

Russian *Chastushka* and Malay *Pantun*

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Russian *chastushka* and Malay *pantun*

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The most developed genre of the Russian late traditional folklore is *chastushka* (plural: *chastushki*). The name originates from the Russian word *chastit'* (to speak fast).

Chastushka is a short rhymed lyrical song which was created and performed as the response to various life phenomena, expressing clear positive or negative appreciation. There is a joke or irony in many *chastushki*. The earliest *chastushka* had 6 stanzas. The basic type – 4-stanzas (quatrain) - was created at the second half of the 19th Century; it is performed with dancing and without it. There are 4-stanzas *chastushki* which are performed only while dancing (for example, during a quadrille). Besides there are two- stanzas *chastushki*, so called “Stradaniya” (from the word "suffering") and "Semyonovna” (first appeared in 1920th).

Chastushki have various, but repeating steady melodies, both lingering, and fast. The using of many texts with the same melody is quite common. In real life *chastushki* sometimes are characterized by the melodic recitation. In them a word, a tune, instrumental accompaniment (by balalaika or accordion), movements (gestures, mimicry, dances) are combined. All these elements suppose the improvisation which takes significant part in *chastushka*.

Chastushka is usually called as poetry of minor form. But *chastushka* is never sung alone (“I string one *chastushka* on another as on the thread”). During performing, cycles of *chastushki* are improvised (sometimes up to 100 stanzas). After each *chastushka*, there is a full musical refrain without lyrics to give the listeners a chance to laugh without missing the next one.

The *chastushki*'s singing could have the composition framing: a *chastushka* which serves as a signal of the beginning of singing and another which serves as a signal of the end. Quite often the singers address to the accordion player. For example, (at the beginning)

Igray garmonist, Igray, ne lomaysa. Dlya kogo-nibud' ne nado – Dlya nas postaraysa!	[Play, our accordion player, Play, do not hesitate Try to do your best For us, not for somebody else.]
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(at the end).

Oy, spasibo garmonist, Za igru otlichnuyu. Ya eshyo tebe zhelayu Milku simpaticnuyu!	[Oh, thanks, our accordion player For the excellent play. I wish you To meet a beautiful girl friend!]
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The scenes based on a dialogue between two singers unite the content. The singing could be done by the play of the form ("cross *chastushki* where the composition of two-stanza *chastushka* is used). The widespread type of singing is *chastushki* having the same beginning. "Hei apple", "A plane flies" "Maids, do not marry" etc. The special type of cyclization is represented by *chastushki* "Semyonovna". It reminds the chain composition of the people's lyric songs. For example,

Samovar s truboy nachinal kipet', A ya Semyonovnu nachinayu pet'. Ya sperva spoyu, kak vlyublyalisa, A potom spoyu, kak rasstavalisa. Mi vlyublyalisa – kudri vilisa, A rasstavalisa – slyozi lilisa...	[The samovar with a pipe started to boil, And I start to sing Semyonovna. First I'll sing how we fell in love, And then I'll sing how we part. We fell in love - curls were twisted And we part - tears were shed etc.]
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Chastushki finally were formed in the last quarter of 19th Century simultaneously in different parts of Russia, in the center, in the middle and lower part of Volga region, in the northern, eastern and southern provinces. Each region had special character of the verbal text and a tune, a special manner of performing (in chorus or solo), and also dancing which generated different designation of them: Saratov, Tambov, Voronezh, Ryazanochka, Elets. Later many of them obtained a common recognition. Improvisation is highly valued during *chastushka* singing. *Chastushki* were sung during festivals, on the way to some destinations, in the woods, during sit-round gatherings. There were *chastushki* experts, singers and creators mastering the basic repertoire of the district. From the beginning of the 20th Century Russian *chastushki* were accepted by neighbor nations: Ukrainian, Belorussian, Mordonian, Chuvash, Tatar and others. In the region bordering between Russian and Mordovian nations, *chastushka* was named in Mordovian language as "matani" (a song). V.S. Bakhtin used to write about the close relation between Russian *chastushka* with Ukrainian *talalaika* and *kolomiyka* as well as with Belarussian short dancing songs *skakukha* and Polish *varvasa* (Bakhtin 1966:12, 20, 24).

In different places, *chastushki* were named differently: songs, short songs, *pripevki*, *prigudki*, *pribaski*, *korotushki*, *sobirushki* etc. The term *chastushka*, also of folklore origin, was introduced in 1889 when the first article about it was published by the writer G.I. Uspensky (1843-1902) (Uspensky 1889).

Unlike G.I. Uspensky who took a keen interest in *chastushka*, many authors considered them as a decline of the true creativity. F.I. Shalyapin, the famous Russian singer, used to write:

"People, who suffered in dark depths of their life, sang suffering and cheerful up to despair songs. What happened with him, that he lost any hope for the best and got stuck between hope and despair on this damned devil's bridge? Whether the factory is guilty, or brilliant rubber shoes, or a woolen scarf shrouding somebody's neck in a bright summer day when birds sing so well? Whether a corset which is put on a top of dress by rural snappy dresser? Or whether it a damned German accordion which with such love is held under his arm a person of some shop on the day of rest? I can't explain it. I know only, that this *chastushka* is not a song but a magpie and even not a natural one, but obscenely painted by a mischievous person. And how well they used to sing! In the field, on mows, on rivers, in woods and by the light of splinter. Russian people were possessed by singing..." (Shalyapin 1990: 26)

Chastushka is a proof of the increased communication between village and city; it reflects the change of mentality of village, first of all of rural youth. The accelerated speed of life, the constant flow of new impressions, and frequent change of experiences - all this made the short mobile *chastushka* very topical.

Chastushka is the main genre of peasants lyric in Russian late traditional folklore. By its origin it is connected closely with oral creativity of old Russian village. Short and satirical dancing songs were created still by buffoons.

It is obvious, that the part of buffoon's repertoire was apprehended by so-called *neskladukha - chastushka* in which the basic artistic role is played by comic absurdity. For example,

<p>Vi poslushayte, devchata, Neskladukhu budu pet': Na dubu svinya kladyotsa, V bane paritsa medved'.</p>	<p>[You girls listen, I'll sing neskladukha: A pig climbed an oak tree A bear washes itself in a bath.]</p>
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In the song collections of the 18th Century, dancing songs of the size of *chastushka* could be found. Sometimes *chastushki* were performed with the tunes of well known dancing songs like "Kamarinskaya" and "Barinya". Short songs were performed during weddings and calendar ceremonies, however *chastushki* do not have utilitarian orientation unlike the ceremonial folklore, and they are purely lyric genre. On the other hand, *chastushki* are influenced by the songs of literature origin and book poetry. For them the rhyme, mainly incomplete cross one (abcb), also full cross (abab) and rhyme scheme aabb (the first two lines rhyme with each) is obligatory. The basically tonic in verse of *chastushki* is very close to syllabo-tonic one.

Chastushki had rural origin and existence. But later they started to be performed on city suburbs, in the environment of workers. *Chastushka* keeps its

high popularity and productivity in modern folklore too. The content of some of them is quite explicit and sometimes even vulgar, but always funny. According to Gershon Legman, who is one of the leading authorities in erotica, *chastushki* are the closest poetic relatives of the bawdy limericks (Legman 1977).

S neba zvyozdochka upala Pramo milomu v shtani, Pust' gorit tam chto popalo, Lish bi ne bilo voini.	[Starlet's fallen from the heavens Right into my boyfriend's briefs, I don't mind his roasted penis If it helps us live in peace.]
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Shtani seriye v polosku Khoroshi da khoroshi. Privyazalis' ko mne devki: Pokazhi da pokazhi.	[My grey pants with stripes are lovely, Make me look so nice and cool. All the wenches now are nagging: "Buddy, please, show us your tool".]
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Chastushki are sensitive to all vital problems, their content is various. However in the great majority of cases they were composed by youth, therefore their most popular theme became love. The main heroes of *chastushki* are a girl and a guy from teenage age till the marriage. *Chastushki* express girls and guys dreams about marriage; the origin and development of love feeling; love experiences of different kind. The youth protests against authority of their parents, their interdiction on free feeling. *Chastushki* are extremely private, the feeling of love is represented in them in all shades, from the most gentle up to furious one.

F.M. Selivanova (1990) in her collection of *chastushki* divides them into following basic groups: come true dreams, gossips, glory, doubts and contemplations, separation in love, end of love, second love, unrequited love etc. Inside of each group there are some more themes. For example, *chastushki* about betrayal break up to the themes: jealousy, reproaches, warnings, feeling experienced during the betrayal, about the competitor, revenge.

The number of *chastushki* about family life is much less, and it is estimated from positions of youth, mostly as unfortunate. Generally the most part of *chastushki* irrespective of the character of the melody has sad content. The hero of *chastushki* sometimes is portrayed in separation with his native places (a recruit, a soldier, a farm laborer). That's why they are full of homesickness:

Na chuzhoy storonushke Poklonyus' voronushke: Zdravstvuyte, voronushki, Ne s nashey li storonusjki?	[In a foreign country I shall bow to crows: Hello, crows, Are you from my native place?]
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In the 20th Century the content of *chastushki* became broader. They reflected historical and social processes: strikes and peasants' revolts, Russian-

Japan War of 1904-05, the First World War, October revolution and the Civil War, ruin and reorganization of villages. For example,

S neba zvyozdochka upala Brigadiru na remen'. Ne poydu v kolkhoz rabotat' Za neschstny trudoden'.	[A starlet fell down from the sky Just to the foreman's belt I'll not go to collective farm to work For the miserable pay.]
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Chastushki on political themes often got satirical coloring. However in the general repertoire their place is insignificant: only 5-6 %. During Soviet times, the government even published large collections of "ideologically correct" *chastushki* (Moreva 1939).

Similarly to lyrical songs, *chastushki* use different graphic-expressive means. They, as well as songs, value its content - not casually, the rhyme falls on the most important words in the text. *Chastushki* use feminine or masculine rhymes. There can be also approximate and internal rhymes:

Shyol ya <u>lesom</u> , videl <u>besa</u> , <u>Besa</u> v novih sapogah, Sam <u>dubovy</u> , nos <u>vyazovy</u> , Papirosochka v zubah.	[I crossed the forest and saw a demon, Demon wearing new boots, The body of oak, the nose of elm, With a cigarette in the mouth.]
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Rhythmical and methodical structure of *chastushki* is made by alliterations, assonances, syntactic parallelism and other repetitions:

Ne toboy dorozhka myata, Ne tebe po ney khodit', Ne toboyu ya zanyata, Ne tebe menya lyubit'.	[Not you will make a path, Not you will go on it Not you is in my heart Not you will be my love.]
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The intonation richness of *chastushki* is due to its closeness to colloquial language. *Chastushki* mostly represent the statement from the first person addressing to someone (a darling, a girlfriend, a competitor, and mother). The narrative beginning in *chastushki* is developed poorly (Anikin 2001: 677)

Chastushki are connected with many folklore genres: proverbs and sayings, dancing and lyrical songs. The role of the last is especially significant; the traditional song lyrics helped *chastushka* to become a lyric genre (Lazutin 1960). *Chastushka* used already existed song symbolic. Like in the lyrical songs we see in *chastushka* "blossoming or withered flowers", "overgrown path to the darling", "grieving cuckoo", "bitter aspen", "white birch", "fast river", "guelder-rose", "raspberry", "bright moon", "starlet from the heaven". The vivid colloquial basis

of language of *chastushki* is combined in them with expressive means of ancient Russian songs.

Simile:

Poyedesh, milen'ky, zhenitsa, Bros' na polyushke platok, Vsya lyubov' nasha zavyanet, Kak nepolity zvetok.	[You will go, darling, to marry, Throw a scarf in the field, All our love will wither, Like a flower without water.]
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Metaphor:

Ya zapru svoyo retivoye Dvendtsati klyucham, Chtobi stary yagodinochka Ne snilsa po nocham.	[I shall lock my zealous heart With twelve keys In order my beloved Doesn't come to my dreams at nights.]
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Metonymy:

Zabivayu, zabivayu, Nyet, ne zabivayetsa. Rubakha bela, chub nalevo Chasto vspominayetsa.	[I want to forget, I want to forget, No, I can't forget. His white shirt, his forelock on the left I often recollect.]
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Personification:

Ya ot gorya ubegayu - Gore vsyo menya naidyot, Ya ot gorya - v sine more, - Gore lebed'yu plivyot.	[I run from the sorrow- But the sorrow will find me, From the sorrow I run to the blue sea,- But the sorrow swims as a swan.]
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Formula of impossible:

Ya ne budu bol'she plakat', Glaza kariye mocht' - Sinya more ne napolnit' I lyubov' ne vorotit'	[I'll not cry any more, I'll not wet my brown eyes - You can't fill the blue sea You can't return your love.]
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Hyperbole:

Shol ya palem, toropilsa, Iz-pod nog ogon' letel. Na molashku rasserdilsa - Razorvat' eyo khotel.	[I was crossing a field, hurried up, From under legs fire flied I became angry with my pretty girl And wanted to break her off.]
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In comic and satirical *chastushki* hyperbole creates the humorous beginning:

Edet miliy po bazaru, Vsem on ulibayetsa. Okazalos' - zubi vstavil,	[My beloved goes through the market, He smiles to everybody. As it turned out he inserted new teeth,
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Rot ne zakrivayetsa.	So his mouth doesn't shut.]
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Compositionally *chastushka* can consist of one or two parts (Zueva 2003: 366). One-part *chastushka* has thorough development of a theme. For example,

Na germanskoy na granitse, Na visokoy gorochke Perevyazivaet rani Sanitarka drolechke.	[On the German border On the high hill A nurse ties up wounds To the wounded soldier.]
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In two-part *chastushka*, the stanza distinctly breaks up on two parts with a sharp pause between them. The construction of two-part' *chastushka* stanza was influenced by the psychological parallelism of lyrical songs. It is sometimes very obvious:

Lodka tonet i ne tonet, Potikhonechku plivyot. Miliy lyubit i ne lyubit – Tol'ko vremechko vedyot.	[A boat is sinking and not sinking Flowing slowly My beloved is loving and not loving Just wasting time only.]
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Here we can see two events as if not connected with each other. But the first two lines about a boat strengthen two other lines about love.

Two-part' *chastushka* is very similar to Malay *pantun* which also consists of four lines with rhymes and has a very similar structure (two opposed parts). (Victor Pogadaev, 2002).

Kerrena di dalam buloh, Serahi berisi air mawar. Datang hasrat dalam tuboh, Tuan seorang jadi penawar.	[Red ants in the bamboo, Vessel full of rosewater. Come passion to my body, You are the only one can satisfy me.]
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The psychological parallelism in Malay *pantun* was the topic of the research made by Russian philologist A.N. Veselovsky (1989).

Malay *pantun* originally also were singing but now mostly are just read.

Unlike Russian *chastushka*, Malay *pantun* is a quite refined genre of folklore: it exists from ancient times, maybe even before Hindu influence in Malay region (Parnickel 1980).

There are a lot of well-known *pantun* which are known almost to all Malays and it is quite common that one of the two lines of it are mentioned in conversation and other people are supposed to fit on the remaining lines and thus to understand the significance of the allusion. New *pantun* usually of a highly topical character are constantly being composed until now and every official ceremony starts and ends with *pantun*. The *pantun* competition is also quite popular, and many Malays will continue such competitions for hours.

Malay *pantun* even influenced Russian literature at the end of 19-th-beginning 20th Century when many Russian authors used the form of *pantun* for

their poetry: Valery Bryusov (1873-1924), Adelina Adalis (1900-1969), and Nikolai Gumilev (1826-1921). In Russian imitation the verse form is in four-line stanzas, the second and fourth line of each verse forming the first and third of the next, and so on to the last stanza, where the first and third line of the first stanza form the second and fourth line. Here is an extract from the Play in verses “The son of Allah” by Gumilev.

Ptitsy	[Birds
Mudrets zhivyot v teni chinar, Laskaya otrokov vesyolikh.	The wise man lives among the trees Caressing his merry children
Gafiz	Hafiz
Zazhog pozhar v nebesnih dolah Tsar' purpurniy i zolotoy.	The fire in the sky was set by The purple and golden sun
Ptitsy	Birds
Laskaiya otrokov vesyolikh, Mudrets pod'emlet kubok svoy.	Caressing his merry children The wise man raises his cup
Gafiz	Hafiz
Tsar' purpurniy i zolotoy Opisan v chashechkah tyul'panov.	The purple and golden sun Reflects in the cup of tulips
Ptitsy	Birds
Mudrets pod'emlet kubok svoy, Otvetny slisha zvon stakanov,	The wise man raises his cup By hearing the clinking glasses
Gafiz	Hafiz
Opisan v chashechkakh tyul'panov Ego nadir, ego zenit.	Reflects in the cup of tulips Nadir and zenith of his life]

What is more interesting there is a similarity of topic between Russian *chastushka* and Malay *pantun*. It seems that the idea of Veselovsky (1872) about wandering topics in folk stories can be applied to other forms of folklore too.

Pay attention to Russian *chastushka* and Malay *pantun*:

Vi razrezh'te moyo serdtse, Posmotrite na nego: Ne beleye serdtse sazhi Eto vsyo iz-za nego.	[Cut my heart Look at it My heart is black as soot Because of him.]
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Belah dada lihatlah hati. Terang bulan terang ke paya Anak gagak makan padi. Kalau tuan kurang percaya	[Cut my breast and see my heart The moon is shining above marsh A black crow eats rice If you don't believe me]
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Russian *chastuchka* and Malay *pantun* are created independently by different nations far apart from each other. And this circumstance has very important meaning not only for philology itself but for other sciences like anthropology because it shows that different nations irrespective of their colour, religion or culture have the same way of thinking, the same intellectuality. It breaks all theories of superior and inferior nations existed even in the 20th Century.

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