

**DASHDONDOG Jamba**

**Mongolia**

*Author*

## Biographical Information on Dashdondog Jamba

He was born in 1941. It is said that he has drawn pictures with a stick on the snow from early childhood. In summer, he used to make the images of many different animals with clay in the river. This might be the beginning for him to describe things elaborately. However, when he entered school and learnt to write, he started preferring describing in words. His first poems could attract a prominent writer from the capital city and were published in the form of a book by the State Printing House. Thus, a 17-year-old schoolboy from a remote province became a children's writer achieving fame throughout the country.

Mr. Dashdondog has been working as the editor-in-chief of Mongolian children's and youth newspapers and magazines for more than 20 years and has published more than 70 books for young readers. 24 of his books are published abroad. But his career in literature has not been easy. During the communism-oriented one-party system, he was named as a dissident, was dismissed, and deprived of the right to write because of a poem published in his newspaper. Nevertheless, the writer never gave up and began doing translations. He translated and published more than 50 books by foreign writers starting from H.C. Andersen's stories. Among them, 6 volumes consisting of works by children's writers from more than 100 countries worldwide are highly emphasized.

He is currently working to publish a textbook on the world children's literature. In 1990, Mongolia rejected the communist regime and started the transition to a democracy and market economy. It was a lucky event for Mr. Dashdondog. He visited Internationale Jugendbibliothek in Munich to get acquainted with the world children's literature in 1991. Reincarnated in terms of works, Mr. Dashdondog introduced to Mongolian children's literature a brand new way of philosophical thinking based on unique nomadic culture. A number of his books have been recognized as the best in his home country. The writer received 6 international awards. Mr. Dashdondog is a big public figure who not only writes books but also initiates many activities for the sake of children by founding the Children's Publishing House, the Mobile Library, the Union of Children's Book Illustrators, and the Children's Cultural Foundation and by organizing book fairs and contests for the best children's books.

## A Statement on the Dashdondog Jamba Contribution to Literature for Young People

Mr. Dashdondog is a strange man because he says that he wanted to write a good book although he has published books more than the number of years he has lived for but has always been fussy about his books. Interestingly, almost every book by him is recognized as the best, and the man wins high praises from critics. In such a way, his books remain in the year of their publication, and the writer always moves forward. Mr. Dashdondog has searched for fertile lands of works all his life and changed himself in his every book. It goes without saying that he has the blood of his ancestors moving from one place to another in search for fresh pastures with abundant grass and water for their livestock. Let me introduce you to some of his books which in the opinions of critics reformed Mongolian children's literature. The writer considers preschool age children as geniuses.

He proved it by his book *Mom, Dad, and Me*. In a poem, *Me*, a boy draws one of his ears smaller and the other ear bigger. When asked why, the boy says that his ears became smaller when he hears a grumble and bigger when he listens to a tale. The boy also draws himself with four legs. When asked, he replies that his two legs were not enough to run to help people and that if he has four legs he would run around the world to help all the people. Further, the boy draws his head bigger than the body. When asked, he replies that he has no choice but to draw a bigger head because his thoughts are too crowded in the head. In such a manner, a number of his poems confirm young geniuses. One of the characteristics of his poems is rhythm and melody. One can hear the rain pouring down from *The Rain*, the arms clanking from *The War*, and the clops of horses from *My Liver Chestnut*. When the writer read aloud his *My Liver Chestnut* in the Mongolian language at a workshop for children's writers in the U.S.A., all the participants understood without any translation that the poem was about a horse. Even, one writer said: "It is curious that we are able to understand this poem although it is read in its native language, like people from any country can understand paintings or music without translation. This is a new trend in the world children's literature, isn't it?"

*The Tales on Horseback* are philosophical tales for children. The legend has it that Genghis Khan found a method of inserting the whole beef in the pericardium and transported food on horseback without any problems during wars. Mr. Dashdondog developed this method passed down by his ancestors in the art of words and tried to fit big ideas to a small space by his *The Tales on Horseback*. This book has nine short stories, each of which occupies only two pages but depicts the whole life. Some critics considered them as nine novels for children. Critics also wrote that they feel

extraordinary writing skills as if they hear the melodic tunes of a horse-headed fiddle when reading *The Tales on Horseback*.

Mongolian readers accepted *The Stone Legends* as a humanistic ode. This book was written on behalf of wild animals to protect their interests. If animals could read this book, how would they be thankful? While reading it, children feel compassion for the animals and burst into tears. Many tragic events occur because of the fact that people do not understand the language of animals. Nomadic people live in harmony with nature. Worried about wild animals becoming rare, the writer wrote this book to help people understand their language. *The Stone Legends* created a sensation in Mongolian society, and even, a voluntary association for the protection of wild animals was established by children. Laura Bush, the former U.S. First Lady, highly praised this book and sent a letter to its author.

Mr. Dashdondog has written his works in all genres of children's literature, such as lyrics, verses, poems, short stories, tales, picture books, non-fictions, plays, operas, cinematology, translation, etc. He also drew the illustrations of some of his books and set his poems to music. He completed 16 stage and screen plays. Of them, the opera *Temuujin* about Genghis Khan's childhood became the pride of the Mongolian people, and subsequently, a theater named after it was established. More than 50 criticisms about his works were published domestically and more than 40 criticisms abroad. There are a number of both domestic and international students who have defended their bachelor's and master's theses about his works. His works are included in more than 30 domestic textbooks and 4 foreign textbooks. His biography and works are included in more than 10 national and international dictionaries.

In all his works, Mr. Dashdondog Jamba has aimed at introducing his readers to humanism and traditional culture of the nomadic people who worship the eternal sky and truly love and protect nature. He is a writer adding his own tunes to the symphony of world children's literature with his works as unique as melodic tunes of a horse-headed fiddle.

### Mongolian Section of IBBY

## RENOVATOR

Lately the word “Renovator” began to understand as if it were a word of political meaning. In policy there’s no renovator. But culture, sciences and production always had renovators, and will further on to have. Let’s look briefly at one such renovator. The man is continuing to make renovations in a difficult to renovate field. This field is “Children’s literature”.

International “Golden Foal” and D.Natsagdorj prize-winner, well-known children’s writer Jamba Dashdondog is a famous renovator who entered children’s literature in second half of twentieth century. At entering great children’s literature almost as a child, he was a “Smart boy” who made to jump up the whole audience adults and children alike. As he entered children’s literature as if not knocking on the door, the first book he carried on in his hand was “A resourceful boy”. When we look back after over forty years or in the period after having closed one century and began the next one the name he gave to his first book seems very much to be suitable to himself. Mr. Jamba Dashdondog today is marching in first rank of children’s literature still as a resourceful boy. As to his work methods he is creating his books by rich options and with his every new books he proves that his “work methods are inexhaustible”.

One. He started with verses or poems. In doing so he except preserving traditional forms began to enrich with new modes. If poem is made a song by adapting a melody, Mr. Dashdondog began to write adapting specific tunes and rhythm to every words, stanza and rhymes. He created many such specific verses one a clear model of which is “Fiery chestnut”.

Two. He in poem by enriching their inner forms, shape and figures renovated changing outer forms using not only illiteration but adjusting also ending characters thus building shapes. The most characteristic example of it is the book “Residence”.

Three. He changing poem into prose and bringing them in conformity introduced a combined type of poem and prose. Last exemplary pattern of it is the interesting book “Tales on horseback”. About this book I mentioned in my article “From words distilled is a fairy tale” in newspaper “Dal /Shoulder/” (issue 84), and therefore I’m mentioning here in short.

Four. With his unprecedented and remarkably interesting book “Stone legend” proved that he through poeticizing not only the nature of his country but even usual rocks considerably surpassed some present “Politicizers”. Along the paths of his stone characters organized “Stone legend” trip on carts drawn by horses involving children from cities and rural areas, organized symposium which became a new initiative for understanding and protection of motherland, the nature and wild animals.

Five. His new combined type of poem and prose brought to stage and screen and created “Temujin” opera, “Geser” children’s play, TV play “Spotted two years calf” and “Wooden snake” movie. “Temujin” opera as well “Geser” children’s play in our children’s literature became primary right works.

Six. To rescue his little readers from the danger to pass transition period to market system without books to read, he initiated almost one man non-government organization or Children’s cultural fund “Golden tale” and personally acted as writer, collector, editor, publisher and distributor. He published series of 180 books thus alone performing works not managed even by a collective of ten personnel. Now he extended his initiative

founding "Golden tale" club of children' books, and dreams and plans to build a house of children' books. Not only our countrymen but foreigners also admire seeing that he alone could perform so much for children which can be understood from the promotion transmitted by Japanese "NHK" TV in framework of series "Who's who in Asia".

Seven. In recent years for promotion of children' books of Mongolia abroad he alone worked at a level of honorary consul of children' writers of Mongolia, published his articles in magazines and book of children literature of Russia, Bulgaria, Germany, Japan, organized exhibitions and became known abroad by his activities. Even today in our children' literature we still lack such militant and active workers. ....

Speaking about writer Jamba Dashdondog who wrote about fifty books and published in two million six hundred copies and about his activities as journalist and organizer would take much time.

Famous modern Mongolian children writer, enlightener and book benefactor Mr. Jamba Dashdondog is renovator in artistry, artistic thinking, work methods, forms and contents. He really still is "Smart boy". Discussions and researches about it is just beginning.

**Tudev Lodon** (Labor Hero of Mongolia, State Prize-winner writer, Dr.)

"Dal" newspaper, 2001, №108

## List of Awards and Other Distinctions

### One. Local

1. Dad, Mom and Me -Award of the Mongolian Writers' Union, 1972
2. New Morning -Grand-Prix in a contest organized by the Mongolian Children's Fund, 1989
3. Fiery Chestnut Horse -Award named after Natsagdorj, the founder of modern Mongolian literature, 1998
4. Tales on Horseback -The Best Book of Mongolia, 1999
5. Stone Legends -The Best Book of the Ministry of Nature and the Environment, 2001
6. A Camel with Seven Humps -The Golden Feather Award as the best literary work, 2002
7. Brave Marmot -Grand-Prix in a contest for the best children's books organized by the Mongolian Writers' Union
8. Horse of Poem and Other Poems -Honored Cultural Worker of Mongolia, 2005
9. Three Stories of Men -The Best Book, 2006
10. The Little Dulmaa and 11 other books -The Best Book, READ Project implemented in association with the World Bank, 2007
11. Dad, Mom and Me -The Best Book, 2007
12. Suckling Colt -Award named after Dandar, the Outstanding Hero of Mongolia, 2008
13. The Goat Lifter of the Camel Lifter -The Best Book, 2008

## Two. Abroad

1. The Five Colors -Grand-Prix in a lyrics category in an international children's songs competition, 1978
2. Temuujin -Golden Foad, International Association of Children's Writers of Mongolian Nationality, 1991
3. Children's Literary Studies -Award by the International Institute for Children's Literature, Osaka, 2004
4. Poems for Children -Gold Medal for Poetic Excellence, World Academy of Arts and Culture, 2006
5. The Golden Neighbour -IBBY Honor List, 2006
6. Children's Mobile Library -IBBY-Asahi Reading Promotion Award Winner, 2006
7. The Yurt (Home) -The White Ravens 2001, A selection of international children's and youth literature (special mention)
8. Odd Boy -The White Ravens 2006, A selection of international children's and youth literature

### **For life-time achievement**

**2016 State Award of Mongolia** for outstanding contributions to Mongolian children's literature and children's reading. Given by the President of Mongolia.



## **Complete bibliography of the books for Children by DASHDONDOG Jamba**

1. **Smart Boy**, 1958, Ulaanbaatar, State printing house
2. **Driver**, 1960, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
3. **Stick!**, 1961, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
4. **Milkmaid**, 1962, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
5. **Three gloves of two hands**, 1964, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
6. **Cheerful poems**, 1965, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
7. **Rainbow**, 1966, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Enlightenment
8. **Dad, Mom and Me**, 1971, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Education
9. **First rain**, 1971, UB, Union of Mongolian Writers
10. **Son of North Taiga**, 1972, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Education
11. **Fiery Chestnut horse**, 1974, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Education
12. **Sun**, 1975, Publishing house of Bayan-Ulgii province
13. **A hundred lambs**, 1979, UB, Publishing house of Ministry of Education
14. **Five pleasant**, 1984, Publishing house of Ministry of Education
15. **Three Manly Games**, 1985, UB, Textbook editorial staff of the Ministry of People's Education
16. **Horse of poem**, 1986, UB, Textbook editorial staff of the Ministry of People's Education
17. **Peaceful mountain**, 1988, UB, Golden tales partnership
18. **Mazaalai (Gobi Bear)**, 1992, UB, Golden tales partnership
19. **Fiery Chestnut horse**, 1993, UB, Publishing house of Mongolian literature
20. **A little golden fish named Altaakhai**, 1993, UB, Golden tales partnership
21. **The five colours** (Published in 9 languages), 1994, UB, Golden tales partnership
22. **Tale of a son named Altangaa**, 1997, UB, Golden tales partnership
23. **A monster with nine heads named Yesugchin**, 1998, UB, Golden tales partnership
24. **Tales on Horseback**, 1999, UB, Admon Co., Ltd
25. **Home**, 2000, UB, Golden tales partnership
26. **Stone legends**, 2000, UB, Golden tales partnership
27. **Colored dream**, 2001, UB, Golden tales partnership
28. **Versifiers of the sky**, 2002, UB, Golden tales partnership
29. **A camel with seven humps**, 2002, UB, Bumbuulei
30. **The Golden Neighbour**, 2003, UB, Bumbuulei
31. **The last snowman**, 2003, UB, Bumbuulei
32. **My little friends**, 2003, UB, Ungut Khevlel Co., Ltd
33. **Artistic Twittering**, 2003, UB, Urlakh Erdem Co., Ltd
34. **Shrewd marmot cub in the second year**, 2003, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
35. **Water up to the knees**, 2003, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
36. **New morning** (CD), 2003, UB, Sonor studio

37. **Colored dream** (Cassette), 2003, UB, Egshig studio
38. **Odd boy**, 2005, UB, Ungut Khevel Co., Ltd
39. **Three stories of men**, 2006, UB, Ungut Khevel Co., Ltd
40. **Home** (the second printing), 2006, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
41. **Ger** (published in 9 languages), 2006, UB, MUTU Co., Ltd
42. **The little Dulmaa**, 2006, UB, Ulaanbaatar press
43. **Water up to the knees** (the second printing), 2006, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
44. **Dad, Mom and Me**, (the second printing) 2006, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
45. **Stone legends** (the second printing), 2006, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
46. **Son of the fire named Galaikhan**, 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
47. **A camel with seven humps** (the second printing), 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
48. **Three stories of men** (the second printing), 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
49. **Drawing of a camel**, 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
50. **Girl with parti-colored scarf**, 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
51. **The wise men of Mongolia**, 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
52. **Stone legends** (the third printing), 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
53. **Dad, Mom and Me**, (the third printing), 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
54. **Home** (the third printing), 2007, UB, Interpress Co., Ltd
55. **Dad, Mom and Me** (the fourth printing), 2008, UB, Ulaanbaatar print Co., Ltd
56. **A bowl with a blue flower**, 2008, UB, Xpress Co., Ltd
57. **Mongol gown**, 2008, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
58. **Tale of a son named Altangaa**, (the second printing) 2008, UB,  
Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
59. **Tale of a son who lifts the camel**, 2008, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
60. **Crane**, 2008, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
61. **Vansemberuu, (Saussurea)**, 2008, UB, Minkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
62. **Tale of an orphan Elm**, 2008, UB, Minkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
63. **Colored dream** (the second printing), 2008, UB, Minkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
64. **Melodious Poems**, 2008, UB, Minkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
65. **Mongolian House**, 2008, UB, Xpress Co., Ltd
66. **Suckling Colt**, 2008, UB, Mongolian Children's Cultural Foundation
67. **The Goat lifter of the camel lifter**, 2008, UB, Mongolian Children's Cultural  
Foundation
68. **A monster with nine heads named Yesugchin**, 2008, UB, Selenge-  
press Co., Ltd
69. **A Golden neighbour** (the second printing), 2008, UB, Selenge press Co., Ltd
70. **Round**, 2009, UB, Ungut Khevel Co., Ltd
71. **Manly good Uai, Uai hero**, 2009, UB, Ungut Khevel Co., Ltd
72. **Tale of the City**, 2009, UB, Munkhiin Useg Co., Ltd
73. **The Old Woman Who Speaks With Ravens**, 2011, UB, Mongolian Children's  
Cultural Foundation
74. **The Three fallow Deer – The Legend of Orion**, 2014, UB, Unget khevel Co. Ltd
75. **A Stone Thrown Up**, 2015, UB, Unget khevel Co. Ltd

## **List of translated books by Dashdondog Jamba**

1. **Dad, Mom and Me**, 1974, Moscow, Detskaya Literatura, In Russian Language
2. **Dad, Mom and Me**, 1976, Kiev, Veselka, In Ukrain Language
3. **A grey wolf and a little marmot**, 1977, Moscow, Detskaya Literatura,  
In Russian Language
4. **Generation of Sukhbaatar**, 1978, Moscow, Molodaya gvardiya,  
In Russian language
5. **Tsetseg and camel calf**, 1981, Sofi, Narodna Mladej, In Bulgarian language
6. **Small Sun**, 1982, Alma –Ata, Jalyn In Khazakh language
7. **Dad, Mom and Me**, 1983 Ashhabad, Magaryf, In Turkmen Language
8. **A son who lifts the camel**, 1992, Moscow, Detskaya Literatura,  
In Russian language
9. **Three Manly Games**, 1992, Alma-Ata, Jalyn, in Khazakh language
10. **Mazaalai (Gobi Bear)**, 1995, Wien, Breitshopt, In German language
11. **Stone legends**, 2002, Khukh Khot, China, People`s press Union of Inner  
Mongolia
12. **Rosy chestnut**, 2003, Beijing, National publishing Council, China
13. **Tales on horseback**, 2003, Beijing, National publishing Council, China
14. **The Green Horse**, 2004, Tokyo, Terainky, In Japanese language
15. **Tales on horseback**, 2006, Seoul, Leegaseo, In Korean language
16. **A kind neighbour**, 2007, Tokyo, Froebel-kan, In Japanese language
17. **Tales on horseback**, 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Penerbitan Pelangi, In Chinese  
language
18. **Tale of an orphan Elm**, 2008, Nagasaki publishing, In Japanese language
19. **A camel with seven humps**, 2008, Seoul, Ollybolly online picture book,  
In Korean and English language
20. **The last snowman**, 2008, Seoul, Ollybolly online picture book,  
In Korean and English language
21. **Mongolian house**, 2009, Seoul, Ollybolly online picture book, In Korean and  
English language
22. **Mongolian folktales**, 2009, USA, Libraries unlimited, In English language
23. **Suckling Colt**, 2009 Seoul, Ollybolly online picture book, In Korean and English  
language
24. **The goat lifter of the camel lifter**, 2009, Seoul, Ollybolly online picture book,  
In Korean and English language

Mongolia IBBY submission for the 2018 HCA Award

The candidate: Dashdondog Jamba (author)

**Five of the most important titles by the candidate**

**(Sent to the jury)**

1. Ysugchin and the horse-head fiddle
2. Ger, a story of Mongolian felt house
3. The three fallow deer: the legend of Orion
4. A stone thrown up
5. The old woman who speaks with ravens



Жамбын ДАШДОНДОГ

# ГҮРВАН МАНРАМ

The Three Fallow Deers

НОМИН ХИЛЭГ







### THE OLD WOMAN TALKS WITH THE AUTHOR

The discussion between the old woman Mrs.Bumbuulii and myself could barely be heard over the bleating of the lambs, like the sweet melody of autumn.

"What are the lambs saying then?"

"They're saying, 'I'll suck some milk, mom'."

"So what do the ravens say when they're cawing then?"

"They don't speak an earthly language. They pass on to us the thoughts of Eternal Heaven."

"We don't understand them then."

"We've not had time. Eternal Heaven one day will change the human way of life. Then humans will be able to fly."

"What? Humans fly? Hardly!"

"Why not? If humans can fly in stories, then they can fly. People should develop along new paths..."

Mrs.Bumbuulii put a lamb to its mother's teat and turned back. Oh well, how very broad is this great Mongolian Gobi desert! That's the sort of ideas people have who live here.

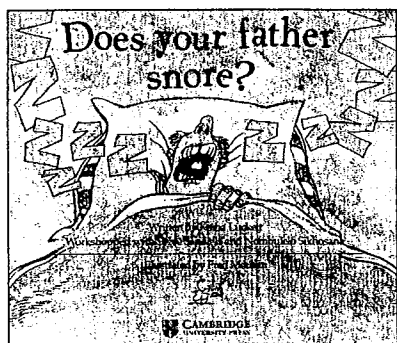
DASHDONDOG Jamba

# THE OLD WOMAN WHO SPEAKS WITH RAVEN





SPECIAL ISSUE: FATHERS AND SONS



Cover of Kathy Lockett's *Does Your Father Snore?*, illus. Fred Mouton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Turn to page 36 for the article by Jay Heale.



Mustafa Delioğlu's cover art for Ayla Çınaroğlu's *Yaşasın, Kar Yağıyor* (Hurrah, it's snowing; Istanbul: Uçanbalık, 1998). The article on Çınaroğlu begins on page 56.

To the Reader	2
Guest Editor's Introduction	3
Letters	4
TO THE POINT: FATHERS AND SONS	
Shifting Versions of Masculinity in Australian Children's Literature, 1953–1997 <i>Beverley Pennell</i>	6
Boys and Men in Kazumi Yumoto's <i>The Friends</i> <i>Yoshida Junko</i>	12
Loved Too Much, Loved Too Little: The Evolving Relationship of Fathers and Sons in Bengali Literature for Children <i>Swapna Dutta</i>	17
Väterdämmerung: Fact, Fiction, and Fathers in Nöstlinger's <i>The Cucumber King</i> <i>Charlotte Cubbage and Jeffrey Garrett</i>	21
You've Come a Long Way, Daddy: Affirmations of Fatherhood in Recent African American Picture Books <i>Alexandria LaFaye and Linnea Hendrickson</i>	28
Other Voices	34
<i>The Myth and the Reality: Father-Son Relationships in the Black Family</i> • <i>Spider Therapy for Fathers</i> • <i>Rewriting the Father: Fathers and Sons in Contemporary Greek Children's Literature</i> • <i>Looking for the Absent Father in Contemporary German-Language Children's Books</i>	
Regular Features	
Focus IBBY	43
<i>Welcome to the IBBY Jubilee Congress in Basel</i> • <i>IBBY in Bologna</i> • <i>Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury 2002</i> • <i>Third IBBY Selection of Outstanding Books for Young People with Disabilities</i> • <i>UNESCO Prize for Children's Literature in the Service of Tolerance</i>	
Country Survey: Mongolia: From Folk Tale to Children's Literature <i>Sunjidmaa Jamba</i>	51
Author Spotlight: Ayla Çınaroğlu: Portraying the World of a Child <i>Aytül Akal</i>	56
International Children's Books of Note	59
Professional Literature	61
News and Announcements	63
Calendar	inside back cover

## From Folk Tale to Children's Literature

*Sunjidmaa Jamba*

### Changing Times: Keeping Our National Traditions

In 1990, Mongolia underwent a relatively peaceful democratic revolution. Within months the country made the transition from one-party rule, a planned economy, and a socialist government to a multiparty democracy and a market economy. For the past ten years, Mongols have embarked on the path of reform, embracing all spheres of political, economic, and social life. Although democracy has brought more freedom and opened the door to the world, we are also experiencing many difficulties, especially concerning children and their literature.

All the publishing houses for children's books have collapsed, and original publishing is mostly limited to textbooks. There are a number of reasons why it is difficult to sustain the previous achievements in basic education: rising cost of books; a school curriculum that has lost its relevance to daily life; an increased demand for the labor of children in the countryside, a result of the dissolution of livestock cooperatives; and a lack of reading materials to stimulate children's curiosity and creativity. This situation poses a serious problem for the future not only of the current generation of children but possibly for successive generations as well.

To promote literacy, it is imperative that we find a new path. As a result of the initiative of our famous children's writer Jambyn Dashdondog, the Mongolian Children's Cultural Foundation was established in 1996. Dashdondog, who has dedicated more than

forty years of his life to children's literature, serves as its chairperson. The Foundation is the only organization in the country that supports the intellectual development of children, especially their reading habits, calling for everybody's contribution to this noble goal. The main activity of the Foundation is the publication of a series of children's booklets called the Golden Tale series. The Foundation distributes these booklets throughout the country, including to the children of herdsmen. In the last three years, the series has introduced young readers between the ages of seven and fourteen to Mongolian folk tales and legends, well-known international works, and modern Mongolian stories.

This period has also brought a new approach to books for children. Under the socialist system, children's literature, like all other Mongolian arts, was too realistic and did little to develop children's imaginations. Today, children read fantasies like *Mortoi ulger* (Tales on horse back; Ulaanbaatar: ADMON Publishing House, 1999), by Dashdondog, a collection of nine stories set in different places in Mongolia. These stories carry readers around the country on a swift horse like the horses of Mongolian nomads. Illustrated in color and written in Cyrillic, each story is very short (two pages each) and has its own hero—such as Galaikhan (Son of fire), Yesogchin (The nine-headed), Tsagtsai (The baby eagle), and Nagoon mor (The green horse). The stories employ fantasy and magic to present philosophical themes: friendship and harmony, loyalty and treachery, love of country, power of art, especially the melody of the horsehead fiddle (the Mongolian national instrument), and mind and space. Dashdondog explains in the foreword that he used the wisdom and skill of Mongolian ancestors—storing all the meat from a cow in its pericardium, as he puts it—in his word art to compose great stories in condensed form. Called “children's nine novels” by critics, the book was selected the best book of 1999 by the Ministry of Education and Culture.



## NINE NOVELS FOR CHILDREN

By **BULGAN Batchuluun**  
**Mongolian Language and Literature Lecturer**  
**Teachers' College**

I think you, dear reader, hesitate that where the nine novels are from in Mongolia where there are a few literary works for children. Even you will be very surprised each novel is only in two-three pages. Yes, it is true in fact. I am sure that you will have such impression when you read Tales on Horseback by J. Dashdondog, a renowned children's writer. This book includes nine tales. It is really wonderful that each of the tales has idea of a whole novel.

From the immemorial time, load to be carried by the nomadic Mongolians during their travel have been small and compact and tales to be told to their children have been short and compact too. Having inherited the wise tradition of word art of having big idea in a small space from the ancestors, J. Dashdondog created a new form in modern children's literature. For example, in the Saussurea (Vansembuu) tale, activities conducted during the whole lifelong period from the birth to the death of prince and princess of flower kingdom. Although the tales are short, they are rich in philosophical idea, the basis of world's wisdom. Therefore their scope is big as of a novel. Any tale has philosophy of life in extend. In general, if any literature, it does not matter that it is for children or adults, is rooted from the philosophical soil, it can meet all requirements of life. It is believed that the tales in the Tales on Horseback will meet these requirements.

It is very advantageous that the new little characters of children's literature we have dreamed of were born in the pages of the book. They include Galaikhan, the son of fire, Altaikhai, a little golden fish, and Yesogchin, a new monster with nine heads. It attracts our interest that artistic ideas of folk tales have been enriched with new form in the modern level. Scholars consider that Mongolian language is rich in vocabulary that has over one million words.

Although the tales in The Tales on Horseback is short, their vocabulary is rich and nice. Some parents can criticize that the book was written with words that are unknown by children. It is sure that the children will be in search for meanings of new words in pages of the book in order to increase their vocabulary. The new word meaning of which was found out by the children themselves is known by heart. A child's thinking is spacious as his/her vocabulary is large.

As for the style, the book is very close to the thinking of a Mongolian person. When we read the tales, we feel nice melody like horse-headed fiddles are played in steppe. I think that world's significance of the Tales on Horseback will be higher, if this nice melody that are produced by like many musical instruments those are harmonious are played in translated into foreign languages.

It has been said by the nomadic Mongolians that a person on horseback travels a long distance. It is sure that the Tales on Horseback will travel a long distance too. I wish the book that is a new phenomenon in Mongolian children's literature to cross the country's border and present the wisdom of its people to children around the world.

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Note: Translation of examples is not provided here because you will find out them by reading the tales.

Nature, animal, and man are interrelated and comprehensive concepts for the Mongols who have been practicing animal husbandry. Its traces are clearly left in folklore in which pitiful characters of animals are invented to instill love and compassion in children. *The Stone Legends* are written based on the traditions of nomadic people who have been using the art of words to make their children humanists.

With the recent changes in social development, such as urbanization, Mongolian people are abandoning their traditional rural lifestyle, and the interrelations among nature, man, and animal are also changing. The author observed this situation, and his goal to instill love and compassion for wild animals in children is clearly visible in *The Stone Legends*.

Many children write that they burst into tears when reading *The Stone Legends* by J. Dashdondog. In their letters to the author, children say that they weep when reading the tragic stories about wild animals that cannot make people understand them.

In this way, the book has stories about generous animals that want to help others, such as wall-creeper, hedgehog, agama, snake, marmot, badger, fox, and wolf. Although the stories in this book seem to take place in real life, they trigger feelings of compassion and pain. If children having read this book become compassionate and warm-hearted, they will love not only animals but also people and other countries. In today's world with numerous cold-hearted people who are ready to settle disputes with war, this book written for the purpose of triggering compassion is not only important to the Mongolian children but also to the children from other countries worldwide.

**Kondo Noriko, Japanese Researcher  
(From Master's Thesis, Entitled  
"J. Dashdondog's Contributions to  
Modern Mongolian Children's Literature)**

## Let's Say 'Yes' for Animals!

Since I have learnt reading, I have read numerous books but never encountered those which had strong influence on my mind. Fortunately, I had a chance to find *The Stone Legends* and became heartbroken after reading it without stopping. When I heard that some people weep after reading a book, I did not believe and even smiled. But there are books which make us to burst into tears. All of a sudden, I found myself weeping when reading *The Stone Legends*. I did not know it. I did not understand wild animals before. How can I understand them because I do not know their language? To me, *The Stone Legends* is like a book translated from the language of animals. Somehow, the animals in this book seem to be intimate to me like my relatives. You should simply read it. An old marmot eager to offer his life to save its little cubs reminds me of my grandfather who is always ready to do everything for us. I wish not only children but also adults to read this book. Those carrying guns for hunting might not hunt animals after reading this book. I think if not only Mongolian children but also children from all over the world read this book, the suffering of animals may be eased. From now on, I will love every living organism from little ants running around my feet. Our class has decided to join the Volunteer Association for the Protection of Wild Animals, which is a nationwide organization established by children who have read *The Stone Legends*. Adults are working by saying 'Yes' for children. Now, I urge both children and adults to join by saying 'Yes' for wild animals!

G. Od-Erdene  
Student of Grade 4d  
Secondary School No. 1  
Khentii Province

2002



## A Book Written by Dondog with Stones

*The Stone Legends* has been published here in Inner Mongolia and is widely read by both children and adults. After reading this book, I began to think what person is the author. Then, a person, called Dashdondog, a children's writer from Mongolia, visited our school and introduced himself as 'Dondog.' Since all of us have already read *The Stone Legends*, written by Dondog, we asked him so many questions as if we are old friends. This book had a strong influence on my life. I found love not only for animals but also for my friends in this book. His book showed that Dondog knew his native language like every line of his palms. His writing skills led me to writing stories. One advantage of *The Stone Legends* is that it makes readers to think deeply. The legend of a snake transforming into a stone after living for the sake of humankind makes me think about a lot of things. Living organisms and lifeless bodies seem to be the same. Anyway, I feel that *The Stone Legends* has a magic influence on me.

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P.S.: Above is an excerpt about *The Stone Legends*.



Igori Motyashov

(Russian researcher of children' literature)

### Small lyrical characters of Dashdondog

When I speak about successes of children' writers think of Mongolia I think of "Notes of steppe land of Mongolia" or (About children' literature of Mongolia) by Academician Rinchen, published in November edition of "Children' literature" (Детская литература) of 1969. In this article in few lines is said "Poet Dashdondog is only writer who writes works dedicated to children of preschool years". Then I think that today Dashdondog no long is alone. He, perhaps, has many pupils. But today in children' poem of Mongolia he still has great and extraordinary position.

Illustrations of Dashdondog's book "Dad, Mom and Me" painted Tsolmon of preschool age which made the book very good. It seemed to me that no professional painter could so exactly express so complicated and deep meanings of poems like this naïve and not yet skilled boy. It clearly showed that Dashdondog as said M.Prishvin is lucky poet and has rare virtue to see the world with eyes of small children who everything "first" spot vigilantly without distortion and missing out.

Also, poems of Dashdondog are not only a proof of children' sensitivity to see the world. They obviously contain experiences of adults and wisdom of elders which endow children with deep and thorough-going education. Please read carefully the following lines:

Dad  
Puts me up  
On his shoulder  
Dad  
Raises me high  
On his shoulder

There clearly seen obvious and definite plan of lyrical character. It contains combined idea not directly understood by children but also contains an idea to make them understand by specific expressions what we adults have reached, what we inherited, what successes we reached and we are raising children "higher than ourselves" to bring them into new and more higher life circle. In further talks between father and son this idea gets confirmed, more detailed and extends with containing new and new ideas.

I ask  
Dad,  
"Dad,  
Dad!  
How come  
You're gotten so tall?"  
Dad says  
To me,  
"I've gotten so tall  
So that I can show  
My kids

These distant,  
Distant shapes”

This talk included in few lines really contains the meaning that in the development of mankind not only technical development but also development of intelligence and moral is more important. When you read new poems of Dashdondog you reveal new and new aspects of rich mental life of small lyrical characters which makes you think over them. Namely, it makes you to realize that both near and far worlds of the environment are reflected in the awareness of children growing up rapidly and full of enthusiasm for discovering new things. It means the beginning of the images of individuals receiving all-round education, acquiring a high level of morality, and cherishing rich intellectual heritages of their ancestors and all other things from their parents, grandparents, animals to tractors running outside, clouds on the sky, airplanes, and characters of tales and legends.

Dashdondog's internal thinking is very close to the unity of children's awareness of the world in its original form. This triggers highly precious and eloquent poems combining the voice of nature and the voice of humans who build awareness in this world.

It is no coincidence that talented children's poets, such as E. Moshkovskaya and Yu. Kushak, translated Dashdondog's works into Russian with pleasure. "His works always make me happy, even though they are word-by-word translation which must have deteriorated the original works," Kushak told me. "I become elated because I have to translate entirely pleasant characters but not a particular topic, event, or banal idea."

Pages 66-68  
Children's Literature  
Children's Literature Printing House  
Moscow, 1982



## UNIQUE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES

**By Ph. D. and Professor OYUNBADRAKH Damba**  
**Literary critic of children's literature**

Human life is everlasting because millions of fathers, mothers and children are continued uninterruptedly in the world. It is difficult to find out a poet who did not write of this triangle of relationship. Let's see how a Mongolian poet has addressed this theme. It is sure he addressed this theme through the point of view by children as he is a children's writer. His rhyme "Dad" starts as pride of a little boy:

My dad  
is taller  
than the smallest kids'  
dads

It seems that fathers are seen taller in the eyes of their children; and fathers have thoughts of making their children better than themselves. How many poets who were able to write this good characteristic feature in simple and skillful manner are there?

Let's see now his rhyme "Mom". A little boy painted his mom in her parti-colored headscarf and green *deel*. But he was hesitating how to paint the love his mom experience for him. In his rhyme "Me", the poet discovers the boy's wisdom and enters into his thoughts. The little character painted himself with six fingers in his right hand and four fingers in his left hand. When it was asked the reason of this picture, it was explained that the right hand do all works and the left hand is lazy one as it almost does not involve in doing anything. It is clear that although the little character of this rhyme discovers the world through his five senses; his sixth sense has been developed in a high level as well. With these rhymes and in this way, Dashdondog Jamba, a children's writer, created the characters of a dad, a mom and a little boy of his "Dad", "Mom" and "Me" rhymes in very interesting and specific manner that will have never been repeated.

Actually, all poems published in his "Dad, Mom and Me" book are unique works that could be born only from thoughts of a Mongolian poet lineage of whom is from nomads. He has a rhyme entitled "My liver chestnut", a color of horse. It is about a horse: a boy riding a horse first has slow walk, then he gallops on the steppe against the wind by adding slowly and slowly the speed. When the school is appears on his eyes, he approaches it by walking by reducing slowly and slowly the walk of his horse. When the writer reads his rhyme, sound of horse gallop is heard. It is a simple melodious rhyme that illustrates horse walk. Once it was criticized that it has no artistic idea. In fact, implicitly there is a philosophical idea: A baby is leant to walk hardly and then to run. In his young age he achieves the highest point of his speed and strength like a horse gallops in a steppe. When he gets his old age, his speed and strength will be slow down and walks. This philosophical formula of human life is in the nature of the rhyme. This is also another unique characteristic feature. In general, we can feel philosophical characters from his works.

There is the rhyme "Three Heroes." It is about a simple eraser, pencil and soap that are carried in bags of children and finished themselves in physical manner by being reduced by serving for the sake and well-being of their owners. Behind these items that are made friends everyday, it is seen clearly courageous and good characters of those who sacrifice their life for well-being of others. It is the characteristic feature of Dashdondog's laboratory to create a unique idea from a simple one.

His rhymes are very melodious. Artistic ideas of his rhymes' are expressed in harmony with the melody they produce. It is difficult to translate rhythm and the internal melody of Dashdondog's poems. However, his artistic ideas are understandable and clear through translations. There are many people who imitate his rhymes in Mongolia. But these writers have not achieved a success. Dashdondog's poems get valuable from a year to a year as gold gets colorful.

It seems there is a strong law for art. What is this? The answer is: it seems the person who performed reform first with his /her unique works is kept in the memory and those who imitated are blown out like foam. If an artist has many followers, it is an example that the person has a unique characteristic feature. One of these people is Dashdondog Jamba, a children's writer. It is true that he produced unrepeatable and unique poems and stories in the Mongolian children's literature with his gifted talent.

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## *Dashdondog Jamba Makes Book Reforms*

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary (2008) of his first poetry book for children to begin his service for the young generation, Dashdondog Jamba has reformed his works. He has never betrayed his good deeds as a children's writer.

Fifty years ago, when he was a tenth grader of the 10-year secondary school in the provincial center of Bulgan, Mr. Dashdondog published *The Smart Boy*, a children's book with only 18 pages containing 13 poems and has been persistently serving for children ever since. Even though he is now a father and grandfather, Mr. Dashdondog remained like a child. On the fiftieth anniversary of his first book, he showed himself as the Smart Boy during a visit to his home province and thought how to depict quick-witted young rural horse-herders and their hardworking parents in a book. Finally, he has made reforms through the publication of *The Goat Lifter of the Camel Lifter*, *The Bowl with a Blue Flower*, and *The Suckling Colt*, the books which depict rural people in colors with a series of photographs and a thread of words. It can be considered as a reform carried out through first literary books (published in photographs) which describe in color photographs and eloquent words the life of ordinary but wonderful rural people, such as Jamiyandorj Byamba the Lion (title given to a champion wrestler) (the tradition of his success has been still continued by Tuvshinbayar Naidan, who became the first Olympic gold medalist from Mongolia on the same year) and herder Erkhemtsogt Enebish, and their descendents. It is a gain of children's literature, a new trend in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, dubbed the century of documentary literature or the information century.

Photography is incredibly convincing because it depicts the truth without any imagination, decoration, or exaggeration. So there is no way to add any exaggeration in words to photographic books because the photographs themselves prove what takes place in reality. It goes without saying that this genre is of cognitive importance to children.

For all these reasons, I would congratulate children's writer Dashdondog Jamba on remaining the Smart Boy, a character of his first book, bidding farewell to the past century and on making book reforms on the eighth year of the new century.

Doctor L. Tudev

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