



حبر أبيض
WHITE INK



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“The journey of Nasir Khosrow and defaming of the Image of Arabs in the Persian Literature”

When talking about the journey of Nasir Khosrow in his famous book "Safar Nameh", which is considered one of the classic literary works that appeared in the fourth Hijri century/ eleventh Gregorian century, two important things have to be indicated. The first one of them is the political situation in the eastern part of the Islamic state (Iran, Iraq, and the Levant) and the circumstances of writing that journey. The other thing is the personality of Nasir Khosrow and the scientific and practical characteristic of that personality. When looking into and searching the history pages, we find that the Islamic state during that historical period was going through a state of severe political turmoil. This was, on one hand, due to the weakness of the Abbasid Caliph's position in Baghdad. On the other hand, there was also a state of fragmentation and the great political division in the east of the caliphate center, in addition to the emergence of many countries that lived a state of the division of powers as some of them expanded on account of the other. The most important of all is the state of intellectual and doctrinal chaos, and the spread of the various Islamic sects there, which were rife with temptations, heresies and deviations. Each of these sects believed that it followed the clear truth and the straight path. They were seeking the truth, but they could not be further from the truth. The reality was represented by the famous verse of poetry:

**“To Laila, they may claim to relate
When in fact, they never truly relate”**

In the midst of that politically unsettled atmosphere and the intellectual and cultural changes, Nasir Khosrow Al- Qubadiani arose: “Who held several positions in the Ghaznavid state. After the change of the political conditions in that geographical spot and the success of the Seljuks to eliminate most of the eastern statelets and to unify them under their authority, Khosrow joined the ruler of Khurasan for a sometime. He, like the rest of people at that time, bewildered with regard to knowing the true path. He became acquainted with the philosophy sciences and discussed the opinions of Al- Farabi and Ibn Sina. He looked around and found that controversy existing, so he tried to reach the truth. Therefore, in order to reach that goal, he took all ways that were possible for him. He referred to the Holy Qur'an, hadith books, as well as the Torah and the Gospel, and even the books of the Indian doctrines in their original language. He carefully examined Avesta and Zand Fest. He contacted religious scholars from Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Magians and Sabians, and discussed with them some issues in which no opinion was found. It seems that skepticism was his guideline. However, many people considered him as an Ismaili at a time when Ismaili Shi'a preachers were active during the period in which he lived.

As for his journey that lasted for about seven years, he toured the Arabian Peninsula and passed through its provinces from Al- Hijaz, passing through Najd, then Al- Ahsa, and then going to Basra. The journey was not a historical record of the cities and places he visited. He, rather, had comments and insinuations that he directed against Arabs, describing them, on his return from Mecca, as thieves and criminals who were fighting each other. This includes his description of the policing system in wild roads saying, “We stayed for days moving from a sentry from an Arab tribe to another as if we were commodities. Danger was in every step we took in these abandoned deserts... Then we crossed that strange place, sentries did not see any lizard without killing and eating it, then, they drank camel milk... As for me, I neither could eat any kind of lizards nor drink camel milk”. In another passage he said, “One of the tribesmen told me that all over their life, they only drank camel milk. They were hungry, ignorant, and naked. Any one came to pray had a sword and shield which was normal...” He also described Arabs in another statement: “I have seen that the Bedouins of these places could wait for a whole year without letting the water touch their bodies.” I saw some Bedouins in this desert of Arabs who did not know water... They drank camel milk and showered with its urine. Every time I asked about water, they answered me saying if you see water, tell us where it is. Some of them have neither seen bathrooms nor running water in their lives...”.

In fact, the words of Nasir Khosrow are very much contradicted. In addition, had it not been for those sentries, he would not have been able to survive in the abandoned desert without a guide or a sentry to protect him from enemies, whether humans or vermin. As for eating lizards and drinking camel milk, it is something that Persians were not used to. Khosrow was aware of the hardships of living in the deserts where there is no water or flowing rivers. Therefore, comparing it to other countries where there are flowing rivers and abundant water is a kind of lack of credibility in respect with presenting and conveying facts. His impressions did not come from complete left field. The arrogant point of view against the Arabs is a generational transfer in Persia. Furthermore, and the stereotype is the same without change or alteration from the view of the Persian element.