

13. Sultan Ghiyasuddin in the Qazi's Court

Hundreds of years ago, in the eastern province of Bengal, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah ruled the land. His capital was Sonargaon. Sultan Ghiyasuddin was a good ruler. He ruled wisely and well. He respected men of learning. He had a deep regard for law.



One day, while the Sultan was practising with his bow and arrows, he accidentally wounded the only son of a poor widow. The wounded boy did not survive. Weeping and wailing, the poor widow went to the Qazi and told him what had happened.

The Qazi was an honest and upright man. He sent an officer to summon the Sultan to his court. When the officer reached the palace, the guards stopped him and enquired about his business. When they learnt that he had come to serve a summons on the Sultan, they were shocked. They refused to let him go inside the palace.

The officer was now in a fix. The guards did not allow him to enter the palace, but he knew that he could not return without serving the summons. The Qazi would not take him back. He had to find a way of reaching the Sultan somehow. What could he do? He thought and thought.

At last, he began to sound the Azan, the call for the prayer, loudly, just outside the palace. It was not yet time for the prayer. When the Sultan heard the loud untimely call, he was greatly surprised. He ordered that the man giving the call should be brought before him immediately.



His soldiers rushed out of the palace gates, caught the officer and took him to the Sultan within moments.

When the officer knelt before the Sultan, he was trembling with fear. But he mustered all his courage and explained why he had given the call for Azan. Then, with shaking hands, he gave the summons to the Sultan. Sultan Ghiyasuddin took it without making any comment. He read the summons and told the officer to go back to the Qazi. He announced that he would appear in the Qazi's court the next day.

The next morning, the Sultan got ready to appear before the Qazi. He hid a sharp sword in his robe and set out.

The courtroom was packed with people. Everyone was eager to see what would happen. The Qazi entered and took his place on the high seat of honour. In a little while, Sultan Ghiyasuddin entered the courtroom. Everyone stood up to show respect to the Sultan, but the Qazi did not get up. The Sultan stood in the docks and the trial began.

The widow presented her complaint. The Qazi took note of all the evidence and in a grave voice, addressed the Sultan.



“You are guilty of causing the death of the only son of this poor widow. According to the law, you must pay a fine for this offence. I order you to do that without delay.”

The Sultan accepted the judgement and apologised to the widow. He arranged to pay the fine immediately. The widow felt satisfied that the offence was brought home to the offender.

When the case was over, the Qazi got up from his high seat of honour. Respectfully, he bowed to the Sultan and requested him to take his seat.

The Sultan then drew the hidden sword from his robes and told the Qazi, “I am happy that you did not waver in your duty. You did not hesitate to punish me. Otherwise, I would have beheaded you with this sword.”

The Qazi then put his hand under the cushion where the Sultan was seated and brought out a whip. He said, “Your Majesty, I am happy because you obeyed the law. Otherwise, I would have whipped you in this court.”

The Sultan then got up and embraced the Qazi. “Thank God, we both did our duty!” he said.

Everyone present in the courtroom praised the two great men.

- **wailing** : crying and sobbing long and loudly.
- **upright** : honest, just.
- **summon** : to order someone to come, to send for someone.
- **summons** : a written notice ordering someone to appear in court.
- **fix** : Here, ‘fix’ means a difficult or awkward situation.
- **docks** : an enclosed space in a court of law, for the accused person.
- **offence** : crime, a wrong deed.
- **offender** : a person who has done something wrong or illegal.
- **waver** : falter, hesitate, became unsure.

Things to do :

1. Answer the following questions with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ :

- (a) Did the Sultan want to kill the widow’s son?
- (b) Did the officer give the summons to the Sultan?
- (c) Did the Sultan appear in the Qazi’s court?
- (d) Was the Qazi’s judgement fair?
- (e) Did the Sultan obey the law?
- (f) Was the Sultan happy with the Qazi?

2. Give reasons for the following :

- (a) The Sultan hid a sword in his robe.
- (b) The Qazi hid a whip under the cushion.
- (c) The widow was satisfied.
- (d) Everyone praised the Sultan and the Qazi.

3. Give opposites of the following words :

- * eastern * untimely * appear
- * respect * accepted * present

