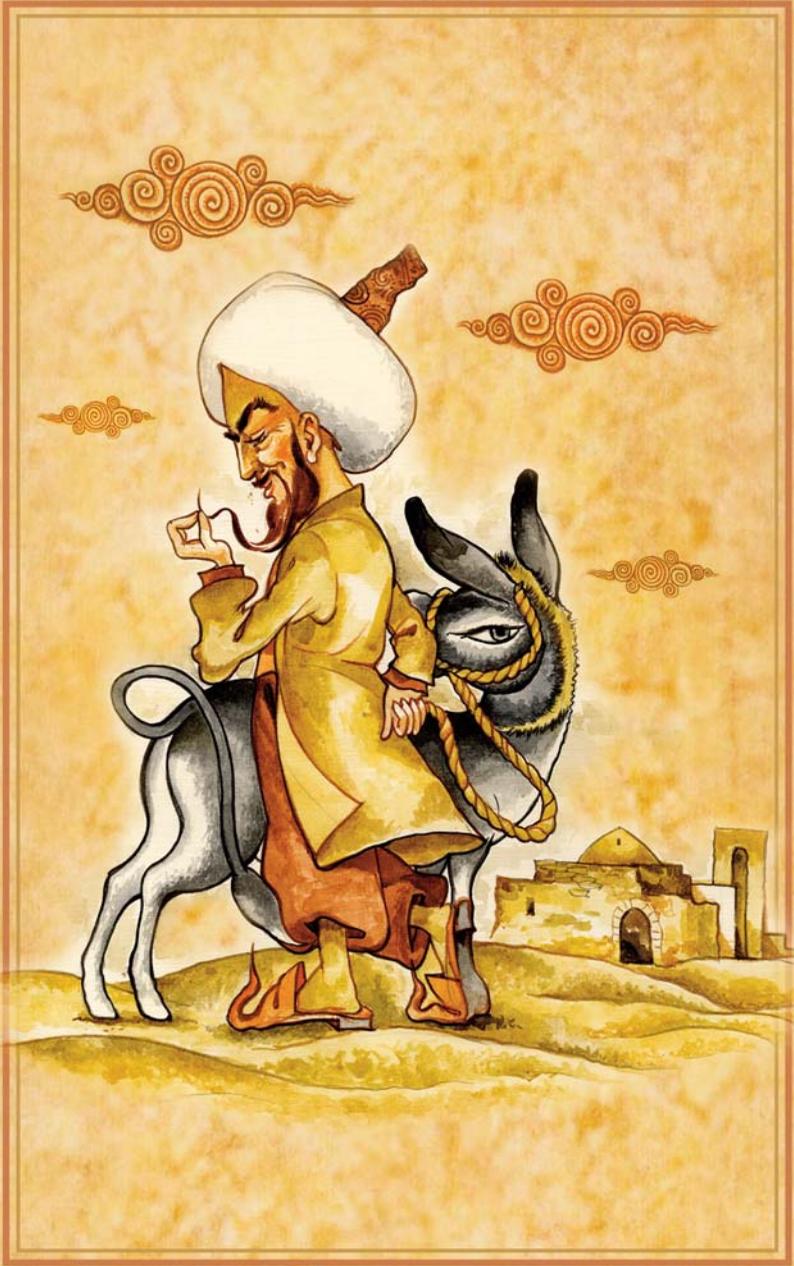
‘Five hundred tumans,’ replied Molla.

‘Why, Molla,’ they tried to persuade him, ‘have you lost your mind? How can a turkey cost five hundred tumans?’

Molla pointed at the parrot-seller:

‘He is selling such a tiny bird for fifty tumans, and you are not saying anything to him. I estimated that the price for a turkey the size of a sheep should be five hundred, and yet you are trying to prove me wrong. Is my turkey not thirty times larger than this parrot?’





‘Yes, but this is a parrot!’

‘So be it. And this is a turkey!’

‘But a parrot can talk like a human!’

Molla realised that he had done something foolish and
said:

‘Well, it can talk and this one can stay silent. We are all
adults and, thank God, we all know that speech is silver,
silence is golden.’

Why would They Sell Something that should be Thrown Away?

Molla bought some plums at the market, brought them
home and shared them with his wife. Suddenly the wife
noticed that Molla, while eating the plums, was swallow-
ing their pits too.

‘Why are you swallowing the pits?’ asked the wife.

‘Why should I not?’ objected Molla. ‘If they are not edi-
ble, why were they selling them? Why would they sell
something that needs to be thrown away?’

Remedy Against Fever

Once upon a time, the wife of a very stingy merchant whom Molla knew very well, ran up to him and said: 'Molla, my husband has been tormented by a fever for three days. He is burning, but not sweating at all. Can you perhaps recommend a remedy?'

'I am very familiar with your husband's personality,' replied Molla. 'Go and take his money and start spending it left and right in front of his eyes. He would sweat right away and the fever will then be gone.'

Molla at the Bathhouse

Once upon a time, Molla went to the bathhouse. He was wearing old clothes, so the bathhouse personnel did not serve him properly. They gave him jauntily a bathing apron. Molla did not utter a word; he bathed and, as he was leaving, paid ten or fifteen times the due price. That was he made the bathhouse owner and his assistants feel awkward.

A few days later, Molla came back to the same bathhouse. As soon as he entered, everyone, from the owner to the junior assistant, jumped up and began to bustle around Molla. Molla was given a silk apron and a silk towel, and in general enjoyed enviable service. Molla bathed and, as he was leaving, he paid less than it was required.

When the bathhouse staff saw that they were not getting what they had expected, they looked at each other in surprise and began cursing Molla. Molla, in turn, said calmly:

‘Why are you being grumpy? The respect should be mutual. Last time I paid you more than required, this time less. There is nothing to worry about here. What I gave in excess last time, you can count for today and what is left to pay today you can cover with what I paid that day.

Piece of Dough

Once Molla went over to the house of a very stingy acquaintance of his. There he was first and foremost served tea to the full. Then the table was laid and a dumpling soup was served. Molla noticed that the plate was full of liquid, with two or three pieces of dough floating in it. Molla could not help but get up and begin undressing.

The host asked:

‘Molla, what are you doing?’

‘See if you have a bathing apron; I would like to borrow one.’

‘Why do you need a bathing apron?’ asked the host.

‘To wear it while swimming in my plate and trying to find a dumpling there.’

Glass of Tea

Once a stingy man came round to Molla’s house. Not only was he stingy, but he was a trickster, too. Molla served him tea in a very large glass. The skinflint saw the

size of the glass and felt like jeering at Molla:

‘Molla,’ he said, ‘can you please get me a rope?’

‘Why do you need a rope?’ asked Molla.

‘I want to tie it around my waist,’ said the guest, ‘in case

I fall in this glass, in order not to perish in it.’

Molla did not speak. Sometime later, Molla happened to go round to this man’s house. The host served Molla tea

in a small glass and said:

‘Molla, to tell you the truth, this is the kind of glass that one is supposed to serve their guest tea in.’

Molla said, not in the least embarrassed.

‘Get me a rope, please.’

‘No, Molla,’ said the host, ‘that will not be necessary.

The glass is not so big for you to drown in.’

‘Oh, no,’ said Molla, ‘I am not afraid to fall and drown. I need the rope to tie it around the glass. I am afraid to swallow it by accident and choke on it, and the rope would help me pull it out.’

Molla is on a Visit

Once upon a time, a rich man invited Molla to his house.

The two had so much fun during the day that when Molla entered the dining room, he felt exhausted and famished, and could barely move.

The cloth was laid and delicious soup was served. Molla noticed stuffed cabbage leaves, pastries and other delicious things waiting by the window.

Wanting to show how well-mannered he was, Molla sat down by the cloth. He hardly dipped his spoon into the soup, when he heard the host shout at the cook: 'May you break your neck! How many times have I told you not to put any garlic in soup? Now take it and go to hell!'

The cook took the soup away. Molla followed him with his eyes regretfully.

'Molla,' said the host, 'can you believe this cook? I feel like he will do something odd today.'

The cook brought fried chickens. Molla saw that the raisins the chickens were stuffed with were so ruddy that

they begged to be eaten.

Before Molla could have any food, the host shouted at the cook again:

‘Did I not tell you not to stuff chickens with raisins?

Take it away and get out of here!’

Molla was sad to see the chickens being taken away, too.

Soon the cook brought in some baklava. Molla drooled over it when the host looked at him askance, pushed the platter toward the cook and said:

‘What are you thinking? Are you feeding us pastries on an empty stomach! Take it away!’

Molla saw that the baklava was also gone, so he got up and attacked the dishes that were waiting by the window.

‘Molla!’ exclaimed the host. ‘Sit down, please; what are you doing?’

‘Keep settling score with your cook,’ replied Molla, ‘I shall try to do without what has already been taken away.’



My Tongue, My Enemy

Once upon a time, Molla was standing by the gates. He saw a horseman passing by and told him just to be polite:

‘Brother, you must be tired; come in and be my guest.’

The horseman dismounted immediately, as if he had been waiting for Molla’s invitation. He entered the yard and asked:

‘Where can I tie my horse?’

‘You can tie it to my overly long tongue,’ replied the abashed Molla.

Һound

Once upon a time, there was a discussion about a good hound. A rich man, whom Molla did not appreciate very much, intervened in the conversation:

‘I like hounds very much,’ said the rich man, ‘but I do not seem to find a pedigree one.’

‘I promise to bring you a well-bred hound tomorrow,’

Molla told him.

The rich man was content.

Early in the morning, Molla found and brought over a big working dog. The servants reported to their master that Molla came with a gun dog. The happy man came into the yard and saw that Molla was standing there with a huge working dog the size of a bull calf.

He carefully examined the dog and told Molla:

‘Why, Molla, this is a working dog. It is no good for hunting.’

‘No,’ replied Molla, ‘this is a very well-bred dog.’

‘That is it well-bred I do not deny,’ objected the rich man. ‘But it is not a hound. A hound is usually lean and graceful, with thin legs and indrawn belly.’

‘You should not be worried. It is still a dog and a big one, too. If it lives with you for a month, it would grow so thin that it would be as good as a hound.’

He is a Real Man

Molla arrived in town. One of the residents approached him and said:

‘Molla, you are a nice person. I am inviting you over for some bread-and-salt and conversation.’

Molla agreed and they went round to the person’s house.

When it was dinner time, only bread and salt were served. Molla was very hungry, so he had to eat what was available. At this time, a beggar knocked on the door and asked for money. The owner of the house leaned out of the window and threatened the beggar:

‘Get out of here this instant, or else I shall come out and break your ribs!’

The beggar did not leave and kept begging. Then Molla leaned out and said:

‘It is best for you to leave, my friend! He is a real name. He does exactly what he promises!’

To Die at Least Once

On one hot summer day, Molla's neighbour invited him to his house.

Cold syrup was served in a big jug.

The owner gave Molla a tea spoon and himself took a ladle and began to draw syrup out of the jug with it.

Molla tried hard, but could not keep up with him.

The host, after each sip, would say:

'Oh, I am about to die from this goodness!'

Finally, Molla threw away his tea spoon and grabbed the host's ladle:

'Neighbour! Let me also die at least once!'

Liar Exposed

Molla had a good sheep. He raised it in order to slaughter it in the autumn and bulk up for the winter with some roast.

His neighbours were very interested in that sheep. They asked Molla many times to slaughter it and let them taste

it, but he was not giving in. Finally, one of the neighbours stole it.

Molla inquired calmly and soon found out who the thief was. He did not say a word and waited until autumn.

The neighbour who had stolen the sheep had a good goat. In the autumn, Molla sneak up by night, stole the goat, slaughtered it, roasted it, and placed the meat inside a jug. The neighbour looked everywhere, but could not find the person who had stolen the goat.

He was incredibly stingy and wherever he went, be it a wedding or a funeral, he would always praise the goat that had disappeared.

‘I used to have a goat, and it was so fabulous; as big as a camel. Its eyes were as dark as a gazelle’s, and antlers like a deer’s, and its skin white and soft as silk.’

Molla was sitting nearby, and he was so tired of this vaunt that he stood up and said:

‘Well, I shall be damned if I do not go and get that goat’s skin. Let everyone see for themselves if it was the size of a camel or the size of a cat, or if it had white fur or completely black.’

Happy Hen

Molla had another very stingy neighbour. Molla noticed that for several days, the neighbour's cook served fried chicken for inner, but the man only ate bread and did not touch the chicken. The cook would take the chicken back in the kitchen.

Molla watched the same story happening every day for two weeks, and he finally said:

‘What a happy hen! Its real life began after its death.’

Molla the Intermediary

Molla's acquaintance had become poor and decided to sell his garden for a low price. There came many potential buyers. A certain rich and stingy merchants found out that the owner of the garden was a close acquaintance of

Molla's. He came up to Molla and said:

‘You must have heard that that man was selling his garden. I am asking you to please go and persuade him to

lower the price and buy that garden for me.'

'The price that he has named is low enough,' said Molla.

'How dare you want to pay even less for that garden?'

'Molla,' objected the merchant, 'he needs money, so he would say this garden for any price. It is none of your business, in any event, just go and talk to him.'

Molla was shocked with the merchant's heartlessness, but did not say anything and promised to take care of the matter.

He went over to the house of the garden's owner. He came back in two hours.

'Well, what do you say, Molla?' asked the merchants.

'Did you manage to get him to lower the price?'

'Yes, he lowered it,' replied Molla. 'I had to apply much effort, but I managed to negotiate a low price.'

'What price have you negotiated?' asked the merchant.

Molla named the price.

The merchant was so happy that he could buy such a cheap house somewhere that he was about to do a dance.

Molla looked at the merchant frowningly and said:

‘But merchant, I also accomplished another task.’

‘What did you do?’

‘Nothing big; in fact, it is related to something else. I negotiated the price that I told you about, but then I found enough money to cover his expenses and gave it to him, so that he would not have to consider selling his garden.’

Love for Money

Molla and one stingy man had an argument. After a long altercation, the stingy man finally told Molla:

‘Whatever you say, but money is one damned thing that everybody likes. Even you like it.’

‘This is true,’ replied Molla, ‘I love money, but my love is not like yours. I love money for having it helps me not to be depended on people like you.’

Molla Tasted the Dinner

A rich man once invited Molla round to show off his

wealth.

The cloth was laid and Molla became dazzled at the sight of the many different dishes that were served. He said to himself: “What an occasion”, and ate his fill.

The host asked with airs:

‘Well, Molla, what did you think of the dinner?’

‘By God,’ replied Molla, ‘it is hard to give an opinion as of now. To have an opinion, I need to come back here a few times for dinner.’

For the Sake of Rice

Once upon a time, one of Molla’s neighbours threw a feast. Molla had not had any rice for a while, so he expected to be invited as well. But no one came to invite him.

Molla waited until the cloth was laid and the dinner served at the neighbour’s house. Afterwards he instructed his wife on what to do to be able to share the neighbour’s rice. She went out on the street and began

screaming for help:

‘Somebody restrain Molla! He wants to kill me!’

Molla with a giant bat in his hand was running after his wife and shouting:

‘Somebody catch her, so I can break her ribs!’

Everyone who was over at the neighbour’s house came out. The women grabbed Molla’s wife and the men held on to Molla, and took them both to the neighbour’s house. Molla was pretending to want to break free and screaming:

‘No, I must break her ribs!’

Finally, they managed to appease him and sit him down. The rice was served. Molla ate his fill, then got up and went into the yard.

‘Tell my wife to come back,’ he said. ‘I forgive her.’

‘No, Molla,’ said the owner of the house, ‘we cannot give you your wife back, or else you will beat her up at home.’

‘Silly you,’ objected Molla, ‘why would I beat my wife? I have not gone mad! Everything we have done today was staged for the sake of having some rice.’

Fourth Word of Wisdom

They say that from his younger years, Molla Nasraddin was one of those people who stood by their word and was never at a loss for words.

Once he had ran out of money and was walking around the market, looking for a job. Suddenly a merchant called him up. He showed Molla a basket full of glass and asked:

‘Can you carry this to my house?’

Molla took the basket and together with the merchant, they set off. As they approached the house, the merchant asked:

‘I can either pay you or tell you three pieces of wisdom. What is your pleasure?’

Nasraddin loved wise words. He was ready to give up anything to be able to learn of them. And at that moment he was also ready to be left without money and food, just to hear some words of wisdom. They approached the merchant’s house, entered the yard and began climbing the forty steps towards the entrance. As

they went up, the merchant said:

‘I am about to start. Listen and remember. First, if anyone tells you that yoghurt is black, do not believe them.’

Nasraddin, carrying a heavy load, gave the merchant a bad look, but did not say anything and kept on going up.

The merchant continued:

‘Second, if anyone tells you that ice can burn, do not believe them.’

Nasraddin figured that the merchant was simply looking for a way to evade paying, but he was still silent. When they reached the final steps, the merchant said the last word of wisdom:

‘If anyone tells you that fire can freeze things, do not believe them.’

‘So you are not going to pay me anything for having brought this basket all the way up?’ asked Nasraddin.

‘That was our agreement,’ said the merchant. Nasraddin, having reached the last step, put the

basket of glass down so roughly that it rolled down the stairs and said:

‘If anyone tells you that the glass in that basket is intact, do not believe them.’

Honey and Heart

Once upon a time, Molla came round to his acquaintance’s house. The acquaintance had nothing to offer as food, so he served butter and honey to Molla.

Molla ate all of the butter, than pulled the honey bowl and began eating it without any bread.

‘Molla, do not eat the honey by itself; it will give you a heartburn.’

‘Only God knows which one of us has a heart that is burning right now,’ replied Molla.

Molla’s Ailment

Once upon a time, Molla fell very ill. He was always dizzy, had trouble seeing and saw so weak that he could

not even move. Somehow he managed to come and see
a doctor and told him:

‘I am not feeling well. Can you please examine me and
find out what my ailment is?’

The doctor examined Molla and said:

‘Molla, you are perfectly healthy. The problem is that
you are hungry. Sit down; we shall have lunch together,
and everyone will be fine.’

Molla sat down, ate and drank his fill and felt
that he had gotten well, indeed. On his way out, he told
the doctor:

‘You are a real doctor. You can figure out what
the illness is, find a remedy and cure your patients. In my
house, everyone has the same ailment. I shall go and
sent them all to come and see you.’

Small Difference

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin’s neighbour told
him:

‘Why are you not asking me what happened?’

‘What happened?’

‘I had taken ten poods of grain from our one-year stock and hid it in the stables, so that my family used less grain and so that I could see what I had hid in spring. Today I went to check on the hidden grain and discovered that mice had eaten it all.’

‘Cheer up,’ said Molla, ‘this has happened to me, too.

There is only one difference.’

‘What is it?’ asked the neighbour.

‘We also have many mice in our house. In winter, I had also taken twenty poods of grain to sell it in spring, but I managed to save it from the mice.’

‘How?’ asked the neighbour.

‘Very simple. Before the mice found out about the grain, I took it to the mill, ground it and all winter we baked bread and ate it.’

Dressed up Men are Just Like Women

Once Molla was asked:

‘Molla, do you know if there are more men or women in
the world?’

‘Women.’

‘How do you know?’

‘For women are already women and men dressing up as
women are also their ilk. This is why there are more
women.’

Greel

Molla had two cousins on his mother’s side. One day,
both of them visited him at home. They had something
to eat and drink and then started a conversation. One of
the cousins said:

‘I just have one wish. If it came true, I would have no
more worries in my life.’

‘What is your wish?’ he was asked.

‘My wish is to have as much money as there are sand grains in the world.’

The other cousin said:

‘And my wish is that all the water in the world turns into ink, so I could dip my quill into it and write out a big number nine, and use the rest of the ink so add zeros to it, and this would be how much money I would like to have.’

Then the two cousins asked Molla:

‘Tell us, brother, what would you like?’

‘I am not as greedy as you two,’ replied Molla. ‘And I am an enemy of greedy people. Now that I know what you both want, I would like for your wishes to come true, but on one condition: that you both die on that day, so I could inherit all that wealth.’

‘Who is the Idiot Who Told You This?’

Once Molla’s neighbour was heading back from his or-

chard. Molla saw that the man's pockets were swollen
and said:

'Good day, neighbour. What are pockets filled with?'

'Molla, if you can guess what is in my pockets, I shall
choose the biggest peach and give it to you.'

'You have peaches in your pockets.'

The neighbour became cross:

'Who is the idiot who told you this?'

'Why do you care what idiots tell me? Let me have my
peach!'

Do not Ask me for any

Once upon a time, a man who was known for never
paying the money he borrowed from people came to see

Molla and said:

'I have a favour to ask you.'

Molla realised immediately that this fellow had come to
ask for money, so he hurried to reply:

'I shall do anything you ask me, but before you do, let
me also ask you for a favour.'

‘What is it?’

‘I beg you not to ask me to lend you money.’

If You Take, You will not Give Back

One of Molla’s relatives who never paid his debts came
to see him and said:

‘My dear, can you lend me fifty tumans for a week? I am
expecting a very promising trade deal from which I shall
make twenty tumans worth of profit, so I shall pay you
back not only the fifty you lend me, but ten more tumans
from the profit, and keep the other ten for myself.’

“If I do not lend him money,” thought Molla, “he will
certainly badmouth me in front of all relatives and will
say that I rid him of a deal opportunity.”

But Molla was afraid lending him money as well, for he
knew he would not be paid back.

Molla handed him ten tumans and said:

‘Here is the profit you expect to make. Consider this as
if you have earned ten tumans and I earned forty.’

A Lie Matches a Lie

On one long winter evenings, Molla and a few other people got together to gossip, and a certain liar began showing off, talking about anything that came to his mind.

Molla Nasraddin was keeping quiet in the corner and listening to him.

The liar went on talking and seeing as to no one stopped him, he completely threw aside all restraint. Finally, he said the following:

‘We used to be very rich. My father had innumerable herds of horses. We built such a huge stable that when a pregnant mare entered it, it would come out with a colt by the time it reached the other end.’

Molla could not endure any more lies, so he exclaimed: ‘He is telling the truth! I have seen that stable, as my father worked for his father as a herdsman. My father had such a long stick that when he stood at the back of the herd, he could reach the horse that was leading it. And if while the herd was pasturing the sky became clouded, he

would chase away the clouds with his stick to prevent rain.'

The liar understood that Molla was pulling his leg and said:

'You know, Molla, there is a limit to lying. Let us suppose that you father indeed had such a long stick; where would he keep it?'

'Why, in your father's stable, of course!' replied Molla.

Compass

Once upon a time Molla was shown a compass and was told:

'Molla, we have found a strange thing whose purpose is unknown to us. We decided to show it to you, since you are a learned man.'

Molla chuckled first, then took the compass, looked at it from all sides and began crying:

'Molla, what happened?' they asked him. 'Why did you chuckle first and then cry?'

'By God, when you showed me that thing and

told me that you did not know what it was, I chuckled. I thought to myself that you must be very ignorant, for you were not able to make sense of such a small thing. Then when I looked at it myself and did not understand what it was, I had nothing else to do but to cry over my own ignorance.'

Molla and a Wiseman

Tamerlane was visited by a wise man from a country faraway. They talked with the help of an interpreter. The foreigner expressed his desire to meet local educated people.

Tamerlane gathered all wise men, but none of them dared to enter into a debate with the foreigner. When Molla saw how timid everyone was, he decided to have a debate with the guest.

The foreigner drew a circle on the ground and looked at Molla. Molla thought for a bit, then divided the circle in half and looked at the foreigner.

The wise man from abroad shook his head in disagreement. Then Molla divided each of the semicircles in half and let the other know that he took three-quarters and left the foreigner one quarter. The foreigner agreed with that.

After this, the wise man extended his hand with finger facing up to Molla and waited for an answer. Molla thought for a bit and offered the foreigner his own hand with fingers facing down. The wise man agreed with this as well.

The third time, he began moving his jaw imitating eating. Molla quickly took an egg out of his pocket and waved his arms like a bird.

The foreigner laughed and kissed Molla's hand.

Molla left.

Through the interpreter, Tamerlane asked the foreigner:

'We did not make sense of your signs.'

'There are different perceptions of the world,' replied the wise man. 'I drew a circle on the ground, letting him know that the world is round and wanting to know his opinion. Good for your wise man: he immediately drew

the equator and then divided the circle into four parts, telling me that water occupies three-quarters of the earth and land one quarter. Then I wanted to know what he thought of vegetation on the earth. Your wise man again gave the right answer. He let me know that the life of all plants depends on the sun and rains. The third time, I wanted to know his opinion of humans and animals. He showed me an egg, which meant that birds have the same roots as humans and animals. When the foreign wise man left, Tamerlane called Molla and asked him what he thought of that wise man. ‘Wise my foot!’ exclaimed Molla. ‘And I thought at first that he was intelligent indeed. He turned out to be a fool and a glutton, too. He initially drew a circle, meaning: “I wish there were a pan of scrambled eggs here!” I divided it in two, implying that he would not get it all, for we were all there too. I saw that my opponent did not agree, so I divided it in four parts. I claimed three-quarters, wanting to say that if he wanted to be greedy, he would only get a quarter. He was afraid to lose all of the scrambled eggs, so with his hand extended fingers up he

asked me what I would do, if there were a pot of cooked rice here. I extended my hand fingers down meaning that if there were a lamb topping, I would have it with pleasure. The third time, the foreigner moved his jaw, letting me know that he had come a long way and was hungry. So I took out an egg from my pocket, which mean that I swore on his life that I only had one egg in my pocket and it was not meant for him, so he would leave me alone.'

Crow

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin brought home a live crow.

'Why do you need this crow?' asked his wife.

'Learned people say,' replied Molla, 'that a crow lives three hundred years. I want to see if that is true or not.'

'I wonder,' said his wife, 'if you really believe you would live to be three hundred to see it die.'

Molla lapsed in thought and then said:

'The learned man who said that, did he not live three

hundred years?’

Molla's Response

Once a certain wise man visited the village and asked to see Molla. The villagers went to look for him and found him in the field where he was mowing grass.

The wise man introduced himself and said: ‘Molla, they say you are a man of great learning. I have come to ask you forty questions.’

Molla realised that if he began answering all these forty questions, he would not have time to mow his grass, which would mean that his donkey would not have anything to eat in the winter. Thus he said:

‘Ask me your questions; let us see what they are.’

The wise man asked all his questions one-by-one. When he finished talking, Molla got up, took his sickle and said:

‘I cannot answer all forty at once.’

Four Rules

Once, as Molla was delivering a sermon, he said:
‘People! Medicine recognises four rules, and he who follows them with precision shall never fall ill. Keep your feet warm, your head cool, pay attention to your food and do not think too much.’

Molla's Doctoring

Once upon a time, one person who considered himself a poet but in reality knew nothing about poetry, met Molla and told him:

‘Molla, I have not been feeling very well in the past few days. I must be ill: my heart feels as heavy as a mountain. Whatever doctor I go to see, none can understand anything. Could you perhaps suggest me a remedy?’

Molla looked him directly in the eyes and said:

‘Have you written any new poetry recently?’

‘Yes, I have,’ replied the poet.

‘Have you not recited it to anyone yet?’

‘You are right, I have not.’

Molla sat down and said:

‘Go ahead; recite it and I shall listen.’

‘I would love to recite it with pleasure, but right now I was hoping you could suggest me a remedy for my heart.’

‘First you recite your poem, then I shall tell you what the remedy is.’

The poet began his recitation. His poem was long and did not make sense.

When he finished reciting, Molla said:

‘Your heart feels heavy because of this poem which you have not recited to anyone. Now that you have gotten it off your chest, you have shared that weight with me. But do not forget: you shall never again write such a long and heavy poem. No heart can endure it.’

Molla and Healer

Once upon a time, Molla and a certain healer happened to be taking the same route. As they were passing by a cemetery, the healer covered his face with his hands. 'I wonder, mister healer,' said Molla, 'why you have covered your face.'

'I pity those who lie here in this graveyard,' replied the healer, 'so I covered my face in order not to see them and not to upset their souls.'

'No, mister healer,' objected Molla, 'that is not true! You must have killed them all with your remedies, and now you are covering your face, for you are ashamed.'

Toothache

They say that Molla used to have frequent toothaches. He would spend weeks with his face wrapped and nagging, but always afraid of having his tooth pulled. One day he tied a big handkerchief around his face, went

out and came across an acquaintance.

‘Why, Molla,’ said the acquaintance, ‘what is the big deal about getting your tooth removed? What are you so afraid of? If that tooth were in my mouth, I would get it pulled.’

‘If it were in your mouth, I would get it pulled, too. The problem is that it is in my mouth, not yours.’

‘Did Your Mother not Have Any Children Elther?’

A woman brought her daughter to Molla’s and said: ‘Dear Molla, they say you are an intelligent man. This is my daughter; she has been married for four years, but cannot have any children. Her husband is thinking to marry another woman. Can you please give her a remedy, or exorcise her, or put a spell on her, or anything it takes for her to get pregnant. If her husband leaves her, she will completely languish.’

When the woman said this, she cried so loudly, that

Molla pitied her. He turned around to the young woman
and said:

‘Tell me, child, did your mother not children either?’

The Governor's Ears

Once Molla heard that the town governor had fallen ill.
Molla picked a few apples and went to pay him a visit.

The governor told him:

‘Molla, my teeth and ears began hurting at the same
time. They are causing me so much pain that I cannot
even describe it. Today I found a good barber and he
pulled my tooth. Now I have no more toothache, but my
damned ears will not leave me be. I wish I could find a
good doctor.’

‘Yes, I wish there were a good man to come and box
your ears, then everyone would be relieved: you and all
people of the town.’

Molla's Advice

Once upon a time, someone came to see Molla:

'Why, Molla, I have a pain in my eye. Perhaps you happen to know a remedy.'

'When I had a pain in my tooth, I went and had it removed. Now you decide what to do.'

Molla's Will

Once upon a time Molla fell very ill and gathered all his relatives to have them hear out his will:

'Dig me a grave with its depth corresponding to a human's height and bury me there head down.'

'Why so?' he was asked.

'I read in books,' replied Molla, 'that on doomsday the world will turn upside down. But I might be too lazy to turn myself around. Therefore I am asking you to bury me in such a way that when the universe turns upside down, I end up on my feet.'

Snow Sandwich

Once upon a time Molla gathered some people and said: 'I had been convinced that when someone invents a new dish, the governor likes it very much and rewards the inventor. I thought for a long time and invented a new dish: snow sandwich. I tried it myself. It was disgusting! I do not recommend it to you either.'

Anti-Louse Drug

On one sultry summer day, Molla's neighbours came to him with a request:

'Why, Molla, we are tormented by lice. They will not let us sleep. What can we do? Do you know any way to get rid of them?'

'There is indeed one very simple and sure way. Keep some salt next to your bed. When the lice show up, catch them one by one and pour salt into their eyes. They will immediately go blind and will not be able to track you.'

Sure Remedy

Once upon a time, Molla ate too much and fell ill. A doctor examined him and said:
‘You have to try to make yourself vomit. That will ease the pressure on your stomach.’

‘But that is the hardest task,’ replied Molla.

The doctor took a small mirror out of his pocket and handed it to Molla:

‘There is nothing hard about it. Have you never looked at yourself in the mirror? Here, take a look once. As soon as you see your own mug, you will want to vomit.’

Power of Mind

Once upon a time, Molla was getting ready to go to bed when he heard a burglar walking on the roof. He immediately began talking to his wife in a loud voice:

‘I was knocking for a long time last night, but you did not hear. In the end, I went up on the roof, prayed out

loud and used a moon ray to end up inside.’
The burglar heard Molla’s voice and kept quiet, while
Molla whispered to his wife:
‘Now let us pretend to be snoring...’

They did so.

When the burglar became convinced that they were
asleep, he got up, prayed out loud, stretched his arms
toward the money and fell into the chimney.

Molla shouted to his wife:

‘Get the light, I caught a burglar!’

The bruised burglar said:

‘There is no need to rush, my friend! Thanks to your
prayer and my brains, I fell so badly that I can never get
up now.’

Words in Return fo Words

Once upon a time, a certain dervish blocked Molla’s way
and began reciting him a qasida . Molla listened to it, and
as soon as the qasida was over, he wanted to continue

his way.

‘Molla,’ said the dervish, ‘give me some money.’

‘Gladly; come and see me tomorrow, and you will get it,’

said Molla.

The next day, the dervish caught Molla at the market:

‘Give me the money.’

‘What money?’ asked Molla.

‘That you promised me yesterday.’

‘I do not remember promising you any money yesterday.’

‘I recited you a qasida and you promised to pay me.’

‘Did you give me anything?’ asked Molla.

‘No, I did not,’ replied the dervish.

‘You only recited me a qasida, did you not?’

‘Yes, I only recited you a qasida.’

‘You gave me words, and I gave you words in return.

What does money have to do with this? Now, if you had given me something, that would have been a different story. Otherwise, you got words in return for words.’

Molla's Poem

One night, Molla woke his wife up and said:

'Woman, get up and get the light; I composed a poem in my dream, and know I want to note it down.'

Molla's wife knew about his talents a little too well, hence she said:

'I pray, stop talking rubbish. Go back to sleep.'

'Woman,' replied Molla, 'I insist that you get up! I have had inspiration, and you are making me angry.'

The wife got up and lit the lamp. Molla put on his glasses, took a pencil and a piece of paper and wrote something down. When he was about to turn off the lights to go back to bed, the wife said:

'Read it; let us see what you have written.'

Molla became filled with enthusiasm and put his glasses back on:

'Here is what I wrote:

A ginger hen's tooth that looked like an axe
Climbed up the mountain of green linen slacks.'

'Now,' said the wife, 'you should add:

May God damn by sending a ghoul
Him who made me marry a fool!

Molla's and his Wife Poem

Molla heard that the ruler generously rewarded poets. He
came home and told his wife:

'Woman, go to bed, but do not turn off the lights.
Tonight I must write a poem to show the ruler tomor-
row.'

'Do not be silly,' replied the wife. 'You would make a
horrible poet. I suggest you go to bed.'

Regardless of how much the wife tried to convince Molla
that his idea was useless, he did not want to listen to
her:

'You do not understand anything. I shall write a poem!'
The wife went to bed. Molla pored over the paper until

dawn, but did not manage to come up with anything. Suddenly he raised his eyes and saw that the first sunrays of the day are illuminating the dome of a nearby bathhouse. This gave him inspiration and he wrote:

Sunrays falling on the dome,
Then lighting up our entire home.

The wife woke up. She saw that Molla was in a good mood, so she asked him:

‘Any luck?’

‘I have written two lines,’ replied Molla.

The wife was interested to hear them:

‘Can you read what you have written?’

Molla read:

Sunrays falling on the dome,
Then lighting up our entire home.

‘Well,’ said the wife, ‘allow me to recite two lines, which you can add to your poem and take it to the ruler.’

‘Go ahead.’

‘Write:

May your father rot in hell,
May he burn there very well.’

Hunting Hares

Once, Molla came back from hunting. He was greeted by the youths of the entire neighbourhood. ‘Uncle Molla,’ they asked him. ‘What did you shoot?’

‘Eight hares,’ replied Molla.

But Molla was holding only one hare in his hand.

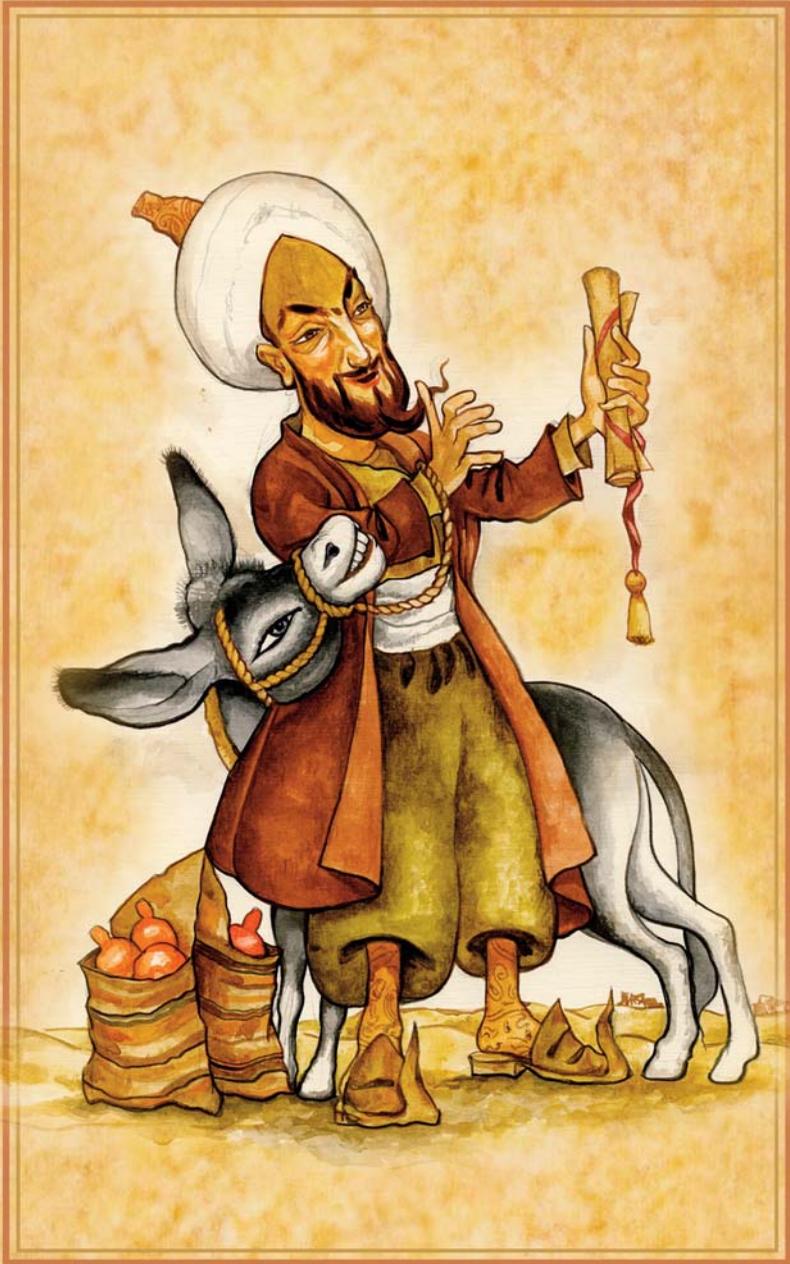
When the youngsters saw that, they asked:

‘Where are the other seven then?’

Molla began counting:

‘I shot at one, but could not slaughter it; I shot at the second one, but I was unlucky and I missed; I shot at the third one, but it probably did not even realise that itself.

That is three.





I shot at the forth one, but it just teased me.
I shot at the fifth one, but it just smirked.
I shot at the sixth one, but it just wiggled its ears.
I shot at the seventh one, but it just turned the other
way.
That is seven plus the one that I am holding, and that
makes eight.

Molla's Poem

Once upon a time, Molla decided to write a poem to
present it to the ruler afterwards.
He told his wife about his plan.
She tried very hard to talk him out of being a poet, but
he kept insisting.
When his wife fell asleep, Molla concerned himself with
the poem until morning, by which time he finally pro-
duced two lines. Upon finishing the poem, he ran to the
palace at dawn.
'Tell the ruler that I have come with a poem!' shouted

Molla.

‘Oh, the ruler has not even woken up yet!’ he was told.

‘Go and wake him up then, and tell him that this is a good poem. If I leave now, you will later blame yourselves, for the ruler will order you skinned!’

The ruler did love poetry. Knowing this and afraid that the ruler could become angry later, the servants woke him up.

The ruler got dressed, sat down on his throne and ordered that Molla be brought in.

‘Let us see what you have written.’

‘Long live the ruler!’ said Molla. ‘I have written the most beautiful poem. I do not believe that all poets of the world could have come up with anything of this sort.’

‘Go ahead and read it,’ repeated the ruler.

‘O, great ruler!’ said Molla. ‘Here is what I have written:

Once I saw an evil snake with its head raised,
I hit it, so it lowered its gaze.

The ruler saw that Molla's poem was as foolish as himself, but, not wanting to hurt Molla's feelings, he said:

'Why, Molla, a poem should have rhythm and meter, whereas in your poem the first line foot-long, whereas the second one is just an inch. Is this how poems should be written?'

Molla read his poem to himself and realised that the second line was indeed too short.

'Long live the sovereign!' exclaimed Molla. 'I am a poet, and in the hands of a poet, a poem is like wax. He can bend it, straighten it, lengthen it, shorten it... But in the end, I did write it! If you please, I can lengthen the second line, so it becomes even longer than the first one!'

'How can you lengthen the second line?' asked the sovereign.

'Easily!' replied Molla. 'Listen to this! Here is who I am going to lengthen it:

Once I saw an evil snake with its head raised,
I hit it, so it lowered its gaze, gaze, gaze, gaze...

O, ruler! Shall I lengthen it even more?’

Constellation of Goat

Once upon a time, someone asked Molla:

‘Molla, what is your zodiac sign?’

‘Goat,’ replied Molla.

‘Why, Molla,’ he was told, ‘there is no such constellation.’

‘When I was a child,’ objected Molla, ‘my father used to tell me that sign was that of Capricorn. Now I have become a grown man and the Capricorn must have also grown to turn into a goat.’

Arrogant Farzali Bey

Once upon a time, an arrogant man named Farzali Bey came to see Molla and said:

‘Molla, I would like to have a personal seal made. Can

you write a little stanza of two lines? Sign them with my name, point at my glory and mention a feature of mine.

This poem will be imprinted on my seal.'

Molla saw that this man had blue eyes and a ginger beard. He thought for a little bit and then wrote:

Blue-eyed, ginger-bearded, will put you in dis-
may,
A brute, a swine, his name Farzali Bey.

Where Else to Go?

Once upon a time, a very self-complacent boaster came round to Molla's.

'They say,' he said, 'that you are a very intelligent and erudite man and that there is no man on earth that you have not fooled. I am not any sillier than others; therefore I came to see which one of us will outdo the other one.'

'First of all,' replied Molla, 'it is a lie that I am the

smartest man on earth. Second of all, since you have come to see me, I would not like to see you off without being of any use to you. Tell me what it is exactly that you want.'

'I want to know,' said the boaster, 'if you can fool me or not.'

'I can take you to a river, and you will come back here without drinking from it.'

'Convince me. Prove it to me.'

'Let us go to the river, as I have told you.'

'All right.'

They came to the river. The boaster folded his hand and drew some water. When he brought it up to his mouth,

Molla said:

'Wait! Now I shall make something, so your mouth will not open and your palm will have a hole in it, making it impossible for you to drink. But we have made a mistake by not having invited a witness. Let us go back to the village and bring one over here.'

The boaster agreed. He let out the water he had drawn earlier, and the two headed back to the village.

The villagers saw that the opponents have come back. Molla sat down with the others and joined their conversation. The boaster was waiting for Molla to get up, so they could go back to river. Molla continued sitting. Finally, the boaster felt he had waited enough and exclaimed:

‘Well, get up, let us go!’

‘Go where?’ asked Molla. ‘I told you I would take you to a river and then bring you back without letting you drink, and as you see, I have kept my promise.’

Molla Talks of Upbringing

Molla knew one person who could not behave well in the presence of others, showed no respect for the elders and insulted people.

Molla wanted to shame him, but no reproach would have any effect.

‘What can I do?’ said the impudent person. ‘That is how the dough I was baked from had been made.’

‘It is not about what the dough was made of,’ noted Molla, ‘but rather how it was kneaded. In your case, it was very badly kneaded.’

Molla Thanks the Doctor

Once upon a time, Molla Nasraddin fell very ill. His wife almost lost all hope that he would ever feel better. She went to see the best doctor in town, who happened to live nearby, and told him:

‘For the love of God, doctor, come and examine my husband who has fallen very ill. We are poor, we are raising many children; have pity on us; see what my husband’s ailment is, and perhaps you can find a remedy that would cure him.’

When the doctor heard the words “We are poor”, he frowned and said:

‘Why are you tormenting the unfortunate man for no reason? Suppose I come and examine him, but how will you buy the medications?’

Molla's wife came back home grieving. Nevertheless, Molla ended up feeling better and getting back on his feet. Once, he came across that same doctor on the street. The doctor told Molla without a hint of embarrassment:

'Molla, you must excuse me. That day I had a very important business to take care of and could not come and see you.'

'Do not mention it, doctor!' exclaimed Molla in response. 'I have been looking for you myself to tell you that I owe you one, for I felt better thanks to you.'

'Why thanks to me?' asked the doctor in surprise. 'I did not cure you.'

'This is exactly why I felt better,' replied Molla. 'Had I been exposed to your dirty breath, God knows what graveyard I would have been buried in by now.'

Thinking of a Key

Once upon a time, when Molla Nasraddin was still a madrasah student, his teacher asked him:

‘Have you done your homework?’

‘Yes, I did,’ replied Molla.

‘Then tell me what a substance is.’

‘Whatever substances there are in the world, all of them are called “substance”.’

The teacher realised that Nasraddin had not done his homework, but he also knew well that even if Nasraddin did not do his homework, it was impossible to prove it to him. Therefore he intentionally asked another question:

‘All right; then tell me what properties these substances have.’

‘All substances in the world have properties of a substance.’

‘And what colour is it?’

‘They are all the same colour.’

‘How so?’

‘Yes, they are all the colour of substance.’

Realising that it is not easy to accuse Nasraddin of ignorance, the teacher said:

‘Very well. What do transparent substances look like?’

‘They are transparent.’

The teacher still wanted to prove that Nasraddin did not know the lesson, so he gave him a hint:

‘This means that when you look through them, you can see the light. Is it not so?’

‘Yes, teacher, that is right,’ replied Nasraddin. ‘You can see the light through them very clearly.’

‘Give me one example of a transparent substance,’ said the teacher.

‘The lug of a key,’ replied Nasraddin.

Indefinite Mood

Once Molla’s teacher asked him:

‘What case in the word “prose” in?’

‘It is in the indefinite mood,’ replied Molla.

The teacher became cross:

‘Why did you not do your readings?’

Nasraddin replied, stuttering:

‘By God, teacher, I know my lesson, but I said that intentionally...’

‘Why intentionally?’ asked the teacher.

‘If I had told you that it was in the past tense, that would not have been all. One word is never enough to describe that damned tense, for there is the imperative, the conditional, the indicative, the passive, the reflexive, the reciprocal, the aorist, the masculine, the feminine, the neuter, the singular, the plural... But in the indefinite mood, there is none of those. This is why I answered thus, so as not to bother you and not to make us lose our precious time.

Molla's Yawning

On one meeting, a certain windbag talked so much that nobody else could speak. He went out of hand so much that people were becoming annoyed. Molla felt sleepy, so he sat aside and began yawning.

Finally, in order to make the chatterbox be quiet, one of

those present said to Molla:

‘Molla, why are you so quiet? You have not opened your mouth all evening.’

Molla replied, yawning:

‘Quite the contrary; tonight my mouth could not have been more open. I have been yawning so much that I am getting cramps in my jaw.’

How to Do Housekeeping

Molla had a lazy donkey and was so sick and tired of it that he decided to get rid of it. He took the donkey to the market and handed it over to a middleman for sale.

The middleman began promoting the donkey:

‘What a donkey! What beauty! Its fur is like velvet, its muzzle like the mood, its gait like that of an ambler, you can mount it have tea on it while riding!’

Molla heard all this praising and thought:

‘All right, if this donkey is so great, why am I selling to others? I shall rather buy it myself.’

He came up to the middleman, paid more than the price Molla himself was charging, and brought the donkey back home.

‘Why have you not sold it?’ asked this wife.

‘Woman,’ replied Molla, ‘this donkey almost slipped away from us. I am so glad I acted right away.’

Molla recounted the story of the donkey purchase to his wife in detail.

Molla’s wife praised him and said:

‘And I fooled the cream seller today.’

‘How?’

‘A cream seller came by. He placed a half-a-pound weight on one pan of the scales and a jug of cream on the other. I took off my gold bracelet and secretly put it on the pan with the weight. The seller did not notice anything and poured more cream than he was supposed to. I paid him for half-a-pound, took the jug and ran home.’

‘And the bracelet?’

‘Well, the seller did not notice it, otherwise he would not have poured me more cream. He put the bracelet to-

gether with the scales in his bag and left.’
‘Good for you, woman! If we continue applying ourselves, you inside the house and me outside, then soon we shall be wealthy.’

Wife Swap

Molla’s wife was an extremely lazy and messy woman, whereas his daughter, on the contrary, was known for her diligence and tidiness. This is why it was her who cooked and made tea.

One day, a matchmaker came to talk to Molla from another village. They talked, and Molla agreed to have his daughter married.

When the daughter was married off, Molla’s worst nightmare began. No one served tea to Molla, no one prepared any food, nor did the laundry.

Molla endured this for a couple of month, until finally telling his wife:

‘Woman, put on your best dress and prepare for the road.’

The woman got dressed and together with Molla, they set off.

Molla brought his wife to his son-in-law's house and said:

'My friend, I cannot live without my daughter. I shall pay you as much extra as you want, but let us swap wives.'

Molla's Dream

Once upon a time, Molla had a dream about women from his neighbourhood who wanted to have him married with a young and beautiful maiden. He woke up in fear, nudged his wife and said:

'Get up, woman!'

'What is it?' asked the wife. 'What happened?'
'The neighbourhood women want to get me married,' said Molla. 'Get up and tell them to leave.'

'Oh, be quiet,' said the wife. 'Let me sleep.'

'Well, I am just letting you know. If they do have me married, do not say later that you had no idea.'

Complimenting Cheese

Once upon a time, Molla asked his wife for some bread.

She brought him a slice and placed it in front of him.

‘Woman,’ said Molla, ‘can you give me some cheese? Cheese is not a bad thing, after all. It is an appetiser, a blood booster and it also improves eyesight.’

‘By God,’ replied the wife, ‘we are out of cheese. Not one bit is left.’

‘Oh, that is good news,’ said Molla. ‘Cheese ruins people’s teeth, causes heartburn and worsens hearing.’

‘What?’ the wife interrupted him. ‘First you say one thing and then you say the opposite. What shall I believe?’

‘If we had cheese, you should believe the former, if we did not, then the latter.’

Heart-to-Heart Talk

Once upon a time, Molla’s wife looked at her husband’s

face for a long time and said:

‘I am surprised at your heart’s performance. It must be very strong.’

‘Why would you say that?’ asked Molla.

‘You are so unbelievably ugly,’ replied the wife, ‘that only a strong heart can endure that.’

‘If so, then your heart should be four times stronger than mine,’ noted Molla.

‘Why?’ asked the wife in surprise.

‘For I do not see my own mug,’ replied Molla, ‘and my heart does not suffer at the sight of my ugliness. As for you, you see me every day, but your heart handles it nevertheless.’

Saving One's Life

One night, Molla heard a noise in the yard. He grabbed his bow and arrow, exited the house and saw a dim shadow in the garden, until a mulberry tree. He thought it was a burglar, so he went down on one knee, aimed

and shot an arrow. But himself, he was so scared that he did not dare look whom he had shot. Instead, he ran back home, pulled a blanket over his head and went back to sleep.

In the morning, Molla went out into the garden. There he saw that he had shot his own aba. Apparently his wife had washed it and hung it out to dry. Molla came closer and saw that the arrow pierced the aba right in the middle. He immediately went down on his knees, raised his arms towards the sky and thanked God.

‘Would you look at him!’ his wife shouted. ‘It was not enough for him to make a hole in his aba, but he is thanking God for it, too!’

‘Woman,’ replied Molla, ‘you should also thank Him. Just think: what would have happened, if I had been wearing that aba? The arrow would have pierced right through me.’

Molla's Soap

Molla and his wife went to the lake to do the laundry and wash the carpets. While busy washing, they did not notice a crow snatch out their soap and fly away.

When Molla's wife suddenly noticed it, she shouted:

'Catch that crow, it has taken our soap!'

'Did you not see how black it was from smudge? If it had not had to wash itself, it would not have touched our soap.'

A Beauty's Proposal

They say, a beautiful woman lived in Molla's neighbourhood. However she was as beautiful as she was foolish.

Once, she passed a message to Molla: "Marry me; you are smart and I am beautiful – just imagine how great our children would turn out!"

Molla sent replied her with the following message: "If the child takes after me intelligence-wise and after you ap-

pearance-wise, that should be fine. But such is my luck that the child may very well take after me appearance-wise and after you intelligence-wise.”

Half the Trouble

They say that Molla was quite unsightly, and this is why he avoided looking in the mirror. Once, when his wife was pregnant, she glared at Molla’s face and said: ‘On one hand, I am happy that we are going to have a child. But on the other hand, woe is me, if the child looks like you.’

Molla looked at his wife and said:

‘If the child looks like me, that is half the trouble, but woe is you, if the child does not look like me.’

Do Your Best

Once Molla bought some meat and brought it home. His

wife asked:

‘What would you like me to make from it?’

‘I do not know; whatever you can make of it.’

The wife tossed the meat from one hand to another and

said:

‘The meat is good; I could use it for everything.’

‘Then cook everything,’ replied Molla.

Warmth from Snow

Molla had only one blanket. At night, he and his wife covered themselves with it, and during the day, when it was cold, Molla would bungle himself into it.

On one cold and cloudy day, Molla’s wife began reproaching him:

‘What kind of man are you?! We do not even have a decent blanket to sleep under. We have nothing to hope for except this worn-out blanket that does not come off your shoulders.’

Molla was trying to persuade his wife:

‘Do not reproach me, woman. Cheer up; there will be time when we shall buy ourselves a new blanket.’

But the woman kept grumbling.

Finally, Molla became angry and said:

‘Just wait; I am about to bring you so much cotton that you can use to make a thousand blankets.’

Having said this, he took a wooden shovel and a sack and went into the yard.

All of a sudden, his wife saw Molla filling the sack with snow and shouted:

‘What are you doing? Why are you collecting snow into the sack?’

‘I am gathering cotton for you,’ replied Molla, ‘so you could make a blanket out of it.’

‘How in the world can I make a blanket from snow that would keep a person warm?’

‘It would,’ replied Molla. ‘If snow did not keep people warm, then our ancestors would not have rested under it so calmly.’

Half Way Through

Molla and his wife went to a village where it would take
four days to go.

As soon as they left the house, he asked his wife:

‘Woman, how long shall we walk?’

The wife realised that Molla was pulling her leg, so she
replied:

‘Not very much; we shall be walking just today and to-
morrow, and then there will only be two days of journey
left.’

‘So this means,’ replied Molla, ‘that we are half way
through the journey and there is very little route left.’

Blue Beads

They say that for a while, Molla had two wives. Both of
them were pugnacious and always argued. One would
say:

‘Molla loves me very much.’

The other one would instantly reply:

‘No, he loves me more.’

In the end, they would go to Molla and ask him:

‘Which one of us do you love more?’

Finally, Molla grew sick of this. He went to the market, bought two blue beads and gave one to each wife, unbeknownst to the other:

‘Do not show it to the other wife. This is a sign of my love for you.’

Afterward whenever the women came to ask him whom he loves me, Molla would say:

‘She who has a blue bead is my bigger love.’

Knowing how to Swim

Once upon a time, an argument sparked between Molla’s two wives. In the end, both went to Molla and asked:

‘Tell us this instant whom do you love more.’

Molla swore to God that he loved both equally, but they would not leave him alone.

Finally, the younger wife said:

‘Do not be fooling me with your sweet talk! Tell me: if both of us fall into a deep lake, and you will be on the shore, which one of us would you jump to save first?’

Molla saw that things were turning against him and, afraid of embarrassing himself, he turned to the older wife and said:

‘Woman, you know how to swim a bit, do you not?’

Liar

They say Molla’s wife was an unsurpassable rascal. Once, she was supposed to go to a village far away, to see her father. As she was getting ready to leave, she told Molla:

‘Look, Molla, I am leaving you all by yourself for a month. In case you feast your eyes on someone else or even think of doing that, be sure that my hair will immediately grow grey, my teeth will fall, my fingers will rot; I shall become crippled, old and decrepit, and a heavy load on you for the rest of my life. And you will be responsible of running the house.’

She came back in a month. Molla quickly removed her headscarf to see that her hair had not gone grey. She asked her questions and found out that her teeth were all intact. He shook her hand and saw that her fingers were all right. He let out a sigh of relief and of having a load off his mind, and even gave his wife a flick on the nose.

‘You, madam, are a big liar.’

‘Why?’ asked the wife.

Molla chuckled and replied:

‘I can see that your hair has not gone grey, nor have your teeth fallen, nor have you fingers rotten.’

The wife became angry; she looked at Molla in indignation and said:

‘Have you been eyeballing other women?’

Molla realised that he had given himself away, so he corrected himself immediately:

‘Oh, no! For if I had looked at one, you would have surely gone through all those misfortunes!’

‘You will be Left

Without a Husband

Once upon a time, Molla bought two ceramic jugs with thin necks at the market. He tied them together through their lugs and set off.

He was about to reach his village when he thought: animals are often scared and run away, but why does that not happen to people?

He thought to himself:

“Let me give myself a scare and see if that works.”

He stamped his feet on the ground, neighed like a horse and began running.

The jugs broke. Molla entered his yard and continued running around. The wife came out to see what the commotion was.

She saw Molla running around and asked:

‘What are you doing? What is happening to you?’

‘Woman!’ shouted Molla. ‘Lock the gate! I am scared and can run away, and you will be left without a husband.’

Unfair Friend

Molla Nasraddin got married. His wife was lame, one-eyed, toothless, bald and hunchbacked.

One of his friends, who knew the woman well, asked him:

‘Molla, why did you marry such an ugly creature?’

‘It is for the best,’ replied Molla. ‘She will not be going out very much and prefer to stay home all the time.’

‘She is also blind.’

‘And that is also good,’ replied Molla. ‘Whatever I do wrong, she will only see half of that.’

‘She has no teeth!’

‘There is not much to eat at home, anyway.’

‘What about her bald patches?’

‘So what? I shall not worry about paying for a pound of henna every week.’

‘But Molla, she is hunchbacked!’

‘That is so unfair of you. So she is not allowed to have one single defect?’

Expensive Cow

One year, Molla's cow was farrow. He had fed it all winter for no reason. Molla took the cow to the market for sale. He walked it around the market for a long time, but he could not sell it.

In the end, upset, he went back home. On his way there, he came across a friend who asked him:

'Molla, where are you taking the cow?'

'I am bringing it back from the market where I could not sell it.'

'Let us go back, and I can sell it for you.'

They went back to the market.

Molla's friend began promoting the cow.

'Just look at this amazing cow! It gives so much milk!

And in just six months, it will give birth to a calf.'

Potential buyers gathered.

The cow was sold for more than Molla had expected.

He remembered how that was done.

After some time, matchmaker ladies came to consider Molla's daughter for marriage. They looked at the girl

and took a liking to her.

As the matchmakers were about to leave, Molla came
and said:

‘My daughter is a good candidate; do not let her slip
away. She is six months pregnant.’

When the matchmakers heard that, they left immediately.

Molla’s wife became furious.

‘Are you out of your mind? When did you tell those
matchmakers? Who is pregnant? What six months?’

‘Do not intervene in men’s affairs, woman. You have no
idea how trade is done. This is the only way you can get
something off your hands. That is how we shook off the
cow.’

‘She as Outdone Me’

Once Molla was told:

‘Molla, run quickly, your wife has died.’

Molla clasped his hands and exclaimed:

‘She has outdone me again!’

‘Outdone you?’ he was asked.

‘She had been ill for a long time,’ replied Molla, ‘and I had had enough of her illness. Finally I decided to go see a mullah, divorce her and thus get rid of her. Now see how sly she was: she knew what I had planned, so she decided to outdo me and died.’

Seeing Double

Molla married a squint-eyed woman. The next morning he bought some cream and brought it home. The woman saw double, so she asked:

‘It was enough to just buy one pack.’

Molla rejoiced and said:

‘What good luck! Now things will improve for sure. I am so glad that my wife sees double.’

Whatever Molla brought back home, his wife would see twice as much of that.

Molla was content.

Once, as they were having lunch, the wife looked at

Molla and covered her face with her hands:
'What is it? Who is this man sitting next to you?'
'Now, woman,' replied Molla, 'that is no good; you can
double anything you want in the house, but not your
husband, or you will ruin everything.'

Expensive Axe

Every day, Molla would buy offal at the market and send
it back home for his wife to cook with.

The wife would invite women from the neighbourhood,
cook the offal, eat it with him, and serve Molla a cheese
sandwich.

This continued for a few days, until Molla said:
'Woman, this unacceptable. I am not saying anything, but
do you not have any conscience? I buy offal every day
and send it to you to cook dinner with. But when I come
home, I only find bread and cheese. What happens to
the offal?'

'By God, Molla, every time I wash it, the cat snatches it

from me and runs away.'

Molla took an axe, put it inside a chest and locked it.

'Why have you done that?' the wife asked.

'What else should I do, woman?' asked Molla. 'If the cat grabs offal that costs one tuman and runs away, imagine what it is going to do with a five-tuman axe.'

Noise on the Staircase

In the morning, Molla left the house to go to the market and ran into a neighbour of his right at the door.

'Why, Molla,' asked the neighbour, 'whatever happened in your house early in the morning? There was quite some commotion, and then a loud tapping noise. What happened?'

Molla replied without raising his head.

'Nothing; we just had a little argument with my wife. She became angry and kicked my jubba, and my jubba rolled down the stairs, making the noise.'

'I do not understand!' exclaimed the neighbour. 'Can a

jubba fall from the stairs, making such a noise?’

‘Why not?’ asked Molla.

‘But of course, this is not possible,’ replied the neighbour. ‘A jubba cannot roll to begin with, not to mention making a noise.’

Molla realised that the neighbour would not leave him alone, so he said in a fit of temper:

‘What is the point of arguing now? I was inside that jubba! Is it clear now?’

Man's Honour

They say that Molla’s wife had a horrible personality. She reportedly saddened him and made his living hard. When she was angry, she would throw at Molla anything she had at hand.

Once, Molla was visited by a guest from another village. The wife grumbled a bit, then went into the kitchen to prepare dinner.

Molla waited for a while, but the wife would not come

out. Finally, he went into the kitchen himself and said:
'Why, woman, our guest is coming from faraway; he is
very hungry, please hurry.'

As soon as Molla uttered this, his wife threw tongs at
him. They hit Molla in the forehead, cut it and covered
his face in blood.

When the guest saw who it had come to, he stood up,
washed Molla's face, dried it with a towel and began
consoling him:

'Cheer up, Molla! It is impossible to change women, no
matter how good or bad they are. You are lucky to have
yours; when my wife becomes angry, she grabs on my
beard and almost shoves it in the oven.'

Molla raised his head and said proudly:

'No, my friend, do not compare us. I am not the kind of
man who lets his wife grab on his beard.'

ساخته زن

Molla's sister-in-law was being married off. Molla's wife

woke him up early in the morning and said:
‘Go to the bathhouse. And from there, come over to my
sister’s.’

Molla started to make excuses:

‘I shall go to the bathhouse tomorrow.’

However, his wife insisted:

‘No, you are going to a wedding, you have to be clean.’
Molla got up and left. When he was already in the yard,
the wife shouted from the house:

‘Do not be late. We shall not be able to take care of
everything without you. Make sure you are already at my
sister’s house when I reach it.’

Molla went to the bathhouse. He took a bath and started
getting dressed quickly, in order not to be late. When he
left the bathhouse, it started to rain. Molla did not know
what to do: if he waited it out, that would mean being
late and told off by his wife. Finally, he undressed com-
pletely, took his clothes in a bundle and went over to his
sister-in-law’s house. All the guests who had gathered
saw Molla walking in totally nude.

‘Why, Molla,’ they asked him, ‘what a state you are in!’

‘When a man heads from the bathhouse to a wedding on his wife’s orders,’ replied Molla, ‘he is to bathe in both hot and cold water.’

Molla the Babysitter

Once upon a time, Molla’s wife gave him their baby and said:

‘Attend to him; I am busy at the moment.’

Molla began nursing the baby. The baby smiled at first, then laughed and suddenly spat Molla in the face. Molla became very angry; he laid the baby face up and spat in its face, too.

The wife came running and shouted:

‘What is wrong with you? Why are you spitting the baby in the face?’

‘Why are you shouting at me? He started it. If you are so courageous, reprimand him as well!’

'Give me my Glasses'

At midnight, Molla quickly woke up his wife:

'Woman! Give me my glasses.'

'Why in the world do you need glasses in this darkness,
while in bed?'

'Hurry up, woman, I am having a beautiful dream, where
unfortunately everything is dark, so I cannot see much.
Get me my glasses so I can see better what is going on.'

'To your Right'

At night, Molla was woken up by his wife:

'Molla, there is a cat in the house; it is going to destroy
all the dishes. There is a candle to your right, let me light
it and chase the cat way.'

Molla became cross:

'Woman, are you stupid? How can I figure out in this
darkness where my right is?'

Cat or Meat

Molla bought ten pounds of meat at the market and sent it to his wife, so she would prepare dinner for them both for two days.

The wife, instead, invited all the neighbourhood ladies; they cooked the meat together and ate it all. In the evening, Molla came home looking forward to a delicious meal.

‘Woman,’ he said, ‘I am hungry, please give me something to eat.’

The wife brought him a piece of bread and a couple of onions.

‘Woman,’ asked Molla, ‘why have you not made anything from the meat I sent you?’

‘Well, blow me down,’ said the wife, ‘I washed the meat, hid it in the niche and went to kindle a fire, when the damned cat came and ate all the meat.’

Molla did not say anything; he got up, grabbed the cat and weighed it. He saw that the cat weighed exactly ten pounds. He turned to his wife and said:

‘Now, tell me honestly: if this is the cat, then where is the meant, and if this is the meat, then where is the cat?’

Fire

Someone once ran up to Molla and said:
‘Run quickly, there is a fire in your house! I kept knocking on your door, but no one answered. I reckon no one is at home.’

Molla did not even move and said calmly:
‘My wife and I have divided our duties: everything having to do with the outside is my responsibility, and everything inside is hers. Now, if it does not bother you, please find her and tell her to put out the fire, for I cannot intervene in her business.’

Secret

On one hot summer night, Molla and his wife were

sleeping on the roof. They had an argument. He said one thing, and she did not agree. Finally, the wife pushed him, and Molla fell from the roof.

At this time, children of their neighbourhood who had gathered outside Molla's house to tell each other tales suddenly saw Molla loudly falling on the ground.

They quickly helped him up, fetched some water, brought him round and asked him:

'Uncle Molla, how did you fall from the roof?'

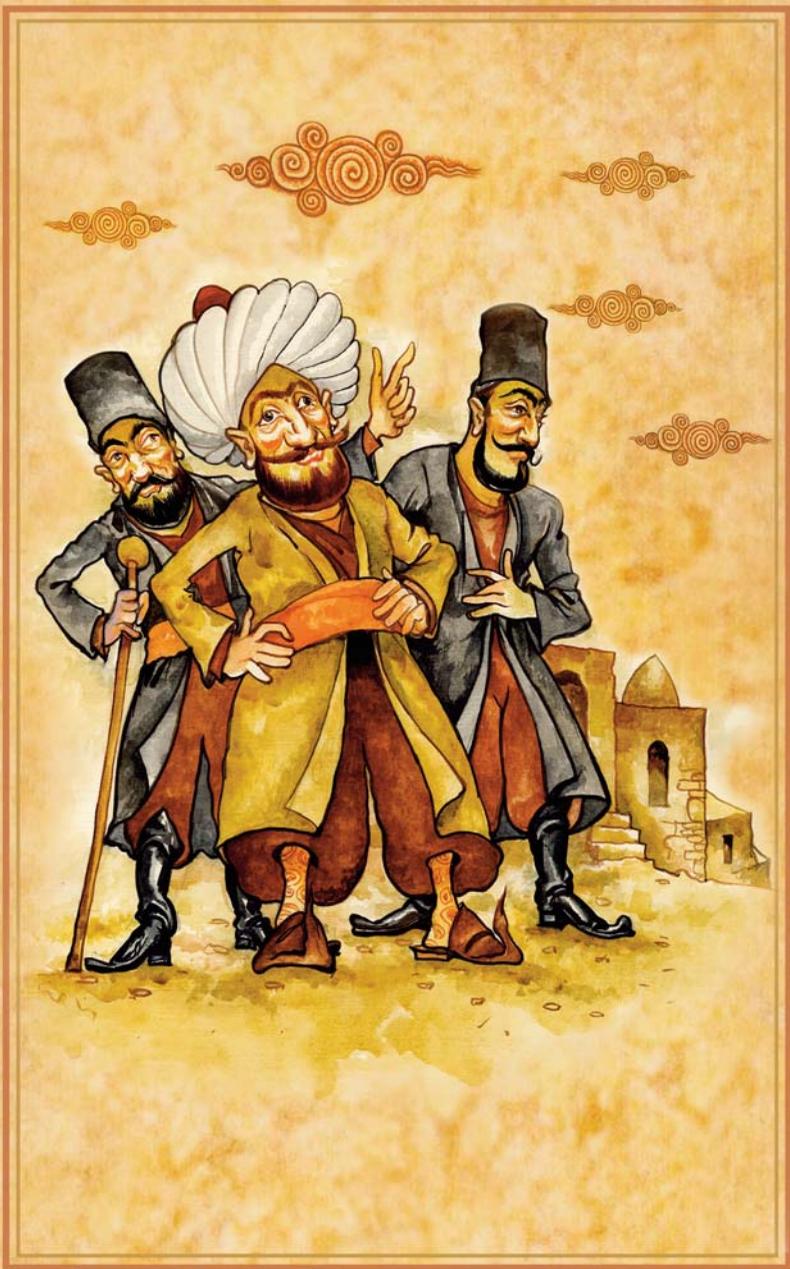
'It is a secret, children.'

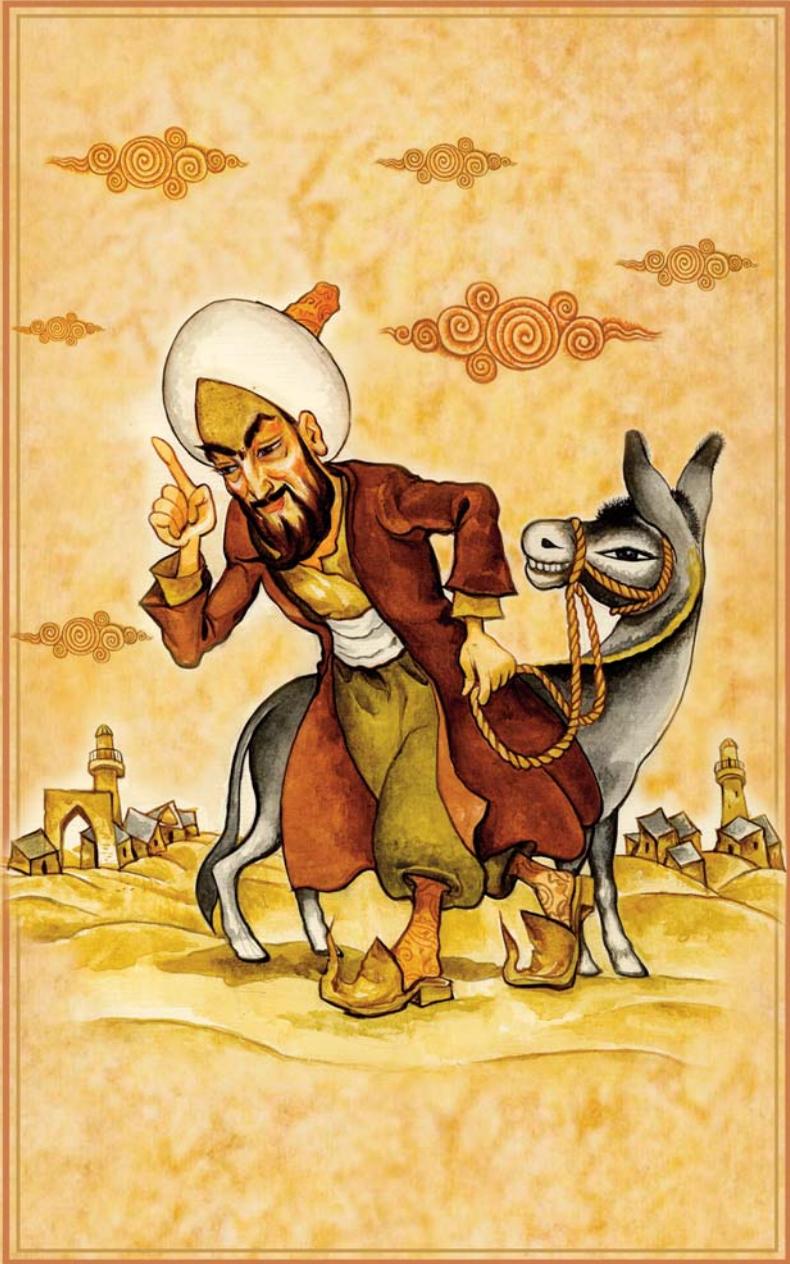
'Let this be a secret, but share it with us, please.'

'I can share it, but you will not understand much.'

'Tell us, we may very well understand.'

'No, you are two young for that and unmarried. First, you must grow up, get married, go to bed with your wife on the roof, have an argument so intense that she would push you down from the roof, and only then you will understand it.'





Cow Gets Molla Home

Molla had a very sensitive personality. He was easily offended and often left the house because of that, and then his wife, son or daughter had to go and beg him to come back home.

One time, he was offended by what his wife had said, so he left the house and lied down in the garden. The wife said to the children:

‘The older he becomes, the worst his personality gets. He has turned into a vexatious child. Do not go looking for him!’

Molla waited and saw that no one came to comfort him. It was getting dark. Molla was hungry, but did not know what to do, as going back home was embarrassing. The sun was down. The herd of cows came back into the village. Molla realised that no one would come looking for him, so he grabbed on his cow’s tail and walked toward the house. The wife winked at the children and asked Molla:

‘So why have you come back! Were you not offended?’

‘I would not have come even if you had died,’ replied Molla. ‘This cow grabbed my hand and brought me here by force. I could not resist it.’

Uncomfortable Heat

On one hot summer night, Molla and his wife were sleeping on the roof. At midnight, his wife told him: ‘Move aside a little bit; it is too hot, I am boiling here.’ Molla did not saying anything and moved himself, and in the morning he disappeared.

The wife waited for days, weeks, months, but Molla was not coming back home. About four months later, a man came from a faraway village and passed on Molla’s message:

‘He said: “Ask my wife if she is still hot, for I can move even farther”.’

Lost Needle

Once upon a time, Molla's wife was sewing something. Molla accidentally pushed her and she dropped the needle.

The wife pushed Molla back and said:

'Move aside; let me see where the needle is.'

Without saying a word, Molla got up, left the house and walked to the outskirts of the town. As he was leaving the town, he met a friend and told him:

'Can you go and ask my wife if she has found the needle, or if she wants me to move even farther.'

Molla's Wife in Mourning

They say Molla's wife always frowned and looked like she carried the burden of sins committed by the whole world.

Once, Molla came back home and saw his wife knitting her eyebrows, as usual.

‘My sullen lady!’ he could not help saying. ‘What happened again that caused you to have the hump? Is there not enough misery in the world for it to tolerate your bad mood as well?’

‘You know well that I have just come back from a funeral. Do you want me to rejoice at that?’

‘The trouble is that you are in the exact same mood when you come back from a wedding, too.’

Family Happiness

Molla’s family chose an unsightly woman for him as his future wife. When Molla saw her for the first time, he began lamenting, but it was too late.

In the morning, as Molla was getting ready to leave, his wife asked him:

‘Which relative and neighbour can show myself to and which not?’

‘My dear wife, you can show yourself to anyone, except me!’

Turning into a Woman

Molla's wife had an extremely lazy cousin. He did not do anything, frittered away his time, walked idly and wherever he was hungry, he would come to Molla's house gluttoned himself with their food.

This continued for a while.

Finally, Molla grew tired and told his wife:

'Woman, you are not teaching your cousin a good lesson. He relies on us and kicks his heels. This is not going to yield any good. I am warning you: I do not want to see him in our house any more.'

Molla's wife told this to her cousin, and the latter made sure to never even approach the house when Molla was in.

The moment Molla left the house, he would reappear, it, drink and sneak away just in time.

Once, Molla unexpectedly came back from the market earlier than usual. The wife's cousin happened to my in the house. The wife did not manage to see him off, so he hid him in the kitchen.

Molla brought back five aubergines and told his wife:
‘These are the first aubergines this season. Make dinner
from them tonight.’

The wife took the aubergines to the kitchen.
“If Molla suddenly enters here,” she thought, “he will find
out.”

She thought for a bit, then took her chador, wrapped
her cousin in it and hid one of the aubergines. Then she
went up to Molla and said:

‘Get up, there is trouble! An aubergine has turned into a
woman.’

‘Do not be going off your head,’ said Molla. ‘How can
an aubergine turn into a human?’

‘If you do not believe me,’ his wife insisted, ‘go and look
for yourself. There are four aubergines and a woman in
the kitchen. She is silent.’

Molla got up and went into the kitchen. He saw that his
wife was right: there was a woman in a chador and four
aubergines.

‘Get up, sister,’ said Molla to the ‘woman’, ‘and follow
me, please.’

The cousin got up and followed Molla in silence. Molla went directly to the grocery shop where he bought the aubergines and told the grocer:

‘Brother, one of the aubergines you sold me has turned into a woman. I am asking you to take her and give me another aubergine, please.’

The grocer realised what the deal was; he gave Molla an aubergine and saved his wife’s cousin from Molla’s rage.

Vicious Circle

Molla’s wife managed to treat her cousin once or twice a month, but Molla tried his best to bar him from entering the house.

The cousin could no longer live off Molla’s family, but he was still too lazy to work. He was often hungry, but instead of blaming himself for that, he would blame Molla and looked for an opportunity to get back at him.

Once he found out that Molla was going to visit a neighbouring village where his daughter then lived with her

husband. Molla wanted to take some money to buy butter and cheese for the winter.

On the day of the visit, the wife's cousin got dressed, covered his face, took a dagger and waited on the road that Molla was supposed to take.

Molla gave the money to his wife, sat her down on the donkey, took some cold weapons and set off with his wife.

The cousin saw that Molla was approaching, but with two daggers, a sabre in one hand and a spear in the other.

The cousin hid by the road, and when Molla approached, he came out, growled and blocked his way.

Molla was taken aback. The cousin took away all his weapons, drew a circle around Molla and said:

'If you dare cross this line, you will regret it sorely.'

Then he jumped up to Molla's wife.

She wanted to hit him, but he secretly let her know who he was.

Molla's wife understood what was happening, so she stood still. The cousin took away all the money that Molla had given her, growled again and ran away. When

the cousin left, the wife approached Molla and began lamenting.

‘What did we do to deserve this misfortune?’

‘Go back on the donkey, woman, let us go. It is all right for a man to get into an adventure.’

‘Very well,’ said the wife, ‘but this robber has taken all our money. What are we going to use to buy cheese and butter?’

Molla thought for a bit and said:

‘If they lend us some money, we shall buy some and then pay them back; if not, then there is no point in buying anything.’

‘But why did you not hit the robber?’ asked the wife. ‘Did you not see that my hands were busy?’ Molla asked angrily.

The wife did not speak. Molla said:

‘Even if this son of a bitch has taken our money, I did manage to get back at him for that.’

‘How so?’ asked the wife.

‘He drew a circle around me telling me not to cross the line,’ replied Molla, ‘but while he was busy robbing you, I crossed it exactly three times.’

