

The spiritual teacher

A wizened sage, from beyond Ashsharq, a far-off Eastern land, had arrived in the village. His philosophical expositions were so abstruse and yet so tantalizing that the usual company in the teahouse soon became convinced that he could perhaps unveil for them the mysteries of life.

Nasrudin listened to him for a while. "You know," he said, "I have had experiences something like yours on your travels. I, too, have been a wandering teacher."

"Tell me something about it, if you must," said the elder, somewhat ruffled at the interruption.

"Oh, yes, I must," said the Mulla. He continued:

"For instance, there was the trip which I took through Kurdistan. I was welcomed everywhere I went. I stayed at one monastery after another, where the dervishes listened eagerly to me. I was given free lodging at caravanserais, free food at teahouses. Everywhere the people were impressed by me"

The ancient monk was becoming impatient at all this personal publicity. "Did nobody ever oppose anything you said, at any time?" he asked querulously.

"Oh, yes," said Nasrudin. "Once I was beaten up and put in the stocks, then driven out of town."

"Why was that?"

"Well, you see, the people there happened to understand Turkish, the language I was doing my teaching in."

"What about the people who had welcomed you?"

"Oh, they were Kurds; they have a language of their own. I was safe so long as I was with *them*."