

Fable – Shaman & The Four Winds

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The Story behind the four winds hat of Sami People is a popular folktale among indigenous people of Lapland. The Sami people, as they are known, have inhabited Northern Norway, Finland, Sweden and Kola Peninsula of Russia for centuries.

Thousands of years ago, no one lived in Lapland. Indeed, the Tundra region was freezing cold. That wasn't the only reason as you might have guessed. It was known that the winds in Lapland were so fierce that they could freeze a man, chilling him/ her to the bone. No soul could survive the banter of the four winds that stormed Lapland with their free will. The icing on top was, for most part of the year, all the four winds blew together in the Lapland.

It is said, things changed when a Shaman travelled to the North. Unfazed by the winds, he dared to build his tent. He had no companion or family. In the evening, the Shaman lit fire in his hut and started to play drum and yoik (singing in Samese). His melodious voice lured the four winds. They sought permission to hear him in the hut. Shaman happily welcomed the four winds. They all sat down by the fire with Shaman yoiking and playing drums. The Four Winds were used to harsh cold, and for the first time they felt warmth in the hut. Soon they fell asleep listening to the music in the cosiness.

The Shaman didn't sleep; he put more logs in the fire. The Four Winds began to shrink and shrink in the warm temperature. Finally, they were so small that he could hold them in his hands. At the very moment, Shaman took off his hat and put all the Four Winds in it and tied a knot, thus locking the winds inside.

The next morning, the Four Winds woke up tied in the hat. They were furious. They started to blow in all the directions. From morning till evening, with all their might they tried to rescue themselves from the hat, but to no avail. Finally, they surrendered, "Let us out, we do as you say". Hearing that, the Shaman smilingly said, "I will let you out, but first promise you blow one at a time, while the others wait." "We promise", said the winds in unison. Shaman released them. Off the wind flew away. He looked at his hat, it was no more a regular hat. It had four pointers towards the four directions. The four winds, thought the Shaman.

From then on, as promised, the East wind blew in the spring, North Wind in winter, South Wind in summer & West Wind during the fall. The Lapland bloomed with life. Since then, as a reminder of the promise, the men in Lapland wear the Four Wind hat.