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A general view of South Azerbaijani poet Sahand's reativity

Abstract

Bulud Garachurlu Sahand was born in Maragha, one of the ancient centers of science and culture in Azerbaijan, into a working-class family. Fifty-three years of his life (1926-1979) coincided with the reign of the Pahlavi regime, under which non-Persian communities in Iran experienced the saddest period in their history. From an early age, Sahand joined the political movement for national rights, was physically and mentally tortured, twice arrested, and deported. He is one of the Azerbaijani poets who created the greatest poetic heritage in the native language despite the ban on writing in the native language during the regime. Sahand's political verses and poems are still relevant in terms of ideas and content.

Keywords: *South Azerbaijani literature, Bulud Garachurlu Sahand, Pahlavi regime, assimilation policy*

Güney Azerbaycanlı Şair Sahand'ın Eserlerine Genel Bakış

Öz

Bulut Karaçurlu Sahand, Azerbaycan'ın eski bilim ve kültür merkezlerinden biri sayılan Maraga'da işçi sınıfı bir ailenin çocuğu olarak dünyaya geldi. Ömrünün elli üç yılı (1926-1979) İran'daki gayrifars toplulukların tarihlerinin en üzücü dönemini yaşadığı Pehlevi rejiminin saltanatına denk geldi. Sahand, küçük yaşlardan itibaren ulusal haklar için siyasi mücadeleye katıldı, fiziksel ve manevi işkence gördü, iki kez tutuklandı ve sürüldü. Rejim döneminde anadilde yazı yaşağına rağmen

bu dilde en büyük şiir mirasını yaratan Azerbaycan şairlerinden biri olarak bilinmektedir. Sahand'ın politik konulu dizeleri ve şiirleri, fikir ve içerik açısından hâlâ geçerliliğini korumaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Güney Azerbaycan edebiyatı, Bulut Karaçurlu Sahand, Pehlevi rejimi, asimilasyon politikası

Introduction

The well-known Azerbaijani poet Bulud Garachurlu Sahand, who lived and was engaged in literary activity in South Azerbaijan in the middle of the 20th century, made invaluable contributions to the national literature in native language and national thought as a herald of independence, being a man of ideas, words and deeds entered Azerbaijani literary history as a patriotic poet with great poetic talent and tragic fate. All his life, literary, as well as a socio-political activity are organically connected with the national liberation movement of Azerbaijani Turks in Iran.

Despite the unimaginable pressures and punishments of the chauvinist Shah's regime, which condemned him twice to imprisonment, exposed to the physical and spiritual tortures, being sent into exile, and despite the fact that the court closed the road for him to the native lands where he was born and grew up, B.G.Sahand remained faithful to his worldview, creative credo, and path of political struggle to the end. He is one of the few patriotic intellectuals who has openly defended the human and national rights of Azerbaijani Turks in Iran (Süleymanoğlu, 2020). Despite all the bans, Sahand, together with the leader of modern poetry Habib Sahir (1903-1988), played an important role in expanding the horizons of poetry in the South, especially political poetry, enriching it with new forms and content. Despite the strict prohibitions of the Shah's censorship and bans on publication, many of Sahand's poems, verses, and letters in verses were still widely circulated and appreciated in the literary circles of Iran, Soviet Azerbaijan, as well as Turkey and Iraq. The secret literary assembly established in Tehran under his leadership, as well as other literary assemblies of which he was an active founder and member, played an important role in this work.

1.Socio-political lyrics

As we know, Sahand was one of the most political poets of South Azerbaijan. Much of his 34-year poetic heritage consists of socio-politically motivated works that promote and glorify democratic left values. Therefore, he is recognized in the South as one of the standard-bearers of the political lyrics by the literary community. For obvious reasons, Sahand waged his struggle against the regime mainly in the field of literature. We can confirm with confidence that none of our poets, who wrote in their native language in Iran in the middle of the 20th century, addressed this "dangerous subject" as much as Sahand, and write such sharp and courageous poems. It is, of course, incorrect to attribute this to the

fact that the environment in which they operate does not allow them to write on socio-political issues. Here, first of all, the inner wealth of the author as a person and his personal courage as a citizen appear as a determining feature. Because, writing works on political subject requires great courage from the author at any time, in any anti-democratic society.

Sahand was horrified by the logic of the flattering members of parliament, hypocritical mullahs, and priests who turned Iran into a jail of nations, deprived them of their most basic rights, and declared the tyrant “God’s shadow on Earth.” He asked: If the “shadow” of your God is so cruel and bloodthirsty, then who is he? So he said, “Do not trample down on the rights of your servant,” which my ancestors worshiped. - It is not God who says! Therefore, under the influence of a more leftist worldview, he shouted:

*The law?
Cut all the books
of the law into pages!
Break the hands of the law-breaker,
throw away the pens!
Bang the Qur'an and the Bible
on the heads of mullahs and priests!* (Sehend, 2006).

These were no longer just thoughts and words, but also deeds and challenges. A call to fight against injustice, hypocrisy, ignorance, and oppression - the political regime, imperialism! In fact, this call was a greater act than what he once did in the ranks of the national devotees of weapons. In fact, only those who are chosen by birth and do not sell the spirit of freedom for anything can dare to do it! His appeals often appeared in the form of open texts, reverberated in the underground poetry meetings and gatherings of southern patriots:

*People, let's unite,
strike, and overthrow the usurper!
Let's clean every land
from rabies-toothed invaders!* (Sehend, 2010).

2.The lyrics of love

There are not plenty of love poems by Sahand. But these works are of great importance in terms of understanding the poet’s love world, estimating his talent from different sides, as well as describing his individual image as a personality. Of course, reading Sahand’s sharp verses on socio-political issues, one might at first think that he could not write poems that would surprise the reader in the “eternal

theme of poetry”, because of the hardships in his life that was full of struggles and deprivations. Indeed, it was not an easy task for a poet living in the grip of so much suffering and daily political pressures to turn in a completely different direction - from the political front to the emotional world, to look at his inner world from a different angle. Also, it seems that there was no place for love poems in the poetry of the environment in which he lived. But this is a deceptive impression. Even the initial acquaintance with Sahand’s few verses, quatrains, and bayatis shows how delicate and fragile spirit he had. In the words of Master Shahriyar, ‘he skillfully added “the flowers, pistachios and sugar” to each other when he spoke’. The poet’s qoshma “Eyes” (qoshma, i.e. a form of Azerbaijani poem) consisting of 8 couplets is more noteworthy in this regard. In this poem, the poet skillfully uses different shades of the artistic word to create the picture of beauty:

*Again, drawing her eyebrows like a bow,
the sharp eyes of that girl are waiting for me.
Those eyes have destroyed the garden and the fruit of my heart,
Now they look at the threshing floor to burn.*

*So far no one was able to escape with life,
Senan was forced to renounce his religion, grazing pigs,
Each time a new conspiracy broke out,
Those Georgian looks, Armenian eyes.*

*Hearts turned to beehives from her tender look,
Everywhere you look you see only unhappy lovers,
Her disheveled hair fell on her shoulders,
They also look at the lashes to tear down the heart house (Sehend, 2012).*

As it is seen, the lyric hero of Sahand is a real being having no divine facial features. But in his presentation, the human existence appears as an angel. The visual details in the description, the optimistic mood color, and the highly tastefully selected means of artistic description bring this poem to the same level as the best examples of classical Azerbaijani ashug poetry.

The samples taken from Sahand’s love lyrics prove that his inner world’s rich feelings and agitations are pure and native to the reader. From this point of view, Professor Akpinar’s opinion that “Sahand is a poet who does not have time to pour his personal feelings and romantic emotions into

poetry, full of people's sorrows and dreams" (Akpınar, 1985). actually reflects the truth, but opens the door to the controversy by exaggerating a bit.

Examples from the poet's love poems also provide serious grounds to prove that the claim of the Iranian researcher I.Mededi about Sahand that he was "*a poet meager in love and romantic spirit*" (Medadi, 2003), is devoid of evidence and unacceptable. So, Sahand was also a poet who wrote love poems and was successful in this field.

3.Epic poetry

Even the most superficial analysis of Sahand's work shows that he was a poet with an epic mind. Of course, this can be considered a natural condition, as he came to the literature from the world of folklore - the world of fairy tales and epics. Therefore, he is the author who wrote the largest number of epic poems in South Azerbaijani literature. However, as the research shows, it is not correct to connect this fact only with epic thinking. Thus, the poet believed that the socio-political and philosophical ideas, legal and moral values, and the spirit of struggle, which he wanted to instill in his readers, would be better inculcated through the genre of poetry. In this connection, the revival of epic poetry in the North in the middle of the twentieth century, as well as the influence of the work of Samad Vurgun, whom he considered a teacher, should not be overlooked. It is interesting to note that most of the ideas that Sahand struggled to realize as a master of words can be found namely in his epic works. Therefore, in this paragraph, the poems "Memory" and "Araz" written by the poet in prison during 1949-1952, the poem "Farhad" written in the mid-1960s were first studied, as well as a series of poems "My grandfather's book" has been valued in terms of history and mastery. Sahand wrote his first poem "Memory" consisting of 626 hemistiches, written in prison in 1949, about the events that took place in the South during the National Government and after its overthrow. After release from prison, he made some corrections hereon, then secretly distributed some of its passages as independent manuscripts in the late 1950s and early '60s, and later published them in the press. The poem is a civil reaction of a 23-year-old man against the treacherous overthrow of the National Government by the international forces, especially the United States, and the destruction of the lands of South Azerbaijan by the Shah's executioners and emerged as an artistic expression of the poet's protest:

*A lot of kites, a lot of ravens,
A lot of dogs, a lot of monkeys,
A lot of scorpions, a lot of snakes,
A herd of scolopendra,
A lot of spies, a lot of spies,*

*A lot ... A lot ...
An old wolf, eighty years old,
Provocative George Alan is at his head.
Extended a Bludgeon to my country,
Our land was flooded. (Sehend, 2012).*

Sahand could not reconcile with the bitter fate of the Motherland, where a thousand games were played throughout his history. In his second poem, entitled “Araz”, he returned to the question of the homeland and its destiny, compared the political, economic, and cultural situation of the two parts of the divided country, and pointed out the sources of the North’s achievements. He skillfully described how a part of the same people skillfully took advantage of the opportunities created by the progressive political regime and achieved great success, lived a happy life, while others fell victim to the hiccups of a chauvinist tyrant and lived in starvation, deprived of even the most basic human rights. Therefore, he saw the way out in getting rid of the psychology of division and ending the separation:

*I wonder if this separation
will end?
Will the two brothers
live together again?
Tell me,
when will Araz dry up?
How long will my homeland
be a prison for me? (Sehend, 2012).*

Certainly, like many representatives of Azerbaijani literature, Sahand’s appeal to the theme of “Araz”, the division of the country, and the future unity was not accidental. He saw the power of this unit during the National Government. It should be noted that this work, written by a 26-year-old man in prison, was the first large-scale poetic work on this topic in our literature. From this point of view, “Araz” is far ahead of even the famous poem “Gulustan” written in 1958 by the national poet B.Vahabzade.

Beginning in the early 1960s, under the influence of the West, the regime’s harsh rules in Iran began to soften to some extent, and like many exiled Azerbaijani intellectuals whose way to their homeland was closed, Sahand has also gained an opportunity to return to Tabriz and his native Maragha. During his years in prison and exile, many things changed in the city where he was born and raised.

Sahand wrote the epic poem “Farhad”, which has clear autobiographical lines, under the influence of the bitter and sweet memories of his past days, where he once wandered on the banks of the Sofi River.

Obviously, the image of Farhad has an ancient history in the oral and written literature and culture of Azerbaijan. However, Sahand’s Farhad is not a famous hero who climbed Bisutun Mountain for his beloved Shirin and opened a milk canal, living in the minds of Eastern people as a symbol of love, loyalty, and self-sacrifice. Sahand’s Farhad is a small child aged 8-9. Sahand heard the popular legends about this child from his mother. This young child had a real Farhad heart in his chest.

Shirin of “Little Farhad” is also different. She is a 16- to a 17-year-old girl named Gulendam, who brings the clothes of the house where she works as a servant to wash in the river every day. This situation of Gulendam, whose hands and feet are “blue like a watercress” in the cold, hoar-frost water makes her small but loving heart ache. He thinks during the night, he can't sleep all night until the morning, and he looks for ways to get rid Gulendam of this torture. Finally, he decides to dig under the red eagles on the banks of the river and build a “cave” there. He decides to dig a ditch through which warm underground water will flow and create a “pond” so that Gulendam can wash his clothes in the warm water without suffering.

The second part of the poem is already on the political and philosophical level. The little lyric “I” who “loves beauty and dies for the sake of beauty” grows up and begins to cope with the affairs of the world. But this time he sees the state of all the beauties of the world as tragic as Gulendam’s life, and the sun of happiness as dormant. Therefore, in order to save the beauty, he decides to draw water from the spring of life that once Khidir Ilyas found and drank in the dark, which he once heard about from his mother’s narration of fairy tales, and to bring that water to the light world, to save Gulendam, to make people’s life easier - to help them live as human beings . The culmination of Sahand’s work is the series of poems “My grandfather's book”. Of course, it is not true to consider this work as a modern version of “The Book of Dada Gorgud”, a masterpiece of Turkish literary thought. In the words of M. Farzana,

“The poet, who has a great poetic power and inexhaustible vocabulary, has done this work with great skill and courage, has created an artistic and social work that evokes excitement, sadness, and joy, resembling the reader's pleasure and passion” (Sehend, 2001).

At a time when the publication and promotion of “The Book of Dada Gorgud” was banned in both Soviet Azerbaijan and Iran - in the 50s of the last century, it was dangerous to engage in such a difficult and hazardous work. Of course, that required the poet to have greater courage, universal knowledge, and high national fanaticism. The matter reached the point that the first secretary of the

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan M. J. Bagirov (1896-1956) named the epic under the dictation of the Kremlin:

“A book dedicated to the definition of the upper classes governing the Oghuz nomadic tribes who came to Azerbaijan as murderers and robbers, directed against the fraternal Georgian and Armenian peoples” (Əliyeva, 2007), and the official Iranian circles called it *“worthless tales of Oguzs from Ural steppes and North Turkestan”* (Sərrafi, 1998). The most surprising thing was that in both the North and the South, a group of “intellectuals” challenged these “official prices” with heavier expressions.

Sahand was the only Azerbaijani poet at that time who was not afraid of such dangerous political pressures from the ruling circles. Under this burden, he wanted to prove to the Persian and Russian chauvinists who humiliated his nation, to the national ignoramuses who believed in their fabrications and despised their history, that the Turks have a great history and a bright cultural past. They simply need to be discovered, researched, studied, owned, and promoted. However, in the double darkness that had befallen the country, it was not easy to engage in such activities, to talk again about freedom with the people, who were oppressed and in a state of shock. For this, it was necessary to fight both the darkness of ignorance of the centuries and the darkness of fear that the cruel shah’s regime had inflicted on society. Perhaps that is why the poet begins his work by “cursing the horrible face of a dark night”. In order to work in this darkness, to achieve something, Sahand needed first of all a light, i.e. the torch. Because he knew well that “the light is the greatest power in the world,” giving life and existence. The poet found the fire he was looking for to light his torch in the sacred hearth of Dada Gorgud, which is being extinguished - in the Oghuz stories, which keep our national system of thought and struggle alive. “If there is no way, there is no goal,” he said, and with the light he took from there he set out for this goal. And with a determination that leaves no room for complacency. After all, he had the personality of a leader since his youth. Therefore, he was determined to achieve his goal:

*He who seeks the morning is not afraid of the night,
Due to the subscription, I take the hand-stick of agitation.
If resin falls from the sky, Sehend
I have to swim through the sea of darkness.* (Sehend, 2015).

The analysis of the work shows that Sahand was not only under the influence of his endless fascination with the Oghuz monument, but also acted as a patriot of national liberation, with a premeditated serious plan. The following details of this plan are clearer in the work:

- To re-motivate the nation through its own system of historical thinking, history of chivalry, and rich moral values in order to save the nation from the psychology of despair and hopelessness after the collapse of the National Government and bloody repressions;
- to present convincing evidence to the ruling circles and their official propagandists, who present the Azerbaijani Turkic community as a nomadic steppe tribe with no origin, no roots, and no historical-cultural value;
- to visually demonstrate the ancient historical roots of the Azerbaijani Turkic language and the ability to express all kinds of contemporary ideas;
- to bring to life the fading ideals of national freedom and unity among the society, using certain literary techniques and forms.

Conclusion

The qualities that distinguished Sahand from other writers was not only his innate poetic talent, sincere devotion to the homeland, nation, its history, and values, but also his fearlessness, steadfastness, generosity, and positive position in all situations. He was at the forefront of the struggle for national liberation against the planned assimilation policy of the chauvinist Pahlavi regime with both his weapon and his pen. He played an important role in the formation and development of national consciousness with his patriotic works. He was one of the leading figures in the formation and development of modern poetry in the South; He gave a great impetus to the expansion of the boundaries of political poetry in terms of content and form; He played a decisive role in the popularization of the epic "The Book of Dada Gorgud" and its transformation into one of the important elements of the process of national self-awareness. Despite all the bans, he played an important role in the establishment and operation of literary associations of national creative intellectuals for the development of the native language, and its functioning in the press and literature. He provided material and moral support to many national intellectuals in solving their everyday problems. His works, which have a great social character, are distinguished by their depth of thought and humanism, and call people to moral purity, patriotism, and the struggle against oppression, are as relevant today as they were yesterday. The great mastery, deep meaning, and poetic fluency, which make Sahand's poetry relevant and popular, is also a sincere devotion to the human values that stand on its foundation.

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