

ORAL PROSE LITERATURE

1. FOLK TALES

Fairy tales are an important genre of the oral prose-literature of the Mongolians. These tales typically begin with the phrase “Once upon a time, in such-and-such a place, in such-and-such a country”. Mongolian fairy tales are symbolic. This symbolism always becomes clear at the end of the tale. The most frequent ending is “and they lived happily ever-after.” This end has the double sense of expressing the wish of the hero and the readers of the tale. The fairy tales of Mongolia can be classified into the four categories:

1. Parables or fables
2. Magic tales
3. Heroic tales
4. Witty narratives

These classifications refer to the meanings of the tales and their actions of the protagonists and villains.

• PARABLES AND FABLES

Wild beasts, antelopes and domestic animals are personified, behaving like human beings. Only animals are the heroes of the development of these stories, which is why they are called as animal parables. The Mongolian animal parables are totally allegorical. The animals in these tales express the sarcastic and humorous sides of humans. For instance:

The Wolf is an allegory of hunger.

The Fox is an allegory of slyness.

The Bear is an allegory of power.

The Tiger and Lion are allegories of fierceness.

The Hare and Hedgehog are allegories of wittiness and wisdom.

Domestic animals are allegories of good heartedness, kindness, and generosity.

The Silly Wolf (fairy tale)

It is said that once upon time there was a wolf walking along the road. He found a piece of sheep intestine and decided to eat it. But the intestine spoke to him, saying, “Wolf, do not eat me. To the south, there is a horse which fell and is stuck in the mud. Please eat him.” The Wolf obeyed the word of the intestine and went to the place that the intestine pointed out. There indeed was a horse stuck in the mud. He moved in to eat the horse, but the horse said, “Dear Wolf, if you want to eat me. First take me out of the mud and then eat me please.” The Wolf accepted the request of the horse and took the horse out of the mud. The horse said, “If you want to eat me, first clean the mud off of me.” As the horse had requested, the wolf cleaned the horse by licking the mud and then tried to eat him. But the horse said, “There is a letter in my hind hoof. Please read it first and then you can eat me.” The Wolf went to the hind feet of the horse to look for the letter, but the instead horse kicked the Wolf hard and then ran away. Before his death, the Wolf said, “Addled noodle who was walking along the road and was cheated by the sheep intestine, why did I let that happen? Why did I take the horse out of the mud? Am I the owner of the horse? Why did I lick the mud off of the horse? Am I the mother of the horse? Why did I try to read the letter in the hoof? Am I literate?”



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