

GENDER ASPECTS OF FOLKLORE: WOMAN AS THE KEEPER OF TRADITION

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Abstract: This article explores the phenomenon of the woman as the keeper of tradition within the context of gender aspects in folklore. The feminine principle is considered a crucial element in preserving cultural memory, moral values, and sociocultural codes. The author analyzes the functions of the female voice, archetypal images of the mother, singer, prophetess, as well as the symbolism of female presence in rituals and legends. By referencing the works of classic folklorists, the significance of the female world in transmitting tradition is revealed. Special attention is paid to the modern pedagogical and cultural interpretation of the woman's role in preserving intangible heritage.

Keywords: gender, folklore, woman, tradition, cultural memory, myth, symbolism, oral culture, archetype.

Introduction

Folklore is not only a collective artistic form, but also a means of organizing cultural memory. Through song, tale, ritual, and legend, people preserve a system of values in which the woman has long served as a mediator between generations. Her voice is not merely a tool for conveying text, but a spiritual instrument connecting the past, present, and future. Modern gender studies offer a view of folklore not as a "male" or "female" domain, but as a multilayered system of meanings where the feminine plays a creative role. In folk culture, a woman is not just a ritual participant but also its author, interpreter, and guardian of symbolic codes. This allows us to view her as an active subject of cultural creativity, not merely an object of representation (Meletinsky, 2015).

1. Woman as an Archetype of the Guardian

The image of the woman as a guardian permeates the structure of traditional worldviews. In folklore texts, she is associated with motherhood, fertility, and protection of the family line. The mother is not just a biological figure but a symbol of moral stability, inner law, and memory. The archetype of the female guardian is universal, present in epics, songs, and tales of many cultures. She symbolizes eternal return to origins, the cycle of life and rebirth. In this context, the woman is not merely a domestic figure, but the spiritual center of the family and community, the keeper of "unwritten laws" (Anikin, 2019).

In traditional societies, it was the woman who bore the responsibility of preserving rituals and passing down lullabies, fairy tales, and beliefs. Through her, folklore remained alive, transmitted from mother to daughter, from grandmother to granddaughter. This female line of transmission symbolized the continuity of cultural fabric, based on trust and inner memory.

2. The Female Voice as a Mediator of Cultural Memory

The woman's voice in oral tradition carries not only the text but also intonation—the emotional matrix of the people. In women's lullabies, laments, and songs lies a life philosophy that unites pain and comfort, sorrow and hope.

The lullaby is one of the oldest manifestations of folkloric motherhood. Through sound, word, and rhythm, the mother shapes the child. This is not merely musical influence but a pedagogical act aimed at forming a person's inner world (Chistov, 2017).

Laments, by contrast, express collective grief and purification. In these genres, the woman becomes the voice of the community, expressing emotions that defy rational expression. Thus, female speech culture in folklore forms a significant layer of national psychology and ethics (Kireeva, 2018).

3. Symbolism of the Feminine Principle and Its Sacred Functions

In folk representations, the feminine principle is linked to natural elements—water, earth, moon. These symbols are not accidental; they reflect the woman's ability to preserve, renew, and regenerate. In myths and songs, she often acts as a mediator between worlds—the living and the dead, the earthly and the celestial (Meletinsky, 2015).

In ritual cycles (spring, wedding, memorial), the woman's role is always sacralized. She purifies space through word, song, and action. Through her, transitions from one state to another are carried out—from chaos to order, from death to life. The symbol of female water, washing, spinning, and bearing light represents the archetype of cultural continuity. The woman carries within herself the symbol of memory and hope through which the cultural code of a people is preserved.

4. Female Images in Folklore Genres

In fairy tales, the woman is not only a mother, but also a wise mentor, enchantress, prophetess. She holds knowledge that defies rational explanation. The fairytale Baba Yaga, for instance, is not so much an evil being as a guardian of thresholds, boundaries between worlds, and a keeper of sacred knowledge (Propp, 2018).

In song traditions, the female image is filled with tenderness and tragedy. In wedding songs, she embodies the idea of sacrifice for the sake of harmony; in lyrical songs, she expresses the inner strength of love and loyalty. The woman knows how to preserve feeling and pain in words, transforming personal experience into collective meaning (Bakhtin, 2020).

Finally, in proverbs and sayings, the feminine principle is often contrasted with the masculine as softness is to strength, patience to action. But this is not opposition, rather complementarity that creates the harmony of the world (Uspensky, 2016).

5. Pedagogical Aspects of Female Tradition

In folklore, the woman plays the role not only of guardian but also of educator. Through ritual, song, and tale, she passes on models of behavior, moral values, and aesthetic norms. This process can be seen as the oldest form of pedagogical communication.

Female education through folklore is education of the heart. It is based not on dogma but on emotional resonance, on trust and empathy. In today's society, where the pace of life accelerates and intergenerational ties weaken, a return to the female pedagogical foundation gains special significance (Kireeva, 2018).

Thus, the folkloric tradition of women can be seen as a model of humanistic education, where spirituality and morality are united into a holistic cultural code.

6. Contemporary Interpretations and the Significance of Women's Experience

Modern cultural studies view female traditionalism as a source of cultural resilience and self-awareness. In the face of globalization, it is women who preserve traditional ways of life and language, becoming bearers of intangible heritage.

Researchers note that women's folklore is a form of "living memory" that helps restore national identity (Anikin, 2019). It preserves internal harmony between emotion and thought, nature and culture.

Today, the humanities show increasing interest in "women's knowledge"—a way of perceiving and thinking about the world through image, metaphor, and ritual. The female tradition in folklore is not a relic, but a spiritual foundation without which the depth of culture cannot be fully understood.

Conclusion

The woman in folklore is not only the keeper of tradition but also a symbol of moral memory, a source of the inner light of culture. Her voice, images, and actions embody the idea of continuity and harmony. Through the female tradition, folklore preserves not only language and rituals but the spiritual structure of the world. The woman connects past and future, turning memory into living action.

Understanding the gender aspects of folklore opens new horizons in comprehending cultural dynamics and pedagogical values. It helps modern society recognize that preserving tradition is not only a scholarly task, but a profoundly human mission.

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