

Speech by Dashdondog Jamba, a Mongolian children's writer

The world's book palace, called IBBY, has opened its door in Mongolia. Now we are members of one family. It is wonderful. Mongolian children's literature with history of 800 years of development has joined this big family.

The first children's writer was Chinggis khan himself. His wise teaching words dedicated to his 4 children have educated the children of Mongols from one generation to other generations. There's an example of his teachings: once upon a time, a snake with 1000 heads and one tail lived there. When a cart approached, the snake easily fell under its wheels as its 1000 heads strived for each direction. But an another snake with one head and 1000 tails did not fall under the wheels of the cart because the only head managed the tails and the snake survived. In fact, the Mongolians were weak when they had many heads and were strong when they had one head.

There is a historic literature that had been available for both children and adults had been developed in this way for 8 centuries. But in 1950-s of 20th century writers started to specialize only in children's literature. One of them is me. When I was 17, my first book was published in the state-run printing house. Since I have had over 50 books published.

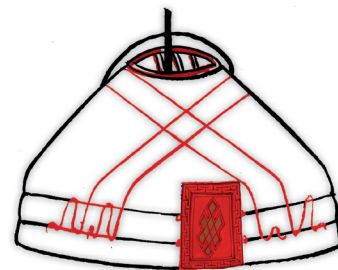
Since 1990, when the country entered the way of democracy and free market economy, it was stopped to publish books for children. People considered the publishing of children's books as a profitless business. However, I managed myself to have published 108 books written by colleagues and made them available for children to read through a mobile library. We were supported: a bus and books were sent us from Japan and USA. My family operates the mobile library.

Our project was valued highly and granted the Asahi Award. It was an event that made thousands of children who like reading books to be very happy. We say the children "After eating candies there remains nothing. But after reading a book you will have it in your head." Therefore, we will fully dedicate this Award not for children who like candies, but for those who like reading books. I think there's no child who doesn't like candy in the world. Mongolian children like eating various candies made in many countries. Our wish is to make available the Mongolian children to read books written and published in different countries.

I, a humble writer, am fully confident that a very tight friendship will be established between the children in the world, if they make friends through the books we deliver to them. When I was a child I was dreaming of the 21-st century that it will be marvelous like in a fairy tale. Unfortunately, war, mistrust and terrorism still exist in the new era. How to save the future from blackness? It is seen that our world needs a belt of friendship as Mongolian ger has it. It plays an important role for the ger. Belt plays an important role in Mongolian ger. But it should be a belt of friendship. I have written about that a small fairy tale – "Ger". I will give it to all of you. This is the communication of my words.

Dashdondog Jamba (Mongolia)

GER



Once upon a time, when our Mongolian ancestors made their dwellings of steppe and their pillows of hills and rocks, all people and animal lived peacefully in a big house called the earth which had a blue roof, a green floor and no ropes to moor it.

But – for what reason no one knows- the creatures of the earth began to quarrel. The animals fought among themselves, and those who had power started to catch and eat those who did not. So all the animals had to go their separate ways, each following their own trail.

Some made a hole and snuck down it. Others made their dwellings under the water, still others in the treetops. Human beings have no nails to dig a hole, no oar to row in the water and no wings to fly in sky. But they are blessed with intellect, thanks to which they can do anything they dream of. At this time, there was a very old man who had no worldly possessions, nothing at all except his intellect. One day he said to his seven sons, "We could build a small dwelling according to our great model, the earth." The sons thought long and hard, but they couldn't work out what their father meant. So the old man made a willow lattice frame, taking as his model the mountains that surrounded the steppe like a wall. He fashioned a door that could be closed during a blizzard and opened in fine weather, inspired by rocky ravines that face to the south. And he made a chimney hole, thinking of the sun overhead in the sky.

He built supporting poles, thinking of the sun's golden rays, which stream to all sides. The covering for the walls he adapted from the fog that rises behind the mountains, the roof covering from the thick clouds that cover the sky. He spun ropes from animal hair, thinking of the whirlwind twisting behind the mountains. Then the old man and his and his sons spread out the walls, erected the door, put up the chimney hole, attached the poles, hung the wall covering, attached the roof covering and tightened the mooring ropes. Now they had a white ger that was round like the globe. The old man's sons were in awe of the ming of their aged father, who had made this dwelling that could bring the sunlight closer and drive away the fierce wind, that could be moved when they needed to move, erected when they needed to stay. They settled down contentedly to live in their ger. But the story doesn't end there. The father lived out his days happily, but one day he became bedridden and gathered his sons around him. "There is a day to finish as well as a day to be born," he said. "I must return to the rocky ger from my lattice-walled ger.

"This ger will teach you how to live in the future," he told his sons. But you ought to tighten the mooring ropes." And with that, he died. The sons were taken aback, once again failing to understand the meaning of their father's words. They didn't notice that the mooring ropes of their ger had grown slack. Each had counted on the other to tighten them, so no one had done it. And soon the ger fell down.

"It's your fault!" each brother said to the other. In the end, they could not be reconciled, and decided to go their separate ways. They shared out the property their father had left them. Each went in the direction his eyes looked, carrying on his back walls or poles, door, chimney, roof covering or wall covering. The youngest son got only the mooring ropes. The eldest son reached a sunny spot, set up his door and settled down to live in peace. But he was soon burnt by the strong sunlight. As the second son was spreading out his walls and preparing to sleep, a fierce rainstorm struck, and he was lucky not to be hit by lightning. When the next son was sheltering under his wall covering, a mountain flood washed his shelter away while the next son was resting on his roof covering, a whirlwind swept away. The son who made his house from the chimney hole was lucky not to be eaten alive by wild wolves. And the son who took shelter in a hut made of poles nearly froze to death.

And the youngest son had the most trouble of all because all he had was the rope. But one day he was approached by one of his brothers, who carried on his back the walls. Soon, one after another, other brothers arrived, carrying on their backs door, chimney hole, poles and coverings. In harmony at last, the brother erected their ger and tightened the mooring ropes. So the seven sons had finally understood their aged father's final words. And since that time, from generation to generation, the white ger has been a symbol of friendship and harmony. And the sons lived happily ever after.