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POETRY OF AZERBAIJANI WOMEN ENLIGHTENERS PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPER “İŞIĞ” (1911-1912)

Among main contributions of Azerbaijan into the world cultural heritage are achievements in the field of women rights.

This article aims to introduce developments related to women in Azerbaijan which began while the country was yet a part of the Russian Empire during 1828-1918, subsequently obtaining its independence in 1918.

Indeed, Azerbaijani women were engaged into organised and planned endeavours related to public life primarily in context of charity as early as in 1850-ties. (1) First secular school for Muslim girls was established in Baku Azerbaijan in 1901. (2) First Azerbaijani woman journalist **Shafiqə Efendizadeh**, began publish-

ing her articles in 1903 in the newspaper “*Şərqi-rus*”. (3) Azerbaijani women accessed possibility to vote and being elected already in 1918 as first Muslim women in the world. (4) Yet there are still various correlated historical developments that deserve attention.

Remarkably, the process of improvements in the social status of women in Azerbaijan began in the second part of XIX century and was directly correlated with the joint endeavors of some of religious leaders along with intellectuals, writers and journalists that were supported by wealthy entrepreneurs. This process emerged along with the desire to educate Azerbaijani society, together with an eagerness to overcome the backward situation of majority of women, which was preventing the overall level of population from steady development.

The first Azerbaijani *Muslim charity society* statute was approved by Governor General of the Caucasus Viceroy Count İllarion Vorontsov-Dashkov on 10 October 1905. Starting from that date a considerable number of organizations were able to form their structures and initiate activities. “Generally, at the end of XIX - beginning of the XX century there were over 30 various charity organizations that functioned solely in Baku city.” (5) Among them Muslim educational societies such as *Nicat*, *Nəşri-Maarif*, *Səadət*, *Səfa* and many more contributed to the



Philanthropists of the Baku Muslim Women's Charitable Society 1914

First issue of "İşiq" newspaper. 1911

considerable improvements. The situation was defined by the prominent cleric of the time Abu Turab: "There are two types of hungry: the first are hungry physically, their needs are not so difficult to satisfy, the main aim is to feed the spiritually hungry ones." (6)

Yet, interestingly enough, one of the components of research in this field is the difficulty which comes forward as limited published sources. This aspect indicates strikingly the state of matters, proving how any kind of processes on the way of improvements in rights of women in pre-soviet era were persistently swept under the rug since mid-1920. Indeed possibility of not censured investigation of topics related to developments that occurred on the way of establishment of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-1920), began scarcely since Perestroika (1985), gaining momentum only after 1990. The pioneer of the research on Azerbaijani women of pre-soviet times is Sabir Gancali Mammadov (born 1930), author of monographies, journalist and publicist. Other researchers who made outstanding contributions to the topics related to women after 1990 are Latifa Aliyeva and Amalia Gasimova.

Research in this field simultaneously allows us to understand the particularity of Soviet era historiography, which basically erased from public awareness certain periods of Azerbaijani history in terms of facts and existence of concrete achievements, hiding from knowledge of masses information related to the social interaction and cooperation of intellectuals; changing rhetoric particularly in the matter of women rights, implementing such a policy through complete exclusion from school, university study textbooks and manuals facts of existence of certain individuals, such as women poetess and their output, both in the field of literature and social status of women, just because of their attribution to pro-independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which was automatically considered as the formation contra whole Soviet Union establishment.

This way we can see that despite Azerbaijani women had certain achievements on the way of obtaining their

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І-й годъ
ИЗДАНІЯ
بر نجی سنه

Азербайджанский Филиал
ИМЭЛ при ЦК ВКП(б)

آ یونه قیمتی ایملکی
باکو ده . . . ۳۰ مات یاریم
غیر شهرده . . . ۴۰ مات
مهالک اجنیده . . . ۶۰ مات

آ لئی آ یلقی
۲ مات
۵۰ مات
۴ مات

« ایشیق » غزتمسک
ادا ره سی: باکو
تسیرقوونی و سیاسکی
کوچهارک کنجده
۴۴ نمره لی ایوده

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نسخه سی ۵ قیك

ایند یلکده هفته ده برد فعه شبه سونی نشر اوله جق تریبه اطفاله. ادبیاته. طبابت و ایو دار لقه
دا یر خا نه لر غز ت سید ر

همیشیره لرمزه
اخبار

غز یتنه مزه اعلان قبولی:
باکو شهری ایچون اولنجی صحیفه ده هر بیت
سغرینه ۲۰ قیك آخر نجی صحیفه ده ۱۰ قیك
اوزگه شهر لردن اولنجی ده ۲۵ آخرنجیده
۱۵ قیكدر:

فاقتاز قطعه سی اولان وطنیز ده ایندیبه کسی عو-
رت طایفه سندن علم تحصیل ایلوب تریبه تابیش اهل قام
باجاریمز، اوز وطن داشاری اولان باجیلر یلک حال و
زمانیه گوره تعلیم و تریبه لرنه چالشد یقلاری گوریلدیگی

rights, not solely as women, but as Muslim women in particular, those facts remain without being widely acknowledged beyond the borders of Azerbaijan, not being included in the evaluations within frames of methodology, lacking internationally spread academic definition in aspects such as literature, social status, religious and women's studies.

By presenting exemplary pieces of poetry written by forgotten Azerbaijani women authors, the goal is to drive attention to yet not much known legacy of Azerbaijani intellectual women, in this way promoting their activity, which clearly expanded fields of social interactions on the way of establishing awareness about situation of women in the whole Caucasus, subsequently influencing Muslim women of the Russian Empire.

Indeed we see each of prominent poetesses of Azerbaijan active at the beginning of XX century, performing tasks prior and during times of ADR up to



Maral Nabizadeh in 1912 with a group of students. Jabrayıl, Gargabazar Azerbaijan

1920 thanks to their names appearing in documents and sources not only related to poetry and as publicists. They are primarily in front lines of charity organizations as well as among those who were fighting illiteracy and bringing awareness to women in matters related to health and upbringing of children.

This way it can be stated that Azerbaijani women enlighteners were epitome of complex, loaded with patriotic responsibility individuals, dedicated by all their deeds to the idea of influencing society and encouraging women to come out of their shells created by religious bias. Remarkably, in face of fierce opposition threatening and defining readers of the newspaper *İşıq* as: "Anyone who reads the *İşıq* newspaper is an infidel", "If anyone has the *İşıq* newspaper in his house, that house is filthy", "Having this newspaper is a sign of doomsday,"(7) they were able to voice their most courageous and timeless thoughts through poetry.

We can see that in their output some concentrated more on patriotism, as that aspect was fundamental for the agenda of Azerbaijani society and implied involvement of women educated to an extent that the concept of patriotism would secure emergence of highly self-

aware and not anymore secluded women, for which there are many tasks to undertake. Yet the primary one was such an universal value as desire to reach for other women, instilling in them understanding of ultimate importance of education as an obligatory quality any woman should possess before becoming a mother and raising children.

Activity of Azerbaijani poetesses during the evaluated time period derived from and united around the high awareness of the necessity of spreading self-determination through education. So to speak majority of women in Azerbaijan during pre-soviet era that devoted their efforts on the forum of social activities, were all united by the single idea of serving their Motherland.(8) In this terms main aspects that unify their literary output are preoccupation for the fate of their country and didactics.

Another unifying aspect of the poetry of women writers in Azerbaijan that came forward as actively publishing individuals in press of the time, was the fact that they created new forms of expression reflecting life conditions which their compatriots were enduring. While the matters of inferior position of women were already

Asia Akhundzadeh's poem "Motherland's outcry"

voiced in the classical Azerbaijani poetry of *aşiq* poetesses since XII century, the matter of education and unification around particular national form of public spirit were completely new aspects that were introduced partly also thanks to the activity of those poetesses. This way, the content, form and way their message was formulated through poetry brought forward a new type of stylistics and symbolics.

At the times of ongoing global actuality in terms of establishment of women rights, activity of those Azerbaijani poetesses at the beginning of XX century brought forward also a particular form of Azerbaijani emancipation based on the model of an educated Muslim woman, who is a patriot but not an activist for solely women rights, she is a defender of the prosperity of her nation, not fighting against male predominance in general, but against particular type of religious clerics, seeking more liberal interpretation of basic rights given to her in agreement with her Turkic mentality and traditions as well as deeply studied and correctly interpreted Islam as a religion.

Already studied and commonly known achievements of Azerbaijani society in the field of establishing of women rights speak for itself, underlining that emergence of considerable numbers of women philanthropists and educators at the end of XIX - beginning of XX century would be possible solely in a society with mentality prepared for social interaction around women related issues, allowing such ideas flourishing in terms of traditions, and those are factual realities that can not be denied in case of Azerbaijan.

Poetry of Azerbaijani poetesses constitutes an independent stream of activity of enlightened women in the evaluated time period. Discovering it made the author of this article willing to bring gradually the output of such authors as Surayya Ananova, Asia Akhundzadeh, Maral Nabizadeh and Hajar Subhanguluzadeh to the attention of scholars and public opinion. All the poetry presented in this article appeared in the *İşiq (Light)*, the first newspaper for women, published by prominent educator Khadija khanim Alibeckova and her husband Mustafa beck Alibeckov with the financial support of Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev during 1911-1912 and is taken directly from the archives.

Authors of the poetry, selected for this article are also exemplary in terms of availability of data on certain personalities that were active prior to the establishment of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. We can see that just like in case of Maral xanum Nabizadeh so far we have



access to her date of birth, information about her father, education and a couple of photos. Subsequently there is a scarce information on Asia xanum Akhundzadeh and Surayya xanum Ananova, while no precise information so far on Hajar xanum Subhanguluzadeh. This way the evaluated material allows author to state that certain Azerbaijani poetesses emerged together with the newspaper *İşiq* and seem as of today to vanish together with it. In this terms further investigation of archival documents related to press publications of the time comes forward as crucial on the way of exploring legacy of certain women writers and poetesses of Azerbaijan.

Maral Nabizadeh (1889-1967). Poetess was born in Shaki (Nuha).(9) She is the first daughter of Rashid Ismail oglu Efendiyev (1863-1942), prominent scholar, teacher, educator and writer. Maral Efendiyeva received (just as her other three sisters) her primary education at home from her father, subsequently attending *Gori (Qori)* gimnasium during 1897-1903. After marriage to Ahmad Nabiyeu in 1908 she moved with her husband to *Tartar*, opening in 1911 a school for girls at her house and becoming a teacher.(10) Maral xanum is known

Poem by Hajar Subhanguluzadeh
"Victim of victims"



for being a permanent author in the newspaper *İşıq*. Articles(11) and poetry dedicated to the difficult situation of women in Azerbaijan, importance of diligent devotion to education and cultural values were main topics of her creativity.(12)

APPEAL TO SISTERS (13)
BACILARA XİTAB *İşıq* №9, 1911
Author: **Maral Nabizadeh**

My sisters, whose days are dark, submerged into scream and cry,
Sisters with animals alike, yet as humans defined!
Who is that despot, who decides that one deserves the yoke?
Who is that despot, that by a Muslim is treated as a despot?
Almighty created a woman in heaven,
Sisters, so what makes you dwelling in hell?
Women of the world numerous as they are,
Yet, the Mother determines generations so far!
Sisters, the honor which Sharia made so peculiar to you
The honor and glory, would be great to have, but do you?
Freedom if you have it, becomes evil as the price you pay,

What serves such a destiny, if the prison is, where you indeed remain?!

They oppress you and from studies they keep you all deprived,

Just to sell you like an animal, with you, they move their enterprise!

A father would not see cruelty as something that his child deserves,

Sisters, he would never leave his child in trouble on this Earth!

With kindness, fathers should take care of their girls,
They should educate you and provide wisdom to you all,

Fathers, mothers! Sisters, brothers!
Do not turn our world into a dungeon!

Teach us, so we become providers of wisdom to the world.
Sisters, let's earn a living for our families after all.

I implore you, those that make me cry with utmost tears of blood,

Mothers that are blind... and sisters of households that became a wrack.

At mournings do not shed tears for unknown,
Sisters, everyone should mind business of their own!

If a mother would be educated, a son will be thrilled,
Sisters, this will open access to any written field.

Upbringing of mothers that knowledge retain,
Will give diverse effect - fresh blood to the vein!

Wild tree not attended, it's fruit will stay crude,
Sisters, No way, might be ripened such a fruit!

From an ignorant mother there can be no other son,
Nature will pull back, towards where the source is coming from!

Just as our great master Fuzuli exclaimed:
Would the black stone stay mute, if transformed to blood from the vein?

If the sons of the motherland would stay ignorant,
Sisters, first cause is a mother if she is illiterate one!

If mother and father of the kid, are both simpleton,
The child will stay simple, blind and wild in his turn!

Will find culture primarily from the Mom,
Then the school will teach science and wisdom.

Right to live is granted fairly to women and men,
Sisters, learning is important to us!

So what if it's troubling to them!
If families turn to become a temple to civilization,

A heart to enlightenment, a source of tradition.
What a joy for such a family would be,

Surahs will rejoice as sisters with wisdom and tradition to see.
What a joy for the offspring to be born to such a home,

The soul that is given by an intellectual Mom.

Poem by Maral Nabizadeh
 “An inquiry of a girl to a scholar”

While a child is raised on the knowledge throne,
 Sisters, imagine then going to school, such a son?
 Will master the language, the land, the nation,
 This is how enlightened mother brings up the son!
 Courteous mother is brought up by the school,
 If school is there, uneducated sisters can study too.
 If the wife liberates herself from the tyranny yoke,
 Sisters, she will save the nation at once from a despot.

AN INQUIRY OF A GIRL TO A SCHOLAR

BİR ALİMƏ QIZIN SUAL ELƏDİĞİ MƏSƏLƏ İŞİQ №8, 1912

Author: **Maral Nabizadeh**

A girl asked a mullah one day:
 “Why only boys are educated this way?
 What if we also study arts,
 What if we learn our credentials?
 Science honors those who possess it,
 Being educated is just a blessing.”
 Mullah exclaimed: “Oh, the blood of shame,
 Read the Quran solely, again and again...
 It is prohibited to write to a woman,
 If she writes, she gives away her honour.
 Wife needs no knowledge. So, I say:
 I do not mind, if she can't write her name.”
 The girl heard him say so, this time she exclaimed:
 “Mullah, stop betraying your faith, again
 Do not slander Sharia, Quran...
 Give the evidence, quote *hadith*, at least one.
 Mine is not a question on your imagination,
 Don't impose on me your argumentation.
 From your own beliefs, this is the issue,
 Do not feel the heads with contra Sharia glue.
 State the will of God, what the Prophet says,
 Bring forward the Holy word,
 Not excuses, again.”
 Mullah, hearing so from the girl,
 Didn't pause to wangle even more.
 Replied: “I am the master of your Sharia,
 I am the scholar; your path to it's idea.
 The mind of a woman is defective,
 Writing is just bad for them”...
 The girl, objected:
 Looking into his eyes she exclaimed again!
 “The Merciful bestowed Quran not in vain...
 Obedience is a duty of everyone,
 Where manhood is superior in Quran?
 There is no difference between man and wife,
 Each has own virtue...”



Whilst man is a Father, the Mother is wife,
 To bore generation the wife is a Father,
 Just as you, mullah, had been born from a Mother.
 Should you agree she stays ignorant.
 Each of them free, let them live vibrant,
 So on Earth, let them reach any clue.
 The way they stand for each other,
 But not as a slave, to some like you...
 Doomsday is there awaiting for All
 Both men and women will face after all.
 In face of God each is equally called,
 For our sins, no exception bestowed.
 There is no fatwa women ignorant stay
 Ignorance is a beast, this is what the Faith says:
 Learning is a glory deserved by mankind...
 Why do you then forbid the science?
 By this, inferior become the wives,
 Take away your hands from fake fatwa
 Fear the fury of God, Alas, mullah!
 Limited expertise is the foe of religion,
 Poor medicine is a foe of good condition”...

Poem by Surayya Ananova
 "To My Sisters"



Another breaks the ignorance for the "zeal" of the other,
 For the sake of the nation, there was no honor and zeal,
 No feelings, we are victims of the reality of thoughts and sorrows.

Slaughtering few animals with joy,
 Someone familiar with the rich, who only eats meat,
 Let the poor man weep longingly until dawn,
 Let him exclaim: Oh God, we too are a worthless sacrifice.

Animals slaughtered once a year on the Feast of Sacrifice,
 Half of the nobles did not help the school,
 No favor for school, Alas why, nobles,
 We are deprived of wealth, being solely victims of a man...

TO MY SISTERS (14)

BACILARIMA

Author: **Surayya Ananova**

Teacher of the Muslim school for women.

Sisters that perish around the world,
 Ignorance fades you like flower.
 Just take a look around the Globe
 Only the tribe of Islam is ahaft
 Alas, infamous they are
 Wake up at least, will you.
 Save the Muslims from shame.

VICTIM OF VICTIMS

QURBANLAR QURBANI İşıq, N32, 1911

Author: **Hajar Subhanquluzadeh**

Teacher at the gymnasium of Baku women's school

Once a year they sacrifice for enchantment,
 While hour after hour, we are victims of anguish!

It is true that Caucasians sacrifice animals,
 Ah! See what Italians do cherish instead,
 A pile of Islam sheds in a woman's blood,
 Who is always a victim in such a savagery.

No knowledge, abundantly ignorant, our wives are un-
 aware of justice,
 We were poor, helpless, useless, our neighbors were masters,
 Nation of Islam was a bloodthirsty executioner,
 They kept killing each other, we are victims of sword and grief..

On one side, animals are slaughtered as sacrifice in glory
 of the rich,

Think, strive, work dedicated,
 Cherish progress of the nation
 Such an evil is beyond imagination
 Such time will never be granted.
 Our religion is glorious, yet we do have no science
 No knowledge, no helm whilst there is plenty of ignorance
 All the foreign girls are educated,
 On the path of education they did reach prosperity.

Asiya Akhundzadeh: Lived and created in Ganja. Her poetry celebrating patriotism and education along with importance of moral values were frequently published in the newspaper Işıq. Unfortunately apart of those publications no other trace or information about life of the poetess has been accessed so far.(15)

MOTHERLAND'S OUTCRY

VƏTƏN NALƏSİ 4 mart 1911

Author: **Asiya Akhundzadeh**

Teacher of Azerbaijani language at Ganja Russian-Muslim primary school

*Praised The God Most Gracious and Merciful.
You have bestowed "İşiq" on us.
And you send Mrs. Khadija to guide us,
Her writings calling the nation exclaiming:
In love with your Motherland, be faithful and zealous!
Serve the Motherland! Aspire and cultivate flowers!*

*The Motherland is in turmoil, troubles multiplied,
Traitors cannot be taken as leaders and guides.
Look at Islam! See how it is wicked,
Men have a foreign taste for passion.
In love with your Motherland, be faithful and zealous!
Serve the Motherland! Aspire and cultivate flowers!*

*The one who disciplines the child as patriot is a mother.
If mothers master the art, they will become the guide.
One who promotes patriotism will become radiant,
None of the enemies of the Motherland can be a guide to us.
In love with your Motherland, be faithful and zealous!
Serve the Motherland! Aspire and cultivate flowers! ❀*

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*Poem by Maral Nabizadeh
"An inquiry of a girl to a scholar" (second page)*



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