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Reflection of Political and Social Influences on
the Ghazal Genre in Azerbaijani Literature in
the 20th Century: Aliagha Vahid's Literary
Works

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Abstract – The essay focuses on the problems that hindered the ghazal genre from developing and how the poet kept the tradition alive in Azerbaijani literature at the start of the 20th century. We used Aliagha Vahid’s literary creativity for our project since he lived through this period in Azerbaijan, experienced all of its hardships, and demonstrated the genre’s potential by creating poetic imagery of the time in his ghazals. He is an Azerbaijani poet who is revered in the Turkic community as Fuzuli’s successor and is credited with saving the ghazal genre in Azerbaijani literature. Analyzing his lyrics provided excellent possibilities to examine the influential factors on all of the Azerbaijani literature at the time. In the study, his creation of new kinds of ghazals with social and political issues while retaining the characteristics of the traditional ghazal genre was investigated. With him, the genre in Azerbaijani literature underwent a new phase. The attempt to eradicate the ghazal from the Azerbaijani literature which has a history of centuries–long history did not succeed as a result of mostly Aliagha Vahid’s serious efforts. For this purpose, the poet’s historical milieu, the challenges of the repression, his satirical ghazals with a socio-political theme, the thematic details of his lyrics, and other issues have been involved in the investigation.

Keywords – Azerbaijani Literature; Aliagha Vahid; Satirical Ghazal; Socio-political Themes.

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1. Introduction. Barriers to the development of the ghazal genre

At the beginning of the XX century, there was almost no literary and social basis for the development of ghazal poetry in Azerbaijani literature. Two factors had particularly great influences on the ghazal genre in this period: social and political factors.

The first was the social factor which determined that the vast majority of the population in Azerbaijan was deprived of the opportunity to read and understand the ghazals because the ghazal in Azerbaijani literature at the beginning of the 20th century still kept using the Arabic and Persian literary traditions and models. Gulkhani Panah wrote in "Arabic-speaking Azerbaijani Literature": "Arab invaders entered Azerbaijan in the seventh century and forcibly converted the local population to speaking Arabic. They also established madrasahs and instituted Arabic-language instruction there. After that, Azerbaijani poets began writing their works in Arabic in the latter half of the 7th century" (14). The Umayyad dynasty was overthrown and replaced by the Abbasid dynasty as a result of the uprisings and struggles by the Middle Eastern peoples who were opposed to the Arabization policy. Poetry began to be written in Persian starting in the ninth century, while "religious and scientific writings continued to be written in Arabic", sustaining that language's primacy as a religious language. Gulkhani points out in "The Influence of Fiction" that "The Persian language then extended across Central Asia, Iran, and Azerbaijan and it gained popularity as a lyrical language. In feudal palaces, it, therefore, started to gain power as "an official and literary language" (13). In the early 20th century, Azerbaijani literature continued this trend. Ghazals that were written mostly in Arabic and Persian were typical and common practice in Azerbaijani literature. The evidence from the sources provides unmistakable proof that the Arabic and Persian words found in Azerbaijani literature's ghazals come from those significant historical influences. Even though centuries had gone by, many of the terms from the conquering empires would surely be found in 20th-century ghazals. The worst part of the situation was that ghazals were only understandable to those who had studied Arabic and Persian. This was the first aspect of how crucial it was to make a revolution in the ghazal genre's linguistic simplification. Therefore, Aliagha Vahid's significant and urgent task was to produce contemporary ghazals removing those Arabic-Persian from Azerbaijani national ghazals and adapting to the local vernacular language. Only in this method, it would be simple to permanently imprint the ghazal lyrics in people's minds.

The second factor was related to Soviet ideology. This factor manifested itself in the Soviet regime's influence on Azerbaijani literature. Academician Isa Habibbayli analyzes this period in his article titled "From Socialist Realism to National Independence" as follows:

The Soviet regime implemented strict measures to shape its literature policy. While most poets and writers who began their work before the regime refrained from openly promoting it, Soviet literature still played a significant role in determining the development of literature and art in the country. The Communist Party advocated for the socialist realism method, which aimed to create literature that was national in form, socialist in content, classist, optimistic, and promoted proletarian internationalism. Azerbaijani literature was not exempt from reflecting the Soviet reality and its advantages, as it was under the strict Stalinist regime. In fact, writers who did not

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adhere to this creative method risked severe consequences, including death. The tragic events of 1937 meant that the intellectuals had to choose between confronting the regime or being loyal to it. (Habibbayli)

In connection with this attitude, the ghazal was also in danger as a genre written in traditional way, so it was at risk of being lost once and for all. Mammad Nuruoglu, a well-known researcher and compiler, explained in his research work *Aliagha Vahid's Poetry*: “The local allies of the Soviet administration attempted to discredit the thousand-year-old ghazal by humiliating those who tell inappropriate words instead of speaking pure Russian language and telling them not to sing a ghazal” (12). For this purpose, they wanted to make people think that the ghazal genre is meaningless and banal. Academician Bekir Nabiyev provides the following details while describing the Stalinist regime's assault on the ghazal genre:

Love poetry, which dates back to ancient times, is still underappreciated. Ghazals, in particular, which discuss the revival of young hearts, unadulterated love, and love's endurance, are particularly notorious for these themes. The motifs of the Cultural Revolution, the hammer-sickle, the bayonet-machine gun, and a little later, the collective and state farms also would suppress and eliminate the ghazal poetry. (7)

The Soviet administration generally viewed all of the ghazals that were penned during this time as being archaic and pastoral. However, A. Vahid responded to these unfair views and biased comments with his contemporary ghazals by hinting at them. As a way out of this situation, he had to make one of these crucial decisions since he was destined to live in such a complex and terrifying time:

___ either to ensure that the ghazal genre continues to flourish in Azerbaijani literature
or
___ to disregard its extermination from the literature.

By altering the ghazal's topics and subjects, Aliagha Vahid attempted to lessen the adverse impacts of these two aspects and keep the ghazal lyrics alive.

2. Development

2.1 Aliagha Vahid, one of the followers of Muhammed Fuzuli and a steadfast defender of ghazal genre

Because of his aptitude for impromptu ghazal and meyxana telling, Aliagha Mammadgulu Isgandarov (also known by his pen name as Aliagha Vahid) (1895–1965) is regarded as a *ghazalkhan*¹ and *meyxana*² teller in the literature of the Turkic world. He is a poet with a multifaceted creative path who has written masterfully in a variety of genres, including ghazals, lyric poetry, satire, taqiya, and meyxana. In Azerbaijani poetry of his time, the traditions of the traditional ghazal form persisted as “restricted topics that are only about the poet's beloved one. The poet describes, magnifies, praises, and even criticizes the beloved” (Galip 9). Azade Rustamova, a 20th century orientalist scholar and researcher of ancient Azerbaijani poetry, likewise noted the ghazal's constrained theme and discussed her expectations in her monograph *Ghazal in Classical Azerbaijani Poetry. History and poetics of the genre* that “although ghazals

¹ A poet who recites poems in the ghazal genre without any prior preparation.

² A distinctive Azerbaijani literary and folk rap tradition, consisting of an unaccompanied song performed by one or more people improvising on a particular subject.

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today are verses about love and affection dedicated to women, years and centuries will pass, the scope of the ghazal will expand, purposeful examples of this genre like religious, philosophical, socio-political will appear in new themes” (28). Thus, the ghazal genre needed a revolution. Writing new varieties of ghazals is a genre innovation that must be done by Aliagha Vahid. It was the current trend and also the demand of the time. Because the first half of the 20th century was such a chaotic and hazardous period in Azerbaijan, the poet could not directly write what he thought by writing ghazals. Besides it, Mammad Nuruoglu, the author of the book *What we know about Aliagha Vahid* (which is a compilation of research on Aliagha Vahid), claims that “in his literary works, two authors with complementary features: the author of lyrical and the author of satirical poetry can be seen” after he innovates the genre (5). In the first direction, “he is recognized as one of the followers of Muhammad Fuzuli” (1494–1556), a poet, author, and thinker from the 16th century who wrote in his native Azerbaijani as well as Arabic and Persian. However, in the second direction, “the satirical influence of Mirza Alakbar Sabir (1862-1911), an Azerbaijani satirical poet, public personality, philosopher, and teacher is noticed” (5).

Aliagha Vahid became one of the most influential individuals in ghazal poetry in the first half of the 20th century by fusing the creative qualities of these two geniuses and rose to prominence as one of the foremost writers of ghazals. Rafael Huseynov emphasized in *Opinions on the aspects of the study of Aliagha Vahid's heritage* that the poet was highly appreciated by his contemporaries:

Yahya Sheyda,³ an Iranian literary critic refers to him as ‘a poet of love’ because of his capacity ‘to convey the concept of love’, a crucial component of the ghazal genre, in a variety of circumstances. Besides it, he was referred to as the ‘Hafiz of the Era’ by Gulamhuseyn Begdali and the ‘follower of Fuzuli’ in Turkic literature. (Huseynov 13)

We can state with certainty that he was successful in the ghazal and satire genres. Unfortunately, while the poet’s love lyrics were extensively investigated, the investigation did not touch on any of his ghazals with sarcastic undertones. He wrote genres a lot preserving the ghazal genre from disappearance.

2.2 Simplifying the Language of the Ghazal Lyrics in Azerbaijani Literature

Considering that the first factor that obstacles the growth of the ghazal genre in Azerbaijani literature in the 20th century was the social factor, Aliagha Vahid’s efforts in this field were actual, commendable, and respectable. His first ghazal starting with verses “Oh! My Lord! Even for a moment, I didn't rejoice in the realm of the world!” was published in a progressive Turkic journal called *Igbal* in 1915. Then, his debut book, *The Result of Greediness* was released in 1916. Because he partially removed all unfamiliar foreign terms, including Arabic and Persian words from ghazal units, and satirical poems were included the book became distinct from those written in prior times. After that, his ghazal vocabulary became crisper, easier to understand, and simpler than his predecessors. To make the ghazals “as basic and understandable as possible, he worked deliberately and imaginatively on their language” (Shirinov 12). He, therefore, pioneered a new genre by penning national ghazals in his mother tongue.

He was referred to as ‘a poet of love’ during the early years of his literary career because “love was the main line of his literary creativity at the beginning, he also obeyed to the traditions of the classical ghazal genre and wrote about love a lot following the requirements of the

³ In the 50s, he was the head of the delegation invited from Iran to Azerbaijan on the occasion of cultural days in Azerbaijan.

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classic ghazal genre” (Rahimova 3). The poet adhered to the motto “I comprehend only love in the world” throughout his writings. He describes the idea of love in his ghazals as including “fragments of mystical overtones, which also incorporates emotions of detachment, hardships faced through physical separation from the beloved, as well as the representation of a yearning lover as a loyal martyr in addition to the traditional themes in classical poetry” (Varghese). However, in Vahid’s ghazals, words like *lover-beloved*, *candle-flame*, and *rose-nightingale* which characterize the concept of love in classical poetry and express lofty goals and virtues have a broader philosophical significance. His true attitude is made clear by the phrase “Only service to humanity will remain in the world”. He writes:

Sevgilim, eşq olmasa varlıq bütün əfsanədir,
Eşqdən məhrum olan insanlığı biganədir. (Aliqha, *Selected works* 2005 271)

My beloved! Without love, life is only a myth,
Who deprived of Love is indifferent to humanity!⁴

The word ‘love’ as used by Aliqha Vahid captures the essence of humans and humanity. He claimed that taking away this wholeness amounted to taking away a person’s humanity and dignity. The poet lists several human virtues, such as upholding justice and truth, opposing injustice, standing up for women's equality, loving one's country and people, abhorring war, condemning ignorance and superstition, etc. His ghazals address each of these ideals in turn. This is how he glorifies his “Motherland”:

Fəxr etmə ey bülbülü şeyda, çəmənım var,
Qoy fəxr eləyim mən ki, gözəl bir vətənim var. (Aliqha, *Selected works* 2005 249)

Nightingale! Don’t be so arrogant that you have a meadow!
Let me be proud that I have a beautiful country.

In this ghazal, Vahid explores the idea of love as a sign of sublime beauty that unites individuals with the physical world and enhances the idea of life in the human imagination. By contrasting the emphasis on his native country with the nightingale’s devotion to the meadow, he achieves a lyrical balance. The comparison’s lyrical beauty comes from the way the poet’s imagination and the ghazal genre’s myriad potential are united. Thus, the ghazal demonstrates the ghazal’s descriptive power, which can also be used “to convey the beauty, simplicity, delicacy, and elegance of the native Azerbaijani language” (Yusifli 3).

2.3 A New Subject Direction in Aliqha Vahid’s Ghazals in 1914-1917: Justice

Aliqha Vahid's political opposition was evident throughout all phases of his creative process. During these phases, he sometimes appeared among the crowd calling for workers' rights and sometimes he became a socialist partner inspired by the socialist beliefs, vehemently supporting its philosophy in his ghazals. It is sufficient to look at the historical epoch of World War I and the Russian October Revolution in 1917 to comprehend the specifics of the poet's literary struggle against the political impact of the ghazal genre. Because examining the poet's literary creativity entails examining this particular historical age itself. Mammadov describes the general picture of this period in detail:

⁴ In this essay, all translations of Aliqha Vahid's ghazals are mine.

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It is well known that tsarist Russia pursued a colonial policy in Azerbaijan in the areas of politics, economics, and culture before World War I. The worst part of the issue was how the tsarist government stepping up its Russification agenda, confiscated the lands of the Azerbaijani peasants systematically and gave them to people who had been displaced from Iran, Turkey, and Russia. Thus, Russians made up 30 percent of Baku's population in 1910. The chauvinist policy of tsarist against Azerbaijanis was shown everywhere. (8)

All these political affairs are reflected in his works in a lyrical or satirical form. As Vahid was a herald of justice, the existing political landscape could not bypass his judgment. In 1914-1919, the poems such as "I could not be happy", "Help", "Thought", "I could not do", "Justice", and "Freedom" were written against the oppression and colonial policy of tsarist Russia. To get rid of these social and political problems, Aliagha Vahid had great expectations of the 1917 October Revolution. He expressed his hopes in his ghazals that "the oppressors will be destroyed and the country will one day be free with justice". In that period, the eight-page Azerbaijani satirical journal *Molla Nasraddin* published his satirical poems that revealed persecution and tyranny.⁵ The poet urged his countrymen to do their best to ensure that freedom would last longer in the ghazals "Freedom" and "Our Remedy" in 1919. He also taught concepts that would apply to all people, such as ending oppressors, guarding freedom, and living in peace. He claimed that it is "preferable to struggle for independence than to ask God's power for it". Seeing the injustice in the country, the poet concludes that "if there is justice everywhere, there will be no courts", so first of all, "people must establish justice in the country":

Nə Xızra bağlıdır, nə Məsihə əlacımız,
Zəhmətlə hasil olmalıdır ehtiyacımız!
Qət etməyincə rişeyi-zalımın,
Hərgiz cahanda olmayacaq ibtihadımız.
Daim gərək biz əsgər olaq, istəsək nicat,
Yox bundan özgə işlə cahanda əlacımız (Aliagha, *Selected works. II volume* 220).

No bound to Khizir, nor Christ, for our remedy,
We need to produce it with effort!
Until we don't destroy the oppressor,
We will never have freedom in the world!
Always be as soldiers! If you want salvation,
Otherwise, no solution can be in the world!

Being a poet of peace, he wants to see the entire world immersed in the light of justice. In his ghazal entitled "Justice" (1919), he expresses his belief that divine power will protect the poor and miserable people if truth and fairness do not establish, and heavenly force will defend the underprivileged and destituted. He adds that justice will ultimately prevail no matter what happens. Atabayli explains Aliaga Vahid's ghazals praising true and justice "reminding his readers of what happened to Pharaoh, a despotic and unfair leader":

İzhar ola gər pərtövi-rüxsari-ədalət,

⁵ *Molla Nasraddin* was an eight-page Azerbaijani satirical periodical published in Tiflis (1906–17), Tabriz (1921), and Baku (1922–33). From the second issue of 1931, the magazine was called *Allahsız (Godless)* in the Azerbaijani and occasionally Russian languages. The magazine was read across the Muslim world from Morocco to East Asia.

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Dünyanı tutar büsbütün ənvari-ədalət.
Qərç eylər onu Nildə Musanın ilahi,
Hər kim edə Firon kimi inkari-ədalət. (Atabaylı 7)

If justice is desired passionately,
It can spread all over the world!
If someone denies justice like Pharaoh,
Christ's God will drown him in the Nile!

The poet concludes the ghazal with an optimistic ending and persuades the public that freedom of the people is possible only after the victory of justice in the country: “Be aware that the people’s house cannot be destroyed, if an architect-justice always repairs it!” (Aliagha, *Selected works. II volume 217*). Two of his ghazals that were presented and especially won favor on justice were “Revolution” and “Song of Freedom” written in 1920. In “The Song of Freedom”, the poet conveys his views, saying things like “who oppress the poor will be punished enough at the end, or it is worth dying because we are on the right way to justice” (Aliagha, *Selected works. II volume 223*). In addition, he highlighted the reasons for oppression and exploitation in the ghazal “Revolution”, concluding that to protect the oppressed class from its oppressors, it is necessary to change the political system in which oppression was established actually:

Sevərcək Gavətək azadəlik, məzlumi-dünyanı
Xilas etmək gərək, Zöhhakı əsrin hər bəlasından.
Əgər məzlumu qurtarmaqsa məqsəd zülmü-zalımdan,
Gərək bilmərrə yıxmaq qəleyi-zülmü binasından. (Aliagha, *Selected works. II volume 222*)

Like Gava,⁶ love freedom in the oppressed world!
Necessary to save all, from the troubles of the epoch, Zohhak!⁷
If the goal is to save the oppressed from the oppressor,
It is necessary to demolish the fortress of oppression!

Zohhak introduces tyranny, while Gava refers to the oppressed class. A. Vahid's aim in transferring these images into his ghazal was to convey the ultimate consequences of ‘oppressed and the oppressors’ to his readers. The poet indirectly sends a message to the rulers who oppressed the people and enslaved them in the modern world that one day they will pay for it.

2.4 Enlightenment in Aliagha Vahid’s Literary Works

Suleyman Aliyarli describes the social and political problems in Azerbaijan where Tsarist Russia implemented its colonial policy at the beginning of the 20th century:

The government forbade the establishment of new schools and periodicals in the native language. Being fluent in Russian was essential, and even becoming a priest required it. There was also control over the mosques. Azerbaijanis were not allowed to construct a mosque on a street if there was a church. Education policy was also biased and deplorable. In the Muslim-populated area, the man should be terrified of both the governor and even a common office clerk.

⁶A hero defeated ruthless and murderous King Zohhak in Iranian folklore.

⁷A character who was overthrown by the blacksmith Gava in an Iranian folktale. Gava and Zohhak are mentioned in the *Dictionary of Arabic and Persian words used in Classical Azerbaijani Literature*.

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Furthermore, a particular order from the Russian emperor forbade teaching European languages to Azerbaijani students majoring in Oriental philology. The fact that foreigners controlled Azerbaijan's riches and that the Tsarist authorities refused to sign contracts with local businessmen because of their nationality was another act of discrimination. (16)

Vahid's literary imagination could not ignore all these political and social issues. He sincerely believed that the main way to solve all of these problems in society is through education. Thereby, education eventually emerged as a major element in the poet's ghazal lyrics. A new period of Aliagha Vahid's literary creativity on these subjects began in the 1920s. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR), the first democratic republic in the East, was founded during this period (September 22, 1918 – April 28, 1920). Following the creation of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan in 1918, significant efforts were made to eradicate illiteracy in the country. Colonial pre-revolutionary Azerbaijan's educational system was in a useless state. Education was one of the key concerns of the newly formed government because

the Azerbaijani people, who lived under the servitude of the Arab, Persian, and Russian empires for centuries, did not have their official language, national school, or books in their native language. In addition, the people were illiterate. Therefore, education became one of the important tasks to be implemented immediately after the establishment of the Democratic Republic. (Ibrahimova 248)

To be able to solve this problem in the country, the poet began to emphasize ideas like opening new-type schools and getting an education in the native language in his works. To convey his ideas to the people, he attended *The Criticism and Propaganda Theater* which had a great role in the social and cultural life of the people in Baku inspiring by the creation of a new democratic republic. The primary goal of the theater was to expose the flaws and the causes of backwardness that prohibit people from becoming literate members of society. Since Aliagha Vahid's goals aligned with the objectives of the theater, he was frequently invited to the theater to perform of his satirical ghazals in front of the spectators. Then, during those years, the *Culture Journal* published "all of those poetic and humorous ghazals every week" (Aliagha, *Selected works 2005* 5). Numerous poems on education subject were written by the author such as "What the school means", "Oh! my lord!", "We Lose Our Patience Because of Ignorance", "Spark of Action", "Self-dependent woman", "Not an opinion", "Rise! My Angel!", "Veil", and "Huriyati-Niswan". With no hesitation, the poet gave the ghazal a humorous tone to emphasize the value of education in his works.

Researchers highly commended Aliagha Vahid's own passion for learning. Mahammadtaghi Zehtabi explains the poet's strive for learning in his book *Memories from Aliagha Vahid*, saying that "even though he was unable to receive a proper education in time, the poet became one of the greatest and most important ghazal poets as a result of his hard individual reading efforts in 20th-century Azerbaijani literature" (31). It is worth mentioning that A. Vahid studied religion for just two years in a madrasa in Baku. He was soon compelled to quit the madrasa due to a lack of financial assistance and the tedious educational system; following this, he started working and providing for his family financially. However, "his attempts and reading with enthusiasm and diligence led him to grasp the traditions of ghazal poetry in classical Arabic literature and he started to create his first ghazal lyrics" (Elchin 395). Bekir Nabiyeu praised Aliagha Vahid for his "delicate treatment of the issues surrounding education and how he brought them up constantly even after the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was overthrown by Russian Bolshevism in 1920. He never stopped to promote education and enlightenment" (7). On the other side, Aliagha Vahid made a connection between the value of education and the Prophet Mohammed's advice to 'seek education, even if it's in China. It implies that education should be pursued for educational objectives regardless of how far away or in another culture it may be'. He highlights the same concept in his 1921 ghazal "Spark of

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Action”. A stanza from the ghazal gives an admonishing message that without education, a man won’t advance:

Məqsud yetişməksə əgər fəzlü kəmalə,
Səy etməliyik elmə, dönərsək də hilalə,
Heç yerdə tərəqqi eləməz elmsiz insan,
Bibəhrə olur su verilməzsə nihalə (Aliqha, *Selected works 2005* 336).

If the goal is to reach perfection,
We should strive for education, even if we suffer from it,
An uneducated person will not make progress anywhere,
Like a seedling could not bear fruit without water.

During the Soviet era, Aliqha Vahid made education a central theme in his ghazals. His two ideas, promoting education and equal rights for women have always been in line with Soviet cultural policy.

2.5 The Poet as a Women’s Equal Rights Supporter

The poet concentrated on the illiteracy of Azerbaijani women at the turn of the century in his ghazals that were frequently printed in the journal *Culture*. Turkish literary critic Kemal Yavuz claims that “women and girls were sold into slavery in Azerbaijan in the 1900s. The unavoidable tragedy of women harms family relationships psychologically and it prevents the progress of the people” (32). Aliqha Vahid focused his writing efforts on highlighting the value of women’s education considering all related problems. He makes an effort to convince the illiterate masses through his ghazals that education, particularly women’s education is essential for the happiness of future generations. The restoration of women’s rights is a prerequisite for this accomplishment. He took a major stand for women’s rights at that time in Azerbaijan’s Muslim society. Furthermore, he argues that it is nonsensical to discuss women’s liberation while superstition rules society and meanwhile, women are uneducated, because contradictions arising from superstition strengthen and ultimately become a barrier to progress.

Based on the ideas of Jalil Mammadguluzade, Aliqha Vahid linked “the plight of women in Azerbaijan with the colonial policy of tsarist and the superstitious despotic regime created by the clerics, henchmen of the regime” (Mammadguluzadeh 246) and sharply satirized them. He stressed the significance of two topics in particular for eradicating the illiteracy of women in society: Achieving legal emancipation of women and Restoration of women’s right to education. He specifically exposed fathers who opposed sending their daughters to schools in his satirical ghazal “What a benefit”:

Aludə olma məktəbə, dil vermə sənətə,
Uyma cəfayə, zövqü cəfadən nə faidə? (Aliqha, *Selected works. II volume* 337)

Don’t be addicted to school! Nor to art!
These are sufferings! Give them up!

In his 1924 poem “Rise, My Angel!”, the poet elaborates on the significance of the subject. Another ghazal on this topic is “Conjecture It”, which was published in a magazine named *Babayi Amir* in 1915. Moreover, he opposed women being covered up and denounced it in his satirical poetry “Veil” in 1929. The veiled woman described in the poem does not wear the

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veil voluntarily. She is forced to wear the veil. Even at home, she should cover her face with a veil because *namabram*, a strange guy, might see her. She is a slave, not free, and a submissive till she dies. She represents the typical Azerbaijani woman at the start of the twentieth century. A comparable illustration is given by Rawya Mohammad Aljared from Marmorstein (1954), which shows that “historically, women have worn the veil for a variety of ritual/religious, cultural, and personal reasons in different societies and within a variety of religions”. Aljared’s other example from Shirazi in his article “Muslim Women in Contemporary Visual Arts; the Veil as a Trope” demonstrates that

veiling was a sign of status and distinction in pre-Islamic Iran as well as the Assyrian, Greco-Roman, and Byzantine empires. Families with ample resources may afford to isolate their ladies. The veil was a symbol of respectability as well as a way of life that excluded manual labor. No one expected slaves or women working in the fields to cover up. (32)

Vahid noted that by the turn of the century, the meaning of the veil transformed emerging as a symbol of tyranny and the retention of women in servitude. The poet's depiction of the veiled woman lacked any human rights. Akhunds and priests who dictated the women that ‘whoever removes the veil is faithless and irreligious, so she will be punished by God with many sufferings and misfortunes in her life’, are exposed by the poet. What saddens the poet is that false religious figures professionally act out their roles in such a convincing manner that even the women who do not understand them are ‘willing to make sacrifices themselves for those false religious groups’. Such clerics use the *hijab verse* to their ends and attempt to persuade people that sending females to any school for education is a sin. According to Vahid's explanation, the veiled woman's declaration in the poem that “I will not give up the veil until I die” has an entirely different connotation; rather than expressing their adherence to their religion, it expresses their grief and hopelessness (Aliagha, *Selected works* 2005 407).

2.6 A Satirical Spirit in Aliagha Vahid’s Ghazals

As we mentioned, studying the poet’s ghazals that criticize ignorance and superstition is crucial for understanding the events that took place at the start of the 20th century. He underlined ignorance as one of the primary causes of illiteracy. In addition, the poet believes that ignorance is the root of all problems and misfortunes that befell the Azerbaijani people and believes that it can be eliminated only by enlightening people. He bemoaned his people’s illiteracy in “Help”, a 1914 ghazal that was published in the Journal *Aliveness*. He uses examples from other countries to highlight how people may learn, advance knowledge, and create new things. In this ghazal, he expresses his opinion that ‘uneducated people are always used as a tool by dishonest religious clerics’. In his 1915 ghazal “Thought”, which was also published in the Journal *Aliveness*, he discusses this topic to awaken his people from superstition and offers guidance to open their eyes, in this way they won’t pursue the path of ignorance. Aliagha Vahid, who carried on Mirza Alakbar Sabir’s satirical traditions, remained faithful to this genre throughout his life and was able to use it to effectively meet the demands of the period. Vahid’s satirical writing has included all the negative stereotypes of society, including

dishonest mollahs, people who lead sleazy lives, ignorant speculators, people who disregard education, pickpockets, opponents of women’s freedom, bribe-takers and procrastinating managers, people who take pride in their position and wealth, in short, all the negative images of society have not been left out of Vahid’s satirical pen. (Nuruoglu 13)

He supported the socialist movement in his lyrics because he had high expectations for the Soviet government. His satirical figures held significant social power and prominence at the

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time. Although the priests appeared to support socialism on the outside, they opposed the socialist notions that people should be kept in ignorance and superstition for their own sake. Vahid attempted to portray every facet of this exploitative class in his work as a proficient critic of social flaws. The addition of a satirical spirit to the ghazal genre is among Aliagha Vahid's most significant alterations to its content. In his humorous ghazal "Oh! My Eye", he frequently calls out hypocritical and haughty clerics, urges them to be merciful, and rejects the idea that poor people are being burned in the fire of persecution. The great Azerbaijani satirical poet Mirze Alakbar Sabir's influence can be seen in his ghazals "It is good" and "What is needed?". He addresses this point to mollahs and writes ironically: "Even if the people die of hunger, never spend a penny, miserliness is good! What is the use of giving alms to the poor?" (Aliagha, *Selected works. I volume 22*). Sabir writes, "Whatever happens to poor people, I do not care" (Sabir 17) with the same satirical tone. Vahid uses criticism as an effective instrument to combat injustice, backwardness, and ignorance in society. He criticizes the hypocrisy and arbitrariness of the mollahs against the people humorously in his ghazal *What a flavor* that "mullahs admonish the people, but they do what they want" (Aliagha, *Selected works 2005 21*). Another poem by the poet, "What a Benefit", also displays the same sense of humor:

Xalqın malını cəhd elə ye, xoş keçirt günün,
Qədri-həyanı bilmə, həyadan nə fəidə?
Məzlumə zülm qılmaq ilə ad qazangilən,
Kim der: cəfanı görmə, cəfadan nə fəidə? (Aliagha, *Selected works. I volume 20*)

Try to obtain the people's property! Have a nice day!
Don't value modesty! Don't do any favor!
Be famous by oppressing the poor!
Who can say?- No benefit! What benefit from favors?

With these words, the poet criticized the proud and oppressive officials and clergy: Do not undervalue yourself, never seek favors, and be famous for uplifting the poor! Who knows? Favors may not bring any benefit.

3. Nightmarish Repression Period and beyond in Aliagha Vahid's life

Aliagha Vahid also witnessed what happened during socialism, especially the events that took place during the repression period. The poet was happy with the victory of socialism and he expresses his strong belief that socialism would lead to human equality and happiness to people in his poetry. His works such as "Pioneers", "Our Country", "March of Samur", "It is in Our Country", "Oil Rig's Song", "Freedom Anthem", and "My Voice" are devoted to the establishment and triumph of socialism. In his ghazals, even the name V. I. Lenin is associated with the concepts of freedom, equality, and fraternity. However, due to its regressive and autocratic characteristics, Stalin's rule, which rejected progressive socialist ideas, became a nightmare for the society's open-minded individuals. According to the academician Bekir Nabiyev's research,

Stalinist forces, guided by the slogan of sweeping away like a mighty storm, either deported or executed the free-thinking people who were the enemies of socialism or anyone who were expected to be an enemy in the future. Therefore, 22,000 Azerbaijani leaders, public personalities, poets, and writers perished as a result of the 1937s repressions. The nation's elite class was assassinated during the years of repression by the Bolshevik group's continued deepening of the class struggle, which was especially fanatical in applying the horrifying precepts it had learned from Josef Stalin. (7)

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Aliagha Vahid, “the last Mohican of the ghazal genre became famous with his satirical works” during the turbulent 1930s according to Arif Orucov (Orucov). However, Aliagha Vahid's competitors in the poetry world did not appreciate this, and Stalin's local allies were envious of his poetic talent and tried to suppress him by falsely portraying what he had written about socialism to remove him from their paths. It was inevitable that in the next few days Aliagha Vahid would be a victim of repression. This is because “he rarely composed poems glorifying Lenin, Stalin, and their party, thus the governing circles did not like him and as a result, they did not consider his literary compositions to be in line with the standards of socialism, and his ghazals were considered outdated, shepherd-like things” (Mirahmadov 218). Therefore, he makes every effort to avoid falling victim to repression, so he spends the majority of his time at drinking parties and reads his most recent ghazals to his fans who will memorize them later. Additionally, he consumes alcohol and behaves like a drunk and finally, he can avoid detection in this way. Even once, in 1937, Vahid's name was included on a list of the upcoming victims of repression given to Mirjafar Bagirov, the communist leader of the Azerbaijan SSR from 1932 to 1953 under the Soviet leadership of Joseph Stalin. His name was crossed out by Mirjafar Bagirov, who told: “He is a drunk all day; what harm he could do us” (Pashayeva 3). Ramiz Iskenderov, Aliagha Vahid's son, also confirmed in one of his interviews that “his father never fell down or teased anyone from the influence of alcohol. He used to drink to protect himself and managed to escape repression in 1937 because authorities didn't take him seriously” (Iskenderov). Therefore A. Vahid was able to avoid the notice of the powerful circles as a man who spent and enjoyed drinking parties. Despite all the obstacles, Aliagha Vahid continued writing ghazals right up till the end of his 70-year life.

Then, throughout the years following the post-repression period, patriotism becomes a motif that frequently appears in Aliagha Vahid's poems. His poems denouncing *Hitler's fascism* were widely read when World War II broke out. The entire nation is familiar with these ghazals since they are so simple to understand. He wrote several ghazals on patriotism during World War II including “Our Country”, “Motherland”, “In This Holiday”, “Samur's Marching”, and “It's in Our Land” in 1939s. The 1952 ghazal “My Enthusiasm is still my motherland like a Nightingale” beautifully speaks about his love for his motherland and was originally published in his book *Ghazals* (1954), and it is as follows:

Yüzlərlə gözəl aşiqi olsam da mən, amma
Qəlbim yənə də aşiqi-sevdayi-vətəndir.
Dünyaya gözəllik verən, əlbəttə, günəşdir,
Ondan da gözəl xəlqə təcəllayi-vətəndir (Aliagha, *Selected works* 2005 280).

Although I'm in love with hundreds of beauties,
But my heart is still in love with my homeland.
The sun, of course, gives beauty to the world,
Even more beauties homeland gives to people.

Aliagha Vahid, a well-known poet, and ghazal khan, “penetrated various spheres of public life, took his themes and critical goals directly from the daily life, wishes, and needs of the people from the socio-political struggle of his time” (Yavuz 43).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the literary contributions of Aliagha Vahid, who played a crucial role in mitigating the sociopolitical effects and preventing the decline of the ghazal genre from Azerbaijani literature in the first half of the 20th century. The poet

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introduced innovation to the ghazal rather than allowing it to disappear from twentieth-century Azerbaijani literature or flourish less than it did during the Fuzuli era. The poet prevented the ghazal genre from vanishing in twentieth-century Azerbaijani literature and declining below the level of growth in the Fuzuli era; rather, he added innovation to the ghazal. He did it by simplifying the ghazals' wording to make them easier to read and understand and also writing new satirical ghazals by capturing the social and political problems that occur in the society. The poet saved the ghazal from the tumults of the twentieth century and gave it as a gift to poets of the 21st century. Additionally, he established his literary school under his name while making this innovation by penning a significant number of ghazals with new themes. His poetry shed light on the time he lived in and it is also true that his ghazals, which have social and political themes, are reflections of the twentieth century. Because the poet showed what the ghazal genre is capable of and that this genre deserves to live in literature by giving a vivid description of the social problems. We believe that the instances and analysis of Aliagha Vahid's satirical ghazals will provide a foundation for examining them in this direction as well, given that his works have been investigated in one way by being labeled a love poet. His contributions to literature were also not appreciated when he was alive. Although he was very popular among the people, he was disliked and cornered by political establishment. His poems are still actual and relevant, so he is studied and addressed by researchers as the most talented poet of the twentieth century.

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