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ETHNOCENTRIC VIEWS OF TARAS SHEVCHENKO

T. Shevchenko's life and work is an example of the devotion to Ukraine, and love to the Motherland. Today the people of Ukraine should listen to the prophetic words of T. Shevchenko, because the main challenge is to achieve national and nation-wide unity.

Over a hundred and fifty years the phenomenon of Taras Shevchenko attracts the attention of the researchers – philologists, historians, political figures, scientists and philosophers. His creative heritage is so diverse that everyone can find the answers both to the questions about “ancient antiquity” and to many the most important problems of nowadays that currently concern the Ukrainian citizens.

Shevchenko is a Ukrainian and Ukrainian-speaking poet. Throughout the history his creative work served for the unification of the Ukrainian nation, and the creation and consolidation of the statehood of Ukraine. Shevchenko personified the Ukrainian national spirit. He lived and worked for Ukraine, having become an ethno-consciousness factor for many generations of the Ukrainians. His language became the basis of the national literary language. The language of Shevchenko became a communion language for our state; it is a factor for the Ukrainian people consolidation.

Taras Shevchenko propagated his national ideas among the population through his creative work, in which each Ukrainian patriot finds something close to his heart. The poet contrasted the poetic past of the Slavs, free of class contradictions with the social inequality that divided the people of Ukraine into the enslaved and privileged ones.

For the first time the revolutionary views of the poet are reflected in “Kobzar” and the poems “Haidamaky” and “Hamalia”, in which Shevchenko made a stress on the patriotism, selflessness of the Cossacks, the ability to sacrifice for the sake of a high purpose, a heightened sensitivity of justice, and the willingness to defend this justice with weapons in hands. According to the poet an even distribution of land between the members of the society, the elimination of the citizens’ caste division, the introduction of legal equality, the obligatory work for all members of the society, and the elimination of exploitation are socially fair factors.

In his works the poet realistically depicts the fate of the people, trampled by the bundles of social and economic, national and political

bondage, and seeks to show that these are the effects of another, spiritual bondage, a slave complex, which is clearly described in “Yurodivyi”. He writes about the mistreatment of the Ukrainian people and condemns their humility, lethargy, indecision, excessive tolerance and even indifference to themselves. Shevchenko reveals a wonderful knowledge of the history of the Ukrainian people and shows that there are people who, despite their excessive patience, act as a hope and salvation of the nation. An educational moment is very important here. The author tries to explain that a person and a nation can become free when they get rid of the internal slavery, which requires such eccentric persons, who by their own example can show that internal reformatting is absolutely possible.

At the same time one cannot think of the poet as a nationalist, because he considered Ukraine’s aspiration to freedom as an integral part of the overall struggle for justice. In the poems “Heretic” and “Caucasus” Shevchenko shows the sympathy for all oppressed peoples. The poetry “To my fellow-countrymen, living, dead and yet unborn” became an accusation directed at those who neglected even their mother tongue. The poet calls for all these people to look at each other and look around, understand what has led to their inactivity. The author is confident that it is necessary to try to know the truth, and reevaluate our own history. In all his works Shevchenko defended the right of the Ukrainian people to both social and national rescue.

Shevchenko can be considered the “father” of the Ukrainian national idea, formed in the traditional form for Europe. His poetry initiated the transformation of the Ukrainian ethnographic mass, which was doomed to complete assimilation, into a European nation, giving it an understanding of the past and a guide to the future. He opposed the national idea to Slavic version of Slavophilism as an ideological cover of the great power policy of the empire. Ukraine, its past and future is in the centre of Shevchenko’s political views.

Taras Shevchenko has an exclusive role in forming the Ukrainian national ideology. His poetic language, based on a local peasant dialect with the addition of elements of the Church Slavonic language, the language of the Cossack chronicles and the new words created by Shevchenko, was distinguished by its natural and sublime character. Having given the Ukrainian language a literary status, Shevchenko laid the foundation for a new Ukrainian literature. Unlike other Ukrainian romantics his flaming poetry was not limited to mourning the heroic past, but woke up the national feelings and gave a vision of the future: if

Ukraine in the past used the rights of an independent state, then it could serve as a sufficient basis for gaining the political independence in the future.

Taras Shevchenko as a brilliant poet and thinker inherited all the talents and spiritual traits of his long-standing, viable, freedom-loving, and generous people and reached the summits of the Ukrainian culture. Therefore, the study of his work is always necessary and relevant, since his extraordinary verbal talent can effectively influence the process of understanding the national identity by the Ukrainians.

The spirit of freedom, especially strained due to the enslavement of the Cossack people, became for T. Shevchenko's world perception his most important instruction and the spirit of the truth of his life. Shevchenko's character multiplied by the genius of his talent encouraged the Ukrainian population to feel free, turning a certain part of it into conscious, nationally defined public activists. Being an orphan and having no hut or land in Ukraine, T. Shevchenko remains deeply committed to his homeland. Even in his youth he began to see the distinctions non between the society as a whole and its state organization. Judging by his work, Shevchenko did not have any doubt about the unnatural, artificial and accidental nature of the Ukrainian people's existence under the Moscow imperial power; therefore, he relates his apocalyptic considerations exclusively to tsarist tyranny, but not to the future of the Ukrainian people.

Taras Shevchenko is a poet who made for the revival and formation of a modern Ukrainian nation even more than any Ukrainian political figure or theorist of politics; he revived the national self-esteem and aspiration for the independent state and political existence and put the struggle for the revival of the state into an active condition.

Now the Ukrainian people have made their choice. It is the way to meet the democratic European principles in various fields of social and political life and the way to democracy. Today, guided by T. Shevchenko's statehood ideas, Ukraine has made a European choice, because it is irreversible and based on its history, ancient historical processes, and the ancient consciousness of the Ukrainians.