

Coetaneous Two Poets Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Mehmet Akif's Child Education Thought

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Abstract

The two great coetaneous poets and thinkers of the East, Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Allama Muhammad Iqbal have many writings in order to awaken their own people and raise their awareness in the troublesome processes of the society in which they lived. It is a common situation for both of them that their works are accepted and adopted by large masses, thus directing the societies in which they live. These two great poets and philosophers, who struggled for their nation with similar emotions and thoughts, in two different parts of the world so far away from each other, have reached large masses with their sermons and conferences as well as writing poetry. One of the subjects that both poets focus on is the children who will shape the future. While Muhammad Iqbal emphasized in many of his articles that children are the guarantee of the future of the Islamic world, Mehmet Akif stated as well that children can change future of nation if they receive a good education. Both emphasized upon the need for good education of children for the sake of the state and religion.

In this study, we will approach Akif and Iqbal's thoughts on child education in the light of their poems.

Keywords:

Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Mehmet Akif, Children, Education, Indian Subcontinent, Turkey.

Great figures of the east: Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936) and Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) were poets and philosophers who had similar feelings and thoughts and had managed to appeal to large masses. The troubled processes of the society they lived in had deeply saddened them and they wrote many works to awaken and raise awareness philosophers in their people. Akif and Iqbal's thoughts on education are similar to each other, as is the case with many issues. Both of them were influenced by the great poets of Persian Literature such as Mevlana Rumi, Hafız Shirazi, Sanai, Saadi Shirazi, Fakhreddin Razi, Feriduddin Attar, Jamaladdin Afghani, Shibli Nomani, who shaped their works with the Islamic line (Çelik, 2005, p. 187). Both emphasized that the salvation of the nation can be achieved by raising the new generation.

At the time when Muhammad Iqbal lived, Indian subcontinent was under the British Mandate and the Muslims of India were being treated like second-class citizens by the British colonization. The British colonized the Muslims who ruled the Indian subcontinent for years. Mehmet Akif Ersoy also watched the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and witnessed the Tripoli War (1911-1912), the Balkan Wars, the First World War (1914-1916), which deeply grieved not only the Turks but also the entire Islamic world. Afterwards, Mehmet Akif Ersoy lived through Turkish National Struggle (1919-1922) and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey (Gürel, 2016, p. 192).

Both Mehmet Akif Ersoy and Iqbal addressed humanity, especially Muslims with their works and issued a call for them to be saved from being slaves of others. Mehmet Akif Ersoy said in his poetry, which was selected as

the National Anthem by The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, “*Use your chest as a shield, stop this impudent attack*”. Here is seen that Ersoy displayed a strong stance, preferring to die rather than be a slave.

Muhammad Iqbal emphasized importance of freedom in his poems entitled *Submission to Destiny, Freedom, Leadership* and in many other of his poetry. He told us that we should not become slaves except than Allah. Iqbal said in his *Leadership* poetry, “*The leadership that makes the Muslim slave of the sultans is a annihilation for Islam*” and Iqbal stated that all kinds of slavery have nothing to do with Islam (Soydan, 2013, pp. 23, 67, 82).

As said in a Turkish proverb; the tree bends when it is treelet. This is also the case during human development. The behaviour desired to be brought to the new generation should be impersonated within certain periods. Child development specialists call this term the critical period and state that it may not be retrieved later. This shows how important the education of children and planning of education in the development of the next generation (Bacanlı, 2012, pp. 51–52).

Muhammad Iqbal as like Mehmet Akif gave importance to the education of the new generation of children and young people in order to get Muslims out of this slavery and likened them to an untreated ruby. For this reason, he longed young people to turn into a processed ruby by getting timely and correct education. Iqbal, who reflects this longing in his works, envisioned a new Muslim generation with conscious individuals with this idea. Muhammad Iqbal, gave effort to bring this vision to life, believed that the Islamic world would pass from collapse to rise in this way (İkbal, 2013, pp. 5–6).

Turkey's National poet Mehmet Akif Ersoy said to his son who left his education in Berlin because in those days, Turkey was going through hard times and returned to own country;

“Go on, accomplish your education quickly, go on!

For the honour of the nations, my son,

Science and virtue... These two powers are needed!” (Ersoy, 2007, p. 430).

“Two or three chops cannot separate us from our past.

If the roots of the tree are abyssal incredibly,

If the branch is broken, what happened?

The body is gone what's the harm?

(...)

In this aspect my son, let not to show the white feather;

Let your face turn to the knowledge of the West only” (Ersoy, 2007, p. 431).

The infinite cadent fountain in the land of science,

Drink it and bring those beneficial waters to the homeland.

To revive the same headwaters here too,

Let your mind work my son, to make flume here too (Ersoy, 2007, p. 432).

With this advice, Mehmet Akif Ersoy emphasized the importance of science education to young people for the future of the country. At the same time, he said that if necessary, they should continue their education from distant places, even from the enemy. Ersoy wanted them to bring only the

useful knowledge of the west for his nation and to close their eyes to the harmful ones (Dayanç, 2015, p. 138).

Similar to Mehmet Akif's dialogue with Asım, Muhammad Iqbal also addressed his son Jawed. Iqbal tried to instill a sense of excitement and courage in Muslims who were in decline and he did so by embodying Jawed's personality. (Diclehan, 1994, p. 13). Iqbal in Jawednama's last poem "Address to Jawed" emphasized the need for endless struggle and self-consciousness for young people (Soydan, 2016, p. 339).

The fact that Mehmet Akif and Muhammad Iqbal care about children and young people is a goal to be pursued and a situation aimed at a purpose. Mehmet Akif Ersoy wanted to show us at the time of his childhood years how his father took him to the mosque in his poem called Fatih Mosque, and how a father would leave indelible positive or negative marks on the child's character (Ersoy, 2009, pp. 27–33).

Mehmet Akif's poem named "Dirvas" is a good exemplary to draw attention to the courage of young people and encourage them in this direction. During the period of the tenth Caliph of the Umayyads, Umayya ibn-i Hisham, famine arose as a result of the drought that lasted for three years near Damascus and caused the deaths of many people. The notables of Damascus decide to take away Dirvas with them who was an eleven-year-old and has a strong speech, as their spokesperson. When Dirvas come into Hisham's presence and started to talk, Hisham reminded him that he was a child and asked him to remain silent, but Dirvas still continues to speak;

“Do you think Dirvas is a child?”

Have a listen and then decide, i am a child or not?

What's fairness, don't you have it?

Let me tell you respectably sir,

It is up to you to silence me sir”

Dirvas continues to speak and Hisham admires his courage and a glib tongue in astonishment. Afterwards, Hisham immediately ordered that his requests be done. (Ersoy, 2009, pp. 221–227).

Muhammad Iqbal advised young people to be aware of the jewel in them and to leave their laziness and lack of discipline. Iqbal said in the poem of “Address to the Muslim Youth”;

“Oh Muslim youth, Have ever puzzle your brain,

What was the sky where you were a falling as a star?

This nation trampling on Darius's crown under his feet,

But they fed you in the arms of love.”

In this poem, Mohammed Iqbal by addressing to the young people says, they do not appreciate to past, their ancestors and the present blessings (Kuyumcu, 2011, p. 78). It is possible to see the same reproach in Mohammed Iqbal's address to his son Jawed;

There are no teachers left in schools anymore like them

“Who had instructive gaze like a whip,

Even if you are having western style education.

You do not have to be afraid if you have faith in your essence.

Do not sit unaware it is not playtime,

Time to show skill and work performance” (Soydan, 2016, pp. 118, 119).

Iqbal is addressing the above lines, in particular to his son Jawed, in general, to all young people. Iqbal said that some young people have the misfortune not to get training from real educators. But he continued to say; this cannot be reason to sit lazy and youth should wakeup from their sleep and be a roaring success. He likened Muslim young people to a falcon and described as a hawk in his poems. He wished young people to be insightful and sharp-sighted like hawks. *“Muhammad Iqbal attached great importance to young people and generally preferred to use the “falcon” symbol when addressing the Muslim youth. Because the 'hawk' always flies high, nidulates its nest in high places; while setting up, he chooses steep places that will cause the least harm to himself”* (Kuyumcu, 2011, p. 79) In the lines of the poem named "Falcon" below, the characteristics of the young man in the dreams of Muhammad Iqbal are included;

“I left the world,

Whose name is water and grain.

The solitude of the desert makes me happy,

My dervishness comes from pre-eternity.

*Neither breeze, nor rose, nor nightingale,
Neither the malady in the tune of love.
Should be stayed away from gardens,
There are so many seductive attraction in them.
The pernicious wound caused by the desert wind,
it is brave man of the warrior for the faith's wound.
I'm not hungry for the pigeon,
My life just to be prayerful.
Leaping on it, retreating and attacking again,
It is a means of keeping the blood warm.
This is the world of the western and eastern partridges,
My world is the blue sky.
I am a dervish in the world of birds,
Because the hawk doesn't nest'' (Kuyumcu, 2011, pp. 79, 80).*

As a result, Akif and Iqbal, who lived in a painful period of the Islamic world was aware that social change is possible with young people, by this awareness they wrote poems for children and young people who will shape the future. They directed youth to beauty and goodness by giving educational and instructional messages in their poems.

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