

# *The Seven Stages of Roostem*

Folk-Lore And Legends: Oriental

Arabic

---

*Advanced*  
*12 min read*

Persia was at peace, and prosperous; but its king, Ky-Kâoos, could never remain at rest. A favourite singer gave him one day an animated account of the beauties of the neighbouring kingdom of Mazenderan: its ever-blooming roses, its melodious nightingales, its verdant plains, its mountains shaded with lofty trees, and adorned to their summits with flowers which perfumed the air, its clear murmuring rivulets, and, above all, its lovely damsels and valiant warriors.

All these were described to the sovereign in such glowing colours that he quite lost his reason, and declared he should never be happy till his power extended over a country so favoured by Nature. It was in vain that his wisest ministers and most attached nobles dissuaded him from so hazardous an enterprise as that of invading a region which had, besides other defenders, a number of Deevs, or demons, who, acting under their renowned chief, Deev-e-Seffeed, or the White Demon, had hitherto defeated all enemies.

Ky-Kâoos would not listen to his nobles, who in despair sent for old Zâl, the father of Roostem, and prince of Seestan. Zâl came, and used all his efforts, but in vain; the monarch was involved in clouds of pride, and closed a discussion he had with Zâl by exclaiming, "The Creator of the world is my friend; the chief of the Deevs is my prey." This impious boasting satisfied Zâl he could do no good; and he even refused to become regent of Persia in the absence of Ky-Kâoos, but promised to aid with his counsel.

The king departed to anticipated conquest; but the prince of Mazenderan summoned his forces, and, above all, the Deev-e-Seffeed and his band. They came at his call: a great battle ensued, in which the Persians were

completely defeated. Ky-Kâoos was made prisoner, and confined in a strong fortress under the guard of a hundred Deevs, commanded by Arjeng, who was instructed to ask the Persian monarch every morning how he liked the roses, nightingales, flowers, trees, verdant meadows, shady mountains, clear streams, beautiful damsels, and valiant warriors of Mazenderan.

The news of this disaster soon spread over Persia, and notwithstanding the disgust of old Zâl at the headstrong folly of his monarch, he was deeply afflicted at the tale of his misfortune and disgrace. He sent for Roostem, to whom he said, "Go, my son, and with thy single arm, and thy good horse, Reksh, release our sovereign."

Roostem instantly obeyed. There were two roads, but he chose the nearest, though it was reported to be by far the most difficult and dangerous.

Fatigued with his first day's journey, Roostem lay down to sleep, having turned Reksh loose to graze in a neighbouring meadow, where he was attacked by a furious lion; but this wonderful horse, after a short contest, struck his antagonist to the ground with a blow from his fore-hoof, and completed the victory by seizing the throat of the royal animal with his teeth. When Roostem awoke, he was surprised and enraged. He desired Reksh never again to attempt, unaided, such an encounter. "Hadst thou been slain," asked he of the intelligent brute, "how should I have accomplished my enterprise?"

At the second stage Roostem had nearly died of thirst, but his prayers to the Almighty were heard. A fawn appeared, as if to be his guide; and following it, he was conducted to a clear fountain, where, after regaling on the flesh of a wild ass, which he had killed with his bow, he lay down to sleep. In the middle of the night a monstrous serpent, seventy yards in length, came out of its hiding-place, and made at the hero, who was awaked by the neighing of Reksh; but the serpent had crept back to its hiding-place, and Roostem, seeing no danger, abused his faithful horse for disturbing his repose. Another attempt of the serpent was defeated in the same way; but as the monster had again concealed itself, Roostem lost all patience with Reksh, whom he threatened to put to death if he again awaked him by any such unseasonable noises. The faithful steed, fearing his master's rage, but strong in his attachment, instead of neighing when the serpent again made his appearance, sprang upon it, and commenced a furious contest. Roostem, hearing the noise, started up and joined in the combat. The serpent darted at him, but he avoided it, and, while his noble horse seized their enemy by the back, the hero cut off its head with his sword.

When the serpent was slain, Roostem contemplated its enormous size with amazement, and, with that piety which always distinguished him, returned thanks to the Almighty for his miraculous escape.

Next day, as Roostem sat by a fountain, he saw a beautiful damsel regaling herself with wine. He approached her, accepted her invitation to partake of the beverage, and clasped her in his arms as if she had been an angel. It happened, in the course of their conversation, that the Persian hero mentioned the name of the great God he adored. At the sound of that sacred word the fair features and shape of the female changed, and she became black, ugly, and deformed. The astonished Roostem seized her, and after binding her hands, bid her declare who she was. "I am a sorceress," was the reply, "and have been employed by the evil spirit Aharman for thy destruction; but save my life, and I am powerful to do thee service."

"I make no compact with the devil or his agents," said the hero, and cut her in twain. He again poured forth his soul in thanksgiving to God for his deliverance.

On his fourth stage Roostem lost his way. While wandering about he came to a clear rivulet, on the banks of which he lay down to take some repose, having first turned Reksh loose into a field of grain. A gardener who had charge of it came and awoke the hero, telling him in an insolent tone that he would soon suffer for his temerity, as the field in which his horse was feeding belonged to a pehloovân, or warrior, called Oulâd. Roostem, always irascible, but particularly so when disturbed in his slumbers, jumped up, tore off the gardener's ears, and gave him a blow with his fist that broke his nose and teeth. "Take these marks of my temper to your master," he said, "and tell him to come here, and he shall have a similar welcome."

Oulâd, when informed of what had passed, was excited to fury, and prepared to assail the Persian hero, who, expecting him, had put on his armour and mounted Reksh. His appearance so dismayed Oulâd that he dared not venture on the combat till he had summoned his adherents. They all fell upon Roostem at once; but the base-born caitiffs were scattered like chaff before the wind; many were slain, others fled, among whom was their chief. Him Roostem came up with at the fifth stage, and having thrown his noose over him, took him prisoner. Oulâd, in order to save his life, not only gave him full information of the place where his sovereign was confined, and of the strength of the Deev-e-Seffeed, but offered to give the hero every aid in the accomplishment of his perilous enterprise. This offer was accepted, and he proved a most useful auxiliary.

On the sixth day they saw in the distance the city of Mazenderan, near which the Deev-e-Seffeed resided. Two chieftains, with numerous attendants, met them; and one had the audacity to ride up to Roostem, and seize him by the belt. That chief's fury at this insolence was unbounded; he disdained, however, to use his arms against such an enemy, but, seizing the miscreant's head, wrenched it from the body, and hurled it at his companions, who fled in terror and dismay at this terrible proof of the hero's prowess.

Roostem proceeded, after this action, with his guide to the castle where the king was confined. The Deevs who guarded it were asleep, and Ky-Kâoos was found in a solitary cell, chained to the ground. He recognised Roostem, and bursting into tears, pressed his deliverer to his bosom. Roostem immediately began to knock off his chains. The noise occasioned by this awoke the Deevs, whose leader, Beedâr-Reng, advanced to seize Roostem; but the appearance and threats of the latter so overawed him that he consented to purchase his own safety by the instant release of the Persian king and all his followers.

After this achievement Roostem proceeded to the last and greatest of his labours, the attack of the Deev-e-Seffeed. Oulâd told him that the Deevs watched and feasted during the night, but slept during the heat of the day, hating (according to our narrator) the sunbeams. Roostem, as he advanced, saw an immense army drawn out; he thought it better, before he attacked them, to refresh himself by some repose. Having laid himself down, he soon fell into a sound sleep, and at daylight he awoke quite refreshed. As soon as the sun became warm, he rushed into the camp. The heavy blows of his mace soon awoke the surprised and slumbering guards of the Deev-e-Seffeed; they collected in myriads, hoping to impede his progress, but all in vain. The rout became general, and none escaped but those who fled from the field of battle.

When this army was dispersed, Roostem went in search of the Deev-e-Seffeed, who, ignorant of the fate of his followers, slumbered in the recess of a cavern, the entrance to which looked so dark and gloomy that the Persian hero hesitated whether he should advance; but the noise of his approach had roused his enemy, who came forth, clothed in complete armour. His appearance was terrible; but Roostem, recommending his soul to God, struck a desperate blow, which separated the leg of the Deev from his body. This would on common occasions have terminated the contest, but far different was the result on the present. Irritated to madness by the loss of a limb, the monster seized his enemy in his arms, and endeavoured to throw him down. The struggle was for some time doubtful; but Roostem, collecting all his strength, by a wondrous effort dashed his

foe to the ground, and seizing him by one of the horns, unsheathed his dagger and stabbed him to the heart. The Deev-e-Seffeed instantly expired; and Roostem, on looking round to the entrance of the cavern, from whence the moment before he had seen numberless Deevs issuing to the aid of their lord, perceived they were all dead. Oulâd, who stood at a prudent distance from the scene of combat, now advanced and informed the hero that the lives of all the Deevs depended upon that of their chief. When he was slain, the spell which created and preserved this band was broken, and they all expired.

Roostem found little difficulty after these seven days of toil, of danger, and of glory, in compelling Mazenderan to submit to Persia. The king of the country was slain, and Oulâd was appointed its governor as a reward for his fidelity.

The success of his arms had raised Ky-Kâoos to the very plenitude of power; not only men, but Deevs, obeyed his mandates. The latter he employed in building palaces of crystal, emeralds, and rubies, till at last they became quite tired of their toil and abject condition. They sought, therefore, to destroy him; and to effect this they consulted with the devil, who, to forward the object, instructed a Deev, called Dizjkheem, to go to Ky-Kâoos and raise in his mind a passion for astronomy, and to promise him a nearer view of the celestial bodies than had ever yet been enjoyed by mortal eyes. The Deev fulfilled his commission with such success that the king became quite wild with a desire to attain perfection in this sublime science. The devil then instructed Dizjkheem to train some young vultures to carry a throne upwards; this was done by placing spears round the throne, on the points of which pieces of flesh were fixed in view of the vultures, who were fastened at the bottom. These voracious birds, in their efforts to reach the meat, raised the throne.

Though he mounted rapidly for a short time, the vultures became exhausted, and finding their efforts to reach the meat hopeless, discontinued them; this altered the direction and equilibrium of the machine, and it tossed to and fro. Ky-Kâoos would have been cast headlong and killed had he not clung to it. The vultures, not being able to disengage themselves, flew an immense way, and at last landed the affrighted monarch in one of the woods of China. Armies marched in every direction to discover and release the sovereign, who, it was believed, had again fallen into the hands of Deevs. He was at last found and restored to his capital. Roostem, we are told, upbraided his folly, saying—

“Have you managed your affairs so well on earth that you must needs try your hand in those of heaven?”

Read more fairy tales on [Fairytalez.com](http://Fairytalez.com)