



The Relations of Ssidi Kur – 4.

The Magician with the Swine's Head

Folk-Lore And Legends: Oriental

Arabic

Advanced
16 min read

When the Son of the Chan had, as before, seized upon Ssidi, and was carrying him away, Ssidi spoke as formerly, but the Son of the Chan shook his head, without uttering a word, and Ssidi began the following relation:—

“A long while since there lived in a happy country a man and a woman. The man had many bad qualities, and cared for nothing but eating, drinking, and sleeping. At last his wife said unto him, ‘By thy mode of life thou hast wasted all thine inheritance. Arise thee, then, from thy bed, and while I am in the fields, go you out and look about you!’

“As he, therefore, according to these words, was looking about him, he saw a multitude of people pass behind the pagoda with their herds; and birds, foxes, and dogs crowding and noising together around a particular spot. Thither he went, and there found a bladder of butter; so he took it home and placed it upon the shelf. When his wife returned and saw the bladder of butter upon the shelf, she asked, ‘Where found you this bladder

of butter?’

To this he replied, ‘I did according to your word, and found this.’

Then said the woman ‘Thou went out but for an instant, and hast already found thus much.’

“Then the man determined to display his abilities, and said, ‘Procure me then a horse, some clothes, and a bloodhound.’ The wife provided them accordingly; and the man taking with him, besides these, his bow, cap, and mantle, seated himself on horseback, led the hound in a leash, and rode forth at random. After he had crossed over several rivers he espied a fox. ‘Ah,’ thought he, ‘that would serve my wife for a cap.’

“So saying, he pursued the fox, and when it fled into a hamster’s hole, the man got off his horse, placed his bow, arrows, and clothes upon the saddle, fastened the bloodhound to the bridle, and covered the mouth of the hole with his cap. The next thing he did was to take a large stone, and hammer over the hole with it; this frightened the fox, which ran out and fled with the cap upon its head. The hound followed the fox, and drew the horse along with it, so that they both vanished in an instant, and the man was left without any clothes.

“After he had turned back a long way, he reached the country of a mighty Chan, entered the Chan’s stable, and concealed himself in a stack of hay, so that merely his eyes were left uncovered. Not long afterwards, the beloved of the Chan was walking out, and wishing to look at a favourite horse, she approached close to the hayrick, placed the talisman of life of the Chan’s kingdom upon the ground, left it there, and returned back to the palace without recollecting it. The man saw the wonderful stone, but was too lazy to pick it up. At sunset the cows came by, and the stone was beaten into the ground. Some time afterwards a servant came and cleansed the place, and the wonderful stone was cast aside upon a heap.

“On the following day the people were informed, by the beating of the kettledrums, that the beloved of the Chan had lost the wonderful stone. At the same time, all the magicians and soothsayers and interpreters of signs were summoned, and questioned upon the subject. On hearing this, the man in the hayrick crept out as far as his breast, and when the people thronged around him and asked, ‘What hast thou learned?’ he replied, ‘I am a magician.’

On hearing these words they exclaimed, ‘Because the wondrous stone of the Chan is missing, all the magicians in the country are summoned to appear before him. Do you then draw nigh unto the Chan.’ The man said, ‘I have no clothes.’ Hereupon the whole crowd hastened to the Chan, and announced unto him thus: ‘In the

hayrick there lieth a magician who has no clothes. This magician would draw nigh unto you, but he has nought to appear in.' The Chan said, 'Send unto him this robe of cloth, and let him approach.' It was done.

"The man was fetched, and after he had bowed down to the Chan, he was asked what he needed for the performance of his magic charms. To this question he replied, 'For the performance of my magic charms, it is needful that I should have the head of a swine, some cloths of five colours, and some baling' (a sacred figure of dough or paste). When all these things were prepared, the magician deposited the swine's head at the foot of a tree, dressed it with the cloths of five colours, fastened on the large baling, and passed the whole of three nights in meditation. On the day appointed, all the people assembled, and the magician having put on a great durga (cloak), placed himself, with the swine's head in his hand, in the street. When they were all assembled together, the magician, showing the swine's head, said, 'Here not and there not.' All were gladdened at hearing these words. 'Because, therefore,' said the magician, 'the wonderful stone is not to be found among the people, we must seek for it elsewhere.'

"With these words the magician, still holding the swine's head in his hand, drew nigh unto the palace, and the Chan and his attendants followed him, singing songs of rejoicing. When, at last, the magician arrived at the heap, he stood suddenly still, and exclaimed, 'There lies the wonderful stone.' Then, first removing some of the earth, he drew forth the stone, and cleansed it. 'Thou art a mighty magician,' joyfully exclaimed all who beheld it. 'Thou art the master of magic with the swine's head. Lift up thyself that thou mayest receive thy reward.' The Chan said, 'Thy reward shall be whatsoever thou wilt.' The magician, who thought only of the property he had lost, said, 'Give unto me a horse, with saddle and bridle, a bow and arrows, a cap, a mantle, a hound, and a fox. Such things give unto me.' At these words the Chan exclaimed, 'Give him all that he desireth.' This was done, and the magician returned home with all that he desired, and with two elephants, one carrying meat, and the other butter.

"His wife met him close to his dwelling, with brandy for him to drink, and said, 'Now, indeed, thou art become a mighty man.' Thereupon they went into the house, and when they had laid themselves down to sleep, the wife said to him, 'Where hast thou found so much flesh and so much butter?' Then her husband related to her circumstantially the whole affair, and she answered him saying, 'Verily, thou art a stupid ass. To-morrow I will go with a letter to the Chan.'

"The wife accordingly wrote a letter, and in the letter were the following words:—'Because it was known unto me that the lost wondrous stone retained some evil influence over the Chan, I have, for the obviating of that

influence, desired of him the dog and the fox. What I may receive for my reward depends upon the pleasure of the Chan.'

"The Chan read the letter through, and sent costly presents to the magician. And the magician lived pleasantly and happily.

"Now in a neighbouring country there dwelt seven Chans, brethren. Once upon a time they betook themselves, for pastime, to an extensive forest, and there they discovered a beautiful maiden with a buffalo, and they asked, 'What are you two doing here? Whence come you?' The maiden answered, 'I come from an eastern country, and am the daughter of a Chan. This buffalo accompanies me.' At these words these others replied, 'We are the seven brethren of a Chan, and have no wife. Wilt thou be our wife?'[1] The maiden answered, 'So be it.' But the maiden and the buffalo were two Mangusch (a species of evil spirit like the Schumnu), and were seeking out men whom they might devour. The male Mangusch was a buffalo, and the female, she who became wife to the brethren.

[1] It is in accordance with the customs of Thibet for a woman of that country to have several husbands.

"After the Mangusch had slain, yearly, one of the brethren of the Chan, there was only one remaining. And because he was suffering from a grievous sickness, the ministers consulted together and said, 'For the sickness of the other Chans we have tried all means of cure, and yet have found no help, neither do we in this case know what to advise. But the magician with the swine's head dwells only two mountains off from us, and he is held in great estimation; let us, without further delay, send for him to our assistance.'

"Upon this four mounted messengers were despatched for the magician, and when they arrived at his dwelling, they made known to him the object of their mission. 'I will,' said the magician, 'consider of this matter in the course of the night, and will tell you in the morning what is to be done.'

"During the night he related to his wife what was required of him, and his wife said, 'You are looked upon, up to this time, as a magician of extraordinary skill; but from this time there is an end to your reputation. However, it cannot be helped, so go you must.'

"On the following morning the magician said to the messengers, 'During the night-time I have pondered upon this matter, and a good omen has presented itself to me in a dream. Let me not tarry any longer but ride forth to-day.' The magician, thereupon, equipped himself in a large cloak, bound his hair together on the crown of

his head, carried in his left hand the rosary, and in his right the swine's head, enveloped in the cloths of five colours.

“When in this guise he presented himself before the dwelling-place of the Chan, the two Mangusch were sorely frightened, and thought to themselves, ‘This man has quite the appearance, quite the countenance, of a man of learning.’ Then the magician, first placing a baling on the pillow of the bed, lifted up the swine's head, and muttered certain magic words.

“The wife of the Chan seeing this discontinued tormenting the soul of the Chan, and fled in all haste out of the room. The Chan, by this conduct being freed from the pains of sickness, sank into a sound sleep. ‘What is this?’ exclaimed the magician, filled with affright. ‘The disease has grown worse, the sick man uttereth not a sound; the sick man hath departed.’ Thus thinking, he cried, ‘Chan, Chan!’ But because the Chan uttered no sound, the magician seized the swine's head, vanished through the door, and entered the treasure-chamber. No sooner had he done so, than ‘Thief, thief!’ sounded in his ears, and the magician fled into the kitchen; but the cry of ‘Stop that thief! stop that thief!’ still followed him. Thus pursued the magician thought to himself, ‘This night it is of no use to think of getting away, so I will, therefore, conceal myself in a corner of the stable.’ Thus thinking, he opened the door, and there found a buffalo, that lay there as if wearied with a long journey. The magician took the swine's head, and struck the buffalo three times between the horns, whereupon the buffalo sprang up and fled like the wind.

“But the magician followed after the buffalo, and when he approached the spot where he was, he heard the male Mangusch say to his female companion, ‘Yonder magician knew that I was in the stable; with his frightful swine's head he struck me three blows—so that it was time for me to escape from him.’

And the Chan's wife replied, ‘I too am so afraid, because of his great knowledge, that I would not willingly return; for, of a certainty, things will go badly with us. To-morrow he will gather together the men with weapons and arms, and will say unto the women, “Bring hither firing;” when this is done he will say, “Lead the buffalo hither.” And when thou appearest, he will say unto thee, “Put off the form thou hast assumed.” And because all resistance would be useless, the people perceiving thy true shape will fall upon thee with swords, and spears, and stones; and when they have put thee to death, they will consume thee with fire. At last the magician will cause me to be dragged forth and consumed with fire. Oh, but I am sore afraid!’

“When the magician heard these words, he said to himself, ‘After this fashion may the thing be easily

accomplished.' Upon this he betook himself, with the swine's head to the Chan, lifted up the baling, murmured his words of magic, and asked, 'How is it now with the sickness of the Chan?'

And the Chan replied, 'Upon the arrival of the master of magic the sickness passed away, and I have slept soundly.'

Then the magician spake as follows: 'To-morrow, then, give this command to thy ministers, that they collect the whole of the people together, and that the women be desired to bring firing with them.'

"When, in obedience to these directions, there were two lofty piles of bundles of sticks gathered together, the magician said, 'Place my saddle upon the buffalo.' Then the magician rode upon the saddled buffalo three times around the assembled people, then removed the saddle from the buffalo, smote it three times with the swine's head, and said, 'Put off the form thou hast assumed.'

"At these words the buffalo was transformed into a fearful ugly Mangusch. His eyes were bloodshot, his upper tusks descended to his breast, his bottom tusks reached up to his eyelashes, so that he was fearful to behold. When the people had hewed this Mangusch to pieces with sword and with arrow, with spear and with stone, and his body was consumed upon one of the piles of sticks, then said the magician, 'Bring forth the wife of the Chan.' And with loud cries did the wife of the Chan come forth, and the magician smote her with the swine's head, and said, 'Appear in thine own form!' Immediately her long tusks and bloodshot eyes exhibited the terrific figure of a female Mangusch.

"After the wife of the Chan had been cut in pieces, and consumed by fire, the magician mounted his horse; but the people bowed themselves before him, and strewed grain over him, presented him with gifts, and regaled him so on every side, that he was only enabled to reach the palace of the Chan on the following morning.

Then spake the Chan, full of joy, to the magician, 'How can I reward you for the great deed that thou hast done?' And the magician answered, 'In our country there are but few nose-sticks for oxen to be found. Give me, I pray you, some of these nose-sticks.' Thus spake he, and the Chan had him conducted home with three sacks of nose-sticks, and seven elephants bearing meat and butter.

“Near unto his dwelling his wife came with brandy to meet him; and when she beheld the elephants, she exclaimed, ‘Now, indeed, thou art become a mighty man.’ Then they betook themselves to their house, and at night-time the wife of the magician asked him, ‘How camest thou to be presented with such gifts?’

The magician replied, ‘I have cured the sickness of the Chan, and consumed with fire two Mangusch.’ At these words she replied, ‘Verily, thou hast behaved very foolishly. After such a beneficial act, to desire nothing but nose-sticks for cattle! To-morrow I myself will go to the Chan.’

“On the morrow the wife drew near unto the Chan, and presented unto him a letter from the magician, and in this letter stood the following words:—‘Because the magician was aware that of the great evil of the Chan a lesser evil still remained behind, he desired of him the nose-sticks. What he is to receive as a reward depends upon the pleasure of the Chan.’

“‘He is right,’ replied the Chan, and he summoned the magician, with his father and mother, and all his relations before him, and received them with every demonstration of honour. ‘But for you I should have died; the kingdom would have been annihilated; the ministers and all the people consumed as the food of the Mangusch. I, therefore, will honour thee,’ and he bestowed upon him proofs of his favour.”

“Both man and wife were intelligent,” exclaimed the Son of the Chan.

“Ruler of Destiny,” replied Ssidi, “thou hast spoken words! Ssarwala missdood jakzang!” Thus spake he, and burst from the sack through the air.

Ssidi’s fourth relation treats of the Magician with the head of the Swine.

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