



## WOMEN'S IMAGES IN RUSSIAN FOLK TALES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON GENDER ROLE FORMATION

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### Abstract.

The article is devoted to the analysis of the transmission of gender stereotypes through female images in Russian folk tales. The research is based on a structural-semantic analysis of fairy-tale archetypes, drawing on the works of V.Ya. Propp and contemporary gender studies.

The main results show that Russian folk tales most often portray women either as passive victims or as helpers to male characters, reflecting traditional patriarchal attitudes. A special place is occupied by the image of Baba Yaga, which retains elements of ancient ideas about an independent and powerful woman. The scientific novelty of the work lies in the modern interpretation of these images from a gender perspective.

**Keywords:** Russian folk tales, female images, gender stereotypes, folklore, archetypes, socialization, mythology, cultural codes.

### Introduction.

Folklore, as a crucial element of cultural heritage, plays a key role in shaping gender perceptions. Russian folk tales, being one of the most widespread genres of oral folk art, transmit stable models of femininity that significantly influence personality socialization. In modern society, which is undergoing a transformation of gender roles, the analysis of traditional fairy-tale images and their impact on worldview formation becomes particularly relevant.

### Theoretical Basis of the Research.

The foundation of this research is based on the fundamental works of V.Ya. Propp, who, in his study "Morphology of the Folktale," first systematized the functions of characters in Russian folk tales [1]. Contemporary researchers, such as S.B. Adonyeva, develop these ideas, emphasizing that fairy-tale narratives are not merely entertaining stories but an important tool for transmitting cultural codes [2].

Of particular interest are the works of E.S. Novik, who analyzes the system of characters in Russian fairy tales through the lens of gender studies [3]. In recent years, new approaches to interpreting traditional images have emerged, taking into account contemporary social changes.

### Classification of Female Images.

A textual analysis allows for the identification of several stable archetypes of female characters.

The image of the suffering heroine (the stepdaughter in "Morozko," Alyonushka) is characterized by emphasized passivity and self-sacrifice. As O.V. Ryabov notes, such characters instill in girls an attitude of patience as a primary virtue [4].

Vasilisa the Wise and Marya the Artisan represent the archetype of the wise helper. Despite their obvious intellectual advantages, their role is often limited to supporting the

main hero. Interestingly, in some versions of the tales, Vasilisa demonstrates not only wisdom but also magical abilities, which, according to V.N. Toporov, indicates the ancient mythological roots of this image [5].

The image of Baba Yaga in Russian folklore represents a unique synthesis of contradictory traits, setting her apart from other fairy-tale characters. This archetype combines both threatening and benevolent features—from a child-stealing witch in "The Swan-Geese" to a wise advisor in "Vasilisa the Beautiful." Researchers associate this duality with ancient mythological roots, tracing in Baba Yaga the traits of an archaic deity connected to both life and death.

The hut on chicken legs, blindness, and a bony leg—these characteristic attributes emphasize the liminal nature of the character, symbolizing the transition between worlds. Unlike traditional female images in Russian fairy tales, Baba Yaga possesses an unprecedented degree of independence and power. She appears as a keeper of ancient knowledge, a skilled sorceress commanding natural forces, embodying an active, independent feminine principle—albeit marked as "other."

The complexity of this archetype requires a comprehensive study at the intersection of various disciplines. Modern interpretations increasingly reinterpret Baba Yaga as a symbol of archetypal feminine power, opening new perspectives for gender studies and cultural analysis. Of particular interest is the evolution of this image in contemporary mass culture, where it acquires new, sometimes unexpected meanings.

#### **Influence on Gender Socialization.**

Empirical research shows a stable connection between fairy-tale stereotypes and the formation of gender perceptions. T.A. Repina's studies demonstrate that children raised on traditional fairy tales tend to reproduce patriarchal behavioral models [7].

Particular attention should be paid to the analysis of plots containing elements of violence. In "The Frog Princess," Ivan burns the frog's skin, which in a modern interpretation can be viewed as a violation of personal boundaries. Such plots, according to M. Lipovetsky's research, contribute to the normalization of gender-based violence [8].

#### **Conclusion.**

The conducted analysis confirms the significant influence of traditional fairy-tale images on the process of gender socialization. Despite their cultural value, a critical reinterpretation from the perspective of modern science is required.

On one hand, Russian folk tales retain an important educational and ideological function, transmitting centuries-old experience and moral guidelines. However, the entrenched gender stereotypes—passivity of female characters, their dependence on male heroes, the normalization of self-sacrifice—conflict with modern notions of equality and personal autonomy.

Thus, Russian folk tales remain a powerful tool of socialization, but their role in modern society requires a conscious and critical approach that considers the dynamics of gender relations.

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