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THE SPIRITUAL-VALUE MEANINGS OF THE AZERBAIJANI NATIONAL CHARACTER



Nizami Ganjavi

It is known how Goethe was struck by one of the parables of Nizami Ganjavi. It says how Jesus wanders and comes to the town square where the corpse of a dog is lying. The townspeople gathered around like vultures and everyone cursed over the corpse. One man said that his head was bursting with stench and another - carrion brings misfortune. When it came to Jesus, he remarked: "A pearl cannot compare to his teeth by its whiteness." Goethe praised the poetic gift of the Azerbaijani genius in this way: "Nizami knows how to squeeze such a moral observation from the carrion of a decaying dog that it amazes and

teaches us. Everyone feels overwhelmed when this prophet full of love and wit forces people in a distinctive way to show a gentle and respectful attitude. How strongly he can return a restless crowd to itself, make them feel ashamed of their neglect and abuse and look at qualities not seen before with recognition and maybe even envy."

In the morally-disoriented situation of the Russian Silver Age, when *people died for metal*, the shrill, clean and uncompromising lines of the 20th century Azerbaijani romantic poet Muhammad Hadi said:

The proud one will not grovel for bread,

The noble one will accept no yoke for bread,

The hungry one will shed no tears in a supplication for bread,

A free mind will not turn away from the truth for the sake of bread.

In December 1990, in Khanlar and Ganja, I met a young man, a traffic police inspector named Ulfat Hasanov. Badly wounded in the head and legs, but alive (five of his companions were killed by machine-gun fire from Armenian militants entrenched in that village in Khanlar), Ulfat crawled to the road at night, and does not remember how he ended up in front of the barrier to the Armenian village of Chaykand. An Armenian living in Khanlar recognized him as he lost consciousness and called him by name: "Ulfat, my dear." He was a traffic police inspector and was well-known in the area. The Armenian promised: "We will bandage you." Why not believe it when you have nowhere to go and have lost all your strength? Ulfat also remembered the story of the Armenian writer Hrant Matevosyan, in which one of the characters Mesrop said of the Azerbaijanis: "Good people, they have good bread and they speak briskly, well done.

Nizami Ganjavi

And they are an ancient people. This land on which we set foot is theirs. I wonder how they let us into their mountains.”

Thus, Ulfat Hasanov fell for a vile trap and became a hostage. He was stripped, it was December, it was frosty in the mountains, they tortured him at each interrogation with his hands tied, and they beat him up professionally: with cotton in his mouth and blindfold; he rarely regained consciousness, and that was only because of injections. He was moved by helicopter - in the corner on rags and with three sugar sacks on his head so that he could not remember any of the butchers. At a base of militants in the mountains, he was taken to the edge of the gorge for execution, and Ulfat, falling over and breaking his knees, prayed to Allah to end it all. But the base received an order in the morning: “Exchange the contemptible Mammad”, and this handsome 190-cm tall guy was shoved into the trunk of a Moskvich car, driven away and thrown out on the roadside like a bundle of brushwood in front of an Azerbaijani village. He crawled for a kilometer in one and a half hours and did not realize that his spine had been disfigured. He managed to whisper: “I’m the missing policeman” ... Strangers took care of him: tea with honey, broth and the flavor of the Azerbaijani home. His natural health saved him, but Ulfat’s parents and wife did not recognize him, although he remained in captivity for

just three days. He had surgery in a military hospital in Ganja: together with the foreign-made bullet, several fragments of his skull were removed.

The Vale Days of Ulfat – this is what we can call this page of the war imposed on Azerbaijan. What, besides revenge, can cause such a plot? Ulfat is the only Azerbaijani I met who wore a knitted hat (men had caps, expensive hats and bare heads) to cover a deep impression of the wound near his left temple. He also wears gloves that are rare in his native land: on both wrists of Ulfat, like bracelets, there are traces of ropes that cut body to the bone...

In that old story, I became interested in *the flavor of the Azerbaijani home*. What is the healing power of this fragrance and how does it affect the character, especially that of men?

The pivot of the Azerbaijani national character took shape under the dominant influence of the Turkic military feudal code of honor well recognizable in the epic Koroglu: Valor is above benefits; dishonor is worse than death; help is humiliating; family and children are above career and success. Striving to prosperity is not immoral, a man’s money adorns the world, the Koran says. With regard to the newcomer, the Azerbaijani always has unlimited credibility and hospitality ready, while the host himself is often mistaken that the guest knows about the rules in his home.

Here’s how an old parable explains these rules. A guest is taken in, given food and water, and offered a bed for the night. The insolent guest began to praise everything, knowing the local custom: everything a guest likes belongs to him – this is the law. The guest was given a lot of gifts, but before leaving, he was asked to remove his boots and

Jesus and a dead dog. Tabriz miniature, 16 c.

Muhammad Hadi

shake off the soil. "We have only one land, and we do not give it as a gift," they say in Azerbaijan.

Any claims to land hit the honor and dignity of any people, even if people do not realize that the appeal for lawlessness made back in Paris is the end of the burning hearths in their peaceful lives.

It seems that the initiators of the Armenian nationalist movement in the South Caucasus, in Russia and in the West were convinced that the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia will not meet much difficulty. Everything was calculated except for one factor - the will of the Azerbaijani people. It was not totally paralyzed...

In the summer of 1992, crowds in Russia, from Yakutia to Vologda, clamored and shouted "Remove the blacks!" Azerbaijani pogroms, which involved special services, swept through St. Petersburg. On 25 July 1992, I wrote in Sankt-Peterburgskiy Vedomosti: "I consider it the duty of a Russian writer, who is not infected with domestic or ideological nationalism, to express my dismay at several massacres by the OMON against Azerbaijanis residing in our city. The evening raids near the Prospekt Prosveshcheniya and Primorskaya metro stations, arranged by the OMON on 24 and 30 June, affected at least eight people who were beaten with batons, robbed and taken to the nearest police stations with threats: "Wogs, go home!.. Shut your f... mouth, darkey!.. This will happen to everyone!"

Concerning these acts of violence and assaults, on 13 July this year, I wrote a letter to the chief of the St. Petersburg City Department of Internal Affairs General A. G. Kramarev: "What is happening, Arkady Grigoryevich? If it is the OMON under your command rather than criminal groups in masks that took part in these robberies and beatings, then why don't they comply with the legal procedure of detention and inspection of documents without brutal treatment and insulting one's national dignity?"

If this is pure robbery and violence over the personality or new bloody forms of racketeering, the perpetrators from the OMON (it is easy to identify them) must face the inevitable punishment and these facts must be publicized in the media (St. Petersburg newspapers report "the arrest of two workers and one Azerbaijani").

If participants in these massacres of Azerbaijanis – residents of St. Petersburg – count on the connivance and tacit support of the city authorities (in fact, none of the rights campaigners in Petrosovet, the City Hall or the Prosecutor's Office, who always sensitively reacted to manifestations of ethnic hatred when it came to other nations, has protested at the call of "The 600 Seconds" to "put an end to lawlessness of the blacks"), as well as the anti-Azerbaijani hysteria that



has been fomented by some media for five years, then you, the professional chief of the City Police Department, need to bear in mind the political consequences of these criminal provocations for the 500,000-strong Russian community in Azerbaijan. After all, these provocations are calculated to foment anti-Russian sentiments and cause destabilization in Baku.

I'm not going to defend criminals or dealers of any nationality. The guilt of the eight people - St. Petersburg residents - I mentioned, who suffered from the actions of the OMON and were taken to hospital, is only that they are Azerbaijanis.

I hope that my message will force the OMON, which is under your command, to stop and act within the limits of criminal law and without offending the human and national dignity of all residents of our city without exception.

If these are new oprichniks, all our inexperienced democracy is worthless."

General A. G. Kramarev promised to conduct an official investigation, especially as some of the victims had appealed to the Prosecutor's Office. It was then that the press service of the City Police Department inquired about the true properties of the Azerbaijani national character and received a relevant text compiled by the Leningrad

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

teacher Z. P. Rustam-Zadeh, which I cannot but quote: "The most sacred oaths of Azerbaijanis are about the mother, the graves of their parents and relatives; bread; land."

The humiliation of national dignity ("wog, black, darkey") is perceived as the most profound insult. Many Russian obscenities are offensive to honor, especially in phrases connected with mother, sister, parents, etc. The use of swear words in any case will cause only a negative reaction, including sometimes the most unpredictable consequences.

An insult in the presence of women, as well as a phrase like "You are not a man" is humiliating.

Since ancient times, the strongest shame has been the loss of the reputation and, as a consequence, contempt by relatives and loved ones. For example, drunkenness and debauchery are a disgrace to all relatives. Publicity in the media is perhaps the only effective punishment for offenders and dealers other than the Criminal Code.

Some men will die of shame rather than admit that they have no money. They will borrow anywhere and lay a "royal" table to look "as expected". The concept of "a man with no money" is humiliating for many, because it means that he is lazy, a moral freak and not a breadwinner.

Do not hurt his woman in any circumstances; sometimes a simple compliment can be perceived as an insult.

Azerbaijanis are openhearted and naive, and it is easy to deceive them with one more promise. Deceit, treachery, "a stab in the back", "a grudge" are not typical, and although they do happen, they are considered to be a humiliation for manhood and shameful qualities in attaining a goal.

Some, especially men, are not punctual and love to brag. They gush, promise a lot and believe in it themselves, and then they do not deliver what they promised. When someone exposes them, they dodge in every possible way, frankly ashamed of this internally and coming up with thousands of reasons, including simple forgetfulness. Azerbaijanis are not vindictive, but hot-tempered; forbearing, but their reaction to humiliation is unpredictable. Respect for elders is stronger than worship for money and power."

I do not know whether the memo had an impact, but after the bandit raid on the Torzhkovskaya market in broad daylight, in which one Azerbaijani was killed and about ten received gunshot wounds, the press center of the St. Petersburg Police Department sent a disturbing message to citizens of Azerbaijan, and it was, we have to say, perceived with understanding: no spears or cobbles (in the then terminology) rained on the heads of Russian Bakuvians...

An Azerbaijani is unthinkable without a family. The people link the idea of the continuity of generations and



guaranteed stable future with the family.

The family teaches from an early age that a man should be ready to answer for every strong word uttered in vain and for every unequivocal gesture. And if someone still offends a woman, they will certainly stand up for her, if not the husband, son, brother or neighbor, then the first man who happened to be around. There are simply no defenseless women in Azerbaijan in the local interpretation of the word.

Azerbaijanis have always stood out for their organic ability to absorb other cultures without destroying their own mental integrity and national uniqueness.

Modern Moscow high school students from among Azerbaijanis, as shown by a recent poll by the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, are the most sensitive to "ethnic" nuances. They strongly worry about situations where their compatriots commit improper deeds. The share of those who sometimes or often "have to feel ashamed of people of their nationality" is the highest among Azerbaijani schoolchildren and accounts for two thirds, just like among Armenians, their peers.

People's genuine knowledge of themselves comes when their history is assessed fairly, not in a biased way. 🌱