

Story 2190 (1999 Tape 15)

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Respective Sale Prices for a Sword and for the Broom of Nasreddin Hoca's¹ Wife²

One day Nasreddin Hoca went to the marketplace. There he observed a man holding up a sword to sell for 50 gold liras. Surprised that anyone could expect to sell a sword for 50 liras, Hoca went to the seller to inquire about that matter. He said to that man, "Efendi,³ that sword should cost only 10 liras--certainly no more than 15. How can you ask 50 liras for it? What is so unusual about that sword?"

"This is a very special sword," answered the seller.

¹A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times he was also a teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. In the Republic, schoolteachers are required to have secular rather than religious training--though occasionally a teacher or professor may still, for sentimental reasons, be called hoca. Nasreddin Hoca has for centuries been the most beloved comic folk character of the Turks.

²A more widely known variant of this tale is the one which follows it immediately: ATON 2191.

³Efendi was formerly an honorific added to the first name of a distinguished man: Ahmet Efendi. By the mid-20th century, the prestige of the term had become so eroded that it was applied only to servants and children.

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may appear to be only 1 meter long, but when you draw it from its sheath, it becomes 2 meters long."

"I see," said Hoca. "What else? Does it have any other special qualities?"

"That one quality is enough to make it valuable. It needs no others."

"Very well," said Hoca. Then he hurried home. There he grabbed his wife's broom and returned to the marketplace with it, where he began shouting, "A broom for sale! A broom for sale for 100 gold liras!"

Everyone who heard this gathered around the Hoca, supposing that he had gone mad. "O Allah!" they exclaimed "Has our Hoca lost his wits completely? Listen to him demanding 100 golden liras for a single broom! Why should it be so expensive?"

Nasreddin Hoca asked them, "Have you seen the man is selling a sword?"

The crowd answered, "Yes, we have seen him."

"Did you hear how much he wanted for that sword?"

"Yes, we did," the crowd answered.

Hoca said, "His sword will become 2 meters long when it is drawn from its sheath. Well, this broom becomes 5

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meters long whenever my wife throws it at me. Truth to tell, I should ask 150 to 200 gold liras for it. The sword can reach only 2 meters, but this broom can reach 5 meters."