
Chapter – 8

The Tale of Melon City

The poem The Tale Of Melon City is a narrative poem about how a melon, following a custom, was chosen to become the king of a state. It narrates in an amusing tone the events leading to such a situation when no other but a melon was coronated as the king.

The poem begins with the description of a just and peace loving king ruling an ancient state. Once the king planned to construct an arch, spanning the main thoroughfare. The purpose of the arch was to improve the onlookers morally and provide aesthetic joy to them. The plan of the king was executed immediately.

One day the king was passing by the side of the thoroughfare. The arch was constructed very low so that the king's crown struck against it and fell off. Immediately the king responded negatively. He felt dishonoured. He decided to hang the chief of builders holding him responsible. Necessary arrangements were made for the hanging.

The chief of builders in his defence shifted the responsibility to the labourers. On hearing so, the king adjourned the proceedings for a moment, then decided to have all the labourers hanged. According to the labourers, it all happened due to faulty size of the bricks. So, the king summoned the masons. They, in their turn, put the blame on the architect. The king decreed to hang the architect. The architect reminded the king that he had made certain amendments to the plans when they were shown for his approval. In a way, the architect indirectly put the blame on the king. The argument of the architect left the king completely confused. Considering the matter to be intricate, the king sought the advice of a wise man. He ordered to bring to him the wisest man in the country.

The king's men could find out the wisest man and, accordingly, he was brought to the court of the King. He was so old that he could neither walk nor see. According to the old man, the real culprit was the arch. It was the arch that hit the crown violently and it fell off. So, the arch was to be hanged. The arch was led to the scaffold. At that time, a councilor said that it would be very shameful act to hang the arch that hit the king's head.

The crowd was getting restless. In order to appease the mass, the king commented that someone must be hanged as it was the public demand. The noose was set up. It was somewhat high. Each man was measured turn by turn. Interestingly, there was one man who was tall enough to fit in the noose, and it was the King. So, his majesty was hanged.

The ministers heaved a sigh of relief that they were able to find someone, otherwise the crowd might have risen in revolt. Now the issue came up as to who would be the king of the state. The old custom was invoked. They sent out the heralds to proclaim that the next to pass the City Gate

would choose the King. An idiot happened to pass the City Gate. The idiot was asked who was to be the king. The idiot uttered Melon. Actually that was his pet answer to all questions since he liked melons. The ministers coroneted a melon and placed the melon king reverently at the throne.

All these events took place long long ago. Now when someone asks the people how is it that their King appears to be a melon, they reply that if His majesty takes delight in being a melon, that is all right with them. They have no right to say what he should be as long as he leaves them in peace and liberty. It seems that the principles of non-interference are well established in that state.