

**GENDER MODERNIZATION IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC: THE ROLE OF THE
AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS****Received: 29 January 2026 | Accepted: 16 March 2026 | Published: 15 April 2026**

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Abstract

This research examines the struggle of the Azerbaijani people, especially women, for their rights in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the efforts of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to protect women's rights, analyzes legislative projects, decisions they make, and also educational policies to ensure effective. Article, The Azerbaijan People's Republic's first protection of women's and men's rights in the east, women's active participation in public life, their achievements in the field of education, it also shows the new faces of female intellectuals of the period that were formed during this period. The study found that the distortions formed in Soviet historiography were unfounded on the basis of historicity and explained with historical facts that the granting of equal rights to women and men in Azerbaijan for the first time did not happen during the years of Soviet rule. The research conducted shows that, Democratic Republic laid the main ideological foundation for the formation of the democratic mindset of future generations, especially women, and had a significant impact on the future fate of Azerbaijani women.

Keywords: Azerbaijani woman, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, gender equality, enlightenment.

1. INTRODUCTION

If we look at our rich and ancient history, Azerbaijani women, in parallel with men, have played a significant role in the progress of social and cultural processes in society at all stages of history, as well as took an active position and played a significant role in political decision-making. Azerbaijani women have always been distinguished for their will, courage, foresight, diplomatic skills, and loyalty. Azerbaijani women have been known throughout history as great mother figures, famous warriors, and powerful politicians.

Late 19th century early 20th century, It has been evaluated as a patriarchal period in the history of the Caucasus, during which significant social and political changes took place. Even though women's education, participation in public spheres, and legal status were limited during this period, In general, the socio-political relations and the enlightenment movement influenced the increase in women's political and

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social activity. However, this activity was not systematic and institutionalized. However, At the beginning of the 20th century, Azerbaijani women managed to create the initial foundations for the formation of gender relations.

Thus, It is observed that a women's movement took shape in Azerbaijan at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The historical period in question is characterized by the formation of gender relations, as well as the establishment of their institutional foundations..

Even though proposals for women's rights were rejected in the early 20th century, legal demands managed to come to the center of public discussion, and in the subsequent stage, the foundation was laid for the legal changes of the newly formed Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

The approach to the topic began in the 20th century and the changes that took place in the socio-cultural environment related to women, mainly from the period until the end of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, were analyzed based on historical facts.

An important point that increases the value of the study is that, During the APR period, for the first time in the East, a normative-legal basis for gender equality was formed by ensuring the right of women to vote and be elected, The socio-economic position of women in society has also expanded significantly.

The purpose of the article is to reconstruct gender relations during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Analysis of the approach to women's rights during the Republican era, In parallel, to highlight the achievements of women in the political, social and educational fields based on historical facts and It is a scientific study of the impact of these achievements on the activity.

The research is based on an interdisciplinary methodological approach, It was written by researching and synthesizing comparative, historical-analytical methods. During the research, available press materials of the period related to the topic of the article ("İşiq", "İqbal") historical sources, local scientific literature, research papers systematically reviewed and individually analyzed.

In the press materials of the period, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh's "*Iqbal*" newspaper (№ 397, 398, 403, 420, 422) published articles and the ideas she put forward in those articles regarding Caucasian women are analyzed and reflected in the article. M.A. Rasulzadeh's comparison of Caucasian women with women from other regions in particular Comparison with Turkish women, women's approach to clothing and culture was evaluated in the context of gender modernization.

Various literatures and research articles, which, an example of this is Amalya Gasimova's article '*Herald of Women's Freedom*', the research collection '*Women Illuminating the Republic*', and Ləman

Süleymanlı's *'Azerbaijani Women During the Republic Period'* were included in the study. Based on these literatures, women's rights were comparatively investigated in legal, social and public terms, common scientific conclusions were formulated, and it was substantiated that the People's Republic has a leading position in the field of women's rights.

The period of the APR has long been interpreted in Soviet historiography, within their ideological framework, and in particular, they have claimed that women's legal and social equality was a reality only during. The presented article has been approached from a different perspective, It has been shown that women's rights were realized during the republican period both at the level of legal acts, as well as at the level of public initiatives in education, labor relations, and so on.

During the research conducted, it was observed that research on the social, political and political status of women in modern times has not been sufficiently extensive. This article has helped to fill in the gaps on these issues to some extent and has systematically and clearly explained the role of women in society during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic.

2. The Early Enlightenment Movement and the Legal Awakening of Azerbaijani Women

As early as the beginning of the 20th century, a number of speeches regarding women's right to vote and be elected were made in the Russian State Duma. In particular, Khalil bey Khasmammadov, who represented Azerbaijan in the Duma, took the initiative to grant Muslim-Turkish women the right to vote, despite the socio-political situation of the time. At the first congress of Turkestan Muslims, Alimardan bey Topchubashov, like Khalil bey Khasmammadov, put forward his proposals for women's right to vote and be elected. One of the main points of discussion at the congress was the issue of education and expanding these opportunities, especially for Muslim women. However, the majority of the conservative group at the congress did not achieve the desired results, and a protest petition was signed by more than a hundred sheikhs, imams, and mullahs.

The women participating in the congress began to make sharp speeches against the male delegates who opposed the discussion on women's legal emancipation: "We have come here not to scold, but to state clearly, to declare that just as Nicholas' government could not resist the will of the people, so your will will certainly be overthrown. We women will undoubtedly overthrow your will. Remember, if you refuse to give us freedom, then you do not want the nation to develop. The progress of the nation is possible with children raised by mothers. (Məmmədova, 2019, p. 8).

If we look at history, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the financial and moral support of Haji Zeynalabdin Tagiyev, a number of Azerbaijani youth had the opportunity to study at a Russian higher education institution. This initiative of H.Z. Taghiyev played an important role in the development of the national enlightenment movement and even had a significant impact in terms of involving women in the field of education. Among these young people, Hanifa Khanim Malikova and Shafiga Khanim Efendiyeva were the main driving forces of the women's movement and deeply participated in the formation of the era..

One of the most important initiatives undertaken by H.Z. Tagiyev for the future development of Azerbaijani girls was the opening of the "Girls' School" for Muslim girls at a time when women's education was limited. If we look at the historical archive, H.Z. Tagiyev's appeals for the opening of a private school for girls begin in 1986. It is no coincidence that the school opened for Muslim girls is named after the Christian Alexandra Fyodorovna. Looking at historical archives, we see that H.Z. Tagiyev first applied to Alexander III to open a girls' school, but was rejected. Not stopping there, H.Z. Tagiyev's determination led him to appeal to Alexandra Fyodnovra, the wife of the new emperor Nicholas II, for the next time. After pleasing Fyodnovra with expensive gifts, he wrote a letter to persuade her to name the school after him. It was written in the letter: "If your consent is obtained to establish the Baku girls' school, which will be the only one in the Empire for now, it should be named "Olginsky" in honor of the Emperor's daughter, Her Majesty Grand Duchess Olga Nikolayevna." (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 369).

From the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, the issue of women's liberation was consistently brought up in the democratic press of Azerbaijan, as well as in the works of intellectuals and writers, and democratic enlighteners sharply criticized the reactionary views existing in this area.. The writings of J. Mammadguluzadeh, M.A. Sabir, F. Khoyski, T. Naghiyev, A. Aghayev, N. Narimanov, M. Jafarov, A. Kazimzadeh, M. Jafarov, Y. V. Chamanzamanli and other thinkers can serve as an example of this. In particular, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, Hasan bey Zardabi, and a number of our intellectuals have played an unparalleled role in defending the rights of Muslim women.

Even the magazine "Molla Nasreddin", which was widely known throughout the period, should be specially mentioned in J. Mammadguluzade's work. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's Molla Nasreddin magazine (1906-1931) laid the foundation for the satirical press in the Muslim East, and in this magazine he criticized the exclusion of girls from education before the age of 9, the forcing of girls into early marriage, and the trampling of their rights in the Muslim-Turkish world. Rashid bey Efendiyev specifically noted in his works that keeping women out of education and science leads to disaster for the development of future generations... (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 370)

In 1911, as a result of the active activities of national intellectuals, the first women's newspaper in Azerbaijan, "Işıq", was published in Baku on January 22, under the editorship of Khadija Alibeyova. This newspaper, which was established on the initiative of intellectual women of the time, was actively fought by Shafıga Khanum Efendiyeva, Medina Khanum Gıyasbeyli, Sona Khanum Tagiyeva, Amina Khanum Batrishina and others. Published in Azerbaijani and Russian, issue No. 68 of the newspaper Isık (until 1912) served as a key indicator of the substantial and meaningful social role of Azerbaijani women. Superstitious religious figures, especially Armenians, worked to close the "Işıq" newspaper, but were unable to achieve their goals. Thus, the intensive increase in the number of female authors of the period and their confident expression of their ideas showed that this difficult struggle was not in vain.

3. Azerbaijani Women During the Transition to National Statehood

For the Azerbaijani people, "women's liberation" was one of the main directions of the national liberation struggle. The period from February 1917 to May 1918 was a period rich in deep contradictions and multifaceted socio-political processes. The power vacuum that emerged in the Caucasus after the February Revolution created conditions for a number of positive developments in Azerbaijan's domestic politics. At the Muslim congresses held in Moscow, Kazan, Central Asia, and Baku, along with a number of political problems, the issues of freedom and rights of Muslim women were highlighted. The Congress of Caucasian Muslims was held in Baku on April 15-20, 1917. The congress took place in the Islamiyya building and was attended by Sara Talyshova from Tbilisi, Shafıga Efendiyeva and Sara Vazirova from Baku, along with the men. The resolution of the political commission at the congress declared the importance of granting legal equality between women and men. (İbrahimova, 2009, p. 174)

At the congress, women took to the podium without headscarves and delivered their speeches, which was considered a remarkable event in terms of the socio-cultural norms of the time. Shafıga Efendiyeva in particular stood out among the female participants for her activeness. During her speech, she prioritized the education of women and called for the opening of schools and theaters for women. The participants of the "Açıq Söz" newspaper, who appreciated his statements, applauded loudly, chanting the words "long live freedom". Naturally, this incident did not please theologians and muftis at all, and they raised their voices of protest.

1917-ci il oktyabr ayının 25-dən 31-dək Bakıda Azərbaycan Xalq Cumhuriyyətinin gələcək proqramı hesab ediləcək Türk Ədəbi Mərkəziyyət "Müsavət" partiyasının I qurultayı keçildi. Proqram 9

bölmə və 76 bənddən ibarət idi. Proqramda əsas məsələlərdən olan mülki hüquqları, fəhlə və torpaq problemləri, milli və dini məsələlərlə yanaşı qadınların təhsil almasına da xüsusi olaraq yer verilmişdi.

It is stated that all citizens are equal, regardless of nationality or gender, and that the required number of gymnasiums for men and women should be opened. At the congress, all citizens who had reached the age of 20 could be elected to parliament, regardless of gender, nationality, or religious belief.. (İbrahimova, 2009, p. 176)

On May 26, 1918, the Transcaucasian Sejm was dissolved, and on the same day, Georgia declared its sovereignty. On May 27, 44 Azerbaijani deputies gathered in Tbilisi for an extraordinary session.. By unanimous decision, it was announced that a "Provisional National Council" had been established, assuming responsibility for the administration of Azerbaijan.(Məhərrəmli, 2003, p. 158). On May 28, the next meeting of the National Council was held at the Palace of the Caucasus Viceroys, chaired by Muhammad Amin Rasullzadeh. At the same meeting, the National Council approved by 24 votes the text of the "Declaration of Independence", which legally defines the legal and political foundations of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Thus, the Azerbaijan People's Republic, which proclaimed the sovereignty of the Azerbaijani people, declared its existence as an international legal entity.

4. Women in the Republican era

4.1 Suffrage, educational reforms, voting rights and enlightenment policies during the Republican era

According to the political and social law adopted by the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, all citizens, regardless of gender, religion, or nationality, have the right to participate in the Assembly of Institutions, which is intended as the country's supreme legislative body, and have been granted universal, equal, direct, and secret voting rights. Thus, the newly formed state of the Azerbaijani People's Republic de jure solves the problem of equal suffrage for women, which was founded in the Russian State Duma by Khalil bey Khasmammadov in 1907. The "Declaration of Independence" approved in 1918 affirms equality and the right to vote and be elected. Thus, Azerbaijan went down in history as the first state in the Muslim East to grant women the right to vote. It should be noted that at that time, the recognition of these rights had not yet reached the level of legislative norms even in many European countries.

Although Soviet-era historiography claims that equal rights for women and men in Azerbaijan were only achieved during the years of Soviet rule, the "Declaration of Independence" and other legal documents of that period show that this approach is inconsistent with historical facts..

Even in the early years of the Republic, efforts were made to solve problems related to ensuring women's rights, but this was not an easy task. Because the entrenched mindsets of the Tsarist period, marked by both illiteracy and fanatical traditions, posed an obstacle to this. In an article titled "Women's Rights" in the "Azerbaijan" newspaper, issue 62, published in December 1918, by the author Selim Sari, it was mentioned, touching on this very topic: "Let's admit that we men are not neutral when it comes to issues that concern women's rights. Today, as part of our worship, we men praise and thank you: "Lord, you created me free and did not give me birth as a woman." (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 236)

He even wrote, citing Plato: "According to Plato, husband and wife are like right and left hands. Even if both hands are equally skilled, the habit of using one more than the other makes it more skilled than the other." (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 236)

Even though the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic lasted for a period of 1 year and 8 months, it achieved a number of achievements in the socio-political, cultural and educational fields during this period. This period witnessed a massive increase in the number of private schools for girls, as well as a rapid attraction to science.

Even though women's participation was viewed with suspicion during the republic's first elections, on the very first election day, mosques were filled with veiled women coming to vote, and according to rough estimates, 11,000 women voted in Muslim polling stations. This fact was real proof of the real involvement of Azerbaijani women in political issues.

4.1.1. Policies on enlightenment and education in the Republican era

Enlightenment and education policy was identified as one of the main priorities of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Serious importance was given to education in the newly formed republic, both in the formation of national consciousness and in the creation of professional personnel. As a result of this strategic approach, Azerbaijan's first university—Baku State University—considered one of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic's greatest achievements in the fields of education and science, was established on September 1 in accordance with a parliamentary law. According to that September 1 decision, "both male and female students" could attend the university as students and also stay and work there after graduating. (Qasimova, 2010, p. 2). According to statistical data, 25.3% of the number of students studying in the first academic year of the university, which began on the first day of classes on November 15, were Azerbaijani students, and within this group, 8.5% were female students.

These indicators show that with the establishment of the university during the APR period, women were provided with access to higher education and their involvement as university employees was one of the main components of state policy.

One of the most important tasks facing the Ministry of Public Education was to prevent illiteracy of the population and to this end, to train talented and educated teaching staff as soon as possible. According to statistics, in 1918, approximately 300,000 children were of school age in Northern Azerbaijan. To educate these children, 7,500 teachers were required. According to calculations, this meant 1 teacher for every 40 children. (İbrahimova, 2009, p. 191).

To solve this problem, a teacher seminar should have been opened with the aim of training a minimum of 650 teachers per year. But these seminars could solve only a small part of the problem. It took at least 10 years to resolve the issues of financial resources, buildings, textbooks, etc. Therefore, in order not to waste time, on July 17, 1919, the Azerbaijani parliament passed a short-term law on the establishment of courses for women. Based on this law, a draft law was signed in September 1919, which provided for the establishment of two-year courses consisting of 50 students, both for men and women, in the cities of Baku, Ganja, Gazakh, Sheki, Shusha, Guba, Salyan and Zagatala. According to reports in historical archives, in 1918-1919, only 4 girls were studying at the gymnasium in Ganja, but in 1920, there were already 296 female students. This showed a steady increase in the number of girls studying during the Republic.

By the end of 1918, four women's gymnasiums and three Saint Nina girls' educational institutions began operating throughout the country. On August 11, 1919, according to the decision of the Ministry of Education, the status of educational institutions named after Saint Nina was changed and they were renamed "The First National Women's Gymnasium of Azerbaijan" in Baku, and educational institutions for girls in the cities of Sheki and Ganja were renamed "Girls' Gymnasiums". Ms. Shafiga Efendiyeva has been appointed inspector of the First Women's Gymnasium of Azerbaijan operating in Baku. Graduates of the last class of these gymnasiums, which covered an eight-year period of education, were granted the right to pedagogical education.

4.2. The “workers” question’ in the Republican era

One of the other main topics that the Parliament of the Republic focused on in its field of activity, along with political and legal reforms, was resolving the problem of labor rights and social security. For this reason, on December 10, 1918, in the declaration of the "Musavat" faction at the II parliamentary session

of the Azerbaijan People's Republic, the law entitled "Labor Matters" mentioned the issues of pregnancy, maternity, health, and workplace safety of women in relevant articles.

Article 28: No one, regardless of gender, will work more than 8 hours a day..

Article 29: Women and men are legally entitled to one 24-hour day off per week.

Article 43: Pregnant women will be exempt from performing their duties for 4 weeks before and 6 weeks after giving birth. They will also continue to receive their wages and salaries during this period.

Article 44: Nursing homes for nursing mothers will be established near every factory, plant, and other industrial establishment where women work. Breastfeeding mothers will be allowed a break of at least half an hour every three hours.

During the second meeting, Sheikhulislamov from the "Hummet" faction was given the floor. "Sheikhulislamov, who began his sentence by saying "Dear Member of Parliament", specifically touched on the issue of women while talking about his nation and said in his speech: If half of the people work and half don't, that people are lame. No good can come to them. Today, our women are educating our future children. If women are not free, they will not be able to raise free-thinking children who will defend our homeland, but will raise slaves and captives. (Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti Parlamenti, 1918-1920, I cild)

According to the law discussed in the parliament on August 11, 1919, if a foreign man accepts Azerbaijani citizenship, his wife is also considered an Azerbaijani citizen. However, deputies - Ahmad Covdat, Govdat Aghayev, Ahmet bey Pepinov and others - voiced that this law violates women's rights and freedoms and does not take into account women's own wishes. Despite these objections, this article was adopted by a majority vote, as in its previous version. Here, in order to maintain gender balance, it was noted that: if a wife and husband have equal rights, and the wife is a citizen of another state, the man is also obliged to become a citizen of that state, or he may become a citizen of that country if he wishes. (İbrahimova, 2009, p. 175)

5. Female Intellectuals of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic Period”

As in the non-governmental and state structures of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, there were also women who were the successors of the enlightenment movement founded in the 19th century as a continuation of progressive steps in the field of science and education. Among the women enlighteners of the Republic period, it is possible to cite Gövhər Qayıbova, who worked as a teacher and was actively involved in the establishment of schools for girls and in training female teachers; Fatma Khanum

Hacinski, the first female teacher of the Nakhchivan school; Hanifa Khanum Melikova, the wife of Hasan bey Zardabi, who served as the head of the first women's Turkish school during the ADR period; and Badisaba Kocharli, an educator and the wife of Firudin bey Kocharli. (Yəhyayeva, 2018)

Among the progressive intellectual women of the period, Maryam Bayramalibeyova in Lankaran, Firuza Agayeva in Ganja, Bulbul Kazimova in Gadabay, Hanifa Malikova, Rahila Hajibababeyova, Sara Vazirova, Zarri Shakhtakhinskaya and others provided invaluable service, especially in the education of women.

Medina Giyasbeyli was appointed as the director of the Gazakh public schools, Eynulhayat Yusifbeyli was appointed as the head of the secondary schools department of the Ministry of Public Education, and Maryam Bayramalibeyova was appointed as the inspector of the Lankaran girls' gymnasium.. (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 332). All of this once again proves that the equality of rights granted to women during the Republic was not formal and women participated in administrative areas. In fact, having previously served as the director of the Sheki orphanage, Badisaba Kocharli, based on the experience she gained from this work, opened an "Orphan and Refugee Children's Home" in Gazakh in 1918 with her husband Firudin bey Kocharli at their own expense. He continued his charitable activities and provided significant financial assistance to schools in Gazakh.

The adventures of Shafiga Khanum Efendiyeva, who constantly put herself in danger for women's rights in the 20th century, especially shone during the Republic.

" Ignorance is the main source of any vile act. Science and education are the only way out of this " These words were spoken by Shafiga Khanum Efendiyeva, a female journalist who defended women's rights in the country and was the first Azerbaijani. Shafiga Khanum Efendiyeva, both in the pre-republican period and during the republican period, consistently worked to realize women's rights to education, to involve them in professional fields, and to reflect real reality in the press. Shafiga Khanum Efendiyeva began her journalistic activity in 1903 with the newspaper "Shargi-Rus". He then collaborated with a number of newspapers, such as "Debistan", "Dirilik", and "Açıq söz", and had his articles published. Shafiga Khanum, who worked for the education of women until the end of her life, still retains its value on a scientific and social level and is valued as a shining example of history.

Liza Mukhtarova, the wife of prominent industrialist and philanthropist Murtuza Mukhtarova, consistently took initiatives in the organization and development of both charity and women's education. She presided over the St. Nina Girls' School, providing financial assistance to young girls in financial and social difficulties to help them acquire education and vocational skills..

Javahir Rafibeyli, Bilgeys Gaziyeva, and Hajar Sheikhzamanova created a charitable society in Ganja and took under their care children who were orphaned and became refugees as a result of the Armenian uprisings.

These progressive behaviors of enlightened women were supported by responsible individuals of the time, and the public was informed that women's professionalization and enlightenment had a fundamental role in society.

6. The Role of Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh in the Life of Caucasian Women”.

As a historical figure, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, in addition to being the founder of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, participated in the development of all spheres of society for his nation, not only in the political sphere. As a historical figure, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, in addition to being the founder of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, participated in the development of all spheres of society for his nation, not only in the political sphere. Rasulzadeh believed that an enlightened, educated woman, as well as a mother, is the most leading force in shaping future generations. M.A. Rasulzadeh has always expressed the defense of women's rights, both in his works and in his political views, and has repeatedly emphasized the role of women in society. He even compared Turkish and Caucasian women in his work "Iqbal", showing social and cultural differences through his quotes. His view coincided with the idea of Azerbaijani enlightenment. In the first part of Rasulzadeh's three-part work Iqbal, he talked about the attire of women in Istanbul, in the second part about the upbringing of Istanbul women and their moral and social movements, and in the third part about the initiative shown by Turkish women for freedom. The value of the work lies in the fact that, while explaining each topic, Rasulzadeh quotes Caucasian women, revealing the differences between them, and calls on Caucasian women, especially Iranian women, to develop.

In his work, Iqbal provided an answer for those interested in the public life and politics of the Ottomans, noting that in Iran, a man would not go out with his wife, and in the Caucasus, it was considered an unforgivable sin for women to go to the shops or markets. However, Istanbul women walk freely everywhere and participate in ceremonies.

In his work "The Siyavushu of Our Century", written after the April coup, the Chairman of the National Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, M.A. Rasulzadeh, wrote that he did not see a problem with the equality of women and men, their equal work in education and health centers, and on the contrary, he wrote that this was women's right. (Məhərrəmli, 2013, p. 110) In that work, Rasulzadeh

noted that "men and women participated in the administration of the country without the privileges of either of them and had the right to enter legislative bodies." (Əhmədov, 2018, p. 234)

M.A. Rasolzadeh wrote: If women of all nations are educated and literate, Azerbaijani women cannot lag behind them. (Məmmədova, 2019, p. 10)

7. CONCLUSION

The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which has set out to create a strong foundation for democratic governance, has implemented a number of important reforms in the fields of rights and gender equality, despite its existence of only 1 year and 8 months since its establishment. The study once again proves that the ARF approached society's problems related to women not on an ideological level, but through legal mechanisms. The Azerbaijan People's Republic, which formed the initial stage of the institutional foundations of gender equality, affirmed equality, the right to vote and be elected based on the "Declaration of Independence" approved in 1918 as a result of its decisions, and Azerbaijan went down in history as the first state in the Muslim East to grant women the right to political participation. Thus, the participation of women in the first election was an indication that this decision was based on reality, not formality.

The education and enlightenment policy implemented during the ARF era was one of the main indicators of women's integration into public life. All the steps taken and successes achieved in this area have had a positive impact on the future of Azerbaijani women. The establishment of Baku State University, the involvement of girls in higher and secondary specialized education, and the creation of women's gymnasiums can be cited as examples.

The research shows that the activities of female intellectuals during the Republican period, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, were an integral part of the process of gender modernization during the early Republican period. The Republican period shows that they emerged as initiators of social change, ensuring their participation in the administration of educational institutions, the press, charity, and public organizations. As an example, the activities of Shafiga Khanum Efendiyeva, Liza Mukhtarova, Medina Giyasbeyli, Hanifa Khanum Malikova, Firuza Aghayeva and other charitable and enlightened women can be mentioned.

However, laws passed for both women and men in the field of labor and social security rights have created conditions for the protection of women's rights in the labor market and ensuring their economic independence..

As a result, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, by granting women the right to suffrage for the first time as a result of the reforms it implemented, not only refuted the unfounded claims made by Soviet historiography in this regard, but also formed the historical foundations of the principles of gender equality in the Republic of Azerbaijan today.

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