

Apology of a Hero

(Abstract)

It should be mentioned that during the 70-80s the national consciousness of a writer in Georgia is being changed. We are making an attempt to define these changes and individual creation of hero in Jemar Karchkhadze's three short stories. Hero and heroism in Jemal Karchkhadze's creative work do not follow the law and ethical norms. Heroism is spiritual vigilance of an individual and society, hypostasis of the system of cultural values not surrounded by time and space. Jemal Karchkhadze's Zebulon is that ordinary character who carries physical existence and moral norms to the whole Georgian nation till today.

Key words: heroic, national narrative, the cult of the time

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One elderly literary critic fond of Francis Fukuyama, peremptorily stated that "The end of History" has devalued our literary traditions. He named the writers of the 70-80s of the XX century, whose provincial prose were turned into the children's naive stories by the postmodernism and demythologization. Obviously it is useless to challenge this opinion the author of which has no idea of tradition, nor postmodern, nor of Fukuyama's "The Great Disruption" and is not able to see anything except subjective facade of mythos text in modern comprehension of significance of mythology.

Four centuries ago Montaigne wrote: "The one who follows others blindly, follows no one." Unfortunately the number of blind followers increased significantly in almost every sphere of our lives. However, we come across those, who base themselves on own intellectual abilities, rather than those of others. The one of them is Jemal Karchkhadze.

In the Soviet epoch the extreme socialization of the vital functions of culture reached peak of thinking whose normative traits were: fruitless time lost in the no ways of maze, authoritative "democracy", cultivation of civil ignorance by concealing information by the ruling class; propaganda of atheism destroying spiritual balance; reducing to the same denominator formally individual (moral) and social (ethic) categories; isolating conscience from obligation ("Party conscience", "class moral". "Soviet patriotism"...). The traits of culture were united in the positive scenario of the idealized model of the world, devotion to which was mandatory. A certain part of the Soviet writers followed this ideological way, but the others were just opposite. The last ones showed society insolent face of the regime what provoked anti-imperialistic disposition in the art. Distortion of the function of ideological megaphone of literature started from the "peripheries" as mostly national narratives distorted the bases for the unified center of dictatorship.

Several of art realization of new stimuli can be distinguished:

- Attempts of reconstructing national opinion by turning to the past heroics.
- Human, "project of future" (Sartre). The blood that should be shed for Motherland, the bullet that should hit the mark.
- Cancellation of verbal taboo and normative rules of behavior.

Jemal Karchkhadze's creative work is based on all these principles. His trilogy "Zebulon: Revenge, Love, Death" (Although the notion of trilogy is relative one. It encompasses three stories and tells us about three stages of mental development of the character) refers to that historical period when Georgians highly appreciated a kind man's name and were eager to die for their motherland. This brief definition depicts our national belief and the moral way of life.

Before talking about the general pathos of literary work, I would like to make a brief cultural and historical overview: being former pupils of the Soviet school, we have written a lot of topics

about the ideal of a Soviet person in the creative work of this or that writer. At least 10-15 such heroes on “socialist patriotism” were included in the school program. Moreover, it was thought that as if even Iliia Chavchavadze’s national unifying conception was based on the hatred between classes. (I was lucky to have such an excellent Georgian language teacher as Tamar Burjanadze. Thus, I was far from falsely set ideals). Today’s literature is not fed with evil ideological traditions. But everything this cannot be prescribed to new times (as we are not fully free from plenty of inherited harmful traditions). We should remember that from the beginning of 70s, Georgian literature seriously hurt the regime whose strategic goal was political-ideological exploitation of literature and its product – heroic characters.

Not minding the moral side of the issue, the world of art peeped through the ideological conjuncture does not let us completely understand objective as well as subjective meaning of a word and life itself. (Roland Bart thoroughly studied this matter though his observations were spread on criticism rather than on literature).

Jemal Karchkhadze is one of the active pioneers who broke servile, utopian “heroic” models that were not products of the creative process. He does not aim at specifying and defining the meaning of heroism.

Creating an “ideal of a hero” Jemal Karchkhadze deeply goes through ancient national texts. His “ideal of a hero” is means of national identification and an instrument for the whole nation to continue existence. Activating past characters, Jemal Karchkhadze’s “hero” visualizes immortality of the eternal, invariant values of the present and past, returns from quasi-romantic pathos to reality. It is eternal willingness to fulfill the unfulfilled, uninterrupted feeling of living and not its immediate fixation. The flow of such idea ruins the theory of heroism, kindness, justice and crime offered by Michel Foucault that is directed to the concrete situation and epoch.

One of the characters in Berthold Brecht’s “Life of Galileo” says that miserable is the nation without heroes. Galileo’s answer is that miserable is the nation needing heroes. Because of historical misfortunes we were always seeking for a hero (“Georgians, where is the hero for whom I live, for whom I weep” – Iliia Chavchavadze) and always found him at the critical moment – with great or no name at all. Jemal Karchkhadze’s Zebulon is that ordinary character who as a hero carries physical existence and moral norms to the whole nation till today.

Hero and heroism in Jemal Karchkhadze’s creative work do not follow the law and ethical norms. Heroism is spiritual vigilance of an individual and society, hypostasis of the system of cultural values not surrounded by time and space.

All three stories describe three-stage gradation of a protagonist. In the first story “Zebulon’s Revenge”, a young fellow dreams of gaining wisdom, but because of misfortunes spends his whole time fighting instead of studying. The first independent steps in his life turned to be a nightmare after killing all the family members of his father’s murderers. (He was logically led to this action). This unjustified behavior causes his first self-doubt that becomes his destiny for the rest of his life.

Several watchers control Zebulon’s life, among which sharpest is the eye of his dignity. Zebulon is more scared of his own judgment than of others. The hero whose life is full of love, obligations and regret step-by-step penetrates into the truth of wisdom where obedience to conscience becomes the highest function of his cognition. Though his wish to gain wisdom remains unfulfilled, finally, the hero comes to the position of self-perfection and freedom and the outer world is opened to his spiritual and philosophical world.

The hero passes all three phases of the inner evolution – chaos, cosmos, logos and his death is more like the beginning of new life than the end of the old. This is the case when “the death of an individual equals to the victory of the whole humankind” (Hegel). This for our kin means the undefeated national idea. Not randomly the author starts and finishes the trilogy with the scene of Zebulon’s death. This mysterious scene depicts love, spiritual triumph and successfully accomplished spiritual mission: “The blue death full of pure love embraced Zebulon softly and tenderly. . . Nothing was seen in the brightness and Zebulon was not able to guess whether it was light or dark”.

The fundamental doctrine of Indian Jainism, which was understood and developed in different ways, preaches that an absolutely purified man having reached the highest level of spirituality

strives to the logical end as there is no point in continuing living. Galaktion Tabidze expresses the same idea in the following words: "Limitless soul strives for limits as infinity requires limits". This is the formula of the balance of spiritual existence and non-existence. The essence of the basis of our existence – Christianity – is the fact that separation of the soul from the flesh becomes the eternal triumph of the spirit.

Ex pupils of the Soviet school have written a lot of topics about the ideal of the Soviet person. Many literary works were written on the Soviet social patriotic topic, which were included in the school program. According to ideologists Ilia's national conception was based on idea of the fight between classes. Nowadays literature does not fulfill this requirement, but let us not prescribe every success to new time. Even from the 70s, Georgian literary work made great damage to the draconic regime. By the Soviet ideologists in 1970-80th there were searches of such literary tendencies which would allow to generate the representation about historical process appropriate to the state ideology, to justify modern at the moment of a writing of the text state policy, to fix in consciousness of the reader rigid system of ethical and aesthetic preferences. Jemal Karchkhadze was out of this system.

It can be said without exaggeration that Zebulon is one of the most monumental heroes in the Georgian literature of the last decades whose supernatural spiritual and physical abilities could face the tyranny of destiny and become a guideline to our nation's crooked life.