



Iranian Folk Tales: Fairy Tales Related to the Animal World

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Abstract

This article examines animal characters' positive and negative characteristics, such as foxes and wolves, in Iranian folk stories. The behavior of these animals defines the virtues and vices of particular members of society.

Keywords: *Fairy Tale; Animal; Epic; Plot; Story*

Introduction

In Iran, birds refer to all creatures whose bodies are covered with feathers, the majority of which can fly or can fly only a short distance. Numerous birds and insects, such as roosters and chickens, pigeons, eagles, partridges, parrots and owls, crows and crows, ants, scorpions, weevils, fleas, etc., have been depicted in folk art, poetry, and prose from ancient times. Similarly, the functions of various birds and insects in fairy tales vary. For instance, in some legends and fairy tales, the crow signifies a far – sighted, bright person, whereas in others, it portrays a backward, stupid person. Or, in one fable, the parrot is a sign of “clean and virgin existence”, yet in other fables, it represents foolishness.

Rooster:

Since ancient times, the rooster has been prominent in Iranian religion, mythology, literature, culture, and folklore. The kings and warriors of Iran viewed the rooster as a symbol of bravery and fight, and they carried them as emblems of the army. According to accounts, the Achaemenid monarch Ardasher offered a golden rooster to a soldier who injured him during a fight with his brother Kuresh the Younger by raising his spear in front of the warriors. Therefore, the Iranians referred to the warriors who wore a rooster crown (or rooster feather) as “roosters”. The rooster was regarded one of the sacred birds in Zoroastrianism.

The rooster holds a prominent position in Iranian folk tales, with “The Fox and the Rooster” being one of the most well-known and oldest. In this tale, the crafty fox attempts to pull the rooster down from the tree and eat it in numerous methods. However, he gets misled by his own trick (we talked about this fairy tale above in the section about the image of the fox). In this story, the rooster is portrayed as a sharp and perceptive character who immediately recognized the fox’s ploy.

Rooster, the protagonist of the fable “The Rooster Who Stole Nuts”, along with a gang of animals – wolf, dog, crow, snake, and scorpions – attempt to steal nuts from the goose’s home. The wolf terrifies the home, the crow sits on the tree in the house’s center, the snake hides beneath the wood, and the scorpion hides in the matchbox. Because the nuts are on top, the rooster instructs the dog to ascend the nursery’s steps. The dog then enters the nursery and begins gathering nuts. When the judge’s wife heard the sound of nuts, she stood up and walked to the firewood, where she was bitten on the hand by a snake. When he takes up the matchbox, a scorpion stings him. As he attempts to capture the thief while climbing the stairs in the dark, the dog pounces on him and grabs him by the leg. When he attempts to alert his neighbors and request assistance, the wolf is hurled at him. A crow flew into his throat when he opened his mouth to pray to God in the center of the yard. During this period, the rooster will steal sufficient quantities of nuts. In this fable, the rooster is portrayed as a leader who communicates with other animals, is skilled at his job, and possesses dexterity.

In the fairy tale “The Clever Rooster”, the rooster is portrayed as a capricious, somewhat boastful character who trusts his friend the dog. Because the weather is hot and he doesn’t want to go home when it’s late, he befriends a dog, and the dog, carrying him and guarding him, stays with him and lies down under the tree that the rooster took out. When the rooster crows in the early morning, the passing fox greets him politely and asks him not to be afraid to sleep here alone. “I am not afraid of anything,” the rooster declared. ‘Are rooster’s cowards?’ he asks. The fox requests that the rooster look at him from above to see if his guests are on their way. “My eyes are weak, and I don’t like to see far”, the rooster observes the fox. You look at me, circle the tree once, and then look in the direction you want”. Before the fox can take a single step, a dog appears from behind a tree and bites the fox on the tail, leaving the barely escaped fox without a tail.

In Iranian fairy tales, the image of a rooster has the following characteristics:

- smart and clever (“An animal with big ears and a long tail was running from a distance. I don’t know if it’s a wolf or not”);
- leading and dexterous (“You look at the stairs of the upper floor” and he climbs up from inside the Tapu himself and begins to count and steal nuts);
- capricious and proud (“No matter what Sak said, the rooster didn’t agree and he fell asleep there. He said that I’m not afraid of anything”).

So, in most cases, the rooster appears as a positive image in Iranian folk tales; it is portrayed as a proud image that is understanding, conveys its word to other animals, leads them, and trusts its friends when the time comes.

Owl:

In his “Persian Dictionary”, Asadi Tusi, the poet and the first collector of Persian words, cited the words “*kuch*, *gangar*, *kuf*” as synonyms for owl (“*jag’d*”). Muiyin’s dictionary includes the words “*bum*”, “*buf*”, “*luf*”, “*gand*” as synonyms for owl, and explains that the root of this word “*jag’d*” is derived from the Sugdian word “*sag’d*”. In general, the owl is depicted in Pahlavi and Avestan texts of ancient Iran as a bird of hatred and terror, and in some places as a pleasant and sacred bird.

In Iranian folklore, the owl is a wise bird who prefers to live alone, in ruins, away from humans. For instance, in the fairy tales “Fate” and “Jagda Agha and Mrs. Kebke”, the owl in “Fate” is intelligent and wise. A parrot falls into the ruins where the owl lives one day and says to the owl, who belongs to no one:

(“Why, owl, can’t you go out without hiding your face from the public? If you go to the city, you will be amazed by the magnificent palaces and colorful buildings. Look at me, what a lovely figure I have and how well I communicate. My brothers who placed me in a golden cage, taught me to speak, fed me bananas and almonds, and placed me in the best rooms”). The parrot tried to persuade the owl that his life was wasted in solitude, that he would go to the city to walk in flower gardens and gardens and eat delicious fruits, and that people who knew he would sit in such a state and heard his voice would take it as a bad omen and invited him to be a guest even for a day. The wise owl then shook his head and said:

(“They call me horrible, but they’re completely wrong. So far, I have never harmed anyone. If you have noticed that I do not go to the flower garden like other birds, you will notice that I am very different from them. A happy, gallant horse quickly passed me and did not make a happy sound, instead passing in front of me with grace and favor. I was forced to listen and to distance myself from others, and I remained poor and lonely”). Although the owl–cage parrot’s is made of gold or silver, it takes away the bird’s freedom; it claims that it has built its own house in this ruin, that it lives in darkness, that strangers’ words hurt it, that it never entertains, and that every creature has its own destiny.

In the fairy tale “Jagda Agha and Mrs. Kebke”, the owl marries a mountain cuckoo. They get into a fight one day, and Jagda ends up on the plain. Pumpkin summons him to the mountain several times, but he refuses each time. Years later, Kabak returns to Jagda, but he refuses to leave his nest. To charm her, go to the partridge: (“Look at my mouth, a bunch of buds / Look at my nose, my nose is very beautiful / Look at my eyes, grapes of Talegan / Look at my ears, Kashkul Darvishi”), but the owl is silent, only (“U–u–u, this is kafuhu”). Then, when the partridge was sad, the owl realized that he was sad and regretted what he had done. With that, the partridge is again on the mountain, and the owl is below.

As we can see, the owl in both fairy tales prefers to be alone. He dislikes people who try to please him, but he is a proud character who prefers to be treated differently, preferring his ruin, his self–made nest, and, most importantly, his freedom.

Based on the stories above, the following unique characteristics of the owl image can be explained:

- wants solitude and darkness (“I will rebuild my destroyed nest in this place and live in darkness, I prefer to live in poverty and solitude, separated from others”);
- disappointed (“How happy Samand ran in front of me and passed quickly, did not give me a sound of joy and did not look at me with love and compassion, and therefore I was forced to pull away from him, cut off contact with others”);
- does not wish harm to people (“Many people think that I am very mean, but they think wrong about me. Because so far no one has been harmed by me, I have not done harm to anyone”);
- intelligent and wise (“But you are aware of this fact, even if the cage is made of gold and silver, it is still a cage, because it takes away the freedom of the bird”).

So, in Iranian folk tales, the owl appears as an image that lives in its own world – in its ruins, with its own outlook, life, and destiny. He dislikes strangers, light. His main life is active in the evenings and at night, and he spends the day sitting in his house. He never hurts anyone, but because he is an evening bird, he lives his life the way he knows how, which irritates others. He is a wise, intelligent, and self–assured character.

Hudhud:

Surah Naml in the Qur'an greatly influenced the depiction of hudhud in Iranian literature, and many poets and writers in their poems and works referred to the events of Hazrat Sulaiman with Balkis and discussed the role of hudhud in these events. In Persian, the region is known by various names. "Shone be sar" and "hudhud" are the main names of the bird. The first name refers to its voice, while the second refers to the crown on its head. Pupak is another name for it, derived from the word Pup, which means a bird's crown, specifically Solomon's hen. However, the name Hudhud is more commonly found in modern Persian literature.

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