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THE INTERPRETATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN CHINGIZ AYTMATOV'S NOVEL "MOUNTAINS FALL (OR ETERNAL BRIDE)"

Annotation: Chingiz Aytmatov is a prominent representative of 20th-century world-class Turkic literature. Environmental issues hold a significant place in Chingiz Aytmatov's works. One of the main ideas of his novel "The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years" (Mountains Fall (Or Eternal Bride)) focuses on the protection of the snow leopard—a species listed in the "Red Book" and found only in some mountain ranges of Central Asia. This is not only about preserving the rare creature with its precious fur but also about safeguarding the high-altitude natural environment. He writes: "If people continue to rely solely on hunting without advancing production, in a few years, there won't be a single partridge left to shoot." His works provide artistic interpretations of global and universal issues, including environmental problems, drug addiction and narcotics, terrorism and religious extremism, arms trafficking, and the tragedies of war. One distinctive feature of Chingiz Aytmatov's creativity lies in the parallel depiction of nature and society.

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In his works such as "The Day Lasts More Than a Hundred Years", "The White Ship", "Spotty Dog Running along the seashore", "The Cassandra's Brand", "Mountains Fall (Or Eternal Bride)", similar topics are discussed. In the 21st century, where environmental issues are increasingly urgent, the need to read Chingiz Aytmatov's works becomes undeniable.

The novel "Mountains Fall" vividly portrays two contrasting characters: one representing society and the other symbolizing nature. On one hand, there is Arsen Samanchin, who resides in a bustling metropolis bursting with life. This city, with its overcrowded streets turned into markets, smoke-filled skies from kebab vendors, and ceaseless allure of noisy taverns, reflects the chaotic reality of human civilization. On the other hand, we meet Jaabars, the snow leopard, a denizen of the unyielding peaks of the Tian Shan mountains. These rugged cliffs, dense juniper forests, and frost-covered terrains serve as Jaabars' home—a stark contrast to Arsen's urban existence.

Though vastly different, the lives of Arsen and Jaabars run parallel. Both characters are outcasts: Arsen, cast away by society and abandoned by his beloved Oydana, contemplates leaving the city forever. Similarly, Jaabars, betrayed by his mate Barsayim, is ostracized from his pack and seeks refuge in the secluded Uzangilash Pass.

Aytmatov masterfully intertwines their emotional states, crafting a narrative that highlights their shared struggle against isolation and despair. At the start of the novel, Arsen's mental turmoil is evident:

"Overwhelmed by failure, expelled from the 'Eurasia' restaurant at the insistence of his lover Oydana Samarova, Arsen Samanchin felt an urge to cry out loud, to scream his anguish into the heavens. But would the sky hear? Would it care?" [1, 30].

Chingiz Aytmatov skillfully portrays the interplay between nature and society in his novel. The parallelism between the characters and their interconnectedness is central to the narrative. Two protagonists from entirely different worlds—Arsen Samanchin from a bustling city and Jaabars, the snow leopard, from the wild Tian Shan mountains—eventually meet under extraordinary circumstances.

At the novel's climax, their encounter takes place in the Molotash cave during their final moments: "What is destined for whom in this world? It is just so—what fate has written for each," says Aytmatov. Neither Arsen nor Jaabars is aware of what lies ahead for them, yet wise nature orchestrates their meeting at the brink of death. Arsen's poignant words to Jaabars, "Are you here too?" as though recognizing an old acquaintance, highlight the shared suffering between man and animal. Jaabars lies wounded, bleeding profusely, and Aytmatov likens this to the plight of humankind itself [1, 218].

Aytmatov's choice to parallel their fates underscores his belief that nature and society are inherently interconnected and must coexist in harmony. Society's actions directly impact nature, and this unity is essential to the laws of life. However, society must answer for its deeds before nature.

Aytmatov's close friend, Odil Yoqubov, reflected on this, stating: "Scientists claim that due to human recklessness, our planet is rebelling—natural disasters, earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis are multiplying. Inspired by this, Aytmatov titled his novel 'Mountains Fall.'" The title itself holds profound meaning: mountains collapse only during doomsday. What kind of era is this, where mountains are falling? The answer lies in humanity's inhuman treatment of nature in a technocratic society, where greed and thoughtless exploitation reign supreme.

Natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and fires are nature's way of retaliating against human arrogance, yet they are not the end. New calamities arise, fueled by humanity's relentless pursuit of wealth and power. As Yoqubov states, "Aytmatov fears not only natural disasters but also moral and cultural degradation, the decline of ethics, inequality, and the rise of unbridled materialism and corruption."

The novel also delves into the eternal human struggle for fame and power. Aytmatov writes, "Just as air is essential for breathing, wealth and money are vital for power. Wealth and power are like twins, intertwined from the womb."

Ertosh Kurchal, one of the novel's characters, embodies this obsession with fame and wealth. Despite his commanding presence and strong voice, he is merely a mediocre actor in a city theater. Yet, he rises to dominate stages and even stadiums, becoming a symbol of how shallow ambition and greed can lead to dominance in a society driven by materialism [1, 32].

In the novel, Arsen Samanchin, who embodies high human ideals, confronts the greed-driven oligarchs of a globalized world. The clash between the spiritual and material realms is portrayed through the characters of Arsen and Ertosh Kurchal. The oligarchs, as described by Aytmatov, have control over everything: from the internet to space, and even cultural tools like media and entertainment. These tools, originally meant for enlightenment, are now exploited to create chaos and profit, sidelining traditional values [1,46].

Beyond Ertosh, other oligarchs like Bektur and the Arab oil magnates, Hasan and Misir, are depicted as symbols of unchecked greed. Bektur thrives on the hunting business, driving a luxurious black Jeep with a personal chauffeur. He invites Arsen to translate for the Arab tourists who pay handsomely to hunt snow leopards. Despite the dwindling leopard population, Bektur orchestrates a plan where riders drive the animals into traps, ensuring easy prey for his clients.

Arsen, troubled by the environmental damage, is nearly alone in his concerns, save for Eles—a journalist and his admirer. Eles enters Arsen's life like a ray of light, steering him away from his dark intent to kill Ertosh. Through Eles, Aytmatov illustrates that love, a sublime feeling, can counteract the forces of greed and violence. Eles, like Arsen, advocates for the preservation of nature and questions the sustainability of overhunting.

Her concerns resonate deeply: "If this continues, hunting will wipe out all the animals in the mountains, including the snow leopards. What will they hunt then? Without local production, can poverty be eradicated in these new market conditions?"

Through Eles's perspective, Aytmatov emphasizes that mountain communities can achieve prosperity through sustainable local production rather than destructive hunting practices. He warns that overreliance on hunting will lead to the "death" of nature, with devastating consequences for humanity.

Arsen himself laments the disregard for ecology in pursuit of wealth: "At the scent of money, we lose our senses, and ecology is forgotten."

Despite such thoughts stirring in his heart, Arsen had already promised to accompany his uncle on the hunt. The obligation of family ties stood in between. Finally, the anticipated guests arrived: "Both guests were polite, modern-thinking, intellectual young men, radiating signs of intelligence and understanding. One had graduated from Cambridge, the other from Oxford. Hasan had a thick black mustache, while Misir had a clean-shaven face. For them, hunting wild animals was not just an excuse to display bravery but also an extremely challenging type of sport."

Arsen quickly found common ground with the guests. When he narrated the legend of the "Eternal Bride," the Arab princes were deeply moved. After realizing the depth of their intellect and worldview during their discussions, Arsen eagerly wished to discuss not only social and political issues but also global problems, such as preserving and valuing nature. "Sometimes nature-related events seem limited to a certain place, but in reality, any ecological shift ultimately impacts the environment of the entire Earth." Environmental issues, of course, are not confined to one region but affect the whole planet. As the poet Abdulla Oripov expressed in his poem "Globalization":

When one side of the Earth is stung by a bee,
The other side swells with its sting...

The novel's inclusion of thoughts related to the destruction of the Aral Sea serves as evidence of this.

On the day of the hunt, Arsen found himself in a difficult situation when he noticed his friend Toshafgon wearing a military cap with a red ribbon on it. This was a signal that the dreadful plan was about to be put into action. Arsen was supposed to announce through a megaphone in English, Russian, and Kyrgyz that the Arab guests had been taken hostage, demanding a ransom of 20 million. He was caught between two fires. On one side was his promise to his uncle, who was profiting from the hunting business, and on the other was Toshafgon's threats, driven by his desire to make easy money without hard work.

Left alone in the battlefield of upholding high human ideals and moral values, what choice would Arsen make? He followed the call of his conscience. With a voice filled with fury and passion, he shouted in English, Russian, and Kyrgyz:

"Listen, listen! Order! Foreign hunters! - the megaphone amplified his voice, spreading it across the mountains. - Curse upon you a thousand times! Keep your hands off the leopards! Leave this place immediately! We will not allow the slaughter of animals! Hey, hey, go back to Dubai, go back to Kuwait! Do not desecrate the sacred mountains! Get your hooves moving! Leave at once! Otherwise, you will die! I will shoot all of you!"

He punctuated his words by firing a burst of shots from his automatic rifle into the sky. The mountains roared. Rocks tumbled from some distant peak. These words erupted from the depths of Arsen Samanchin's soul, filled with anguish. It was a rebellion against Bektur, Toshafgon, Hasan and Misir, Ertosh Kurchal, and Oydana Samarova! Every word resounded as a call to awaken the crumbling society, to protect and cherish nature.

In the 21st century, ecological problems concern us all. In various parts of the world, natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, avalanches, and landslides claim the lives of thousands of people. Many also suffer from the scarcity of water.

As a result of climate change on Earth, the large glaciers in the Arctic Andes are gradually melting. According to environmentalists, global warming is the primary cause of this phenomenon. If the Earth continues to heat up at the same rate, there is a possibility that these glaciers could completely melt within 20 years. Similarly, in some regions, extreme cold weather conditions are causing human casualties. Such natural disasters pose significant risks to the people of the 21st century.

Chingiz Aytmatov's final work serves as a warning to us about these dangers.

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