



## HORSE TITLE RECITATION

The horse-title recitation is a melodious verse of praise and well-wishing that is chanted for the first horses that reach the finish line in a horse race. This is a unique form of the ritualistic praise poems. During this ritual, the horse is driven three times around the main tent where the festival organizers stay, while, at the same time, the horse-titles are recited three times as well. At the last recitation, the horse owner and jockey are treated with *airag* (fermented mare's milk). The owner is given a drink while the horse head and loins are sprinkled with it. This is why the first horses in the race are called as *airgiin tav* (the five with fermented mare's milk). Reaching the top position in a race is called *airagdakh* (to have *airag*). Each title of the first five horses shares common features, yet they also have slight differences. Each horse-title is started with a statement of the horse's place of origin and

name of its owner.

As for the winner, following the first statements, the title goes "Out of myriad horses, this one shows its perfect speed and flies like a hawk and becomes the first-comer." It continues by defining the characteristics of the horse:

*Topaz-headed,  
Two-perky eared,  
Two jet-black eyes,  
Two elephant teeth,  
Cervical vertebrae,  
Four delicately hoofed feet,  
Hare-shaped back,  
Long tailed,  
Vigorous bodied,  
Swiftest winner,  
These are the embodiments  
Of the swift horse*



This part is the statement of the swift horse and the next part is following as:

*It gallops by throwing back its head with forward tilt  
And can cover the long distance in the shortest hours,  
It runs, taking the bit in its teeth  
By covering long distances in a moment  
It gallops, tossing its head  
It gallops, shying from its dust  
It gallops, toying with its tail  
It gallops, shying from its shadow  
It gallops, from beyond of the mountain,  
And it leaves all others in the distance*

This part describes the features of the horse when it gallops in the race. In another version of the race-winner title, the horse is depicted as it stands:

*It has four sparkling elephant-canines  
Stretching its cervical vertebrae  
Alternating its span-sized ears  
Challenging its round black eyes  
Swaying its hare-shaped back  
Moving its agile body freely  
Sweeping its bushy mane  
Swinging its long tail  
Dancing its four hoofs nimbly  
Flying its excellent four legs  
It describes the horse characteristics with movement.*

The title of the second-place horse is almost the same as that of the winner. Yet it lyrically describes the contesting way in the race as the first part says:

*The swift horse  
Which spurted through  
The front of spectators  
Like a whirl-wind  
Demonstrated its  
Strength and sinews;  
Once again  
Leaped  
And challenged  
Again spurted  
Almost overtook;  
It raced and again spurted  
But failed  
Now it is the runner up*

It describes the competitiveness of the horse in a detail. It continues:

*This year,  
It is the runner-up;  
Next year,  
It shall be a winner*

The fun and joy of these festivities is evident in the praise songs sung for the worst-performing horses in

these races, songs which are called 'Bayankhodoonii tsol' (Booby-prize blessing). The worst racer in the race of two year-old colts is identified as *Bayankhodoon* and brought on the festival ground with its child jockey and feted like a winner. Then a cooked stomach of sheep is attached to the saddle thongs and the title is recited as:

*Because of the confusion of  
The owner of this racer,  
Who made a mistake in training,  
The jockey  
Was too small [and]  
His whip  
Was too short;  
This horse always finds  
All of the holes in the ground,  
And the many knolls and burrows  
Along the way;  
There were a certain number of sandy knobs  
There were certain swerves;  
The start was jumpy,  
But it finishes behind like ox-cart;  
It is the booby-prize winner.  
It will certainly be a winner at next year's race.  
It is the racer that will become the best  
And it will be the winner of next year!*

In this recitation, there is an implication of sarcasm and of friendly criticism of the horse trainer, who, it is believed, lacked experience to train the yearling horse and the horse's jockey. The festival becomes amusing and entertaining with this recitation. The horse trainer and jockey will usually feel ashamed in the crowd during the recitation of this blessing. But the booby prize winner must stand next to the winner and display an arrogant behaviour, which causes incredible merriment at the festival ground.

