



Հ.Ա.Ղ.Մ.-ի ԳԼԵՆԴԵԼԻ ԱՐԱՐԱՏ ՄԱՍՆԱՃԻՂԻ  
ՄՇԱԿՈՒԹԱՅԻՆ ԲԱԺԱՆՄՈՒՆՔ

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*Get to Know...*

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## ALEXANDER SHIRVANZADE

April 18, 1858 – August 7, 1935

Aleksandr Movsesian, an Armenian playwright and novelist was born on April 18, 1858, into a tailor's family in the province of Shirvan, in what is now Azerbaijan, and later adopted the pen-name Shirvanzade (son of Shirvan). He brought to fruition the social realist school of Armenian drama promoted by Gabriel Sundukian a generation earlier. At the age of 17, Shirvanzade went to work in the Caspian city of Baku whose fortunes were beginning to rise with the boom in oil production. He immersed himself in Armenian and Russian literature as well as reading Stendahl, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola and Shakespeare, his greatest love.

Working first as a clerk and then as an accountant for oil companies, Shirvanzade saw first-hand the social impact of industrialized oil production. He turned his shock and anger into a literature of protest, writing in many genres: novels, plays, short stories, and newspaper articles. His later protests against the massacres perpetrated during 1894-96 against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdulhamid II resulted in his imprisonment in Tiflis, an experience which led to his masterpiece, *Chaos* (1896-97). Returning to Baku, he became increasingly interested in women's issues, as shown in his play *Evgine* about women's suffrage, and *Did She Have the Right?* Shirvanzade's concerns with capitalism and feminism fuse in his drama, *For the Sake of Honor* (1904). In 1916, Maxim Gorki wrote that Shirvanzade's works "were known and read not only in the Caucasus but also in England, in the Scandinavian Peninsula, and Italy." In his later years, Shirvanzade lived abroad, finally returning permanently to Yerevan in 1926. He died in Kislovodsk in 1935, and was buried in Yerevan.

*His books:* *Chaos* (1898), a novel describing the life of a large industrial city.

*The Evil Spirit*, a novel about an [epileptic](#) woman.

*Namus* (1911), a play about the ill fate of two lovers, who were engaged by their families to each other since childhood, but because of violations of *namus* (a tradition of honor), the girl was married by her father to another person.

