



The Epic of Manas and its relevance today

Kamil Mamadaliev, interviewed by Aikokul Arzhieva

Kamil Mamadaliev is a Manaschy, a Kyrgyz performer of the Epic of Manas, and member of the World Union of Indigenous Spiritual Practitioners (WUISP). In this interview, he comments on the ethical guidance the Epic of Manas provides to present-day generations.

Aikokul: Kamil Baike, what does it mean for you to chant the centuries-old The Epic of Manas in the 21st century?

Kamil: The Epic of Manas is a sacred gift to the Kyrgyz people and to humanity. First of all, it is a responsibility for me to practice this centuries-old gift. It came to me through sacred revelation. Like many other epic stories, the Epic of Manas can influence people in terms of its sound, meaning, and energy. It contains many codes to the sacred nature of Life and our divine nature. Today, some people treat it as a myth. But it is not a myth. It is based on truth, which became inaccessible to many people because our feelings have become blunted to many things. There are many things we cannot see anymore, but they exist. You have to feel it. The Epic of Manas contains a verse that mentions 18,000 ‘worlds’ between the Sky and Earth. We know very little about these

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‘worlds’ today. The epic *Er Toshtuk* explains Life under the Earth to us. In our epic stories, the Earth has always been treated as a living Mother that nurtures us. Not treating Mother Earth with respect, recognition, and gratitude can release underground energies. The Epic of Manas contains clues to how this complex world functions, why we must respect Life’s sacred nature, and how we should build relationships with the visible and invisible. It is not easy to talk and explain such things today when more and more people are becoming blunt-minded.

Aikokul: Kamil Baike, the Epic of Manas contains a distinct ethical philosophy for what to be and how to live. Do you find that ethics relevant today? How?

Kamil: As I mentioned, the Epic of Manas contains codes to Life’s sacred, spiritual nature and to ourselves. It recognizes that Earth is alive, Fire is alive, Sky is alive, Air is alive, Wind is alive, Stars are alive, Mountains are alive, Sun is alive, Moon is alive. We were all created by the Creator. Life is a gift; we must treat it with respect and gratitude. Without the Epic of Manas, our young generation would think they should enjoy life and live for themselves. They would not recognize the invisible, sacred nature of Life. They would not recognize the spiritual within themselves. They would not learn to respect Mother Earth. They would not learn these important values that sustain our lives. Manas was a person of High Awareness. He recognized the spiritual dimension of Life, he recognized the Creator and Creator in himself, he recognized his Life mission, he recognized that words are alive, he recognized his responsibility before his people, he knew how to serve, how to unite fragmented people. The Epic of Manas clearly states that we are not born to conquer other people, nor are we born to collect early wealth; we are born to recognize our own divine nature and live in harmony with all other beings that sustain our lives on Earth. We should build relationships based on respect, recognition, gratitude, honesty, service to each other, and so on. These meanings and values are as relevant today as never before.

Aikokul: Kamil Baike, there is a proverb that says ‘inside the closed wooden box, there is an invaluable treasure’. By ‘wooden box’ the proverb implies our inner world, that there is an invaluable inner treasure within us that is closed and inaccessible to us. We sometimes hear people use expressions like: ‘their inner light/consciousness/energy is weakened’. Can these be related to how we treat Life, Nature, and ourselves?

Kamil: Of course, when we do not recognize the sacred nature of Life, when we do not respect and express gratitude to that which sustains our lives, we also block our own divine nature, we do not recognize sacred in other people, and we do not recognize it in ourselves. Our lives become dry and purely materialistic. This is already happening in our lives. Some people live purely by material values. They want to have a big house and a nice car; they want to live just for themselves; they do not want to learn about their ancestors, and are not interested in the spiritual dimensions of life. They do not recognize the Creator. They purely believe in themselves and their wealth. Such lifestyles nurture greed, selfishness, and ungratefulness. These breed unhealthy relationships and disturb the balance of Life. We become like machines. I am not against modern things, but when we limit our lives only to material things, we lose our connection with the sacred nature of Life and our own divine nature, which opens through relationships based on respect, recognition, and gratitude. Sun, Moon, Stars, Wind, Water, Mountains, Our Creator – these all give us strength and energy; they sustain our lives. Therefore, we need to build relationships through respect and gratitude; we need to recognize our Creator; we need to serve each other; we need to learn about our ancestors and their ways of life as it will take us to initial meanings, which reveal us sacred nature of Life; we need to change and grow but with awareness. The Epic of Manas and its ethics can offer us invaluable guidance in the times of uncertainty and confusion that we live in today.

Aikokul: Kamil Baike, can you please say a few words about the episode of the Epic of Kojojash that you chanted during the conference in Mongolia? What was it about, and why did you chant this episode?

Kamil: I chanted the episode *Sur Echkinin Kargysby*, the Curse of the Mother Goat. The Epic of Kojojash concerns a hunter who initially engages in hunting with the intention of supporting the village people. However, in time, his intention to ‘serve’ people transforms into passion, greed and desire for power. He begins to take more than he needs from Mother Earth, to satisfy his ego-based desires. A passionate hunter does not follow the spiritual order of things, where it is important to ensure that other living beings can continue their reproduction. Despite the Mother Goat’s plea to save her children, Kojojash kills them, even when there is no real need for it. The episode describes the pain of the goats’ mother, Sur Echki, and how she curses Kojajash. Unable to manage the energies of his mind, power, greed, and passion, Kojojash leads himself to death.

The whole village suffers from the hunter's death as they keep silent in the face of Kojajsh's misdeeds. I find this episode relevant in the face of global environmental issues we face today. Traditional communities engaged with the natural world through spiritual laws. This does not mean that they did not kill animals or did not take anything from nature. People recognized their interdependence and built relationships accordingly. In these relationships, intention, recognition, gratitude, and respect were important to keep the balance of things. The global issues we face today indicate the lack of balance that I think was disturbed by our human side. Thus, we need a collective, sincere, and honest reflection on our changing human nature and our relationship with other visible and invisible worlds that sustain our lives.