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BY

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## The So-called Pahlavi Origin of the Sindibâd-nâmeḥ, or, The Story of the Seven Wise Masters.

[Read 28th June 1892. *The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Telang in the Chair.*]

Like the story of Kalila and Damna, known in Europe as the "Fables of Bidpâi," the story of the Sindibâd-nâmeḥ, known in Europe as the "Story of the Seven Wise Masters," has gone through several versions, both in the East and in the West. Mr. W. A. Clouston, in the *Athenæum* of 12th September 1891 (p. 355), says that all these different versions have a common origin, and that they also, like the story of Kalila and Damna, come from the Pahlavi, through an Arabic version now lost.

Mr. Clouston has given an epitome of this story of Sindibâd in his *Popular Tales and Fictions* (Vol. I. (1887), Introduction, p. 9n. 1). Professor Forbes Falconer has published an "Analytical Account of the Sindibâd-nâmeḥ" in Vols. XXXV. (pp. 169-180) and XXXVI (pp. 4-18, 99-108), (new series) of the *Asiatic Journal* (1841). We find the story reproduced by the pen of Mr. A. Rogers in the January number of this year of the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* (pp. 160-191). Mr. Clouston has also published a separate book on the subject of the Sindibâd-nâmeḥ, which, being "privately printed," is not available.

The object of this paper is to show, that, if, as Mr. Clouston says, Pahlavi is the origin of this wide-spread story of "The King, the Damsel, and the Prince," it is the old Persian story of Kâus, Soudâbeh, and Siâvash, that has given rise to it. In the Pahlavi literature now extant, we find no story of the kind, but we find a trace of it in the Shah-nâmeḥ of Firdousi, who, let it be remembered, has

collected, as he himself says in the preface of his great epic, the materials of his poem from a Pahlavi work.<sup>1</sup>

Before giving Firdousi's version of the story, I will give here for comparison the Sindibâd-nâme story as given by Mr. A. Rogers. (*The Asiatic Quarterly Review* of January 1892, New Series, Vol. III., pp. 162-163):—

“An Indian King, by name Gârdis, was for a long time childless, but by dint of fasting and prayer, at length obtained a son, who was destined, according to the horoscope cast at his birth, to pass through a great misfortune and become famous in his age. Great care was taken with the young prince's education, but for some years to no purpose, until he was placed by the king, on the advice of his seven *Vazirs* or Ministers, in the charge of a learned man of the name of Sindbâd. Under this person's tuition, the prince in six months became a model of learning and wisdom, and was about to be presented to his father under this more favourable aspect, when the time for undergoing the calamity, predicted at his birth, arrived. He was warned by his preceptor accordingly, that, in order to counteract the evil fate that was lying in wait for him, he must be silent for seven days, whatever the king might say or do to him . . . . . One of the king's wives, who had fallen in love with the prince, begs the king's permission to take his son into the private apartments, on the pretence that she might extort from him the secret of his remaining silent. Leave is given, and she takes the opportunity to declare her passion to the prince, and offers to raise him to the throne by poisoning his father. The offer being in-

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بشهرم یکی مهربان دوست بود. : تو گفتی که با من یکی دوست بود<sup>1</sup>  
مرا گفت خوب آمد این رای تو. : به نیکي گراید همی پای تو  
لبشته من این نامه پهلوی. : به پیش تو آرم مگر نغوی  
گشاده زبان و جوانیت هست. : سخن گفتن پهلوانیت هست  
تو این نامه خسروان باز گوی. : بدین جوی نزد مهان آبروی  
چو آورد این نامه نزدیک من. : برافروخت این جان تاریک من

*Vuller*, I., p. 10, lines 164-169. (*Mohl*, I., p. 20, lines 164-169).

dignantly refused, the woman, afraid of the possible consequences when the prince was allowed to speak again, determines to be beforehand with him, and rushing into the king's presence, accuses the prince of making improper proposals to her and threatening his father's life. Shocked at the revelation, which he fully believes, the king sends for the executioner and orders the prince's execution . . . . .

. . . . The king's *Vazirs*, hearing of the king's order, hold a consultation, and determine to prevent its being carried out by one of their number going to their master on each of the seven days for which silence has been imposed on the prince, until the latter may be at liberty to defend himself, and relating tales to the king to expose the deceitfulness and viles of women. Then commences the struggle between the *Vazirs* and the desperate woman, the king on each day putting off the prince's execution in consequence of the impression made on his mind by the *Vazirs'* stories, and the next day reiterating his order for his son's death on the tears and entreaties of his treacherous wife. The former, however, manage to tide over the seven days of silence; and finally the prince, allowed to speak for himself, turns the tables on his wicked step-mother, and turns out a model of wisdom and excellence."

Now the episode in Firdousi's *Shâh-nâmeh*, to which I think this story of *Sindibâd* is similar in its main features, though not in some of its details, which, I think, are added and worked out in the subsequent versions, runs as follows :—

*Kâus*, the king of *Irân*, had a prince by name *Siâvash*, who was as beautiful as a fairy. He thanked God very much for the birth of this son, but those who calculated the movements of the heavens found that the stars were hostile to this infant. They revealed this to the king and advised him on the matter. *Rustam*, who was a general of the king, took the prince under his protection and instruction. He took the prince to *Zaboulistân*, and brought him up in a manly way as befitted a king's son. He taught him the arts of war and chase, and the ways of ruling justly. He taught him all the virtues, and in short made him one who had none as his equal in the world. Then, at the special desire of the prince, *Rustam* took him to the

royal court, where he was enthusiastically received by king Kâus and his courtiers. The festivities in honour of the prince continued for seven days. The prince thus lived in ease at the court of his royal father for seven years, during which period Soudâbeh, the step-mother of the prince, fell in love with him, and, under the pretence of affection for the boy as a mother and of a desire to entertain him and to give him presents, requested the king to send Siâvash to the apartments of women. At the desire of the king, Siâvash paid three visits to the ladies' apartments. The queen made improper proposals to him, and he left her rooms indignantly. Soudâbeh being afraid of the consequences, if the prince complained of her conduct, tore off her clothes and raised an alarm. Kâus went to her apartments, where she complained of Siâvash having tried to commit violence upon her. The king said to himself: "If all this is true I will cut off the head of Siâvash." He then sent for Siâvash, who stated all the facts. The queen accused him of falsehood, and said that he had gone to such an extent of violence, that *enciante* as she was, she expected a miscarriage. The king found that Soudâbeh had all kinds of strong perfumes and scents over her clothes and body. Then calling Siâvash by his side he did not find over his body any trace of those scents and perfumes, which, he said, would have been found over his body had he committed any violence upon the body of Soudâbeh as alleged. Thus he found the prince innocent. Soudâbeh then tried other means to move the feelings of king Kâus in her favour and against the prince. She, by means of some drugs, made a maid-servant who was *enciante* miscarry. The maid gave birth to two still-born infants. Soudâbeh then pretended that it was she herself who had given birth to the still-born infants, and raised a cry of grief and sorrow. The king ran to her apartments, and she reminded him of her former complaint, *viz.*, that she expected a miscarriage from the violence of Siâvash. This made the king again suspicious about the conduct of Siâvash. He called the sages, who knew the stars, before him, and asked them to find out the secret. They consulted the stars for seven consecutive nights and traced out the truth. The woman, who was the real mother of the still-born infants, was arrested, but she denied any knowledge of the

matter. The king called Soudâbeh in the presence of the sages. She accused them of being partial to the prince, who was supposed to be very powerful. She then wept and cried bitterly. This affected the heart of the king, and he again became suspicious about the whole affair. He then called an assembly of the Mobeds of his court, and submitted the whole matter before them for advice. They advised the king to try the case by the ordeal of fire. Soudâbeh, the queen, being asked to go through the ordeal, said, that she had showed her innocence by presenting before the king the two infants, that were born dead through the miscarriage caused by the violence of Siâvash, and that, therefore, it was the duty of the latter to prove his innocence by going through the ordeal. Siâvash went through it unhurt and proved his innocence. The king, thereupon, condemned the queen to death and sentenced her to be hanged. But then Siâvash interfered on her behalf and persuaded the king to forgive her.

This then is the story of the Shâh-nâme which resembles that of the Sindibâd-nâme. We will here enumerate the points of striking resemblance between these two stories:—

1. The son of the Indian King Gârdis was destined, according to his horoscope, to pass a life of misfortune. So was Siâvash, the son of the Irânian King Kâus, destined, according to the astrologers, to pass a life of misery.

2. As the Indian prince was entrusted to Sindibâd to be trained and educated, so was the Irânian prince Siâvash entrusted to Rustam.

3. The Indian queen, who had fallen in love with the young prince, asked the king to send him to her apartments on the pretence, that she might extort from him the secret of his observing silence. According to the Shâh-nâme, the Irânian queen Soudâbeh asked Kâus to send Siâvash to the private apartments of women on the pretence of entertaining him and presenting him with gifts, and of making him choose a partner for his life.

4. The Indian king grants permission to the queen to take the prince into the ladies' apartments. There the queen reveals her love to the prince, and offers, if he returned her love, to raise him to the

throne by poisoning the king. The Irânian king, according to the *Shâh-nâmeh*, also grants permission to Soudâbeh to take Siâvash to the ladies' apartment where she reveals her love to him, and promises, if he returned her love, to give him crowns and thrones, and threatens, in case he did not return her love, to deprive him of the throne and to ruin him.

5. On the Indian prince refusing the offer with indignation, the queen raises an alarm and accuses the prince before the king of improper offers. We find the same in the case of the Irânian prince.

6. The seven *Vazirs* of the Indian king intercede on behalf of the prince for seven consecutive nights and persuade the king to postpone the execution of the prince. According to the *Shâh-nâmeh* we have no seven *Vazirs*, but we find a number of sages who know the stars. They consult the stars for seven consecutive nights to find out the truth about the miscarriage complained of by Soudâbeh as the result of the attempted violence of Siâvash. The number seven plays a prominent part in the story of Siâvash in the *Shâh-nâmeh*. Siâvash on his return from Rustam after completing his education was entertained by the king for seven days. It was for seven years that Kâus tried the ability of Siâvash before putting him at the head of the province of Mawaralnahar (The Transoxania). Again it was for seven years that Soudâbeh entertained love for Siâvash before revealing it to him.

7. The last time that the Indian queen comes before the king to defend herself, she accuses the *Vazirs* of being in league with the prince and of saying falsehoods. So does the Persian queen accuse the sages, who met for seven consecutive nights, of being afraid of Siâvash and of saying what was not true.

8. According to one account of the *Sindibâd-nâmeh*, the Indian queen, who, in the end, was found guilty, was pardoned by the king at the intercession of the prince. So was the Persian queen, who was condemned to death by the king, pardoned at the request of the Persian prince.

Now there is one great difference between the story of the Sindibâd-nâmeh and that of the Shâh-nâmeh. It is this, that we do not find in the Shâh-nâmeh any allusion to the stories told to the king each successive night by one of the seven *Vazirs*. But in place of that, we merely find that the sages met together for seven nights. According to the Sindibâd-nâmeh story, it is the alternative stories of the *Vazirs* and the queen that allay and excite the feelings of the Indian king. According to the Shâh-nâmeh story, it is the tricks of the queen and their exposures that alternately excite and allay the suspicions of the Persian king. At first she tears off her clothes and raises an alarm to excite the king's suspicions, which are soon removed, when he finds no trace, on the body of Siâvash, of the strong perfumes with which she had covered her body. Then Soudâbeh resorts to the trick of a pretended miscarriage, which again makes the king a little suspicious. The sages after their seven nights' consultation soon expose the mischievous plot. Soudâbeh, in her turn, again weeps bitterly, and accuses the sages of being afraid of, and partial to, the prince. This moves the king again a little in her favour. He calls a council of his *Mobads* to discover the whole truth. They advise an ordeal by fire. Now these steps and countersteps, taken by the queen on one hand, and the sages and *Mobads* on the other, as described in the Shâh-nâmeh, are replaced by the stories of the seven *Vazirs* in the Sindibâd-nâmeh.

Now, I think, that this narration of stories by the seven *Vazirs* and the queen is a foreign element added to the Pahlavi story by the Arabs who were very fond of spinning out a long story in the form of petty stories narrated every night, as we see in the case of the well-known Arabian Nights. I think I am borne out in this view by the very fact—and that an important fact—that, as pointed out by Mr. Clouston, the stories of the seven *Vazirs* and the queen vary greatly in the different versions—Syriac, Greek, and Persian—of the Sindibâd-nâmeh. The main features in the story remain the same in all the different versions of the Sindibâd-nâmeh as in the original Persian story, but in the stories of the *Vazirs* and the queen, which I consider to be the foreign element added by the Arabs, as



was their wont, we find a great difference in the different versions of the Sindibâd-nâmeh.

Thus, it appears to me, that if the source of the story of "The King, the Damsel, and the Prince," as described in the Sindibâd-nâmeh, be Pahlavi, we find it in the story of Kâus, Soudâbeh, and Siâvash of the Shâh-nâmeh, which is, as the poet himself says, written from Pahlavi sources.

It appears, that the story of Siâvash is more ancient than the times of the Sassanian period, when the Pahlavi books, from which Firdousi took his materials, were written. We find an allusion to the unsurpassed beauty and innocence of Siâvash in the older writings of the Avesta. In the Avesta writing, known as the Âfrin-i-Spitâmân Zarathusht, we read the following passage:—"Srirem keharpem anâstravanem bavâhi yatha kava Siâvarshânô, *i. e.*, may you be as beautiful and innocent as Siâvash." An allusion to the unparalleled beauty of Siâvash is also made in the Pazend Âfrin, where one is desired to be as beautiful as Siâvash (Hudeed bêd chûn Siâvakhsh).