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DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2710-4656/2024.1.2/16>**Guliyeva S. H.**Institute of Manuscripts named after Muhammad Fuzuli  
of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences**THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S FREEDOM IN AZERBAIJAN  
IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY IN FEUILLETONS**

*The article comprehensively addresses the socio-political milieu in Azerbaijan during the early 20th century, delving into the concomitant challenges concerning women's emancipation, infringements upon women's rights, and the instrumental role played by the feuilleton genre in disseminating conflicts to the broader public. A particular focus is placed on scrutinizing various feuilletons authored by distinguished literary figures and journalists.*

*A meticulous analysis is undertaken of feuilletons by eminent figures such as Jalil Mammadguluzadeh ("Girl Education", "Those Who Kill Wives or the 'Honor'", "Girl Child", "A Nine-Year-Old", etc.), Nariman Narimanov (a series of feuilletons titled "Week's Lament"), Uzeyir Hajibeyov ("About Russia", "Establishment of the State Duma", a series of feuilletons titled "Here and There"), Aligulu Gamkusar ("Freedom", "Ugly" feuilletons), Omar Faig Nemanzade ("Letter to a Maiden", "A Wife's Response", "Gratitude" feuilletons), and Najaf bey Vezirov (a series of feuilletons titled "Little Sophisticates"), which conscientiously elucidate the intricacies of the issue of women's freedom.*

*Furthermore, the article elucidates the pivotal role played by feuilletons in contributing to the discourse on women's rights and the socio-political dynamics of the time. Notably, it underscores the efforts of these literary figures in offering nuanced perspectives and potential solutions to the challenges associated with women's freedom.*

*The pivotal year of 1918, marked by the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, is examined in the article in the context of broader efforts to restore women's rights.*

*The article addresses the critique levied by feuilleton authors of the early 20th century against religious leaders, deceitful clerics, officials, and ignorant individuals who restricted women's freedom, hindered their free integration into society, and treated them as slaves, attributing such behavior to national mentality and religious grounds.*

**Key words:** Azerbaijan, feuilleton, women's freedom, press, literature.

**Introduction.** The idea that "a society is impossible without women" has found its confirmation throughout history. Despite the significant appreciation given to women today, regrettably, it is still insufficient, and the global struggle for gender equality and women's freedom continues. "Freedom cannot be achieved unless women are emancipated from all forms of oppression" [9] – Nelson Mandela, a South African political and statesman, and a prominent advocate for women's rights, reaffirmed these thoughts in the Cape Town Parliament on May 8, 1994, emphasizing that humanity would face problems as long as women's rights were violated. Women have consistently engaged in a tense struggle to establish their place in civil society. Although they occasionally stand alone on this path, more often than not, they receive significant support from enlightened and philanthropic individuals. "A woman who follows the crowd usually goes no further than the crowd.

A woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before" [10] – echoing the sentiment that women should act based on their own thoughts, not someone else's, as expressed by the eminent physicist and Nobel laureate Albert Einstein. According to him, women must engage in the struggle for their freedoms and rights without hesitation or fear. Throughout history, we can assert that women who have fought for their rights have achieved their goals.

In contemporary Azerbaijan, women live freely and enjoy all rights equally. However, this has not always been the case. Upon examining the early 20th century, we observe that the issue of women's freedom ranked prominently among the challenges faced by Azerbaijani society, prompting active efforts to address it. During this period, the majority of the population resisted education due to ignorance and opposition to educational principles based on religious norms, resulting in societal ignorance and

religious conservatism prevailing. Under such conditions, women, in particular, experienced the most hardship. Living in conditions of social and political isolation, most women engaged in domestic work, finding themselves unable to allocate time for personal pursuits and compelled to lead a constrained life.

**The extent of addressing the problem.** Despite various research conducted on the issue of women's emancipation in the early decades of the 20th century, the feuilletons elucidating this matter have not been collectively subjected to scholarly investigation [1; 2]. Researchers in different years have conducted diverse studies and analyses in this direction [3; 4]. Utilizing these and other research findings, this article analyzes the feuilletons published in the period's press regarding women's emancipation [5; 6]. In the early 20th century, women's freedoms were significantly restricted, and their rights were violated. Influential figures of the time brought this issue to public attention through the media, especially through feuilletons. In some instances, its resolution was also contemplated [7; 8].

**Objectives and tasks.** The primary aim of the research is to examine the effects of the socio-political situation prevailing in Azerbaijan in the early 20th century on the curtailment of women's freedoms. Furthermore, it aims to present the works of the media and literature in the satirical-publicistic genre, particularly feuilletons, directed towards addressing this problem. Investigating the role of these works in achieving certain advancements in the restoration of women's rights is also a fundamental objective and task.

**Methods.** The feuilletons reflecting the conditions of those years are comparatively analyzed in the article. Feuilletons authored by various writers are thoroughly examined, and examples are presented based on which a comprehensive exploration is conducted.

#### **Main section**

#### **The Violation of Women's Rights in the Early Decades of the Last Century**

In the initial decades of the 20th century in Azerbaijan, the coercive matrimonial practices, dehumanizing treatment akin to servitude, abrogation of liberties and rights, and the deliberate exclusion of women from societal, educational, and cultural realms were ubiquitously prevalent. A cadre of intellectuals, perturbed by these predicaments, unabashedly articulated their dissent and conscientiously endeavored towards redressal. Prominent figures within Azerbaijan's intellectual stratum, such as J. Mammadguluzadeh [1, p. 89], O.F. Nemanzade [8, p. 265], A. Qamkuser [2, p. 96], N. Narimanov [7, p. 278], U. Hajibeyov [3, p. 39], N. Vezirov

[6, p. 357], among others, adeptly harnessing religious texts, forthrightly lambasted clerics culpable of transgressing women's rights, mendacious mullahs, and officials culpable of enconcing societal ignorance. Their resonant voices of protest resonated through the channels of contemporary journalism, wielding the quill as their singular instrument.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the Azerbaijani press underscored women's emancipation as a pivotal theme. The feuilletons of the period delved into issues that curtailed women's freedom and orchestrated their estrangement from societal and communal spheres, employing a literary stylistic approach. Writers adroitly harnessed satire, wit, and irony as vehicles to conscientiously elevate these issues to the reader's discerning purview.

As a result of the multifaceted endeavors and concerted efforts of enlightened intellectuals, Azerbaijani women began to emerge more frequently in the socio-political sphere from the second decade of the 20th century onwards. They not only sought education but also contributed to the cultural enlightenment of society. Azerbaijani women now ascended to advocate for their rights, actively participated in socio-political life, engaged in various fields such as journalism, and even commenced exerting influence within society. It can be asserted that the challenging struggle conducted by the Azerbaijani press, distinguished journalists, and literary figures played a significant role in these developments.

#### **The Protection of Women's Rights During the Republic Era**

In the early 20th century, one of the key factors influencing the resolution of issues faced by Azerbaijani women, the restoration of their rights and freedoms, their engagement in education and enlightenment, and the improvement of social prosperity was the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918. The government of the Republic, composed of enlightened intellectuals, took significant measures and signed documents to emancipate women from slavery and ensure their participation in society as free individuals with all the rights of men. During this period, women were granted the right to participate in elections. The importance of women's access to education and enlightenment was emphasized, leading to their involvement in industry, projects, and employment in various fields. The Republic government, along with the contributions of Azerbaijani intellectuals, journalists, and the national media, played a crucial role in the struggle for women's rights and the historic decisions adopted. The advancement during the Republic years also prompted the estab-

lishment of women's publications, such as "The Path of Industrious Women" and "The Path of Caucasian Industrious Women", contributing significantly to the implementation of these policies.

### **The Representation of the Current Women's Freedom Problem in Feuilletons**

However, in the early 20th century, numerous challenges persisted in the treatment of women. Prominent literary figures, journalists, and public servants facing various difficulties in the existing socio-political context illuminated the subject from different perspectives through the pages of the press. They aimed to direct society's attention to these problems, seeking to open people's eyes. Journals such as "Molla Nasraddin", and newspapers like "Yeni Irshad", "Taze Hayat", "Tekamul", "Kaspi", "Bakinskiye Izvestiya", "Baku", "Bakinski Den", among others, played an exceptional role in the prominence of women's issues. These periodicals featured feuilletons, articles, and satirical writings in line with "Molla Nasraddin's" advocacy for women's freedom on their pages.

In the early years of the last century, efforts towards the restoration of women's rights were not extensive, but from the latter part of the first decade, the press began to allocate more space to this subject. Muslim women during this period faced challenges associated with mindset and unequal traditions, experiencing restrictions on their freedoms in a society dominated by ignorance, vulgarity, and illiteracy. Women's freedoms were primarily curtailed by their close relatives, parents, and husbands. One significant problem prevalent in society during those years was the forced marriage of underage girls. Due to ignorance, misguided individuals would subject their children to grow up as servants or slaves from an early age through this practice. Since women lacked the right to speak in society, mothers could not protest against their daughters' predicaments, or in some cases, due to common ignorance, they would accept the situation knowingly.

As articles about women's rights became regularly published in the press, they began to attract more attention, fostering converging ideas. This, in turn, contributed to the shaping of public consciousness towards civil ideals through the press in the early decades of the century. Ancestors began to prioritize education and intellectual development over marrying off their daughters at a young age. However, women still did not enjoy complete freedom and the right to speak freely because Sharia rules and religious customs presented by clerics and false mullahs continued to restrict their freedom of expression.

### *The Issue of Women's Freedom in the Feuilletons of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh*

One of the most serious problems faced by women in the early XX century was obtaining education. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, a prominent representative of Azerbaijani press and literature, paid special attention to the issue of depriving girls of education in his feuilletons, magnifying the problem in his written works. In his feuilleton "Qız tərbiyəsi" (Girl's Upbringing), he criticizes those who argue that girls will be better educated by keeping them away from education. With the statement, "If this goes on for a while, eventually our families will lose their national identity and will be erased from our nation..." [5, p. 50], Mammadguluzadeh targets individuals with ignorant thoughts who equate women's education with the loss of national identity. In reality, he highlights that these individuals are not concerned about national identity but rather prioritize their own interests, exposing those who serve as examples of ignorance opposing women's freedom. Explaining the primary cause of women's lack of rights in the family as the limitation of their worldview, Mammadguluzadeh sees the path to liberation in girls' education and writes, "When your daughters are knowledgeable and educated, and know their worth, they themselves will know how to behave" [1, p. 89].

Mirza Jalil, a proponent against the infringement of women's rights and an advocate for their egalitarian rights alongside men, critiques those who curtail women's freedoms and condemns individuals restricting their lives under the pretext of "honor" in the feuilleton "Arvad öldürənlər yaxud "qeyrət"" ("Those who kill wives or 'honor'"). Mirza Jalil accentuates the regrettable reality that, relative to other nations, in the Azerbaijan of that era, a woman could be easily subjected to lethal consequences under the veil of "honor", a term he underscores is construed as the act of killing a wife. He asserts, "And due to the absence of the "honor" itself, or "honor" weapon in those groups, no instance has been reported thus far of a Russian, Armenian, German, or American resorting to the act of killing a wife under the pretext of "honor" [5, p. 293].

In his intricately articulated feuilleton "Qız uşağı" ("The Girl Child"), Jalil Mammadguluzadeh delves into a prevalent concern in Muslim societies during the early 20th century—specifically, the curtailment of the right to life for female infants. Expressing gratitude for the relatively milder treatment compared to ancient Arab practices of immediately drowning newborn girls, Mammadguluzadeh concurrently condemns the mistreatment of newborn girls in Azerbaijani society,

suggesting that while they are not subjected to drowning, they still face societal discrimination merely for their gender. By asserting, “But among ourselves, a girl is nothing. I have observed this phenomenon in numerous instances: a household with a girl does not prosper, and many households eschew the inclusion of a girl” [4, p. 184], Məmmədquluzadə underscores the societal disregard for female children in Azerbaijan during the early 20th century. He cynically notes that the birth of a girl was deemed undesirable, prompting those with female offspring to feel both unfortunate and stigmatized within the societal milieu.

Mirzə Cəlil directs his attention in the feuilleton “Nişanlı bir qız” (“An Engaged Girl”) towards the lamentable condition of women who, despite their aspirations for emancipation, educational advancement, and cultural enrichment, find themselves ensnared in servitude owing to societal limitations and retrogressive norms. Within this literary composition, the author compassionately depicts a young girl bemoaning, “Oh, my ill-fated destiny”, articulating her fervent desire for unrestrained living, educational pursuits, rights assertion, and even contemplating life beyond her ethnic identity. “Oh, my ill-fated destiny, how I wish that I had already gazed upon the countenance of the day illuminating the world, and when my parents sought to betroth me to an elderly gentleman, I would have possessed the autonomy to express myself. Oh, my ill-fated destiny, how I wish I had perused at least a couple of the myriad books authored and comprehended why we have entered this world” [4, p. 439].

In Mirza Jalil’s feuilleton “At Nine Years Old”, he artistically depicts the tragic fate of a nine-year-old girl living in the early 20th century, whose life is controlled by a religious figure. Addressing the religious figure in the journal’s language, he exposes the violation of the rights of this young girl through a publicistic approach: “Oh, Haji, ... I also heard when passing by your watermelon shop, the next morning the news came out that you had sent an envoy to ask for Nurmammad’s nine-year-old daughter, Sekine” [4, p. 114]. The words spoken by the child in the work truly prompt readers to deeply contemplate. Despite the fact that the nine-year-old girl should be experiencing childhood, playing with peers, and pursuing education, she is forced into a life of servitude and misery in the so-called “rules” of the household, fabricated Sharia laws, ignorance, and commonness of that era. The criticism extends to her parents, who subject her to a life of hardship: “...Sekine started crying and told her mother, ‘You are like God, oh mother, let me go and see what this husband is saying. And then I heard that her mother beat her with a stick’” [4, p. 114].

### **The Issue of Women’s Liberation in the Feuilletons of Nariman Narimanov**

Renowned writer and public figure Nariman Narimanov sheds light on the topic of girls’ education in the series of feuilletons titled “Weekly Outcry”. “We will not tell you: open a school for girls, train knowledgeable girls for the nation, prepare mothers, because our ancestors and mothers shed tears of blood for the ignorance of our children. We have become a laughingstock to foreigners because of their ignorance...” [7, p. 278]. Narimanov emphasizes the urgency of girls’ education in this satirical appeal. He underscores the importance of having educated and knowledgeable women, mothers, in the upbringing of children and the development of society. Additionally, he exposes individuals who hinder girls’ education and knowledge.

In the feuilleton series bearing the same title, Nariman Narimanov delves into a significant matter, wherein women are transformed into victims of familial avarice. The central figure, Haji Murad, stands as a quintessential embodiment of this avarice. One of the casualties of his greed is none other than his own biological sister. Haji Murad, accumulating all his wealth, precious metals, and gemstones in an unopened chest, exhibits no compassion toward his destitute sister. “Brother, do not consent to the prospect of your sister’s garments fetching more than two hundred manats in the markets tomorrow. Haji Murad remains unsympathetic to his sister’s plight. The wretched woman, with tearful eyes and a heavy heart, returns to the village, and Haji Murad remains indifferent to whether his sister’s clothes are sold or not, and whether her children are on the brink of starvation; such matters are beyond Haji’s purview. Haji’s sole concern is to ensure that two hundred manats do not emerge from the chest because frugality is deemed necessary” [7, p. 257]. Haji Murad, epitomizing those who prioritize their possessions over familial ties, does not balk at orchestrating the ruin of his daughter’s life. Rather than facilitating her union with someone she loves, he marries her off to a debtor: “He bestows his daughter upon the debtor to alleviate the debt, ensuring that no funds emerge from the chest, for it is imperative to exercise frugality...” [7, p. 257]. The feuilleton culminates in Haji Murad losing all his wealth, his monetary resources being pilfered, and crucially, his daughter eloping with her beloved. Through this narrative, Narimanov conveys the notion that individuals ensnared by avarice will inevitably confront the repercussions of their transgressions, and ultimately, righteousness will triumph over malevolence. By portraying the women of the era as resilient individuals who persevere through all

hardships to reunite with their beloveds, he communicates a profound message about the unyielding struggle for women's rights.

In one of the feuilletons in the series "Cry of the Week", Nariman Narimanov addresses the issue of women being forced into marriage. The writer condemns the false promises made by members of the Muslim faction to discuss various issues, stating that they instead utilize the platform to deceive the public. He also criticizes those who believe in these representatives. In this context, Narimanov expresses regret over a lawyer who, instead of defending people's rights, exploits them for personal gain. "One of those people also spoke: 'Brother, according to Sharia, it is permissible to marry a 9-year-old girl, so it is not against the law to touch her for this reason'" [7, p. 370]. Here, he emphasizes that those in positions of power in society turn a blind eye to the blatant violation of women's rights in the discussions within the faction, even acknowledging their direct involvement in such practices.

#### **The Issue of Women's Liberation in Uzeyir Hajibeyov's Feuilletons**

Renowned composer and writer Uzeyir Hajibeyov did not remain indifferent to the education problem faced by girls. In his feuilleton titled "Rusiyaya dair" (About Russia), he touches upon the difficulties that girl students face during the learning process. In this context, the Minister of Education wishes for girls to participate in all classes and appeals to professors for this. However, the professors consider this task impossible and impractical. As a result, the Minister of Education is compelled to take the issue to the parliament: "Now the matter is left to the parliament. In this case, a new regulation has been prepared for the university, and it will be discussed in the Council of Ministers. This regulation will then be submitted to the parliament" [3, p. 39]. Here, Uzeyir Bey notes with regret that, in the early 20th century, women faced injustice in education, as in other fields.

In another feuilleton titled "Ordan-burdan" (About Various Things), Uzeyir Hajibeyov criticizes those who oppose women's freedom of movement in society. In this essay, written in the language of a prejudiced person who looks down on Muslims attending the opera, retrogressive individuals are targeted. The protagonist of the feuilleton, who claims that Caucasus Muslims are corrupt when they appear in the opera, is also an image criticizing those who violate women's rights. People with narrow-minded views, who disdain a woman's interest in culture and going to the opera, are subjected to criticism: "Look, look! Look at our wives, look at our wives! They form

groups and go to the theater! Whereas, in the past, our wives knew nothing other than crying in the bathroom!.." [3, p. 176].

The matter of women facing legal restrictions, akin to numerous other concerns, deeply perturbed Uzeyir Bey. In his feuilleton "Dövlət dumasının qurulması" (The Establishment of the State Duma), he staunchly advocates for the equalization of rights among people in elections, underscoring the indefensible nature of distinctions among individuals. The writer, articulating that "...everyone should possess the liberty to elect a representative", explicitly underscores the imperative for women to hold the right to vote on a par with men: "Allocate this privilege to women similarly, ensuring the election's confidentiality;..." [3, p. 207]. His progressive entreaty materialized during the Republican era, and Azerbaijani women, breaking new ground in the East, acquired this right for the first time.

#### **Women's Liberation Issue in Aligulu Gamkusal's Feuilletons**

The prominent writer Aligulu Gamkusal's feuilleton titled "Freedom" is one of his significant works that addresses various topics and sheds light on the issues of the time. The focus of the feuilleton is on the residents of Iravan, who, inspired by Iranians, seek freedom from the Russian state by preparing a legal document – a constitution. One of the important issues specifically emphasized here is women's freedom. As known, in the early 20th century, women's liberties were restricted; they were excluded from education and even forced into servitude within their own homes. When they dared to protest, they were beaten and even killed by their husbands. While appealing to the Russian state to obtain freedom, these individuals, especially women, expressed their desires such as concealing their "skills" – essentially hiding the evidence of violence – and requesting immunity from punishment for female crimes. The author vividly portrays the hardships that women endured, expressing heartfelt anguish: "Even though they beat, abuse, and kill their wives as their hearts desire, the state intervenes, and those who are in the position of slaveholders complain, and the state rushes to their complaints".

In his feuilleton "Dirt", Gamkusal delves into the issue of religious ignorance, elucidating how Muslim women of the era were relegated to ignorance, being kept aside from education and science. The story unfolds the narrative of these women, excluded from the realms of knowledge and education, being deceived by a cleric driven by his own self-interest. The clergyman, signified by the tarnished robe he wears, beguiles Muslim women by intertwining

every aspect with religious edicts. The passage illustrates the clergyman obtaining a favorable verdict in a dubious case through funds from Axund and then, capitalizing on the women's lack of knowledge, evading consequences effortlessly and being saved by the intervention of non-Muslim Russian doctors: "...and if he smears the throats of those who have come to the throat with the throat of a charlatan, he finds a fever cure, saves lives, and is rescued from the hands of lame-brained Russian doctors" [2, p. 97]. Through this, the author underscores the imperative nature of education and erudition, critiquing the cleric for exploiting the women's educational deficiencies and deftly deceiving them.

#### **The Issue of Women's Liberation in the Feuilletons of Omar Faig Nemanzadeh**

In O.F. Nemanzadeh's feuilleton "Xortdana Məktub" (Letter to a Hortdan (evil spirit)), the transgression of women's rights and religious conservatism are extensively addressed. The protagonist of the feuilleton laments divorcing his wife due to deeming her act of placing vinegar in the garden an unfavorable omen, and he endeavors to rectify his misjudgment. However, in attempting to amend his error, he once again succumbs to intellectual deficiency. "Relatives and clerics assembled and asserted that such an act cannot be pardoned, and the veil of disgrace cannot be lifted. Oh, what recourse is there? They opined that the husband must contract another matrimony, namely, entrust the sister-in-law to someone for a brief period, then effect her separation, only thereafter permitting matrimonial ties" [8, p. 265]. Here, Omar Faig subtly illustrates how religious statutes and intellectual regress impinge upon individuals' cognitive faculties. He also underscores the lamentable reality that women lack autonomy in determining the course of their lives and are consigned to subservient existence based on the deceitful proclamations of clerics.

In the feuilleton "Bir Arvadın Cavabı" (A Wife's Response), drafted as a female dissent to articles about women featured in the periodical "Molla Nasreddin" [8, p. 260], Omar Faig highlights that women are already articulating discontent with societal injustices and inequities. In the feuilleton, a woman, petitioning for the publication of her epistle in the journal, protests against injustice and the curtailment of their liberties. She also observes that articles against women are disseminated across various editions of the periodical. Through the woman's objections, such as "In your 24th issue, you opine that wives are inept at financial matters", "In the 25th issue, you deride wives for masticating gum", and "In the 26th issue, you ridicule wives' head coverings", the feuilleton

depicts the injustices and a spectrum of societal and domestic predicaments women confronted during that epoch. The author accentuates that the literary articulation of a woman's protest against the quandary of women's emancipation also serves as a voice of dissent from the enlightened intelligentsia of that era.

Nemanzadeh's feuilleton "Təşəkkür" (Gratitude) can be characterized as the voice of women left powerless in a society under the sway of religious conservatism, where individuals live in accordance with Sharia rules and face the pressure of conformity. Here, the delicacy with which these women are compelled to cover their heads against their will is expressed: "Among today's Islamic countries, one of the contentious issues is the matter of veiling" [8, p. 298]. In the feuilleton, Nemanzadeh emphasizes that the resolution of this significant problem is not achievable through the efforts of just a few individuals but requires the collective endeavor of numerous intellectuals and scholars: "...I, as a well-educated person, would also desire the once-and-for-all resolution of this issue. However, for this, the presence of a 'courageous,' knowledgeable, influential cleric was necessary" [8, p. 298].

#### **The Issue of Women's Liberation in the Feuilletons of Najaf bəy Vəzirov**

In Nəcəf bəy Vəzirov's feuilleton "Short Stories", he vehemently opposes the early marriage of young girls and censures the subjugation and denigration of women in his 48th article. He provides incisive criticism of the practice of early marriage, exposing its societal ramifications. The endorsement by a gathered assembly of the notion that "an individual harboring a spouse for more than one or two years lacks rationality" underscores the egregious violation of women's rights. The adroit revelation of the proposition, "Acquiring a spouse within a year wouldn't be detrimental, but it necessitates a slightly increased expenditure", by an approving landlord illustrates the finesse of the feuilletonists. The suggestion, "...to manage the acquisition of a spouse in a manner that, after designating her, she should return home promptly", targets those seeking to evade all associated marital costs.

The individuals proposing the facile method to circumvent all expenditures with the idea, "Select an unaffiliated, non-indigent girl, at the age of fourteen", poignantly exposes that the literary luminaries have transcended established boundaries, leaving young children vulnerable to the injustices perpetrated by the ignorant of their era. In this discourse, the author vehemently registers his dissent against the approving landlords: "Oh, you uncouth, morally bankrupt,

and depraved individuals! Has not God created the human race? Is justice, compassion, and mercy absent in you? How can you audaciously discuss the plight of a destitute girl, merely fourteen years old, cast into the streets, bereft and homeless within a year?... May divine blessings prevail! You proclaim yourselves as Muslims... Idolaters!.. Beneath the dignity of animals! 'Alas, alas!' ” [6, p. 397–398].

In the 11th story of his feuilleton titled “Balaca mütəfərriqələr” (Short Stories), N. Vezirov depicts the helplessness of a woman, religious ignorance, and the portrayal of common society. The central figure in the article, a woman who has been married for ten years, reveals that her husband has started living with another woman, neglecting to provide food for the children, and despite her pleas and supplications, she remains helpless. The woman mentions even contemplating harming herself and her children due to the impossibility and lack of assistance. In the feuilleton, the writer also draws attention to the religious backwardness of the era: “I’ve even become tired of writing prayers; it doesn’t help. My remaining belongings have been taken away; we are left destitute. Whenever I stretch out my hand for help, all I hear is a foolish response... ” [6, p. 352] – here, he asserts that those who believe the problem can be solved by writing a prayer are deceived by the clergy, and he also criticizes the common women who, despite this backward thinking, give all their money to deceitful clergymen. By stating, “...Sister, this is a community matter; help should come from the community...” Vezirov actually emphasizes that all problems can be resolved collectively by people themselves, highlighting that women can fight for their education, knowledge, and rights.

**Conclusions.** In the early decades of the 20th century, Azerbaijani women, grappling with a plethora of socio-political and domestic constraints, were not

singular in their confrontation with these issues. This epoch witnessed the efficacious endeavors of enlightened individuals and intellectuals, transmuted prolonged periods of ignorance and commonplace into an era wherein women and even men aspired to align with the burgeoning civilized world. Women endeavored to emancipate themselves from the morass of limitations and, in numerous instances, achieved success. They commenced active participation in socio-political, cultural, and economic processes, particularly demonstrating activism in education and philanthropy. Hindrances and impediments to girls’ education gradually commenced receding. Women, emerging across various facets of life, acquired a more salient role in society with the acquisition of the right to vote during the Republic era. Activities pertaining to women’s liberation and rights during that period did not escape notice, and over time, this progression continued to burgeon.

Today, if we were to assert that Azerbaijani women have evolved into a pivotal force in our society, such a claim would be judicious. Women actively engage in augmenting the country’s social, economic, and cultural potential, achieving laurels in fields such as science, education, healthcare, arts, sports, and beyond. A century ago, Azerbaijani women grappled with challenges such as ignorance, commonality, religious retrogression, and educational dearth. However, presently, they have metamorphosed into integral constituents of society, playing an instrumental role in the comprehensive development of our country. The more robust, adept, and cosmopolitan women become, the more resilient our society manifests itself. As the distinguished writer and playwright Huseyn Javid articulated, “When a woman smiles, our desolate environment will smile, and humanity, advancing forward, will ascend with women”.

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**Гулієва С. Х. ПРОБЛЕМА СВОБОДИ ЖІНОК В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНІ НА ПОЧАТКУ ХХ СТОЛІТТЯ У ФЕЙЛЕТОНАХ**

*Стаття всебічно розглядає суспільно-політичне середовище в Азербайджані на початку 20-го століття, заглиблюючись у супутні виклики, пов'язані з емансипацією жінок, ущемленням прав жінок та інструментальною роллю жанру фейлетону в розповсюдженні конфліктів на широку громадськість. Особливу увагу приділено розгляду різноманітних фейлетонів видатних літературних діячів і журналістів.*

*Ретельному аналізу піддаються фейлетони видатних діячів, таких як Джаліль Мамедгулузаде («Дівоче виховання», «Ті, хто вбиває дружин або «Чесць», «Дівчинка», «Дев'ятирічка» та ін.), Наріман Наріманов (серія фейлетонів «Тижневий плач»), Узеїр Гаджибеков («Про Росію», «Створення Державної думи», серія фейлетонів «Тут і там»), Алігулу Гамкусар («Свобода», «Потворні» фейлетони), Омара Файга Неманзаде («Лист до дівчини», «Відповідь дружини», фейлетони «Вдячність»), Наджаф бека Везірова (серія фейлетонів «Маленькі хитруни»), які сумлінно висвітлюють тонкощі питання свободи жінки.*

*Крім того, стаття з'ясовує ключову роль фейлетонів у дискурсі про права жінок та соціально-політичну динаміку того часу. Зокрема, це підкреслює зусилля цих літературних діячів у пропонуванні нюансованих перспектив і потенційних рішень для проблем, пов'язаних зі свободою жінок.*

*Переломний 1918 рік, ознаменований створенням Азербайджанської Демократичної Республіки, розглядається в статті в контексті ширших зусиль щодо відновлення прав жінок.*

*У статті розглядається критика фейлетистів початку ХХ століття релігійних діячів, брехливих священнослужителів, чиновників і невігласів, які обмежували свободу жінок, перешкоджали їх вільній інтеграції в суспільство, ставилися до них як до рабів, пояснюючи таку поведінку національною ментальністю. і релігійні мотиви.*

**Ключові слова:** Азербайджан, фейлетон, свобода жінок, преса, література.