

# 南轅北轍

*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*

A report published by a major Chinese newspaper alleging a brand of shampoo products to be carcinogenic has been ruled libelous. The judge castigated the way the report had been compiled and stressed that reporting on matters concerning public interest must not be used as an excuse for careless journalism.

A commentator noted it has become a norm for media organizations to use their platform as a tool to further partisan political agendas too. In playing the role of a public watchdog, the media must check its facts meticulously, and report them impartially.

Presenting fiction as facts is “南轅北轍” (*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*) with maintaining objectivity, the golden principle of good journalism.

“南” (*nan2*) is “south,” “轅” (*yuan2*) “the shaft of a cart,” “北” (*bei3*) is “north” and “轍” (*zhe2*) “tracks of wheels,” “ruts in the road made by cart wheels in ancient China.” Literally, “南轅北轍” (*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*) is “south shaft north tracks.”

## Idiom by Lon Yan

When a cart is going south and the tracks of the wheels are going north, something is very wrong. “南轅北轍” (*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*) means, therefore, “to head for the wrong direction,” “diametrically opposed to each other,” “to be poles apart,” “to be widely separated,” “to have nothing in common.”

When a wife wants to save up to buy a home but the husband keeps squandering on luxuries, their ways are “南轅北轍” (*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*). When it becomes clear that the other party will not agree with you no matter what you say, you can say: “Our views are “南轅北轍” (*nan2 yuan2 bei3 zhe2*).”

### Terms containing the character “南” (*nan2*) include:

南瓜 (*nan2 gua1*) - a pumpkin

南極 (*nan2 ji2*) - the South Pole

南非 (*nan2 fei1*) - South Africa

南丫島 (*nan2 ya1 dao3*) - the Lamma Island