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## **The Ideal of “New Youth” according to David Guramishvili’s Davitiani**

Self-discovery is the most essential human obligation. As early as the period of classical antiquity, young learners were warned that self-knowledge was the basic precondition for learning anything, to begin with. According to Socrates, self-awareness is a way for the soul to become better and discover its own divine spark which has been preserved in the philosophy of Plato: “*and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine—God and understanding—would have the best grasp of himself as well*” [Plato, 2013:240]. The same is the most fundamental appeal of the Christian faith—“the new law of nature”. It can be achieved through repentance, understanding the universe, and introspection. The literary works by David Guramishvili comprise poetic specimens created through self-discovery. The poet has identified self-awareness as a main way of solving the mysteries of the universe. “*In Davitiani “Know thyself” is achieved by means of “Christian Socratism”*” [Siradze, 1980:127]. From a religious perspective, self-discovery is a precondition for “becoming the son of God”. *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*” [Matthew 5:48], – proclaims the Lord. To become complete, the author, first of all, perceives his own personal, national or common human *self* through poetic means, therefore, he represents himself as a main character of the literary work. Professor R. Siradze indicates that unlike Freud’s ego ideal (“the infantile narcissism”), the poet’s lyrical self is more “conscious”; *It is “reflected through an entire foundational belief system, both personal and social”* [Siradze, 1980:127].

David Guramishvili, who reflects on human purpose, identifies four stages of self-awareness:

/ “*A young man should pursue learning to perceive himself: / [to realize] who he is, where he has come from, where he exists, and where he is going to depart for?*” / [Guramishvili I, 2013:19] These are the four questions, along with the search for their answers, that enable a human being to observe himself. Life in this world is what leads a man to the soul’s eternal destination. A human being returns to his source, the God, therefore, striving towards the past. Saint Augustine notes in *The Confessions*: “*from where, and on what path, and to what place does it pass, as it is measured? From where, except from the future? By what path, except by the present? To what place, except into the past?*” [Saint Augustine, 2010:118]. According to him, time may be simply “*nothing but extension ...of the mind itself*” [Saint Augustine, 2010:123], the mind that gravitates towards the source. Passing the way that leads to the God as the source incorporates the ability to contemplate and be restored spiritually through divine love. This journey is defined

within time and space encompassing four stages of human life in this world such as birth, growing up, aging and death.

*Davitiani* presents the ways of spiritual growth of the lyrical persona who follows the path leading to the Lord. Experienced to a large extent, the author dedicates his book to young readers, the youth who have embarked on a journey of self-discovery. Therefore, the language of narration is rather intelligible. The poet employs the principle of allegorical narration which represents a widespread literary form in the medieval literature. David Guramishvili perceives time from the Christian perspective. The elderly and eminent poet never forgets his path of life and by analyzing it tries to reflect on the ways that will allow him to draw closer to God. “*Davitiani does not reflect poet’s inner evolution from a chronological perspective, rather, it depicts an entire confession of a man who cultivated spiritual depth to a certain extent. It provides the analysis of the entire life-span of the individual*” [Grigolashvili, 1979:78]. Clearly, the lyrical persona is depicted as an experienced elderly man peacefully gazing at readers: / “*It made me fade away affected by blighting, and let me be full of years heirless*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:137]; / “*with distress, it made my days shorter and used up, not much was left, / anything pleasurable that I had drunk, turned bitter*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:138], – claims David Guramishvili with regret. In the song *Zubovka*, a beautiful woman rejects the love of the poet due to his age and appearance: “*I have a lover. I don’t want you. Yet you continue to stay. My husband’s handsomer than you and better in every way*” [Guramishvili, I, 2013:190]. The women in love with a younger man rejects the elderly man enamored of her. The poem entitled “*Dispute, Counsel, and Resentment between Man and this Earthly World*” depicts a dialogue between this earthly world and a man. This is how the polemist argues with the man (who is the author’s lyrical persona): / “*How comes it that the sixty-nine-year-old you refer to me as a transient and momentary world that has spanned over seven thousand two hundred and eighty-two years?*” [Guramishvili, II, 2013:25]. Hence, the age of author’s lyrical persona is sixty-nine. The testamentary poems, epitaph lyrics, testaments and other verses of similar content echo the outcry of the soul of the poet who is approaching death. Thus, the author of *Davitiani* is an elderly man with a certain degree of spiritual experience.

The poet shares his experience with generations to come, warning, advising and instructing them by referring to his own “mistakes”: “*now be careful*”; “*...unlike me, do not waste your time*”, “*...so that not to perish*” [Guramishvili, II, 2013:9]. From this perspective, David Guramishvili appears in the role of a teacher and didactician of his readers. The poet is recalling his past life with regret and educates the youth who, if follow the path of their ancestors, will create a better future, otherwise they are likely to face failures due to the lack of experience. “*Whatever youth find easy is a challenge for the elderly*” [Guramishvili, II, 2013:9]. An experienced one has the ability to differentiate between good and evil and hence he warns the young from error. His instruction which is didactic in tone stems from a venerable old age. “*Davitiani features the basis and motivation as a right to didacticism. This is the experience-based knowledge and distancing oneself from a range of problems to some extent*” [Karichashvili, 2009]. The poet who has lived much of his life addresses and shares his wisdom with future generations, trying to pave their way offering them his experience:

/ “*educate yourselves, behave like balance masters / to prevent disruption and burns!*” / [Guramishvili, II, 2013:192].

Author's didactic speech is also demonstrated in *A Cheerful Summer*. The words of the poem's older character are reiterated by author's lyrical persona who attends to the purity of a young couple, giving them his suggestions. In another part of the text, the poet straightforwardly declares that he is striving to distinguish between good and evil so that / "others act with great caution to avoid tears" / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:46]. Certain spiritual experience allows the author to share it with his descendants, "paving the way to those concerned about striving towards self-discovery" [Ghaghanidze, 2002]. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were others who followed David Guramishvili's path. Unbridled desire of the rider of Nikoloz Baratashvili's *Merani* to go far beyond the bounds of fate serves as a way for generations to come to follow life's thorny paths. The only comfort that encourages him in such a desperate struggle is that his spiritual descendants will more easily go through this beaten path (*Merani*). In essence, the poet's desire resonates with the ideas of David Guramishvili. Vazha-Pshavela's *Song* dedicated to young poets urges them to maintain resilience and spiritual strength. Through self-awareness, the poet's lyrical persona gains an insight into his own sins and virtues, further expressing his ideas by sharing his experience. Primarily, the ability to understand the inner world of the predecessor author in a profound way allows his literary heirs to manifest themselves. It is noteworthy that reading the text of *Davitiani* requires readiness to embrace it. As a literary critic Gérard Genette noted, literature is like a mirror that reflects reader's lineaments. According to him, the history of literature is, in fact, the "history of methods of reading" [Genette, 2010].

David Guramishvili, willing to acquire his spiritual descendants or those who will remember him, prefers addressing young readers, dedicating his *Davitiani* to them.

/ "Therefore, I did not hedge the tree of parables with thorns, the one I had planted in the field, / the youths will more easily climb into the tree to shake it. / To drink, I have given them hot sugared water not to be poured out. / I have entrusted this book to the youths, not to tear it up" / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:4].

The *youth* first of all suggests young age. As Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani explains the term, a *baby* is a human being in the first five years of his or her life; a young person of fifteen to twenty years of age is called "გოძ", *youth*, while the age between twenty to thirty is known as „ჟაბუკობა“ a period of *youth, adolescence*; a person of thirty to fifty years of age is called „სრული ვაჟი“, *being of full age*. The rest of the person's later life is referred to as *old age, being decrepit; period of being fit (in old years) and that of hoariness, well advanced in years* [Orbeliani, I, 1991:360]. Thus, in one respect, the *youth* is the state of being of a certain age (fifteen to twenty), therefore, such young persons are likely to be chosen as readers by David Guramishvili.

From the Christian perspective, the *youth* has two connotations, referring to both young age and a certain state of being in terms of spirituality. It envisages both an adolescent and a person of genuine spirit. The *youth* has another meaning that refers to an honest, sincere person. Since *Davitiani* falls within the paradigm of the Bible, and specifically the *Psalter* [Siradze, 1992:159], poet's "lyrical thought is *Psalm-like*" [Siradze, 1992:160], such understanding of the *youth* has its roots in the Scriptures. "From the mouths of children and infants You have ordained praise" [Ps. 8:2]. These were the words referenced by Jesus as he triumphantly entered Jerusalem through the road laid with branches of box-tree and palm

tree [Matthew 21:16]. The youngest, the humblest of all welcomed the Savior on his way to the city; they took off and laid down their clothes in front of the Savior mounted on a donkey. As Jesus said, the kingdom of God belongs to such as these [little children]. According to the teachings of Peter the Apostle, those who become Christian should reject each of their evil intentions and delve into the *milk of the word*, like new-born babies. Basil of Caesarea in his commentary on Psalm 114 indicates that the youth and infancy refer to both young age and bringing oneself “*down to the humility of children*” [Basil of Caesarea, 2002:202].

Depicting Christ Child “*with a more mature face showing wisdom beyond His years*” [Parulava A, 2005:36] has been a widespread tradition in Georgian and Greek iconography, symbolizing the burden of his further ordeal manifested on the face of the Christ Child. Besides, the latter urged the believers to embrace the grace of God with a heart of a child. In Georgian hagiography, it is not uncommon to find many instances where *youth* denotes spiritual genuineness, while *old age* referring to the age-related state (and vice versa). Giorgi Merchule describes young Saint Grigol as distinguished by “maturity of his mind”. When mentioning George the Hagiorite, the hagiographer puts emphasis on the monk’s youth “enriched by maturity of old age” and “adorned with sunset years”.

The thought model of David Guramishvili (allegorical text) integrates in itself a twofold nature of ideas. First of all, possibly, the poet dedicates his poetry to the young (as mentioned above, old and experienced author enlightens his young readers by means of didactic lessons). At the same time, he is willing to win a reputation for himself for generations to come: / “*I have prepared sweet new wine to the young to remember me*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:4], – notes the author. Good readers will be his spiritual descendants who will create a better future for themselves carefully and delicately. The poet regards them as those who will remember him and pray for him:

/ “*...if I fail to gather and dedicate violet and rose bouquets to the young, / After I die, who will remember me - living but forgotten by everyone?!*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:11].

For Davitiani’s author, the integration of poetic word with the Word of God, *Logos*, and expression of gratitude toward Christ’s self-sacrifice are of primary importance. He urges the readers to act the same way for which they will need to have hearts that are *rejuvenated* with divine love:

/ “*The story of David has been recounted by me, David Guramishvili, / As a fruit of my work, I enlighten readers with the Word of God that brings comfort, like young sprouts; / Spring of life is a timeless spring of eternity, / You will shed tears for the one who suffered on the cross for immortality of our souls*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:4].

The author of Davitiani believes that poetry is supposed to “*articulate*” the Lord [Parulava, 2005]. Guramishvili as a Christian thinker continues: / “*I would not dare to speak to those aged and experienced, I would rather address new youth*” / [Guramishvili, I, 2013:21]. A “*new youth*” is a human being that belongs to the New Testament, whose heart has become pure through the divine light and whose soul has been renewed through righteousness. In the famous fiftieth Psalm, the Holy King David foretold the ideal of a “new man”: “*Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me*” [Ps. 50:10]. Renewal means spiritual rejuvenation, the idea that is manifested by famous phrase from the Psalms: “*your youth is*

*renewed like the eagle's*" [Ps. 102:5]. The ideal of a "new man" has been frequently reflected in Georgian literature: "new Nino" (*Praise and Exaltation of the Georgian Language*), "new Paul" – Abiatar (*The Conversion of Kartli*) and so on.

The archetype of a "new man" is Christ Himself. This is what is manifested in the famous lines of the hymn by King Demetrius I of Georgia, where the hymnographer refers to the Mother of God as a "newly blossomed" vineyard. "New" and "Old" God is the same God, however, God the Father and God the Son specifically represent their old and new nature, respectively" [Tsereteli, 2005]. "New" as a symbolic image of Jesus Christ is also understood by David Guramishvili.

*/“before the old sunny day and night regenerated, / chaffy wheat had been thrown on a threshing floor /*

*a new day has cleansed [wheat] mixed with rye-grass and chaff, / since then the difference between gain and harm has become visible. / no one is capable of rebuilding the ruins, / until the old day replaces the new day; / the world became more beautiful / as dawn broke and a new day began, / offering a delight for our eyes and ears" [Guramishvili, II, 2013:10].*

A young soul that is full of grace easily gains insight into divine truth, which exactly is a cornerstone of spiritual rejuvenation of a human being. Saint Augustine considered love, that is the highest divine power in a man, as the foremost sign of youth. Saint King David the Builder wrote that the one who had embraced divine grace was reborn in Christ, and that his "new creation in God's image" could happen through an exercise of divine power ("the Hymns of Repentance"). Christianity delivers a "new man" in a human being that is created in the image of God. Through Christianity", "the human nature was apparently renewed and recreated in Christ" [Parulava, 2002:55]. Similarly, David Guramishvili follows the Christian tradition when entrusting his collection to the young. Stories governed by divine wisdom and reflected in *Davitiani* are to be understood by readers through "youthful understanding" [Siradze, 1992:161].

The verse *Infant* by Nikoloz Baratashvili is inspired by similar vision of tender age. The author refers to the child as the one speaking a "heavenly language". The poet thinks that the infant is innocent and sincere, therefore, infancy is a triumph of spiritual freedom. As the poet says, in infancy the time "has joy in looking at" a living soul (*Infant*).

Also, noteworthy is the verse *From the Story Told by the Moon* by Galaktion Tabidze which refers to Shota Rustaveli as a dreamer child: / "remembering Rustaveli as a child / He was dreaming in a golden boat" / [Tabidze, 1988:415]. From one point of view in scholarly literature, "Rustaveli's dream is the dream of a new thought process that emerged in the Late Middle Ages, matured throughout the Renaissance period, and marked the beginning of a new era for the civilization of the human race" [Khintibidze, 2004:121]. Notwithstanding the above-cited opinion, specifying the child's sincerity as a source of Rustaveli's superb literary craftsmanship might imply tenderness of the poet's soul.

Given the fact that *Davitiani*'s author is primarily aiming at being self-aware, he also wishes to rejuvenate spiritually and contemplate the truth through youthful eyes. Meanwhile, the poet relentlessly strives for finding the meaning of existence while being well advanced in years.

Finding the truth is only attainable through rejuvenated consciousness. According to the ancient epic of Gilgamesh, the hero on his quest for immortality meets his ancestor and, becoming convinced of the fragility of men, worn out by his wandering, continues his search for “a rejuvenating plant that grants eternal youth”. Gilgamesh descended to the bottom of the sea, and “found depth” [Kiknadze, 2009] but a snake stole the plant. The hero saw the snake losing its skin and “renewing its youth” (as in Grigol Robakidze’s *The Snake’s Skin*, Archibald Mekeshi’s feverish desire of returning to his motherland and, thus, renewing the past, has been symbolized by a gruesome scene depicting a snake renewing itself). The ancient epic manifests the process of spiritual perfection of the character and “*a gradual sublimation from physical to spiritual heroism*” [Kiknadze, 2009].

Grounds for a similar concept of self-discovery manifest themselves also in *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri. In the beginning part of the text, the poet writes: *Midway along the journey of our life I woke to find myself in a dark wood, for I had wandered off from the straight path*” [Dante, 2012: 5]. The “awakened” character begins thinking about the world and discussing a destiny of the man’s earthly life. The youthful gaze of the old poet is directed at the primal cause - the source so that to face death with the renewed youth”, a pure heart and sincerity of a child when facing the inevitable hour.

A similar point of view is featured also in Akaki Tsereteli’s literary works. According to him, how could “grey hair ruin” a heart full of divine wisdom and love? How old age can impair it? (*There Can Be no Shining without Burning*); in another verse, the poet who is rejoicing when men and God lovingly unite, he has a distinct feeling of soul renewal: /, ...As being a young man, who has already lived his late life”/ (*Kebata Keba*). Maintaining childlike sincerity late in life symbolizes the willingness to accept the grace of God. These words of Akaki Tsereteli “imply sincerity, innocence and purity of heart which is the only thing welcoming the God within a human being” [Parulava, 2005:35].

Childhood is perceived as the most genuine and sincere time by Ivan Ilyich, the character in Leo Tolstoy’s novella (*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*). Childhood is the only light left in the soul of a dying man.

According to Arthur Schopenhauer (*Aphorisms on the Wisdom of Life*), the youth and old age are understood as the life narrative and its assessment, respectively: “*The first forty years of life give us the text: the next thirty supply the commentary which enables us rightly to understand the true meaning and connection of the text with its moral and its beauties.*” [Schopenhauer, 2010:298]. In his view, observing the past life will ultimately lead humans to self-discovery.

Goethe, a character of the novel *Lotte in Weimar* by Thomas Mann, has the same idea. The writer who is well advanced in years says in the above-mentioned novel: *But man can experience recurrence, he knows youth in age and the old as youth; it is given him to relive what he has lived, his is the heightened rejuvenescence that comes after the triumph over youthful fears, impotence, and lovelessness, the circle closes and shuts out death*” [Mann, 1986:254].

From this perspective, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, the short story written by Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is of utmost interest. With skillful mastery, it depicts the story of spiritual and physical rejuvenation. At the end, being born as an old man, he dies as an infant.

The same spirit is reflected in Gatsby's selfless efforts to bring his past back, and pursue every possible way, both legal and illegal, in order to recover what has been lost. In the final part of the novel, the narrator indicates: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" [Fitzgerald, 2015:176].

Tzinacan, the character in the story by Jorge Luis Borges excited by discovering a grain of God in himself, allows "the day to enter" his night, and feeling with all his heart the joy of becoming young in spirit (*The Writing of the God*).

*Davitiani* provides an example of transforming a real hero into a literary persona. According to the book, it is often difficult to distinguish between poetic imagination and reality. Moreover, fictional reality is what largely matters to its readers. The poet is recalling his past. For him, the reality matters as long as it has a symbolic meaning. To a certain extent, it stems from the fact that by recalling and bringing his past to life, David Guramishvili "takes years off the fact itself and gets his own youth back as well. By revitalizing the world of memories, and bringing the past into the realm of his time, the poet moved beyond its limits" [Ghaghanidze, 2002].

Thus, the text features David Guramishvili's lyrical persona as a man well advanced in years who, on the one hand, shares his experience with and dedicates his book to the young and, on the other hand, wishes to have a youthful spirit throughout his life, since the renewal and rejuvenation of heart allows to get closer to God. From the Christian point of view, apart from young age, the *youth* encompasses sincerity and purity of heart. With theological traditions in mind, a well-tried path toward the spiritual rejuvenation implies the pursuit of the past in order to return to the source, the God.

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