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BILUHAR AND YUZASIF



**BILUHAR
AND
YUZASIF**

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BISMILLAAHIR RAHMAANIR RAHEEM

PREFACE

Aynul Hayat (foundationhead of life) - a compilation of Allama Majlisi is actually an encyclopaedia that could answer any question that may be posed in respect of the *shi-ah* school of thought.

The subjects dealt with by Allama Majlisi in *Aynul Hayat* are:

Fundamentals of Islam (gnosis of Allah, prophethood, imamat, angels, hell, hereafter);

Quran (merits of recitation, hifz, merits of various surahs);
moral excellence;

moral turpitude;

day of judgement;

death, *alam barzakh*;

miracles;

prayers (ablution, mosque, special prayers);

sins (adultery, sodomy, arrogance, hypocrisy).

It is a book of practical instructions on how to live an Islamic life. A lot of emphasis is placed on good manners which according to reliable traditions will carry more weight in the divine scales on the day of judgement than any other moral quality. A well behaved Muslim is like one who fasts during the day and spends his nights in prayers.

Our intention was to present the complete English

translation of *Aynul Hayat* but because it is eleven hundred pages we thought it practical to break it into several parts. This book *Biluhar and Yuzasif* is one such part from *Aynul Hayat*.

Biluhar and Yuzasif is a true story of a sage, Biluhar, and a prince, Yuzasif, son of an Indian king. Biluhar, having heard about the sound “reasoning” (*aql salim*) of the prince came all the way from Sarandeeep to India to guide the prince towards the path of “truth”. Though the son of an idol worshipper, Yuzasif from the very beginning hated idol worship. However, he remained unaware of the right path until Biluhar’s arrival. Yuzasif was later honoured with prophethood by Allah.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF AKHUND MULLA MUHAMMAD BAQAR MAJLISI

Mulla Muhammad Baqar al Majlisi son of Mulla Muhammad Taqi bin Maqsud Ali al Majlisi is better known as Allama Majlisi among *shi-ah* Muslims.

Allama Majlisi was born in 1037 *hijra*, and died in 1111 *hijra*. He was a *mujtahid* who had attained the highest possible degree of religious knowledge. He lived in Ispahan, Iran, where he used to lead *jumu-ah* and *jamat* prayers. He was well-known for his kindness and was famous as *Shaykh al Islam* in the city.

Allama Majlisi was a prolific writer and devoted his pen to the preaching of religious commandments and knowledge.

Whenever the Allama studied a particular problem he would ask his pupils to collect all the Quranic verses relevant to that problem. The pupils could not write anything of their own accord. Allama would then study the Quranic verses and ponder over the topic until he found the solution.

It should be known that there was no topic wise arranged records of traditions and religious verdicts. During the time of our 10th, 11th, and 12th Imams, the enemies of Islam had manufactured multitudinous traditions. It therefore became necessary for erudites (learned scholars) to search

through thousands of volumes to ascertain original works. After years of labour four hundred of these books were certified to contain reliable traditions. Even in these four hundred volumes there was no topic wise arrangement. This task was accomplished in twenty years by Muhammad bin Yaqub Kulayni also known as *siqatul Islam*. The newly compiled works is known as *Kafi*. These books contain verdicts and traditions about *usul* and *furu al din*.

Then Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa Babawayh Qummi well known as Shaykh Suduq compiled reliable and approved verdicts and traditions and wrote a book which he named *man la yahzuruhul faqih*. Then came Muhammad Hasan Tusi known as *Shaykh al Ta-ifa* who wrote two books - *Tahzib* and *Istibsar*.

Then came the time of followers. First among the followers was Muhammad bin Murtaza Fayz Kashani who wrote *Wafi*. The second was Muhammad bin Hasan Hurr al Aamili who after eighteen years of research wrote *Wasa-il* and the third was Allama Majlisi who has written the sumptuous *Bihar al Anwar* in 25 great volumes. The contents of *Bihar al Anwar* comprise the essence of all the above mentioned books. Allama Majlisi elaborates every topic giving references from the works of *ahli sunnah* and supporting his arguments with Quranic verses. He wrote 58 more books besides *Bihar al Anwar*. We will mention a few such as *Aynul al Hayat*, *Jila al Uyun*, *Haqq al Yaqin*, *Hulyatul Muttaqin*.

BISMILLAAHIR RAHMAANIR RAHEEM

Ibn Babawayh, in his book *Akmal al Din and Tamam al Ni-ama* relates from Muhammad bin Zakariyyah that:

There was in India a king of great magnificence. He ruled over a vast territory and had a large army. He was well aware of the conditions of his subjects and administered the state with due deliberation. His subjects loved him sincerely.

His authority and success intoxicated him with conceit. He became arrogant and began to tyrannise his subjects. With all this he was very fond of merry making. At his court, a person who supplied the means of his pleasures and desires won favours with him. Anyone who advised him to give up the decadent life was regarded as an enemy.

He was blessed with children but all of them were girls, there being no male issue.

Before his reign the people of his land were very virtuous. They feared Almighty Allah and motivated other people to take to the life of righteousness. Satan however, came to gain an upper hand in his rule. The people forgot Allah. Idol worship and sinfulness became the order of the day. The righteous amongst his subjects on seeing the state of affairs left the city for the jungles.

One day the king summoned a godly person, who was also his courtier, for some business. He was informed that the

person had left for the jungle. The king was offended and ordered that the person be brought before him. The person was produced. The king flew in a rage on seeing this person dressed in rags and shouted, “You were a favourite amongst my courtiers. You served me and now you have degraded yourself by adopting a beggarly life.”

The virtuous man replied, “Why is your majesty angry with me. Is it for the sin of having adopted this particular way of life to harm myself? Have I been remiss in any kind of service to your majesty?”

The king said, “It is a serious crime on your part to assume such an appearance and to have done harm to yourself. I do not want any of my subjects to ruin himself in this way. I shall not permit it. I have full authority over my subjects. I shall order that you be punished for your actions.”

The virtuous man made this submission, “I entertain good expectations of your kindness and justice. I hope that I shall not be punished before presenting my case.” The king asked him as to which of the judges decide his case. The pious man requested that the judge be the king’s own understanding provided the king’s ego did not intervene.

The man proceeded, “Your majesty I remember the words of a certain sage I heard when I was young. A man sometimes considers a useless thing as useful and sets aside the really useful thing thinking it as useless. Unless one gives serious thought to the matter, it becomes very difficult

for him to give up the useless thing. The really beneficial and everlasting thing is the hereafter. The useless and fleeting thing is this unclean life of the world. This truth sank deep into my mind. The more I reflected on it the greater I was convinced that this worldly life is, in fact, bracketed with death.

Life is bracketed with death, in that there is fear of departure every moment.

Affluence is worse than destitution, in as much as, the wealthier a man is, the greater his want.

Pleasure here is worse than sorrow. When one achieves his objectives, there are thousands of headaches attached with it.

One does not get so much pleasure by getting sons and possessions as one gets sad for fear of their loss.

The honour of this world does not remain in one state, and as such is worse than disgrace.

The world has no reality behind it. It snatches away by the other hand what it gives by the one hand.

One is made to sleep in soft velvet bed at night time then the same man is thrown over the thorns next morning. It provides a chance of making merry with friends one day to a person, then it ruins him the next day and makes him despised by everyone.

A man is never in peace from the deceptiveness of the world.

Please do not think, your majesty, that I have forsaken my family and friends. It is not so. I have given up other things only for their sake.

Your majesty commands great grandeur in the matter of armies, ministers and courtiers. If you give it a serious thought you will come to know that there is not a single friend of yours among them. All are your envious enemies. You, really stand alone and helpless.

As for me, I have no worries. All are my friends, and all my friends are my brothers. No one intends to do me harm, nor does anyone expect anything of me. There is no hypocrisy or envy amongst us because we have given up the desires of the fleeting benefits Of this worldly life to gather benefits of the hereafter.”

The king remained unmoved by the wisdom of the virtuous man and banished him from his kingdom.

As luck would have it, the following year the king was blessed with a son. There were great celebrations throughout the land. The king being an idol worshipper thought this to be a favour of the idols. He gave vast amount of gold and silver to the temples.

Astrologers were summoned from far off land to foretell the

future of the little prince. They proposed the name Yuzasif for him. They said that the prince would rise to the height of honour never attained by anyone before. One of them however, said that the honour in store for the prince did not relate to this world but to the hereafter. He would be the leader of the pious in the land.

The king was dismayed upon hearing this. He banned entry of all the religious people into his land and banished those who were living there. A royal proclamation was made that any pious worshipper found in the land was to be burnt alive. The idolaters were overjoyed. Extensive search was carried out and whenever a worshipper was found he or she was burnt alive.

The king decided that the young prince was to be raised in isolation, with only those whom, the king approved as his companions. These people were never to talk to the prince on matters of death and the hereafter.

The king had a wise and experienced minister whom he trusted and respected. Other ministers were jealous of him and were always seeking ways of poisoning the king's mind against him.

One day the king went hunting. The trusted minister accompanied him. Somehow they got stranded en route. While trying to find his way the minister saw a wounded person lying under a tree. He approached him and enquired as to who he was. The man replied: "I am a wayfarer. I

have been wounded by a beast. If you take me with you for medical treatment, I shall prove of great advantage to you, on recovery.”

The minister took pity and ordered the man be taken to his house and treated medically. In a few days the man recovered.

As luck would have it the enemies of the minister got an opportunity to poison the king’s mind against this trusted minister. They informed the king that the minister was plotting to kill the king and take over the throne. In order to prove their point, they devised a plan. They advised the king to summon the minister and inform him that he was planning to abdicate and pass the rest of his days in prayers and piety. If the minister welcomed this idea then his intentions would be obvious. These mischief makers were aware that the minister was unhappy with the king’s decadent way of life and was inclined towards piety and worship. He had a soft spot in his heart for pious people. So they were sure that he would wholeheartedly support the king’s intentions.

After a few days the king summoned the minister and said, “O my minister, you know how I love this world. I have accumulated such vast fortunes and have extended my territories with my victories. I, however, now realise that these things are of no benefit to me. When death comes I will leave all these behind except my deeds. I, have therefore decided to abdicate the throne and toil for my hereafter. I

would like to spend the rest of my days in the company of the pious worshippers. What do you think of this idea?”

The minister was very pleased to hear this as he was a God-fearing man. He replied, “I am so happy to hear this your majesty, this world is nothing but a past time, the wealth and advantages of this world have no value, if there is anything to strive for it is the hereafter.”

The king was both saddened and enraged by this response but said nothing. The minister however, sensed from the king’s expressions that he was not too pleased with his reply.

The minister returned home very confused. He was very uneasy and could not eat or sleep. He sat up thinking as to what could he have said or done to upset the king. The old man whom he had given refuge in his house approached him and enquired the reason for this uneasiness. The minister narrated his meeting with the king.

The old man smiled and said, “Have no fear, I have a plan which will foil the plot of these evil courtiers.” The man advised the minister to dress like a hermit and approach the king.

The next morning the minister in a beggarly state appeared before the king. The king enquired, “What is the matter with you, why are you in this state?” The minister replied, “Your majesty, I have served you all my life for material gains of this world, and now that you are renouncing the world and

taking such a virtuous step I would like to have the honour to accompany you and spend the rest of my days with you in worship and seeking the everlasting rewards of the hereafter.” The king was extremely pleased to hear this. He immediately summoned the devious courtiers and punished them severely.

Many years passed and prince Yuzasif was now a young man. He possessed great knowledge and understanding but was unaware of the etiquette of God-worship. In spite of his isolated life his clarity of thoughts and reasoning surprised those around him.

Prince Yuzasif spent a lot of time thinking. He would ask himself questions such as, “Why am I imprisoned in this palace? Why am I prohibited from conversing with the wise people?” Those around him feared the king and could not provide him with the answers to these questions.

The prince had an elderly servant who was very devoted and loyal. This servant had a lot of sympathy for the prince. One day when the servant was in an especially affectionate mood, the prince approached him, “I want to ask you a question. If I find that you are lying I will punish you severely. Tell me why has my father confined me to this palace? Why am I not allowed to meet with the people of my kingdom?”

The old servant hesitated for a moment but then narrated the whole story in detail, the astrologers’ predictions on the prince’s birth and the fears of the king.

Prince Yuzasif listened attentively but said nothing. The next day when his father came to visit, he said, “Your majesty, I seek permission to make a submission to you.” The king allowed him to have his say. Prince Yuzasif proceeded thus, “I was a small child sometime back. I am a youth now. I understand everything. I have gone through so many changes. My present state will not last long. Neither shall you find yourself in your present state. The condition of the world being as it is, why is its fleeting impermanence being hidden from me? I wish to be freed from this imprisonment to interact with people. I want to know what harm to me does your majesty apprehend? I will most obediently follow your majesty’s advice.”

The king had no plausible answer. He thought hard and replied, “O my son, all that I intended was to save you from harm. You are now free to live wherever you like if you are not happy with your present state.”

The king ordered that the prince be taken around the city in all pomp and splendour. However, no beggar or virtuous worshipper was to come his way.

All kinds of luxuries were provided and the prince toured the city in a stately procession. The prince was overjoyed by his new found freedom and thoroughly enjoyed moving around. He would set off every morning to explore different parts of the city.

One morning on his trip he encountered a man who was in

a very miserable state, his complexion was sallow, his feet were swollen and he was blind. The prince was dismayed at this sight and asked who the man was. His companions replied that he was a poor beggar. Having never seen a beggar in his life the prince wanted to know if there were others like him in the city.

His companions told him that there were thousands of such poor suffering people in this world. The prince was saddened to hear this and his own wealth and luxurious life began to perturb him.

While on another excursion he saw an old man whose back was bent with age. His hair was grey and his body furrowed with wrinkles. He was moving with the support of a crutch. This was also a new experience for the prince. He enquired whether there were other men who had such a form. The accompanying minister told him that it was the natural culmination of years with death as the final end.

The prince remarked, “Woe is this life, thirty days go to make a month. Twelve months make a year and these years pass away so quickly.”

The concept of death bothered prince Yuzasif and he kept on pondering over it. He concluded, at last, that the world is meaningless and that it should be renounced. He did not disclose his intentions to the king and began to search for a person with whom he could share his ideas.

The prince summoned the same elderly servant who had helped him gain his freedom and asked whether all the people of the world professed the king's religion of idol worship. He was told that there were people who believed in Almighty Allah and in the hereafter. The king had banished these people from the kingdom and if any remained they were burnt to death.

Prince Yuzasif was saddened to learn this.

The fame of prince Yuzasif's deep thought and intelligence spread far and wide.

In the land of Sarandeeep there lived a virtuous sage named Biluhar. He heard about prince Yuzasif and thought of approaching him to guide him towards the right religion.

In order to achieve this purpose Biluhar travelled from Sarandeeep disguised as a merchant and came to the king's court. Being a wise man he soon made acquaintance with the king's courtiers and befriended the prince's closest friend.

Said Biluhar to his friend, "I have brought from Sarandeeep a very special item. It is superior to elixir (a preparation supposedly able to change metals into gold), it restores vision to the eyes of a blind man. It removes the deafness of the deaf. It relieves every kind of pain. It grants energy to an extent that one can overpower his enemies with it. I cannot find a buyer who is worthy of this. Could you please lead me to prince Yuzasif?"

The friend was intrigued and thought this to be an excellent opportunity to win more favours from the prince. He rushed to the prince and narrated the story of the extraordinary item from Sarandeeep. The prince ordered the merchant be brought to him secretly.

Soon as night fell, Biluhar was brought before prince Yuzasif. The prince greeted him with great respect and asked his friend to leave them for private discussions. Soon as the friend left Biluhar asked, “O lucky prince I wish to know the reason for showing me such respect and kindness.” Prince Yuzasif replied, “I have a problem which I feel may get resolved by you.” On hearing this Biluhar said, “If that is the reason for showing me such courtesy then listen carefully to this story.”

Thus proceeded Biluhar: “In a certain land lived a king who was well known for his justice and goodness. One day as he was leading his army somewhere he saw two beggars on the way. They were in a wretched, state and seemed awfully distressed. Being a kind person he dismounted from his horse, approached them and shook hands with them. He enquired about their condition and ordered alms be given to them.

The ministers accompanying the king did not approve of this gesture and felt that the king had degraded himself. They complained to the king’s brother. This brother was very close to the king. He approached the king and told him that the behaviour such as that with the beggars did not befit a king. The king’s reply offended the brother who left him.

Few days later a royal proclamation was made for the execution of this brother. The law of the time required that a death announcement be made a week prior to the execution. On this announcement a hue and cry arose in the brother's household.

The next day the brother attired in funeral shroud came before the king. He was weeping bitterly because of the fear of death and begging that his life be spared.

The king said to him, "O fool, you weep before me because of the fear of the death sentence, although I have not created you, nor have you sinned against me. Look at your beggarly state. You chided me the other day for showing sympathy to the poor beggars and for having spoken to them kindly. I am aware that the angel of death is making an announcement of death every moment of my life. I know that I have sinned for which I have to stand in reckoning before the Almighty Allah. How can I then walk about arrogantly thinking of myself as superior to Allah's other creations? I know that my ministers have beguiled you. They too shall become aware of their folly soon. I had given this order to make you aware of your ignorance. I did not intend to put you to death. Go home and rest in peace."

The next day the king ordered that four boxes be made. Two of these were to be painted black and two gold. The golden ones were to be filled with dirt and the black with jewels.

The king summoned the ministers who had objected to his

behaviour with the beggars. The four boxes were placed before them and he asked them to appraise the value of each. The ministers placed a higher value on the golden boxes.

The king said to them, “You are so ignorant. What do you know about the contents of these boxes?” He ordered the black boxes be opened and remarked, “This is an illustration of the beggars whom you held with contempt because of their appearance. Their minds are filled with gems more precious than these.” The ministers were remorseful and admitted their error.”

Biluhar said that might be the reason for the respect shown to the stranger by the prince.

Prince Yuzasif listened attentively while Biluhar continued, “Words of wisdom are like the seeds scattered by a farmer on the field. Some seeds fall on a path, some are picked by the birds, some fall on the piece of land underneath which there may be a rock. The seeds germinate. Their roots go deep but when they reach the rock, they fade and dry up. Some seeds fall on a thorny bush, they germinate and bring forth fruits which get destroyed by the thorns of the bush. However, the seeds that fall on good earth bring forth good fruit.

Similarly, the words of wisdom can be told to those whose hearts appear soft and gentle but in reality are harder than stone. They hear, they understand, but remain unaffected. Whilst others listen attentively, remember and put it into practice.”

Yuzasif said, “O sage, sow the seed of advice in my mind in such a way that I may never forget it. Give me an illustration of the world and its people in a Way which will help me understand its shortcomings.”

Biluhar replied, “the condition of the man of this world is analogised by the following story, listen carefully and remember it.

A wayfarer was going through the jungle. He saw a wild elephant rushing towards him grunting fiercely. The wayfarer ran for his life with the elephant in pursuit. On his way he saw a branch of a tree hanging into a well. He grabbed the branch and hung himself down. The elephant remained in ambush for him. The man looked down and saw that the well was dry, but there were four pythons glaring up at him with their mouths wide open. As he looked up he saw that the branch he was holding on to was being nibbled by two rats - one black and the other white. In front of him he found another branch with honey on it. He rejoiced, forgot about all the dangers around him and protruded his tongue to lick the honey. At every lick thousand of bees swarmed him. He, however, paid no heed to them.

The well symbolises the world, which is infested with afflictions all around. The branches symbolise the days of man’s life. The black and white rats nibbling the branches are the days and nights of one’s life. The pythons, with their mouths wide open, ready to devour him are the afflictions

and diseases of death. The honey which makes him oblivious of all the afflictions, are the pleasures of the world. The bees are the men of the world. They envy even petty gains.”

Prince Yuzasif exclaimed, “What a fine analogy, O sage please give me another illustration.”

Biluhar proceeded thus: “A man had three friends. He cherished one of them to such an extent, that he even forsake his own welfare when it came to that of this friend. He also loved the second one, but did not have much affection for the third as he was a poor man.

As luck would have it for some reason the reigning king got offended by this man and ordered his immediate arrest. The man was at his house with his three friends when the officials came to arrest him. As he was being led away he called out to his influential friend to intercede but the friend pretended not to recognise him. He then called out to the second, the second replied that all he could do was walk with him till the city limit. He then looked towards the friend whom he had not treated very well. Before he could say a word, the friend came forward placed a reassuring hand over his shoulder and said, “Do not worry, I shall try my best to make approaches for arranging remission of your punishment. I shall help you to the best of my ability.”

The man experienced the quality of all three men. He was

ashamed of befriending the two who turned away in his hour of need, he was equally ashamed of his own behaviour towards the poor friend.”

Biluhar went on to explain: “the first friend symbolises worldly possessions. The second friend symbolises one’s own friends and relations, whilst the third is one’s righteous deeds.”

Biluhar continued: “In a city there was a strange custom. The people would get hold of a stranger and appoint him as their king. They provided him with all the luxuries and comforts for a year. At the end of the year, they banished him with disgrace - stripping him off his clothes and beating him. In this way, a poor man was caught by them and made the king. However, he wondered why they would appoint a stranger and not one of their own to rule them. So, he began to search for someone who might be able to explain this strange custom.

He found a virtuous man and enquired about the custom prevailing in the city. The old virtuous man said to him, “O ignorant one, all the luxuries and comforts shall last one year. At the end of this year these very people shall disgrace you. If you are sensible enough, you should get whatever you can and send it in advance to your home or the place where you will go when they drive you but. You can then lead the rest of your life in comfort.” The man acted upon this advice and spent the rest of his life in ease and luxury.

Similarly, if we develop God consciousness and act righteously in this world, our prayers and good deeds are being sent in advance to await us when we reach our ultimate destination - life hereafter. It is what we accumulate now, while we are alive, that will determine our hereafter.”

Prince Yuzasif was highly impressed by the wisdom of Biluhar and asked, “Are your views the result of human understanding or are they the revelation from Almighty Allah?”

Biluhar replied, “Man cannot rise to these heights of thought without guidance from Almighty Allah. Man’s reasoning power is limited to worldly matters, These are divine commandments, which are in the scripture. They contravene the desires of the people of the world. They expose the good and evil in the conduct of man. They prevent him from doing evil and guide man to the right path. Those who turn to them are shown the light of guidance by Almighty Allah, who loathes ignorant rebels. They are kept deprived of the blessings of righteousness. There are, of course, some who are innately right minded. They turn to the right religion and the rites of divine worship, even before they are revealed to the prophets. There are others who acquire faith on receiving it from the prophets. O prince, you have adopted the right path, by the power of your own reasoning and intelligence.”

Yuzasif asked, “O sage, are there other men like yourself who approve of the renunciation of the world?”

Biluhar replied, “There is none in this land. There are, however, people in other lands who teach the right religion. But their deeds are not in agreement with those of the people of the truth. As such they are different from ourselves.”

Yuzasif seemed perplexed and asked, “What is the reason, that you are all getting guidance from the same divine scripture but you are on the right path whereas they are in error?”

Replied Biluhar, “Undoubtedly, the right path is only one. The divine commandments are equally meant for all. Those who accept those commandments with all the related conditions are in the right. But others who accept them in principle, but do not care for the related conditions are led into error. They cannot guide anyone. Their tongues do not express the word of the truth. The difference between us and these people is that they introduce neologies in the religion for petty worldly gains. They prefer the world to the hereafter.

Almighty Allah sent a prophet for every age for the guidance of His creatures. The religion was finally perfected by the last prophet, Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad left this world after completing his mission. The people followed this path for sometime.

With the passage of time, egoistic urges overpowered them. Neologies were introduced in the religion.

Misguidance increased. People began to interpret the divine commandments to suit their own aims. They forsook the reality.”

Yuzasif asked, “Is the word of Almighty Allah same as the word of man?”

Biluhar replied: “How could man understand it, if it were not? A man when he calls or scares an animal, uses words peculiar to that animal. The Almighty Allah revealed His message in the language of the people being addressed. He drives home the message of the mysteries through explanatory illustrations. Many people fail to recognise their niceties. That leads to difference of interpretation amongst the scholars. They speak of their meaning, according to the level of their power of reasoning. An example of this is the sunlight. The person with a stronger vision shall avail the light to a greater extent than the one whose vision is relatively weaker.

The high position of the divine commandments is too exalted for anyone’s intelligence to cognise the mysteries thereof. The divine word is full of all kinds of merits. It is the elixir of life. One who avails of it, becomes immortal. It points to the right path of guidance. One is never misled if he follows the right path.”

On hearing the above Yuzasif asked, “When the divine word has such merits why is it that all the people do not avail of it?”

To this Biluhar replied, “The light of the sun is the same for everyone. It does not deprive anything from its benefit. Supposing someone chooses to remain in darkness, it would be due to one’s ignorance or defective vision. It does not cast a slur on the beneficence of the sun.

There are, however, people who would not be able to see anything even if there were ten suns radiating light. There are some who are weak sighted and can only see things which are big in size. There are others possessing normal sight who can see everything clearly. In the same way, persons differ according to their mental vision in deriving benefit from the divine word. Those whose minds are blinded because of their denial of the truth, fail to see the right path altogether. There are others who derive very little benefit because their minds are weakened by self indulgence. Those with strong mental vision get the full benefit of the divine truth, by their senses in rational disciplines.”

Yuzasif asked, “Is there anyone who listens to the voice of the truth, but does not follow it, but after some time comes to accept it and then follows it?”

Biluhar replied that there were many people in that category. Prince Yuzasif was concerned whether the truth had reached his father. Biluhar told him that he thought that the matter had not been brought to his notice.

The prince asked as to why the wise scholars were remiss

in this respect, for such a long time. Biluhar replied, “the God-fearing wise people tender their advice when they get an opportunity for doing so. They have no concern with the persons whom they know to be averse to such advice. It often happens that they remain in his company, for their entire lifetime. They talk of personal esteem, yet they do not reveal to him the word of truth, knowing that it would be in vain. Positively harmful. It is for this reason that they are often in a dejected mood.”

Biluhar proceeded to narrate to prince Yuzasif the story of an idol worshipping king who embraced the right religion.

“There was once a king who was well known for his intelligence, justice and kindness. He had a loyal and sincere minister, who was very religious and God-fearing. The minister was wise and intelligent and the king consulted him on most matters. Many a times the minister thought of renouncing the world and joining the poor and virtuous but his responsibilities and loyalty to the king prevented him from doing so.

The minister never revealed the true faith to the king, and the king continued to follow the religion of his ancestors i.e. idol worship. The minister was very sad about this but did not know what to do.

One day when he was in the company of his pious companions he discussed ways of inviting the king to the right path. His companions warned him, because religion

being a sensitive matter the king could take offence and cause serious harm to the minister and his family. However, they suggested to the minister to first appraise whether the king was fit for guidance, if so, then he be approached at the right moment.

From that moment the minister was constantly on the look out for an opportunity to approach the king on this subject.

Late one night the king suggested to the minister that they tour the city, he wanted to get a bird's eye-view of the condition of his subjects. The minister welcomed the idea. They both mounted their horses and rode around the city.

At a certain spot, they saw a rubbish dump. An earthen lamp was burning and as they looked closely they saw a drunkard reclining against the rubbish heap with a bottle of wine in his hand. A woman also drunk and of a forbidding form danced and sang to him. Unaware of the rubbish and the stench around them, they both seemed in a state of ecstatic enjoyment.

The king and the minister watched them for a long time. On their return the king said to the minister, "With all the luxuries available to us, we have never rejoiced and been as happy as those two people were."

The minister grasped this opportunity and said, "Your majesty, just as we look upon this couple, we are looked upon in the same light by the people who enjoy

perpetual kingship of the hereafter. They must rate our transitory palaces as piles of rubbish and filth compared to the permanent abodes in the hereafter.

Those who are engaged in the enjoyment of the eternal beauty and love of the Almighty Allah regard our apparent forms as ugly as that of the couple we have seen. They shall be wondering at our rejoicings and luxuries just as we wonder at the rejoicings of that pair.”

Taken aback the king asked the minister, “Do you know such people?”

The minister replied, “Yes, your majesty, I know them well. The people of this category subscribe to the religion revealed by the Almighty Allah. They worship Him. They seek the everlasting enjoyment of the hereafter.”

The king asked as to what was meant by the hereafter.

The minister replied, “It is the life in the wake of the present existence, the enjoyment of the hereafter never fades. For those who have done good in this life there is complete joy and peace, there is no hunger, thirst, senility or any form of affliction in the hereafter.”

The king’s curiosity was well aroused and he wanted to know the means of achieving this eternal bliss. The minister replied that it could be achieved by following the religion of the Almighty Allah and His divine guidance.

The Minister explained the divine guidance to the king and finally the king accepted the right religion.”

Yuzasif said, “O sage, I want your company for ever, so as to listen to such matters.”

Biluhar replied, “How can you bear to keep my company? I have no place to live nor have I any kind of wealth. I have no clothes except these which I am wearing. I have no fixed abode.”

“I hope I can develop the patience and contentment which you enjoy.” said Yuzasif.

Biluhar continued, “Do you really want to keep me company? You shall then be like the rich young man who took a beggar for his father-in-law. Let me tell you this interesting story.

A wealthy merchant had a son who was not only handsome and intelligent but was also very kind and pious. His father wanted him to marry his rich uncle’s daughter. The young man was not interested in marrying her. The father was very insistent so the son slipped away one night. He reached another city. There he stayed with a very poor pious man who had a young daughter. The daughter was very kind, gentle and, God-fearing. The young man liked her and thought of marrying her.

He disclosed his intentions to her father who tried to

dissuade him, but the young man was adamant. Finally, the father agreed, on the condition that his daughter would not be separated from him, so the young man would have to adopt the beggarly way of life and live with them. The young man did all that was required.

Many years passed. When the father was convinced of his son-in-law's intentions and piety he called him one day and led him to an underground cell. The cell was full of chests which contained treasures the like of which the young man had never seen. The father-in-law handed him the keys to the chests and said this is yours. I give you all this wealth because of your renunciation of the world."

Yuzasif said, "I too want to be like that young man. You too have tested my intellectual capacity. Am I fit for it?"

Biluhar replied, "I came to know of it at first sight. But I am restrained by the tenets of religion. A person has to be absolutely sure before accepting this way of life. You should ponder over my points well. It is not proper to accept anything without due consideration. I shall return tomorrow and we will discuss this matter then."

With this the sage took leave of Yuzasif.

True to his word he came the next day. Prince Yuzasif received him with great reverence. Biluhar prayed, "I pray to the Almighty Allah who is ever-living. Nothing preceded him, nor shall anything last with him. He is

eternal. He never dies. His majesty is magnificent. There is no limit to His grandeur. He is one. There is none to associate with Him. He is all-powerful without a peer. He is the creator of all things without needing the co-operation of anyone. He is omnipotent without anyone to deny His authority. He stands self-sufficient. Everything else is in need of Him. He is the ruler who needs no assistant. May he grant you the favour to become the embodiment of justice and the leader of the people of faith. May He raise your status of a king to lead the people to righteousness. May He raise you and me to exalted positions in paradise, as He has promised to His prophets. May our hearts be filled with the hopes of His grace, as well as, the fear of His torment. Our eyes are turned to His mercy. Our heads bow down in obedience to Him. All our affairs depend upon His grace.

Yuzasif was greatly moved by this prayer. He wondered at the perfect wisdom of Biluhar. The following dialogue ensued between them.

Yuzasif: What is your age, O sage?

Biluhar: I am twelve years old.

Yuzasif: (wonderstruck) twelve years, yet you look and speak as a person of an advanced age.

Biluhar: Sixty years have actually passed since my birth. You, however, asked for my age in life. To me, one begins to live after attaining the path of the right faith. In that sense, my age is just twelve years. Prior to this, I was amongst the dead, because of the darkness of ignorance.

Yuzasif: When this apparent life is not the real life, according to you it stands to reason that the apparent death should not be called the real death when the mind is alive.

Biluhar: I would not have come to you, if I had cared for such life seeing that your father is bent upon killing people like me. You can, therefore, realise that I do not regard this death as real extinction, nor do I look upon this life as real existence. Having given up the pleasures and comforts of this life, what importance can I attach to them. With my ego under my command why should I have any fear of death. O, prince, just look at the people who devote their lives to the service of Almighty Allah, giving up all the comforts and luxuries. What importance can this life have for them?

Yuzasif: Suppose you came to know that you are to die tomorrow, will it not sadden you?

Biluhar: What of tomorrow? I will joyfully welcome death if it comes tonight. One who distinguishes between the good and evil and is constantly aware of Allah will always act righteously. Such persons are convinced of the promises made by Almighty Allah and therefore never fear death. In fact, they look forward to leaving this world and meeting their creator.

Yuzasif: O sage, give an illustration of those who are absorbed in idol worship because of their misguidance.

Biluhar in reply proceeded thjus:

“A person had a garden with many different kinds of fruit trees. He worked very hard to maintain his garden, but

every time a fruit appeared on any one of the trees a bold bird would swoop down and pick on the fruit. This annoyed him immensely. One day he laid a trap and caught this bird. Full of rage, he was about to kill the bird, when it spoke, "Please do not kill me. If you promise to release me, I shall give you three pieces of invaluable advice, which will benefit you all through your life."

The man agreed.

Said the bird, "Listen to what I say carefully and act upon it. First, do not worry for anything, which gets out of your hand. Second, do not give credence to anything which is apparently impossible and thirdly, do not try to get anything which is beyond your reach."

The bird flew and sat on the branch of a nearby tree and said to the man, "Surely, you are an unlucky person, look at what you have given up. Had you slaughtered me you would have found in me a gem as big as a duck's egg. This would have got you enormous wealth."

The man was extremely perturbed and regretted his action. He spoke very kindly to the bird, "Forget the past. Come to me, and I shall keep you in all comfort. I shall give you all the fruits you want."

The bird replied, "What a pity! You have forgotten the advice I just gave you i.e. not to worry for what goes out of you hands. You are worrying for having released

me. I advised you not to believe the impossible and impracticable. You are convinced that within me is a gem the size of a duck's egg, while my body is too small to hold an egg of that size.”

The same is the condition of the misguided people.

They carve out idols with their own hands. Then they call them their creators. They keep watch over them against possible theft and say that the idols will be their protectors. They spend their hard earned money for their sake, and yet look upon them as their sustainers. They give credence to similar absurdities. They are like the foolish bird-catcher.”

Yuzasif said, “Indeed what you say is the truth. I have been damning the idols in my mind. I want you to please reveal to me the reality of your own religion, which you approve for me.”

Replied Biluhar: “My religion is based on two fundamentals - the gnosis (knowledge of spiritual mysteries) of the Almighty Allah, and actions in accordance with His commands to please Him.”

“How do you recognise Allah?” asked Yuzasif.

Replied Biluhar, “One should have the belief that the Almighty Allah is unique, without any associate. He is the creator of everything. He is Ever-living while the existence of his creations is limited. He is the architect. Everything

is of His making. He is the sole organiser. He alone is self-sufficient. Everything else depends on Him. He has begotten none and none has begotten Him. He gave form to everything without using matter. He is above all ideas of decline and decay. He never undergoes any change. He is independent of time and space. He is omnipresent. He is omniscient. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is just, He is omnipotent. He is compassionate, forgiving and merciful. He has promised reward for those who are obedient to Him. He has promised torment to the disobedient.

O prince, try to live your life to earn His pleasure. His pleasure lies in avoiding misdeeds and in serving Him. You should behave towards others as you would like them to behave towards you. One should treat others fairly and with consideration. One should follow the path of Allah's prophets. All these are ways of winning His pleasure.”

Yuzasif said, “Please repeat what you have said so as to create in my mind a dislike for the world and a liking for the hereafter.”

Proceeded Biluhar, “This world is in a constant state of transformation. All human beings are the targets of trials and tribulations. Everyone is in the grip of death, there is disease side by side with health. Poverty runs along with wealth. Honour and prestige end in degradation and limitless worries. Youthfulness is followed by the helplessness of old age. Peace here is attached to fear. Life ends in death.

A wise person therefore subdues his ego. One should not lay much weight on one's own views and knowledge. One should thereby avoid conceit and pride. The Almighty Allah dislikes conceited and self centered people. Many are led astray by such ignorance. A sensible person knows the harm of egotistic urges and does not allow self indulgence to overpower him. One should try to develop a mind like that of a just judge, who keeps all of his organs in discipline - leading them to virtue, barring them from sinfulness. One should convince oneself of the reward and punishment of the hereafter, so as to persevere to do good and shun evil. These matters can be grasped only by those who are endowed with divine grace. Satan is forever creating misgivings of varied sorts in one's mind by casting a veil over one's reasoning.

O Son, never fall into Satan's trap. Use all your energy to acquire knowledge. Do not build hopes in this transitory abode. This life is so short. The days and nights fly away in quick succession. Every one of us is a passerby. We have to move on to the difficult destination of the hereafter. One is not allowed to take anything with him. These grand palaces so lovingly built and decorated will remain here. Even your name will be forgotten in a while. One shall lie helpless and friendless in a corner of the dark narrow grave. No amount of wealth or power can help you when death strikes. All that goes with you to the next life are your deeds.

I pray to Almighty Allah that he bestows on you the grace for goodness, that He grants you success over your enemies.

Nothing can be achieved without Almighty Allah's help and grace, nor can one escape the Satanic insinuations towards sinfulness."

Yuzasif listened attentively and said, "O sage, speak to me about the attributes of Almighty Allah in such a way that I may feel as if I see Him."

Biluhar replied, "The Almighty Allah is beyond the reach of our physical senses. Human reasoning is incapable of cognising His essence. Human words cannot express homage to Him, in the manner befitting Him. One can know about Him only to the extent that He himself has taught through His prophets. In His essence, He is too exalted for the human understanding to have an idea of His majesty."

Yuzasif: What are the arguments for the existence of the Almighty Allah?

Biluhar: Whenever we come about any piece of handiwork, we think about the person who created it. This Universe comprises the heavens, the earth and many other planets, mountains, oceans, and limitless wonders. As a matter of course, we have to conclude that there must be a maker of them.

Yuzasif: Do the calamities that befall mankind occur under divine dispensation?

Biluhar: Yes, they are under divine decree (*qaza wa qadr*).

Yuzasif: Are the evil deeds and sins too perpetrated under the divine commandment?

Biluhar: The Almighty Allah is free from everything evil, otherwise why would He have ordained reward for the righteous people and chastisement for the evil doers?

Yuzasif: Who is the most just in this world and who is the most unjust? Who is the wisest and who is the most foolish? Who is the most fortunate and the most unfortunate?

Biluhar: The most just is the person who is more just to others than to his own self. The most unjust is the one, who regards his own injustice as justice and the justice of others as injustice. The wisest is the person, who in this world is making preparation for the journey to the hereafter. The biggest fool is the man who wastes his days in fruitless pursuits.

The most fortunate is the one who has his hereafter guaranteed. The most unfortunate is the man whose days of life end in evil deeds and who shall be hauled up on the day of judgement, to puffer divine wrath. One who does to others what he does not like to be done to himself is heading towards divine wrath. Whereas, one who behaves towards others in the manner in which he likes the others to behave towards him is working for the pleasure of Allah. He shall have the grace to do greater good. Do not underrate a good deed even if it is performed by an evil doer, likewise do not appreciate an evil deed even if it may come from a good man.”

Yuzasif: Who are the people who shall be rewarded in the hereafter?

Biluhar: Those who avoid disobedience to Almighty Allah.

Yuzasif: Who are the people most obedient to Almighty Allah?

Biluhar: Those who remain steadfast in their faith, who are conscious of Allah's commandments and avoid sins.

Yuzasif: What is virtue and what is vice?

Biluhar: Good intentions, truthfulness and justice are virtues whereas vices are sins like evil-doing, falsehood and evil intent.

Yuzasif: What does good intent mean?

Biluhar: It is to keep in view the golden mean in all affairs.

Yuzasif: How can man acquire the golden mean?

Biluhar: By developing God consciousness. By remembering the impermanence of the world and by trying to please Almighty Allah by doing good deeds.

Yuzasif: What is generosity?

Biluhar: It is spending that which you value most in the way of Almighty Allah, to earn His pleasures.

Yuzasif: How does man earn honour?

Biluhar: It is earned by piety and virtue.

Yuzasif: What is miserliness?

Biluhar: It is to withhold the right of a person who has a rightful claim. Accumulation of wealth by unlawful means is also included in it.

Yuzasif: What is greed?

Biluhar: To be inclined towards the world, and to be enamoured by things which harm the interest of the hereafter. It is a curse which keeps a person discontented in this life and earns the wrath of the Almighty in the hereafter.

Yuzasif: What is integrity?

Biluhar: It is moral uprightness, to avoid falsehood and to refrain from nonsensical actions.

Yuzasif: What is folly?

Biluhar: It is to get enamoured of this mortal life and to forget the lasting blessings of the hereafter.

Yuzasif: What is falsehood?

Biluhar: It is to defraud the people by giving expression to things against the truth. It includes the tall hopbs, which make one lethargic in their religious obligations.

Yuzasif: Who is to be regarded as perfect in virtue?

Biluhar: The person with perfect reasoning, who gives thought to the consequences of his actions, who recognises his enemies and thus protects himself against them.

Yuzasif: Who is an enemy and what do you mean by “giving thought to consequences?”

Biluhar: The greatest enemies of a person are envy, greed, anger and lustfulness and the end of everything is the hereafter.

Yuzasif: Which of these is the most inveterate enemy, and what is the nature of each?

Biluhar: Greed never allows a man happiness. Its nature is to produce anger and narrow-mindedness. Anger generates enmity and injustice. Envy vitiates one's intent. It gives rise to suspicion. Of all these hypocrisy and falsehood are the most serious vices.

Yuzasif: What is the evil that helps Satan in ruining a man?

Biluhar: It is lustfulness. It removes all distinction between good and evil. One forgets the Almighty Allah thereby.

Yuzasif: What potentiality has been endowed to man by the Almighty Allah which enables him to avoid these evil natures.

Biluhar: It is the power of reasoning and the knowledge flowing therefrom. If one acts in accordance therewith, following the persons of good understanding and religion, he shall be able to harness it to subjugate these enemies. One should be pleased with the divine dispensation. One should ask for Allah's help to develop patience. One should respect the rights of the creator and the creatures. One should take to worship. One should behave gently towards other people. One should become content with the fulfillments of his day to day needs. One should constantly be aware of the hereafter and the temporary nature of this life. One should be convinced that every good and every evil will be recompensed on the day of judgement (*qiyamat*).

Yuzasif: What is the best quality of a man?

Biluhar: Humility.

Yuzasif: Which is the best form of worship?

Biluhar: It is to keep one's mind in the constant remembrance of Allah.

Yuzasif: Which is the best attribute of man?

Biluhar: It is to befriend the righteous people.

Yuzasif: How should one talk?

Biluhar: One should advise others to do good and to shun evil.

Yuzasif: Is there any enemy which is difficult to get rid off?

Biluhar: There is no such enemy except sinfulness.

Yuzasif: What is the best, excellence in man?

Biluhar: It is to be thankful and pleased for the sustenance apportioned by the Almighty Allah.

Yuzasif: Who is the most tyrannical of men?

Biluhar: The heart without piety and the unjust officer.

Yuzasif: What is it that has no end?

Biluhar: The nature of the greedy eye of a man of the world.

Yuzasif: Which person will see the worst end?

Biluhar: One who displeases Allah in order to please people.

Yuzasif: Which is the most easily changeable thing?

Biluhar: The heart of the ruler who works for the world only.

Yuzasif: Which is the sin that brings disgrace to man?

Biluhar: It is to break one's covenant with the Almighty Allah and to practice deceitfulness towards Him.

Yuzasif: What is it that breaks easily?

Biluhar: The love of the lover.

Yuzasif: Who is the most advanced in dishonesty?

Biluhar: One who speaks a lie.

Yuzasif: What is it that remains hidden for a long time?

Biluhar: The evil of a hypocrite.

Yuzasif: What is it that resembles the state of this world?

Biluhar: It is a nightmare.

Yuzasif: What is it that gives the greatest pleasure in the world?

Biluhar: Virtuous children and a pleasing wife.

Yuzasif: What is it which is difficult to cure?

Biluhar: An unchaste wife and evil disposed children.

Yuzasif: Wherein lies one's comfort?

Biluhar: It is to be pleased with one's own disposition in life and to be able to live under the protection of a righteous ruler.

Yuzasif: Your advice has been opened my eyes to right guidance. I have learnt about the religious codes which I

never hoped to learn. O sage, tell me as to what will be the condition of the man whose religion is idol worship, who has spent his life in self indulgence. He has never had an idea of gnosis of Almighty Allah. He has spent his time in getting the greatest pleasures of this life. With the advance in age, his greed for material things has also advanced.

He has never thought of the hereafter. His enmity towards the God-fearing people of the right faith has become even more serious, so much so that the righteous, because of his fear, have to conceal their faith. Can such a man be expected, in the last days of his life, to give up false religion and to accept the true one. Would his past sins be forgiven?

Biluhar: I understand that you are referring to the case of your father. You want your father to be rescued from the chastisement ordained for persons of this denomination.

The Almighty Allah is forgiving, merciful. There is no cause for disappointment. There is hope for everyone till the last moment of one's life, however, misguided one may have been.

Here is a story of a king who was famous for his justice and intellectual powers. He loved his subjects and administered the state very wisely. He died without leaving a male heir to succeed him. In due course however, the queen gave birth to a son. There were great jubilation at this event. For a whole year the people indulged in all sorts of frivolities and indecencies.

There were some sober scholars in the town, who objected to such misdemeanours. They said that the birth of the prince was an event for thanksgiving to the Almighty Allah and not for pleasing the Satan by such acts of sinfulness. The people promised to forsake their self indulgence and to fall on a life of clean behaviour. They gradually turned to the rites of worship and in due course they became well behaved citizens of the state.

From the conduct of the people the astrologers deduced that the prince too would indulge in profligacy before becoming virtuous. The constellation of the stars at his birth indicated that he would be endowed with wisdom, yet he would be allured by carnal pleasures.

The prince grew up. His youthfulness, power and his worldly success made him conceited and selfish. He became a veritable tyrant. His self indulgence knew no limits.

One day he ordered that all his treasures, his elephants and horses should be marshaled in a vast plain. The slaves, both male and female were to present themselves before him in their ornamented liveries. Golden canopies were set up. The soldiers, the bodyguards and the officials were aligned in proper order. His subjects and spectators gathered around the plain. He came to the spot in all his youthful exuberance, in bejeweled dress and crown, mounted on the royal steed. The spectators and the government officials made him obeisance. The king was very much pleased with this pomp and show.

He then looked in a mirror and was admiring his own image of beauty and exuberance. Suddenly, he noticed a single grey hair in his beard. All his joy vanished at the thought of the approaching old age. With the old age ahead, the end of his worldly power appeared to him imminent. Nothing could hold back the angel of death, and that would be the end of all the worldly glory and pleasure.

The next day the king summoned all his ministers and courtiers. He asked them as to what was their opinion about him and his administration. They praised his solicitude for their welfare. They offered to lay down their lives for him if so required.

The king in reply said, "Behold, there is my enemy ahead. No one among you has done anything to withstand him."

"We are ready to face the enemy. Only let us have a view of the enemy and here we are prepared to destroy the same," replied the courtiers.

"The enemy is the messenger of death. It brings in the intimation of decline. It says that all that I have reared up and all that I have gathered is to be made over to my enemies. The hearts of the enemies are to be gladdened by my death. Can you think of a plan to fight against death?" asked the prince. They expressed their total incapacity in the matter.

"Can you keep off the sorrows and ailments of this life? Can you contravene the fiats of destiny appointed for me?"

“No one can prevent them. They are contingent upon life,” they replied.

The king continued, “Seeing that you are so powerless. I want to befriend those whose loyalty shall be above suspicion. Even death should not be able to sunder my relationship with them. I should be able to enjoy their friendship even after this body is reduced to dust. They should be able to ward off from me such kind of sorrows. I have been stupid to have neglected them for your sake. You are not my friends, had you been my well wishers, you would have drawn my attention to the hereafter. You should have reminded me of the fleeting nature of the world.

I have made up my mind to be contented with the minimum of worldly goods. I shall go into seclusion to earn the wherewithal of the hereafter. Look here the graying hair. It is a messenger of death. It says that it shall not forsake me till it drags me to the grave.”

They submitted, “Pray do not leave the land. The people shall be ruined. It is a heinous sin to allow the creatures of the Almighty Allah to go to ruin. You have dispensed even handed justice among the people. Do you not deserve heavenly reward therefor. You have in your hands the amelioration of the whole nation. Will your majesty evade that responsibility? The sages have said that a man ruins himself, when he causes the ruin of a single person. He, who causes one single person’s improvement causes his own personal improvement. For Allah’s sake do not give up

the heavenly reward in this life and in the hereafter, which shall be merited by your majesty administering the state in accordance with the commandments of Allah.”

The king listened very carefully, then replied, “What you say is correct. You want me to hold on the reins of government. But in case I do so, I shall need your co-operation for the sake of just administration but as I see, you are absorbed in your personal worldly gratifications.”

The courtiers replied, “Your majesty, we are no longer what we were before, just as you are no longer what you were till now. The Almighty Allah, who has caused a change in your state, has also brought about a similar change in our state. We can see the error of our ways. We express sincere penitence for our past misdoings. Have pity on us.”

The king said, “If you really mean what you say, I shall stay with you. In case your conduct contravenes your promises, I shall leave you, never to return.”

All agreed to this and they began to cooperate with their good king in a spirit of goodness and piety. The Almighty Allah bestowed upon their land His munificence and prosperity. No enemy had the temerity to come in their way. Peace prevailed in the land. The king ruled thus for thirty two years and at the age of sixty four he passed away.”

Yuzasif expressed his great appreciation of the story and requested the venerable sage for another similar narrative.

Biluhar proceeded thus:

“There was a king in a certain land, who was steeped in pleasures and vice. The people in the land were in distress because of his misdoings. Enemies stalked the land because of mismanagement of the state. The king had a son who was well known for his piety and goodness. He tried to teach people the right way of living. He tried to infuse into the minds of the people the awe and majesty of the Almighty Allah, and of the consequences of sin in the hereafter.

He came to the throne when his father died. The enemies were subdued one and all through the mercy of the Almighty Allah. The people were happy and contented. But as the years of comfort and plenty passed, the prince became ease loving. The worldly pleasures made him forget the Almighty Allah. No mention was made of Almighty Allah in that society.

The prince himself began to be worshipped as a deity. In the life time of his father, he had pledged to serve the Almighty Allah in every way. This pledge was forgotten in the heat of conceit and vanity. Such was the intoxication of power that he became blind to all counsels of reason.

Amongst his courtiers was a pious person who was greatly distressed at this state of affairs. He wanted to remind the prince of the pledge for righteousness which he had made in the life time of his father. He could not get a chance to do so, because of the fear of the prince’s offensiveness.

One day the courtier made up his mind to speak to the king. He took a rotten human skull to the king and began to kick it. It was shattered to pieces. The king was offended. The other courtiers looked on in surprise. Seeing the king in rage, the headsman with drawn sword appeared on the scene to slay the courtier on a signal from the king.

It was, however, a custom of the kings of the times that they did not administer punishment without deliberation. Notwithstanding their unbelief and ignorance they acted forbearingly, for fear of a revolt. The king remained silent in accordance with the usual custom. He gave no signal for punishment. The courtier repeated the same procedure on the two following days and the king did not take any action. On the fourth day he put the skull in one part of a piece of cloth and in the other part thereof he put earth. He came to the court with weighing scales.

He took out the skull. In one pan of the scales he placed a coin and in the other pan he put sufficient earth to balance the coin. He took the earth and put it in the mouth of the skull and then he put the earth in the eye socket of the skull. He repeated this procedure a number of times. At this strange procedure the king could not contain himself. He said authoritatively, "O man, what is the reason for such absurdity?"

This was the moment the courtier had been waiting for, he fell at the feet of the king and respectfully begged leave to have his say. The king granted permission and the courtier began to speak.

“Your majesty is aware that words, of wisdom go deep into soft earth like the arrow but have no effect on hard granite. Good counsel is like the rain drops, which makes the earth grow life giving and life preserving provisions, while on barren land they have no effect. Man nourishes multifarious desires in his mind. That is why an incessant fight goes on between the rational mind and the animal instincts. In the animal, instinct has the upper hand, so good counsel has no effect. In case of the rational beings, mind dominates. Man accepts the path of goodness on hearing well-meaning counsel. Let me now proceed as I wish to say:

I had a keen desire to acquire knowledge since my childhood. I put into practice the knowledge I gained. One day while walking through the royal graveyard I found this skull. Being a loyal subject I took the skull home and respectfully washed it daily with rose water. I covered it in fine silk and placed it on costly cushions. I thought that if it belonged to a king, it would become refreshed and would assume its original state. I did this because kings are pleased with such service. Although I carried on this ritual for days the skull did not change.

Then I thought that the skull might belong to a poor beggar. So I gave it to a lowly slave, with directions to behave towards it in a degrading spirit. I hoped that this may cause it to assume its original state. But to no avail. I concluded that honour and disgrace were the same for it. I pondered over the matter a great deal and have consulted all the wise men. No one has been able to give me a satisfactory

explanation. Thinking that your majesty's knowledge and apumen surpass that of all others, I have brought the matter to your court. All I want to know is whether this skull is that of a king or a beggar?

The eyes of the kings never get satiated with the worldly possessions. Even if the whole earth comes to their hands, they still would cherish the longing to get the sky under their rule. I have now put into the eyes of the skull earth weighing just one small coin and they have been filled up. A similar small amount of earth has sufficed to fill its mouth.

Since I found the skull in the royal graveyard I doubt that this could belong to a poor person.

However, I can go and get a skull from the graveyard where the poor are buried, will anyone be able to distinguish between the two skulls?

Your majesty, if you believe this to be the skull of a king, then, when alive he must have enjoyed power and magnificence just like yours. But look at the end, right before you. This skull can be kicked about by anyone. The once fine body has been devoured by the injects of the grave. It is distressing to know that one has to leave this beautiful palace and end, in the dark and narrow grave, alone and helpless.”

The king began to tremble at these thoughts. Tears welled up in his eyes. He continued to weep bitterly for a long time.

The courtier on seeing that his words had had the desired effect continued to talk more forcefully. The king saw the error of his ways and converted to the right path. With his example for goodness, the people in general also changed over to piety and righteousness. Learned scholars swarmed towards his court from far and wide. An overall atmosphere of goodness and prosperity prevailed over the entire land.”

Yuzasif listened with interest and requested some more illustrative stories. Biluhar in compliance continued:

“There was a very powerful king who had no sons. All sorts of efforts failed and he gave up all hopes for an heir. Then, in his old age, a son was born. There were great rejoicings in the land. The prince was brought up in all kinds of luxuries. One day while playing the little prince took a step and said, “You do injustice and yet you have to return to your origin.”

At the second step he remarked, “You have to grow old.” At the third step he uttered, “Then you have to die” and he continued to play. The king summoned astrologers to seek their views. He was told that the prince would be a highly religious person. The king was very sad to hear this. He brought up the prince in complete seclusion, under the care of special servants.

One day the prince, who was now a youth, slipped away and went to the bazar. There he saw a corpse. He was told that it was the body of a dead man. On asking as to the cause of his death, he was told that he had become too old and weak to live on this earth. The prince asked whether he had ever

been a healthy young man, he was told that he had been a strong wrestler in his youth. As he walked a little further he saw an old man bent with age. On asking he was told that he had once been a healthy child, then a strong youth and was now into old age. At some distance further on he saw a sick man. On inquiring he was told that he had been quite hale and hearty till recently.

The prince fell into deep thought and said, "If all that you say is true, then all these people, who go about rejoicing are mad men." He returned to his palace. Lying on his bed he gazed at the wooden ceiling. He enquired whether the wood used had always been such. He was told that the wood came from trees which were mere saplings to start with, then grew into huge trees, which were cut and used for all sorts of articles.

The prince was busy in this sort of talk when the minister from the king came to enquire about his welfare. He went back and informed the king that the prince was talking like a mad man. The king took counsel with the astrologers. They told him that the prince was destined to become a leader of the righteous. The king was advised to arrange for the marriage of the prince, to try and change his views. A girl of exceptional beauty was found for the prince. Great jubilations began in preparation for the marriage. The prince took no part in these rejoicing and remained unmoved.

The marriage was duly solemnized. The king advised the bride to try her best to win the love of the prince. The bride

tried to win the affection of the bridegroom. He, however, put her off. She was used to alcohol and after having a few intoxicating drinks she passed out. The prince slipped out, and with a friend of his, he left the city. The two planned to hide in the day and travel at night, till they reached another kingdom.

After travelling for many days the prince and his friend reached another kingdom. The king of that land had a daughter of exceptional beauty. He was anxious to find a suitable match for her. It so happened that the prince was passing by the palace. The princess saw this young man of princely form in beggarly clothes. She informed the king that she would like to marry him. The king in disguise approached the prince. He was very impressed by his high breeding and intellect. But the prince would not disclose his identity. The king returned to his palace.

The next day he sent for the young man. The prince had no choice but to appear in the king's court. The king offered him huge treasures if he would agree to marry his daughter. The prince expressed his disinterest and sought permission to narrate an illustrative story. On receiving permission, he proceeded thus:

“There was a prince who had some young men of his age as his companions. These companions invited the prince to a feast, where they drank wine until they were completely intoxicated. The prince in this state started to walk towards his palace. He missed the road and entered a graveyard. There he saw a grave which was open. Taking it to be his

apartment, he entered it. There was a terrible stench issuing from the dead body. He thought this to be some kind of fragrance showered by palace servants. The shroud of the corpse was mistaken by him as a white sheet and he mistook the corpse to be his beloved princess who had gone to sleep being tired of waiting for him. He began to embrace and kiss the corpse. His clothes were found soiled when he woke up. He was highly embarrassed. He tried to hide his shameful clothing and made haste for the city. He reached home quickly, showered and changed his clothes. He thanked the Almighty Allah. Your majesty, will that prince ever fall into such a situation, having erred once?"

The king said, "Certainly not."

The prince replied that he was also in the same situation as that prince. The king informed the queen and the princess that it was useless arguing with the young man. The queen was determined and requested that she be permitted to talk to him. The king agreed. Said the queen to the prince, "O young man, do not decline this offer. This is a boon from Almighty Allah. You shall appreciate the beauty and wisdom of my daughter and will be very grateful."

In reply the young prince related the following story:
"A certain king had limitless treasures. Some thieves found their way into the treasury. Amongst all the jewels they found a little chest of gold with a sealed lid. They were intrigued and thought that this would contain the most valuable jewels. They picked this chest and ran towards

the jungle. They all gathered around it and broke the seal. There emerged from it a number of poisonous snakes. The snakes bit each and every one of them and the thieves died instantly.”

The prince asked the king if any sane person would wish to have a share with them after having learnt of their fate. “Certainly not”, replied the king. “Then, how do you suppose I shall accept your offer”, concluded the prince.

On hearing this story, the princess asked to speak to the prince. The king granted permission. In all her elegance and beauty the princess appeared before the prince. She asked him, “tell, me truly, if you have seen an elegant beauty like that which the Almighty Allah had bestowed upon me? How can you decline such an offer? I ask you to reconsider your views, lest you should repent.”

The young man in reply proceeded with this story:
A certain king had two sons. In a battle one of them was taken prisoner and kept in a dark narrow dungeon. Every passerby was ordered to throw stones at him. Many years passed. His brother was roused to help him. He started his journey disguised as a wealthy merchant. He included dancing and singing girls in his entourage. They arrived in the land of the enemy and encamped outside the city. The king learnt about this merchant and ordered that honour and courtesy be accorded to him.

The merchant prince requested that his show rooms be set

up near the dungeon. They offered their merchandise at very cheap rates. The prince merchant threw a stone into the dungeon to determine if his brother was alive. A huge hue and cry rose from the cell. The next day the prince merchant offered his choicest, merchandise at very low prices. He ordered the dancing girls to sing and dance outside the dungeon to distract the guards' attention. The whole city turned to enjoy the dancing and singing of these beautiful, women. The prince merchant found an opportunity to enter the dungeon and freed his brother. He kept him hidden. Soon as his wounds were healed he mounted him on a horse and sent him towards his native city.

As luck would have it, he lost his way and came to a thick jungle. There was a well in the way, into which he fell. In the well was a huge python. Looking up, the prince discerned a number of evil spirits on the tree. With great difficulty he dragged himself out of the well. After wandering for a number of days he found a boat, which he boarded and finally reached home.

He asked the princess if a person who had undergone such affliction, would ever dare to face the same situation. "Certainly not," replied the princess. "Then I am in that same position," said the young prince.

On hearing this the king, queen and the princess lost all hopes of winning him.

The prince and his companion took leave of the king and moved on to other lands. They practiced piety. They preached the right religion wherever they went. The prince won great fame for his righteous deeds in the world.

One day he thought of saving his father from the darkness of ignorance. He asked a wise minister to take his salutations to the king in the following manner.

“The Almighty Allah has guided me to the path of righteousness. I have delivered many people out of the darkness of ignorance by His grace. I have taught them the rites of the true religion. It does not seem right that a person as intelligent and understanding as yourself should remain deprived of such bliss.”

On receiving the message of his son, the king embraced the right religion. His conversion led other people to the path of virtuous life, with consequent betterment of society.

Biluhar then took leave of the prince for the night. He continued his meetings with the prince for a while. When he was convinced of the prince’s true faith, he departed from that city.

The prince continued his worship and learning diligently and in due course became a learned scholar. He then began travelling to other countries to propagate the right religion.

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