

## AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE POEM OF N. IZHENDEY “THE VOICE OF THE UNBORN CHILD”

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### Abstract

In modern education, methods of an integrated approach to learning are actively used. When studying literature, knowledge from the field of related sciences is acceptable: folklore, mythology, history, psychology, social science. This makes it possible to expand students' knowledge about the art world of a work, the national picture of the world of an ethnos, and socio-historical reality. The purpose of this work is to outline the role of the poem by N. Izhenyey “The Voice of the Unborn Child” in the moral and aesthetic education of the younger generation, since the poem is included in the regional component of the school curriculum.

The work depicts the hardships and troubles of the 90s. The twentieth century, as well as the problem of the future of the Chuvash language and the survival of its speakers. The elements of folklore and mythology used by the author contribute to the perception by students of a holistic world view of the Chuvash people: their aspirations, fears, hopes. In addition, the author creates, as it were, a new - more accessible to the modern generation - version of the myth of the origin of *arçuri* (wood goblin).

In the analysis of these images semantic meaning, knowledge of folklore, rites associated with the birth of a child is appropriate. So, Chuvashs call a newborn baby *çěñě kayăk* (new bird). If this is a boy, then he is called golden bird, a girl is called silver bird. The lyrical hero calls himself fire bird, because he wants to emphasize that his soul is like fire. He promises to clear the world of people from evil and injustice with his fire.

“Birth in a shirt” is perceived as a sign of a happy fate, good luck. The umbilical cord of a child also belongs to such attributes. In the poem, the umbilical cord is the organ that connects the child with the mother, a detail uniting past and future generations. As long as this organ is intact, the child will live, and the connection between generations will not be interrupted. This problem has become especially urgent at the present time - in the era of globalization and the departure from traditional values. In the poem, the author focuses the attention of readers on the importance of maintaining the connection of generations, because without the past there is no future.

The swallow in Chuvash mythology has a good meaning. It is associated with hard work and the ideal of beauty, the ability to speak fluently and beautifully. In the poem, the swallow represents the Chuvash

language. The mother, feeling the germ of a new life, sings songs that give rise to the Chuvash spirit in the soul of the child. At the end of the story, the soul of the lyric hero returns to its native places in the likeness of a swallow.

The use of knowledge about the features of folklore, its images, and the socio-historical development of the region allows a deeper understanding of the artistic intent of the work. When analyzing it, knowledge about traditions and continuity in literature and moral ideals of an ethnos is acceptable.

**Keywords:** integrated education, mythologism, Chuvash poem, folk image

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Integrated teaching in literature lessons has become a priority in the modern education system. In this area you can find not only knowledge, but also related issues. The content of the poem "The Voice of the Unborn Child" by N. Izhendey allows you to attract folklore, mythological, historical, psychological material actively on a par with literary one. The authors of this article are actively involved in studies based on the principles of mythologism, its implementation in works of art, the identification of the valuable components of artistic creation (Chekushkina, Yakimova, Sofronova, Nikolaeva & Rodionov, 2020; Chekushkina, 2018; Sofronova, 2016; Yakimova, Chekushkina & Sofronova, 2017; Yakimova, 2019; Yakimova & Trofimova, 2019).

The main goal of this scientific article is to demonstrate the possibilities of integrated learning when studying the poem of Nikolai Izhendey "The Voice of the Unborn Child" for familiarization with the national world picture of the Chuvash ethnic group, its ideals of good and evil, traditions of the continuity of literary images, the feature of the poet's art world, and the history of the people in 90s of the twentieth century, presenting the basics of family education.

## 2. OPINIONS AND DISCUSSION

The literary analysis of Chuvash literature development at the end of the twentieth century shows that during this period, the poetics of mythologism, which represents individual plots, motives and images of Chuvash folklore, became very popular. The writer N. Petrovskaya combines national and biblical myths in the story "The Black Angel" and in the novel "The Witch". In the novel "The Recipient" V. Stepanov uses the features of ancient Egyptian mythology and Chuvash reality. N. Izhendey in the poem "Çuralman acha sassi" (the Voice of the Unborn Child, 1993) recreates the Chuvash myth plot about the origin of *arçuri* (wood goblin). According to the author, in the poem he tried to express the hardships and vague state of the 90s of the XX century. Against this background, the work also touches on the problem of the Chuvash language fate and the problem of abortion. Since the main idea of the work is focused on the image of child's future fate, the image of ceremonies and the use of literature texts accompanying pregnancy and childbirth are not the least in it. Through mythological images and details the author conveys the idea of the work, saying that the problem he touched is very acute and relevant. The plot of the work is that the image of a recently conceived child begins to talk to his parents, storyteller and reader. But the alarming and unstable time of the 90s of the XX century forces parents to terminate the pregnancy. According to Chuvash mythology, the soul of a child who died an unnatural death turns into *arçuri*.

To date, the poem has received a very high praise in the Chuvash literary criticism. Volkov G., Dmitriev A., Yermakova G. and other researchers consider its artistic features, special attention is paid to the problem of abortion (Volkov, 1996; Dmitriev, 1998; Yermakova, 2015). However, the issue of revealing the significance and the role of mythologism in the embodiment of author's artistic intent, the possibility of using the plot of this work to familiarize students with the peculiarities of birth ceremonies, the cult of their ancestors, people's ideas about good and evil spirits, and the socio-historical situation of the republic's population in the late 90s of the twentieth century has not been sufficiently studied.

In the poem "the Voice of the unborn child", the main place is occupied by elements of mythologism. Writers and poets use them to express their thoughts, to deepen the artistic intent of a work, or to create a new reality. In N. Izhendey's poem, they deepen the artistic intent, as a result, it turns out that the work itself is interpreted by the reader as a new myth, which is especially important when working with modern youth. "The writer strives to create a new epic about modern life, but the emphasis falls not on "modern" life, but on revealing the universal principles that he understands in a certain way" (Meletinsky, 2000, P. 309).

It should be noted that the use of mythologism elements by any author is not always the result of his deliberate interest in this problem or a passion for any literary movement. Elements of the myth are alive in the Chuvash worldview. They live in the memory of every representative of the nation, especially among the older generation. They absorbed samples of literature from childhood, studied the discipline "Chuvash oral folk art" at universities. Plots of legends about wood goblin are not forgotten by us also thanks to the immortal poem "Arçuri" (Wood Goblin) by M. Fedorov. It turns out that the myth still lives in the minds of people. We can say that myth is the basis of modern Chuvash worldview, especially among people of a creative mindset. For them, "the myth is not an example of creating a "second reality", it acts as a form of world perception of the author and characters (Amineva, 2013, P. 478).

In Chuvash folklore there are many legends about *arçuri*. According to one of them, "the souls of people who died an unnatural death are transformed into *arçuri* ..." (Salmin, 2011, p. 478). The souls of babies who were born and killed by unmarried girls to avoid shame also turn into *arçuri*. An ancient myth, on the one hand, explains the origin of the evil spirit, on the other hand, warns young girls from possible mistakes, committing sinful acts. N. Izhendey creates a new, modern version of this mythological legend. Not only the soul of a murdered newborn child can turn into *arçuri*, but also the soul of one who was killed before birth, i.e., if an abortion is performed.

The storyline of the poem is associated with the legend of the origin of *arçuri*, in connection with this, the corresponding motives and images are introduced into the story. According to the traditions of Chuvash mythology, they can be divided into good and evil ones. Good spirits are associated with ceremonies and signs about the birth of a child: *çĕĕĕ kayăk* (new bird), *kĕmĕl e iltăn kayăk* (golden or silver bird), *vut kayăk* (fire bird), *achana pehil parassi* (blessing of the child), *acha kĕpi* (amniotic shirt), *tăhăr sypăkri asattepe asanne* (grandfather and grandmother in the ninth knee). The evil ones include: *akar yytti* (dog of the underworld), *shuyttan* (devil), *yytă* (dog), *hura çăkhan* (black raven).

The Chuvash call the newborn baby *çĕĕĕ kayăk* (new bird). Depending on whether it is a boy or a girl, specify: a silver or a golden bird. Silver is associated with the feminine, and gold is associated with the masculine. In the poem, the narrator calls himself a fire bird, wants to emphasize that his soul is like fire. He promises to cleanse the world of people from evil and injustice with his fire. The word *kayăk* (bird) in the Chuvash language has the meaning of a bird, as well as wild animals that people hunt. In the mythological representation of the people, *acha* (child) is replaced by *kayăk* (bird) to deceive evil spirits that send illnesses or death to the baby. For their confusion, newborn children were given the names of animals, trees, birds, fish.

Many cultures consider a baby born with a caul a sign of good luck. It has a symbolic meaning. If from the point of view of medicine this poses a threat to the baby, then ordinary people perceive it as a sign of a happy fate. The umbilical cord of a child also belongs to such attributes. It is considered a magical amulet that can help a child in difficult times. It is no coincidence that old people tried to protect and preserve the umbilical cord. The umbilical cord as a symbolic detail was used by Y. Ukhsay in the poem "Kĕlpuk Muchi" (Grandfather Kelbuk). In the poem «The Voice of the Unborn Child», the umbilical cord is not only the organ connecting the child with the mother, but also the detail uniting past and future generations. As long as this organ is intact, the child will live, and the connection between generations will not be interrupted.

According to old customs, a newborn was bathed, then a midwife or a respected family member blessed the baby. The blessing protects the child from diseases and misfortunes, evil spirits. In M. Trubina's novel "Acha Chuhnekhĭ" (Childhood), the mother's grandmother blesses the newborn Martha. The girl, over whom the sacred text was read, gains strength to overcome adversity and disease, makes her way to knowledge. The narrator of N. Izhendey wishes to receive a blessing in order to be the support of the family at this difficult time.

The image of the swallow is found in the poem more than once. In Chuvash mythology, it has a good meaning. Since the swallow makes a nest near farm buildings, people try to take care of it. It is believed that the house where the swallow made a nest will be filled with happiness and prosperity. In Chuvash, a swallow is associated with hard work and the ideal of beauty. It is no coincidence that the newborn girls were given the name *Chĕkeç* (Swallow) - *Chĕkeçpi* (beauty, like a swallow), wishing that she will be as hardworking and beautiful as a swallow. The twittering of swallows is different from the singing of other birds. About a person who knows how to talk nice and well, they say that his or her speech is like the twittering of a swallow. Also, the newborn was given the opportunity to listen to the twittering of a swallow so that child's speech would be pleasant and sweet. N. Izhendey also uses this detail in the work "Tĕrĕllĕ çyru tĕlĕntermĕshĕsem" (Miracle Embroidery, 2005). Here the swallow teaches to talk an orphaned boy *Yăvashuk*. In the poem "The Voice of the Unborn Child", the swallow personifies the Chuvash language. The mother, feeling the germ of a new life, sings songs that give rise to the Chuvash spirit in child's soul. At the end of the plot, narrator's soul

returns to its native places in the likeness of a swallow and sings songs to his relatives in the Chuvash language. But they, having betrayed the Chuvash language, do not recognize it, do not understand the words of his song.

In Chuvash mythology, the world of evil spirits is very peculiar and diverse. There is a certain taboo or restriction on the mention of their names. Therefore, in everyday life, we do not remember their names. In this regard, the author of the poem uses the younger representatives of evil spirits: *akar yytti* (dog of the underworld), *hura çăhan* (black raven), *yytä* (dog). They are executors of the will and orders of the main deities.

*Akar yytti* is “an evil spirit, which, together with the spirit of death *Esrell* takes away the souls of people”, explains the linguist N.I. Zolotnitsky (Zolotnitsky, 1875, p. 78). At the behest of his supreme boss, he sends bad weather, misfortune to people, takes their souls. *Akar yytti* has a terrifying and horrendous look.

The image of the dog used in the text of the poem is close in meaning to the image of the dog of the underworld. A.K. Salmin in his study provides a detailed description of the image of a dog in the Chuvash understanding: “Sources reflect the traditional notions of the dog’s close relationship with the supreme deity *Tură*; according to legend, at the founding of villages, the Chuvashs first buried a dog or a wolf in the ground; sorcerers use dogs as mediums; an example of sacrificing a dog during a drought, an epidemic; when performing rituals of the funeral and memorial cycle of *yupa*, *çimĕk*, *kĕr säri*, etc. the specially separated part of the food is thrown (to the street, into the courtyard, outside the storehouses) for dogs ”(Salmin, 2010, p. 478). According to legends, during the commemoration ceremonies, the spirits of the ancestors come to this world, sitting on the nose of a dog. Also, dogs feel an imminent death in the house, warn their owners by howling. “The dog is one of the most important iconic characters in the traditional representations of the Chuvash. It is believed that it has a direct relationship with the supreme deity *Tură*. On a semantic level, a dog has a lot in common with a wolf and a person. It can be used as a sacrificial gift, serves as a substitute for the spirits of ancestors and enters into a relationship with another world. Perhaps the etymology of the word *yytä* “dog” goes back to the Sanskrit *idā* ”(Salmin, 2010, p. 479), the researcher summarizes his thoughts. In addition, A.K. Salmin notes that the image of the dog is used by the Chuvash in a negative sense. To confirm his thoughts, he quotes from the work of V.D. Soboev: “It must be assumed that the common name of the dog (*ida*, in Tatar *et*) became a swear word in the Chuvash in recent times, due to imitation of the Tatars; it is likely that in ancient times this animal was considered if not sacred, then at least not contemptible”(Salmin, 2010, p. 137).

The word *yytä* (dog) is used as swearing and in the poem “Narspi” by K. Ivanov, for example, Migeder’s wife uses it when referring to her naughty daughter and Setner:

<p><i>Карчăк:</i> <i>Атя, йытă, хăвăртрах,</i> <i>Пĕртте мана пăхмăстăн.</i> <i>Сетнер, йытă, кĕçсе пит,</i> <i>Пуян хĕрне ан хапсăн.</i></p> <p>(Ivanov, 1990, P. 184)</p>	<p><i>The mother:</i> Let’s go away quickly, you, the dog! You’d better listen to your mother... You, Setner, shameless dog, should know: You are not a son-in-law to the rich!</p> <p>(Translation from Chuvash to English by Vladimir Shashkov with the participation of Luiza Mikhailova and Lyudmila Prokhorenkova.)</p>
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The epithet “dog” is also used to characterize the time, which is described in the poem “The Voice of the Unborn Child”. The time of troubles at the end of the twentieth century is defined by the author as canine. Hell dog haunts the soul of an unborn baby after an abortion. It treads on its heels, wants to tear to pieces. In the fact that child’s fate became unhappy, the author blames the dashing canine time of the 90s. Because of this, the unborn child had to become an *arçuri*, and not be born as a boy.

In the poem of N. Izhendey several parallel worlds are depicted: this is the real world of people, the world of the dead, the world of evil spirits. Mother, father, sister Tanya and narrator live in the real world. The work gives historically reliable signs of the 90s of the XX century: the struggle for human rights, the mention of selective ballots (people first went to the polls), sister Tanya’s stay in the kindergarten, disdain for the languages and culture of non-Russian peoples, the delay in wages for workers, the departure of Chuvash people outside the Republic for work, etc. The author expresses dissatisfaction with the existing political system, condemns the downsides of society. He criticizes such a national character trait as tolerance. In the

text, the epithet *chāvash - yāvash* (chuvash - patient) often appears in the text. When it is time to hold the reins, the Chuvash is content with little, he stays at home and is inactive. The narrator offers his father to recall the trading experience of distant great-grandfathers to survive in difficult times. Here, with the help of background knowledge, the author gives us a hint about the Bulgarian period in the history of the Chuvash.

The human world is filled with representatives of evil spirits. In the lives of people, the tricks of *shuyttan* and *akar yytti* are manifested as social difficulties, the destruction of the good beginning and the native (Chuvash) language.

The world of ancestors is represented through the images of the great-grandfather and great-grandmother in the ninth generation, who do not cease to protect and help their descendants. In the understanding of the Chuvash, each person should know his or her ancestors to the seventh generation. The use of the numeral *nine* in this case, enhances the importance of this knowledge, emphasizes that the narrator is conceived as an element connecting the past and the present of the nation, of the people. Ancestors pass on to the newly conceived child the mind, the power of generations and condemn the behavior of its parents. They are ready to protect the baby in the human world after birth. However, they have to take care of the unborn child in the world of the dead, becoming linden in the field, i.e. mother, and oak in the forest, i.e. father. In this case, there is a totemic representation of the people about the transformation of the spirits of their ancestors into plants, trees. The narrator finds understanding and support from the ancestors, but there is no mutual understanding with the parents. The harmony in relations between generations is destroyed, the continuity between them is broken. So, "the desire to have children is connected with the desire to continue the kin. The Chuvash believed in the continuation of life in the afterlife, where elderly parents need help from living descendants. Those who have no children will be tormented in the world without support and symbolic feeding "(Salmin, 2007, p. 194). Parents, having killed an unborn child, deprive themselves of peace in the afterlife. Not only the soul of the son, but also their own, can turn into *Arçuri*. The reason for this is the rampant evil forces in this transition period, when the pressing problems of today become more important than thoughts about the future fate of the soul in the afterlife.

The narrator is constantly talking to his parents. At the beginning of the story, he wants to be noticed, so that they feel that he is a healthy and smart baby. He listens to adults and tries to comfort them, but no one hears his voice. After the abortion, the voice of the unborn child also does not reach the recipient, it becomes inaudible, intangible and invisible. Then there is the idea of the people about what happens to the soul of a person after death: it turns into a wind, an owl, a swallow, a grass, a branch, a berry. The soul of the narrator wants to attract attention to himself, addresses his relatives in the Chuvash language. It remains unheard and misunderstood, since they have forgotten their native language.

The narrator, who could not learn the difficulties of the time, is idealistic about life. According to him, the laws of harmony and love should prevail everywhere. He wants to see a close relationship between generations, people and nations. But in the human world, love and peace exist only under the mother's heart, and in the rest - only flattery, deceit, humiliation, etc.:

<p><i>Уқса куҫасшӑн</i> <i>уқсалли патне.</i> <i>Шырать телей те телейлисене.</i> <i>Чапли мухтатъ хӑй пек чаплисене.</i> <i>Вӑйли те ал тытатъ вӑйлисене.</i> <i>Хӑватсӑрри патне</i> <i>хӑват куҫмарӑ.</i> <i>Телейсӑрри патне</i> <i>телей куҫмарӑ.</i></p> <p><i>(Izhendey, 2009, p. 28)</i></p>	<p>Money is seeking the rich, the unfortunate cling to the unfortunate ones. Those who are honored with glory certainly praise the glorious ones, Strong man strives when meeting, to shake the hand with a strong one. And the power will hardly once come to the powerless man. From an unhappy one happiness all the time hurries to run.</p> <p>(Translation to English by N. Nikolaeva)</p>
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The image of the unborn child and the image of the native language in the poem are identical. The author chooses the tragic outcome of the plot. It turns out that in the troubled times of the 90s, both the new generation and the native language become unnecessary. Both of them, as it were, turn into *arçuri*.

<p><i>Йыт кӑшланӑ телейпе</i> <i>Халь сӳретӗп сӳрӗпе,</i> <i>Хӑрушла йӗре-йӗре</i> <i>Хӑратас тесе сире.</i></p> <p>(Izhendey, 2009, p. 33).</p>	<p>Happiness, eaten by a dog, I am now, Having forgotten your speech forever, I am howling and crying, trying to bring fear and horror at night to you.</p> <p>(Translation to English by N. Nikolaeva)</p>
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### 3. CONCLUSION

Thus, the integrated approach to the study of the poem by N. Izhendey "The Voice of the Unborn Child" contributes to the reproduction of the mythological worldview of the Chuvash people, the historical reality of the late twentieth century. Students can see that mythological images and details have become in demand for depicting a vague, transitional socio-historical period in the development of the country and people. The image of the unborn child, the spirits of distant ancestors, the images of good and evil spirits deepen the semantic space of the literary text, add tragedy to what was said. The semantic meaning of mythological images and details taken by the poet from the Chuvash folklore is also typical for the works of other authors. N. Izhendey tells us a new, modern version of the legend of the origin of *arçuri*. The study of the peculiarity of the work art world using the methods of an integrated approach allows us to instill the moral ideals of the ethnic group, concern for the future of a healthy nation and the native language in the young generation.

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