



Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) had a neighbour, in Kufah, who was a shoemaker. This neighbour would work the entire day, only returning home when night had set in. When returning home, he would bring with him some meat that he would cook, or fish that he would prepare for his supper. After eating his supper, he would drink liquor. As the liquor would begin to influence him, he would sing the following words:

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*They have let me go to waste (by forsaking and neglecting me), and what a youngster they have let go to waste! (I am a youngster who could have been of benefit) at the time of adversity and defending the openings (in the border of the state).*

The shoemaker would continue to drink and sing, repeating these words, until sleep would eventually overcome him.

As far as Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) was concerned, he would spend the entire night engaged in performing salaah. Hence, he would hear the singing of his drunken neighbour on a daily basis.

Once, a few nights passed when, contrary to the norm, Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) did not hear the singing of his drunken neighbour. This filled Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) with concern, causing him to make enquiries regarding the shoemaker. On enquiring, someone mentioned to him, “The police arrested him a few nights ago. Hence, he is in prison.”

The following morning, after performing the Fajr Salaah, Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) mounted his mule and proceeded to speak to the governor. On arriving, Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) sought permission to enter, to which the governor responded by instructing (out of respect and reverence for Imaam Abu Haneefah [rahimahullah]), "Allow him to enter, and escort him in while he is mounted. Do not let him dismount and walk on the floor."

When he entered, the governor made space for him in the gathering, and asked Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) whether there was any need of his that he could fulfil. Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) replied, "I have a neighbour who is a shoemaker. He was arrested by the police a few nights ago. My wish is for the governor to release him." The governor acceded to the request of Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) exclaiming, "Yes - and every person who was arrested from that night until today (will also be released)!" Saying so, he ordered for all these prisoners to be released.

Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) then departed, mounted on his mule, while the shoemaker walked behind him. Finally, when Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) dismounted, he addressed his neighbour, and asked, "O youngster! Have we allowed you to go to waste?" The shoemaker replied, "No! You have saved me and shown consideration towards me! May Allah Ta'ala reward you abundantly for honouring me and fulfilling my right as your neighbour."

The shoemaker then repented from his evil ways and never again returned to his vices.

*(Taareekh Baghdaad vol. 15, pg. 496)*

### **Lessons:**

1. In numerous ahaadeeth, Rasulullah (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) stressed the importance of honouring the neighbour. Hence, Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) not only tolerated his neighbour when he got drunk and sang through the night, but went the extra mile to assist him in his hour of need.

2. When it comes to softening the heart of a person and motivating him towards righteousness, then in many cases, showing the person good character is far more effective than merely 'lecturing' him or reprimanding him. Hence, after many years of liquor addiction, it was the kindness and consideration of Imaam Abu Haneefah (rahimahullah) that melted this man's heart, prompting him to change his life.