

# THE ROLE OF RUSSIAN FICTION IN REFLECTING THE SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS OF SOCIETY

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**Annotation:** This article analyzes the role of Russian fiction in addressing the spiritual problems of society throughout different historical periods. Beginning with the 19th century "Golden Age" of literature, it examines how writers like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy explored themes of guilt, redemption, and the search for moral truth. The study continues with an exploration of Soviet-era literature, where authors such as Bulgakov and Platonov subtly criticized ideological repression and depicted spiritual longing in a secular state. The article also highlights post-Soviet authors like Pelevin and Ulitskaya, who reflect the disorientation and spiritual searching of a new, consumer-driven era. Through this analysis, the article reveals how Russian fiction has served as a vital platform for expressing the spiritual challenges faced by individuals and society.

**Keywords:** Russian literature, spiritual crisis, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Bulgakov, Pelevin, Ulitskaya, Soviet fiction, post-Soviet literature, moral dilemma, faith, ideology, redemption, existentialism

## РОЛЬ РУССКОЙ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ В ОТРАЖЕНИИ ДУХОВНЫХ ПРОБЛЕМ ОБЩЕСТВА

**Аннотация:** В этой статье анализируется роль русской художественной литературы в решении духовных проблем общества в различные исторические

периоды. Начиная с «Золотого века» литературы 19 века, в ней рассматривается, как такие писатели, как Достоевский и Толстой, исследовали темы вины, искупления и поиска моральной истины. Исследование продолжается исследованием литературы советской эпохи, где такие авторы, как Булгаков и Платонов, тонко критиковали идеологические репрессии и изображали духовную тоску в светском государстве. В статье также освещаются постсоветские авторы, такие как Пелевин и Улицкая, которые отражают дезориентацию и духовные поиски новой, потребительской эпохи. Благодаря этому анализу статья показывает, как русская художественная литература служила важной платформой для выражения духовных проблем, с которыми сталкивались люди и общество.

**Ключевые слова:** русская литература, духовный кризис, Достоевский, Толстой, Булгаков, Пелевин, Улицкая, советская художественная литература, постсоветская литература, моральная дилемма, вера, идеология, искупление, экзистенциализм

**Introduction.** Russian fiction occupies a unique position in world literature, distinguished by its deep engagement with moral, philosophical, and spiritual questions. From the 19th century to the present day, Russian writers have addressed the inner struggles of individuals in a society marked by upheaval, ideological transformation, and existential uncertainty. Through the works of literary giants such as Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, Mikhail Bulgakov, and contemporary voices like Viktor Pelevin and Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Russian fiction has continually reflected and interpreted the spiritual dilemmas of its time. This article explores how these authors have used fiction as a means of examining the soul of the Russian people and their quest for meaning, morality, and faith across historical epochs. Russian fiction has long served as a profound mirror of the country's collective soul, chronicling not just its political and social transformations, but more deeply, the spiritual crises and moral dilemmas of its people. From the introspective works of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy to the allegorical narratives of Mikhail

Bulgakov and the postmodern voices of contemporary writers like Viktor Pelevin and Lyudmila Ulitskaya, Russian literature has consistently explored the inner life of the individual in conflict with the world around them.

Russian literature's portrayal of spirituality is profoundly shaped by the principles of Russian Orthodoxy, which emphasizes themes such as repentance, forgiveness, and moral purity. This spiritual foundation serves as a lens through which Russian authors explore complex questions about human nature, morality, and redemption. Orthodox beliefs place a strong emphasis on personal reflection and the transformative power of suffering, suggesting that individuals grow closer to spiritual purity through introspection and penitence [1, 206].

**Spiritual themes in the golden age of Russian literature.** The 19th century, often referred to as the “Golden Age” of Russian literature, witnessed an explosion of literary works that dealt with questions of faith, guilt, redemption, and the human condition. Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* dive into the psychological and spiritual turmoil of individuals questioning morality in a society experiencing rapid modernization and secularization. Dostoevsky posed difficult questions: Can man be moral without God? What is the role of suffering in personal growth? His characters—Raskolnikov, Ivan Karamazov, and others—represent fragmented souls seeking truth and redemption.

Leo Tolstoy, another towering figure, turned inward in his later years, producing works like *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, which examines the existential anxiety of a man confronting his mortality and the hollowness of a materialistic life. For Tolstoy, true spiritual fulfillment lay not in societal success but in humility, compassion, and simplicity.

**Spiritual struggle in the Soviet Era.** With the rise of the Soviet Union, official ideology rejected religious belief and spiritual inquiry. However, many writers found creative ways to address spiritual concerns beneath the surface. Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* is perhaps the most famous example—an

intricate blend of satire, fantasy, and theology that critiques Soviet repression while affirming the power of love, forgiveness, and faith.

Writers such as Andrei Platonov also examined spiritual emptiness in the context of collectivization and industrialization. Though constrained by censorship, they managed to subtly depict the human longing for meaning, dignity, and connection in a dehumanized world.

**Post-Soviet fiction and new spiritual questions.** After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian fiction entered a new phase marked by freedom and disillusionment. Authors like Viktor Pelevin used postmodern techniques to explore spiritual confusion in a society overwhelmed by capitalism and consumerism. In *Generation P*, for example, Pelevin presents a generation lost in a media-driven reality, disconnected from its historical and spiritual roots.

Lyudmila Ulitskaya, on the other hand, offers a more empathetic portrayal of spiritual searching. Her works often center around personal belief, religious identity (especially Jewish heritage), and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of trauma and ideological collapse.

**Conclusion.** Russian fiction is more than just a record of historical events—it is a deep exploration of the moral and spiritual trials faced by individuals and society. Whether through the tormented souls of Dostoevsky, the moral introspection of Tolstoy, or the allegorical brilliance of Bulgakov and Pelevin, Russian literature has continually reflected the nation's spiritual heartbeat. It poses timeless questions about good and evil, belief and doubt, freedom and responsibility—questions that remain as relevant today as they were centuries ago.

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