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## **Tolerance in Kazakh Society in the light of the Poem by Kulash Ahmetova**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Kazakhs have taken place in history scene as a nation through a long and arduous process. Kazakh nation, has managed to survive with its culture and literature by transferring them from generation to generation. Past, present and future of each nation can be assessed by looking at sustentation of peculiar material and spiritual values. The factors which provide Kazakhs to stand firm and also to look confidently to the future, are culture and moral values which they inherited from their ancestors. Geographical features and daily life struggles have been the basis of the national worldview, literature, music, family life and the national character of the Kazakhs. The vast expanse of the steppe was reflected in the hearts of the Kazakh people.*

**Key words:** Tolerance, Kazakh society, poetry, Kulash Ahmetova

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Culture is an attitude, a form of expression and everything contributing human maturity and giving personality. If a society's culture is deep, colorful and rich, it would be so persistent and impressive. Cultures reach this character by feeding "directly from their internal resources, and by filtration from the external sources" (Ergaliyeva, Şakuzadaulı, 2000).

Kazakhs have taken place in history scene as a nation through a long and arduous process. With the famous Kazakh poet J. Moldagaliyev's words, "a thousand dead and thousands resurrected" (Moldagaliyev, 1964) Kazakh nation, has managed to survive with its culture and literature by transferring them from generation to generation. Past, present and future of each nation can be assessed by looking at sustentation of peculiar material and spiritual values. The factors which provide Kazakhs to stand firm and also to look confidently to the future, are culture and moral values which they inherited from their ancestors. Geographical features and daily life struggles have been the basis of the national worldview, literature, music, family life and the national character of the Kazakhs. The vast expanse of the steppe was reflected in the hearts of the Kazakh people (Salgaraulı, 1995). It is possible to see the example of this in friendship with the Kazakh people, in their shopping and trade relations or in literary works which are the written reflections of life.

### **POET KÜLAŞ AHMETOVA, A REPRESENTATIVE OF MODERN KAZAKH LITERATURE**

One of the representatives of the modern Kazakh literature, poet Kulash Akhmetova's poems are exemplary of this subject. Kulash Akhmetova, a productive poet, was born in the town of Talas in province Jambul, in 1946. K. Akhmetova is the author of many poem books such as "Arğımaqtar dalası" (Akhmetova, 1988), "Aq gülüm menin" (Akhmetova, 1975), "Kün şıqqanda külüp oyan" (Akhmetova, 1989), "Jasıl jağalaw" (Akhmetova, 1987), "Baq" (Akhmetova, 2005), "Qut" (Akhmetova, 2005), "Mahabbat" (Akhmetova, 2006). Poet Akhmetova defines precondition of to love someone and to understand the other, are first and foremost to be himself and "to love homeland with its every inch, it's history, culture, traditions, language, religion, history and future." She reconciled her personal and literary accomplishments with being a conscious heir of rich cultural mosaic of the environment in which she was born and raised.

### TOLERANCE IN K. AHMETOVA'S POEMS

The poet has advised the protection and survival of national values such as strength, unity, friendship, hospitality, respect for the past, humility, the right of neighborhood, the importance of the family institution, etc. in her poems. She has stressed that the cultural values which have been filtrated from the past should be protected to be existed. According to her, education and practice starts in the family. Her poem, "My Birth House" (Akhmetova, 1988) which we'll try to analyze, is an example for this subject. The family is the core of social community for Kazakhs. Every community is based on it's family order. The principles of family, based on the mother-father-son relationships, have a great role in in providing social discipline and peace of mind and in achieving social behaviors for the patronage of the people.

Individuals create the family. The community consists of these families. Multiplying individuals to serve as community and to have information and cultural heritage breeds civilizations. Because of the robustness and better protection of the family structure which can be described as gravity center of social stability, society can develop and establish the state and the emergence of civilization can be achieved.

Kulash Akhmetova's "My Birth House" poem is important in terms of revealing example of peace and friendship in Kazakh family. Kazakhs called family as "otbası", and the family patriarch as "otağası". For this reason, "od" which means "fire" is attributed to holiness.

The family is sacred in Kazakh mentality. Therefore, they assume the duty of forming the family is sacred. First and foremost the householder, who provides any kind of needs of his home such as food and clothing for his wife and children, also has an authority for inner peace of the family, spiritual development of family members and about family relations (İsmail, 2002). The father who is regarded as the patriarch of the home is the first master of his child. He is always cautious, shrewd and careful for the sake of creation and his location. Thus, in the first stanza of the poem as introductory part, it is said that:

"There was a novelty to anyone in our house

Dady gives ear to the news hour

Sets his clock first

Then, he would continue to pleasant conversation."

The ancestor is a monument of strength in the Kazakh family, the mother on the other hand is the compassionate hero. Kazakhs stress the importance and value of father and mother by saying "Ata-askar taw, ana-sarkılmas bulak." (The father-gorgeous mountain, the mother-inexhaustible resource.) They instill to their children this awareness: "Atana ne kılın aldına sol keledi" (What kind of future do you want, act like that your parents.) "Babasına hürmet etmeyen, balasından hürmet görmez." (The man who does not pay homage to his father, he does not see the reverence from his child).

Secondly, the most important assets in a Kazakh family, is the kid. Drawing attention to the continuation of the dynasty, Kazakhs see the child at the same time as the guarantee of society. Kinsfolk beauty cites the favor of people. Having respectable parents is perceived often as the guarantee of a better future for children. Kazakhs also give too much importance to the education of children. Thus, in the continuation of the poem, the poet mentioned the atmosphere of unity in her family, in which she was born and raised, with mother, father, children and their relatives:

"Those who know, say our home was an interesting nest

Any of us did not like the silence in our home

Our mini-concert after dinner

Decorated with Uzbek dance of 'Namangan's Apple.'"

In these lines, sofra (dinner table) which is an important element of Kazakh culture and in general Turkish culture is mentioned, in which family members come together, eat together and afterwards the children shows their skills. First of all, the Kazakh dinner table means abundance and prosperity. This abundance has continued through the ages. Kazakhs exhibited the feeling of gratitude and thankfulness constantly against all the blessings God has given. According to the Kazakh poet, each Kazakh family should be a "quthane" for their members, that is the location of unity, fertility, happiness and bless. In her another poem, K. Akhmetova says: "In the home that I was born, men owned all jobs outside while girls were the symbol of the elegance and innocence. Elders' place is always at the top which is called tör. Everyone should seek happiness of this world in his 'quthane', because the most sublime works occur in the family."

Another point brought to attention in the above verse is that the children are crowded for a nuclear family that they could give concert and preferred the Uzbek melody "The Apple of Namangan". So the other's music is not alienated, on the contrary universality of music is perceived at younger ages. There's parents' discipline on the basis of this orientation. Thus Kazakhs says such a proverb: "Ata körgen ok jonar, ana körgen ton pişer" (Children who learn father's discipline make arrow, who exercised with mother sew clothes.) This matter is stressed also in the continuing verses of the poetry:

“We had friends from various nationalities  
They were collected as a cluster of stars in our house  
My mother used to play balalaika, my father continuously  
Was singing Kyrgyz's 'jir's.”

Dad is responsible for material needs and also spiritual development of family members such as his wife, their children and the elders. The lady of the house has been accepted her obligations from the beginning. She is aware of that “the female bird makes the nest.” The men are at the center of the classical Kazakh family. This does not mean the woman is completely abstracted from the life or the loss of her effectiveness. Contrary to popular belief, Kazakh women are not only subservient to men, but also is free to speak on issues important family matters. Kazakh woman is not an introvert.

The Kazakhs are welcoming people. A Kazakh family works for the best way to welcome their guests, even though they are hungry. The verse of “They were collected like a set of star at our home” shed light on the Kazakh hospitality. In addition, guests arriving for an accident is not necessarily familiar. Showing the necessary attention to their guests, is an important duty of the householder. Catering to guests is considered to be their unshared stock in the Kazakh family (İsmaıl, 2002: 165-166). Kazakhs introduce hospitality to their children from a young age. A Kazakh proverb says that “The child who'll be the man, sits close to the visitors.” They want their children to participate the conversations of elder guests and want to take their best wishes.

Because the guest's prayer is a priceless gift in the faith of Kazakhs. They know that the respect and courtesy to the guests is the way to win the approval of God. They believe wholeheartedly that the sheer number of guests is mercy and the absence of guest is disaster.

Strengthening the neighborly relations and to get on well with the neighbors is one of the good traditions of the Kazakh people, that had existed for centuries. Urbanization engendered some negative results and this ritual is becoming extinct. In the Akhmetova's poem, this tradition appears not only as the house or street neighborhood, but also as friendship with neighboring countries and the value given to them. Her father's singing Kyrgyz song and her mother's playing Russian musical instrument balalaika are obvious examples of this. When giving examples from her own family, the poet also gives the message that the survival and continuity of the societies is connected to healthy human relationships, dominance of proper moral principles and strong frame of mind. Kulash Akhmetova believes wholeheartedly that “Homeland begins in the family.” She has reminded so often in his poems the sanctity of the family institution and the importance of mother, father and children relations. In another poem, the poet shows that neighborly relations was so good in the time of her own childhood. She also expresses the concern about the weakening of neighborly relations of today. The poet says that making friends from various nationalities and meeting with other cultures provide peace to people's lives.

“The Russians were close friends of my father  
Tatar girl was my mother's confidant.  
Neighbor aunts from every nation  
Would come together day by day.  
Aladağlar is the witness of what is past.  
Ukrainian dance Gopak also used to play.  
Symbol of tolerance in this cozy nest  
A wide variety of folk music were heard.”

The idea of unity, friendship and alliance is the most painful issue for Kazakhs since they have taken the name “Kazakh”. The unity according to Kazakh people is the source of peace, strength and abundance. The unity should be both in a person's own and also in relations with neighbors, friends and brothers. This issue is also considered important in relations with neighboring and friendly countries. That's why the Kazakh people have always given value to friendship and always preferred unity and meeting with neighbors to have a common denominator. Poet Kulash Akhmetova has succeeded to become an interpreter of these national traits (Janibekkızi, 2003).

I'm in love with life, in love                      I don't say for anyone, from different nation.  
To the people with pure souls,                      I've opened the door to my heart.  
I'm close to all of goodness,                      I don't say his language and style is different.  
I always love people,                      With pure and compassionate eyes and souls

It is possible to see from Kulash Akhmetova's poems that before anything else the poet has a patriotic identity devoted to her nation with its history and culture. She addresses the readers by bringing deep-rooted culture and human traits with universal values. Winning “Parasat” which is the highest order of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2006 (Aytolen, 2006), Kulash Akhmetova invites with her works the people

whose eyes are open and hearths are awake, to practice today the beautiful experiences of the past and to comprehend that individual friendships can be transported to the denominator of humanity.

## CONCLUSION

Tolerance in Kazakh society begins with the family education and continues throughout the whole life periods. The best example for this is that in Kazakhstan people from many nationalities, different religions and various traditions have been coexisting peacefully. Kazakh Public Assembly, being organized after the collapse of Soviet Union, is a key component of social tolerance that unite together above 820 ethnic and cultural associations. This matchless institution takes on public diplomacy. As of today, 88 schools in Kazakhstan are giving education in the languages of minority ethnic groups. There are 195 ethnical education centers. In 108 schools 22 languages of minorities are taught as a separate course. There are national theatres as well. 35 media organs are published in 11 different language. There is a research center of inter-ethnicity communication. Focusing different people and different opinions to one ideal is a major factor in forming nations, beliefs.

As it was described in the poem analyzed above, tolerance, comprising one of the important features of Kazakh people, has been reflected on all genres of Kazakh literature. Especially, Kazakh poetry is alive with supplementary components of tolerance like hospitality, empathy, benevolence, respect, love, compassion, devotion, altruism, and generosity.

Today Kazakh society, considered as one of the bright representatives of tolerance, remains as an untouched area in term of social, literal, philosophical, educational, historical and cultural research. In order to create an example for the nation in this world abound with disputes and wars, it is important to study and analyze Kazakh literature in terms of educational background, infra-structure and psycho-social analysis.

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