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CHAPTER 3

BAKHTIYAR VAHABZADEH IN THE LITERARY RELATIONS BETWEEN AZERBAIJAN AND TÜRKİYE

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Abstract

The history of Azerbaijan-Türkiye relations is as old as the history of these people. During the republican period and in the modern period, the relations between the two states in various fields are built on a solid foundation based on their glorious past. These two peoples, who had a common language, literature, and music in ancient and medieval centuries, also cooperate comprehensively in the construction of modern statehood. Although scientists, poets, journalists, and individuals have played an important role in establishing literary relations, individuals with exceptional services in this direction are distinguished. The national poet of independence of Azerbaijan, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, in addition to being a herald of freedom and national awakening of the people with his life path and works, also praised the lofty concepts of Turkism, national unity, and solidarity in his works with high poetic language and propagated them with his spirit and deeds, and worked for this success. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's visits to Türkiye, the publication of his works in Türkiye, and later the writing of both journalistic and scientific articles about his works and personality are an indication of the poet's important role in the formation of the modern era of Azerbaijani-Turkish literary relations. The poet was the voice of Azerbaijan in Türkiye for a certain period. The poet's poems "Men Turkum" (I am Turk) (1995), "Azerbaycan-Turkiye" (1996), "Allah meni bele aglat" (May God Make Me Weep This Way) (2001) and other poems contributed to the development of these relations. It is no coincidence that Yavuz Akpınar, when talking about the poet, writes that he "will live forever among our wise figures like Navai and Fuzuli, who have been guiding the world Turkism for centuries and whose existence we are proud of today." It is no coincidence that Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's name is mentioned alongside the names of these great values that unite the Turkic peoples - Navai and Fuzuli. The poet's artistic creativity gives reason to say this. The article will discuss the exceptional role of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh in the formation of the modern era of Azerbaijani-Turkish literary and cultural relations.

Keywords

Literary Relations, Poetry, National Independence, Turkism, Mother Tongue

Introduction

The longstanding historical, cultural, and linguistic commonalities between Azerbaijan and Türkiye have laid a solid foundation for the establishment and development of progressive literary relations. These shared values have, over time, fostered deeper intellectual and cultural engagement, particularly since the second half of the 20th century. Within this context, the contributions of prominent literary figures have been instrumental, among whom Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh occupies a distinctive and noteworthy place.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is recognized not only as a lyrical poet but also as a committed advocate of national consciousness and an active proponent of the literary and cultural unity of Turkic peoples. His literary output, shaped by deep patriotic sentiment and a strong sense of cultural identity, has resonated beyond Azerbaijan's borders and received significant recognition in Türkiye. Throughout his multiple visits to Türkiye, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh actively participated in various cultural and literary events, contributing to the strengthening of interliterary and intercultural dialogue between the two nations.

His works have been translated into Turkish and published in various literary outlets, becoming the subject of scholarly interest and academic research. Numerous articles and critical studies dedicated to his literary heritage have appeared in Turkish academic journals and media. This widespread engagement attests to Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's status not merely as a national poet of Azerbaijan, but as a shared intellectual and cultural figure within the broader Turkic world.

1. The Concept of Turkic Unity in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's Literary Work

The idea of Turkic unity holds a prominent place in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's creative oeuvre. In his poetry, the fraternal relationship between Azerbaijan and Türkiye is grounded in shared historical roots and common cultural values. Remaining committed to the principle of "one nation, two states", the poet endeavored to familiarize Azerbaijani readers with Turkish literature, while simultaneously introducing the Azerbaijani spirit to readers in Türkiye.

His works consistently reflect a strong sense of attachment to the Turkic world, loyalty to its values, a critique of separation and geographical distance, as well as a longing for unity and solidarity. In this context, his renowned poem "Azerbaijan – Türkiye", written in 1991, is considered a significant work both ideologically and poetically. The poem encapsulates the ideals of national unity and cultural affinity, and symbolically underscores the aspirations of two closely linked nations to overcome divisions and reinforce their historical bond.

Bir ananın iki oğlu,
Bir amalın iki qolu.
O da ulu, bu da ulu
Azərbaycan-Türkiyə.

Dinimiz bir, dilimiz bir,
Ayımız bir, ilimiz bir,
Eşqimiz bir, yolumuz bir
Azərbaycan-Türkiyə.

Bir millətlik, iki dövlət
Eyni arzu, eyni niyyət.
Hər ikisi cümhuriyyət
Azərbaycan-Türkiyə.
(Two sons of a single mother,
Two arms of the same endeavor.

One is noble, so is the other -
 Azerbaijan and Türkiye.
 One our faith, and one our tongue,
 One our moon, our year is one.
 One our love, one road we're on -
 Azerbaijan and Türkiye.
 One nation, two sovereign states,
 Same desire, and same fates.
 Both republics, standing great -
 Azerbaijan and Türkiye.)

The simplicity of language and rhythmic structure in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's poem "Azerbaijan-Türkiye" brings it closer to the tradition of folk literature and makes it easily memorable and widely quoted. Despite its seemingly simple form, the poem deeply and sincerely conveys, through the means of lyrical poetry, the unity of language, culture, and spirituality between the two nations, emphasizing their shared history and common roots. Describing the fraternal bond poetically as "two sons of one mother", the poet symbolically presents the path from a shared past to a united future. With the verse "the same desire, the same intention", he articulates a collective vision for the future of Turkic unity. The phrase "one nation, two states" found in this poem has become a widely embraced slogan, poetically reaffirming a historical truth.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's genuine interest in Turkish literature and Turkish poets played a significant role in the development of Azerbaijani-Turkish literary relations. The love for Turkic identity and culture, so prominent in the works of Turkish poets, also finds vivid expression in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's creative output. In his artistic and journalistic writings, he paid tribute to both classical and modern Turkish poets, including Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Nazım Hikmet and Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, acknowledging the value of their literary heritage.

In addition to his publicist writings, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, as a prominent literary scholar, authored several academic works focused on Azerbaijani-Turkish literary ties. He introduced Azerbaijani readers to various stages of Turkish literature, particularly the literary movements of the Atatürk era and beyond, thus contributing to the intellectual and cultural exchange between the two nations.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's poetry was first introduced to Turkish readers in September 1972, when it was published in the *Türk Edebiyatı*¹ journal, founded by Ahmet Kabaklı. This marked the beginning of his recognition in the broader Turkic literary world. Even during the Soviet era, when Azerbaijan was still under strict ideological control, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh managed to deliver the voice of his nation to Turkish audiences. Following Azerbaijan's independence, his works began to be published in Türkiye with increased frequency. From that period onward, his distinct literary style - already familiar to many Turkish readers - reached a wider audience through his publicistic, academic and poetic writings.

Notably, during the early years of Azerbaijan's independence, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh played an active role in addressing issues of national significance. As a citizen, poet, and scholar, he emerged as a representative voice of the Azerbaijani people - a quality also reflected in the works published in Türkiye. His poems and essays, imbued with love for the Turkish language and the Turkic world, resonated widely among Turkish readers.

It is worth noting that the August 2025 issue of *Türk Edebiyatı*² was dedicated to the centenary of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's birth. In this special issue, various articles explored different aspects of his multifaceted personality, hailing him as a symbolic standard-bearer of the Turkish language and the Turkic world.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh first visited Türkiye in 1961. The profound emotional impact of this encounter with Istanbul - the spiritual and cultural heart of Türkiye - found poetic expression in his poem "İstanbul". In

¹ *Türk Edebiyatı*. Eylül, 1972

² *Türk Edebiyatı*. Ağustos, 2025

subsequent years, the poet revisited this theme in other works such as “The Grand Bazaar” and “Topkapi Palace”, which were inspired by the impressions of his first visit. Although written by a poet from the Soviet Union, these poems hint at sentiments that would later be articulated more openly. Until that moment arrived, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh used the subtle power of poetry to express his deepest aspirations and dreams through artistic language, offering an intimate glimpse into the longings of his soul.

Saraylar danışdı özgə dilində,
Uyuşdu özgəyə,
Uyuşdu yada.
Xalq öz komasında, öz əməlinə
Yaşatdı dilini, varlığını da.
(The palaces spoke in a foreign tongue,
Swayed by the stranger,
Swayed by the other.
While the people, in their quiet struggle,
Kept their language, kept their soul - forever.)

In 1999, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s book “Vatan, Millet, Anadili” (Homeland, Nation, Mother Tongue) was published in Ankara, presenting to Turkish readers a collection that includes the poet’s autobiography alongside various articles written across different periods. The following year, in 2000, his book “Ömürden Sayfalar” (Pages from a Life) was published in Istanbul. This volume partly reproduces several of the articles found in “Vatan, Millet, Anadili”, yet offers a broader scope, blending autobiographical narrative with philosophical reflections on the themes of homeland, humanity, history, art, moral values, and personal memories. The book may thus be regarded as a philosophical work that encapsulates Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s intellectual and emotional worldview.

In his earlier poems, written in response to his first visit to Türkiye, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh had often conveyed - through lyrical subtext - the powerful yet inexpressible emotions he experienced when encountering Turkish people and Turkish soil. These deep inner stirrings, which poetic form could only hint at during the constraints of the Soviet era, are later articulated explicitly in his memoirs. Recalling this transformative moment, the poet writes: “A lantern is blinking in the distance. My God!.. For the first time in my life, I see the Turkish light. My dreams are burning in that light. Oh lantern, you are guiding the ship of an empire that has been your enemy throughout history. Inside that ship, you have a brother who is ready to sacrifice his life for you” (Ömürden sayfalar, 2000, p. 264).

The poet’s deep and sincere devotion to Turkic identity constitutes the core of his entire literary oeuvre. In Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s works, the concept of “Turkishness” is intricately intertwined with his sense of national identity, ideals, and patriotism. When the poet speaks of the Turk and Turkishness, he constructs a noble and idealized image - one that embodies beauty, bravery, and love for the homeland. “As seen in Vahabzade’s works, Türkiye is as precious to him as his own country. The poet, who rejoices in Türkiye’s happy days and grieves in its sorrows like a fellow Turkish citizen, believes that Türkiye’s future place should be among the world’s prosperous nations, and he desires Türkiye to become one of the world’s great powers. His statement, «My only wish is that in the twenty-first century, Türkiye becomes a powerful state in the world, with a voice in the global balance of power,» best demonstrates the depth of his love for Türkiye” (Karaman, 2025, p. 7).

This dominant theme, which forms the central axis of both his literary creativity and intellectual activity, has been aptly summarized by Yavuz Akpınar: “In his poems and other writings, he addressed Islam and Turkishness through their historical depth and universal values. In addition, he authored works that strengthened the brotherhood between Türkiye and Azerbaijan and contributed to the establishment of political and cultural ties within the Turkic world” (Akpınar, 2011, p. 14).

This statement encapsulates the dual essence of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's mission: to preserve and promote cultural identity grounded in Turkic and Islamic values, and to serve as a literary and ideological bridge between the Turkic peoples. Through his poetry, prose, and scholarly contributions, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh sought to elevate the ideal of Turkic unity beyond political discourse and transform it into a cultural and spiritual reality.

2. Turkish Identity as a Component of National Ideology in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's Work

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh served not only as a distinguished writer and scholar but also as a prominent public and political figure who played the role of a moral and cultural bridge between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. In his literary works, themes of Turkish identity are closely linked to broader ideological concepts such as national freedom, linguistic unity, and cultural belonging.

Thus, in Türkiye, the understanding of poetry stemming from folk and minstrel poetry, and classical poetry, had weakened considerably. It was at this time that Turkish readers, encountering the poems of Bahtiyar Vahabzade, found the poet they were searching for, the one they longed for. Although he wrote in Azerbaijani Turkish, many readers understood his language better than that of Turkish poets. Vahabzade's poems were also in accordance with the poetic taste, moral understanding, and spiritual values of the people. In the person of Bahtiyar Vahabzade, the Turkish people had found a voice they longed for, a voice they missed. Moreover, this poet lived in Soviet society, where national and spiritual feelings were allegedly being destroyed. (Akpınar, 2011, p. 21).

His celebrated poem "Gülüstan" and the well-known piece "Latin Dili" (Latin Language) explore, with remarkable poetic mastery, the motifs of national liberation, unity, Turkic identity, and the central role of the mother tongue. These works reflect Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's ideological stance against assimilation and cultural oppression, emphasizing the need for preserving and revitalizing national consciousness among Turkic peoples.

Vahabzadeh gained even greater recognition in Türkiye through poems such as "Azerbaijan-Türkiye" (1991), "Mən Türkəm" (I am Turk) (1995), "Atatürk" (1992-1998), and "Allah Məni Belə Ağlat" (May God Make Me Weep This Way) (2001). These works not only resonated with Turkish audiences but also contributed to the literary discourse on shared history, values, and aspirations between the two nations.

Through such poetry, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh articulated a national ideology in which Turkishness - embodied in language, culture, and historical consciousness - served as a core element of Azerbaijani identity. His literary contributions thus transcend the boundaries of aesthetics, positioning him as an intellectual advocate for pan-Turkic solidarity.

Atatürkün atası! Adi cəfəkeş bir ata,
 Öz kiçik kulfətinin cövrünü cəkmiş bir ata,
 Bir böyük millətə ancaq ata əkmiş bir ata!
 Atatürkün anası! Adi bir insan, bir ana.
 Zaman ötdükcə nədən səcdə qılır hər kəs ona?
 Bir böyük millətə bir gün ata doğmuş o ana.
 Atatürkün sinəsi, yurdun almımaz qalası!
 Atatürk millətinin həm atası, həm balası!
 Nədir arzum, diləyim tanrıdan imanla bu gün?
 Talanan, bağına dağlar cəkilən xalqım üçün:
 Yeni fikrin kuləyindən qoca millət darana,
 Bizi birləşdirəcək bir Atatürküm yarana!
 (Ataturk's father - a simple man, a striving soul,
 Bearing life's burdens in his modest role.

Yet from his roots, a nation grew whole -
A father to a nation, though a father alone.
Ataturk's mother - just a woman, tender, kind,
Why now do all bow to her with reverent mind?
Because she bore a son, for all mankind -
A mother who gave birth to a nation's spine.
Ataturk's chest - the fortress of the land,
At once the nation's child, and guiding hand.
What is my prayer today, with faithful breath?
For my people, scarred and crushed, near death:
From winds of thought, let new life start,
Let a new Ataturk rise, to unite every heart.)

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's deep affection for Turkishness found continuous expression throughout his literary career. Tracing the chronology of his works reveals that, starting from 1961, the theme of Turkic identity increasingly gained prominence in his poetry. As noted earlier, following his first visit to Türkiye, the poet composed the poem "Istanbul", capturing the emotional impact of that formative experience.

Let us consider a brief excerpt from this poem:

Bosfor korfəzi...

İki qitə

Soykənmiş bir-birinə

Ortasında bu yolun.

Bir tərəfi Avropadır,

Bir tərəfi Asiya

İstanbulun...

Türk oğlu durub ortada

Seyr edir

Sağını,

Solunu.

Bir şəhərdə birləşir

İki qitə.

Birinin başlanğıcıdır,

Birinin sonu...

(The Bosphorus Strait...

Two continents

Leaning close -

Face to face

With this path in between.

One side is Europe,

The other is Asia -

Istanbul in between...

A Turkish soul stands at the center,

Gazing out -

To his right,

To his left.

In one single city

Two worlds unite.

One is where it all begins,

The other - where it ends.)

This poem marks a turning point in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's literary development, as it reflects the awakening of a cultural consciousness that would come to define much of his later work. His encounter with Türkiye- and particularly with Istanbul, the historical and spiritual center of the Turkic-Islamic world -triggered a profound emotional and intellectual response. This experience not only inspired individual poetic works but also laid the foundation for a lifelong literary commitment to themes of Turkic unity, identity, and historical memory. Regarding his first trip to Türkiye, the poet wrote the following: "I was going to Istanbul, the Mecca of the Turkic World, whose name I longed for throughout my 35-year life, the city that makes my whole body tremble, gives strength to my arms, power to my legs, and light to my eyes; my hope, my place of worship, the owner of my name that was forcibly taken from me, the protector of my honor and dignity, my seeing eyes, my striking arms, my thinking brain, my support, my history and my flag... Everything I have lost, my history, my past, my mother tongue, my honor, it is all in you" (Vahabzade, 1999, p. 48).

It is, of course, unrealistic to expect a poet who was a citizen of the Soviet Union to openly promote Turkic identity. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh also produced works that conformed to the ideological demands and restrictions of his time under Soviet rule. However, he skillfully managed to convey the sentiments of his heart through subtle, implicit meanings embedded within his poetry. This is the power of artful language.

In the aforementioned poem, the poet states, "the Turk son stands in the middle". This "Turk son" is, in fact, the poet himself - a figure who is observant of his surroundings, whose eyes carry a thousand questions. The poet expresses his firm belief that this Turk son will find the path of truth.

Reading through many of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's works, one is often amazed at how his poetry managed to pass through strict censorship. The Turk son described in the poem stands between two continents, caught between the past and the future. He remains deeply connected to his past, while also contemplating an as-yet-unknown future. The poet concludes his hopes for the future with the phrase "there is light ahead."

In this poem, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, through the symbolic figure of the Turk son - represented by himself - expresses pride in a glorious past and optimism toward the future.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's poem "Latin Dili" (Latin Language) is imbued with a spirit of struggle, demonstrating the profound connection between freedom, independence, and the issue of language. The poem conveys the idea that without one's language, one ceases to exist; if the language dies, the individual is also dead. This work provokes philosophical reflection and resonates with universal human values. As noted by İsa Habibbeyli: "Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's poem "Latin Dili" (Latin Language) stands out not only within 20th century Azerbaijani literature but also across the former Soviet Union as one of the most courageous works addressing the struggle for the mother tongue-an essential condition for national independence. There is no higher pinnacle in the Soviet-era Azerbaijani literature regarding the fight for the mother tongue" (Habibbeyli, 2010, p. 105).

This poem holds a unique place in the literary and cultural history of Azerbaijan, symbolizing the inseparability of linguistic identity and national sovereignty.

Mən azadam, müstəqiləm sözlərini

Öz dilində deməyə də

İxtiyarın yoxsa əgər

De kim sənə azad deyər?

Komalarda dustaq olub ana dilim,

Böyük-böyük məclislərdən

İtirilib ilim-ilim.

("I am free, I am sovereign" -

If you cannot say these words

In your own tongue, your own voice,

Then tell me -

Who can call you free, by choice?
My mother tongue lies in coma,
Chained in silence, pain, and trauma.
From the grandest halls it's gone -
Its name, its breath -
Slowly withdrawn.)

After Azerbaijan gained its independence, issues related to Türkiye and Turkic identity began to appear in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's works more openly, without the need for concealment or indirect expression. The initiatives and efforts for unity and rapprochement between the two peoples inspired the poet and motivated him to write with even greater enthusiasm.

In his poem "Allah, məni belə ağlat" (May God Make Me Weep This Way), written in response to the flight of Türkiye's Air Force "Turkish Stars" squadron over the skies of Baku in 2011, the poet poetically expresses the profound sense of support and strength he feels when he knows that his brother stands behind him, metaphorically stating that under such circumstances, he leans firmly against a mountain.

Öz halal "Türk ulduzlarım"
Uçdu mənim öz göyümdə.
Aslan gücü, pələng əzmi
Duydum o gün biləyimdə.
Mənə barmaq göstərənə
Öz yerini bəllətdilər.
Onlar Bakı səmasına
Ürək şəkli rəsm etdilər.

Dedilər ki, sizinlədir
Daim bizim ürəyimiz –
Hər eşqimiz, diləyimiz.

Sən ey mənə güc göstərib,
Hərdən məni hədələyən!
Onlar sənə göstərdi ki,
Tək deyiləm dünyada mən.
O gün baxıb göydə süzən ulduzlara,
Mən özümü arxalı bir dağ sayırdım,
Sevincimdən ağlayırdım.
Biz bir daha dərk elədik
Nədir inam, nədir inad.
Mən ağladım sevincimdən,
Allah, məni ağladanda, belə ağlat.
(My true "Turkish Stars"
Soared across my sky that day.
With the strength of lions, tigers -
I felt their power in my veins, my way.
To those who dared to raise a finger,
They showed their place, made the line clear.
In Baku's skies they drew a heart -
For us, their message: "We are near."
They said:
"With you always is our soul -

Our every love, our every goal.”
 And you -
 Who threaten me with force,
 Trying to shake my steady course -
 They showed you, loud and plain:
 I’m not alone - not in vain.
 That day, watching stars glide in flight,
 I felt like a mountain, standing in might.
 And in joy, I cried -
 Tears I couldn’t hide.
 We understood once more, that hour,
 What it means -
 To believe, to endure, to empower.
 And I prayed to God from the depth of my core:
 “If ever I must weep again -
 Let it be from joy, like before.”)

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s works promoting national ideology embody a sense of universality and humanity. If certain names and events were substituted, these poems could resonate with the voices of any people anywhere in the world who aspire to freedom and independence. These works are written with such sincerity, lived experience, and heartfelt sorrow combined with a determination to succeed and struggle that the poet has taught and inspired subsequent generations to embrace perseverance, love for their mother tongue, and the understanding and appreciation of their heritage.

In particular, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poem “Gülüstan” not only symbolizes the historical tragedy of a divided Azerbaijan but also reflects the nation’s struggle for freedom and independence. It portrays the idea of unity of a state caught between great powers within literature and simultaneously serves as a call for the entire Turkic world. In these works, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh presents his people not merely as a geographical entity but as a unified community bonded by a common language, history, culture, and national identity. This unity transcends the borders of any single state.

As noted, “Bakhtiyar Vahabzade has written all his works in an attempt to highlight the lofty values of our national, spiritual, moral, political and cultural history. His poem *Gülüstan*, as explained above, was written to deal with a historical fact that was imposed on us. It was written in a harsh language that reflected the national feeling and the sensitivity of the citizens” (Muradov, 2023, p. 43).

Tərəflər kim idi? Hər ikisi yad.
 Yadlarını edəcək bu xalqa imdad?!
 Qoy qalxsın ayağa ruhu Tomrisin.
 Babəkin qılıncı parlasın yenə.
 Onlar bu şərtlərə sözünü desin.
 (Who were the sides? Both were strangers.
 Will strangers bring us any saviors?
 Let the spirit of Tomris rise again!
 Let Babek’s sword flash through the plain!
 Let them speak -
 Against these terms so bleak.)

The lyrical hero, the lyrical “I,” in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poetry is characterized by struggle and courage. This spirit of resistance and bravery permeates both his poetic and journalistic works. As Nizami Jafarov expresses, “If there were three people consistently fighting for the unity of Azerbaijan’s North and South since the 1950s, one of them is B. Vahabzadeh; if there were two, one of them is B. Vahabzadeh; if there

is one, it is still B. Vahabzadeh. These words are not meant to evoke mere emotion in the reader; they are stated with complete seriousness...” (Cəfərov, 1996, p. 54).

From *Gülüstan* to the present day, he has raised the issue of national unity and a unified homeland as a poet, a nationalist scholar, and a sociologist, striving to grasp the essence of this matter and seek ways to resolve it.

The theme of national unity in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s work is a poignant and deeply felt subject. This is clearly reflected in his poetry. In his 1969 poem “Bakıyla Təbrizin arasındayam” (Between Baku and Tabriz), the poet writes, “I have been devastated many times at the crossroads”. Through these lines, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh poetically and heartfully conveys the tragic fate of his people torn apart between two occupying neighboring states.

Bəxtiyar, sinəndən neçə “mən” keçir
Biri dərdli keçir, biri şən keçir,
Məftilli çəpərlər sinəmdən keçir.
Bakıyla Təbrizin arasındayam.
(Bakhtiyar, how many “selves” pass through your chest?
One in sorrow,
One in jest.
Barbed wires cut across my breast -
I’m caught between Baku and Tabriz, oppressed.)

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s name is often mentioned alongside the poets of independence. In numerous works written about him, the poet is referred to as the “national poet of independence,” “the great herald of national independence,” and other similar epithets related to independence. The idea of independence runs like a red thread throughout Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s creative output. It is no coincidence that the poet regarded his 1999 poem titled “İstiqlal” (Independence) as a continuation of his earlier poem “Gülüstan” (1959). This is because the path to independence, as depicted by the poet, did not begin with Azerbaijan’s years of sovereignty, but traces back to an earlier period.

Məgər türk deyildi mənim şahlarım
Əsrlər boyunca mülki-İranda?
Bəs səni tutmazmı naləm, ahlarım
Məni “farsdan dönmə” adlandıranda?

Türkün zatındadır kişilik, mərdlik
O, öz düşməninə vurmaz arxadan.
Türkə, Türk dilinə bu düşmənçilik
Sizdə bir adətdir qalü-bələdan.
(Were my kings not Turks, ruling with might,
Through centuries past in Iran’s long night?
Do you not feel my cries, my sighs, my pain -
When you call me “a convert,” again and again?)

In a Turk’s soul lives honor and pride,
He never strikes an enemy from behind.
But this animosity for Turks and our native tongue -
In your hearts, it’s rooted deep, since time begun.)

In Azerbaijan’s struggle for freedom and independence, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh stood at the forefront not only through his poetry and journalistic works but also played a significant role in promoting this just cause not only in Türkiye but throughout the entire Turkic world. His work titled “Dovşana qaç, tazıya

tut: Azərbaycan hadisələrinin iç üzü, Moskvanın siyasəti” (Run from the Hare, Chase the Greyhound: The Inside Story of the Azerbaijan Events, Moscow’s Policy) was published in Türkiye in 1990. In this work, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh exposed Russian policy and Armenian duplicity in the emergence of the Karabakh conflict, introducing these realities to the Turkic world through his journalistic pen. He continued his struggle for justice with the same zeal in his journalistic writings as he did in his poetry.

Students fortunate enough to study under him for many years at the Faculty of Philology of Baku State University have taken his courage and determination as an example, recognizing the significance of his struggle. Vagif Yusifli, who wrote the foreword to Yavuz Akhundov’s book “İstiqlal şairləri” (*Poets of Independence*), did not withhold heartfelt words when describing the qualities of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s character: “Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh was my professor at the university. If I possess even a little courage as a person and a scholar, its source is Bakhtiyar’s influence. When he lectured us on ‘Azerbaijani Soviet Literature’ at the Faculty of Philology (BSU), it was not just a lecture; it was a LESSON ON THE HOMELAND. This lesson on the homeland played an unparalleled role in shaping hundreds of Azerbaijanis—before me, with me, and after me—into complete human beings. Later, through multiple interactions with this profound thinker, I understood what it means to be Azerbaijani-Turk, what suffering truly is. I realized how fortunate we are to have Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh in the world; without him, during the darkest periods of our history, our nation would have lost a vital voice of justice” (Yusifli, 1998, p. 3-4).

In Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s works, the issue of the mother tongue emerges as one of the key attributes of the national ideology. The mother tongue runs alongside the idea of Turkism throughout the poet’s entire oeuvre. He employs the notion “I am a Turk; my mother tongue is Turkish” as a leitmotif in his poetry.

Əslimi, nəslimi tanıyıram mən,
Qarışıq deyiləm, ozumdən hurkəm.
Sən kimsən, sən nəsən, özün bilərsən,
Mən ilk qaynağımdan türk oğlu türkəm.
Sübutdur, dəlildir, ağlın qibləsi...
Dəyişə bilərsən adımı ancaq.
Canım çıxanadək qəlbimin səsi,
“Türkəm” - gercəyini pıçıldayacaq.
(I know my origin, my pure bloodline clear,
No mix within me - I am who I appear.
Who are you, who claims to know me well?
I am Turk, from the very first well.
Proof and reason, my mind’s true guide,
You may change my name - but truth won’t hide.
Till my last breath, my heart will decree:
“I am Turk,” it will whisper to thee.)

As previously noted, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poems are as much universal as they are national. The verses he composed concerning his mother tongue resonate deeply in the hearts of all people. The poet’s work can be aptly characterized by the words of one of his students, who was as fervent a herald of independence as Vahabzadeh himself. Our independence poet, Khalil Rza Ulutürk, writes in his book “About the Master Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh”: “Once, a critic who had read Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poetry collection reproached the poet for his excessive use of the word ‘heart.’ I recall the author’s smiling response: ‘I write my poems with my heart. That is why you encounter the word “heart” so often’ (Ulutürk, 1999, p. 7).

The sincerity and passion of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s heartfelt poetry leave no doubt. Whether writing about the burning desire for freedom, the sweetness and significance of the mother tongue, or the pain of his people’s fragmentation, he has always written with profound emotional intensity.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's poem "Ana dili" (Mother Tongue) stands as one of the strongest poetic expressions in Azerbaijani literature, embodying love for the native language, national identity, and patriotism. This poem can be regarded as a manifesto of the mother tongue. The poet's lyrical persona elevates the mother tongue as a fundamental symbol of national identity. The poem instills in its readers lofty moral ideals: a person who forgets their language disconnects from their past and future; protecting the mother tongue means protecting one's people and homeland; scorning the native language is tantamount to betraying one's roots and nation. The poet poetically expresses his willingness to sacrifice even his life for the mother tongue, demonstrating his boundless love for it.

Bu dil, - bizim ruhumuz, eşqimiz, canımızdır,
Bu dil, - bir-birimizlə əhdi-peymanımızdır.
Bu dil, - tanıtmış bizə bu dünyada hər şeyi.
Bu dil, - əcdadımızın bizə qoyub getdiyi
Ən qiymətli mirasdır, onu gözlərimiz tək
Qoruyub, nəsillərə biz də hədiyyə verək.
(This language - our soul, our love, our breath,
This language - our sacred pledge, our binding faith.
This language - showed us the world's vast sea,
This language - our ancestors' precious legacy.
Like precious gems, may we guard it tight,
And gift it to generations, shining bright.)

3. Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's Recognition and Promotion in Türkiye

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's recognition and promotion in Türkiye began during the Soviet Union era. For instance, in the August 1972 issue of the Ankara-based literary magazine *Varlık*, an article titled «Ölü Edebiyat» (Dead Literature) by İsmet Zeki Eyuboğlu was published. In response, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh wrote a reply article entitled "Yel Kayadan Ne Aparır? [A Response to the Author Who Considers the Works of Nesimi and Fuzuli 'Dead Literature']," which appeared in the *Ədəbiyyat və incəsənət* (Literature and Art) newspaper on November 4, 1972. This response was subsequently published in the February 1973 issue of *Varlık* under the title "Azerbaycan'dan Cevap: Yel Kayadan Ne Aparar?" (What can the wind take from a rock?) accompanied by an editor's note stating, "...we present this text by Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh exactly as it was received, without any linguistic alteration, as it is easy to understand."

In this article, the poet firmly counters those who attack classical literature and reject the old by responding in the eloquent language of Fuzuli, a classic of Turkish literature. However, at the end of the article, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh humbly admits, "While writing these lines, it seemed to me that Nasimi and Fuzuli stand on the summit of a high rock, smiling at Eyuboglu's attacks and my defense. Because these personalities do not fear attacks from people like Eyuboglu and do not need defenders like me... As for attacks from below to the summit of the rock, the people have wisely said: 'What can the wind take from a rock?'"

Throughout his works, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh consistently emphasized his Turkish identity and the nobility of his language. This dimension of his creativity played a significant role in his recognition in Türkiye. In 1992, through his poem "Haqqı yox" (No Right), Vahabzadeh poetically articulated the importance of unity among Turkic peoples, expressing that in times when enemies were more numerous than friends, Turks had no right to feud with each other. This poetic message echoes and continues Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's famous statement "A Turk has no friend but a Turk," emerging from the sorrowful and challenging days Azerbaijan faced in 1992 as a heartfelt response from the poet's soul.

Dayaq olsun bu gün gərək sol sağa,
 Bu vəhdətdən yurdumuza gün doğa.
 Bütün millət dönməliyə kən yumruğa
 Türkün türklə ədavətə haqqı yox.

Tarix bizi imtahana cəkirkən
 İmdad umur hamımızdan bu Vətən.
 Dünya da haqq səsimizə kar ikən
 Türkün türklə ədavətə haqqı yox.
 (Today, we need support on left and right,
 From this unity, may dawn break bright.
 While all the nation freezes in cold plight,
 The Turk has no right to feud or fight.)

History tests us with heavy hand,
 This homeland seeks help from every land.
 Though the world is deaf to our just stand,
 The Turk has no right to feud or fight.)

Conclusion

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh made unparalleled contributions to building a literary and cultural bridge between Azerbaijan and Türkiye, tirelessly working through his creativity and social activism for the unity of these two brotherly peoples. His works continue to serve as an exemplary source for the Turkic world today and play a rich foundational role in the future development of literary relations.

One of the main reasons for the recognition and spread of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's work in Türkiye is his engagement with topical issues and his poetic treatment of painful subjects relevant to Turkic peoples. "In many of his poems and in the poem 'Martyrs,' Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh considered it essential to address problems pertinent to the Turkic world. At this point, he broadly speaks about the historical fate of the Turkic world. It is difficult to find a second poet in Azerbaijani literature who openly discusses the spiritual unity of the Turkic world as clearly as Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh. In such matters, he does not advocate a rigid Turanist stance; rather, his Turkism brings the issue of a common fate, not a common state, into the literary agenda" (Həbibbəyli, 2016, p. 11).

As a prominent figure of Azerbaijani literature and the Turkic world, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh played a significant role in the development of literary and cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. His work expresses both the national spirit and love of freedom, as well as the shared values of the Turkic world. In his valuable works on the unity of the Turkic world and the common history, language, and cultural roots of Azerbaijan and Türkiye, he artistically articulated this brotherhood, influencing the social and national consciousness of his time and subsequent generations.

The high respect and affection with which Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is received in Türkiye, as well as the frequent publication and translation of his works there, demonstrate his spiritual connection with the Turkish readership. Moreover, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh maintained longstanding friendships with many representatives of Turkish literature and contributed to mutual influence and cooperation in promoting the literatures of both countries. He has entered history as one of the writers who served as a bridge between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. His social activity, literary creativity, and ideals of independence have had a profound impact on the cultural rapprochement and strengthening of literary relations between these two brotherly nations.

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