

**The aesthetic of suffering in Galaktion Tabidze's
earlier creative works**

(In relation to Vazha Pshavela's lyric poetry)

Abstract: "Enjoyment in suffering" is one of the motives of romantic literature that is experiencing a kind of transformation in modernist literature. The paper deals with the manifestation features of the concept of suffering in the lyric poetry of great Georgian poets Galaktion Tabidze and Vazha Pshavela.

Key words: aesthetic of suffering; Galaktion Tabidze; Vazha Pshavela.

The issue of the essence of sufferings belongs to so called eternal type of problems. The theme of "the enjoyment in suffering" is particularly characteristic of the romantic poetry. In the scientific literature it is pointed out that "the spiritual values and moral strength of an individual are formed in conflict with the reality and universe. If this conflict, which is the reason of the earthly anguish and torture, did not exist, there would not be the wealth of spiritual life that is the most significant for romanticism and creates the basis for the creative works" (Doiashvili2004: 326).

In the romantic literature the positive understanding of anguish was established under the influence of Christian doctrine. Hegel uses the notion of "romantic arts" to determine the Christian arts. According to German philosopher, the human body was declared to be the burden of soul and suffering was assigned the positive essence by Christianity as far as it was acknowledged as the condition for repenting sins, rising spiritually and sympathizing with God that exactly was depicted in the romantic arts.

The restoration of romantic traditions in Georgian poetry of the outset of the XX century is connected with the name of Galaktion Tabidze. In Galaktion's earlier literary works the tendency of aesthetic understanding of sufferings is clearly revealed along with the other romantic themes¹. Starting from romanticism the motif of "the enjoyment from suffering" underwent the peculiar transformation in the modernist art. In the Georgian literature, from the standpoint of the aesthetic significance of anguish, Galaktion Tabidze's ancestor was Vazha Pshavela. In the artistic embodiment of the mentioned issue there is revealed a certain similarity as well the difference in the creative works of these two greatest artists.

The positive value of sufferings is mentioned in a number of literary writings of Vazha Pshavela. From the poet's point of view, this is conditioned by several factors. First of all, according to Vazha suffering can have the significance of purifying, because "when a person is worried he tends to perform the generous deeds and cleanse his thoughts and feelings" (Vazha Pshavela 1964: 257). Bearing the sorrow honorably beautifies the human, makes his sense and sensibility exquisite and cleansed, and at the same time strengthens his heart:

"I love you lying on the heart
like a stone of the orphan's grave,
Sorrow, I'll drink you again and again,
like a cold mountain spring,
the man who is not thirsty for both
sorrow and joy

¹The discussions concerning the "wonderful sufferings" in Galaktion Tabidze's poetry can be found in Teimuraz Doiashvili's (Doiashvili 2004:323-326), Akaki Khintibidze's (Khintibidze 1987:3-4) and Levan Bregadze's (Bregadze 2008:24-33) scientific works.

is telling a lie when saying –
I am a man and wear a hat on the head
(fig. I am a he-man and live a manly life)”
(Vazha Pshavela 2006: 82).

According to Vazha Pshavela the personal steadiness and spiritual endurance of the human is revealed exactly in the struggle with suffering and sorrow. From Vazha’s viewpoint, in case of enduring the ordeal of life with dignity “the human can visualize the ulcer as the sun, “ the blow of the world will not make him despondent or depressed, but it will make him rise. Such a poetic picture of the man’s rise is depicted in the poem –“Life did not pity me”:

“The blow of life did not hurt me,
but rather it benefitted me,
the more blows I got from life,
the more I approached the heaven”
(Vazha Pshavela 2008: 93).

According to the poet, the existence of anguish and life difficulties is the divine providence: the obstacles of life are necessary for the moral rise of the man: “ who would praise the plain if the ascent did not exist? If we are not bothered by the heat, how shall we understand the value of coolness?” (“God gave us for jousting”). Vazha Pshavela’s standpoint concerning the cleansing significance of suffering is based on the Christian-knightly ethics. That is why, the principle of hedonist-eudemonist escape from suffering is unacceptable for the poet. Vazha Pshavela’s lyrical subject accepts the life with all its evil and kindness and shows mercy to suffering as the cleansing factor of the human being. Vazha Pshavela does not surrender the life and lights it up with the sane optimism:

“Suffering cannot make me dispirited,
I will suffer a great deal of disaster
and will not give up
the thorny way of my life”
(Vazha Pshavela 2008: 337).

In Vazha Pshavela’s literary writings the aesthetic essence of suffering is also acknowledged along with its ethical values. According to Vazha, the true poet is “the owner of the crying pipe” (“The song”), his poetic words are “the tears of the tortured and diseased heart being fed with sorrow,” (“The Lone word”). Sorrow is the source of the valuable works, that is why the poet yearns “the heart to be stuck by the thorn of torment, the creator of divine anthems”. (“I No Longer Want to Sing”)According to Vazha the real artist is happy when “the mind suffers from thinking and the heart is burnt by the hot fire” (“My Entreaty”). Exactly at the time of the greatest torment the poet is drawing the true creative inspiration:

“I am happy only
when I am worried;
When my heart is burning in the fire,
my mind has the ability of logical reasoning,
and I am free and feel
chainless exactly at that time”
(Vazha Pshavela 2006: 206).

Such is Vazha Pshavela’s point of view referring to ethical – aesthetic values of suffering.

Considerable attention is paid to the problem of suffering in the earlier literary writings of Galaktion Tasbidze. In some of his poems of earlier period (“The Grave”, “Oh, Eva, Eva!”) the poet presents the ethical, cleansing essence of suffering . Galaktion’ s lyrical subject is ready to accept the anguish bravely and endure it generously: “Even if I suffer, I will never regret the life”(“The Grave”).

Poet believes that suffering can result in spiritual cleansing and finding happiness: “The silent torture will return happiness again and purify the heart”(“Oh, Eva, Eva”) According to the poet’s point of view, suffering, which is assigned the religious-redemptive significance, is the destiny of the man having lost the paradise and lacking in heavenly blisses:

“The time will come and we will get wet
by the heavenly tears in the cold grave
so as to redeem our mundane existence
by torment and suffering”
(Tabidze 1966: 180).

Primarily, The poet believes in the possibility of returning the former bliss, he is sure that there exists the spiritual harbor for the human who is tortured by this world: “And in my heart I will constantly nurture the hope that somewhere there exists the land, where the sunny paradise is flourishing, where the sad soul does not exist”. From the ethical point of view this hope justifies the anguish, but later the poet’s soul is gradually seized by skepticism which is getting deeper and deeper. The depreciation of the traditional values and the crisis of consciousness of the epoch are peculiarly reflected in Galaktion Tabidze’s lyrics. The poet can no longer manage to answer the question-what the purpose of life is: “Day and night I am constantly thinking: “what is the reason for living, what is the purpose?” (“For what?”)

The shaky in belief individual casts doubt not only on the reality of the empiric world but on the possibility of finding the spiritual relief beyond the universe as well:

“I believed that the relief prevailed invisibly somewhere:
on the earth or in the sky,
actually it does not exist anywhere,
neither in the celestial space nor on the earth”
(Tabidze 1966: 206).

The uncertainty and the loss of the faith intensify the sufferings of the artist having the soul of a seeker – “Crucify if you want, there is no help, no help, no help!”(The Autumn in the Savannah of Fathers of “Innocent Conception”).When the faith is shaken, the ethical meaning of anguish is also abolished for him. There is only one justification for suffering left – it is the source of creativity and art, consequently, it has the aesthetic value.

According to Galaktion Tabidze, suffering is the prerequisite for the spiritual transfiguration of the artist and his cognitive rise: “The heart has been renewed in the fire of torture, I have been transfigured, I have been transfigured,” (“The heart was transfigured”), that is why it has been assigned the positive meaning.

In the poem “What feeling is it?” there is specially pointed out that the emotional experience of the creative strength is originated as a result of the great inner anguish in the soul of the artist. The question of the surprised wave of the sea - “what gives birth to this feeling which looks like the strange emotion?”-is responded proudly by the young genius dreamer with his overweening confidence: “Only the suffering can give birth to such emotions”.

Suffering is the fate for every human being. The majority of people tries his best to find the way of escaping it. Only the artist accepts it courageously and sees the peculiar happiness in it, as far as the creation of art is originated in suffering. The real poet transforms the spiritual pains received from the life into the powerful creative energy:

“If torture is born to be the Hell for humans,
I don’t want to get rid of it,
I know that everything has its end in this world,
but my torture will never finish.

I am looking for a peculiar happiness
and it is as strong as the fire
and it can renew the song
which was deprived of me and destroyed by the reality”
(Tabidze 1966: 218).

The poet accepts the suffering as the factor for giving the impulse to creativity. “The innocuous existence in the eternity is inadmissible for Galaktion, because the anguish vanishes along with the way to poetry. The poet returns and accepts the reality in the name of poetry and beauty, which is the only eternal value...”(Doiashvili 2004:326).

Starting from romanticism the concept of “the enjoyment from suffering” is being peculiarly transformed in Vazha Pshavela’s and Galaktion Tabidze’s literary works. Depending on the ethical-aesthetical basis both of the artists acknowledge the positive significance of sufferings, but in Vazha Pshavela’s creative works the ethical meaning of suffering is more emphasized while Galaktion focuses on the aesthetical sense. In Vazha Pshavela’s creative works the mentioned concept is embodied on the basis of the realistic perception of the world and the moral values of sufferings as well as sharing other’s anguish are considered on the ethical and social grounds, whereas in Galaktion’s literary works the same issue is presented from the individualistic point of view. It is the religious optimism that makes suffering tolerable for Vazha Pshavela’s lyrical subject. Vazha’s poetry is inspired with the hopeful spirit, as the poet is firmly convinced that they, “(we) who are imbued with sorrow, will taste sweetness in the end”(“I recognized the world, God”), but Galaktion’s lyrical subject does not expect the spiritual salvation in the future, because according to him, “there is only despair in the eternal world” (“Blue Horses”).The only basis for the poet to see the happiness in sufferings is art, which is created by the soul having been renewed in the fire of torment. The fruit of sufferings is the poetic creation, which fills the sole of the creator with relief, because it immortalizes his name thus making him win a victory over the death.

References:

Bregadze 2008: Bregadze L., Art and artist in Galaktion Tabidze’s earlier creative works, Galaktionology, IV, Tbilisi: 2008.

Doiashvili 2004: Doiashvili T., “The way to the “Artistic Flowers”, Journal “Literary Researches”, XXV, 2004.

Tabidze 1966: Tabidze G., Works, I, Tbilisi: Publishing House “Sabchota Sakartvelo”, 1966.

Vazha Pshavela 1964: Vazha Pshavela, Works, IX, Tbilisi: Publishing House “Sabchota Sakartvelo”, 1964.

Vazha Pshavela 2006: Vazha Pshavela, Works, I, Tbilisi: Publishing House “Sakartvelos Matsne”, 2006.

Vazha Pshavela 2008: Vazha Pshavela, Works, II, Tbilisi: Publishing House “Sakartvelos Matsne”, 2008.

Khintibidze 1987: Khintibidze A., Poetics of Galaktion, Tbilisi: “Tbilisi State University Press”, 1987.