

## **RASUL RZA- INNOVATOR POET OF THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE**

**Ph.D Etrabe GUL**  
QAFQAZ UNIVERSITY  
PEDAGOGY FACULTY  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
etrabegulus@hotmail.com  
Azerbaijan / Baki

The prominent Azerbaijani poet Rasul Rza (real name Rasul Ibrahim oglu Rzayev, 1910–1981), who wrote his epics and poems in free measure played particular role in development of poetic conscience of Azerbaijani literature. In modern Azerbaijani poetry, with his different poetical thinking, special expression skills Rasul Rza engaged a special place as he brought a new breath to an Azerbaijani literature with his innovation. His poetry carried inspirational, motivational as well as thought provoking features.

In today's globalized world poets often borrow styles, techniques and forms from diverse cultures and languages. It is undeniable that some forms of poetry are specific to particular cultures and genres, responding to the characteristics of the language in which the poet writes. In this regard the poetry of the venerable poet R.Rza was distinguished with philosophical lyricism, the vividness of the ideas and the emotions and original poetic characters. His philosophical poems from series of 'Rengler'('Colours'), lyrical epic poems 'Fuzuli' and "Gizilgul olmayaydi(If only there were not a rose)" are considered to be the best patterns of Azerbaijani poetry.

Notwithstanding the new reference entailed adversities among writers, poets and readers towards him. Rasul Rza went through all hindrance and critiques, and as a deduction of his poetic experience he surmounted the difficulties and featured literary innovator school to the national literature. It must be noted that, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the period of massive revolutions as well as a cultural revolution, endowed with Azerbaijani literature a new form and meaning. Rasul Rza resorted to blank verse, when everybody got used to listen and recite samples of the traditional poetry. But the overturn of all casts regarding to traditional poetry was a veritable heroism done by the innovator poet, i.e. the choice of words and figures, pay attention to elements of poetic diction special to blank verse poetry demanded competence, skill, audacity and etc. Based on all aforementioned dignities, it can be concluded that the evaluation of the creativity of Rasul Rza is of paramount importance to the national heritage of Azerbaijani -Turkic people.

**Key Words:** Rasul Rza, innovator, Azerbaijani literature, blank verse, elements of poetry

One of the outstanding poets of the 20th century - Rasul Rza(1910-1981) infused a fresh spirit into the modern Azerbaijani poetry thus winning the repute as an innovative poet. The poet began publishing his works from 1927. His first poems were published in newspapers and magazines ("The Young Worker", "Hujum", "Revolution and Culture", etc.). In the late 1920s-1930s he wrote about the International struggle against fascism and colonialism. In the early 30s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century he wrote the anti-fascist poems "The Women", "Chinar", "Germany", "Madrid", etc. He got responsive on the Soviet-Germany war of 1941- 45 years by the books of poems and stories: "Immortal Heroes", "Rage and Love". From the 50s philosophic grounds prevailed in Rasul Rza's creative palette.

Rasul Rza who is distinguished for his distinctive poetic realm, peculiar way of expression in the enrichment of our modern poetry, thus bringing a new breath to this poetry, stands in the most successful line of the world poetry owing to his blank verses. It should also be noted that the trend of "blank verse" which triggered a number of constructive debates appeared through the program of updating the national poetry, raising it to the level of modern culture of literary thought.

"In the second half of the 1920s the blank verse found its reflection mostly in Mikayil Rafili's works. M.Rafili associated the blank verse with the confirmation of a new idea, a new individual, and characterized it as quite a new poetic form harmonizing with time" (10, 106-107). Rasul Rza's wide-ranging realm of poetry has an impact of lyrics with a plot.

The great poet's poems perfect both for their content and from the literary point of view as well as his poems which seem relatively ordinary can arouse very gentle feelings in their readers. For, being a personality

with gentle, tender feelings by nature, R. Rza liked traveling to far away countries. He had been to the countries of Europe, Asia and Africa, and put down what he had seen. Thus appeared his various, interesting poems related to France, Algeria, Iraq. From this point of view, his poem "The White Elephant" is interesting and characteristic. The first lines of the poem do not draw attention, but reading further one experiences a painful feeling in the heart. The tears of wistfulness shed from the eyes of a rare white elephant imprisoned in a cage shake the hearts. The poet, who describes the agonies of a caged life and imprisonment in the example of an elephant, also expresses in simple words, but very gently, at the same time philosophically the advantages of a day's freedom over the life behind iron bars for a hundred years. This literary piece of the poet was translated into English by Margaret Wettlin. A brief extract can give you an idea of the poem:

I first saw him one hot noon in Ragoon  
alone white elephant in an iron cage  
of many colors and close-set bars.  
His eyes were black stars  
in a milky sky.  
He might have been any age.  
He looked at me as if suddenly  
he would begin to cry...  
Elephants are long lived, they say.  
Poor white elephant  
Why should you live to old age  
in this many – coloured, close-barred cage?  
Poor white elephant!  
Poor white elephant! (7, 46)

In this small piece of his poetry Rasul Rza rings a march of uprising against those who suppress freedom and try to keep it within iron cages in the example of the rare elephant that once used to live a free life, but now is imprisoned. What is the sense of living such a long life in the cage? - he says.

Rasul Rza, whose poems were published in Canada several times, has earned the love of the Anglophones, and his poems have been estimated as the most valuable example of modern world poetry. It is obvious from the articles related to those poems published in 1965 that the readers in Canada and the USA loved them judging from the way Dyson Carter, the editor-in-chief of the journal "Northern neighbours", not very fond of poetry in general, described Rasul Rza's poetry as the outcome of a sincere and pleasant impression.

As noted by the researcher N.Akhundov, "the press of the Western hemisphere estimates R.Rza's poems as a new discovery, a strong literary and aesthetic means expressing artfully the feelings and emotions of modern people on an international scale" (6, 75).

Rasul Rza's works were translated in Albania, Cuba, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and tens of other foreign countries, and the journal "Tulu" printed by the Information Agency in the city of Karachi presented the translation of some of his poems as well as some information about his literary heritage. All this is the reflection of an extreme love to this great man of literature with rich and multi-colored literary creativity not only within our country but also beyond its boundaries.

While one reason for such a strong interest in R.Rza's poetry is connected with the deep humanism of his creative activity, the other important reason is in his search of a system of forms and new characters reflecting the development of modern world more realistically and righteously (3, 220).

For Rasul Rza's poetry is the achievement of the man of art who completely meets the standards of modern period, serves the enrichment of people's mode of thinking, and creates a new school. The Canadian people received Rasul Rza's poems with great love and excitement. This feeling and excitement is obvious even from the letter sent to our poet. According to the Canadian journal "Northern Neighbours" published in English, Rasul Rza's poetry leans against the outstanding man of art with deep philosophic thinking who creates a literary chronicle and poetic map of life" (2, 47). It would be considered no exaggeration, if we call the Earth, the humanity as the main subject of R.Rza's poetry. The humanity's joy, sorrow, challenges, wishes, and beliefs make the poet think deeply. Freedom – the humanity's belief of light, love of life, last hope – is the exclamation mark of R.Rza's poetry.

As a poet perceiving, realizing the essence of life developments profoundly and capable of transforming the important political events of the period into the materials of poetry courageously, R.Rza has reflected all this in his Oriental poetic series more vividly. According to Arif Abdullazadeh, who analyses and estimates R.Rza's creative activity stage by stage, "Great universal senses and patriotic feelings put together in a small poem acquire great importance in R.Rza's creative activity. In this very sense, he enjoys quite an independent position in the Azerbaijani poetry" (3, 117). Rasul Rza's poetic realm with a very wide circle of themes is always concerned, is always alarmed.

“Rasul Rza’s poetry is a rich and profound poetic sample with its own structural peculiarities, form and shape, alongside with its completeness of content and idea, progressive philosophic spirit, artistic expression and poeticism of thought” (1, 195).

Rasul Rza was an extremely sensitive and touchy poet. In his lines he succeeded to create the picture once created by the most famous artists. Hence the poetic power of Rasul Rza who created his magnificent works in the form of blank verse and developed in this form of poetry, (one can dare say) who was able to express in an artistic and polished way what no other poet managed to say in our contemporary poetry, who succeeded to see and describe in a heavenly inspiration things unimaginable and hard to be noticed. Many of our poets have tried this form of poetry; however Rasul Rza’s peak remains unattained yet.

It is not a mere coincidence that the outstanding critic A.Nazim considered the blank verse as a literary phenomenon possessing the potentials of expressing the content of the period, when summarizing its peculiarities, ideational direction, aesthetic sources and providing its true definition (4, 6-7).

As R.Rza’s creative activity is targeted at realizing the world with its entirety and grasping it with its rich colors and shades, the roots of his poetry are nourished by the wonders of the world. Above all, it is a human being that makes him think. It is the love to man that throws light upon every line of his poetry. Hence the main purpose of his creative activity. According to the poet, who wishes for everyone to have their soul’s eye in his poem “The Third Eye”, having a pair of eyes is a means for people to see very ordinary things. The real eye is the soul’s eye. The absence of the soul’s eye means “deprivation from everything, being blind in soul, losing emotions and thoughts, losing the existence” (9, 133).

Great man of art Rasul Rza is a philosophic poet, a powerful poet, who always makes one think, sometimes hides his idea in covert senses artistically and induces his reader to read him repeatedly in order to understand him.

When speaking about the philosophic nature in Rasul Rza’s creative activity, one remembers the series “The Colours”. Since Rasul Rza’s series “The Colours” is the peak of intellectual poetry in the Azerbaijani literature. He shows not only the poetic image of colours but also their social and political colour. The colours created by Rasul Rza in his poetry are absolutely impossible on canvas. No matter how talented the artist may be, he can’t manage it. Every line in “The Colours” carries some poetic function. It would be very appropriate to consider an extract from the poem:

White, black, yellow, green, red,  
All of them are connected in some experiment.  
One of them reminds us of our longing,  
One of our trouble, another of our wish.  
Each of them hides some meaning,  
Each of them has some reason for its colour... .

Or another extract from the poem “Turquoise”:

The pain of love left in memories.  
The charm of the sea.  
The light of the lamp with a green lampshade  
that falls into a blue wall.  
The longing of a poor girl's fingers.  
Jafar Jabbarli's Baku.  
Only two eyes  
in the entire world.

It is not enough to estimate these poetic series of the 1960s simply as a modern poem, there is a process of realizing life in them. There is a mode of approaching life philosophically here. As noted also by many researchers, “The Colours” has a function of penetrating from the surface of the things, events into their inside, uncovering the invisible features of those things and events through their visible features known to us.

Owing to R.Rza’s series “The Colours”, the innovatory inclinations in the contemporary Azerbaijani poetry got ever stronger.

Among the poems R. Rza wrote until 1980 there are many pieces which continue “The Colours”. His poem “Time” is one of them. Time is the moment when youth symbolizing the ardent passion stands face to face with the depressed and weary old age in the paths of life. What artistic and incomparable words does the poet use when describing the early periods and the last moments of life!

R.Rza’s poetry is the poetry that has brought “a substantial and perfect form, fine, attractive puns (*cinas*), original, unparalleled rhymes, rhythms, harmony” (5, 79) to our contemporary poetry.

In the 1960s the modern poetry made just an impression of an experiment in the panorama of the Azerbaijani poetry, and thus resistance against it was natural. The reading public was not ready to accept such kind of poems yet; however, to cease that process and to prevent it were beyond one’s power. The first

Azerbaijani modernists themselves were not concerned with the results of this process. They were trying either to escape the tight cage of the traditional poetry as much as possible or create innovations within the traditional poetry.

To review the path made by the modernist poem in the Azerbaijani poetry, we can say that in the Azerbaijani literary environment modern poems had a secondary place compared to traditional poems. Firstly, the foundations of the traditional poetry were very strong, from the point of view of wide audience it had earned a firm support; secondly, the defenders of the traditional poetry were eager to prove its advantage over the modernist poetry by all means, and most of the time managed it. Despite some obstacles, modernist poems turned into one of the stylistic trends of our poetry; and certainly, the supporters of the traditional poetry could not prevent this trend, and the Azerbaijani poetry could not be isolated from the world poetry.

One can proudly say that the name of the Azerbaijani poet Rasul Rza is on the same list with such universal poets as W.Witman, E.Verkhara, V.Nezval, N.Hikmat, P.Neruda who are creators of blank verse in the world literature.

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