**My Hometown**

*What will survive of us is love.*

*Philip Larkin*

Tambov is my hometown. I live in it and love it greatly. Why do I love my native town? This question is simple and difficult at the same time. I'll try to answer it and express my point of view.

It is often said that Tambov has nothing in common with a modem town, that it seems to be rather provincial because it has no "skyline" of highrises, and its architecture is modest. I suppose, that the people who have such opinion still remember Lermontov's words about three straight streets from "Tambovskaya Kaznacheisha". Perhaps, they are right. But as for me, I always bear in mind William Shakespeare's words, "There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so". That is why I am absolutely sure that I live in a very good town, though I know that there are a lot of beautiful places on our planet.

First of all, Tambov is the town where I and my children were born. The dearest people to me, my parents, lived here. Tambov is the town of my ancestors. They died in Tambov and I hold their graves sacred.

I live in Astrakhanskaya Street. It is short and noisy all year round, dusty in summer and muddy in autumn. But it's the street along which I have been going to school for nearly twenty years. My school is the place, where everyone gets on well with each other. So I enjoy its atmosphere. What warms my heart is that some years ago I planted two small trees in the street to make it greener. And I must say my trees are growing in my street now. Frankly speaking, I watch and greet my birches every time I go past them.

No wonder that one of the first things I am writing about is the past of the town. If you are rich in time, you may be interested in some historical facts. It seems that every place in the town has its history. The streets of Tambov saw Derzhavin, Verstovskiy, Sergeev-Tsenskiy, Shatrov, Rakhmaninov, Agapkin… A great Russian diplomat Chicherin lived in one of the houses in Sovetskaya Street. It's a mansion museum now. Across the road you can see the house of Naryshkin, one of the richest noblemen of the 19 century. Aseev's house, a museum today, situated in a picturesque place on the bank of the river, is worth seeing too.

Every time I cross the bridge over the Studenets I can't help thinking about those ancient times when the fortress was laid there among the forests and swamps. I think about those brave people who came here to guard the place from the enemies, about Roman Boborykin, who is considered to be the founder of Tambov.

The Great Patriotic War was a dramatic page in the history of mankind, my country and my town. Thousands of my countrymen took part in it. They were awarded orders and medals. By tradition we come to the memorial complex and the Eternal Flame located in the middle of Sobornaya, the former Octyabrskaya Square, to commemorate the heroism of our people during the Great Patriotic War.

Founded in 1636, Tambov at present has a population of over 290,000 people. It's an administrative, educational, cultural and industrial center. The town has a lot of schools, two universities and other educational establishments.

Our Drama Theatre, the Concert Hall are places where concerts and musical festivals take place. I believe, our Picture Gallery ranks with the best ones in Russia. When leaving the theatres, galleries, libraries and museums I have an impression that their doors are always wide open. I cannot but visit them again and again.

Many factories and plants produce different goods for our population and for the country. New economic relations have changed our life. The people of Tambov try to survive in spite of all the economic hardships of this period. I hope they'll overcome some day.

Maybe I'm wrong, but I think that my town begins with a railway station. It's the first place I see when I come to Tambov by train. And to tell you the truth, when I go anywhere, I usually start missing Tambov as soon as the train leaves the platform. I can't but add that Agapkin's march "The farewell of Slavyanka" performed during the train's departure touches my heart greatly and fills it with the pride in the composer and the town.

Tambov is an old Russian town with its own character. Its houses with lovely gardens built in the 18 and the 19 centuries are a great attraction for both citizens and visitors. In designing new houses our architects try to follow the style of old Tambov. If they succeed in doing it, my town with more than 380years of history will preserve its unique beauty.

There is one more important aspect that I love about Tambov. I mean our marvelous nature. It is majestic with varied landscapes. Our quiet river Tsna, the forests surrounding the town, the freshness of wild flowers, the sweet smells of summer meadows are unforgettable. How beautiful our glorious sunrises and golden sunsets are! Have you ever admired the shining domes of our churches? Sometimes I think the beauty of our nature is a kind of reward for toilsome everyday work. No doubt, our nature helps me to understand myself and the essence of my life.

What is more... The folk songs performed by my fellow villagers who follow the traditions of our famous singer Mariya Mordasova are so simple and sincere, so warm, so Russian... They give a fantastic feeling of rest to your heart and fill you with new love towards both the people you live with and the nature. I am grateful to the people of my native town, to those who lived many years ago and live now.

Every day I love being in Tambov, an old town, situated in the heart of Russia. I have come to the general conclusion, that the town’s prosperity depends only on us, our knowledge and our desire to live in a new world. I want to make my hometown more beautiful, to keep its treasures and history for our descendants.

 … I see the train leaving the railway station. I hear the exciting melody of Agapkin's march. The train is taking people away from my native town in order to bring them back some day. As the saying goes, "East or West, home is best".

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