

Timeless Tales of Mulla Nasrudin

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By
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Preface

This is the second volume in a trilogy on Mulla Nasrudin by this author. This volume, already on sale in print in vernacular in India, is being made available now on KDP, for the benefit of a larger audience, especially in the West.

This volume titled “Timeless Tales of Mulla Nasrudin” contains 111 brief anecdotes like its predecessor, “Immortal Tales of Mulla Nasrudin” which also had 111 short episodes. The “Immortal Tales” is already available on KDP.

The third and last volume in the Mulla Nasrudin series by this author is not likely to be available on KDP before 2013 due to existing copyrights of a current print version in India. However the first two volumes, “The Immortal Tales” and “Timeless Tales” with no restrictions whatsoever are available to print publishers and others in United States and elsewhere and in any language and in any form—separate, combined or abridged. Each anecdote included here is original and unpublished in English before.

Mulla Nasrudin needs no introduction. Believed to have lived in Turkey, Central Asia or China some time between 11th and 14th centuries, Nasrudin, with the Mulla and Hoja as titles denoting his scholarship or nobility, is undoubtedly the most humourous character in human history.

Known for his sarcasm and satire, wit and wisdom the Mulla stands taller than all his peers.

Needless to say that all the stories are timeless. Although the symbols, situations, geography, culture, economy, life style etc. are typically central Asian and medieval, their appeal is not limited to any particular age, clime or place. They are still as fresh as they were a thousand years ago—and shall continue to be so even after another thousand or two.

Unlike a typical sufi, Nasrudin is epicurean in tastes, hedonistic in quests and rebellious in words and deeds. This has made Mulla tales timeless with perennial appeal to mankind anytime and everywhere.

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1.A Donkey For The Neighbour

Nasrudin went to the market to buy a donkey.

‘To tell you the truth, this donkey has the bad habit of disturbing you at night for fodder,’ cautioned the dealer showing an animal.

‘That is good,’ Said the Mulla.

‘But let me tell you, it has the worse habit of crying for water after that and disturbing your wife,’ disclosed the man.

‘That is very good,’ replied Hoja.

‘ But to be frank , the worst comes after food and water- it dances all night with its braying music and keeps awake all neighbourhood,’ admitted the dealer.

‘That is excellent, I shall buy it,’ affirmed Nasrudin.

‘But it will keep you awake too,’ the seller tried to dissuade Hoja.

But the Mulla was firm in his resolve:

‘That is a small price to pay for keeping your neighbours awake,’ said he.

2 A Pursuit of Peace

Nasrudin went to a divine in search of peace of mind.

‘You will have it tomorrow,’ predicted the saint, ‘when a mendicant will come to your residence in search of alms , treat him as your brother.’

It so happened that the next day a man in rags was at his door in quest of help. The Mulla took him inside, lavished all possible luxuries on him and made him agree not to leave.

‘He is my brother,’ Hoja told his wife.

Soon he rushed to the divine and informed him delightedly about the miracle.

‘You are already having enough peace of mind,’ pointed out the god man, ‘and you will find out that you have more of it as soon as you reach home.’

As Nasrudin rushed back with heightened expectation he found that the beggar had made himself fully comfortable at his home.

‘Your wife just left,’ he said, ‘ she said be with your brother for more peace.’

3.Prove it Yourself

While walking along the road Nasrudin found a modest crowd in the street corner gathered around a showman.

‘ One of these fruits has ten gold coins in it,’ the man was saying pointing to two water melons in front of him, ‘the one who can point it out correctly gets the gold.’

The fee was only one silver. And one should do it without touching the melons with hand.

‘Why, Mulla will do it, he is the cleverest of all,’ somebody was taunting him from the crowd.

Within a flash, Hoja kicked both melons with such a force that both rolled down in opposite directions falling to the ditch full of flowing sewage.

The man immediately ran after one of them, recovered the melon and returned with relief.

Everybody thought that now the Mulla will claim the gold .

‘ You can keep it,’ said Nasrudin, ‘since I have not paid the fee.’

4.On Fasting

One day in the tea-house, some onlookers were intently listening to a divine who was eloquently expounding the do’s and don’ts during fasting.

‘Can we tell lies during a fast?’ asked a listener in right earnest.

‘What a sacrilege,’ exploded the holy man, ‘who does not know that fasting is an extremely sacred act which cannot be allowed to be at the mercy of such irreverence.’

Nasrudin was one of the listeners.

‘ I entirely agree with you,’ the Mulla joined issue, ‘But don’t you think one can fast while telling lies?’

‘What a stupidity,’ exclaimed the saint , ‘ Which bloke does not know that fasting is so noble and all encompassing to the extent that you can do it anytime, anywhere and while doing anything.’

5.The Left and Right

It was usual to loose shoes in the mosque, especially after the Friday congregation.

Nasrudin finally decided it cannot be allowed to continue.

One day the Mulla reached the mosque wearing only left foot pieces on both the legs and stayed back until everybody left the mosque to find out what happened.

As expected there definitely were two pieces left behind, but both were of right leg...

6.The Magic Flower

One day Nasrudin went to the cosmetic shop and asked for the latest arrival in wonder drugs. The shop- keeper took out a small casket and remarked:

‘This contains the magical flower that helps a person of medium complexion like you. Take it with milk before you go to sleep for forty days and thereafter the entire townsfolk will say that you are among the fairest.’

‘How much is it?’ the Mulla enquired eagerly.

‘Just a thousand gold coins.’

‘A thousand gold coins?’ Nasrudin was surprised, “if I had half that amount the entire townsfolk would have been saying I am one of the richest - the filthy rich.’

7.The Intention

It has been raining rather heavily for sometime and the river was in spate . While in the tea-house , a fisherman was advised by his neighbour about the flood.

‘Don’t go to the river for the present,’ he cautioned.

‘Don’t go to the river for the present,’repeated Nasrudin who was witnessing the proceedings.

The amused onlookers wanted an explanation from the Mulla for simply repeating the words of another man.

‘ My advice was with the intention of saving his life from the swollen river,’ explained Hoja.

The inmates of the tea-house were still not satisfied .

‘And his advice was tendered,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘with the motive of depriving the man of his catch.’

8.The One to Blame

Nasrudin was carrying cotton bales on his donkey’s back to the town market. On the way the animal slipped and fell into a canal getting the cotton soaked and spoiled in the process.

As an infuriated Mulla started beating the animal, a crowd gathered to defend it.

‘Stop the beating . The donkey’s fall actually saved you from falling yourself into the canal,’ one of them said.

‘If the cotton got wet, only the water can be blamed, and not the animal,’ said another.

‘If the bale is spoiled, you are now saved of the bother of going to the

market,' the third one remarked.

'In the presence of so many of his relatives, I now know it is not the donkey who is to be blamed,' the Hoja exclaimed, 'But only the cotton, the water and myself.'

9.The Probable Place

While at home, Nasrudin was fortunate enough to notice his creditors approaching from a distance. He soon got into the half-filled grain basket kept in the dark basement.

'Don't tell that I am in this cellar basket,' he taught his kid son. The boy seemed to understand.

The visitors soon arrived and met the boy at doorstep. They enquired about the whereabouts of his father.

'He is not in the half empty grain basket in the basement,' the boy was quick to clarify.

'He is right. I was inside the hay stack on the attic,' said the Hoja as he emerged from his hiding.

10.No Third Option

While Nasrudin was riding his donkey the animal fell into a ditch and broke its leg.

'You are lucky, Mulla,' comforted the neighbours, 'had it been you, you would have been in bed now.'

'Don't be silly,' retorted Hoja, 'Nothing lucky about it. I had seen the pot hole much in advance and convinced that if either of us might fall into that, why can't it be the donkey?'

11.It is One's Feeling

An old man approached Nasrudin and complained:

'My son has deserted me,' complained the visitor

'It is your feeling due to old age, he maybe busy in his own affairs,' consoled the Hoja

'But my daughter does not visit me either.'

'It is your feeling, she may be busy with her husband and house.'

'But my daughter-in-law too neglects me,' lamented the old man.

'It is your feeling, she may be busy with her children,' suggested the Mulla.

'But my grand children too don't come to me.'

‘It is your feeling, they may be busy playing among themselves.’

‘And you too don’t seem to pay any serious attention to what I say,’ said the man in rage.

‘It is your feeling . Right now I am seriously thinking of them all,’ concluded Nasarudin.

12.The Excuse

Nasrudin went and ordered a leather coat from a fashion shop.

‘You can come and take delivery after ten days,’ he was assured. So the Mulla returned in good time.

‘It is still not ready. Last week my horse died so I could not go to town to buy the dye,’ he was told.

So Hoja went home disappointed.

‘It is yet to be ready. This time my cow was killed, so I couldn’t buy the special needles for the work.’ On hearing this , a week later the Mulla went back dejectedly.

‘It is getting ready. Now my sheep was poisoned to death, so I couldn’t procure the critical thread for the work,’ was the next excuse.

The Mulla could no more contain himself.

‘If all the leather of these killed animals was not sufficient,’ exploded Nasrudin, ‘ please wait till you are stoned to death for pure leather.

13. The Reason Why

Nasrudin went to the Cadi and bitterly complained:

‘Everyday I see horrible nightmares,’ said the Mulla, ‘the hell’s angels approach me in my cold grave and torment me to death.’

The scholar considered the ominous foreboding:

‘It is a clear sign that you are condemned to eternal hell,’ said he.

A dejected Mulla returned home and ordered his wife for his favorite eatable to drown his grief.

‘Bring me a pound of fried nuts,’ he told his wife.

‘But you already had half a pound yesterday and a quarter today,’ his horrified wife protested, ‘ If you have more, you will see nightmares of the hell’s angles approaching you in a cold grave to torment you to death.’

14.Trusting the Enemy

Nasrudin's house was invaded with ants. All the sweets kept in the kitchen also got spoiled by the insects. His wife wanted a solution.

'You interchange the labels on the sweet jars with those on the spice jars,' advised the Mulla.

She heeded the advice and there was respite for a day. The next day the ants attacked with a vengeance all those jars of sweets now having labels of condiments.

'Now what is your advice?' his wife sneered at him.

'Don't trust even the ants for more than a day,' stated Nasrudin.

15.The Security

Nasrudin went to the Amir for a soft loan. The Amir was all obligation.

'It is in your interest that I am giving you this loan interest free,' said he.

The Mulla was equally solicitous:

'It is in my interest that I am leaving this horse with you as a security' said he.

'Why ?' the Amir was puzzled.

'Because it is still wild,' replied Hoja, 'and I have no fodder to feed it.'

16.The Behaviour

Nasrudin was once a judge.

One day an accused facing trial before him barged into the court-room in a drunken state and abused him harshly. The Mulla smiled and become very indulgent with him to the mortification of all those present.

After a few days of the delivery of judgment acquitting the person, he visited the Mulla's residence with many presents, apology and reverence.

This time it was the turn of Hoja to get annoyed with the man. It again surprised all those present.

They said the Mulla was whimsical.

'My this response was to his behaviour then,' explained Nasrudin, 'and my earlier show of friendliness with him was in reply to his behaviour today.'

17.The Explanation

Nasrudin went to a feast accompanied by his wife. He was much surprised to find that everybody there avoided him.

'It was the stinking socks you were wearing. Get a new one', said his wife on

their return.

The Mulla did so, but next time people kept even a longer distance from him.

He demanded an explanation from his wife after describing the situation :

‘You see, I am wearing a new pair of socks,’ he said, ‘and the old ones are safe in the front pocket of my coat.’

18.The Gathering

One day somebody announced in the tea-house that the Amir was holding an open house feast in his mansion for all those distinguished.

‘Then I should be the one to be there,’ said some one.

‘Me too,’ added another.

‘Me too,’ cried all others one by one.

Nasrudin was passively listening.

‘Why Mulla,’ someone asked, ‘wont you go too, to be among the distinguished?’

‘Now that all of you are going, I too shall be there ,’ said Nasrudin, ‘next time when the distinguished gather.’

19.As You Like It(1)

One day in the tea house a sufi was delineating the virtues of self-discovery .

‘An eternal puzzle,’ he said, ‘was that we never like the way we look.’

Nasrudin wanted to know why.

‘Because we never look the way we like,’ said the saint.

The Mulla did not find it convincing.

‘If all the looks were only to be liked,’ exclaimed Nasrudin, ‘there will be nothing more left to look beyond what we don’t like.’

20. Fact At First Sight

It was a sufi from Tabrez in the tea-house.

‘How old do you think I am?’ he asked everybody present. Nasrudin kept his silence.

‘You look eighty,’ replied the crowd.

‘Are you sure?’ asked the saint.

‘Err. May be seventy,’ some body ventured

‘Are you really certain?’ the visitor persisted.

‘May be you are sixty or may be even fifty,’ they replied sensing the mood.

‘Ah! That is it. I know I look much younger than I am. But how old do you

think I really am?' The dervish demanded of the Mulla.

'Can't say,' Hoja was hesitant.

'Then listen. I am eighty,' concluded the sufi triumphantly.

21.A Reason to Hate

In the tea-house four persons were animatedly discussing weather.

'Summer is horrible,' said one, 'you are restless both inside your home and outside too.'

'It is so in winter too,' said the second, 'the most despicable of all seasons.'

'But I hate spring,' asserted the third, 'the most useless of all seasons, with only flowers and flowers all around.'

'So is autumn,' opined the last, 'when even leaves don't stay on trees.'

Listening to them Nasrudin broke his silence:

'I wish I too could hate,' pondered the Mulla, 'if only there was a fifth season, when leaves sprout, flowers bloom, fruits ripen and grain turns golden.'

22.On Buying Cheap

Nasrudin was sent by his wife to the market to buy chicken. Soon he returned empty handed. So she wanted to know what happened.

'The price is the secret,' said the Mulla, 'a pound of chicken with skin, feathers, claws and beak is much cheaper than the one without all these.'

'But then why didn't you buy the cheaper one?' she inquired.

'I shall look out for the cheapest,' explained Nasrudin, 'chicken with all the above and eggs too.'

23 On Answering a Prayer

Nasrudin was heard one day loudly praying in the mosque:

'My Lord, keep me away from the evil of temptation and coveting others money too.'

As he repeated it, a merchant who was listening left a leather bag of money beside the Mulla unawares to him and decided to watch his reaction from a distance.

Soon Hoja got up, noticed the money, picked it up with no hesitation and started to leave.

The shocked merchant hurried to the Mulla and wanted him to explain his

greedy behavior soon after his prayer of piety.

‘It is simple. My today’s prayer will be answered only tomorrow. This money bag is God’s answer to my yesterday’s prayer,’ said he.

The merchant wanted to know what his prayer yesterday was.

‘Yesterday I was only asking the Lord’ explained Nasrudin, ‘to answer my prayer for a leather bag of money today.’

24 The Doubt

One day in the tea-house the preacher was expounding the nuances of theosophy.

Nasrudin who was listening had his own doubts.

‘When in doubt go to the enlightened scholar,’ the Mulla was told.

The Mulla went to the enlightened one.

‘For all doubts authentic solutions have to be sought from the Holy Book,’ he was advised.

The Mulla went into the Holy Book.

‘If you are ravaged by any penetrating doubt, ask your own conscience for solution,’ stated the Book.

Hoja did so.

‘So Mulla, has your doubt been cleared now?’ he was asked.

‘Except one,’ confessed Nasrudin, ‘which one, the preacher, the scholar or the Book is to be doubted?’

25. The Local Sun

Nasrudin was listening to two men as they continued with a street brawl one cloudy evening.

‘It is the sun that shines hot at this high noon,’ one of them insited

‘It is the cool moon that beams at this midnight,’ the other was in no mood to concede.

‘You appear to be a Mulla,’ they observed as Nasrudin approached, ‘lets us know whether it is moon during this noon or the sun at this midnight that lights up the world?’

Hoja immediately sized up the situation.

‘I am not sure,’ Nasrudin pointed out, ‘You see, I am not from this part of the village.’

26. The Opposites

One day a stranger come to the tea-house and addressed Nasrudin.

‘Mulla, It is said you are closer to the Sultan than everybody else here,’ he continued, ‘ Now that I am an alien please tell me something about your king’.

‘He is a rogue, a stupid tyrant,’ confided Hoja.

‘Thank you for the information. But I have a news for you too. I am the Sultan, and I disguise myself one day every month and go out to find the people’s opinion about me,’ revealed the stranger.

Now the Mulla could appreciate the gravity of the situation.

‘How interesting! Once a month I too sit around and tell things exactly opposite of the truth,’ explained Nasrudin.

‘Is that day today ?’ all wanted to know.

‘Yes,’ was the reply.

‘But why should you engage in such slander ?’ asked the Sultan. ‘To find the Sultan’s opinion about me,’ said Nasrudin.

27. The Seller

Nasrudin used to sell seasonal fruits at doorstep in the town. When he bring mangoes, he would say:

‘This is the cure-all fruit for any disease- ulcer, flatulence , indigestion, headache...’

When he brings apples, oranges, or papayas, he would repeat the same in a different order:

‘This is the king of fruits, it cures the eye, skin diseases, back ache or belly pain..’

‘Mulla, how come you always praise the very fruit that you sell, and denigrate all others?’ a regular customer one day wanted to know.

‘You see, I am a seller of fruits,’ replied the Mulla, not its buyer.’

28.The Rich and Poor

Nasrudin become penniless.

‘If only I had ten silver pieces,’ he mused, ‘ The jingle would have been so soothing to the ear..’ He continued to revel in the reassuring thought for a while.

Just then there appeared a mendicant before him:

‘Please give me some coins, I didn’t have anything to eat for the last two

days,' he pleaded pathetically.

'How terrible,' exclaimed the Mulla, ' They won't allow you to keep even the din of coins'.

29.The Wrong Solutions

Nasrudin was considered to be a divine by many local inhabitants. They used to approach him for the solution of many mundane problems.

One day it was the turn of a grieving farmer:

' My son is repeatedly failing in grammar in the Madrassa, the Islamic theological School,'he complained.

' Take this holy thread,' saying so the Mulla handed it over with instruction to tie it on the forearm of the boy on a full-moon night.

'And that is not all,' continued the man, 'my cow is barren for the last ten years despite all my efforts.'

' This thread will do the trick,' Nasrudin gave the farmer another thread. This time the thread was to be tied on the hindleg of the animal.

The farmer who left with joy returned with rage later :

'Your solutions are weird. With the help of the threads, my cow passed the grammar exam and my son got pregnant. Now please explain,' he roared

'It is the thread. The one to be tied on the forearm helps to pass exams, and the one for the hindleg gives plenty of milk. So you please explain ,' retorted Nasrudin, ' Why did you tie the thread meant for the boy on the cow and vice versa?'

30.Money Never Given

One day Nasrudin was seen running through the street at a mad pace. His pals wanted to know what had happened.

The Mulla said he was doing it to prevent two people from fighting each other. They wanted to know who they were.

Hoja explained the fight was about to take place between him and his wife. They wondered why such a fight should take place between them .

'It is because she had been daily demanding money for the last one year,' he said. They wondered what the money could be for.

'For buying chappals,' he said. They asked why she should be needing a pair of chappals each day.

'She does not need a pair of chappals every day,' replied Nasrudin, 'Thus I

never gave her any money.'

31.The Leader.

One day Nasrudin found himself walking behind a donkey along a narrow lane. Having got frightened, the animal gave a kick to him, as usual , with its hind leg.

' Now I know why donkeys are leaders,' realised the Mulla, 'Because they don't like any followers behind them.'

32.Tall Claims

A tramp from the east was one-day narrating in the tea- house:

'In Sinkiang the grass is taller than the bamboos. Animals can hardly eat them.'

His listeners could hardly believe the story. But Nasrudin did .

'He is right,' the Mulla supported the man, 'and in Sinkiang the horses are as tall as the mountains , so that nobody can mount them.'

Now it was the turn of the tramp to disbelieve this disclosure.

'If the animals are of such a size, what use are they?' he fumed.

'They are used for eating all that tall grass,' replied Nasrudin.

33.The Costlier Nose.

One late night when Nasrudin was still awake he heard some suspicious noise outside and decided to find out.

As he half- opened the window to look out, a burly figure emerged from nowhere in the darkness and caught hold of his beard tightly through the windowsill.

Alive to the situation instantly, the Mulla called out to his wife, now nearly awake in the bed-room, to bring a ransom of fifty dinars. But she wanted to know why.

'This man has caught my beard and unless we pay fifty dinars, he will hold me by the nose,' explained Hoja, drilling the idea into the puzzled man, 'and then we will be compelled to pay a hundred.'

Thanking his luck for getting the tip from his victim itself, the man eased his hold on the beard to look for the nose.

That was the opportunity Nasrudin wanted, to withdraw himself and to shut the window, all in a jiffy.

34.The Substitute

Nasrudin was summoned to accompany the Amir for deer hunting in the nearby forests. As they returned empty handed, he wanted to console the downcast chief:

‘It does not matter if we did not get a deer or two. After all a couple of deers is not better than half a dozen rabbits,’ pointed out the Mulla.

‘But we did not get any rabbits either,’ protested the sullen Amir.

‘That defies logic,’ exclaimed the Mulla, ‘ How do we get rabbits unless we hunt for them.’

35.None is Unimportant

Nasrudin was back from one of the regular trips he makes to the capital. As usual the village folk crowded around him to listen to the news from the distant city.

‘ It was during the prince’s wedding that I have been to the royal city,’ revealed the Mulla, ‘ the whole place bore a festive look and it was grand gala time for all.’

They wanted to know whether the Hoja was invited to the marriage party.

‘ I was taken by two soldiers in connection with the wedding,’ he disclosed.

The listeners gasped, went their own way, now more than ever before convinced about the Mulla’s claimed proximity to the royalty.

Nasrudin’ s wife was however not fully convinced. ‘You are not important enough to be taken by two soldiers for the reception,’ she said.

‘I am definitely important enough,’ protested Hoja, ‘to be rounded up by soldiers along with other tramps.’

36.Love and Hate.

Nasrudin started growing a terrible, violent beard.

‘We hate your beard,’ his mates declared unanimously.

‘I too hate it,’ the Mulla said solemnly.

‘As you hate it and we too hate it , why should you grow it after all?’ they wanted to know.

‘Because my wife too hates it,’was the reply.

37.The Cost of Soul

It was a metaphysical evening in the tea- house. Nasrudin was categorical

that soul existed.

‘Can you prove it, Mulla?’ some one asked.

‘Very much. For how much will you buy my 500 pound milch cow?’ asked Hoja.

‘For 500 dirhams,’ the man replied

‘For how much will you buy 500 pounds of meat including hide and bones?’

‘For 100 dirhams,’ replied he,

‘Then for what do you pay the extra 400 dirhams?’

‘Now I know . Soul is costlier than meat,’ acknowledged the person.

38.The Real Value

It was the usual week day at the local cattle market. ‘This goat is a million worth. But anybody can have it just for hundred gold coins,’ a seller was shouting.

Nasrudin wanted to know what is so special about it. ‘It is simple. You see millions of goats can be reared through this goat,’ was the reply.

The Mulla held out a grain of wheat in his hand. ‘In that case, let us exchange the grain with the goat because this is worth a billion. But you can have it for hundred coins only,’ claimed Hoja

The goat seller wanted to know the magic behind the grain.

‘It is simple,’ Hoja explained, ‘ Using this grain you can propagate enough to feed the entire humanity.’

39.A Polite Gesture

One day Nasrudin was on his terrace basking in the sun when a villager came and called him down to the road.

‘I asked you down to tell you that your bull gored my cow. You are liable to compensate me.’

‘In that case,’ replied the Mulla, ‘Let us go up and decide the issue. Please come up with me.’

The farmer accompanied Hoja to the top hoping to get a hefty sum in reparations.

‘About your claim,’ said the Mulla, ‘I now remember that I have no bull.’

‘But you could have told me that then and there itself,’ protested the villager.

‘That will be unfair,’ retorted Hoja, ‘If you had the courtesy to call me down to the road, I should reciprocate the gesture by inviting you to my place.’

40.The Omen

One day as Nasrudin was walking along the street with a friend when a black cat crossed their path. 'What a bad omen,' the Mulla observed on seeing it, 'We will now meet a creditor.'

No sooner, a person accosted Hoja from behind who happened to be a debtor who had borrowed a hundred dinars from Nasrudin. Now he had to explain.

'I mean , it is only the white tail of the black cat that has saved the day for us,' the Mulla told his friend on seeing the debtor.

'Please pay me a hundred dinars more urgently. I shall return both the loans of two hundred by next week,' the person pleaded.

'I was saying,' theorised Hoja, 'the best omen is not having a black cat with a white tail and not having it cross the road.'

41.Offence is Best Defence

Nasrudin decided to start farming. But neighbours warned him of the next farmer: 'What will you do if he stops water to your field, encroaches on your land and frees his cattle on your crop ?' they asked.

' What did you do when he did all those to you?' the Mulla asked.

' We drained his fields, took his cattle to the Govt. pound and gave him a sound thrashing after the event,' they stated.

' But I don't want to wait till all that is done to me,' asserted Hoja, 'I am going to drain his fields, impound his cattle and thrash him right away.'

42.The Real Reason

It was as usual at the tea- house. 'We cut the trees for firewood, so the forests vanish in no time and it no more rains and the land turns into a desert,' somebody stated.

Nasrudin was listening. 'There is no logic behind that argument,' the Mulla asserted,

They wanted him to explain. 'There are no trees in the ocean, and yet it does rain there and even when it does not, the sea has not turned into a desert,' observed Nasrudin.

43. The Truth That Matters

On the highway a cartman with a load of cotton bale asked Nasrudin for time.

‘Why do you need to know time,’ the Mulla retorted, ‘You only need to bother about the distance from here to town.’

‘O. K. Then what is the distance to town?’

‘Why bother ? All that your horse would like know is how long is should work more,’ stated Hoja.

‘How long?’ The man was anxious.

‘Till it reaches the town,’ concluded Nasrudin.

44.The Hide and Seek

No sooner had Nasrudin got out of his house, than it started raining helter-skelter. He hurried back to the house to fetch his rain coat which could not be traced even after some search.

Finally the Mulla decided to take his wife’s umbrella and got out to the portico by which time the rain had stopped suddenly.

‘Look, here is the umbrella of my wife, seeing which the rain has gone into hiding,’ exclaimed Nasrudin, ‘And there is the rain coat of mine which has taken refuge elsewhere on seeing the rains.’

45.The Flower and Vase

Nasrudin used to keep cut flowers in a rare ancient vase in the shop window.

Many people, assuming that the Mulla did not know its real value used to buy the flowers at exorbitant rates and then would casually ask for the vase to keep it for a nominal cost.

An art collector too tried this route. ‘I have paid you a fortune of hundred mohurs for the flowers. ‘Why don’t you gift me the vase as a token?’ he asked.

‘I cannot, because every time people buy the flowers on seeing the vase,’ quipped Nasrudin, ‘but you are trying to buy the vase on seeing the flower.’

46.Be Prepared

Some body stopped Nasrudin on the street and enquired. ‘How come , Mulla , I hear that you are preparing for a feast, and are now wearing new dress. Is there any wedding in your house?’

‘Not in my house hold,’ replied Hoja, ‘but there may be a wedding in some body’s house, on some day, and in that case, I should not be found wanting when it comes to celebration.’

47.He Only Gains

Nasrudin lost his donkey. He announced a reward of one silver coin for the finder. They said the sum was ridiculous as the animal was worth at least a hundred coins.

But he said an old donkey is worth only one silver piece. But they said that it was a young and energetic donkey.

He said by the time they find it, it would be old enough. But they said nobody will bother to look for it that long. He said that in that case he gains one silver coin.

48.Equality Before Law

Nasrudin was the judge for a horse- race competition where the contestants were the prince, the son of the minister, the brother of a noble and the fourth, a commoner.

‘Your test is to get on to the saddle,’ suggested the Mulla to the noble and ordered the jockey to take the animal to the other end of the ground. That was done.

‘You may kindly get on the animal and order the jockey to take it anywhere you like,’ he pleaded with the minister’s son. That was done.

‘Your Royal Highness may consider ordering the jockey,’ appealed Hoja to the prince, ‘to ride the beast on your behalf.’ That too was done.

‘You are prescribing increasingly softer and ridiculous tests for the privileged,’ protested the commoner as his turn came, ‘I insist you prescribe tough tests.’

‘I shall,’ agreed Nasrudin, ‘You are ordered to carry the horse on your back to the finishing point.’

49.Mistaken Identity

The rich Amir who has been a patient of blood pressure, diabetes etc. once invited Nasrudin to his house. ‘This is almost poison,’ said the Mulla while being served with soup.

‘Oh ! It is only an appetizer,’ said the host apologetically. ‘But the ghee in the rice is nothing less than death warrant,’ observed Nasrudin as rice was served.

‘But you can select the wheat dishes instead,’ commented the Amir almost

annoyed. 'But the fat in the oil used for the curry shall corrode your system,' remarked the irrepressible Mulla.

'But I thought I have invited you as a guest of honour,' lamented the visibly irritated Amir.

'But I thought you have invited me,' bewailed Nasrudin, 'in my capacity as a physician.'

50. My Donkey's Master

One day evening it was the usual crowd in the teahouse when somebody asked Nasrudin: 'Mulla. I hear you have been in the hospital.'

'Yes, it was for my donkey.'

'What happened to it?'

'Oh! Its master fell from it and broke his leg,' said Hoja disdainfully.

51. My Truth

One day Nasrudin went to the Magistrate and complained: 'My neighbour's boy has beaten my son into a pulp.'

'How do you say that?'

'Because it was my younger son who was involved,' was the Mulla's reply.

Next time it was the neighbour's turn to go to the Magistrate and complain:

'Now what is your defiance ?' asked the magistrate to Nasrudin.

'I deny the fight ever took place,' said Hoja.

'How do you know that?'

'Because it was my elder son who was involved,' stated Nasrudin.

52. A Stick Off Time Causes Nine Walks

Nasrudin was on his way to the next village with his family to attend a wedding reception. When they had almost reached the house, the Mulla said he had to go back as he had forgotten an essential item to bring along.

After much argument, they trekked back and as soon as they reached home, the Mulla took out his walking stick and started anew.

'You should have known,' wondered Nasrudin, 'how could have I gone all the way without a walking stick to attend a marriage?'

53. Sales and the Man

The monsoon has been unduly delayed and still there was no sign of any approaching rain. As everybody was worried, Nasrudin got out to sell

umbrellas.

‘A divine tell me that there might be heavy rains from tomorrow onwards,’ he told a gullible audience.

As he sold out all except a few umbrellas, the Mulla withdrew: ‘Who knows,’ he exclaimed, ‘if the umbrellas get sold out at this rate, it might rain , and I and family require this many umbrellas any way.’

54.A Serious Joke

One day Nasrudin was walking along the street, lost in his thoughts. Suddenly a bully, rather burly, came up from behind and gave a hard kick to the Mulla’s loin. Although he felt the pain and looked humiliated, considering the menacing posture of the offender, the Mulla made light of it.

‘You did it jokingly and not on purpose, didn’t you?’ Hoja wanted to reassure himself.

‘I did kick deliberately . I didn’t do it as a joke,’ the man growled.

‘Thank you, I too don’t like jokes,’ agreed Nasrudin.

55. Beginning of End

One day in the tea- house a sufi was giving a discourse: ‘Life is like a long journey. We start from our homes, not knowing where we are proceeding until the destination is reached,’ he was saying, ‘it is worth-while only because the suspense about the unknown destination remains.’

Nasrudin was among the listeners: ‘To keep up the suspense,’ the Mulla added, ‘a better way is to start mid way, so that the mystery about the origin remains even after you reach the end.’

‘It is impossible to start mid way,’ they all cried out, ‘for wherever you start from is the beginning.’

‘If it were so, the beginning never ends,’ professed Nasrudin, ‘and the end never begins.’

56. A Question of Trust

As Nasrudin was loitering in the weekly market, suddenly there was a chain of shouts warning people to get out of the way of a raging mad bull.

With no time left to think, Mulla ran along the road that was the least crowded. It was deserted as the bull was approaching from that road.

‘Mulla, get out of the way, the bull is about to gore you,’ onlookers warned

him frantically as he crashed into the beast.

Later they wanted to know why he did not heed their warning. 'When I think of saving myself, should I trust the sight of a beast,' asked Nasrudin, 'or the advice of man to run?'

57. No Cause for Concern

Nasrudin's donkey was stolen, yet he remained unmoved.

'Aren't you concerned?' they asked.

'Why should I worry if the donkey is stolen?' the Mulla retorted, 'Last month thieves stole all my money and jewels, but then the donkey never seemed to worry.'

58. The Teacher Knows the Least

A scholar from Khorasan came to Nasrudin's town to meet him. He described in detail about his studies, the schools he attended, his teachers and gave an exposition of his scholarship.

He wanted the Mulla to teach him more.

'All that I know is all that you have now told me,' replied Hoja, 'Now all that you know is all that I can tell you, so where is the need for it?'

59. The Proof

Nasrudin was explaining the wonders of logic to the uninitiated in the tea-house.

'For example,' the Mulla told one of his listeners, 'I am going to prove that you are not present here at this moment, using logic.'

'That is impossible,' all others said in unison.

'Do you agree that just now you are not in Bukhara, not in Samarkhand, or even in Baghdad?' he asked his listeners.

'We do,' they said unanimously.

'So if you are not in any of these places just now, you are at somewhere else, and if you are somewhere else, you are not here,' deduced the Mulla.

One of them wanted proof.

As Nasrudin slapped the man across his face, they wanted his explanation for his impudence.

'You can't blame me,' protested Nasrudin,

'When he is not here, I can't slap him sitting here, that is the logical proof

he needed.'

'That is wonderful,' they chorused.

60. In Old Age

Nasrudin went to a doctor with multiple complaints: 'I find it difficult to walk steadily,' said the Mulla.

'It is due to old age, the legs become weaker then,' said the doctor.

'But I find it difficult to digest food too,' added Hoja. 'It is due to old age, the stomach becomes weaker then,' was the reply

'But I find it difficult to do any work as I start panting for breath,' Nasrudin continued. 'That too is due to old age, as the lungs and heart become weak then,' explained the doctor.

'But I can hardly sit straight too, as my neck pains,' the Mulla persisted. 'It is also due to old age, as the spine becomes weak then,' he was told.

Now the Mulla lost his temper and abused the doctor violently.

As the injured and shocked doctor looked at Nasrudin in disbelief, Hoja explained his intemperate behavior as he went out: 'It is due to old age,' explained Nasrudin, 'the head becomes weak then.'

61. The Long and Short of It

Nasrudin was on a visit to the weekly market at the next village, two kilometres away:

'The people in this village are much shorter than those in mine,' he declared to the puzzled crowd at the square.

'How do you say that, Mulla?' asked one of the listeners.

'It is like this,' explained Hoja, 'When I left my village in the morning, my shadow was six foot long. But now you look at yours, they are only three feet.'

62. You Never Loose.

Nasrudin was approached by an oil merchant in the whole-sale market: 'If you can carry one of my two jars to my shop you get one copper. But if you take both, you get three coppers,' he said, 'so you gain one copper.'

The Mulla agreed. Following the trader, he reached the steps of his shop, where one jar slipped from Mulla's hand, fell and broke.

Hearing the din the merchant looked back and enquired what happened.

Nasrudin was nonchalant. Said he: ‘Now you have saved two coppers.’

63.A Tall Order

The Amir used to ask many people in the town to get him a horse of the height equal to the length of a wooden pole he used to give them to measure the animal.

None could do it. Either the animal was at the best a fraction of an inch taller or shorter by that much.

As Nasrudin’s turn came, he could do it in a jiffy. Every one was puzzled.

‘How could you get a horse made equal to that of the stick?’ they all wanted to know from the Mulla.

‘I couldn’t,’ admitted Nasrudin, ‘I could only get the stick made equal to that of the horse.’

64. Announcing a Loss

One day in the tea-house Nasrudin was scolding the bearer for some lapse.

Listening to the goings on, a dervish finally broke his silence: ‘Mulla, raise your voice when you announce a joyous occasion,’ he counseled, ‘but be soft in tone when you convey anything unpleasant.’

Hoja could only agree.

Much later even after the divine had finished his soup, the sausages were yet to reach him. As he yelled for the dish, the Mulla informed that a stray dog made away with it as he continued with his advice of Hoja.

‘But why didn’t you alert me then?’ the dervish roared.

‘I did it in a muted tone,’ replied Nasrudin, ‘you see, when you announce a loss you should not raise your voice.’

‘A loss you mean?’ asked the dervish intending to corner Hoja, ‘was it not a joyous occasion at least for the dog?’

‘It was indeed,’ said Nasrudin, ‘and so the dog was barking loud about the whole thing.’

65. Money Matters

A neighbour who had never been prompt in repaying in the past has been pestering Nasrudin for a loan. Although the Mulla had some gold coins to spare he used to give the man friendly excuses to keep him off.

One day it so happened that the cloth bag containing the coins kept in the

attic was found torn and empty as rats had swallowed all the gold.

By the time Hoja ventured to ferret them out, his pet cat had devoured each one of them. As Nasrudin was chasing the cat, his dog pounced upon the feline and disappeared with it to the jungle.

As the tired and dejected Mulla returned to his house downcast, he found his neighbour waiting for him with a request for the loan.

‘I have lent it out,’ told the Mulla sternly before the other man could say anything.

‘But why don’t you tell him the true rat-cat-dog story?’ admonished Hoja’s wife who was watching the goings on.

Nasrudin protested: ‘I have already told it to him the other day.’

66.An Even Contract

Nasrudin and a friend went to the oasis to collect dates.

‘We shall share the labour fifty-fifty,’ said the friend, ‘I shall gather the fruits and fill the bottom half of the sack. You fill the upper half and seal the bag.’

‘Agreed,’ said the Mulla, ‘I shall climb the bottom half of the palm, you climb the upper half of it and pluck the fruits.’

67.As You Like It (2)

Nasrudin went to a cloth- shop for buying a turban. ‘But the colour and design on the cloth is faded in places,’ stated the Mulla after examining a piece with the hope of getting it cheap.

‘But it will reappear brightly after the first wash,’ replied the shop- keeper.

‘But I want it plain, with no colours and designs,’ insisted Hoja. ‘No problem. They will disappear after the second wash,’ revealed the trader.

‘Then I shall have it after the third wash,’ was the reply.

68.The Nexus

Nasrudin used to buy milk from the villagers, make curd and sell it to the townsfolk at a price less than the cost.

Puzzled, everybody wanted to know why.

‘How can you say I buy milk dear and sell curd cheap?’ queried the Mulla, ‘I never bought any curd nor did I ever sell any milk.’

69.All Yours, Sir

In the east the cultured has a tradition of telling , ‘it is all yours, sir,’ not to offend the sensibilities of the guest. It goes like this:

‘This is a beautiful house you are living in,’ comments the guest, and asks, ‘whose is this?’ ‘It is all yours, sir,’ replies the host with extreme finesse, meaning it is his own, and not on rent.

‘ What a majestic horse is that on that corner,’ enquires the guest as per sophisticated custom, ‘whose is it?’ ‘It is yours too, dear sir,’ answers the man in all humility.

Now it was the lot of Nasrudin to play host on such a delicate occasion with his young son present.

‘What a handsome boy is this!’ complimented his guest approvingly, ‘whose son is he?’

‘My dear sir,’ revealed Nasrudin to the visitor, ‘He is your son only.’

70.The Intelligent

One day a pretender from the distant east came to the sultan’ s court to prove his scholarship. The ruler paid him a thousand gold coins, asked some impossible puzzles and gave him a month for solutions.

‘You will have more when you come back with intelligent answers,’ he was told.

‘He appears intelligent,’ remarked the lord after the man had left.

‘A stupid he will be,’ commented the Mulla as a courtier, ‘If he still comes back after getting a thousand gold coins.’

‘if not?’ asked the sultan.

‘Then,’ observed Nasrudin, ‘You will be.’

71.A Debt to Clear.

A creditor and debtor finally decided to accept the mediation of Nasrudin. ‘Come to me tomorrow,’ he told the creditor.

The creditor presented himself the next day. ‘Come to me after a week, as the debtor cannot pay now,’ the Mulla sent back the creditor that day.

The man returned the next week. ‘Please come after ten days because he might have the money only by then,’ now Hoja informed the puzzled person.

The man came back after ten days without much hope. ‘He will pay your fifty mohurs tomorrow,’ Nasrudin finally declared.

‘Tell me Mulla, how were you knowing precisely about his ability to pay me at every stage?’ the creditor was curious to know.

‘Because I know that I am today clearing my debt of a hundred mohurs,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘Which I had from him earlier.’

72.To Catch a Mocking Fish

Nasrudin was fond of angling, but was not good at it. Once he wasted the whole day, but was ashamed to return home empty-handed.

So the Mulla went to the fish- market . ‘I shall have a dozen of the fresh stock,’ he said, ‘and don’t pack them, instead hurl them at me, I will catch them with my own hands.’

‘Why Mulla , why do you want such a strange thing to be done?’ asked the surprised shop- keeper.

‘What will be more strange ,’ replied Nasrudin, ‘is to return home without catching any fish by an expert angler like me with my own hand.’

73.Honouring a Custom

Nasrudin had a bull which he has been using for farming operations. As the animal had grown old, one of his neighbours approached him:

‘Mulla,’ he said , ‘now that your ox is no more fit , you can hire mine.’ Hoja found it an agreeable suggestion.

‘Mulla,’ the man advised next time, ‘now that the animal is idle, better slaughter it and hold a feast as is the age- old custom.’ Hoja found the advice acceptable.

‘Mulla,’ the man offered for the third time, ‘now that you have killed the idle bull and laid a feast, better donate the hide to me.’

‘I will certainly, do it. As per the age-old custom the hide belongs to the owner,’ answered Nasrudin, ‘for the animal killed was the hired one, which was the idle one.’

74.The Identity

Nasrudin once bought a horse reputed to be a ferocious one, as it never allowed anybody to mount it.

‘Mulla, Can I have a ride on it for free?’ asked a neighbour.

‘Certainly not,’ Hoja replied, ‘You may even manage to ride on it, and in that case it will no more be enjoying the reputation for being ferocious, isn’t it?’

75. Prayer -Power

One day a beggar came to Nasrudin's residence. He described his pathetic story. He had no clothes except the tatters he wears and had not eaten for days.

'I am praying to the Lord for the welfare of yours and your family,' said the oldman and stood there expectantly for help. But the Mulla remained unmoved.

'Now what are you going to do about this?' the man asked Hoja losing his patience.

'I am going to join you in your prayers,' replied Nasrudin, 'I really need His munificence before I can hope to help you.'

76. The Late Customer

Nasrudin was carrying a basket full of eggs to the market on his head when he slipped and fell breaking all the eggs.

Soon a crowd gathered in amusement.

'It is strange,' mused the Mulla, 'wonder why nobody bothered as much to look when the eggs were intact, but now they have all the time to bestow attention on the most useless stuff.'

77. The Old Age.

It was the familiar crowd at the tea-house in the evening. 'As we advance in age, we lose our physical strength too,' someone made a profound observation.

'Yes, When I was young I could overtake any donkey in the village, but now I can't even catch up with my own one,' someone else supported.

'But I don't agree with the proposition,' Nasrudin interrupted. They wanted the Mulla to explain himself.

'When I was young, there was a massive grinding stone at my grandmother's place. I couldn't lift it then. It is still there,' Nasrudin narrated, 'and I can't still lift it.'

78. Time and Place

Nasrudin was asked by his wife to go to the market and fetch some milk for making curd. 'Bring it immediately. It takes time to form curd out of milk,' she added.

The Mulla soon got out to buy milk. But as his ill luck would have it, the can fell down on the road on his way back, splitting the milk on the dirty road.

The Mulla was seen by passersby sitting still on the pool of milk for a long time. He was asked why.

‘This milk was meant for making curd,’ explained Hoja, ‘and I am waiting for the curd to form.’

‘But you have been here for a long time,’ they pointed out.

‘But you see,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘It takes time to form curd out of milk.’

79.Early To Rise

Nasrudin’s mates at the tea-house noticed that he had become much exhausted of late and demanded an explanation.

‘Oh ! It is the poultry farm I have started,’ he said, ‘the birds get up early, so they crow early, so the sun rises early , so I am on my way early too.’

80.The Fancy Dress

One day as villagers in Nasrudin’s hamlet got up in the morning, they were intrigued to find large, deep and circular foot prints in the loose earth meandering through open courtyards and the village road.

Curious and terrified, they approached the Mulla for unraveling the mystery.

‘Oh ! It is the deer from the neighbouring forest. The naughty animal had tied grinding stones to its legs while walking , that is all,’ he explained.

Greatly relieved at the revelation, they left for the day only to return the next day in a much more agitated mood. They had just seen with their own eyes a wild elephant ambling along the dirt tracks in broad day light. It was now amply clear that the owner of the foot prints was none other than the elephant.

Now Hoja owed them an explanation.

‘It is the same old deer. Last time it came with grinding stones on all the fours to be-fool you,’ asserted Nasrudin unmoved, ‘Now it has come in the form of an elephant itself to hoodwink all.’

81.The Money Bag

Nasrudin was looking for a money bag in the local market. He finally selected one and asked the salesman for the price. ‘That will be forty coppers,’ said he.

‘I shall pay sixty,’ offered a rival of the Mulla.

‘But he has already selected it,’ pointed out the shopkeeper to the interjector.

‘And the deal is clinched,’ added Hoja.

‘In that case, I am paying a hundred,’ the man persisted in an attempt to spite Nasrudin.

‘Give it to him then for hundred. And out of the sum pay me fifty as damages for breach of contract.’ said Nasrudin to the owner, ‘It is better to have money without a bag, than having a bag with no money.’

82.The Will of God

One day a divine was speaking in the tea-house about the will of God: ‘Every thing happens with the will of God and there is a silver-lining even to the darkest happening,’ he declared solemnly.

‘I don’t agree,’ interrupted Nasrudin.

‘How do you say that?’ asked the sage.

‘When I ride on my donkey suppose we fall into a ditch. If I break my leg I can continue to ride on it, but if the donkey breaks its limbs can it ride on me?’ the Mulla wanted to know.

‘Have you ever heard of a donkey riding a man?’ questioned the scholar in disbelief.

‘It depends upon from which point of view you look at the will of God,’ pointed out Nasrudin, ‘the man’s or the donkey’s.’

83.The Wasted Days.

One day Nasrudin met an acquaintance on the road: ‘Why Mulla, what is the matter? You look sad,’ the friend wanted to know.

‘I had been trying to cram up an entire poem for the last ten days, but only yesterday I could I do that,’ said the dejected Hoja.

‘What is wrong with it? Some real jobs do take time,’ consoled the mate.

‘That is fine, but had I known that only yesterday I could have done that,’ lamented Nasrudin, ‘I would not have been wasting all the other nine days before that.’

84.Reason for Death

Nasrudin went to the market to buy a donkey.

‘This one can run for any distance non-stop,’ boasted the seller, ‘at forty

miles an hour.'

'But mine could do that at fifty miles an hour,' the Mulla was not impressed.

'Then you can have this animal,' the man offered another, 'it can carry a load of a ton.'

'But mine could carry much more,' said the Mulla disapprovingly.

'In that case consider this beast,' replied the man in clear annoyance, 'which can jump over a ditch of any width.'

'But mine could jump from a cliff of a hundred feet height,' stated Hoja.

'In that case why do you want to buy another?' asked the irritated man.

'Because I have to replace the dead donkey,' was Nasrudin's reply, 'which got killed while falling from a cliff at the speed of fifty miles per hour with a two ton load on it back.'

85.Chicken Feed

Nasrudin once had a poultry farm. One day a stranger came and enquired what the Mulla gave his chicken to eat.

'Oh ! Nothing much,' confided Hoja, ' they eat worms from the pig droppings.'

'I am the health inspector, and you are heavily fined and are to be prosecuted,' announced the stranger, 'now I know why there is so much of chicken disease and infection all around.'

Soon there after another stranger approached Hoja and wanted to know what he gave the chicken as feed.

'I give them almond milk and coco pudding for breakfast; chicken biriyani for lunch and fresh grape juice and ice cream for dinner,' claimed the Mulla reminiscent of his past experience.

'I am the tax-inspector, and you are heavily fined for your extravagance,' warned the visitor, 'now I know how the precious national wealth is wasted.'

A few days thereafter a third stranger approached Hoja and asked how he fed his chicken.

'Every morning I give them a copper,' replied a wiser Nasrudin, 'and they go out and eat whatever they want from the bazaar.'

86.The Problem

Once Nasrudin was basking on the beaches of the Aral Sea.

An acquaintance wanted to know how the Mulla could afford to be idle when

every body had any number of problems.

‘I have none,’ insisted Hoja. The man was annoyed.

‘Won’t you still have no problem if I threw you to the sea?’ he asked.

‘None still,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘In fact if you did that you will have a problem at hand, and not me.’

87. Your Own Rain

In the tea- house an acquaintance was telling: ‘The other day I had gone to the next village to attend the wedding of the washerman’s daughter. But the rains, though not very heavy, spoiled every thing and the ceremony got almost washed out. Everybody cursed the washerman for the rain.’

Hearing this another person said, ‘That day I too had been to the nuptials of the landlord’s daughter, and though it was not a cloud burst, the function could be solemnised only with a host of difficulty for all due to the ever-present water. Everybody grudged the landlord for the rains.’

And now it was Nasrudin’s turn: ‘That day I too had been to the capital to witness the betrothal of the prince in the palace and although it rained in a torrent, all said, ‘Oh ! What a welcome break for an auspicious occasion. The rain-gods have brought the much needed relief from the intense heat, the sky is bluer, the plants greener and air is thinner. Everybody praised the sultan for the rains.’

88. The Wisdom Bottle

Nasrudin was approached by a half bald tailor for the treatment of his baldness. The Mulla said that there was a bottle of medicine which once his father used to apply when he too was half bald like the customer. He looked for it, found the half empty bottle and told that the bottle should be returned after use, it being a heirloom. He said :

‘I am giving you a half empty bottle.’

‘Thank you for giving me a half-filled bottle,’ replied the tailor.

After a month, the angry man returned to Hoja: ‘By using your lotion now I am fully bald. You cheated me,’ fumed the man, ‘here is your empty bottle.’

‘I didn’t cheat you, my father too had become fully bald after using half the bottle,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘any way thank you for returning the full bottle.’

89. The Bargain

Idling in his mansion one day the local Amir was boasting before a small

group:

‘One day I found myself left alone and unarmed in deep forest with a ferocious lion about to pounce on me.’ he continued, ‘but it took me much effort in bare hand combat to vanquish the beast and shred it into pieces.’

Nasrudin was among the listeners.

‘One day I too found myself left alone in deep jungle unarmed with a ferocious lion about to pounce on me,’ repeated the Mulla, ‘and being no hunter I ran till I reached a swollen river, where finding no bridge or boatmen I crossed it to safety walking over an anaconda straddling the perilous water.’

Sullen, the Amir did not know how to react to this. Hoja could sense his dilemma.

‘Your Excellency, if you are prepared to leave killing of the lion to your armed camp-men,’ reacted Nasrudin ‘I am prepared to cross the river in a boat.’

90.Day and Night

It was the usual chatter in the tea-house. ‘I have not slept at all during the last seven days,’ proclaimed Nasrudin.

‘Impossible,’ they pounced on him, ‘in that case you would have been dead by now from lack of sleep.’

‘I don’t think so,’ asserted the Mulla, ‘It is sufficient for me if I sleep for sometime during the nights.’

91.On Truth and Lie

One day they were holding a lying competition in the tea-house. Taking advantage of Nasrudin’s presence, some body announced: ‘And the Mulla will sponsor the prize.’

The contest began.

‘One night I saw the sky flying away,’ some one said. ‘That was the day I saw the sea-catching fire,’ another added.

As the session was coming to an end, they all wanted the Mulla to say a few words in conclusion.

‘Friends,’ said Hoja, ‘Contest or no contest, you all know that I don’t tell lies; so.....’

‘The Mulla gets the prize sponsored by him,’ they cried aloud.

92.Unfond Memories

Nasrudin had just returned from his native village and his wife asked whether he used to remember her while he was away. 'Always,' he said.

'May be the halwa, the oriental sweetmeat I used to make made you remember me?' she was inquisitive. 'The halwa and more,' he stated disdainfully.

'May be the gossip I used to give you about neighbourhood?' 'The gossip and more,' he muttered uninterested.

'May be the money I used to save while shopping?' the wife persisted. 'The money and more,' Hoja was now really bored.

'What is all this more and more?' she demanded in clear annoyance.

'I mean the drawing of water, the hewing of wood, feeding the animals , bathing the baby.....' said Nasrudin.

93.A king's Throne

Nasrudin had long considered himself to be the king.

And when he found a bull resting on the way side, with its horns set wide apart, he instantly decided it to be his throne. Without much anticipation he went and sat down between them which provoked the beast. As it ran wildly through the streets past puzzled onlookers, attempting to shake off the intruder, the Mulla was cast aside.

A crowd gathered and wanted to know why he mounted a mad bull.

'What is so amusing about it?' Nasrudin asked, 'On the contrary it is saddening , for it is not for the king to recognise how unstable his throne is, but it is for the throne to realise how impulsive the king is.'

94.Calling Names

Nasrudin was spending a night in an inn in the desert. At night he felt so thirsty as if his mouth was burning.

As the Mulla called out 'Fire, fire,' a large no of persons assembled with water in their leather – bags. To those who were looking for fire , Hoja pointed to his mouth and shouted 'here, here.'

The crowd departed dejected.

Next night there was really a fire in the tented camp. It was again Nasrudin's turn to spot it and shout , 'water , water' this time . As none turned up the

tents were gutted.

‘Mulla, when you noticed the spreading fire why didn’t you shout ‘fire’ instead of water?’ they demanded of him later.

‘I thought that for water I should call out fire,’ explained Hoja, ‘and for fire, water.’

95.On Twins and Triplets

One day Nasrudin was wandering in the weekly market selling milk.

‘Mulla , you have good news,’ some body accosted him, ‘and as is the custom you will pay me one mohur before you listen to that.’

Hoja took out the sum but wanted details before payment to the distant acquaintance.

‘The good news is that the tailor in the next village has been blessed with twins, he wanted you to know,’ the man disclosed.

‘That is great,’ said Nasrudin, ‘now convey him the good news that my cow has delivered triplets, and collect my coin from him on my behalf.’

‘But what about mine?’

‘You can collect yours too from him, by delivering his good news to him,’ consoled the Mulla, ‘by telling him that he can have all the milk from me for his twins.’

96.The Foresight

Shopping was Nasrudin’s domestic duty. But every time he used to bring eggs home, a dozen at a time as per the demand of his wife, he used to break 2-3 out of the lot.

One day the Mulla managed to bring all the twelve intact and his wife was delighted. ‘How did you do this?’ she asked.

‘ Simple,’ replied Hoja, ‘ I bought fifteen eggs, threw away three of the lot even before I started carrying the remaing dozen from the shop.’

97.Clothes in Darkness

One night Nasrudin was a guest in a friend’s place in another village. After the dinner there ensued a long conversation between them.

‘As we are only talking,’ pointed out the host, ‘we don’t need the lamp. I shall therefore put it out so that we can save precious oil.’

The Mulla could only agree.

Once the long discussion was over, the host got up. 'I shall now lit the lamp,' said he, 'so that we can retire to bed.'

'But wait,' hurried Hoja, 'let me wear my clothes.' The host wanted to know what had happened.

'Since we were only taking , you didn't want to waste the oil in the lamp,' explained Nasrudin, 'and since it was dark, I didn't want my clothes to wear off by putting them on.'

98.The Dowry

The Amir was prepared to marry off his lame daughter for a hefty dowry.

'How much ?' asked Nasrudin.

'A thousand gold coins,' offered the Amir. 'Too much, with a thousand coins even a blind can be sent away,' said the Mulla.

'O. K. Then let us make it 500 coins,' agreed the Amir. 'That too is much , with that you can sent off a deaf girl.'

'In that case I make it hundred coins,' declared the Amir. 'That is also much, with that you can find a boy for a dumb girl,' stated Hoja.

'Then let me pay 10 coins,' the amir climbed down.

'That is more like it. For a lame girl you can pay a dowry of ten gold coins and can still retain her with you,' concluded Nasarudin.

99.Alms and The Man.

One day as Nasrudin was idling in his living room, a beggar came and called out from the front gate. Nasrudin's wife who responded from inside came out and on seeing the mendicant sent him away without any alms.

The Mulla who was observing the goings on called the fellow back.

'You should know that I am the lord of the house and not she,' he informed the now hopeful charity seeker, 'It is me who decides how to handle a beggar.'

'I am grateful for your kind words,' he replied eagerly.

'In that case, please listen further,' the Mulla ordered, 'There is nothing to give you. You may go now.'

100.At Proper Time

The festival of Idd, that follows the holy month of Ramzan when Moslems fast, is decided by the sighting of new moon. On such a day when it was expected, people were struggling for the sight of the crescent.

But Nasrudin was nowhere around. ‘Mulla, why don’t you hurry too?’ somebody asked.

‘What is the use?’ asked Nasrudin, ‘When I can see a better, brighter moon in the weeks to come with no crowd around.’

101.Nothing is For Free

Nasrudin went to the fruit market and found mango prices rather high.

‘If you carry the load from the whole-sale market, I shall give you one out of ten mangoes free,’ said the retailer.

‘If you can deliver the consignment from the commission agent at the city border, you get one-fifth free,’ the Mulla was told at the whole sale market.

So he went to the agent. There he was told to collect the goods from the owners of village orchards, and take half of it free.

‘If I climb up the trees and pluck the mangoes what do I get?’ Hoja wanted to know on reaching the farm.

‘You get all the mango stones free,’ was the logical reply he received.

102.The Distinction

A holy man was explaining the difference between passive resistance, non-violence and cowardice.

‘If a man pulls my beard should I keep silent?’ Nasrudin asked. ‘No, that is cowardice,’ stated the divine, ‘you may in that case pull down the hair on his balding pate.’

‘But that won’t prevent him from plucking my beard,’ pointed out the Mulla. ‘How do you know?’ asked the holy man.

‘Because I only pulled down the hair on his pate in the first instance, but that did not prevent him from plucking my beard,’ pointed out Nasrudin.

103.The Net Gain

One morning Nasrudin’s wife got up to find that the previous night thieves have carried away all the valuables in the house.

On closer examination it became clear to her that the Mulla had failed to bolt the doors from inside before retiring for the day the previous night.

Now she demanded his explanation for the criminal negligence. But Hoja was unmoved.

‘I knew all along that sooner than later they will come and carry away every thing . Had I then bolted the doors, they would have broken them open,’ explained Nasrudin, ‘now at least the doors have been saved.’

104.The Late Wisdom

Nasrudin was having trouble in getting his daughter married. One day a marriage-broker , as common in the East, came with people of the prospective groom.

‘She is the best cook in town,’ the broker certified, ‘the aroma of her cooking waters the mouth of all neighbours.’ The visitors listened.

‘She is excellent in singing too, the neighbours never sleep when she sings,’ the man continued. ‘In that case , can we go ahead and decide the matter right now?’ the visitors were willing.

‘No,’ Hoja was emphatic in his reply.

As the visitors left the place intrigued at the turn of events, an exasperated broker wanted to know the reason for the Mulla’s tantrum.

‘ I never knew all this about my daughter in so many years as you could know in so few minutes,’ confessed Nasrudin, ‘ and having come to know, everything about her rare qualities, what a fool should I have been, had I given it all for free?’

105. A Brother’s Share

During Ramzan, the holy month of fasting and charity, a mendicant came to Nasrudin’s door.

‘Do you believe Allah has created all men as equals?’ he asked. ‘I certainly do,’ replied the Mulla.

‘Do you believe that the Lord has ordained all men to be brothers and the earth belongs to them all equally?’ the visitor continued. ‘I definitely do,’ agreed Hoja.

‘Then don’t you think that I have my share in your property as your brother which you may give to me now?’ ‘I surely do,’ answered Nasrudin. He willingly handed over a copper to the poor man.

The man demanded an explanation for the paltry alm.

‘Don’t you believe that all men are my brothers and millions of them are like you?’ asked Nasrudin, ‘Who also have an equal share in my property?’

106.The Guests

In the east people traditionally keep telling good news or bad news each other. The trouble is that they undo one another. For example:

‘The good news is that it is soon going to be warm after this severe cold, but the bad news is that it is to happen in Baghdad.’

Again, ‘our watch dog is too good in its job to allow anybody in. The bad news is that it does not allow us also in.’

Once again , ‘My son is an expert in deep sea diving, but the bad news is that he is yet to learn swimming.’

Discussing about good and bad news on a particular day, Nasrudin announced in the tea-house: ‘There shall be a free dinner at my house for a select group of people.’

‘Who are among the lucky few?’ the eager crowd wanted to know.

‘Myself, my wife and children and some of wife’s relatives,’ was the reply.

107.The Expert

It was business as usual in the tea-house chat room. Nasrudin was boasting to the assembled pals:

‘Being an expert on earthworms I can distinguish between male and female of the species,’ he claimed.

‘How?’ the Mulla was asked. ‘Female earthworms eat male termites and vice versa,’ explained Hoja.

‘But for that you should be able to distinguish between male and female termites. Can you do that?’ they cornered him.

‘See , I am a specialist only on earthworms,’ pointed out Nasrudin, ‘and not of termites.’

108. The Season

The villagers were in dire straights after continuous crop failures with successive cold winters and hot summers with no monsoonal respite.

Finally when the sultan came to assess the damage Nasrudin was made to represent the farmer’s case.

‘Mulla, don’t you think that the weather was behaving quite strangely ?’ the

dignitary wanted to know. 'Not at all. The summers are quite warm as usual and the winters are characteristically cold too,' Hoja said in a placating tone.

'But is not the monsoon biased?' asked the sultan pointedly .

'Not at all,' asserted Nasrudin, 'It never precedes the summer nor follows the winter.'

109.A Matter of Mutuality

As Nasrudin returned from a long journey, he was approached by a neighbour with a worrisome look on his face.

'Did you see my donkey anywhere on your wayback?' he queried. 'I did,' admitted the Mulla, ' Far from here- ambling along the road aimlessly and alone.....'

'But then why did'nt you guide it back to the village?' demanded the neighbour, ' when you recognized it and found it alone?'

'Why should I ?' wondered Hoja, 'when the donkey saw me alone it even refused to recognize me.'

110.The Last Days

As Nasrudin grew old, he could walk only with the aid of a stick and used to be all smiles all the time. His old mates in the tea-house used to be puzzled at the change of his countenance.

' Mulla , what has come over you, you were never like this,' they used to taunt him.

'When I came here I was crying bitterly , but all those around me were then full of smiles. Now that I am on my way back, those around me today are supposed to weep,' explained Hoja.

' But that does not explain your smile,' they pointed out.

' Now I should have my revenge too,' said Nasrudin , that only will settle the account.'

111.The Final Days

Nasrudin had a huge iron trunk in his house padlocked and well guarded. None had ever seen it open.

'This holds my secret treasure,' the Mulla used to say while he was still alive, 'It also contains my will.' Soon after his death, his impatient relatives opened the box and took out the will placed in an envelope inside.

It read:

‘For years my descendents have served me affectionately hoping that one day they will inherit the wealth this trunk holds. For such wonderful gestures, this metal box was exclusively responsible. Thus it is my greatest treasure. Now it is all yours.’

They all looked in and found it stark empty, but could hardly do anything. Mulla Nasrudin Hoja had already become dear to the vine yards of Isphahan and Khorasan and the rose gardens of Bukhara and Samarkhand.

THE END