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IMADADDIN NASIMI

Poet, 1369-1417

AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE



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Imadaddin Nasimi

Imadaddin Nasimi, Azerbaijani poet and thinker with real name of Sayyid Ali Sayyid Muhammad (oglu) was born in 1369 in the city of Shamakhi and killed in 1417 in Aleppo. Being one of the pioneers of native-language poetry, Nasimi got his education in Shamakhi, studied the sciences of his time, history of religion, logic, mathematics and astronomy in this city.

After the gibbet of Mansur Al-Hallac Huseyni in Baghdad in 10th century, whose sufi views were preached by Nasimi, he wrote his first poems under the pseudonym of "Husseini". He got in touch with the adherents of Hurufism, widely spread religious movement at the end of 14th century, adopted the views of Fazlullah Naimi, the founder of Hurufism and began to write poems personifying the ideas of this trend. Since that time accepted the pseudonym of "Nasimi", which is in coincidence with Naimi.



A fragment from "Nasimi" movie, 1973

The major idea of Hurufism is the conception of creation of human by God as a possessor of great potential opportunities and with ability to perfect his passion and to reach divinity by abstaining animal instincts. The word of “huruf” is derived from Arabic and the literal meaning is “letters”. Naimi could write his “Testament” and send to his adherents before he was killed by Miranshah. He recommended them to scatter in different countries and disseminate Hurufism.



Alinjachay architectural complex in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan (tomb of Naimi, Hurufist's center)



Old aged Nasimi from "Nasimi" movie



A fragment from "Nasimi" movie



Following his "Testament", Nasimi left Baku, the center of Hurufism immediately after his execution in 1394. First he headed to Tabriz, then to Anatolia. He was imprisoned several times for dissemination of Hurufism. As the Ottoman Sultan Murad I persecuted the adherents, he left Anatolia for Syria and lived in Aleppo for a while.



The stage of skinnig Nasimi from "Nasimi" movie





The bust of Sayyid Nasimi





The monument of Nasimi in Baku

The great poet spent the last years of this life in Aleppo. He was imprisoned there in 1417, declared “pagan” and “heathen” and skinned alive by the order of sultan of Egypt and clerical judgment.



"Sayyid Nasimi"
Painted by: Mahlukat

Nasimi had a complicated path of creativity. He was lyrical poet, started his literary activity with amorous poems, and later wrote in the theme of the politics and ethics. He is considered the founder of philosophical *ghazal* in native language in the history of Azerbaijani literature.



*"Nasimi" portrait
Painted by: Aygun Aliyeva*

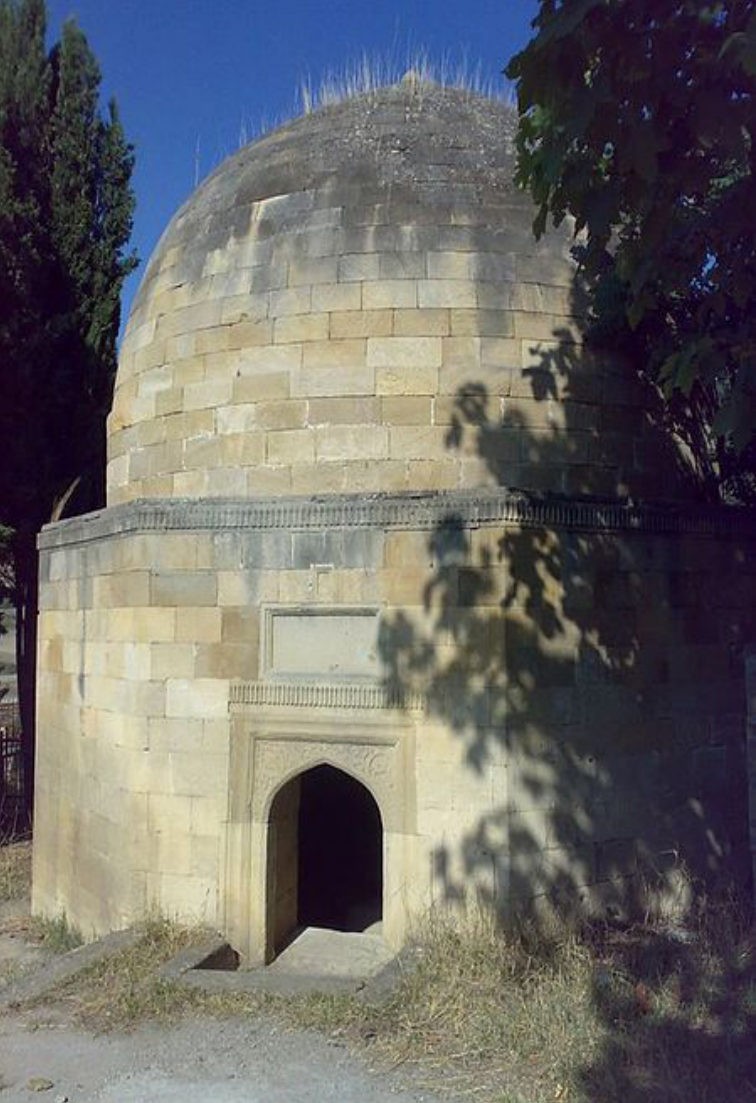


Nasimi curtained the prohibited critical thoughts about public life in his amorous or landscape descriptive lines. His creative activity is considered a significant stage in the development of Azerbaijan poetry and literary language.



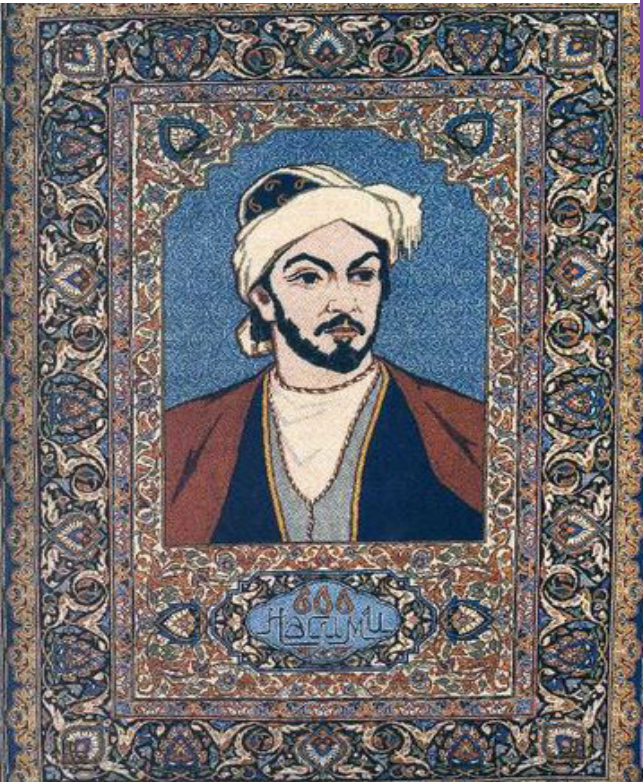
*The book of "Doomsday" by İsa Muğanna dedicated to Nasimi which was published by "Hedef" Publishing House
The cover of book painted by: Aygun Aliyeva*

His literary activity has a particular importance, especially, in terms of historical development of Azerbaijani Turkish. He tried to harmonize the verses of Arud with Azerbaijani language.



*Mausoleum of Shakhandan,
Nasimi's brother*

Nasimi is the first poet who wrote *mustazads*, *murabbes* (quadrate), *tarcibands* in native language in Azerbaijani literature. His *rubais* (quatrains) and *tuyugs* have specific content. The *rubais* narrate the Hurufism provisions, own philosophical views and thoughts about life and universe in compact and logical style. He wrote exquisite samples both in Arabic and Persian, besides Turkish and composed *divan* (collection of lyrical poems) both in native and Persian languages.



Nasimi Carpet



The monument of Nasimi in Sumgait



Nasimi metro station in Baku

Nasimi's works are evaluated mainly from two aspects: superior poetic skills and dissemination of humanistic ideas. Nasimi is the great lyrical poet glorifying human beauty and humanistic love. The main subject of his lyrics is love. Unveiling his poems from the Sufizm and Hurufizm, we can see sincere and pure glorification of human feelings. He wrote only in Arud verse and lyrical style. Although he skillfully composed in *masnavi* (double-rhymed verse), *gasidah* (ode), *ghazal*, *tuyug*, *mustazad*, *tarciband*, *mulamma* genres, *ghazals* dominate in his creativity.

Nasimi's works made fame in Azerbaijan, Near East, Iraq, Asia Minor, Syria, as well as in Middle Asia and among uyghurs still he was alive. Native language poems had a powerful impact on the improvement of Azerbaijani poetry and creativity of great literary masters such as Shah Ismail Khatai, Fuzuli and Vagif. Jahanshah Hagigi of 15th century wrote a lot of *nazirahs* (imitative poem) to his poetry.



A photo collage from "Nasimi" movie



USSR stamp with image of I.Nasimi. 1973



Hungarian stamp with image of Nasimi. 2013



Nasimi's poetry had significantly influenced all Turkish literature (Turkish, Turkmen and Uzbek) since 15th century. The manuscripts of the poet are widely spread. These samples are preserved at the important libraries of the world. His works have been published over and over, became the theme of scientific researches. 600th anniversary of his birthday was celebrated worldwide by the order of UNESCO. The representatives of many countries participated in the anniversary ceremonies in Azerbaijan and Moscow. One of the Baku districts and metro stations were named after Nasimi. A novel (I.Muganna "Doomsday"), a poem (Gabil "Nasimi") were written, a cantata (J.Jahangirov), a symphonic poem (A.Rzayev), a ballet of "Nasimi Epos" (F.Amirov) were composed, a feature film ("Nasimi"), two documentaries were shot about him; his poems were composed in music and romances. His monument was built up in Baku. The Institute of Linguistics of ANAS is named after Nasimi.



Appreciative statements about Nasimi:

“As a poet and thinker Nasimi was one of the leading and progressive personalities of his time. His meaningful life and tragic destiny is of great historical significance as his rich literary legacy is. As a real humanist and human friend Nasimi looked forward towards the future behind the centuries. His great thoughts, pleasant wishes and poems are more highly appreciated today. He found his real friends and appreciators only today in his multinational country.”

M. Arif

“We see the improvement of Azerbaijani language once more and the glorification of public and philosophical trends of his time figuratively in this language in the poetry of Nasimi.”

B. Azeroglu

“Imadaddin Nasimi is one of the poets that Azerbaijani people bestowed to the world literature. He was extremely rare talent and original master. His monument is side by side with those of such a classics of world literature that their life and creativity are in combination with progressive political elements and aesthetics. The poetic word was a major tool of struggle of Nasimi for his beliefs and views.”

M. Ibrahimov

“Being a great humanist Nasimi is known as a poet personifying the human as a tireless herald of freedom spirit, glorifying human beauty and believing his victory over despots, highly appreciating his wit and ability to explore and conceive the most latent mysteries of nature. Nasimi’s poetry demonstrates its author’s great mastership and wisdom.”

N. Tikhonov



The monument of Nasimi in Shamakhi

☞ At love's most sumptuous feast was I with
love made drunk— ☞

Is not this why to me besotted seems the monk?
Of love I took a draught, I worship at its shrine;
Think not, a pious one, that I am drunk with wine.
Love leaves me dazed and sick, I stagger, overcome,
Whene'er to its embrace, enchanted. I succumb.
I am a drunkard, aye, but wine to me seems weak:
Upon the couch of love sweet solace do I seek.
When man, by Nature's will, did first appear on
earth
A dram of love did he receive from her at birth.
Wind, water, fire and flame, the world is drunk
with love,
The devil and the ghost, the serpent and the dove.
The earth, and heaven too, this would I say on oath,
So trust my words, I pray, are sots and drunkards
both.
The sky reels drunkenly: the stars, half-swooning,
wink—

Of love's sweet-scented wine a cupful did they
drink.

And so in paradise did Eve, and Adam too,
Men, angels, houris, sprites, the faithless and the
true;

Kings, prophets, holy men, Mukhtar and Suleiman,
And Noah of the Ark, and Jesus — everyone;
The Shah Mardan, Kerrar, the heathen, the
devout,

Those who are firm of faith and also those who
doubt;

Apostles, saints and seers, the scorned and the
extolled,

The sages and the fools, the young, the very old.

The zealous Mufti claims his share in open glee;

The Ghadi,¹ holy one, joins in the revelry.

The tavern-keeper drinks, the tavern haunter too,

The dervish and the priest wax maudlin o'er the

brew.

The infidels, the giaours partake of love with zest;



*Nasimi's grave
Aleppo, Syria*



Fragments from "Nasimi" movie



All lovers are alike, none differ from the rest.

The outcast Angel drinks who waits at Heaven's
door;

The mystic tries a sip and, thirsting, calls for more.

Love's fumes are wondrous strong, and though
the cup be small,

He who doth fill it full, may reel and, stumbling, fall.

A drop will make one faint, one's limbs to wax

'twill turn,

With passion's melting fire one's heart '«twill sear

and burn.

The voices in the inn are hoarse and shrill with wine;

The flute and tambourine, carousing, moan and

whine.

There is a city where love reigns and lovers dwell;

Come, knock upon its gate, and enter for a spell.

No man who there abides, the morning sober meets:

The city walls are drunk, the market-place, the
streets.

Alone the drunkards leave upon this earth a trace.

Mansour² was right, for love doth all of life embrace.

Our hearts reflect the glow upon Mount Sinai:
We who are drunk with love can happy live and die.
The Universe is drunk, for drunk 'tis meant to be—
Thus holds the keeper of both time and destiny.
The sun itself is drunk, else would it give no light;
'Tis clear to Nasimi, no veil obscures his sight.
The secret has he probed of love's mad drunkenness,
And now in flaming words his knowledge doth
confess.

-
1. Mufti, Ghadi—high Moslem officials.
 2. Mansour—Oriental poet and philosopher.

Translated by *Irina Zheleznova*

* * *

Framed by its dusky locks, your face my
heart ensnares;

I burn with passion's hopes, its yearnings
and despairs.

Of my eyes that glow like stars I am the
helpless prey –

Torment me, sweet one, not thus cruelly ere
you slay.

But rarely to the end the cup of bliss is
drained;

Yet think what pain is mine who is by you
disdained.

Count not your beads, I beg, hide not in
prayer from me;

A lover is no bird to cage thus mercilessly.

Your beauty night and day I praise in sheer
delight.

If I desist, o Lord, turn not my day to night!

You promised I might drink of Eden's
gushing spring –

To me not wine - a cup filled with its waters
bring.

While you repel my love, there is no peace
for me.

Spurn not, o houri mine, your faithful
Nasimi!

Translated by *Irina Zheleznova*

* * *

Need I my throne, need I my crown, my
lands and castles, tell me, love,

Need I the heart within my breast if you and
I be parted love.

You are the fever that consumes - I waste
away beside you, love.

You are the balm that heals my wounds-I
live anew beside you, love.

Love is a joy, a priceless gem - no Moslem
dares deny it, love.

What need have I of life itself if you and I be
parted, love?

I offered vows, I sent up prayers, I knelt
before my Maker, love.

But if my dreams go up in smoke, then truly
prayers are futile, love.

My love is dead - what use to weep, what
use to mourn, Nasimi?

If love is dead, and I can live, then tears are
vain, O Nasimi!

Translated by *Írina Zheleznova*



"Nasimi is skinned"
Painted by: Zeynal Ertakin



* * *

Two worlds within me fit, existing side by side,
Yet narrow is for me this world where I abide.
The heavens and the earth within me are
confined
But what I am but ill in words can be defined.
From nature I derive, of her I am a part,
And when of me you speak from this do not
depart.
Conjectures lead astray, to guess is but to err;
Be guided by the truth and put your trust in her.
Part form and content not if you would have me
whole:
I am the body, aye, but too I am the soul.
No treasure-house contains the riches that are mine.
The pearls, the precious stones, the silks of rare
design.
Great, shining, wondrous gems within me lie
concealed.
So heavy are my crops that none can count the yield.
Man is my lofty name. I am Mount Sinai,
Life and eternity, the world, the boundless sky.
I am the universe, the spirit, and the dream,
The banks I overflow of time's unending stream.
The stars, the silent orbs, and fate are part of me.
Be mute. No tongue can paint my image truthfully.
I am the golden Sun whose glory never wanes;
Describe me not in words, for I will burst their
chains.

I am a man of weight to whom respect is due;
I am a sweet too hard for children's teeth to chew.
I give off sparks like flint, I can be set aflame,
Yet fire cannot devour this that to be I claim.
I am a fount of love; life I beget and mould,
But there is more to me than life's short span can hold.
Both youth and age am I in all their riches decked;
My treasures are too great for mirrors to reflect.
Though famed is Nasimi and noble is his name,
Yet is the man in him far greater than his fame.

Translated by *Irina Zheleznova*



Selected pieces by Nasimi



A photo collage from "Nasimi" movie



*The character of Fazlullah Naimi, the founder of Hurufism, whose member was Nasimi.
A fragment from "Nasimi movie".*





"Nasimi is skinned"
Painted by: Azim Azimzadeh



Seven national poets
Painted by: Mahlukat