

Salman and Rostom

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Armenian

Easy
4 min read

Salman was a strong and mighty man, He was as large as a hill, as powerful as a giant, and a terrible tyrant. He lived in one corner of the world, but his fame spread terror over all the earth. He had a horse of lightning, and his arms were as strong as iron. He assaulted men in their peaceful habitations, and took tribute from them; none could refuse to pay him tribute, else he would slaughter and destroy the people. In another portion of the earth there was another strong brigand, called Chal, who had a son named Rostom. This Rostom was a huge man, as large as a mountain, and greatly celebrated for his extraordinary strength and bravery. It was only the land of this Chal which did not pay tribute to Salman.

One day Chal mounted his horse and started, saying: "Let me go and see what kind of a man Salman is."

After a long journey he met a huge man mounted on a horse swift as lightning; the staff of his spear was as thick as a man's waist. Chal did not know that this was Salman himself; but nevertheless he prepared his spear for battle. To his surprise, the horseman gave spur to his horse and passed by Chal without even looking at his face. Upon this Chal was offended, and threw his spear after the horseman. Salman turned back, seized Chal, whom he bound under the belly of his horse, and galloped until he came to a tent pitched by a gurgling spring. He dismounted, nailed Chal's ear to the tent's beam, and lay down to sleep. Chal was almost mad with rage; he gnashed his teeth and muttered to himself:

“He did not speak a word to me, he did not tell me his name. I wish I might know who he is.”

Salman soon waked, and asked:

“Fellow, who are you?”

“I am from Chal’s country,” answered Chal. He was so much afraid that he did not say that he was Chal himself.

“Ah!” exclaimed Salman, releasing Chal’s ear, “why did you not tell me before? Go and bid Rostom, Chal’s son, come hither that we may measure swords. There cannot be two men of equal strength; the world must know who is the stronger champion. I am Salman.”

Chal returned to his house and sighed deeply. Rostom, hearing him sighing, said:

“How now, father? You are Chal and I am Rostom, your son, and yet you sigh! Nay, you must tell me your grief.”

Chal told him of his meeting with Salman, and the latter’s challenge to Rostom. Rostom took with him his cousin Vyjhan, and both disguised themselves, assuming the habit of pilgrims. Rostom kissed his white-hoofed horse on both eyes and said to his father:

“When I am in trouble my horse will know it and will beat the ground with his feet. Then bind my arms upon his back and set him free; he will come and find me.”

Vyjhan, who accompanied Rostom on his journey, was far from being a common mortal. He had a wonderful voice; if he cried in the East his voice would be heard in the West. After traveling for a long time, Rostom and Vyjhan came to a city and encamped upon a meadow outside the town. Rostom was sleeping, when Vyjhan heard a terrible uproar in the city and went there to inquire the cause of the trouble. Some of the people were running like chased deer, some were tearing their hair, some beating their breasts, and all were weeping and wailing.

“Why, what is the matter?” asked Vyjhan.

“Salman has come, demanding seven years’ tribute that is in arrears,” the people answered.

Soon they collected the amount; but the question now arose, by whom they should send the tribute, because

Salman would take away the man by whom the tribute was sent, and kill him.

“Give it to me, I will take it,” said Vyjhan.

Soon Rostom heard in his sleep Vyjhan’s shrill voice, saying:

“Help, Rostom! Salman is carrying me away.”

Rostom got up and learned from the people what had happened, and lo! his white-hoofed horse came running and stood before him. Immediately Rostom jumped on the back of his horse, which galloped away and soon reached Salman’s tent. Salman, having nailed Vyjhan’s ear to the tent beam, came out to meet Rostom. Then and there took place a duel the most terrible that has ever been recorded in the history of the world. Bows and arrows, spears and swords were cut into pieces. Finally they came near one another, seized each other, and both were entangled in each other’s hair.

Up to the present time they have not yet conquered one another, but are still struggling. Now and then they pull and shake each other so violently that the earth quakes, and that is what men call an earthquake; and Vyjhan’s voice is still heard deeply from afar.

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