

Kərəsāspa's Wet Dream¹

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Long time ago, the great Indologist Louis Renou commented that the Māryas exhibit characteristics which are partly erotic and partly militaristic (Renou 1958: 49; Dumézil 1969: 71). It was, however, Stig Wikander, in his work on the Indo-Iranian Männerbnd, that singled out the hero Kərəsāspa (MP. Garšāsp / P. Garšāsb) as the ultimate Mārya hero in the pre-Zoroastrian world of Iran (Wikander 1938). Wikander touched upon the special relation between this hero and the deity Vayu Yašt XV (Wikander 1941: 162-177: with a differing opinion see Lincoln, 1981: 79, n.134). In this essay, written in memory of my teacher, Hanns-Peter Schmidt, I would like to touch upon the erotic or sexual aspect of Kərəsāspa, who exhibits the same Männerbud aspect identified by Wikander, ultimately preventing him from entering the Zoroastrian heaven.

This study explores the sin(s) of Kərəsāspa, a nebulous hero in the Zoroastrian literature but one who has one of the longest literary vitas in the Iranian world, from the *Avesta* to the Pahlavi and Persian literature. While several sins are associated with this hero, specifically his extinguishing of the fire in Zoroastrian literature, I would like to suggest that it was Kərəsāspa's overtly sexual and licentious nature that caused him so much troubles. His sexual affairs, especially with the Iranian nymph Pairika, was against Zoroastrian mores and values, which makes it difficult for this wily hero of the remote past to be rehabilitated. While

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his many feats and smiting of dragons, monsters and evil characters partly redeems him, he is made to stay in deep sleep till the end of time. At the time of resurrection, Kərəsāspa will partake in the Zoroastrian eschatological act of Zoroastrian heroics, which allows him to enter the House of Songs.

There are only a few scholarly studies on this all-important Indo-Iranian hero, Kərəsāspa / Kṛāsva (West 1882; Hussing 1911; Christensen 1931; Molé 1951; Nyberg 1975; Eduljee 1983; Sarkārātī 1378; Skjærvø 2012). In the Indic literature, he is a minor figure and appears only a few times in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇas*, as well as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. There is very little in terms of identifiable aspects between the Iranian Kərəsāspa and Indic Kṛāsva. The only commonality that one finds is the weapon(s), used by other heroes (Rāmā and Roštam) to defeat their enemies. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* (1.21.13-14), Kṛāsva's sons, born of Prajāpati's daughters, provide Rāmā extraordinary weapons (Duémzil 1986: 5), while in the *Šāhnāmeḥ* Roštam is said to hold the club of Sām, which was once with Narīmān and first with Kərəsāspa (Molé 1951: 131-132; Duémzil 1986: 6-7).

On the other hand, Kərəsāspa appears in the *Avesta* in a number of places (Yašt xix.38-44; Hom Yašt ix.10-11; Yašt v.37-38; xiii.61; xv.28; *Wīdēwdād* i.g). In Pahlavi literature, he is most prominently discussed in the *Pahlavi Rivāyāt* Accompanying the *Dādestān ī Dēnīg* (Henceforth PRADD), along with in the 14th Fragard of the Ninth book of the *Dēnkard*, as well as the *Rivāyāt of Dārāb Hormazdyār* i.61-6 (Nyberg 1975: 379-381). Other minor passages from Pahlavi texts have also been collected by Eduljee (1983), but they do not add much to our knowledge regarding the question that is being studied here.

The Persian historiographical and epic tradition, meanwhile, offers many references to Kərəsāspa, under the names of Garsāsb, Sām and Narīmān. Of course, in the *Avesta*, these names are actually part of his family name and his epithet, i.e., Kərəsāspa, Manly Minded (*naire.manah*), of the Sāmānid clan. Two important Persian epics should be mentioned, as they contain material relating to our study and the life of Kərəsāspa. First is Abū Maṣṣūr 'Alī b. Aḥmad Asadī's *Garšāsbnāmeḥ* (Book of Kərəsāspa), completed in the eleventh century CE (Yaghmayī 1354). The other text is the *Sāmnāmeḥ* (Book of Sām), an anonymous text attributed to Khaju Kermānī (Rūyānī 1392). These two texts have been far less studied and utilized in the study of Kərəsāspa, no doubt because of their late date and because they are written in Persian.

And yet they provide important evidence which links the *Avesta* and Pahlavi Kərəsāspa with that of the Persian epic *Garšās*. As noted by Dj. Khaleghi-Motlagh, while the topography of the *Garšāsbnāmeḥ* shifts from that of the older tradition (due to Sasanian and late antique political developments, such as the appearance of Rūm/Rome, and Yemen because of its conquest), the myths and actions of Kərəsāspa, especially his deeds in India, are in line with the *Avesta* tradition (1362: 397-398). More importantly, Kərəsāspa's dealings with Pairīkas, in both the *Garšāsbnāmeḥ* and the *Sāmnāmeḥ* specifically, provide a direct link to the *Avesta* material. The *Sāmnāmeḥ*, although by another Khājū and not Khājū Kermānī (Khatibi 1392: 55-68) and probably part of a long oral tradition (Mohmadzādeh & Rūyānī 1386: 172), has much to offer about Kərəsāspa.

Kərəsāspa is not really an enigmatic and forgotten hero. If we consider Persian epic material and keep in mind Pahlavi sections mentioning him, we could even say that he is quite well-known (Skjærvø 1998: 162). The *Garšāsbnāmeḥ* is a very good reason for accepting the *longue durée* importance of this hero of the past, who not only does his dragon slaying and killing of villains in *Avesta*, but continues to exert a larger role on the popular imagination in the medieval period.

The Sins

Kərəsāspa's sins. In the Avesta *Kərəsāspa* is mentioned to have done a deed which appears in the *Hōm Yašt* and the *Widēwdād* I.9. The first sin appears as follows (9.11):

yō janaṭ ažīm sruuarəm
yim aspō.garəm nərə.garəm
yim višauuaṇtəm zairitəm
yim upairi viš raodaṭ
ārštiiō.barəza zairitəm
yim upairi kərəsāspō
aiiaṇha pitūm pačata
ā rapitβinəm zruuānəm
tafsaṭčā hō mairiiō xʷīsaṭčā
fraš aiiaṇhō frasparaṭ
yaēšiiāntīm āpəm parāṇhāt
paraš tarštō apatacaṭ
naire.manā kərəsāspō

(*Kərəsāspa*) who killed the horny serpent,
the horse devouring, man devouring,
the poisonous, yellow horned serpent,
over whom yellowish poison
spurted up to the height of a spear shaft,
on whom *Kərəsāspa* cooked food,
in a metal (pot) at noon time,
the scoundrel became hot,
and began to sweat,
he dashed forth from
(under) the metal (pot)
he cast boiling water about,
trembling, he ran off to the side,
the manly-minded *Kərəsāspa*

This passage is curious in that *Kərəsāspa*, who still carries the epithet of *naire.manā* (manly-minded), fearfully runs off from the top of the dragon for having spilled boiling water! This passage has been connected with the major sin of *Kərəsāspa* by important scholars (for example Boyce 1976: 103; Williams 160, n. 29). In the Zoroastrian literature, he is not allowed into heaven for having extinguished the fire (spilled the water of some sorts on the fire).

This sin appears in the *PRADD* and other Zoroastrian Persian texts. The extinguishing of the fire by *Kərəsāspa*, however, may be related to another tradition. According to the *Persian Rivayats of Hormazyar Framarz*, the sin which *Kərəsāspa* commits is more meaningful, although late. The interpreter of *Yasna* 9.11 states:

And as for the dragon which he speaks of having killed, he (himself) was hungry and as the fire fell one moment later upon the fire-wood which he had placed below the post, he smote the fire with a club and scattered it” (Dahbhar 1932/1999: 519).

The second sin of Kərəsāspa, which he committed when being followed by the Pairika Xnaθaitī, a nymph fashioned by the Evil Spirit in the first chapter of the *Widēwdād*, the land of Vaēkərəta (Wikander 1938: 38; Wikander 194: 204; Christensen 1943: 28-32), is probably the most important and heinous of his misdeeds mentioned in the *Widēwdād* (1.9). The Pahlavi version provides commentaries that are of interest (I.9):

haftom az gyāgān ud rōstāgān ā-m pahlom frāz brēhēnīd man kē Ohrmazd ham Kābul ī duš-sāyag [u-š duš-sāyagīh ēd kū sāyag ī draxtān pad tan wad ašt kē ān ī kōftan gōwēd] u-š pad ān ō petyāragīh frāz kirrēnīd gannāg mēnōg purr-marg ān ī parīg-kāmagīh [ān ī uzdēs-parīstagīh] kē-š abar abāgēnīd Karšāsp [kū-š ōh kard awēšān-iz ōh kunēd nē pad dād]

“I, who am Ohrmazd, fashioned forth seventh, as the best of places and settlements, Kābul of the evil shadows [its evil shadowiness is that the shade of the trees is bad to the body. There is one who says: “That of the mountains”]. Then, the Evil Spirit, full of death, counter created the witch desire [idol-worship], which followed Karšāsp [he practiced it; they also practice it unlawfully]. (Moazami 2014: 34-35).

The Avestan *Widēwdād* has Vaēkərəta which is identified with Kābul in the Pahlavi *Widēwdād*, but the true location is a matter of debate. Grenet suggests Urgūn, in the Tarnak valley, south of Hindukush (Grenet 2005: 39-41; Grenet 2015: 27-28). In earlier scholarship, Vaēkərəta had been identified with Gandhāra (Levi 1915: 67; Henning 1947, pp. 52-53; Gnoli 2011). Most importantly for our purpose it has been suggested that Vaēkereta derived from **vayu-krta*, “made by Vayu,” connecting the land to the heroic epic cycle of Kərəsāspa (Nyberg, 1933/1966: 300 & 317; Wikander 1941). In the Avestan version, the Evil Spirit creates Pairika Xnaθaiti (*pairikam yam xnaθaiti*), who, in order to harm the hero attaches herself onto (*upayhacat*), or more colloquially, jumps on Kərəsāspa. One should say a few words about the word *pairikā* / *parīg* and, more specifically, about *Parīkā Xnaθaiti*, who appears twice in the *Widēwdād* (I.9 and 19.5). Janda (2006) argues four possibilities for the etymology and meaning of *pairikā*. His work is further discussed by Schwartz (2008), regarding this old Iranian female nymph / concubine (Pokorny 1955: 789); Jamison witch (2009: 320), and most convincing by Schwartz, in taking *Pairikā* as surrounding female succubus (2008: 5), which may also be called a nymph (for general remarks, see Adhami 1990). I very much agree with Schwartz’s idea of *Pairikā* being succubus – female demons who have intercourse with men during their sleep – who latches to Kərəsāspa at night, in his dreams. Equally important is Omidsalar’s view, which considers Pairika as the “nymph of sexual gratification” (Omidsalar 2015). As we shall see, this aspect of *Pairikā* is abundantly attested in Iranian folklore and mythology. In the Zoroastrian and Persian literary tradition, the *Parī* is known as being a flirtatious woman who chases men and tricks them (Mazdapour 1381: 204).

Specifically regarding Kərəsāspa, in both the well-known *Šāhnāme* (1985: 44-49) and the less-known *Sāmnāme* (1913: 90; Sarkāratī 1378: 278-279), the Parī named Ālam-afrūz, who abducts Sām, or Parīdukht, plays the same role as the Pairika Xnaθaiti. Similarly, in the *Iskandarnāme*, the Parī kidnap their victims in their sleep (Afshar 1343: 361, 383-385, 631-641), which is connected with the Avestan tradition. While in Persian literature the *Parī* have lost their evil connotations, their hyper-sexuality and desire are made abundantly

clear (Afsharī 1384: 49), often turning into beautiful and desirable women (Raštegārīnejad & Bāgherī 1394: 70). Lastly, one should mention the etymology proposed by Güntert (1913: 200), also accepted by Sarkarati (1378: 8), associating *xnaθaitī* with Greek *κνηθω*, meaning “to scratch,” or “to itch,” (jucken, kitzeln), i.e., having sexual desire (Güntert 1913: 202; Sarkarati 1378: 8, f.21).

In view of this suggestion, the name of the daughter of the sovereign of China, who marries Kərəsāspa in the *Sāmnāmeḥ*, makes perfect sense (Afsharī 1384: 50). Parīdukht “Daughter of Parī,” harkens back to the Pairika from this Persian epic in which she steals Kərəsāspa but is ultimately slain. Also of importance is that Kərəsāspa was in a deep sleep, which may have been brought by Avestan Būšyašta- / Pahlavi Būšāsp, until the time of renovation (Sarkarati 138: 259). The evolution of Būšyašta needs not be discussed here - suffice to say that she was regarded as the demoness of sleep and shortness of breath (Malandra 1990), a sort of a nightmare. J. Darmesteter links Būšyašta to Xnaθaitī and Jahī (whore), two female storm demons, and explained Būšyašta’s epithets as reflecting the lightning-flash of Xnaθaitī (Darmesteter 1877: 181; Malandra 1990).

Is it then possible that Būšyašta was able to bring the sleep that allowed the Pairika Xnaθaitī to latch onto Kərəsāspa and copulate with him, hence creating a sinful state? Can one go even further and suggest that the spilling of the water committed by Kərəsāspa in *Yasna* I.9, is a metaphor for his semen (Schwartz 2008: 5 & in private correspondence), hence a wet dream? Certainly, in the Zoroastrian religion, Būšyašta is identified with the delusion and pollution of dreams (Malandra 1990). According to Daštūr Borzū, Būšyašta is specifically associated with nocturnal pollution in the Persian Rivayats (Dhabhar 1932: 390; Malandra 1990). In both Zoroastrian (Malandra 1990) and Islamic tradition in Iran, *šeytūnī bāzī* is related to having a wet dream, which is also associated with Būšyašta.

In the Pahlavi version, the Avestan *pairikəm yaqm xnaθaiti* is rendered as “witch-desire” (*parīg-kāmagīh*), interpreted as “idol-worship” (*uzdēs-parištāgīh*), and Kərəsāspa is said to be its first practitioner. This exegesis is cited in the *Bundahišn* (31.17-18), where the “witch-desire” is said to be the same as Sām’s worship of the *dēws*, although another Zoroastrian authority states that it referred to the sin of not tying the *kuštī* (*wišād-dwārišnīh*) (Skjærvø 2011).

I would like to suggest that the Pahlavi version attempts to take the meaning of the Avestan version towards another direction, i.e. Kərəsāspa’s paganism, while we can still see that the “real sin” is something else. I take the *kuštī wišād-dwārišnīh* in the sense of having the *Kuštī*, or garment open, i.e. being ready or having partaken in sexual activity, and *parīg-kāmagīh*, literally as *Pairikā*-desire or *Parīg*-lustfulness. I suggest that Kərəsāspa is seduced in his sleep through the sexual desire of *Pairikā xnaθaitī*. As a result of this nocturnal attack, Kərəsāspa has a wet-dream and commits the sin of copulating with an evil female nymph of the Zoroastrian world. In the Zoroastrian tradition the spilling of semen without the intention of procreation is a sin, and those who engage in any other form of sexual activity have to beg for forgiveness (Daryae 2002: 103-105).

This act, in a way, is echoed in popular oral tradition, where the offspring of their union came to be known as Narīmān-Parī, the product of the union with Roštam, who replaced Kərəsāspa as the ultimate hero and the daughter of the king of the Parīs at the time of Kay Kavūs (Anjavī Šērāzī 1363: 71). Furthermore, not only Roštam, but also Sām is mentioned as having engaged in sexual intercourse with the Parī Gol-Afrūz (Anjavī Šērāzī 1363: 242). Either way, our hero and his offspring are implicated in an act which, in the Zoroastrian tradition, was considered a serious sin. Somehow, a distant tradition about kings and heroes related to the Pairikas survived in the Persian epic and oral tradition of the Islamic period. However, this story has been made into the reading staple of Medieval Iranian society, while forgetting the sinful aspect of such a tradition.

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