

# ["the sultan’s dilemma”](https://assignbuster.com/the-sultans-dilemma/)

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In The Sultan’s Dilemma, there is the theme of clashing traditions with modern values.

The sword is used in the play as an instrument tyranny and its administration of justice. The sword, in this play, is shown as an instrument that can be used to carry out justice. At the same time, if abused it can be used to violate the same laws it is used to fulfill. Al-Hakim used the sword to depict his dilemma that of being torn between laws, and the application of using the sword as the ultimate tool of carrying out the rulings. This implies that the sword can be seen as a tool of delivering justice.

At the same time, it can be used to bring end to evil deeds or in commission of injustices. The play represents the inner conflicts that exist in the modern times, well disguised in early thirteenth century societies. The indecisive Sultan has inner struggles of either fulfilling the wishes of his subject or administering justice. The depictions of the Sultan as a slave signifies the enslaving of leaders who use force to support their rule and freedom . They are, therefore, enslaved by their own methods.

The play is a strong advocacy for the use of negotiations as a means of resolving issues. This is driven home when the sultan and the courtesan spend the night in her house carrying out discussions. The play has reversal situations and ironical parallelisms which the author used to bring out the dilemma. This can be seen when the Sultan turns out to be a slave and has to be auctioned so that his new owner can release him. The ironies include the fact that the condemned man had once traded the Sultan as the slave and now, before his execution, he has to auction the one man who can reverse the judgment. In other words, he has power of his judge while he is still condemned (Lawall, MacK and Lawall).

This is ironical since the Sultan has the powers to forgive him and, therefore, save his life. Nonetheless, he has to auction him in a public forum. This is a situation that cannot happen in reality, yet the author used this irony to draw parallelism between the condemned and his judges. He also cleverly puts his readers in an imagination dilemma similar to that experienced by the wine merchant and shoemaker. They cannot help, but think what they would do with the Sultan as their slave. The leaders are put in a similar situation imagining on behalf of the condemned man what he should do with his new powers as the sultan’s auctioneer.

The ironies do not end there. We are then taken into a situation where the Sultan is bought by a courtesan. The courtesan is seen as an immoral being in this society, yet she helps the Sultan make a moral choice. Al Hakim’s play is full of moral parallelism that in the end helps the Sultan escape from his dilemma. By doing this, the Sultan is the ultimate symbol of authority and freedom, yet himself a slave, who freedom lays on the goodwill of one of his subjects.

Additionally, the same man that he only can save is put in a position where he has powers over him as his auctioneer.