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Haroun's Creatures and God's Creatures

There was once a bektashi¹ who lived during the reign of Haroun al Raschid.² This dervish went once to visit the land of that ruler. While he was walking in the street of that land, he asked a person near him, pointing at some strangers approaching him, "Who are those people who are approaching us?"

His companion said to him, "They are the creatures of Haroun.

As the bektashi was very shabbily dressed, he opened his hands and turned his face up to the sky, and addressing God, spoke thus: "O, God first take a look at Haroun's creatures and then take a look at me, your own creature."³

¹The attraction of most orders of dervishes is their reverence, their piety. Mystics, seers, performers of miracles, they are usually viewed as holy men. Not so with the Bektashi sect. They are always pictured as unorthodox, as daring to challenge the religious beliefs and practices; they often refused to fast; they drank alcoholic beverages; they blasphemed. In a strict social pattern their behavior may be a projection of the suppressed rebelliousness felt by the average man--a wish fulfillment.

²Anachronism. The fifth and most famous of the Abbasid caliphs (786-809). He brought Baghdad to its highest point culturally. Often a character of folk tales, he is best known for his appearance in tales of The Thousand and One Nights; Haroun appears as a character in many folk tales.

³Rebuking God in this manner is, of course, blasphemous, but this is typical of the behavior attributed to the bektashi sect.