

An essay for the New Year

Episodes related to hares

The year of the hare has opened. The Hare is the fourth among the twelve animal signs of the Japanese zodiac. It corresponds to the eastern direction and 6 o'clock in the morning. A Hare is comparatively small in size within the family of 12 animals of the zodiac and its image is soft and tender. So the hare has been used in many stories for infants and children.



“A hare and a turtle”, “Kachi-kachi Yama”, “Hare of Inaba” are some of the more well-known stories in Japan.

When we were children, we heard of a folktale about the full moon, “Two hares are making rice-cakes on the moon”, my mother used to tell me as we looked up at the evening sky. However, with time pass, this tale has proven to be a fanciful story. At earth science classes in high school, we learned that the parts in the moon which look black represent the craters on the surfaces of the moon, and the white appearing areas were relatively smooth plane fields. Furthermore, when the Apollo project landed two astronomers on the moon for the first time in the history of human beings 41 years ago, the real entity of the moon has become more clearly known to us all. But I hope the fantasia of “Hares in the moon,” will continue to shine in our children’s dreams.



By the way, hares appeared also in numerous proverbs and figurative expressions. “If you run after two hares, you will catch neither”. “Behave just like a virgin at the beginning, but run off like a hare with lightning speed at the end” come to mind. Perhaps we need not to explain their meaning. While the former emphasizes the importance of focusing on one thing at a time, the latter refers to the undulating behaviors of human being that are likely to be so fleeting.



There is another saying, “Protecting a stump and wait for a hare.” This refers to a man who is inflexible and sticks to an old habit and eventually cannot advance forward. The fable goes as follows. One day a man saw a hare bumped against a stump and died. The foolish man kept watching all through the day at the stump, hoping to catch another hare. His wish of gaining profit without working was a fair warning to us. This story appears also in a song “MACHIBOUKE (keep waiting a hare)”, written by Hakushuu Kitahara. Most Japanese are familiar with this song.

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When it comes to the world of male adults, I would dare to say that many still turn their heads to look at cute bunny girls with sexy tight red vests and long fabricated ears, looking like a Playboy Bunny. You, gentlemen, won't you agree with this?

Finally, the point I would like to impress upon you before closing this essay is the jumping power of a hare. I shall become 70 years old this year.

While I am no longer young, and I won't push myself too hard these days, I will continue to advance forward ever so slowly and steadily like a turtle. But when the opportunity arises, I will willingly jump over the bumpy road of life, ever so powerful as a hare.

