



On Oppression and Corruption

Persian Sufism - Iran

An anecdote of Nūshírván the Just, one of the most important kings of the Sasanian dynasty, during the second Persian empire, who is known in the West as Khosrow I (4th century).

Sa'adi of Shiraz tells that, on a certain occasion, during a hunting party with his men, while preparing the food, Nūshírván the Just ordered an assistant to go ask for salt in a nearby village.

'But pay exactly what they ask for the salt,' the king instructed, 'lest this become a habit and end up ruining the village.'

'But, sir,' inquired one of his men, 'what can be wrong with not paying for something as insignificant as salt?'

'When oppression and corruption were established in the world, it was on a tiny foundation,' replied the king, 'but they grew and grew with each person who considered such things to be insignificant, until they reached their present enormity.'

Sa'adi comments: 'If a king would want an apple from the orchard of one of his subjects, there would always be a servant who would tear out the whole tree to please his lord; and if the king demanded five eggs taken by force, his soldiers would roast a thousand hens. Tyrants and their henchmen end up leaving this world just like everyone else, but the curses of humanity will fall on them eternally.' □

Adapted by Grian A. Cutanda (2018).

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Comments

This story is an adaptation of story number 19 of the first chapter of the *Gulistan*, by Sa'adi of Shiraz, which appeared in English slightly transformed by William A. Clouston (1890).

Sources

Clouston, W. A. (1890). *Flowers from a Persian Garden*. London: David Nutt, pp. 21-22.

Associated text of the Earth Charter

Principle 13e: Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.

