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# The legend of Garshasp in the Garshasp-nama and its comparison with Rostam in the Shahnameh

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**Abstract**---Garshasp Sam Nariman is one of the Indo-Iranian heroes and legends whose names and stories are mentioned in Avesta, and Asadi wrote this epic poem about his bravery. This epic and legendary figure seemed feeble and pallid in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. The Heroic acts of Garshasp have typically been assigned to Sam and Rostam throughout the history of the growth and change of Iranian national epics. In Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, with the arrival of Rostam, Garshasp has been forgotten, and Rostam has become the sole Iranian epic and national hero. This paper will compare the characters, morality, and heroic features and acts of the two heroes in the Garshasp-nama and the Shahnameh.

**Keywords**---epic, legend, Garshasp, Rostam, Shahnameh, Garshasp-nama.

## Introduction

Rostam and Garshasp, the heroes of the two poems of the Shahnameh and the Garshasp-nama, each possess unique qualities. The descriptions of the two poems, in addition to demonstrating the composers' credibility in citing sources, also provide the poets' descriptions and depictions of the two poems. By outlining the similarities and differences between these two legendary figures, the researcher hopes to highlight the relative strengths and flaws of each. The epic poem of Garshasp-nama, which is full of Garshasp's deeds, is the most famous epic poem after Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. None of the historical and martial epics and poetry created after Garshasp-nama can match this epic masterpiece; it may be boldly asserted among Ferdowsi's imitators. The epic spirit and patriotism of the time, when Garshasp-nama was versified immediately after Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, and the character of the patriotism wanting this type of poetry and literature, contributed to the work's success.

## Discussion

The two-part myth of Garshasp, in which Asadi described his heroic traits in his epic poem, is found in the Avesta (keresaspa) and Sanskrit (Krshasva). The first part is Keresa and the second is Aspa, which signifies "the owner of a skinny horse." The name should therefore be pronounced "Kershasp," and as the ancient manuscripts could not distinguish between K and G, it is probable that the ancient speakers also used K in their time (Moin, 1947: 251). In Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Garshasp's personality and acts are exceedingly frail and pale. In general, Sam Nariman (Grandson) and Rostam, his Grandchild, have been given credit for the majority of the heroic actions of Garshasp in the metamorphosis and historical evolution of Iran's national epics. As soon as Rostam arrived in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Garshasp was forgotten, and the hero Rostam became the sole Iranian national epic. In the introduction to Garshasp-nama, Asadi expresses his surprise that a prominent poet such as Ferdowsi did not place Garshasp's famous narrative in chronological sequence and argues that Garshasp's heroic acts and masculinity were greater than those of Rostam:

In Shahnameh by Ferdowsi, the mellifluous  
 Which no poetry can compete with  
 Many heroes have been mentioned  
 But this story is not mentioned in it  
 This sapling is from the same tree  
 But it is dry, fruitless, and withered  
 I have now brought fruit for this seedling  
 And I caused it to sprout again  
 Thus far, you have only heard from Rostam  
 You ponder there is no man like him in the world  
 If you listen to the battle of Garshasp  
 Rostam's battles will no longer stand out  
 (Garshasp-nama:19)

As said, despite his sanctity and esteem in Mazdayasna, Garshasp's persona is obscure and forgotten in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. Comparing the religious traditions of Garshasp and Zal (who does not appear in the Pahlavi and Avesta texts, and there is no trace of him), we discover that Zal fills a significant portion of the Shahnameh, but Garshasp is only referenced four or five times. The myth of Garshasp is broken in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, and this hero is separated into three distinct and independent characters:

Nariman: Garshasp's name in Avesta is "Kersaspa," his surname is "Nairmana," meaning "manly," and his family name is "Sama," meaning abstinence. Bundahishn, Garshasp-nama, and other Pahlavi texts are written as Garshasp, Nariman, and Sam. Nariman and Sam are Garshasp's son and grandson in Bundahishn and Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, respectively, but in Garshasp-nama, they are his nephew and grandson in turn (Khaleghi Motlagh, 1977: 407).

According to what has been mentioned above, it is likely to argue that in the Avesta, Nariman was initially an epithet of Garshasp and in reality, no such person existed, and those epic authors invented him.

The Shahnameh mentions two Garshasps. is the first one, Garshasp, son of Zaav, who succeeds his father after his death, and the second one is Garshasp, father of Nariman, ancestor of Sam and Rostam, and chieftain of Faridun and Minuchihr:

A Shoot from that tall Cypress - Minuchihr,  
 Like Tahmuras, the Binder of the Demon,  
 Sat on the King's right hand: thou wouldst have said:-  
 'He is the heart and soul of that great King.'  
 His son, Karan by name, the warrior,  
 The watchful chief, the conqueror of hosts;  
 The minister - Sarv, monarch of Yaman,  
 The treasurer - victorious Garshasp  
 (Shahnameh, 2003, Vol I: 117)

Zav's son Garshasp, mentioned in the Shahnameh, succeeded his father Zav as king:

Zav had a puissant son by name Garshasp  
 Who sat upon the throne and donned the crown  
 (Ibid., Vol II: 47)

### **Comparing the characteristics and heroic traits of the two heroes Birth and adolescence of two heroes**

In the Garshasp-nama, Garshasp's birth is described without any noteworthy introduction:

When his command was obeyed everywhere  
 God gave him a renowned son  
 (Garshasp-nama, 1975: 49)

There is no reference to Garshasp's mother or father's status in the Garshasp-nama. In this regard, Asadi merely gives the name of Esret, the father of Garshasp, without providing any other information. However, Ferdowsi has devoted a lengthy discussion to describing the birth of his hero, Rostam. Ferdowsi has vividly recounted his hero's birth to characterize him more epically. According to the story of Shahnameh, since Rostam's physique was bigger than a typical infant, he was not born normally, and his mother's belly had to be ripped open to get the newly born out.

Garshasp was in the same way comparable to a one-month-old infant at birth, and he had the physique of a one year old when he was only one month old:

When he was born, he was like a one month-old baby  
 In one month, it was like one year old  
 (Ibid., 49)  
 At the age of ten, he was a whole man  
 No one could stand his punch  
 The wheel of time passed  
 He reached the age of fourteen  
 When he drew his sword, no one could escape  
 No one could find shelter either in the seas or in the clouds

(Ibid., 49)

Too, after his birth, Rostam:

A thing so strange. The babe was like a lion,  
A hero tall and fair to look upon.  
Both men and women wondered at him, none  
Had heard of such an elephantine child  
(Ferdowsi Shahnameh, Vol I: 151)

Garshasp avoids the baby stage altogether by going straight from the cradle to the saddle, and he amuses himself with a club and a slingshot:

After he was weaned  
He stepped from the cradle to the saddle  
Instead of soft clothes, he put on armor  
He asked for mace and slingshot to play  
(Garshasp-nama, 1975:49)

Rostam's desire were saddle, bow, and arrow since he was eight years old. Upon seeing his grandfather, Sam, for the first time, he addresses him as follows:

Be thou my root. The slave of Sam am I,  
But I am not one for banquet, dream, and ease,  
I would have steed and saddle, mail and helm,  
Despatch my compliments by bolt and arrow,  
And by God's bidding, trample on foes' heads.  
My face is like to thine, so be my courage."  
(Ferdowsi Shahnameh, Vol I: 173)

### **Heroic acts of Garshasp and Rostam**

The war with Aji-dehak is Garshasp's first notable and courageous act. He was the first Iranian hero to participate in the Aji-dehak clash. The terrible memory of Aji-dehak colors the earliest stages of Iranian philosophy. The demon Patiare also arrives and brings about the Aji disease, which has manifestations as dragons, snakes, most noticeable, the red snakes, along with a terrible and bitter winter, when Ahura Mazda forms his first noble kingdom, Iran (Sarkarati, 2006: 256).

In Garshasp-nama, the memory of the first dragon and snake, winter, and cold is recounted as follows: In the one-week war between the armies of Iran and China, when the world narrows for the Chinese, they, with the assistance of their magicians, on the peak and the ridge of the mountain and behind the Iranians:

They released the flying snakes  
A cloud emerged from the increase of the dragon  
Hail and storms were created  
The trees were breaking due to the cold  
(Garshasp-nama, 1975: 395)  
Garshasp, on Zakhak's orders and against his father's desires, fought and slew the dragon that lived on Mount Shakavand. The beast on whose back Garshasp gallops from daybreak to noon to reach his head:  
And making earth afoam. It reached from city  
To city and from hill to hill  
Thus said Garshasp, at the command of the king

I will close the way to dark Satan

However, Rostam's first heroic act was fighting Afrasiab, bringing Kay Kawad from Alborz mountain, and placing him on the royal throne. Rostam completed this task under Zal's order. Several points are significant when comparing these two parts of the Garshasp-nama and Shahnameh: Garshasp's act was carried out at Zahhak's behest, whom Iranians have seen as the enemy of humanity since the time of the Avesta. However, Rostam performs his heroic act at Zal's command and with the agreement of the Iranian king, Kay Kawad. In the first act of Garshasp, his father was never content and often advised him against battling dragons, but Zal yearned for Rostam to battle Iran's enemies:

Esret said to Garshasp, O ill-fate  
You should not have accepted the king's order for the fight  
(Garshasp-nama, 1975: 52)

### **Rostam affluence and Garshasp greed**

In Garshasp-nama, there are several examples of Garshasp's greed. Whenever he comes across a treasure throughout his travels, Garshasp grabs it and brings it with him. However, Rostam's character in Shahnameh is not suchlike. He gives gold coins to the soldiers and the people wherever he acquires some. Before the war with Esfandiyar, Rostam invites him to make peace, and when they face each other, to dissuade Esfandiyar from fighting, he says:

A thousand royal jewels will I give thee,  
As well as crown with armband and with earrings;  
Will give to thee a thousand sweet-lipped youths  
To minister to thee by day and night;  
Will give a thousand damsels of Khallukh  
To be the glorious graces of thy crown  
(Ferdowsi Shahnameh, 2003, Vol II: 330)

### **Asadi's incomplete imitation of the events of The Seven Labours of Rostam and Esfandiyar**

After arriving in India and defeating Bahu's army, Garshasp began exploring the landmasses of India. Along the way, he witnessed miracles and incidents that resembled The Seven Labors of Rostam and Esfandiyar to a less significant extent. Garshasp travels to many islands to battle dragons. Rostam likewise participates in the Third Labor's dragon battle. In India, Garshasp fights against the people known as the Sagsar:

The army called Sagsar  
They are known as brave combatants  
Giant people with faces like dogs  
And like goats covered with hair  
(Garshasp-nama: 174)

In his Seventh Labor, Esfandiyar fights the people known as the Sagsar. Garshasp's battle with Menheras Div resembles Rostam's Seventh Labour, which goal was to kill the White Div. The Menheras Div is the same devil that Rostam describes in his rodomontade against Esfandiyar after praising his grandfather Sam for his valor in the battle against the dragon he slew (Akbari Mafakher, 2006: 15).

### **Immortality and continuity of two heroes**

The myth's elements of continuity and immortality are present in Garshasp. The heroic acts and wisdom credited to Garshasp have such an idealistic influence on his mind that this bravery is constantly active. However, Rostam does not exhibit this continuity or persistent vigilance. When Rostam arrives in a clean pasture in the Akvan Div tale (Shahnameh Vol. 4, pp. 301-314), he offers his horse Rakhsh, water before sleeping off. Akvan Div takes this opportunity and throws him into the sea. Rostam, therefore, does not experience the heroic trait of Garshasp as he sleeps.

### **Death of two heroes**

Garshasp dies in bed, an unfitting end for a renowned and distinguished hero. It has led us to believe that Garshasp's heroic narrative and persona had come to a cold conclusion with his death. However, Rostam is assassinated by his half-brother Shaghad, who throws him into a pit with spears and blades. Great heroes should not end their lives in a cold, powerless manner which is unworthy of their names; instead, they should be killed or sacrificed as martyrs, regarded as heroic deeds.

### **Conclusion**

Even though Garshasp has a great story in the religious epic and is respected by Mazdayasna, his character is unknown and forgotten in the national epic, and Rostam has taken his place. In creating Garshasp-nama, it appears that Asadi drew heavily on a masterpiece like Ferdowsi Shahnameh. Garshasp's journeys to the islands of India and his experiences with exotic animals, such as witnessing the Simurgh and battling the Aji-dehak, Sagsar people, and Menheras Div, are imitations of The Seven Labors of Rostam and Esfandiyar in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. Despite Asadi's best attempts, he could not compete with Ferdowsi's noble and consistent work, and his hero has never been comparable and renowned as Ferdowsi's Rostam.

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