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VAZHA-PSHAVELA ON GEORGIAN LITERARY LANGUAGE, ALPHABET AND KARTVELIAN DIALECT VOCABULARY

Numerous interesting papers have been dedicated to the language of Vazha-Pashavela as an expressive phenomenon, though his view on the history of Georgian literary language and the linguistic integrity of the Georgians is less studied. From this point of view, Vazha-Pashavela's linguistic conception could be discussed in two main topics such as:

- Language and national identity;
- Standard language and dialects.

1. Language and identity.

From this point of view, Vazha-Pashavela's following quotation is of interest:

"A sense of patriotism, as a life itself and feelings is apparently an inherited thing at the moment of birth; it is made up of undeniable parts such as a mother language, historical past, famous public figures, national territory, literature, etc." Moreover, Vazha-Pshavela regards the death of the language of Georgians – the Georgian language – to be the death of the whole country. For instance, in his speech at the funeral of Ilia Chavchavadze he states:

There are awful young men of new generation "who destroy the country itself by rejecting a language, nationality and even territory! Certainly, if not a destruction of our country, then what it is?"

Moreover, Vazha-Pshavela regarded the creation of Megrelian and Svan alphabets as a struggle against the mother language:

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries the Russian Empire makes active attempts to achieve linguistic and ethnic disintegration of the Georgian nation that had been strengthened by centuries-old literary /national/ language. For that purpose, the Russian officials, with the assistance of some Georgians try to create literary languages on the basis of Megrelian and Svan dialects. Vazha wrote a verse in response to such linguistic diversion in 1902.

Vazha-Pshavela's creative work is inspired with the idea that the relationship between the national language /common language of the Georgians/ and a dialect /a communal idiom, a language used by people as a mean of communication/ has to correspond to the relationship between a river and its tributary: those who declare particular tributaries as independent rivers harm both the river and its streams..."

Moreover, Vazha regarded the growth in the number of Russian-language newspapers to be an action against the Georgian mother language.

2. Standard language and dialects.

In Vazha-Pshavela's opinion, the modern literary language should be based on both the old Georgian literary language and a vernacular idiom. Particularly, in two of his articles entitled *During Discussion with P. Mirianashvili (1888)* and *"Language (A Brief Note; 1901)"* – a polemic one, Vazha partially revises the "linguistic reform" commenced by the Tergdaleulebi; he claims that the modern literary language should not be based on a simple "language of the people" but instead, on the old Georgian language and the vernacular idiom that has preserved specific features of this old language "the grammatical forms of which absolutely correspond to those of ancient writers (like authentic old Georgian)".

It should be noted that Vazha disputed the idea according to which the Kartlian was considered to be a basic dialect of the modern Georgian language. Cf.:

By some reasons, a large part of linguists believe that the modern Georgian language is based on Kartlian and Kakhetian dialects. Actually, the Georgian literary language is established on the basis of common Kartvelian language, a direct continuation of which is the so-called language of Khanmeti texts. The latter is later substituted with the well-known „Old Georgian” – a language of „The Martyrdom of Shushanik”, which actually contrasts with the Kartlian dialect /it actually exceeds the latter/.

The great poet proficiently employs dialectal and archaic forms in versification; for instance, in order to have a certain number of syllables Vazha actively uses syllabic and zero forms of the nominative case marker in nouns ending with a vowel.

All of Vazha-Pshavela's ideas on the Georgian language are important for modern Georgia as well.