



Gasham Isabayli

*Azerbaijani Author candidate for the
2020 Hans Christian Andersen Award*

Biographical information on the candidate

Gasham Isabayli was born into a family of a pedagogue on August 14, 1948 in Khalsa village of Kurdamir district, Republic of Azerbaijan. His grandfather Hajimail bay (a landowner) was a well-wisher and generous man who was on good terms even with his subjects. Hajimail bay had already left this world when the Soviet government was established in Azerbaijan but his wealth was taken away from his family disinheriting and disfranchising it. And it was equal to death in those years.

Started writing in his school years Gasham Isabayli fostered good ideas in children continuing benevolence traditions of his grandfather. His first book “Balaja-bapbalaja” (“Little, very little”) was published in 1982. About 40 books of G. Isabayli were published in Baku till today, among them narrative “Jinn” (1993) and story “Lesson of hunger” (2014) in English, “Uuu”, “Lesson of hunger” and narrative “Donkey the son of Donkey” in Russian.

His works were translated into Russian, English, Ukrainian, Belarus, Kirgiz and Turkish. He was first Azerbaijani children’s writer whose 2 pages poetry were published in famous “Murzilka” magazine in Russia (Moscow, 1987).

G. Isabayli’s poem “Akil-Bakil” became winner (regarding poetry) of first Republican competition “The best children’s book of the year”, organized by the Union of Writers and “Dovletneshrkom” (State Publishing Committee) in 1989. The author transferred money award to the Fund of monument dedicated to the people who became martyrs for the independence of Azerbaijan.

He was the first Azerbaijani children’s writer whose story “Grandpa, good morning” was published in English in IBBY’s Bookbird magazine in 2012.

He was the first among Azerbaijani children’s writers whose name was included into IBBY International Andersen Honor List for narrative “Jinn” in 2014.

In 2015 his book of poems, stories and tales “The revenge of the Stork” won a prize “Golden Word” of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Aysel Khalilova’s book “The prominent children’s writer G. Isabayli” is about creative activity of the writer. The book has 260 pages and was published in Baku in 2011.

Statements on the candidate's contribution to literature for young people

Alaviyya Babayeva, a writer, characterizes G.Isabayli's creative activity like this: "What is G.Isabayli's poems' essence? First of all the national character. A poet, a prose writer comes from the nation. But he returns to the nation's soul with difficulty. Everybody has his own way in this returning but pure spring water is not for everybody. G.Isabayli's poems which resemble spring water gives pleasure to children and adults the same way."

PhD in Philology **Aysel Khalilova** wrote a book "The prominent children's writer G. Isabayli".

The book is about creative activity of the writer. It has 260 pages and was published in Baku in 2011. Here is a statement from the book:

"G.Isabayli's works are the product of powerful pen reflecting the spirit of nation. The narration "Uuu..." is interesting from the point of view of effort of respond to world standards of Children's prose of Azerbaijan. The language of the narration is national one."

Gasham Isabayli is the master who gives great value to power of the artistic word. As a careful observer of children's psychology in creation of interesting works the author derives inspiration from reality of life. The writer who tries to "presents" his thought as "a sweet cake" to children. It is enough to read a sentence of his stories in order not to leave the book and finish it in a very short time (**Shafag Nasir. 525 Newspaper, 30.09.2011**).

Gasham Isabayli's creativity differing with a distinct style, sweetness of language, sense of humor is notable with skillfully creation of original composition of the plot and enlivening the images profoundly. The stories of the writer are far from the idea of suggestion of something to the readers directly, the suggested idea emanates from logical content of the text. Folklore style occupies the main place in the creativity of the author with all its components: description, possibility of expression and the way of narration **(G.Garayeva, PhD in Philology, Associated professor. 525 Newspaper, 07.05.2015).**

THE TALENT FORCES ITS WAY THROUGH

(Newspaper "Adabiyat" (Literature), January 10, 1997)

In our poetry, especially in children's poems, our picturesque meadows, forests, valleys are depicted. Some poets tell that the steppes where in summer the snakes bleat, in winter the wolves howling together are not talked of. I want to argue with them. They are talked about!

When you look through the pages by Gasham Isabayly's "Little, Very Little", "Uuu", "Akil-Bakil", "The Granny is Alone" you see the Motherland's white, different coloured steppes, abundant and non-abundant ravines, muddy roads in winter. It is interesting that the poet teaches to love these places. The young reader's love is deep for the hard-working people in these places, whose hands are toil-hardened, alone-living grandmothers, who pray for their grandchildren:

Granny is alone in Khalsa,
In her three-room flat.
She bakes bread,
She has salt and bread for everybody.
She says: The god is like me,
I'm here and He is there alone
In the Heavens...

Working in the publishing-house "Ganjlik" as an editor I opened a folder with the name "G.Isabayly". The poems which I read drew my attention. These poems written for children were mere and natural. Some of those poems, especially "Wind" I remember even today: –The wind, why are you blowing?

–If not I won't be a wind.
–Are you of any good?
–I am only for good.
–In the winter?
–In winter I am a rain, snow.

–In spring?
–I awaken the trees.
–In the summer?
–In summer I am a spring.
–In autumn?
–In autumn I am abundance,
I become the leaves,
Fruits on the branches.

I was delighted by the findings in these lines. What was the essence of G.Isabayly's poems? First of all the national character, folk character. These poems come from the folk literature spring. The poets, writers come from the folk of course, but his returning there is difficult, full of hardships. This road is taken differently by different people, but the spring water is not achieved by everybody. Such spring water gives a pleasure to all.

I've written "Akil-Bakil"
for you, to read,
to feel the smell
of my words.

The poet is not mistaken, each line here has got its own fragrance like a flower's. In nature every flower has got its smell; the rose, the daffodil, the tulip, lily of the valley's smell is not like geranium's. But all of them admire us. G.Isabayly's poems also smell the smell of folk poetry. Even we can't explain how they find their way to your heart. The thoughts come across and we all are those who once took pleasure from the treasure of world literature. We don't accept everything that we have read we can choose the best. G.Isabayly's "Akil-Bakil" is of such magic, it comes from the folk literature and became the product of the fiction.

Come, come round,
Let us dance,
let us find the round-clearer
Don't let him join us.

"Make a round, don't let the round-clearer join us". The music and rhythm, alliteration of this poem attracts not only the little readers but also all of those who know and estimate the literary pieces, the poem has the naturalness like a bird's flying, but we know that flying is a very difficult process. The bird flies by the help of the wings.

G.Isabayly's "Akil-Bakil" begins with the making a round, a circle which comes from the tales, but the development of the happenings brings us face to face with events, life events. And the author takes us to the sweet flowing of the tale. It is not a secret that in some poems clever sayings which are not directly connected with the plot do have got place. The poets take us to clever, wise sayings, separate us from the general plot. But G.Isabayly's "additions" have the same roots with the literary piece. The tale-like "Akil-Bakil" poem's events have everything to do with the general plot. The love of Motherland, unwishable border difficulties, on the other side of the border, in the territory of Iran, in South Azerbaijan, our native people, our native land is depicted with natural tale tinges of a poem.

There is a book called "Uuu" before me, where his two other tales – "Uuu", "Elnur, Akil, Bakil and their Adventures" and a novel "And I Came to Khalsa Village" are given. It is admirable that G.Isabayly's prose style is very much alike his poetic language and is of tale essence. The story of crying Gunay amazed me. The author gave a strange name to the novel – "Uuu". To tell the truth, the name of the novel, as well as the book itself is a discovery for the children's prose. The crying Gunay is called by everybody "Uuu". In the prologue of the novel the author in an interesting way explains how the name was created. Then several unexpected events following each other are given which present in a tale-way adventures. These are the big adventures of a little girl:

–This girl's name... – Narmin stopped speaking and looked at the children.

–Go on, go on! – the children were waiting for the name with interest.

–... is Uuu, – Narmin finished her speech.

–How?! What?! – the children asked in chorus.

–Uuu!

Gunay stopped. But it had happened. The girl became Uuu."

Then the author tells us about the interesting adventures of the crying girl: How Uuu Visits the Forest of Tree-men, Vice Versas, Being at Odds, Thieves, Trues. These are the name of the countries to which Uuu travels, where she visits with the "unexampld doctor". The thing is that the author doesn't depict the adventures only to give a pleasure, but for thinking of, faces these events with the modern life events, ties them up with today's social life, known difficulties.

I not only read "The Grandmother is Alone", "Akil-Bakil", "Uuu" with great interest, but also couldn't stand writing on the pages "Thanks", "Excellent" several times.

G.Isabayli Earns Hans Christian Andersen Award

IBBY Honour List 2014 – The Andersen Award was presented at the 2014 IBBY International Congress on Books for Children and Young People (See site - IBBY Honour List 2014) in Mexico city. It is noteworthy that the list of laureates includes the name of Azerbaijani children's writer Gasham Isabayli among its 57 names.

What does the Hans Christian Andersen Award mean? It is given to a selection of world children's writers for the best works reflecting the contemporary literary environment in the past two years. Gasham Isabayli, included in the Andersen Honour List for his tale "Genie," is the first children's writer of Azerbaijan to receive this honor. "Genie" was published in three editions. The number of copies printed in the first printing was 60,000 in Azerbaijani Turkish and 20,000 in English. The book has spread widely among readers.

It should be mentioned that G.Isabayli's story "Good morning, Grandpa!" was published in the Bookbird magazine of the International Committee of Books for Children and Young People (London, 2012). The magazine editor mentioned in his letter addressed to the author: "Your story is very interesting!" This is the first valuable opinion on Azerbaijani children's literature. G.Isabayli's works have been translated into Russian, English, Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Kyrgyz. In the Soviet period the author's poems were published in the "Murzilka" magazine (Moscow, 1982). His works included "Uuu...", "Donkey the Son of a Donkey," "We are Old Caucasians," and "A Lesson of Starvation."

Another review states that "Characterized by his retrieval of artistic form and content and original style of writing, Gasham Isabayli has brought new breath to children's literature with his multiform creation" (Z. Khalil and F.Askerli, *Children's Literature Textbook*, Baku, 2007). The author traveled a difficult path to gain success in his literary activities. Many writers have written approvingly of his innovations in children's literature. Well-known poet Mammad Ismayil writes, "In this book, little in title and form (*Balaja, bapbalaja*, Baku, 1982), I have seen a lot of interesting stories which children will read with wonder" ("Adabiyat ve injasanat" Newspaper, February

11, 1983). He also mentioned the poem “Ekil-Bekil.” “The language of ‘Ekil-Bekil’ is really sweet. Maybe Ekil-Bekil from our national fairy-tales showed the author where to find a magic lamp. That is why the story is so readable. (“Ekil-Bekil.” Introductory, Baku-1990). It should be noted that G.Isabayli was given awards by Azerbaijan Writer’s Committee, Azerbaijan State Committee of Public Relations and Azerbaijani Comsomol. The author transferred the monetary award to a charitable foundation.

Alaviyya Babayeva, an outstanding Azerbaijani writer, spoke of G.Isabayli’s narrative “Uuu...” as follows: “G.Isabayli’s narration is as poetic and improbable as poetry. It is a godsend for children’s literature.” (“Talent finds his way,” “Adebiyyat ve injasanat” Newspaper, January 10, 1997). The poet Mammad Namaz wrote: “I think the book *My Granny is Alone* is one of the best works of recent years. It stands on a high level with great Shahriyar’s poem ‘Greetings to Haydarbaba;” (A.Khalilova, “Outstanding Azerbaijani writer Gasham Isabayli.” Baku, 2011).

The presentation of the Hans Christian Andersen Award of the International Congress on Books for Children and Young People to Gasham Isabayli can be considered a significant event in the history of Azerbaijani literature.

His book of poems, stories and tales “The revenge of the Stork” won a prize “Golden Word” of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Shafag Nasir
Writer/Publicist

List of awards and other distinctions

1. **“The best children’s book of the year” (1989).**

G.Isabayli’s poem “Akil-Bakil” became winner (regarding poetry) of first Republican competition **“The best children’s book of the year”**, organized by the Union of Writers and “Dovletneshrkom” (State Publishing Committee) in 1989. The author transferred money award to the Fund of monument dedicated to the people who became martyrs for the independence of Azerbaijan.

2. He was the first Azerbaijani children’s writer whose story **“Grandpa, good morning”** was published in English in **IBBY’s Bookbird magazine in 2012.**

3. He was the first among Azerbaijani children’s writers whose name was included into **IBBY International Andersen Honor List for narrative “Jinn” in 2014.**

4. **“Golden Word” Award.**

In 2015 his book of poems, stories and tales “The revenge of the Stork” won a prize **“Golden Word” of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Azerbaijan.**

The book published about G.Isabayli

PhD in Philology Aysel Khalilova “The prominent children’s writer G.Isabayli”.

The book was published in Baku, 2011, by the decision of Scientific-Methodical Council of the Ministry of Education of the Azerbaijan Republic.

It consists of 260 pages and was published by Shirvannashr publishing house.

Bibliography of the books of candidate

G.Isabayli's first book "Balaca-bapbalaca" (Little, very little) was published in 1982. He is always searching for literary form and content, original style and is one of the children's writers in Azerbaijan with his new breath and colourful creation. His advantage is in his flowing poems written for children; these poems are harmonic to the children's simplicity and nature. For instance, we can see it in his poem "Wind". Written in the form of conversation, this poem increases the children's outlook, knowledge. The original lines admire the reader. Taking its roots from the spring of folk pieces this poem is engraved in the children's memory. The children take these poems as spring water and the poems become the engraving of the poetic creation of Gasham Isabayli. In order to describe the activity of the children which are of different characters the poet gives his lines humour and the little ones see themselves in these mirrors. G.Isabayli plays a great role in the formation of children as new generation's personalities, especially with his poems of the 90s of the last century and beginning of the new century with his poetic lines which conquer the moral world of children. It is not in vain that in 1989 in the competition of Azerbaijan Writers Unity, State Publishing Committee and other organizations G.Isabayli's "Akil-Bakil" won the first prize in the "Best Children's Book of the Year". It was published for 25 thousand copies which was a record for those years.

Alaviyya Babayeva, a writer, characterizes G.Isabayli's creative activity like this: "What is G.Isabayli's poems' essence? First of all the national character. A poet, a prose writer comes from the nation. But he returns to the nation's soul with difficulty. Everybody has his own way in this returning but pure spring water is not for everybody. G.Isabayli's poems which resemble spring water gives pleasure to children and adults the same way."

G.Isabayli's works "Uuu...", "Elnur, Akil and their adventures", "The Jinn" tale-novels, novel "And I Came to Khalsa village", poetic selections "Little, Very Little", "Songs about Bread" had become table-books of the Azerbaijan reader. These works are read with interest today, too. The reader loves them for their folk nature, for their being very original. G.Isabayli's poems were published in Russian, Ukrainian, Belarus, Kirgiz languages, his book "The Jinn" (in English) was published in Baku in 20 thousand copies.

Works of Gasham Isabayli

1. Little, Very Little. Baku, "Ganjlik" Publishing House, 1982.
2. Mother Wants Nothing. Baku, "Yazichi" Publishing House, 1983.
3. The Tale of the Candle. Baku, "Ganjlik" Publishing House, 1984.
4. Akil-Bakil. Baku, "Ganjlik" Publishing House, 1987.
5. Uuu. Baku, "Ganjlik" Publishing House, 1990.
6. The Jinn (tale). Baku, "Shur" Publishing House, 1993.
7. The Jinn (in English). Baku, "Shur" Publishing House, 1993.
8. The Grandmother is Alone. Baku, "Shur", 1995.
9. Khalsa – times of the life. Baku, "Shur", 1996.
10. Elnur, Akil and their Adventures. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2000.
11. You, Wind, Why are you Blowing. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2002.
12. The Love Confessions of a Soul. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2006.
13. Samur Drives a Horse. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2006.
14. An Old Man and an Old Woman... Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2006.
15. European Fashion, Tight Trousers... Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2007.
16. The Dead Man Knows, I Know. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2008.
17. This City is too Much for Me. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2011.
18. Uuu... (in Russian). Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2011.
19. Donkey the son of Donkey. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.
20. Donkey the son of Donkey (in Russian). Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.
21. Lesson of hunger. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.

22. Lesson of hunger (in English). Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.
23. Lesson of hunger (in Russian). Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.
24. The revenge of the Stork (stories, tales, poems). 128 p., Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2015.
25. The Deadly Fight of The Grey Chickens and Black Cat The Famous Thief, tale-narrative. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2015.
26. The tale of freedom of the Goat. Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2017.

Song collections

1. G.İsabayli, O.Rajabov "Anam, nənəm, bir də mən" (My mother, my grandma and me). 24 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2004.
2. G.İsabayli, O.Rajabov "Çörək haqqında nəğmələr" (Songs about bread). 16 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2004.
3. G.İsabayli, O.Rajabov "Çörək haqqında nəğmələr" (Songs about bread). 98 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2009.

Some important works by G.Isabayli

1. "Akil-Bakil". Baku, "Ganjlik Publishing House, 1987.
2. "Uuu". Baku, "Ganjlik" Publishing House, 1990.
3. "The Jinn". Baku, "Shur" Publishing House, 1993.
4. "The Grandmother is Alone". "Shur", 1995.
5. "Elnur, Akil and their Adventures". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2000.
6. "You, Wind, Why are you Blowing". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2002.
7. "Donkey the son of Donkey". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2014.
8. "The Deadly Fight of The Grey Chickens and Black Cat The Famous Thief". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2015.
9. "The revenge of the Stork". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2015.
10. "The tale of freedom of the Goat". Baku, "Shirvannashr", 2017.

List of translated editions

1. The Jinn (in English). 32 p., Baku, "Shur", 1993.
2. Uuu... (in Russian). 96 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2011.
3. Donkey the son of Donkey (in Russian). 60 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2014.
4. Lesson of hunger (in English). 16 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2014.
5. Lesson of hunger (in Russian). 16 p., Baku, "Shirvanneshr", 2014.