



Inspirations From the Ecological Views in the Literary Creation of Rasputin

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Abstract

In the 21st century, vast amounts of haze shroud the blue planet on which we live; the global ecological crisis is becoming increasingly severe. Concerns over ecological issues were raised as early as in the literary works of the Russian writer Rasputin, who pointed out that if we humans wish to live a good and comfortable life, we need to cherish the natural environment, cherish this blue planet of ours, and live in harmony with nature. Return to nature, for to cherish nature is to cherish ourselves. Otherwise, we humans will be lost and be punished by nature.

Key words: Rasputin; Creation; Return; Inspiration

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INTRODUCTION

A favorable ecological environment is the foundation for human survival and reproduction and for social and economic development. It is not only a mark of highly developed civilizations but also a prerequisite for sustainable development. Global ecological problems have a direct impact on the global environment and have caused environmental degradation around the globe. A series of problems have arisen, including

land degradation, desertification, soil erosion, issues of population and urbanization, fresh water shortage, vegetation deterioration, marine pollution, and hazardous waste transfer, as well as global atmospheric problems such as global warming, ozone depletion, acid deposition and so forth. Rasputin pays close attention to ecological problems in his literary works.

Born in 1937, Rasputin is a famous Russian writer. With the increasing seriousness of the problem of global pollution, his novel *Farewell to Matyora* (1976), characterized by its ecological theme, has brought him great honor and fame and earned him a spot in the literary world. Born in the Ust-Uda district on the bank of the Angara River in Irkutsk Oblast, Rasputin spent his adolescence with his mother and grandmother, hence his grandmother became the model for the series of village “grandmothers” in his works.

1. ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION IN RASPUTIN’S WRITING

In terms of ecological issues, the harmony between humans and land is an important theme in Rasputin’s works. The interdependence between humans and land reveals the importance of ecology for human survival. With the development of industries and the increase of fickle material needs, the once fertile land is now suffering from the aggravation of soil erosion. Land has been trampled; the crisis of human survival is starting to emerge. Abandoned and damaged land not only reflects the conflicts between humans and the material nature but also mirrors the psychological syndrome of increasing alienation from “natural” humanity in modern societies.

Rasputin has been pondering over an important question: what is the best way for humans to live? With the development of modern society, more and more peasants abandon their land and go to the cities to do hard manual work. Despite the hardship of living at the bottom

of the social hierarchy, they still enjoy their lives in the cities. Is this way of living reasonable? What can humans do to prevent future generations from dehumanization, indifference, and moral decay? The author believes that civilization represented by urban prosperity and growth is the ultimate cause of ecological deterioration of the planet Earth.

The image of the village “grandmother” in Rasputin’s works is a symbol of tradition and represents the ideal of the harmony among humans, between humans and races, and between humans and nature. These village “grandmothers” love their home village and are sentimentally attached to their homeland. They have not received any formal education in school; nor have they been to the cities and seen the skyscrapers. Their simplicity and innocence enable them to understand the true meaning and the wisdom of life. The pure and simple heart of theirs is not contaminated by modern civilization, hence they are exempt from the harms of modern civilization. In their mind, there is no sense of times, no modernization; all that exists are fertile soils, green hills and willow trees. “They use the concrete and sentimental “knowledge”, deeply rooted in Eastern Orthodoxy, to battle against “science” and “rationality”. All they love is land, fertile land” (Yu et al., 2001).

Not only does Rasputin actively engage in the creation of ecological literary works, he is also a proponent of various ecological preservation activities. In August, 1987 in Irkutsk, six Russian writers including Rasputin and seven Japanese litterateurs held a symposium titled “Ecology and Literature”, at which they launched “the Lake Baikal campaign” and called for ecological preservation. Along with other writers, they halted the “plan for North-to-South Water Transfer Project”.

The Russian critic Charaikin has pointed out that “urbanization does not obscure its anti-ecological essence; peasants’ alienation from the land is the most important step of human alienation from nature” (Liang, 2003). Concerned about the social phenomenon of ecological imbalance and spiritual imbalance, Rasputin proposed the idea of sticking to the land and returning to tradition.

1.1 IMPLICATIONS OF ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

Ecological civilization is related to human survival and development. Positive development of ecological civilization would enable political and economic constructions to progress in harmony with the natural environment, achieve a benign cycle between humans and nature, steer us in the direction of healthy development characterized by economic growth, wealth of the people, and a well-maintained environment, and ensure healthy human reproduction. Ecological civilization bears on the future of humans. It is the foundation for the harmony of society and the construction of civilization. It represents the fundamental interests of the people and constitutes

the social foundation for the political stability of a nation. It is the ruling party’s historical mission and the measure of the progress of a nation’s civilization, and it bears on the rise and fall of a nation. The development of society, the increase in productivity, the growth of population, the constant improvement of the standard of living, along with the development of humans’ abilities for and the expansion of the scope of ecological transformation have all contributed to the continuous aggravation of environmental pollution. The destruction of the ecological environment has brought fatal harm to humans and made humans clearly realize that attention to the protection of the ecological environment and a well-maintained relationship between humans and nature are prerequisites to healthy living. This environmental awareness steers humans toward an ecological revolution, which sets environmental protection and development of ecological civilization as an important goal of human activities. China has a time-honored eco-moral culture and ethics. Traditional Chinese culture contains elements of a rich and simple eco-moral culture; one of the elements is the concept of “unity between heaven and man”, which represents Chinese people’s pursuit of the harmony and unity between humans and nature in the spiritual realm. China is the largest developing country. If China takes the lead in evolving into an ecological civilization, not only would China’s own economy, society, ecology, environment, humanistic endeavors, and people’s livelihood all take on a new look, the construction of a global ecological civilization would also be greatly expedited.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION AND OTHER CIVILIZATIONS

Material civilization, political civilization, spiritual civilization, social civilization, and ecological civilization constitute the five major forms of human civilization. They are intricately intertwined and mutually conditioned. With the development of the times, ecological civilization becomes the foundation and premise for other civilizations. Ecological civilization provides an environmental foundation and rich natural resources for the development of material, political, spiritual, and social civilizations. Ecological, material, political, and spiritual civilizations are important constituents of social civilization. Generally speaking, in the process of humanstakeing the initiative in exploring and transforming nature, the efforts devoted and the entirety of material gains acquired by humans constitute material civilization, which is an important mark of the improvement of material productivity and of people’s material well-being. In the process of human taking the initiative in transforming society, the efforts devoted and the entirety

of political gains acquired constitute political civilization, which is an important manifestation of the development of people's political consciousness and the robustness of political systems. In the same vein, in the process of humans taking the initiative to transform their own subjective world, the efforts devoted and the entirety of spiritual gains acquired constitute spiritual civilization, which is an important mark of the improvement of spiritual productivity and spiritual well-being as well as the satisfaction of spiritual needs. Similarly, the efforts that humans devoted to achieving the harmony between humans and nature and the ensuing positive effects constitute ecological civilization, which is instantiated in the increase in people's environmental awareness, the improvement of the ecological system, the amelioration of the ecological environment. With the development of society, the status of ecological civilization among all five civilizations discussed above is becoming increasingly important. The evolution of human society from primitive culture, agricultural culture, and industrial culture all the way through today's ecological culture sufficiently illustrates the importance of the ecological environment to humans. Ecological civilization is a new concept developed on the basis of humans' summarization of and reflection on historical experience. This concept is an innovation of the traditional concept of productivity, an improvement over the traditional model of growth and consumption. It is also a reform of traditional ideas. This reform has implications of historical progress. With the experience gained and lessons learned from previous modes of production, it is characterized by the realization that in the process of taking what they need from nature, humans must conform to the laws of nature and maintain an ecological balance. Only by so doing can humans ensure healthy reproduction and living. Otherwise, material and spiritual civilizations that are developed at the cost of environmental degradation would be destroyed due to the damage done to ecological civilization.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION AND THE SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK ON DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development encompasses sustainable ecological development, sustainable economic development, and sustainable social development. Sustainable ecological development is the foundation, sustainable economic development is the premise, and sustainable social development is the goal.

The concept of sustainable development derives from our understanding of the natural environment and a deep understanding of the harms brought by environmental destruction. Socialist construction under the guidance of

the scientific outlook on development requires a favorable ecological environment and sufficient natural resources. Ecological issues are closely related to social development and to the basic principles of the scientific outlook on development. The scientific outlook on development and the concept of sustainable development not only illustrate the important status and role of ecological civilization in the overall development of society but have also outlined a specific plan of action.

a) A well-developed ecological civilization is an important safeguard for the implementation of the scientific outlook on development and for the comprehensive construction of a moderately well-off society. The core of the scientific outlook on development is its human-centeredness, which defines the goals of development as constantly satisfying the ever increasing material and cultural needs of the people, improving the quality of their lives and their standards of living, and promoting comprehensive individual development. Moreover, the basic components of the scientific outlook on development include protection of the natural environment, maintenance of ecological safety, implementation of sustainable development, as well as achievement of the harmony between humans and nature and the balance between the social environment and the ecological environment on the basis of eco-friendly development. The construction of ecological civilization, the achievement of the goal of ecological soundness, as well as the maintenance and amelioration of the conditions for human survival and development all requires adherence to the scientific outlook on development and to human-centeredness.

b) Ecological civilization is an important element in the implementation of the scientific outlook on development and an inevitable choice in the comprehensive construction of a moderately well-off society. A full range of discussion on the value of nature is a must. Not only do we need to conquer nature, benefit from nature, and take from nature all that has instrumental value for human development; we also need to protect nature with kindness and respect. We need to establish the concept of the big value; that is, when evaluating any economic activity and social activity, we should consider not only the economic value but also the ecological value, not only the short-term value but also the long-term value, not only what we may take from nature, but also what we can give back in return. Only by doing so can we truly establish a harmonious, co-existent relationship between humans and nature and achieve harmonious co-existence and coordinated development of humans and nature. As a safeguard for human civilization, ecological civilization builds on the foundation of the previous stages of human society including primitive civilization, agricultural civilization and industrial civilization; it embodies the outcomes of the construction of material civilization, spiritual civilization, and political civilization. The construction of ecological

civilization bears on the long-term big plan about the future of the Chinese nation. The lack of resources, serious environmental pollution, and severe damage to the eco-system all requires that we establish the following concepts of ecological civilization: respect for the laws of nature, conformity to the laws of nature, and protection of nature. We should give top priority to the construction of ecological civilization, devote major efforts to the construction of a beautiful China, and achieve sustainable development of the Chinese nation in perpetuity.

CONCLUSION

In his writing, Rasputin calls for respect for nature, protection of land, and return of the human soul. With a strong sense of responsibility for nature and sense of mission for society, he hopes that his works would encourage people to cherish nature, protect nature, as well as decrease and guard against possible occurrences of ecological disasters. All these illustrate the writer's deep concerns over the fate of the Earth and with all life on Earth. Earth is indeed the only home of humans; no other planet that is conducive to human existence has been spotted in the universe so far besides Earth. Environmental protection is the foundation of the healthy development of us humans. Therefore, we should raise environmental awareness and take measures against

existing pollution of the environment in order to bring it to a halt. Moreover, we should start our effort toward environmental awareness with children and intensify environmental education among children, helping them to realize the importance of the natural environment to us humans. As we all know, oxygen in the air is a necessary condition for human existence, and oxygen comes from photosynthesis in plants. Without plants, we humans and other life forms would no longer exist on Earth. Small animals not only feed on plants but also protect plants. On the planet Earth, humans, plants, and animals are an interdependent and inseparable whole. Therefore, we should cherish everything around us. Human survival on Earth is attributable to its ecological balance. Earth provides air, water, adequate light and heat, energy, and other resources for all life, so we should protect this only home of ours. Only when the natural environment is in a state of ecological balance and harmony can humans expect a bright future.

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