HEROIC TALES

These tales retained the heroic manners in the poetic tunes and epic deeds. There are many heroic tales.

WITTY NARRATIVES

The works in this genre express the conflicts and witticisms experienced in the everyday lives of the nomadic herders. These tales are often humorous and include frequent descriptions of animals, hunters, mendicant Lamas, and noblemen and officials. In them we find popular symbolism of nomadic herders’ ways of life. In these tales there are struggles for power and authority, longings for offspring, greed and avarice. These tales usually circle around questions of morality.

Tale of the Witty Daughter-in-law

Once upon a time there was a king who had a stupid son. One day he heard of an old man who had a witty daughter. The king decided to marry his stupid son to this witty daughter and so called for this old man.

The king said to him, “You, old man, bring me an ash hobble with three legs. You must look for it along neither a road nor a non-road. You must walk neither with boots nor without boots. And you must do this neither by day nor by night, and neither outside nor inside. If you make a mistake, your head shall be cut off.”

The old man was scared out of his wits and told the king’s order to his wise daughter. The daughter told her father not to worry. It will be easy to solve, she said, and then told her father how to reply to the king. The next morning the old man went to the king to complete the king’s order in the manner that his daughter had told him to.

Old man said to the king, “Dear sir, I brought an ash hobble with three legs as you ordered. Look at it, please.”

The king shouted, “At where are you?”

The old man answered, “I am neither inside nor outside, but I am between the wood framed wall and the felt cover.”

The king asked, “When did you arrive?”

The old man answered, “Neither day, nor night. I arrived at dawn.”

The king asked, “Which way did you arrive?”

The old man answered, “Neither by a road, nor by a non-road. I arrived along the narrow trail.”

The king asked, “How did you make a hobble with three legs?”

The old man answered, “I made a hobble with three legs and placed it on the flat stone. I then burned this hobble and now it is an ash hobble. So, your majesty, you can hobble your horse with it if you favour it.”

The king said, “Old man, I will come to your home. You must give me milk from an ox. If you cannot do this your head would be cut off.”

The old man thought that the king had become crazy and was in despair. But when he came to his home and told his wise daughter about king’s order, she said, “That is not difficult, daddy, do not worry. I can find out a way to do that.”

The next morning his daughter caused her father to lean over a pannier and draped a gown over him at the base of the ger. Suddenly somebody called out, “Hold your dog.” The daughter pushed out the capital of the column and went out of her ger.

“Nobody can enter,” she said.

“Why? What has happened?” the king asked.

The daughter answered, “My father has given a birth to a child.”

“Does a man give birth to a child?” the king asked.

“Does an ox give milk?” the daughter replied.

The king was silent and then returned to his palace. He thought that this girl was witty enough and made up his mind to marry this girl to his stupid son. He supposed that she might have a great hold over him when they married.

One day the king said, “Son, can you saddle a horse with two heads for me?”

The son said he could and placed two horses in opposite positions and bound them with cinches. But the cinches snapped. He tried again and again, but each time he failed.

Then the stupid prince said to his wife, “My father told me to saddle a horse with two heads. I tried and failed. What can I do?”

The witty wife said, “You may saddle a mare to a foal.”

As his wife said, the prince saddled a mare to a foal. Then the king asked his song to boil meat in a wooden kettle. The prince said he could, but then when he tried burned all his wooden utensils. It was impossible to boil meat in a wooden kettle. When the prince told this to his wife, she said, “Please pierce the meat with the dwarf cornel skewer and roast it.”

The prince did as his wife said. The king then told him to make a man of ice and said, “My son, ask a word and learn it from the man of ice.” The stupid prince tried but could not get the man of ice to say a word, so he broke it to pieces and said to his wife, “My father told me to make a man of ice and ask a word from it. The man of ice did not say any word, so I broke it to pieces.” Then his wife said, “Tell him: My body consists of water. The nature of water is icy. In winter for three months there is ice. In summer for three months this ice thaws.” The prince told these words to his father. The king said, “Son, you have married a witty wife and has a great influence on you. Now you are able to ascend to the throne and to govern others.”

One day the king was hunting on another’s territory. But
two men, who wanted to occupy the king's throne, arrested him. The king said, "My banner people do not believe easily. They are serious. They do not believe that I can be arrested by two men. Let me give you a note that I am well." The two men accepted this offer.

This letter he wrote, however, stated: "I have a blue vault over me and a green silken lawn under me and ten men supporting me at my back. I always have two milk skins of milk and plenty of mutton. I live happily. Please drive horned animals before you. Drive hornless animals behind you, and fold your white hare. There are two aspens. You do not fell these aspens. They are local spirits. Hew one of these in the middle of locality. Our local spirits will chase after them. Please come here by using one of these as fuel. Nobody can understand this letter. Do not show it to anyone. There is a black silken file at my son's feet. My daughter-in-law knows it. Let her find this file. She can file the lock and open the chest and then see what is inside of it."

The two men came and showed the letter. Those who saw this letter believed that the place where the king was very nice. Some even wanted to move there. But the daughter-in-law asked to see the letter. After she did she spoke before the audience and deciphered the real meaning of the letter.

"My dear audience, you believed that my father-in-law is living happily. As I understood, some of you even wanted to move there. Indeed my father-in-law is not living happily. His blue vault above him means space. Green lawn under him means green grass. His ten men supported my back means that his arms were pinioned on his back with straps. Drive horned animals before you means that those who have guns and spears go in the front; and drive hornless animals behind means that people with no guns go behind those with guns. Staggered red stark means the prince. Keep a black hare means to go in the night. Keep the white hare to conceal a day. The two local aspens mean these two messengers. Hew one and make another a fuel means one should be killed and another should be made as a guide.

As the daughter-in-law of the king said, the subjects of the king did. They rescued their king by killing enemies and occupying the territory. After many years king became senile. He needed to transfer his throne to his son; but the prince was stupid. The king was anxious about the stupidity of his son. Even though the daughter-in-law could not succeed the king, she was genuinely witty. The king considered a way to transfer his power to his daughter-in-law. So he quizzed his daughter-in-law.

The king called on her and said, "You should compose a sentence that does not use the words arag (pannier), sawar (cane gatherer of dung), adud (horse), khomool (pellets), honi (sheep), huts (ram), chano (wolf), gol (river), mod (tree) nor idekhi (to eat), but this sentence should inevitably need these words. The king gave her a pannier, a dung-gatherer to collect horse's manure. In the meantime, a wolf came to the flock of sheep and caught a ram and dragged it over the stream and ate it. The daughter-in-law of the king had to report it without using real proper names.

She said, "When I carried an interlaced basket over my back and held a curved wooden hand and gathered runner's waste, a howler appeared and apprehended the father of the heather. It forded the current and guzzled it near the tallest plant." The king was very glad and amazed at her wit and gave his throne to her. Then they lived happily ever after.

**HUMOROUS TALES**

The humorous tales are often full of parody and humorous devices.

**The Pudgy Boy who Rode a Stumpy Yearling Colt**

Once upon a time during the Manchu period a nobleman assailed the common people with insults. There was a pudgy boy, riding a stumpy yearling colt, galloping along the rutty road with his whip. The boy saw a field mouse whisk straight into its burrow. The boy stopped and dismounted from his yearling colt and started digging and smoking out the burrow.

But then the king's horseman, with a furry overcoat made of goatskin and riding on a black stallion, came and asked, "What are you doing?" The boy answered that a field mouse had whisked into the burrow. "Now I am digging and smoking the burrow." The horseman said, "You, who uttered the witty words. Heaven may strike you with lightning." The boy answered, "Heaven might strike you who are riding the stallions and striking them with their thick crest. It may spare me, who is orphaned."

The horseman were enraged by this and wanted to inform it to his nobleman. But the nobleman was not at home. Then he told the nobleman's wife about the boy. The wife sent out a messenger to bring him. The boy said, "The head of a goat is less respectable at the sacrifice. The head of a camel is too big to place on a tub. The fatty wife is not entitled to become involved in a suit. The head of a sheep can be placed at the sacrifice. I can be punished by the nobleman who is entitled to penalize."

The boy was stripped of his clothing and then hitched to a horse-hitching pole. He shuddered with cold. The doctor of the nobleman came and asked, "Why are you here?" The boy answered, "I am picking the doctor's thumb, a writer's pointing-finger, and the dry skull of clergymen." But the nobleman came and asked, "Why is he hitched?" The boy said that he argued with a nobleman's horseman and the nobleman's wife and explained his arguments. The nobleman said that boy was correct.