

Women and Ecological Moral Education in Yakut Literature

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A particular culture of interaction between man and nature and a peculiar moral and psychologic climate, which has acquired a human importance in such conditions, has formed in the North over thousands of years. Living conditions in extreme climates gave rise to special rules in human societies that are based on mutual understanding, tolerance, mutual aid, and a tactful attitude towards nature.

It is necessary to use the enormous educational potential of belles-lettres to preserve the moral health of a person and, indeed, of entire peoples. The invaluable intellectual experience of generations, the basis of national or ethnicity-based pedagogics, and a high ecological culture—all of these things that are seen to comprise what can be called the moral genetic fund of a people—leaves its impression in the best literary works.

Such are the main themes of Yakut classics by A.E. Kulakovsky, P.A. Oyiunsky, A.I. Sofronov, N.E. Mordinov and such writers as S.P. Danilov, V.S. Yakovlev (Dalan), I.M. Gogolev, N.A. Luginov and others who produce works in the modern era. Communication of the natural and human worlds and a particular natural philosophy are the reasons for the peculiarities of a writer's creative individuality, such as is shown so clearly in A.E. Kulakovsky's works. Praising the fundamental unity of man and nature, the poet created an

olonkho, a Yakut epic legend. Thus, it can be seen that myth and its comprehension comprises the basis of the writer's creative method.

One of the smoothest poetic forms, that of symbolic characters, in the works of A. Kulakovsky is the owner of nature, Aan Alakhchyn-Khotun. This mythological character personifies the brightest, kindest origins of nature, as well as its maternal creative essence ("Ancient blessing").

The supreme happiness of man is that nature itself blesses his actions, and his greatest misfortune occurs when nature rejects or curses him. As the national ideal of beauty, the best creature of nature is the character of a beautiful girl who is like the "owner, goddess of land" who embodies "the spirit of the land" and who is praised in the poet's works ("beautiful girl"). A. Kulakovsky's creative legacy is modern and actual. The national Yakut conception of life in harmony with nature is fully expressed in his works. Kulakovsky's legacy is a quintessence of national aesthetics, national culture, and beliefs.

Traditions of the founders of Yakut literature in recreating life-creating maternal origins is a peculiar development in the first Yakut novel involving a broad epic plan—the novel *Springtime*—written by N.E. Mordinov (*Amma Achchygyia*) in 1944. There is a long-standing tradition in Yakut literature of awarding special attention to the fate of a woman, and to her moral, intellectual character. A particular role is played by women within the artistic system of works completed by various authors, in which an aesthetic ideal is more often embodied. The woman is depicted as the centre of the microcosm of the home and as the intellectual teacher of younger generations.

Numerous female characters in the novel *Springtime* re-create the many-sided mythological image of Iejekhsit Khotun, the owner of life. They are creators of nature, themselves embodying the most important meaning of womanhood—to give a start to life and to protect all the living beings. The author's unquestionable achievement is the character of Fedos'ya, the mother,

who loves her children selflessly and is the family's guardian.

The wonderful fairy tales of the old woman Daria played a particular role in the formation of the personality of the main character, Nikita. This old storyteller, possessing countless treasures of folk speech, engrained in a boy a deep liking for his native language. Daria knows nature. She knows a vast number of legends about the system between Earth and Sky, animals, birds and fish. The curious boy finds answers to many questions in Daria's stories. Fairy tales shape the boy's ideas of things of beauty and kindness.

Great intellectual power is concealed in fairy tales, so "a fine world, inhabited by brave and truthful people fascinates and enthrals the boy . . ." The most important values that are praised in fairy tales are friendship and love: "Friendship will overcome everything . . . it will light up everything, the light of love will penetrate everywhere."

Besides Daria, there are other female characters in the novel who are remarkable for their psychologic reliability. The author creates unique characters with particular features as portraits of the main heroines or with exact, capacious retorts or aphorisms (statements of truths or principles).

The writer-humanist is especially worried about the ruined fate of women. Women in the novel quickly fade like northern snowdrops. Such is the sad fate of gentle Mayiys, who is married to the rich old man Bollorutta, who is as old as her grandfather. Mayiys slowly fades in her roomy house, deprived of warmth and human sympathy. The underlying idea of the story is about Mayiys' sad fate. When a woman loses her ability to fulfil her role in life, she lives in vain.

All girls remember the novel's lyrical character, lejekhsit-Khotun, who arranges peace and happiness on Earth. It seems to him that nature itself, including trees and grasses, are women's blessings.

In modern Yakut prose, the problem of the relationship between humans

and nature is foremost. Intensive industrial development of nature has disturbed the ecological balance and the human environment, which has had the most negative moral-psychological results. The collapse of the ecosystem results in the ruination of individuals, and it is time to propound questions about the ecological protection of man himself and about the preservation of his intellectuality and morality. Relations between humans and nature are fully shown in S. Danilov's novel *Don't Fly Away, Swans!* (1984). Nature is presented as the basis for forming one's national character, determining the system of moral, philosophical, and aesthetic ideas about the natural environment.

In the moral philosophic conception of the novel, female characters take central place: the grandmothers of Namytag and of young Chara and Sakhayana. The national peculiarity of the woman's character as kind and feminine, but with strong inner power and feelings of personal strengths are shown below.

It is primarily women who worry about the fate of their native land, the clear taiga river Dhenkir; they rise up to urge for the protection of nature. In S. Danilov's novel, the philosophical idea of unity of man and space (Chara's symbolic dream) and the unity of the human race is heard again. The modern life of the Sakha (Yakut) people is understood in terms of the fundamental unity between that which is national/ethnic and that which is of humankind in general.

In the historical novel *Tygyn Darkhan* (1990), V. Yakovlev (Dalan) introduces readers to wonderful women characters who bear light. It is as if northern nature itself gave birth to Dalan's characters. They are self-controlled, sometimes they are harsh, but full of poetry, the ability to enjoy life, moral purity, and nobility. As individual, unique characters, Nurbachan, Tesani and Urun Uien are presented. In this epic novel about war and peace, it is women

who resist violence and evil.

Nurbachan, who experiences the cost of life and death as a child, hates war. She loses her relatives in fierce fighting between tribes and is saved by old Yakut men and makes her home in Tuymaada. In the character of Nurbachan, the best qualities of both the Yakut and Even peoples are joined. Freedom-loving and wise, she can perceive another intellectual culture. In bitter times she finds consolation in Yakut songs and in playing the *khomus*, the mouth harp. She didn't wish to give her son over as a *botour*, a warrior, and leaves the Tuymaada Valley, which had come under a threatening shadow of war. Dorgon, a blacksmith, is astonished by the vitality of this frail woman and by her "indestructible vital power."

The female shaman, Tesani, is convinced of the necessity of peace on Earth. Unable to resist tragic contradictions, she dies with good wishes for her people, imploring the heavens to grant them all happy fates.

In the complex polyphony of the novel, the main idea of peaceful creative life is confirmed. In the perennial dilemma between "war and peace," the writer-humanist chooses peace, poetizing human relations, based on love, friendship, and harmony with nature.

I. Gogolev's novel, entitled *The Third Eye* (1998), bears intricate symbolic sense. In inexact translation "the third eye" means ultrasensitiveness. With her "third eye," Kyraha, the main character of the novel, finds the chance to penetrate the secret life of nature, acquires the ability to hear and understand birds and trees, and to see time as a common stream of life in outer space.

Having become a shaman, Kyraha develops a particular mutual relationship with nature, blessing all the light and kindness in it. Philosophic interpretation of "the third eye" leads to the conclusion that much in human interactions with nature depends on people themselves. The personality of the lyrical character and his moral formation occupy the centre of attention in N.

Luginov's story *Song of White Cranes* (1985). The author's main idea is that man begins with the realization of love of his motherland—the grove of Nuoraldzhyma, and the *sergei* (horse-hitching pole) at his own home.

The writer accurately reveals the vulnerable world of a child's young soul, opening to the outside world, and the credulous purity of his aspirations. His grandmother, the dearest person for him, has become his main "life teacher," coaching him in the first lessons of real morality, humanity, and patriotism. In the boy's perception, his grandmother is a guardian of nature, of all earthly kingdoms. She leads her grandchild gradually into this fine and mysterious world: "Everything is living and each tree is as well. But not everybody remembers it" Thanks to his grandmother, the young person is persuaded that it is necessary to know how to see nature's beauty. Nature, surrounding the child from his birth, is symbolized by the fine grove, Nuoraldzhyma. The story is pierced with the unending sadness of unrealizable dreams. The grandmother's fondest dream is that her children would stay at the Nuoraldzhyma grove, would build their houses there, thus keeping intact the thread of generations. But her dream isn't realized: war deprives her of one son; the others move far away. The symbolic character of a lonely *sergei*, standing in a deserted place "as a sad symbol of memory, as silent cry of dreams failed to be achieved," reminds us of unfulfilled dreams.

The old woman, who personifies the moral beauty of the elderly generation that has endured trials and hard labour, but has yet preserved human dignity and optimism, places her greatest hopes in her bright, curious grandchild. And, though the ending, with the grandmother's death, is sad, the story has an encouraging sub-text: as long as one person lives, there is one who can continue the ancestors' moral commandments.

N. Luginov's story is typologically close to the stories of V. Astafiev, V. Rasputin, and Ch. Aitmatov. His character is kindred to Katerina, an old wo-

man in V. Astafiev's works, to Evstolia in Abramov's works, and to old Anna and Daria in V. Rasputin's works.

Women in the works of Yakut authors are spokeswomen of their national or ethnic outlooks on the world and nature, and appear as intellectual teachers of youth.

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