



Interpretation of Images of the Animal World and Their Functions in Iranian Folk Tales

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Abstract

This research paper provides information about the characteristics of the animal world, especially the wolf, in Iranian folk tales.

Keywords: *Animal World; Wolf; Iranian Folk Tales; Interpretation; Features*

Introduction

It is well known that the main characters of animal stories are wild or domestic animals, birds, insects, and occasionally plants and humans. Animal world stories are distinct from animal life stories. Animals in fairy tales behave in accordance with their nature, and they exhibit, first and foremost, one or more human characteristics, such as one or more actions. As a result, in fairy tales, the animal world is filled with human imagination, and it is a form of expression of human thoughts and feelings, as well as life relationships.

Animals that act, think, and speak like humans are merely poetic conventions. The human character, the value, and vices of people, the appearance of human interactions in everyday life and society are the main themes of Iranian fairy tales about animals. These images are sometimes displayed satirically.

Images of wild and domestic animals are commonly used to represent the characters in Iranian folk tales about animals. Wild animal images outnumber domestic animal images: wolves, bears, lions, rabbits, jackals, birds – crows, sparrows, parrots, sparrows, hawks, and so on. Domestic animals are less independent and prominent than wild animals, and they frequently interact with them: dogs, cats, cows, goats, sheep, horses, donkeys, roosters, ducks, and others. Each character is a specific image of a specific animal or bird, with some human characteristics hidden behind it. As a result, participant classification is based on observations such as the animal's behavior and appearance. The difference in their personalities is evident, especially in the images of wild animals.

The Main Part

Wolf:

The wolf is one of the main participants among animals in the system of Iranian epic works, according to the image of the wolf in Iranian folk tales. Firdausi's "Shahnoma" and dozens of other epic poems contain references to the image of the wolf, including the following: being an evil spirit, riding a warrior on a wolf, a wolf totem, feeding a child with wolf milk, killing snakes, becoming a wolf, a wolf and union with people [1]. As these interpretations show, the wolf has both positive and negative aspects. "The negative aspects of the wolf are its demonic nature, which is found in ancient texts such as the Avesta" [2]. Even in Firdausi's Shahnama, the image of the wolf is frequently interpreted negatively. The first primary reason for this is that, due to the wolf's demonic nature, killing it was considered a positive and encouraging act in Ancient Iranian religious texts. The second reason is that Firdausi compared Turan Shahs to wolves in his "Shahnoma", and used the negative characteristics of wolves to describe them [3].

The image of the wolf is also prominent in Iranian folk stories, such as "The bloodthirsty wolf and the smart fox" [4], "The wolf and the fox", "The wolf and the goat", "The wolf and the sheep", "The wolf and the donkey" [5] and "The wolf, the goat, and the fox" [6]. The popularity of fairy tale collections among the populace.

In Iranian folk stories, the wolf generally denotes avarice and evil. As a result, other clever creatures in fairy tales, like the fox, frequently portray the wolf as an idiot. The robust animal features of the wolf and the fox are juxtaposed in the plots of numerous fairy tales. In almost all of these stories, the wolf is depicted as a smart and daring creature who is continually duped. In the fairy tale "The Bloodthirsty Wolf and the Clever Fox", the fox, who ate the lion's two cubs because he was hungry, slandered the lion by claiming that the wolf was responsible. He is informed by the lion that he will discover the wolf. When the fox meets the wolf, he deceives him by telling him that the lion is seeking an assistant and that he will propose to him if he agrees to bring him a weekly sheep or goat. The gullible wolf has faith in the fox and follows his orders. The fox instructs the wolf to declare, "I did this" when he approaches the lion. The wolf obeys, and the lion, outraged by the wolf for eating her young and publicly confessing it again, pounces on her and skins several of her body parts. In this situation, he goes to his childhood buddy, the bear, and tells him the incident. The bear accuses the wolf of naivete. He hates himself for not approaching him for advice. He claims that the fox made fun of you and that he fed the lion pups to you. The wolf admits his wrongdoing. As for the fox, he continues his pranks by informing the lion that the wolf's stomach has ruptured and caused its death. After a lengthy period of recovery, the wolf encounters the fox. The fox kills the wolf using his trickery and cunning once more. The wolf once more accepted his words, and he and the fox entered Kadkhudo's barn in the hamlet and began to devour food there, but the fox ate little, and the wolf ate so much that he was unable to walk. At daylight, the fox flees undetected, and the greedy wolf, having been defeated by Kadkhudo and his men, returns safely to the bear. The bear reprimands him again and resolves never to interfere with the fox again. After a lengthy separation, the wolf encounters the fox again and blames the wolf for the fox's misfortune. Then he murders him again and informs him that winter will soon arrive, and if he brings one sheepskin per day, he will stitch him a fur coat. The wolf delivers a sheep to him. The rest of the narrative unfolds as follows:

("...Three days later, the wolf approached the fox and asked, "Is your skin ready?" "No," the fox replied. Your brought sheep is too small. One of its skins is skinless. Please bring another sheep". The wolf returned with another sheep. "Come back in three days", the fox said, happy. Because your skin is thin, it will not produce good skin. Please bring another sheep". The wolf returned with another sheep. The fox promised to come and get the skin in three days. However, even after three days, the skin was still not ready. The fox wanted to come up with another reason. But the wolf was furious...").

The wolf follows the fox into his room to investigate and discovers sheepskins and bones strewn about. He realizes the fox has duped him. The astute fox flees and goes for a long time without being noticed by the wolf.

As we can see, despite the fact that the fox has repeatedly harmed the wolf, first by bringing him into contact with the lion and then with humans, the wolf is stupid and trusts him again. A wolf without an independent mind is helpless in the face of a fox's tricks. He doesn't even listen to his bear friend's advice and ends up in awkward situations.

In the fairy tale "The Wolf and the Fox", the wolf appears as a character who is angry, greedy, and can communicate his words to the fox. The anger of the wolf character in this tale is expressed by saying ("Red fox, find me something quickly; otherwise I will eat you") and his greediness is reflected by the fox's ("You have such a stomach that it will never stop"). We can clearly see from his these words, that he can control the fox ("The angry wolf forced the poor fox in front of him so that he could do what he wanted"). In this fairy tale, no matter how angry and harsh the wolf is with the fox, the cunning fox finds a way to get rid of the wolf. Due to his greed, the wolf, who had eaten much food and had a swollen belly, could not escape from the hole and was beaten by the shepherd. And the fox is happy that he got rid of the wolf by tricking him.

The wolf in the fairy tale "The Wolf, the Goat, and the Fox" is different from the others. The wolf is kind to the goat in this story. He makes an effort to care for him and feed him on time. When the wolf had gone, the fox approached the goat and, while eating it, told him that these lands belonged to his father. The goat promises to bring witnesses to prove that these lands are his father's. Meanwhile, the wolf reappears, and the goat informs him of what transpired. The wolf excavates and instructs the goat to cover it with kings. As a witness, the fox brings an old fox with a long tail. If the fox's words are true, the goat promises to swear. The old fox with long tails had previous experience. When he came to the Qur'an to take an oath, his eyes fell on a wolf with shining eyes below him, he trembled and stepped back, saying ("O father, my father did not swear unjustly"). The goat-fox comes and asks for an oath. When he came to the said place and said he will now take an oath, the wolf came out, bit him on the throat, and started to squirm.

As we can see, the wolf is embodied in this fairy tale by the fox, who is kind to the weak and cruel to the ill-wishers. The image of the wolf in Iranian folk tales is interpreted both negatively and positively, as evidenced by the content of the fairy tales discussed above. Based on this, the image of a wolf in Iranian folk tales takes on the following characteristics:

- Simple-minded ("When the wolf followed the fox with a turban, a chapan and a rooster, he was confused, stepped forward and asked him: "What kind of food have you prepared for yourself?");
- Simple-minded and gullible (A river flowed around the village. It was winter. The wolf went and stuck his tail in the water of river. The weather was getting colder and the water of river was slowly freezing. The wolf wagged his tail and when he saw that it was getting heavier, he said to himself: "Let it be more");
- Suffers because of his gullibility ("You showed me the way, the peasants came and asked, what a bad place you showed me, the peasants grabbed me and rubbed my skin");
- He dies because of his greed ("The wolf began to eat, and then he thought that when he was full, he would pass through this secret hole. The wolf ate so much that he could not run away because his stomach was full. The farmer took a long stick and the wolf hit him so hard that he died");
- The friend of the fox and the bear (the fairy tale "Sheikh Fox");
- Mindless ("The Goat and the Wolf", "The Bloodthirsty Wolf and the Cunning Fox" fairy tales);
- Kind and friendly to the helpless ones ("The wolf and the goat became friends. The wolf said to the goat: "Goat, don't worry, there is no animal in the world stronger and wilder than me. I will nurse you until you grow up and live comfortably, please be my friend).

Conclusion

As a result, in most Iranian folk tales, the wolf is traditionally portrayed as greedy and angry. Because the wolf is not intelligent and lacks an independent mind, he is frequently duped by other characters in fairy tales, such as the fox. Many fairy tales feature the juxtaposition of these two powerful animals. The wolf's personality is presented in the adjectives in almost all of these plots. However, as demonstrated by the preceding examples, the wolf possesses both positive and negative characteristics. After all, in real life, the wolf is very intelligent, capable of doing various things, lives in packs as a community, feeds primarily on mice and other rodents, considers the fox its worst enemy, and protects good and kind people. Of course, in fairy tales, the wolf is an image used to represent the bad vices of some people in society.

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