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**The role of the Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the progress of Azerbaijani women in the 19th century**

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***Abstract.** The main goal of the article was to shed light on the struggle for the freedom and rights of our women, who were deprived of rights in public life, science and education, and to evaluate this struggle, that is, the importance of educating our women, as an integral part of the general socio-political struggle of society. It is stated that if a woman wants to express herself, she must be educated. And it is for this reason that our enlightened, patriotic intellectuals, who spoke about the importance of cultural progress and studying science, worked for the development of science and culture, and took care of the education of Azerbaijani girls, despite the difficulties of that time.*

***Methods and methodologies used.** The article uses analysis and comparison methods to investigate the struggles of our intellectual thinkers and women in order to make their voices heard and break the chains of their condemnation.*

***What is new in the article.** For the first time, the author studied the problem of a woman having free will, the ability to independently decide her own destiny, not depending on anyone, based on the works of thinkers.*

**Conclusions.** *Summarizing the objectives set out in the analysis, notes and comments, the author came to the conclusion that man and woman are two main elements that play a decisive role in the development of society. Just as it is impossible for one to live without the other, the superiority of one over the other should also be impossible. If this balance is disturbed, the greatest damage will be done to the existing society, to the people lagging behind in progress. For this reason, it is necessary to join hands and fight for the progress of the people and the state, and this can be achieved not by the superiority of one, but by maintaining the balance of equality. And thus, in order to ensure the comprehensive development of humanity, women were called upon to science and enlightenment, the elimination of vulgar customs and traditions was put forward, and the slogan was raised that women should be educated and actively participate in public affairs.*

**Keywords:** *enlightenment, thinker, disenfranchised, progress, woman, freedom.*

## **Роль азербайджанської інтелігенції XIX століття у прогресі азербайджанських жінок**

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**Анотація.** *Головною метою статті було висвітлити боротьбу за свободу та права наших жінок, які були позбавлені прав у суспільному житті, науці та освіті, та оцінити цю боротьбу, тобто важливість освіти наших жінок, як невід'ємну частину загальної соціально-політичної боротьби суспільства. Зазначається, що якщо жінка хоче самовиразитися, вона повинна бути освіченою. І саме з цієї причини наші освічені, патріотичні інтелектуали, які говорили про важливість культурного прогресу та вивчення науки,*

працювали для розвитку науки та культури, і, незважаючи на труднощі того часу, піклувалися про освіту азербайджанських дівчат.

**Використані методи та методики.** У статті використовуються методи аналізу, порівняння та зіставлення, щоб дослідити боротьбу наших інтелектуальних мислителів та жінок, щоб їхні голоси були почуті та розірвали ланцюги їхнього осуду.

**Новина статті.** Автор вперше досліджує проблему вільної волі жінки та її здатності самостійно вирішувати свою долю, не покладаючись ні на кого, спираючись на праці мислителів.

**Результати.** Підсумовуючи цілі, примітки та коментарі, викладені в аналізі, автор дійшов висновку, що чоловіки та жінки – це два основні елементи, які відіграють вирішальну роль у розвитку суспільства. Так само, як неможливо одне жити без іншого, так само неможливо, щоб одне було вищим за інше. Якщо цей баланс порушується, найбільшої шкоди буде завдано існуючому суспільству та людям, які відстають у прогресі. З цієї причини необхідно об'єднати зусилля та разом боротися за прогрес народу та держави, і цього можна досягти не перевагою одного, а підтримкою балансу рівності. І таким чином, щоб забезпечити всебічний розвиток людства, жінок закликали до науки та просвітництва, висувалося скасування поширених звичаїв і традицій, а також гасло про те, що жінки повинні бути освіченими та активно брати участь у громадських справах.

**Ключові слова:** просвітництво, мислитель, позбавлена прав, прогрес, жінка, свобода, боротьба.

**Introduction.** Women have never shied away from their struggle in any society, social environment and circumstances, regardless of violence, injustice and oppression, and have shown heroism by fighting for the change of unjust relations,

and this courage they have demonstrated is actually the embodiment of women's political power and the source of power. In the middle of the 19th century, enlightenment and national awakening took place in Azerbaijan. Our female enlighteners who joined the fight against illiteracy, fought for women's freedom, their involvement in education, and the education of our women are the main protagonists of this awakening.

The main goal of the article was to shed light on the struggle for the freedom and rights of our women who are disenfranchised, deprived of science and education in public life, and to evaluate this struggle, that is, the importance of the education of our women, as an integral part of the general socio-political struggle of society. It is stated that if a woman wants to express herself, she must definitely be educated. And it is precisely for this reason that our enlightened, patriotic intellectuals, who spoke about the importance of cultural progress and learning science, worked for the development of science and culture, and, despite the difficulties of that time, took care of the education of Azerbaijani girls.

**Innovation in the article.** For the first time, the author studied the problem of a woman being free, having free will, and having the power to independently decide her own destiny without depending on anyone, based on the works of thinkers.

**Main material and results.** The illiteracy of women has always deeply concerned and worried prominent thinkers of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani enlightened intellectuals saw the liberation of women from ignorance in their enlightenment, and by highlighting the issue of women's education and freedom, they created the basis for the realization of this idea.

In recent years, the status of gender studies in the social sciences of Azerbaijan has risen to the academic level. Thus, a group of scientists who have been professionally and consistently engaged in gender studies for nearly 30 years has been formed at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Azerbaijan National

Academy of Sciences. The 22-volume collection of studies of this group has been positively received by the scientific community. The works of the following researchers are of particular importance in relation to the problem mentioned in the article. These are: Abasov A., Adigözalova S. Dynamics of the gender situation in Azerbaijan (mid-19th century-early 20th century) [1], Seyidova G. Some thoughts on the history and modernity of gender relations. [2], Mirzazade R. Female public figure in the history of Azerbaijan: Natavan, a princess and the last heir of Karabakh khanate. [3], Alakbarli F. Azerbaijani Enlightener Women of the 19th Century and others [4], Horst Helle. The evolution of gender in different culture [5], Mirzaeva Valentina. Concerning gender resource potential in view of existential challenges [6].

They insisted on the irreplaceable role of women in the progress of science, education and culture, in the development of our people [7]. Thus, the progress of society begins with the enlightenment of women, and from this point of view, the enlightenment of women was considered extremely necessary. An educated and cultured woman was appreciated, her high moral qualities were praised, and the idea that educated, literate women instill high qualities in their children was propagated. And thus, in the image of the people, the development of public consciousness took place in society as a whole. Because, the prominent intellectual class of that time understood very well that an uneducated woman would never be able to take her deserved position in society, and would continue her rightless, miserable life.

At the end of the 19th century, most women in Azerbaijan existed as creatures without rights, isolated from public life and living in superstition. The fact that our women lived far from science, literacy, and education could not but worry Azerbaijani intellectuals [8]. And it is no coincidence that the fact that our women stopped simply existing and became active members of society, and their enlightenment is the result of the great efforts and labor of our intellectuals. Our intellectuals, who wanted to see women as individuals free, left a deep mark on the

history of Azerbaijani culture and rendered invaluable services to the history of national public thought. Progressive, enlightening intellectuals saw the only way for the nation to escape from the slavery of ignorance and backwardness in science and education, and in the literacy of the people. Because the future of Azerbaijan was growing in the arms of Azerbaijani women. Because an educated woman means a great support and guarantor of success for the family and the state. Aware of the essence of this idea, Azerbaijani intellectuals saw the enlightenment of the people, the upbringing of a healthy generation, the formation of an environment where people have equal rights precisely in the role of women, in the importance of their education [9]. And on this path, they spared no effort and initiated the transformation of Azerbaijani women into productive and beneficial members of society, actively participating in general public affairs. Despite the contradictions brought by the era, Azerbaijani women, who had no rights, now rose to fight for their position in society, freedom, and rights. Their efforts in enlightenment led to the elimination of superstition and thus contributed greatly to the creation of a spiritual and cultural heritage such as education, enlightenment, and charity. As a result, the number of female teachers, girls' schools, and students in the country increased day by day. This struggle that took place in the country at that time manifested itself in all socio-political, cultural-literary development, declaring the strength, struggle, and determination of Azerbaijani women. And this could only be achieved by acquiring knowledge and education. It was precisely as a result of this determined effort of Azerbaijani women that great support was given to the elimination of illiteracy and a successful struggle was waged [10].

During this period, one could see in the pages of the press that great attention was paid to issues such as the attitude towards women in society, their education, the protection of women's rights, and women's freedom. When analyzing the period, one can come to the conclusion that the struggle waged by the Azerbaijani press has

indeed played an undeniable role in the transformation of women into full-fledged members of our socio-political and cultural-economic life. For example, the Kaspi newspaper wrote on this occasion: "If Muslim women are currently in a state of lawlessness and impasse, it is not the religion of Muhammad that is to blame, but the historical socio-economic environment in which Muslim peoples lived, the despotic Eastern tyrants who distorted Islam for the sake of their own personal interests, and the Muslim clergy" [11, p. 85]. For this reason, our intellectuals emphasized the importance of enlightenment and education, indicating that in order for our women to achieve freedom, they must first acquire education and science, stating that only in this way can Azerbaijani women become active participants in the struggle for their freedom, become educated, understand their rights, and become owners of their own personal lives. All these verses and examples cited are the most obvious indicators of women's rightslessness, allowing us to see that period in all its nakedness and feel the painful situation of our women. In the words of Omar Faig Nemanzadeh: "Giving women freedom, saving them from Eastern inertia should be our most important task, because it is precisely our lack of rights for women, our greatest social shortcomings" [12, p.50]. And it is precisely for this reason that the liberation of women was considered the most important, leading issue of the national liberation struggle. All these processes, namely, the fact that so much importance was given to the women's issue in the country, that one of the main issues that worried Azerbaijani intellectuals was precisely women's education, and the struggle against women's lack of rights led to the awakening of national consciousness and the strengthening of the process of the formation of a national ideology.

Another key point is that the signatures of our women are now often found on the pages of the press, and in this way our intellectual women were reaching out to more women, calling them to science, enlightenment, progress, and the struggle for their rights and entitlements. The most important point that we must emphasize here

again and again is that a woman spoke in the press with such courageous words in difficult circumstances. This is truly an example of heroism. Dozens of articles inspired our women and girls, encouraging them to stand up and wake up from the sleep of negligence. The enlightened intellectuals of Azerbaijan, who educated girls and gave them rich knowledge, taught them literacy, and guided them, carried the entire burden of education on their shoulders, but they did not tire of this difficulty, did not say they were tired, and worked tirelessly and with all their might. To cope with this great task, they worked tirelessly day and night, did not spare their knowledge and experience on this path. It is precisely as a result of this great labor that many Azerbaijani women who began their public activities as teachers rose to the level of party and state figures. And these proud facts are an indication that the sufferings suffered were not in vain. Our intellectuals unanimously believed that only if our girls were involved in education would the veil of darkness be lifted from their faces [6]. Thus, the difficult struggle of the press for women's freedom was not in vain, but on the contrary, it led to the emergence of progressive positions and trends on women's issues within various circles of society. Azerbaijani women are now awakening, realizing their rightsless situation, looking for a way out, starting to appear in public and political life, and thus becoming a serious social force.

One of the reasons that prompted the media to cover the current situation regarding women's education was the establishment of a girls' school. Stressing the importance of opening a girls' school, Haji Zeynalabdin Taghiyev said: "In most countries of the world, even the educated are studying and getting education, but our Muslim educated are completely illiterate. Our daughters are the mothers of our future children. The children of illiterate mothers grow up illiterate, lacking in education... A community whose mothers are educated can do a lot. A community whose mothers and women are illiterate is like a blind person. I think that I will open a girls' school at my own expense so that our Muslim girls can be educated." [8,

p.36]. One of our intellectuals, Alimarden bey Topchubashov, who could foresee the role that the school would play in the life of society and the contribution it would make to the development of the country, evaluated the opening of the first Muslim girls' school that would play an important role in the revival of Muslim women as an unprecedented event in the history of education and training: "The time has come to bring Muslims out of the darkness of ignorance, and only education can enable a Muslim woman to fulfill her feminine and maternal duties wisely. can teach. The education and upbringing of women is such a cornerstone that without it the progress of Muslims in cultural, spiritual and economic relations is inconceivable. You, Haji Zeynalabdin, who is highly respected among your religious brothers, with your new dedication, which we celebrate today, for the benefit of the enlightenment of Muslims... you have erected a truly unattainable monument for yourself" [13, p.36]. A clear example of how great the importance of the establishment of the school in the life of Azerbaijani women can be seen in the letter of gratitude addressed to Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev by the girls on the occasion of the opening of the school: "You have elevated us in your eyes and in the Muslim community. Our moral duty is to justify the name of educated, well-mannered, high-ranking girls among all nations" [13, p.14]. Dozens of Azerbaijani girls who graduated from this school made their valuable contributions to the cultural progress of our nation and the implementation of educational policy in subsequent periods. All these initiatives, the new schools opened, the Muslim women's charitable societies created, played an indispensable role in attracting women to science, cultural and educational work, and in their development, causing an awakening in women's lives. Those enlightened women carried out a number of charitable works and cultural events, which ultimately led to the increase in the worldview of our women and the rise of their cultural level. This was a great revolutionary turn for that time, and they fought diligently and persistently on this path, making their valuable contribution to women's education

and the fight against ignorance [14].

As we have noted, during this period, the study of the status of women in Azerbaijan, their place in society, and attitudes towards them formed the main line of the works of writers and thinkers of the time. We find it difficult to explain the struggle of the leading intellectuals of the period because their struggle did not end only with the solution of the problem of enlightenment, but they continued this honorable struggle to achieve the elimination of existing shortcomings in order to grant women more freedoms. The works of scientists are still a valuable source in terms of the role and development of women in society. As a clear proof, we would like to recall the ideas expressed by academician Firudin Kocharli in his book “M.F. Akhundov’s Worldview”: “The writers of the 19th century, along with fighting for the enlightenment of the people, especially women, also devoted a large space to women’s rights” [13, p.7]. Emphasizing that the only way to get rid of the ignorance and injustice faced by women in the 19th century was through education, Mirza Fatali's works dedicated to the topic of women are still considered a very valuable source in terms of studying and researching the position and rights of women in society. The most important point that the writer, who rightly spoke about the importance of education, actually wanted to convey is that our women faced problems both in the family and in society precisely because they did not receive education and did not know their rights, and they became a being without rights, just existing. The writer's works once again show that the writer attributed the root of all the troubles in society to the lack of equal rights between men and women and the injustice of women. The thinker, who believed that women were more willful and spiritually stronger than men, attached great importance to the role played by women in society.

If we talk about the work done in the field of education, the great work and dedication of our writers in this field, then we could not help but recall the work of

Sultan Majid Ganizadeh "Mektubati-Sheydabay Shirvani". While talking about the importance of educating girls in the work, the following comparison caught my attention: a book is an adornment of the "soul and soul", it is necessary to know the ways of life and livelihood, to raise human dignity. It is as if our thinkers deeply believed in the power of advanced ideas to change society. The main point that the writer tried to show as an enlightener in the example of the main character of the work, Sheydabay, can be clearly seen from the following lines: "Rather than eliminating the flaws left over from old traditions and throwing them at the people, it is better to protect the people from ignorance by using the rules of our age as a shield" [14, p.120]. Therefore, he likens the widespread ignorance and ignorance that exists today to the struggle between good and evil: "just as darkness falls when there is light, evil appears when there is good" [14, p. 129]. In other words, the main point that the writer wants to emphasize is that ignorance and ignorance cannot be eliminated with words, it is necessary to fight for it. And it is precisely for this reason that Sheydabey, who attaches importance to education and science, emphasizes with great confidence: "if a lamp is to be lit for us, it must be lit from the flame of the school" [14, p.121]. He sees the salvation of the nation in science and education. In other words, education is a ray of light, a cradle in the kingdom of darkness. "If you want to be a sultan, become a servant in a school..." [14, p.121]. - he valued the school as a sacred place and equated standing at its door with being a servant. In my opinion, a better explanation and explanation of the topic is not possible. He saw the only way to escape from the darkness of ignorance and the pressure of moral and physical oppression of humanity in education. Therefore, being educated means getting rid of oppression, creating a new, healthy society by fighting ignorance and ignorance. Because, things do not get better by criticizing, the most important point here is to show the way to escape from darkness. The work reflects a complete picture of the necessary problems of the social environment that existed in Azerbaijan

in the 19th century.

The theme of women's freedom was not bypassed by the pens of our poets, and fiery poems with a call were written in this spirit. As an example, we wanted to visit the creativity of Muhammad Hadi. From the words of the poet who could not reconcile with the situation in which women found themselves:

She lives in oppression, neither day nor morning shines, When the light of a woman appears, darkness flees [15, p.189].

The poet tries to show that even darkness is helpless in front of the light and light of a woman. We cannot apply these ideas only to that period, this idea, which has become a slogan, applies to all periods, to all societies that treat women as individuals without rights.

As we have mentioned, during this period, representatives of progressive society actively fought for the expansion of women's education and their involvement in public life, rendering invaluable services in the enlightenment of our women. Our women, whose names we will mention, who sacrificed themselves for the benefit of the people, are a clear example of this.

The name of Nazli khanum Mammad-aga bey kizi Tahirova, one of our female educators who fought for the education of our women, should be specially mentioned. Because, in addition to teaching, this intellectual lady succeeded in establishing the first girls' theater by opening a drama club. Thus, she caused our girls to participate more actively in social life [15].

Among other enlightened ladies, Hanifa khanum Zardabi, one of the first enlightened women of Azerbaijan, who went down in history as the founder of the first girls' school in Baku, achieved the education of dozens of Azerbaijani girls in this great field of service and thus became a lamp and light on the path of many young people. Hasan bey's great support for Hanifa khanum's educational activities further inspired her and pushed her to great deeds. After that, she began to move

forward on the path of enlightenment more successfully and confidently. In 1873, she organized the first theater performance in Turkish in Baku with her students, achieving the more active participation of our girls in social life. In 1875, Hasan Bey published the first Turkish newspaper, “Ekinchi,” one of the main goals of which was enlightenment. Despite the hardships and difficulties encountered during the publication of the newspaper, this intellectual lady, shoulder to shoulder with Hasab Bey Zardabi, did her best to benefit the people. Hanifa Aliyeva was not only Hasan Bey Zardabi’s wife, but also a comrade in the struggle. Hanifa Aliyeva recalled those years as follows: “The newspaper mobilized society. Hasan Bey was very sensitive to the new reporters and employees of the newspaper. Often, he would carefully return the weak articles he received to the owner and explain their shortcomings” [15, p.40]. Hanifa Aliyeva did not limit herself to this, she even opened the door of her house to young people who wanted to study, opened free schools in her homes and apartments, taught them science and literacy, and supported them in their more confident steps in the social sphere. In addition to teaching children in her apartment, Hanifa Aliyeva went from village to village, house to house, teaching women how to sew, read and write, translated and told fairy tales from Russian, went from house to house, vaccinated children, and organized women's counseling centers in different villages. One of the facts I read was about her saving 132 people from the Zardab community from lifelong blindness. It is impossible not to feel happy as I read. The main point that touched me when I thought about it was how a woman could carry such a huge burden on her delicate shoulders, and most importantly, with such dignity, responsibility, and carrying it out to the end. Although her life was full of suffering, trials, and sometimes persecution, she never tired of the struggle, but on the contrary, gaining even more strength, she moved forward with great strides and enthusiasm, confident that she was on the right path. Hanifa Aliyeva said: “The goal of my life has been and will be to raise the cultural level of Turkish women in the struggle

against the rights of the common people, especially women, and exploitation. I am happy that I lived until the time when all horizons opened for the liberation of Turkish women from slavery.” In addition, Hanifa Aliyeva was one of the founders of the women's section of the “Nijat” society. Hanifa Aliyeva is one of the first Muslim women to walk without a veil. In addition, her name has also gone down in the history of Azerbaijan as one of the first enlightened women.

These intellectual women, not remaining indifferent to the socio-political events taking place in the country, fought against ignorance, fought tirelessly for the enlightenment and progress of people at the cost of their lives, and supported girls' education in every way. Thus, they contributed to the development of enlightenment and national awakening in Azerbaijan. And it is the result of the efforts of these women that our oppressed women, who have been victims of eastern ignorance for centuries, took refuge under the flag of freedom raised by these fighting people and joined the struggle, welcoming the freedom offered to them with great enthusiasm.

**Conclusion.** The main achievement of this period can be considered the creation of wide opportunities for Azerbaijani women to become active members of a democratic society, the elimination of illiteracy among women in a short time, their equal rights with men in society, and the ability to realize their talents and skills. We have also examined the role of our intellectuals on this path, linking the path to the liberation of Eastern women only to enlightenment, and the great work of our selfless people who instilled in society the idea that the education of women can save them from the difficult situation they are living in. Because, the role given to women in any society, how much importance they are given to them, is an indicator of the level of culture of the society.

And although it is very difficult to believe, in a period when they were forced to distance themselves from national existence, women's protests slowly began to be heard, to express themselves, to raise their voices of truth, even if in a whisper. The

role of our thinkers and pioneering women in this awakening is undeniable, and soon a wave of protests almost swept the entire country. Waiting for such a day is both highly anticipated and not very convincing. And it was impossible not to rejoice at such an awakening. After all, the seeds of the thinkers' dreams, their ideals began to bloom, sprout, and take wing, and their faith in a bright tomorrow increased significantly. Thus, they opened a new stage in the public consciousness of the people, in their rich social history, rebelling against the exploitation of man by man, all kinds of oppression and torture against women on earth, and turned into selfless, warlike heroes who showed an uncompromising and merciless determination to fight against all reactionary dogmas. As we mentioned above, during the Enlightenment period, Azerbaijani enlighteners put forward the issues of women's education and freedom more boldly, tried to ensure that girls also received education in existing schools, and spared no effort to realize this idea by putting forward the idea of establishing national girls' schools. The veiling of women was considered as exploitation, oppression and injustice, and it was argued that only if they were freed from the veil could the people seriously take the path of progress. Women's education was considered an integral part of women's freedom, it was considered important for women to be educated and knowledgeable, and it was said that the future of society depended on this factor. In conclusion, we would like to note that women have always written their names in history with their heroism, sharp mind and thoughts. As a result of our research, we were once again convinced that Azerbaijani women have shed light on all historical periods with their mind and thoughts, spared no effort for the enlightenment and literacy of the people, actively participated in the life of our society, made their contributions in different fields, and gave impetus to the development of our society as a whole.

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