



SEARCH FOR THE LOST PARADISE AND AKAKI'S SULIKO

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: December 7 th 2020 Accepted: January 11 th 2021 Published: January 26 th 2021	This paper presents a new interpretation of the research of a well-known poem "Suliko" by genius Georgian poet Akaki Tsereteli. When working on the report I used hermeneutic and comparative research methods, in addition with text analysis and synthesis. My conclusion is the continuation of Akaki Bakradze's and Amiran Gomarteli's literary-critical dialectic line, however, looking deeper into the text, I also noticed different contexts. I believe that in <i>Suliko</i> , the main line is based on the Kingdom of the Lord, "the Lost Paradise" and search for and finding it. The beloved is the Lord and his grave is the Eden closed and buried for the humankind. As for the literary and Christian Orthodox Trinity of Star-Rose-Nightingale, I believe, these symbols should not be construed as unambiguous and linear; that it is either a blasphemy or deeply religious text? My answer is that none of those. Akaki is a great poet, with all his high aesthetic feelings and full of subconscious, illogical, Hadesian emotions of writing. His <i>Suliko</i> is associated with the spirituality, soul, Lord, universe and cognition of the Lord in the universe.

Keywords: Georgian, Akaki, Suliko, Poety, Paradise

Akaki Tsereteli is a genius Georgian poet, writer and public figure (1840-1915). Together with Ilia Chavchavadze he was a leader of the national liberation movement and Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians. He has also greatly contributed to the creation of Georgian drama society and development of Georgian journalism. Along with Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli was a reformer of Georgian language and founder of the new Georgian literature. While still being alive, Akaki Tsereteli was recognized as the people's poet and was called only by the name Akaki. His poetry is distinguished with simplicity, lightness, euphony and rhythmicity, unlike his predecessor Romantics, poems of which were constructed with heavy archaisms. That is why, many of Akaki's poems have turned into the songs. Despite superficial lightness, Akaki's poetry is deeply thought out and conceptual. Homeland, God, human, poetry and poet, love and the pure human feelings are represented as most beautiful poetic layers in his poems and appear to us as live songs of life.

There are numerous researches about Akaki Tsereteli's genial poem *Suliko*. It has been analyzed by such prominent Georgian writers and researchers, as, Vasil Barnov, Grigol Robakidze, Akaki Bakradze, Amiran Gomarteli, Davit Tserediani and other; In Sulikos lyrical image they saw either the lost beloved, sometimes the admirable homeland and or the Lord. We can claim that *Suliko* is the manifest of existential search by Akaki, in which is declared the "Paradise" found the poet; Paradise, from which, we, humans, have been exiled long ago and which we all permanently strive towards; and this striving – from birth till death, is the cause and reason for every step taken by us.

In Akaki Bakradze's opinion, "what can be hidden in a Rose, Nightingale and Star, if not the Lord himself? Of course, nothing. The only one that can be preserved by all those three is the Lord, as he is everywhere. It is essential that the search goes vertically – from the bottom up; from earth to the sky. The process of ascending is shown. Generally, in Akaki's poetry, movement is always shown directed from the bottom up. This also leads to the fact that most of Akaki's poems have the character of Chants." (1.Bakradze) We must agree to the researcher that Akaki's poetry is like a prayer, which is defined not only by unique euphony and masterly carved rhythms, but mostly by bright, hope-giving, vivid and full of love to life content of the verse. We agree with Akaki Bakradze that *Suliko* cannot solely be a beloved or the Homeland, although, we would like to claim that as an example of true poetry, *Suliko* also has multiple layers and therefore, it can sometimes be a beloved and sometime Homeland. However, we think that *Suliko's* dynamics is more the vertical leading to the Lord and is formed into the attempt of searching for "the Lost Paradise" and returning to it. And the Doors of the "Lost Paradise" can be opened only by the Hand of the Lord; the power of unconditional love, based on Faith, sobriety and patience.

Researcher Amiran Gomarteli writes that "following the footsteps of Akaki Bakradze's excellent interpretation, there is another secret hidden in *Suliko*, finding of which gives us clear understanding of Akaki's poem's genesis – its connection with Vaha's poem *The Kingdom of Love*, which, conditionally can be described as literary archetype. At the same time, I believe, it adds more arguments to Akaki Bakradze's interpretation of *Suliko*". (2.Gomarteli) Amiran Gomarteli's article reads that Vazha's *Kingdom of Love* was written in 1894 and Akaki's *Suliko* in 1895. Akaki, who at that time was editor of *Kvali*, rejected Vazha's aforementioned poem and due to that it was not published. Vazha was heartbroken by that fact. Gomarteli explains this fact by the circumstance that for Akaki, as for "a poet with deep religious feelings", unacceptable was pessimism expressed in Vazha's poem, "due to the disorganization of the world". David Tserediani claims absolutely the opposite: "Suliko must not be interpreted as Homeland, or furthermore as the Christian Holy Trinity. Perception of the Holy Trinity as Rose-Nightingale-Star, looks more like blasphemy than praising the Lord. Such symbols and allegories are the trends of ancient times, results of pagan centuries, completely unperceivable in the then Georgia and therefore, absolutely unjustifiable; I do not know at all, what kind of artistic purpose and justification such allegories may have today." (4.Medzvelia)

Researcher Kristine Medzvelia completely disagrees with David Tserediani's opinion. She refers to Emzar Kvitaishvili's definition of Symbol, that "symbol is an ancient and basic aesthetic category", which was "widely used back in Antique literature"; therefore, Medzvelia believes that it is not at all surprising that Akaki Tsereteli could have expressed the Holy Trinity by Star-Rose-Nightingale symbols, if we also consider that the Star and the Rose are firmly determined Biblical symbols. Kristine Medzvelia relies on the Bible and explanations of the Holy Fathers for substantiating this argument and also refers to Solomon's *Song of Songs*, in which search for the beloved is associated with the search for the Lord. According to the Supreme Law of Love, we search for the Lord in a beloved, mother, child, friends; love is true only when there is the Lord between the two people. The main axis of the Mystery of Wedding is that husband and wife are connected by God, as the road and truth, as the proof of Supreme Love.

Let us look back at Amiran Gomarteli's article, in which he confirms that Akaki's *Suliko* was written under influence from Vazha's *Kingdom of Love*, and that it, to some extent, is lyrical polemic with Vazha. Hence, he claims that "Vazha's contribution is the greatest" to the birth of this genial poem, the researcher claims. Gomarteli also stresses that both of those poems "take roots from Guramishvili, namely his poem *Song of David. Zovovka*. As for similarity between Vazha's and Akaki's poems, it becomes apparent from the very first lines. Vazha: "I have lost my beloved; I searched,/walked the whole country around"... Akaki: "I was searching for my beloved's grave,/I could not find it, it has been lost"...

Poet and folklorist Eter Tataraidze tells a story she heard in Tetrtskaro Region village Toneti, according to which, Akaki has dedicated this poem to Suliko Samadashvili from Toneti; Akaki was friend with Samadashvili's brother and was shocked by his tragic death; Suliko, who went to the town to buy clothes for the wedding was killed by wild animal in the forest and the bones were found only after several months of searching. According to the story, when Akaki came to the grave, he found Suliko's beloved crying tears over the grave in despair. That is why, the initial line – „ჩემი ძმის საფლავს ვეძებდი, ვერ ვნახე, დაკარგულიყო“, {"I was searching for my brother's grave, but could not find it, it has been lost"}, he changed to – „საყვარლის საფლავს ვეძებდი, ვერ ვნახე, დაკარგულიყო“, {"I was searching for my beloved's grave, but could not find it, it has been lost"...} Obviously, a folk saying is far from true historic fact; it more an emotional and tragic legend, which can be related to Akaki's genial *Suliko*.

Suliko, as a literary creation, gained its own fate; Varinka Tsereteli wrote such a melody for the song that I have often thought, which is better the lyrics or the melody? It is a fact that the melody immortalized Akaki's this masterpiece even more and added special, musical aesthetics to it. Poetry has fewer and specific-delicate readers, while song is more listened to by people. Song music is more "people's" than poetry; it has far more coverage of wide audiences.

Let me look back at the poem and my opinion about it. When working on the report I used hermeneutic and comparative research methods, in addition with text analysis and synthesis. My conclusion is the continuation of Akaki Bakradze's and Amiran Gomarteli's literary-critical dialectic line, however, looking deeper into the text, I also noticed different contexts. I believe that in *Suliko*, the main line is based on the Kingdom of the Lord, "the Lost Paradise" and search for and finding it. The beloved is the Lord and his grave is the Eden closed and buried for the humankind. As for the literary and Christian Orthodox Trinity of Star-Rose-Nightingale, I believe, these symbols should not be construed as unambiguous and linear; that it is either a blasphemy or deeply religious text? My answer is that none of those. Akaki is a great poet, with all his high aesthetic feelings and full of subconscious, illogical, Hadesian emotions of writing. His *Suliko* is associated with the spirituality, soul, Lord, universe and cognition of the Lord in the universe. I would also not say that Akaki's search for the Lord is pure emanation and allows thinking about Gnosticism. The lyrical character is searching for love and the Paradise determined by being in love, which he finds in the greatness and perfection of the Universe created by the Lord. The lyrical character is filled with this feeling, the Doors of "the Lost Paradise" open and Akaki's *Suliko* claims to be over time:

„ისევ გამეხსნა სიცოცხლე,
დღემდი რომ მწარედ კრულ იყო,
ახლა კი ვიცი, სადა ხარ,
სამგან გაქვს ბინა, სულიკო“!

**[I once again recalled life,
Severely hidden until now,
Now I finally know where you are,
You are in three places, Suliko]!**

Akaki could be called as a genius poet just for writing *Suliko*. Critical realism born between Georgian Romanticism and Modernism, representative of which was Akaki Tsereteli, obviously consisted of the team of objective type writers. Objective type writers are characterized with objective telling about events and happenings; while self-reflection and expression characterize subjective type writers. Akaki's existential search, expressed by *Suliko*, may also be considered as Christian existentialism, when the cognition of the Lord runs only on the subjective, actively searching vector.

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