

THE GOLDEN AGE OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE AS THE FOUNDATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

Usmanova Munisa Shuxratovna

Lecturer of the University of Business and Science, Tashkent branch

usmanmunisa.ru@gmail.com

The greatest wealth of a nation is its language!

Countless treasures of human thought and
experience have been accumulating
for thousands of years and live
forever in the word.

M. A. Sholokhov

Annotation:

This article explores how Russian literature did not merely reflect the socio-political reality of the 19th century but actively constructed it. By synthesizing a new national language and introducing transformative social types—such as the "superfluous man" and the "little man"—writers like Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, and Ivan Turgenev provided a profound diagnosis of societal crises and paved the moral way for the abolition of serfdom. Furthermore, the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy elevated literature to the status of "secular theology," offering programs for global ethical renewal and establishing a unique literary-centric culture. This study argues that the system of ethical coordinates created in the silence of writers' offices determined the vector of Russian social thought and its integration into the universal human context.

Keywords: Russian literature, cultural dualism, national identity, humanism, social responsibility, ethical coordinates, linguistic revolution, social culture.

Introduction

The nineteenth century occupies a singular position in the history of world civilization, marking the "Golden Age" of Russian literature. During this period, the literary word in Russia transcended the boundaries of aesthetics, evolving into the only effective institution of a nascent civil society. In an environment defined by stringent censorship, a lack of political representation, and underdeveloped democratic structures, literature assumed the role of a public rostrum. It became the primary field where the most acute challenges of the era were addressed and where the ethical foundations of the nation were forged [2].

Russian literature of the nineteenth century is a unique phenomenon in the history of world civilization, because during this period it went far beyond pure art, becoming the only effective institution of civil society. In conditions of severe censorship pressure, lack of political freedoms and underdeveloped parliamentarism, it was the artistic word that became the rostrum from which the answers to the most painful challenges of the era sounded. It was a time when literature not only reflected reality, but actively constructed it, creating types of thinking, behaviors and ethical norms that determined the vector of development of Russian and world culture for decades to come [3].

The fundamental role of literature in the development of social culture began with the formation of a single national language. Before Pushkin, Russian educated society was in a situation of cultural dualism: the language of everyday communication of the aristocracy was French, and the Church Slavonic and ponderous style of the XVIII century did not meet the needs of living thought. Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin made a genuine revolution by synthesizing folk speech and high European tradition. This linguistic revolution had enormous social consequences: the nation found a common language of meanings, which became a necessary condition for the emergence of national identity. A single language allowed representatives of different classes — from the noble to the commoner — to begin a dialogue within the framework of a common cultural field.

Continuing this process, literature turned to the study of the social structure of society, offering a deep diagnosis of the crisis of the nobility. The appearance of the "superfluous man" type in the person of Onegin and Pechorin was not just a literary find, but a verdict on an entire epoch. Through these images, literature conveyed to society the idea of a tragic gap between the intellectual potential of a person and the impossibility of its realization within the framework of the existing state system [4].

The discovery of the "little man" occupies a special place in the development of social culture. The humanistic pathos laid down by Gogol in "The Overcoat" and Dostoevsky in "Poor People" revolutionized the public consciousness. For the first time, literature forced the educated class to see in a low-ranking official, a downtrodden philistine or a peasant not just a detail of the state mechanism, but a living soul with the right to compassion and dignity. This ethical shift paved the way for future democratic transformations. Without the previous many years of literature that "aestheticized" compassion, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 would have been impossible as an act of social consent. Works like Turgenev's "Notes of a Hunter" proved to society the moral incompatibility of the concepts of "culture" and "slavery", turning a political problem into a matter of personal conscience for every reader [1].

In the second half of the century, Russian literature acquired the features of "secular theology." In the works of Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, she reaches the level of extreme generalizations concerning the fate of all mankind. Dostoevsky, exploring the

"underground" of the human soul, warned of the social dangers of nihilism and godless radicalism, predicting the tragedies of the social upheavals of the 20th century. Russians' concept of "universal responsiveness" became an attempt to substantiate the special mission of Russian culture as a reconciling principle between East and West. In turn, Tolstoy, through his epic novels and late journalistic treatises, proposed a program of total ethical renewal of society based on nonviolence and simplification of life. His criticism of state institutions, the church, and the courts was so powerful that literature actually became an alternative center of power with enormous moral authority, often exceeding that of official structures [3].

The influence of literature on social culture has also manifested itself in the transformation of gender roles. The image of the "Russian woman", from Pushkin's Tatiana to the heroines of Nekrasov and Anna Karenina, evolved from a passive object of contemplation to a strong, independent personality, ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of an idea or the right to freedom of feeling. Literature was the first to raise the issue of women's right to education and social importance, which became a powerful incentive for the women's movement in Russia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Russian literature of the 19th century created that unique type of literary-centric culture where a book is not an entertainment, but a textbook of life and a way of spiritual survival. She shaped the Russian intellectual as a special social type for whom serving truth and justice is the highest priority. All subsequent social transformations, including the revolutionary shifts of the early 20th century, were prepared in the silence of writers' offices. The literature of the "Golden Age" did not just reflect its time — it created the system of ethical coordinates in which modern man still exists, making humanism, the search for the meaning of life and social responsibility the foundation of national culture. It is thanks to literature that Russian social thought has gained worldwide importance, integrating national experience into a universal human context.

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