

THE OUTSTANDING MEN OF AZERBAIJAN



R. AZADA

NIZAMI
GANJAVI



М. Ахундов adına
Azərbaycan Respublikası
Kitabxanası



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Nizami Ganjavi Abu Muhammad Ilyas-ibu Yusif (1141—1209), an outstanding Azerbaijan poet and thinker, embodied in his creative work the aesthetics of beautiful and heroic. The author of the famous "Khamse" reaches the highest peak in the exposure of violation and injustice with great artisticism. Nizami's name is linked with a new stage of development of epic poetry in the whole Near East. His poetry served as an orientation for hundreds of poets of various nations.

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The great Azerbaijan poet and thinker Nizami Ganjavi is one of the rare geniuses of the past whose creative activity forms a distinctive and original stage in the history of the development of world culture. His broad, versatile and rich heritage which reflects poetic, scientific and cognitive qualities long ago proved to be true examples of eternal marvellous art.

Nizami's creative activity is unique in the depth of its content, the interpretation of images and characters and its moral ethical aim. Masterly portrayal of man's personality, varied feelings and emotions of man's "ego", his joy and grief, his natural aspirations are the problems put forward and solved in Nizami's works and all these interweave and mingle with the social intent and purpose of the poet. Psycholo-

loped and the latter, in its turn, stimulated the growth of fur production. Azerbaijan was famous as a country for her fine fruit plantations, vineyards and planted fields. But this abundant wealth of the native land served only a handful of exploiters. Class inequality was conspicuously evident both in the cities and in the villages. The peasants as well as townspeople suffered from the evils of oppression, despotism and bribery and they starved. As a result of all this in many areas of the country riots and disturbances broke out and clashes took place between the working masses and the feudal landowners.

The country experienced diverse periods in its history. Political power was strengthened markedly in the states of Eldaghizlar as well as Shirvanshahs. Rapid development of trade, establishment of various relations with foreign countries, the possibility for many cities of Azerbaijan of serving as transit points opened up great opportunities for the rapid prosperity of science and culture. Both states — Eldaghizlar and Shirvanshahs — fostered art and enlightenment to a certain extent and founded new schools and madrasahs. Azerbaijan scholars

dealt with such sciences like medicine, astronomy, geography, mathematics, and geometry; Eastern languages, logics and theology were taught in schools and madrasahs. The development of Azerbaijan science and culture was interrelated with that of the peoples of the Near and Middle East. Azerbaijan's cultural ties with the neighbouring Armenian and Georgian peoples also grew.

The basic language used in poetry then was Persian. Beginning from the 7th century the Arabian caliphate was established in the majority of countries of the Near and Middle East. Despite the strong resistance movements for national independence, not long passed before Azerbaijan fell under the rule of the Arab caliphs, too. Islam became the official religion and Arabic became the predominant literary language. Under the political banner of Islamic religion, the caliphate strove for the Arabization of all the peoples of the East. But people constantly opposed and revolted against the policy of the caliphate and all this shook the foundations of the caliphate's rule. Already in the middle of the 8th century intradynastic struggles in the

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caliphate flared up and the dynasty of Amavilar was replaced by the dynasty of Abbasilar (750 — 1258). The Persian nobility played an important role in Abbasilar's seizure of power in the caliphate and in this way they entered into the central government and took over the most important state affairs. During the reign of Abbasilar, vice-regents in the main provinces and regions were appointed from Persians. Persian vice-regents paid great attention to the development and well-being of their native tongue and tried to spread their language in the countries they ruled. In the 9th—10th centuries, although Arabic kept its importance as the language of science, religion and theology, in poetry the Persian language dominated.

In the 11th century during Saljughī's great march from the East towards the West a rich and perfect literature in the Persian language existed in Central Asia. This literature existed here for about a century producing the literary school which united such intelligent men-of-letters as Rudaki Abu Shukur Balkhi, Gisai, Daghihi, Asjodi, Farrukhi and Firdousi. The best examples of Persian verse were created in the

palaces of the Samani and Gaznavi rulers. "Shah-nameh", which revived the heroic traditions of ancient Iran, was written in prose and verse.

The new rulers of Iran and Central Asia — the Saljughilar inherited from their predecessors *not only the machinery of state but also a great literary heritage in Persian*. Moreover, they spread it to all corners of the great Saljughian Empire. If poetry in Persian was widespread only in the Eastern provinces (Mavarunnahr, Khorasan), during the reign of the Persian dynasty of Samanilar, then during the reign of the Turkic dynasties of Gaznavilar and Saljughilar, Persian as a literary language began to be used in a large area from India as far as Asia Minor.

A great expert on classical Persian-Tadjik poetry and an outstanding orientalist, Y. E. Bertels clearly shows that "the absence of national selfconsciousness" prevented the Saljughian rulers from thinking of the progress of their native tongue¹. Neglecting their native language, the

¹ Е. Э. Бертельс. Великий азербайджанский поэт Низами. Баку, изд-во АзФАН, 1940, стр. 36.

Saljughians used Persian as an official language and the language of poetry and prose and made their subject emirs, feudals and lords follow their example in palaces. Knowledge of the Persian language was the first sign of one's "membership of the nobility". Persian was spoken in the palaces and feudal manors during the reign of the United Saljughian Empire and later when the Empire was broken into small independent states.

School and madrasahs functioned in the Persian language, poets composed verse in Persian (though occasionally there appeared works in Turkish such as "Kutadgu bilik" by the 11th century Uigurian poet Yusif Khas Hajib, but these were exceptions). Ousting local languages, Persian gained international status.

Persian was the official state language of the 12th century Azerbaijan feudal palaces, too. In Shirvanshahs' as well as in Eldaghizs reign the "assembly of poets" was conducted in Persian and the participants of these assemblies competed in Persian. It was the same with the literature (written) created outside the palaces, mainly in towns. Azerbaijan poets follo-

wed the literary traditions of the epoch: voluntarily or against their own will yielded to the requirements of the literary canons of the epoch. But the latter differed from the former. The latter thought in Azerbaijan and expressed themselves in Persian. Studies have revealed a great number of facts in support of this idea².

As it is distinct from written literature, Azerbaijan oral literature of the 12th century existed in the native Azerbaijan language as in previous centuries. The best examples of folk poetry were created and rapidly spread from town to town, from country to country, from mouth to mouth. In squares and bazaars, in front of large audiences, ozans-troubadours sang and narrated the legends of Dada-Gorgut, the story of "Leili and Majnun", of "Farhad's eternal love", stories about Alexander and the heroic deeds of Babak, in their native tongue. The narrator brought to their native people in their native vernacular marvellous fairy tales which can be traced to ancient times while

² Н. Араслы. Низамиде халк сөзлери, халк ифаде ве зербулмәсаллери. «ССРИ ЕА Азербайжан филиалынын хәбәрләри», Баки, 1942, № 8.

mothers sang lullabies in their mother tongue over their babies' cradles.

Such was, in brief, the historical, social and cultural picture of the epoch of Nizami in Azerbaijan.

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The poet was born in the family of a townsman, an inhabitant of ancient Ganja by the name of Yusif Zaki, son of Muayyad. He was named Ilyas by his parents, but was immortalized as Nizami Ganjavi in history. Assembled later on, by unknown scribes under the common title "Khamsa" ("Quintuple") the unfading examples of literary art, his poems "Storehouse of Mysteries", "Khosrov and Shirin", "Leili and Majnun", "Seven Beauties" and "Iskandarnama" (book of Alexander the Great) which consists of two parts — "Sharafnama" (dealing with Alexander's glorious military marches) and "Iqbalnama" (dealing with Alexander's later life) made him the immortal poet of the world.

The creative activity of the poet gives us evidence of his thorough madrasah education. Logic, medicine, law, astronomy, geography and the much-developed science of the Middle Ages in the East — astrology are the spheres of knowledge where Nizami tried his strength. He was especially interested in history, philosophy and theology and studied them with great zeal.

He displayed an early interest in poetry and creative work, and attracted attention by his unique talent and diligence. This is shown by his literary heritage:

Come and see how I dig pits at night,
Not pits, I dig my own soul,
For a pearl that I extract from my mouth
What battles I do wage with myself;

To get a sparkling jewel that shines in the darkness
I switch on the lamp of my brain hundreds of times.
(*Kh. Sh.*, 776)³

To search for a virgin word is like exhausting one's soul
And not everybody is able to do it. (*Sh.*, 37)

³ Here and henceforth Nizami is quoted in literal translation from scientific and critical texts published in the Soviet Union.

He who extracts pearl from stone
Takes possession of the word with difficulty. (*Ig.*, 12)

It is doubtless, that Nizami had a complete collection of lyrics — a divan, consisting of gazals, qasidas, rubaiyats, tarkibbands, tarjibands and others, but only a small portion of this heritage has reached us. Small extracts from his lyrics that we have at our disposal illustrate that throughout his life the poet created lyric poems alongside with great epic works.

The flower of his life — his beloved wife Afag — was sent to him as a gift by the ruler of Darband as a sign of deep respect and recognition of his lyrics. Afag was sent to Nizami from Darband as a servant, but the poet did not look upon her as a servant, made her his wife and lost her very early. The "Kipchakian beauty" of Nizami died in her early youth, but the poet constantly and repeatedly remembers her and his fleeting, disappointing love in his works.

Afag gave birth to a son called Mohammed. From Nizami's works it can be seen that his son Mohammed had a great love for poetry and art.

Ganja was considered as one of the capitals

of Eldaghiz at that time. The residences of Atabays and many state enterprises were situated in Ganja. It is very likely, that in the luxurious palaces of Eldaghiz many poets lived and worked. Festivals and ceremonies in the palaces might also have attracted the young poet. Being a man of good education and rare talent, Nizami had all the opportunities to reveal his abilities. He did not want to take initiative. He soon determined that exterior glitterings were deceptive and moved away from the palaces before he approached them. The purity of designs and wisdom dictated him "to live on barley bread sparingly, but be the lion of his own house."

But the poet needed some means to live on and therefore he was obliged to devote poems to the rulers of the country and sent to them from time to time. Even this effort of the writer emerged from the necessity of calling the rulers to justice and truth. His glory as a poet spread not only to his native land Azerbaijan, but echoed in many remote countries as well. The number of admirers of his art grew day by day, year by year. And the poet made good use of

his fame to save Virtue and Beauty from the clutches of Evil and Ugliness.

His *entertaining stories in verse* which embodied his humane views and thoughts on social equality were sent to palaces. Nizami devoted many congratulations and greetings in verse to the rulers of his time. But all of them sounded like really severe accusations, and his honey tasted as if it were poisoned.

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The marvels of Nizami's art are closely related to the thoughts and aesthetic tendencies of his great predecessors. On the one hand, he heard the melodies and songs of folk ashigs (troubadours), listened to the fairy-tales and legends of story-tellers with great enjoyment, on the other hand, he read and learned the poetry of his own people and the peoples who were close to them from the point of view of historicosocial and cultural relations. We come across many themes identical to Nizami's in the works of Yusif Hajib Khas. The problem of justice in "Kutadgu bi-

lik" forms the leitmotif of Nizami's poems. Nizami read "Shahnama" repeatedly and considered the author of this grand epos his teacher. He reflected upon the philosophy of Omar Khayyam and regarded the rebellious spirit and social protest of Khagani's lyrics to be his own.

In accordance with the socio-political and literary requirements of the epoch, Nizami, like many other Azerbaijan poets of his time, wrote in Persian. Owing to this, he won the general recognition and fame all over the Near and Middle East in a short time. The themes of his poems were also broad. The events described took place either in ancient Madain, Greece, India, China, or in many other countries. Whatever or whoever he described, and wherever the events took place, he still remained a true son of Azerbaijan, a Turk in all circumstances and everywhere. He was inspired by his native land, its fascinating nature, the mirth and grief of his people and ancestors, their way of life. Nizami glorified the beauties of the lilac- and poppy-covered fields of Mugan, the cool springs and woods of Barda. The imagination of the poet brought the great Macedonian knight Alexander to Barda

and made him bow in front of Nushaba, an Azerbaijan woman who came from the people. Wasn't it Shirin, a bewitching Azerbaijan lady, who played a decisive role in the spiritual awakening of the shah of Kayan? Nizami's Leili and Majnun were immortalized in the world as "Turks in Arabic garments". Inspired by the blue skies of Ganja, by its green valleys, by its high mountains with waterfalls, fascinating lake Goy-Gol, the foothills where antilopes and gazelles grazed, the poet portrayed "the nude lady" of the "Sandy deserts". And what about the "Turkic spirit" in Nizami's poetry? The poet searched for something "Turkic" in all his positive heroes and always emphasized them. It is also interesting that Nizami often liberally used words and expressions like "Turk", "Turkic", "Turkish type of face" on nearly every page of his poems. The poet used these words and expressions in the meaning of "Azerbaijan", "peculiar to an Azerbaijanian" and related them to such concepts as "divine", "beauty" and "bravery". Wasn't it the "Turkic spirit" which was conspicuously in Nizami's poetry in his early lyrics, and the poems "Storehouse of Mysteri-

es", "Khosrov and Shirin" that prompted the Shah of Shirvan Akhistan to ask Nizami to put the immortal love legend "Leili and Majnun" into verse? Nizami wrote in Persian, but in the manner of an Azerbaijanian and Turk. Khagani's and Nizami's use of the Persian language greatly varies from the language of Persian poets and this fact is not denied even by the well-known Iranian scholars of Nizami⁴.

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Virtue was one of the main factors characterizing Nizami. He underlines this leading feature of his literary "ego" in many parts of his works and introduces himself to the readers in the following way:

دیوان قصاید و غزلیات نظامی گنجوی شامل شرح احوال
و آثار نظامی با مقدمه و حواشی و فهرست اعلام و تصحیح
مقابلہ از روی بیست و ہشت نسخہ چاپی و قدیمترین نسخہای
خطی موجود در دنیا بکوشش استاد سعید نفیسی، تهران،
۱۳۳۸، ص ۱۳۵

If you can, carry the burden of all men. (L. M., 102)
 If I had the right by law I would not allow anybody
 to depend on anyone. (Sh., 135)

Here Nizami comes close to sufis. But, as it is well known, sufism never was a monolithic ideological school of thought. If its progressive wing, based on pantheism, stood for defence of light from darkness, glorified virtue, and generosity, propagated justice and condemned all kinds of social inequality, its reactionary wing called the people to obey God's will, denied everything that was real and humane, agitated harmful, mystical and ascetic ideas.

Nizami always opposed the harmful wings of sufism which propagated ascetism, an austere life and the philosophy of patience and this is proved by the facts. It is doubtless, that as a man of his epoch, Nizami believed in God, and relied upon His mercy, because He was the creator of Man, the crown of the Universe, because He endowed Man with wisdom and the ability to feel, the perception of Virtue and Beauty. By this way of thinking belief in God did not deny the existence of objective reality, but sounded like an assertion of earthly beauti-

es. According to Nizami, part of God is seen in all earthly beauties. Nizami sought for a part of God in all the "familiar designs". The relations of "particular and general", "individual and common" in Nizami's works come from progressive pantheist views of sufism which greatly influenced socio-philosophical thought in the Near East and Azerbaijan throughout the Middle Ages. But Nizami made these views serve his purpose. Nizami's god was the god of only Beauty, Virtue and Light, and what is beautiful, virtuous and light. In his understanding Man rises to the level of God when he embodies Beauty, Virtue and Light.

For a long time in world orientology, there have been attempts to ascribe mysticism, pessimism and ascetism to Nizami's poetry. Progressive scholars of Nizami have always rebuffed such groundless, non-scientific arguments⁵. Even

⁵А. Крымский. Низами и его изучение. «Низами Гянджеви» (Сборник статей). Баку, 1947, стр. 161; Е. Э. Бертельс. Избранные труды. Низами и Физули. М., 1962, стр. 433 — 434; М. Шагинян. Этюды о Низами. Ереван, 1955, стр. 108; Г. Алиев. Легенда о Хосрове и Ширин в литературах народов Востока. М., 1960, стр. 14 — 15; Д.ж. Мустафаев. Мир идей Низами и современность. Автореферат докт. дисс. Баку, 1967,

nowadays there are scholars who support these accusations⁶. The following statement from Cassel's *Encyclopedia of Literature* may serve as evidence: "In his youth he (Nizami. — R. A.) often attended mystic circles, preferred ascetism and the life of a hermit"⁷. The author of an article on Nizami, published in "Nouveau Larousse Uniwersal", points out that "Nizami's poems ("Storehouse of Mysteries", "Leili and Majnun", "Iskandar-nama") were written under the influence of the mysticism of sufism"⁸.

The contradictions of feudal life, the unbearable atmosphere caused by the rule of religion, constant oppression of the broad masses, acts of violence and brutality, murder of many innocent people as a result of palace and religious intrigues grieved the poet, and gave rise to pessimism.

⁶ Sufism and account of the mystics of Islam. London, 1956, pp. 109 — 110; M. V. Donald. The Religious and Social Views of Nizami of Ganjen. *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, vol. I. London, 1963, pp. 60 — 61; S a f a. *Anthologie de la poesia persane (XI — XXemes siecles)*. Gallimard, 1964, p. 154.

⁷ Cassel's *Encyclopedia of Literature*, vol. 2. 1953, p. 1298.

⁸ *Nouveau Larousse Uniwersal*, vol. 2. Paris, 1969, p. 302.

But if taken as a whole the philosophy of pessimism and despair does not emerge as a prominent feature of Nizami's poetry. Nizami is characterized by an optimistic spirit and proceeds from this position in his creative work. "Life has been created for beauty and happiness" is the thesis which forms the foundation of his world view.

The poet calls on men not to give in to despair even in the worst conditions, to be brave and to strive for happy days: "Be a man of will. Those who don't have it are like insects crawling on the ground. Sighs never help".

Why do you become a servant to the weeds?
 Why do you become a puppet in hands of the villains?
 Why do you keep your neck ready for anyone to strap?
 Why do you agree with all the sufferings?
 Straighten your shoulders like a mountain!
 Be irreconcilable to the insidiousness of the world.
 If you weave silk as good as iris
 You will drink sediment from the pure soil.
 Misery would cause inner pains,
 Humility would humiliate man.
 Lige a thorn keep your weapon ready!
 Only then can you take bunches of flowers into
 your arms. (*L. M.*, 97)

Can we equate the philosophy expressed in these lines with the world view of an ascetic.

hermit who considers the spiritual and physical sufferings and economic difficulties to be a sign of love for God, opposes all kinds of activity — free thinking, independent action, initiative? These lines are not the doctrine of a mystic-dervish, but concord with the slogans of Akhis. It is impossible that the poet ignored the programme of such a man organization which had lot of members living in his native town of Ganja. Spiritually he was close to them. His lines calling for action against tyranny and ignorance are evidence of it.

Nizami's life is an example of man's fortitude, pride, wisdom and will, the grandeur of his inexhaustible talent. Objective reality and the laws of its cognition, rationalist teaching about the omnipotence of cognition, spiritual richness of the "ego" and his creative capacities are the main themes of Nizami's world of ideas

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Each work of Nizami taken separately is a literary-sociological and literary-psychological

system about man's "ego"; the tasks and duties of "ego" in life, his constructive, emotive and mental activities. The man who creates, who thinks, who loves and is loved, who is excited and who struggles takes the foreground in Nizami. In this poetry man is promoted to the level of personality despite his class affiliation, and he is the master of his own actions and will.

The ideas of humanism found deep expression in Nizami's poetry in the 12th century, acquired new philosophical overtones and became a leading force in literature.

Nizami's humanism is also closely connected with his democratic views. Without hesitation, it is possible to say that Nizami was the only poet who was, for the most part, close to the people and labourers in the 12th century. The majority of the poet's characters from common folk are distinguished by their wisdom, spiritual purity and will, and in most cases they surpass the shahs, the rulers, in these qualities. Khosrov's nature, his debased feelings are revealed when he is compared to Farhad, an ordinary man from the folk, who embodies the spiritual and physical power of the people. In order

to complete the portrayal of Khosrov as a character the poet needs Farhad who directs the poem from the point of the idea inherent in it, and helps to clarify the main purpose of the writer. Here the democratism of Nizami's poetry is conspicuously revealed. Sky-scrapers built by Simnar and Sheyda are magnificent. But what is the lot of the men — the labourers who embellish life? Farhad became the victim of a fatal lie. Toil-hardened Simnar was thrown down from the roof of a high building he had constructed. In this way Nizami reveals his hatred towards despotism, cruelty, the idea of protest and struggle against those who shed innocent blood.

As a popular poet, Nizami embodies in his poems the "voices of orphans whose ears are always pulled", "babies thirsty for their mother's milk", "sick strangers" and "sorrowful old folk". His word turns into a weapon against the world of exploitation founded on injustice. It is a great honour to have the name of "man". "Man" must be virtuous and generous by nature. Because of these qualities "man" is said to be the personification of God on Earth.

But thirst for money, wealth and property has deprived many a man of humane qualities. "The pearl of humanity is lost". "Humanity has alighted on the wings of the legendary bird Phoenix". Nothing humane is left, especially in the men who rule the country. The horrible scenes of the deeds of the so-called monstrous men who have lost the "pearl" of humanity are terrifying.

Nizami's art is a mirror of his era. Like a poet-citizen he whipped all the social and spiritual evils of feudal society either by lyrical or literary strokes or by the plot of his works, directly reproducing the events of the historical past or with the help of his imagination. And in this struggle Nizami made wisdom and thinking his banner. The poet criticized the drawbacks of feudal life and condemned the murders and robbery that prevailed there, the avidity, corruption, ambition, boastfulness in a vivid satirical manner.

But the poet did not only expose the evils. He searches for ways of how to do away with these evils and propagates his Utopian ideas: spiritual and moral evolution.

Not only an individual, but also a whole society may become perfect by spiritual and moral evolution. Spiritual and moral evolution is the triumph of Virtue and Light, and promotion of man to the "level of God".

During the whole period of his creative activity the poet thought of sensible, purposeful human life, of the perfect personality and the perfect society and he hoped at least a part of his ideal would be realized through the teaching of spiritual-moral purification.

However, Nizami's artistic presentation of the problem of the perfect man and the ideal society does not confirm the possibility of rooting out evil through spiritual evolution. According to the poet, it is possible to drive darkness out of man's soul if a shimmer is left in him from "the pearl of manhood". Then a sparkle may be ignited. But if evil is deeply rooted in the nature of an individual or in the life of society and there is not a single ray of hope, then it is doomed, there is no need for reform.

In the epoch of Nizami and for a long time after the objectives of literature did not include the aspirations and the struggle for a better

life which proceeded from laws of historical development. In the Middle Ages, eastern, as well as Azerbaijan, poetry mainly consisted of romantic verse and this poetry is characterized by the theory of moral purification and spiritual evolution. Nizami was the first great man-of-letters who enriched this teaching with the achievements of image-bearing thought. Against the contradictory, complicated background of Azerbaijan in the time of the Renaissance, Nizami gave this teaching a new sense, a new spirit and direction, turned it into a perfect poetic and philosophical system and made it serve the democratic and social ideas of his creative work.

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Nizami is known as a great master of psychological images in the poetry of the Near East. All the images of "Quintuple" — be they incidental or dominant, secondary or primary,— all the heroes of Nizami rise to the level of psychological characters. For a better and true

We witness a lyrical miniature which has not lost its attraction even nowadays. The poet seems to lighten the psychological world of the heroes. These four lines describe a moment of the two lovers' meeting where the poet masterfully and visually reveals the feelings and emotions which reign over their hearts.

Christian-parish postulates regard love as a "sin", but Islam considered it as something worth condemning. We see duality in regard to these natural human emotions in the works of the early representatives of the European Renaissance. The lyrical hero of Petrarch's famous poem "Konsenera" (Love Song) (experiences deep emotional crisis. On one hand, he loves Laura as a woman of the world and enjoys greatly the sufferings and pleasures of this love, while, on the other hand, he is anxious and worries about his love, and considers the "earthly passions" temporary and begs the Virgin Mary to absolve his sins. This duality is absent in

بکوشش استاد سعید نفیسی، تهران، ۱۳۳۸. ص ۲۵۴
نظامی گنجوی، قصائد و غزلیات با مقدمه و خواصی و

Nizami, the 12th century Azerbaijan poet. When men of his tribe take Majnun to Kaaba in order to cure him of the disease of love, while kissing hajar (the sacred black stone) he begs the god to rouse up his love for Leili. Nizami's gazals and rubaiyats on the theme of love, his poems "Leili and Majnun", "Khosrov and Shirin" sound like a symphony about the grandeur of supreme, pure and humane love. The poet is greatly interested in the varied forms of man's emotions, the joys and sufferings of his soul. In Nizami's creative work love acquires a broader content — a social-ethical and sociological content. It is the source of heroism and self-sacrifice, it gives man initiative and strength (like Farhad's love). In Nizami's poems love emerges as a philosophical conception. Love makes man immortal and idolizes him. Nizami identifies love and humanism, a study of man. Such a grandeur is peculiar only to a poet of the Renaissance.

The problem of women in Nizami's poems attracts attention by its Renaissance character. In the Middle Ages woman was considered as a living thing, a source of profit. She was an obe-

dient slave, first of her parents, then of her husband. We do not yet mention the innumerable maid-servants and concubines acquired through wars and invasions. Women were sent as gifts to anybody and anywhere, from town to town, from country to country. Such were the conditions of life for women long before Nizami and after him when in the East half of the population consisted of women. The tragic fate of mothers and sisters could not but move and disturb the humanist poet and thinker. The life story of Leili who was not in control of her own feelings, who faded like a bud before her full bloom as a sacrifice to old traditions and morals, was the heroic life story of thousands of innocent women who died very early. Were there few women disappointed in life like Leili? Majnun was brave enough, at least to speak to everyone about his pure love, therefore he got the nickname of Majnun (Insane), though his name was Gheis. Leili could not even do it. She hid her sacred love, she had her love internally, her love tore her soul and heart, and she could talk about her love only to narcissuses and poppies, watering them by her tears.

She would make oceans of pearls,
 And float them (tears) like ships.
 She would grieve behind the veils.
 And swallow griefs one after another. (*L. M.*, 179)

Nizami deplores it. He regrets that time and its traditions have made this fair creature humble and unfortunate. He wants to influence the reactionary thoughts of his contemporaries with the magic power of his art. He repeatedly questioned himself. Why is the fate of woman in the Islamic world so miserable? "A lion is a lion, be it male or female", says the proverb. If necessary, the woman may become a knight and fight on the battle fields shoulder to shoulder with lion-hearted men like Nishaba, like a maiden, Nistan-darjahan from the Chinese a gift to Iskandar. It is of great interest that the "Turkic spirit" is more distinct in Nizami's images of women. In his verses he expresses the attitude to woman of his ancestors — Azerbaijanais, a nation composed of Turkic speaking tribes, before they adopted Islam. So the women images of Nizami remind us of the women characters from the folk epos "Dada Gorgud", the roots of which are very ancient. The heroine of the story that Bah-

ram-shah heard in the red palace—a Slav—seems to be the sister of Seljan, Banuchichak. What about Fitna, Mariya, a woman of profound knowledge! What about Shirin, an Azerbaijan beauty, a good horsewoman, and player of chovkan (a game played on horseback), fascinating and a woman of a rich spiritual world! The readers admire the perfectness of Nizami's female images. They are characterized by resoluteness, nobility, bravery. Woman can create miracles, she is a creature of great powers. Woman is the mother of geniuses; she gave birth to heroes and heroines, she fosters noble ideas and feelings in everybody. Mankind owes much to this sacred creature. Nizami regards woman as the most honest person, a citizen of equal rights, and does his best to give a good portrayal of woman's talents and abilities. The immortal woman images which have been so masterfully portrayed by the Azerbaijan poet Nizami are the achievements in the history of the classical verse of the Near East.

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* Nizami is also unique and enthralling when he reveals the contrasts of the internal world of the character. By relating to each other many characters with different spiritual qualities, by psychological conflicts the poet seems to travel in the world of emotions. The images are highlighted from different angles, contradictions, contrasts and identities fill and complete each other. Farhad's pure love must, as it seems, harmonize with emotions which reign over Shirin's heart. But she cannot respond to Farhad's love though she respects and sympathizes with him, for she is fully devoted to her first love, or more exactly, to the ideal of her love. Parallels (Farhad — Shirin) remain as parallels. Though strangely enough, Shirin yearns for Khosrov, who is spiritually alien to both Farhad and Shirin.

The poetic aim of Nizami here is to reveal the educative content of pure love and feelings. In reality, Shirin's ideal love absolves Khosrov his sins and raises him to the level of a positive ideal. As a result of spiritual evolution Khos-

rov becomes a man of high ethical and moral qualities. The process of evolution and purification, the changes that take place in Khosrov are described by Nizami convincingly and with great skill. Farhad was as hot as the sun. His love was the ideal degree of love. Sun and light attract everybody. Valorous is the man when he seeks light in darkness. To cast light on darkness requires bravery. In "Khosrov and Shirin" Nizami wanted to solve this artistic problem and did it with the talent of a genius. This was Nizami's poetic discovery. Few attempts to create such varied, psychological characters came later, even long after Nizami, in the poetic history of the East, presentation of an image in literary process being carried out in one plane. Only in the works of the famous representatives of the European Renaissance the poetic discovery of Nizami continued and developed to the highest degree.

It is doubtless that when interpreting the psychological emotions of heroes, the poet does not limit himself to the study of contradictory features of the characters. For instance, in his poem "Leili and Majnun" the emotional paral-

els are more vivid and in the foreground. The love described here is different from that of "Khosrov and Shirin" by its content; the heroes in "Leili and Majnun" are identical by the content of their spiritual qualities right from the beginning. But as the conflict and collision of the poem are built on quite different principles, the heroes who strive to unite do not reach the aim.

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↳ Nuances, strokes, sketches. These are of great importance in the literary solution of the problem of the "inner world" of the character in Nizami's creative work. The poet pays a good deal of attention to details. This is also one of the qualities of Nizami's mastery which enriched medieval poetry, especially epic poetry. Here very often a small psychological scene is enough to characterize the hero. Do you remember the dialogue of Khosrov and Farhad, an episode from the poem "Khosrov and Shirin"? Brief and laconic answers consisting of only

two or three words. They are like bullets which hit the target. But behind them, there is a deep meaning and a wide poetic world. These laconic, as if greedily used, broken, fragmented sentences sound like thunder and reveal Farhad's internal essence, intellect, spiritual world and the might of his love as a poetic image.

Laconism — is one of the marvellous features of Nizami's art. For an artistic expression of an idea Nizami searches and finds such a word, which later on wholly discloses to the readers the purpose of the poet and the deep meaning of the text. Look at this couplet from "Leili and Majnun":

Sighing in grief and lamentation
He came to the bride of earth (*L. M.*, 548)

«عروس خاکی» — "bride of earth" is a laconic expression. It is not only laconic and brief, but also embodies a broad content and a deep meaning. Leili is dead. Her unfortunate mother fearing her hair mourns her only daughter and buries her. Majnun comes to contemplate with Leili. But, alas ... only an inch of earth is left of Leili. An inch of earth. Now Majnun

spends all his time by the "bride of earth" and is waiting for the moment when he is united with his beloved, "the bride of earth". The effect of the expression is great and striking. ✎

In Nizami's poetry sometimes even a word is enough to reveal the essence of an event, characterize an image. Depicting the hero Nizami very often appeals to the image of the sea in "Iskandarnama".

The precious mother-of-pearl was handed to the sea.
(*Sh.*, 222)
(An episode from the wedding party of Iskandar with
Rovshanak)

Who has seen the sea board on a ship. (*Jg.*, 164)
(An episode of how Iskandar sails to the continent from
the Chinese Sea).

Iskandar and the sea! Man and nature! Do you see the unbreakable internal relation and harmony of the poetic image and the subject? Aren't they identical — Iskandar — with his grandeur, pride, spiritual and internal energy, and the sea — with her wild and stormy nature, with her roaring waves and vastness? This is the might of Nizami's laconism.

When revealing the spiritual world of his heroes Nizami's use of images taken from nature, that is visual images, as a literary device is unique and incomparable. In him we do not see only a mere description of nature. Nature is brought to his verse as a substantial example of earthly beauties. The earth — mountains, valleys, sky, twinkling stars, the sun, the moon, black and grey clouds, dawn, darkness of the night, the morning breeze — all become the object of a special poetic description. Using varied means and innumerable nuances of the art of the word, the poet portrays many landscape sketches and descriptions of nature. Slender and miraculous ornaments in word revive the spring — the innocent daughter of nature, the pages and the lines are scented with the odour of spring flowers, the gentle purr and murmur of the springs are heard. The description of the process of withering of flowers and trees in autumn evokes a gloomy mood and a state of sadness in the reader. We hear the rustle of the falling red-golden leaves caused by autumn. We grieve because the musical and heart-piercing song of the nightingale, a faith-

ful lover of spring and flowers, is not heard.

But Nizami does not use the description of nature as an external background. He personifies nature, description of any natural phenomenon serves a special literary and social aim, and is directly or indirectly linked with the main characters, with their lives and dispositions. With the help of personification the poet portrays original and capacious images of nature. The life of nature harmonizes with the life of man. Nature becomes a bosom-friend of man. Able to listen to his heart-throbs and the hidden storms of his soul, man begins an intimate conversation with the descriptions of nature of varied colours. The image of nature shares the thoughts and passions of man and helps the readers to reveal the internal "ego" of man who undergoes a complicated process of psychological evolution.

Classical Azerbaijan epic poetry reached its highest peaks in the creative activity of Nizami. But lyrics dominate in the epic poems of Nizami. One must have a sensitive soul to depict the joy and grief of life, an iron will to unveil the deformities and evils. The poet must have

also severe, exposing satire, subtle humour, versatility. The lyrical pathos which includes all these above-mentioned elements, is predominant in Nizami's poetry, and must be regarded as one of the main qualities of the poet's creative work. "Quintuple" — a collection of his five big poems — is the unity of epic and lyrical works, *if we do not take into account the few lyrics of his divan that have reached us*. Lyricism attaches plainness and beauty to the plots of Nizami's poems, and sometimes successfully substitutes epic perception. The plot and composition of the poems are presented to the readers either by making use of narration or by means of the potentials of lyrics.

It may be said that the poet wrote in all basic types of classical Eastern verse, but his use of them was of a creative nature, and enriching them in content and form, he added to them many new qualities. Nizami created the best examples of gazal, rubaiyat and qasida. His poem "Storehouse of Mysteries" being a literary-philosophical and deductive treatise, is composed of a number of short stories. According to their plots and contents "Khosrov and

Shirin", "Laili and Majnun", "Seven Beauties", "Iskandarnama" may be characterized as novels in verse. The poet restricts the development of events around the main heroes of the poems in time and space. Narrative is led in the frames of the plot and the latter in its turn is divided into many component parts. The parts of the main plot are logically interconnected and succeed each other and serve the literary solution of the whole. The successive parts are *built on the principle of either from cause to effect, or from effect to cause*. The relations of time and space here are correlated.

In his epic poems Nizami very often makes use of subsidiary narrative. Such additions and subsidiary narrative help the poet tell the readers of a theme or the problems that puzzle him throughout his creative activity. This never disrupts the composition and structure of the main plot, but completes and polishes it.

Nizami's fantasy embellishes his plots. His artistic imagination serves a practical aim and aesthetic ideal which is based on reality. We do not find any incidental elements or characters in Nizami's poems which are abstract and un-

real. He uses conventional devices less than his predecessors, though it was widespread both in Western and Eastern poetry. The features and the traces of mythological and lyrical stories are few in his poetry. For comparison we may turn to the poetry of Firdousi, a well-known predecessor of Nizami, whose verse is wholly conventional. This quality which is characterized by the genre of the poem is distinctly seen in two large parts of "Shahnama" depicting the events of the pre-shah period, for Firdousi's poem is a heroic epopee; here men live for 300 — 500 or even 1000 years and they fight with three-headed, or seven-headed monsters. Magic and miracle play an important role here; Zal, son of Sam — father of legendary Rostam — was brought up by Phoenix; serpents have settled on the shoulders of Zohhak, son of Deuce and so on.

Nizami's narrative is rapid and tense which also may be regarded as a component of the novel genre. Stories and characters are not static, but rather dynamic, they are presented in their evolution. Analysis of the characters is carried through probing into their internal and

spiritual world. Nizami does not merely display conflicts and contradictions, but also illustrates the process of their development. And the literary devices involved by the poet serve this aim. Here the poet regards a character as presenting the life story of a man, psychology — in the meaning of psychological process.

The poetry of human feelings and soul emerges fully and in all its tenderness in Nizami's poems ("Khosrov and Shirin", "Leili and Majnun"). To reveal the social essence of the life experience of the image by a psychological process is one of the best achievements of the novel as a genre.

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Nizami's creative work leads not only medieval Azerbaijan poetry, but the poetry of the whole Middle East as well. He ingeniously applied to his art aesthetic principles of beauty and heroism, and created a number of eternal images of ideal heroism, ideal love. Be it his lyrics or his "Quintuple", both are hymns to man's internal, external, spiritual, physical, so-

cial grandeur and charms. Everything in man—his appearance, his thinking, his heart, his behaviour must be beautiful. This is the real essence of Nizami's art, the art of the Renaissance by its content! To sing of earthly beauties is the theme of Nizami's poetry, its main starting-point. Originating from here are stories, relationships, contradictions, conflicting and united ideas, human grief and joy, spiritual-emotional victories, deprivations and failures which succeed each other, directly or indirectly interconnected in Nizami's plots. They return again to their starting-point, assemble around this aesthetic concept and serve it.

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