



IN RESPONSE TO THE WESTERN IMAGE OF THE OPPRESSED TURKISH WOMAN: VOICES OF TURKISH POETS

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Abstract

This paper interprets reflections on women in some poems of the prominent Turkish poets such as Gülten Akin, Şukufe Nihal Başar, Naciye Bacı, Ayten Mutlu, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Nazım Hikmet, Kul Figani, Basri Baba and Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli in response to the Western image of the oppressed Muslim woman in Turkey. A close examination of their poetic representations of women enables us to rethink the status of women in Turkish society within a poetic context. The subordination/oppression of women seems to be universal, and the female poets generally express this issue. However, in contrast, some male poets do not reflect women as oppressed or subordinated, but as having a great awareness of their existence, importance and value both in the family and society. From the religious perspective, unlike the female poets' feelings, they defend women against the religious mistreatments and malpractices towards them. For example, Kul Figani, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Basri Baba and Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli re-emphasize the valuable statuses of women as stated in the holy book Quran. Nazım Hikmet's voice for the position of women is explored in the rural domain. The aim of the present study is to show that while female poets have been addressing Muslim women's issues in Turkey, there are also male poets who seem to be supporting women by arguing that they should be treated as equal based on religious, social and economic perspectives. In this respect, it can be suggested that the Western image of the oppressed Muslim women is confuted. The discussion will take place in two parts: a) perspectives of subordination/oppression of women by women poets and b) religious perspective on this issue.

Keywords: Oppression, Turkish Women, Poetry

Introduction

Women's issues have been depicted in literature by both male and female writers with some differences and sometimes with similarities in their approach throughout the history all over the world. An asymmetry in the cultural evaluations of male and female appears to be universal (Rosaldo 19). Edward Said in his *Orientalism* draws the manufactured Western image of the Muslim world (1979, 5-6). In this image, one can see oppressed women of the Muslim world. This study tries to be a reply for such image through literary works. Accordingly, the present study attempts to show that, while generally female poets have been addressing women's issues; male poets are also active in addressing women's issues in Turkey through their poetry, as Turkey being primarily a Muslim country. Male poets argue that women should be treated as equal based on religious, social and economic perspectives. These prominent Turkish poets are Gülten Akin, Ayten Mutlu, Şukufe Nihal Başar, Naciye Bacı, Zehra Bacı Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Basri Baba, Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli, Kul Figani and Nazım Hikmet. There are also many other poets like Attila İlhan, Orhan Veli and Can Yücel, with similar views, valuing women. However, the scope of the present study is limited by a selection of the poets who expressed their reflections from the religious and emotional viewpoint and by the publisher's word limits. The poetic reflections of women's issues will first be discussed with a brief historical overview of the status of women in Turkey and then through emotional and religious perspectives in the selected poems.

1. An Overview of the Status of Women in Turkey

Bonnie Bullough (1973) states that "though women in the past have had varying conditions, they have never held a position of equality with men, nor have they been viewed either by themselves or by their men folk as entitled to such a position" (335). Her statement seems to prove Turkish women's status. Women in Turkish society have gone through dramatic changes throughout the history due to cultural, religious, political and social factors, which were also reflected in poetry. There have been scholarly works on this topic that cover the process of civilization and cultural and religious changes which Turkey experienced. Emel Doğramacı (1) draws three different periods in which one could see the approaches to women. These are the pre-Islamic period, the post-Islamic period, when Islamic culture had great influence on Turkish society, and the Republic period, when Western civilization became influential. In the present study, the approaches towards women and the role of women are discussed with examples from various

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male and female poets of the last two periods. In this respect, a brief historical survey of the approaches to women in Turkey from the pre-Islamic period to the post-Islamic period will help us to see what changes occurred in the women's status and to interpret better the poems reflecting women's issues.

Turkish women were basically regarded as "mother" and "heroine" according to the documents that go back to 4.000 B.C. before Islam (Savcı, 107). They were important members of the Nomadic Turks with their strength in fighting a battle, using weapons, and riding horses. The Legend of Oguz Khan reveals that the Turkish women were respected and treated equally; they attended political meetings and social gatherings and fought at wars together with their husbands (Gündüz, 135).

The Shamanism period after Totemism showed that "Goddess" was important among other Gods Turks believed in. The Great Goddess's name was Akana (Göksel 105). Due to the influence of Shamanism on Turks' social life, women were regarded as holy. Even the official orders were declared with both Khan's and Khatun's signatures on them. In the world history, the first stateswoman was Turkish; Raziye Sultan in Delhi Turkish State between the years 1236 and 1240 and Türkan Hatun in Kutluk Turkish State. Unlike in the post-Islamic period, the Turkish women did not cover their heads and were not forced to live in seclusion in their houses (haremlik) and had the equal property rights.

However, this equal, free and respective approach to women fundamentally changed after the Turks accepted Muslim faith. The striking point is that it is not Islam to blame; which is a faith that actually does treat women equally. The Quran orders equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, inheritance and owning property. There are different studies to explain the reasons for the change during this period. Doğramacı¹ states that the Ottoman Empire was influenced by the slavery of the Byzantine Empire after the conquest of Istanbul in 1453. Gradually losing their respective and equal status in this period, women were regarded as only sex providers and child bearers, and as domestics and servants, and found themselves increasingly subjugated to male-dominated social structures which gained strength through misconceptions of Muslim faith. The Ottomans prohibited their women from appearing in public as they took the harem model of the Byzantine Empire for this reason.

Urban women were kept in "harem"² which was organized in imitation of Byzantine practice in the Ottoman society. In fact, "harem" was something unknown for the Turks before, although they were following, the Islamic rules. The women of Muslim faith were equal to men until the Seljuks came to Anatolia in the 10th century. During the 300 years of Seljuks' reign in Anatolia, the approaches to women gradually changed but no strict suppression could be observed until 1453 and after. Schools, hospitals and libraries were opened for women.

Other studies suggest that the Ottoman society was under the great influence of Arabic traditions and culture, which practice seclusion and veiling. This eventually leads to the changing of the status of Turkish women in a negative way.

The political reforms made in the Ottoman State between 1839 and 1876 were the first attempts that brought about social changes (Kırkpınar 13). With the wide ranging reforms, women's situations began to change as well. This was a period when the Ottoman Empire was inspired by Europe. Every effort in imitating the Western civilization and ideology gradually changed the former Islamic view in the society (Caporal 52). Within the frame of this modernization movement that started with the reforms, Turkish women had the chance to take serious meaningful steps in intellectual, political and social rights. Education was one of the most important fields for women to have equal rights. They could go to both primary and secondary schools. Nurse-Midwife Schools (Ebe Okulu), Technical Schools for Girls (Kız Sanat Okulu), and Girls Teachers College (Kız Öğretmen Okulu) were opened in 1870. In 1914, the University for Girls, affiliated with the Girls Teachers College, was established (Arat 25). Only the women of the upper class who could take the chance of attending these schools were privileged. The interesting situation for these education movements was that they were not of scientific or engineering fields, but rather womanly fields like nursery, midwife and teaching were only let for them. According to Wiebke Walther, "the first college for training of women teachers was opened in 1863, the idea being to prevent upper-class families from bringing foreign women into the country for the education of their daughters" (224). In the late 1890s, women were allowed (let) to attend the Medical Faculty of Istanbul University because the women needed female doctors in order not to be examined and treated by male physicians due to religious reasons. As seen, the first step in changing women's subordination due to urgent necessities was taking place during the

¹ E. Doğramacı, *ibid.* p. 2

² Harem in the Ottomans was only for the women who lived in the cities not the ones in the rural areas who were freely taking part in working life. They were a part of production equally with the men. These two types of women were called as royal women (saraylı kadın), the consumer and rural, laborer women (kırsal, emekçi kadın), the producer.



Tanzimat period in the Ottoman Empire, which was under the great influence of the misconceptions of Islam, although it did not cover the whole female population.

Fortunately, this was changed by Atatürk, who appreciated the sacrificing help of the rural women during the Turkish War of Independence. The reforms in Republican Turkey in the 1920s and early 1930s could be seen as the ground which made concrete improvements possible for the legal status of women. Şerif Mardin stated that the Turkish Revolution was primarily a revolution of values where innovations, such as the reform in the status of women, were directed at changing the prevailing values (Mardin 239). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk pointed out the importance of women's equality to men for Turkey's Westernization, secularization and republicanism. The transformation of Turkey could not be realized without women's rights and women's emancipation.

2. Perspectives of Subordination/Oppression of Women by Women Poets

While this study cannot present an answer for this complex (women's) issue, it only aims to address the matter with a limited scope through reflections in the selected poems. On the other hand, it should be noted that not all women in Turkey have been the subordinated and violently oppressed sex. The poems in this part of the study, regardless the differences in time in which the poems have been written are selected to be considered as the voice of only those who suffer from these treatments. It does not necessarily mean that the oppressed situation of women has never changed; in the late 19th century, it was observed that Turkish women already possessed all the legal, personal and proprietary rights which are necessary for holding a social position equal, if not superior, to that of European women in general (Garnett, 15). In spite of this fact, Ayten Mutlu, Gülten Akın, Şükufe Nihal Başar and Naciye Bacı similarly reflect the women's issues although they lived in different periods of time. For instance Ayten Mutlu's³ "My Left Hand Broken" (Sol Elim Kirik), written in the late 1984, can be regarded as an example for the reflections of the women's conditions from emotional and psychological perspectives.

It's no use to be quiet, to hide it, to be ashamed
I dedicate the poem of my
left ring finger broken by force as
a result of Feudal remainders being
armed like a weapon to the women like me.⁴

(Utanmam, saklamam, susmam yararsız
Feodal kalıntıların bir silah gibi
kuşanılması sonucu zorla kırılan
sol el yüzük parmağımın şiirini benim
gibi kadınlara adıyorum.)

She openly reveals universal dehumanizing customs. Physical abuse toward women is observed almost in all ages and all societies. Her personal experience seems to reveal that physical abuse is one of the incidents that women have been facing. Her husband has broken some of her fingers of her left hand. She dedicates this poem to all women who have been suffering from their men (husbands, fathers or brothers) who still have the feudal approach.

By dedicating her poem to all women abused like her, Mutlu wants to be a voice for the silent women who are violently suppressed. Generally speaking, these kinds of women tend to hide the problems they face in order to save their marriage or status in the family. Their social and financial dependence on their husbands or fathers - also stop them in crying out their sufferings in fear of being abandoned even through divorce. Mutlu, however, values the importance of writing poems of how she was violently suppressed by her husband. She seems to explain one of the main reasons of men's violence towards women: in her case, it is due to Feudal remainders with which the men arm themselves like a weapon. The metaphoric expression may suggest that she sees that they still follow the traditional attitude towards their women from the dominant patriarchy of Feudalism. In Turkey, one can overtly observe that the Feudal remainders have still traces on the patriarchal relations between men and women in mostly rural areas, especially in the Eastern part of Anatolia.

with one step left
to the 21st century
this left hand broken by force

³ Ayten Mutlu, born in 1952 in Bandırma, Turkey, is a contemporary woman poet. She is politically active in the women rights movements.

⁴ It is translated into English by the author.



is screaming to wrong doings

(bir adım kala
yirmi birinci yüzyıla
bu zorla kırılmış sol el
yanlışlığı haykirmada)

Mutlu has great anger for the situation of those women who were left disabled. What's more, she cannot believe that such abuses could happen in a time soon to be the 21st century. It is not feudal times anymore; several steps have been taken for the benefits and rights of women so far.

Mutlu goes on being the hopeful and strong voice for all women:
taking out the deed of the future
even if the heart is put in a plaster case
extinguishing day by day
I am not going to submit to handicaps
and will always
stepping on darkness and
will walk to brightness.

(çıkartıp tapusunu geleceğin
alçıya alınsa da yürek
gün be gün tükenerek
boyun eğmeyeceğim sakatlıklara
ve daima
basıp üstüne karanlığın
yürüyeceğim aydınlıklara.)

Despite her sufferings, she is determined to make a significant difference to become a role model for the women of the future. She probably aims to find a way through her poetry to fight for the independence of women, who she believes might eventually become a small group of determined people like her.

In "How Everything Is So Close and So Far Away Now" ("Her Şey Ne Kadar Yakın ve Nasıl Uzak Şimdi"), the emotional dependence which is shaped by the traditions in Turkey is vividly described through Mutlu's mother's relation with her husband. Her mother lives in a small town in Bandırma, where she feels lonely.

All the things that she would hear
In the darkness of those long nights
Weaved thread to thread in the loneliness
of that uncultivated small town
And the things she shared with my father
other than the traditions and us

.....
her life was never her own
and she never complained of her fate
she never wanted something for herself
from her husband and from her God

(O uzun gecelerin karanlığında
Neler duyardı o yaban kasabanın
İplik iplik ördüğü yalnızlığında
Ve neleri paylaşırdı babamla geleneklerden
Ve bizden başka

.....
hiç kendisinin olmadı hayatı
ve hiç yakınmadı yazgısından
asla bir şey istemedi kendisi için
kocasından ve tanrısından)

While questioning what the mother shares with her husband in such a town, she focuses on the patriarchal values that make her unhappy and lonely. Her mother has got no chance for her own identity besides being a dutiful wife and a devoting mother.



Like her mother, Mutlu needs to have her own identity as she confesses in “And My Beauty Begins” (“Ve Başlıyor Güzelliğim”).

I was always inexperienced of life
and of my womanhood
Traditions, shames, family ties
Tuesday bazaars(market place), weekend neighbor visits
Festivals,.....

(Hep acemisi kaldım hayatın ve kadınlığının
Gelenekler, utançlar, aile bağları
Salı pazarları, hafta sonu komşulukları
Bayramlar,)

She wrote this poem just after she got divorced. Even with the title of the poem, one can feel how hopeful she was to begin her life anew after a long time of suffering and suppression in her marriage. She had been suppressed within her little world not only by her marriage but also by the traditions and cultural surroundings that shaped her life. Due to these limitations under which she tries hard to build her own life and have her own identity, she cries out her need to have her own room, which is her identity and freedom as Virginia Woolf states in her essay “A Room of One’s Own”. Traditions, culture, family ties, going to the market every Tuesday and relations with neighbors symbolize the responsibilities with which she is burdened. She is obliged to spend almost all of her time for these responsibilities. Family ties, a part of her culture, also impose some duties she has to fulfill like cooking for them, visiting and helping them. She has to go to the market every Tuesday to do some shopping (the market on Tuesdays in Istanbul is a very well known market all through Turkey). This is another duty on her shoulders as being a woman because men do not generally go to the market for shopping. This is considered something peculiar to women. Moreover, the woman has to continue her good relations with her neighbors as well by visiting or welcoming them in her house. She has to cook and serve for them, too. Ayten Mutlu, as being a Middle Eastern woman, is expected to have good relations with her neighbors. Otherwise it is not considered to be good for a woman; the others would gossip about her and this would even affect her name and her relations with her own family members. Among all these burdens besides her marriage, she is completely suppressed. However, she is different from the other women because she is aware of her situation. Her awareness highlights her difference from the others as they happily live accepting what the world gives them. She tries to find a way to get out of this prison in which she was by birth put without asking for her free will. Now, it is high time for her to question the conditions and through the end of the poem, she talks about the new condition in her life where she talks about her beauty: “with a huge and quiet snap the templates of my life broke” (“hayatımın kalıpları öyle kocaman/ve sessiz bir çatırtıyla kırıldılar.”) Her beauty is not meant as a physical one but something metaphorical which means her new life with freedom and her identity. After breaking the norms imposed to her, her beauty begins with her awareness first and then later with her separation from all the traditions and the like as stated in the lines above mentioned.

Gülten Akin⁵, another contemporary Turkish female poet, expresses similar boredom of daily household chores that women in all positions complain about, in her poem “The Old Carnation” (“Eski Karanfil”) in 1992. Akin escapes from the role of a socially conditioned wife. She seems that she cannot break the chains but escapes for a short while and says: “I find a sheltering fortress to escape/from knittings and unimportant household chores” (örgülerden küçük ev işlerinden/bir kaçma kalesi bulurum). Akin, like Mutlu, is aware of her situation and thus she wants to escape from it. She is not like the others who are inured to their suppressed situation. Her awareness is reflected in her other poem “The Hurt Days of Poverty” (“Gücenik Yoksul Günler”). She sees all women as subordinated and men as selfish:

those women in self extinguishing schools
are the little memorizer girls, they never change..

....

They are the silent fortresses of troops,
on their faces are the purple roses
blooming that fall into hurt from love

.....

let men roar and break out in open revolt,
selfish men, days of poverty...

⁵ Gülten Akin (1933-) is a contemporary poet. Her poetry is culturally significant to Turkey.



(O kadınlar kendini tüketme okullarının
Ezberci küçük kızlarıdır, hiç değişmezler
Onlar alayların sessiz kaleleri
Durur yüzlerinde sevgilerden
Gücenmeye düşen mor güller

....
Gürleyip bayrak açsın, varsın açsınlar
Bencil erkekler, yoksul günler)

Akın draws a portrait of subordinated women and men through metaphors. Troops and the fortresses are the metaphors she uses for men and women. The silent fortress points out women's subordination and their strength if only they were aware of it. The other metaphor is related to little girls at school. Being reflected as the little girls, they are never given chance and freedom to mature. Among the characteristics and traits of being emotionally matured, the scholars advise to work hard to achieve one's goals. Having goals and trying to achieve them primarily mean that a person is free to have a goal. The women in this case are not let even to dream to have a goal in life, thus, Akın describes them as not matured but 'little girls' who are dependent, submitted and needs protection. As Akın states, they are forced to extinguish their lives following the orders. They are resembled to students in a spoon-fed educational system, memorizing and conducting the courses. Their suppression is depicted through the purple roses on their faces, falling from love to hurt. It might mean that they have expected love from their men but their expectation turns out to be disappointment. The visual image 'purple' might culturally contribute to the idea of suppression because Mor Çatı⁶ (The Purple Roof) is a widely known women's shelter foundation in Turkey. Towards the end of the poem, she encourages all women to have awareness and to resist the oppression. She calls them not to pay attention to the men's restlessness in such resistance: "let men roar and break out in open revolt."

Gülten Akın, in "Responsible Women" ("Sorumlu Kadın"), continues her awareness of women's issues and wonders who has given them the responsibility of being a woman, adding a question "where did you take 'no way!'s and those 'restrictions'?" (Nerden aldın "olmaz"ları o "geçilmez"leri). Being a woman means so many responsibilities and burdens without their free will; household chores, taking care of children, asking for permission from husbands even to buy a new dress (because she is dependent even if she is a working woman) and to travel or to do an academic study. Akın uses the metaphor of a bazaar to describe how women are suppressed:

I remember it will not be the same as your face, who are you?
People see through you, from one end to the other, quite empty,
you are charming like new bazaars, I am passing through.

In the bazaars, men's names are called, women's are confidential
Who gave you this responsibility? You are a woman.
Where did you take 'no's and those 'restrictions'?
I am passing through one end-the other end is not yours.

But they are pleased by you, so why all these obstacles?
We've been against it for thousands of years
We are weighed on black scales
All women, all shame, all fear.

(Yüzünle bir olmaz hatırlıyorum sen kimsin
bir yanından öbür yanın görünüyor bomboş
yeni çarşılar gibi alımlısın geçiyorum.

Çarşılarda erkek adları söylenir kadınlar gizli
Sana kim taktı bu sorumluluğu kadınsın
Nerden aldın 'olmaz'ları o 'geçilmez'leri
Bir yanından-senin değil öbür yanın-geçiyorum.

⁶ <http://www.morcati.org.tr/en>



Bu senin yüzünden gülmelere bu ne bu
Tüm karşınız binlerce yıl çoğunlukta
Kara tartılarda ağırlığımız
Tüm kadın tüm utanç tüm korku.)

Akın describes the woman as charming like a new bazaar. The speaker walks through the bazaar from the entrance to the exit, which suggests that women do not have any privacy or freedom to build up their own identity and life. The line, "in the bazaars men's names are called, women's are confidential" (çarşılarda erkek adları söylenir kadınlar gizli) emphasizes that Akın observes that women are regarded as secondary in a male-dominant society. They are surrounded with 'restrictions' and 'no's. The metaphor of black scales in "we are weighed on black scales" has a cultural allusion. In Turkish, 'black' has two equivalents: 'siyah' and 'kara'. 'Siyah' is used to mean the color only whereas 'kara' both means the black color and something bad, evil, unfortunate, unlucky, and the like. Here the poet probably indicates that women are undervalued, without any good intentions at all.

The speaker questions why the responsibility of being a woman fell on her by asking "where did you take 'no way!'s and those 'restrictions'?", which women have been imposed on thousands of years but she states that all women are against these restrictions. She does not give any answers for this question. However, one may think of several reasons, one of which may be the practice of the religion. For example, some people follow the Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah or hadiths and try to live accordingly. It cannot actually be said that one of His hadiths⁷ is the only reason for the restrictions on women but it can affect the relations among couples. Probably due to these restrictions, Akın regards women as incomplete by saying "the other end is not yours."

Ayten Mutlu shares similar ideas in "Seni Özledim" ("I Missed You") which draws a pessimistic view of the woman-man relationship:

A woman in a country of taboos
Who is milked with fears and limitations

(tabuların ülkesinde bir kadın
Yasakların korkuların emzirdiği)

She reflects that women in her country are surrounded with taboos, strict rules, social codes and fears imposed within the male dominant society. As well seen again, it is cried out that there is no freedom for women.

The most striking lines that reveal the status of women in the eyes of Ayten Mutlu, who seems to reflect also how women are treated in her culture, can be found in "A Rebellion Folk Song" ("Bir İsyân Türküsü"):

her sexuality is the synonym of sin
her happiness is rudeness
painted by the blackness of veils
with the restrictions and taboos

(cinselliği günahın öbür adı
sevinci ayıp
yasaklarla tabularla
peçelerin karasına boyanmış)

While she describes herself, in fact she speaks in the name of all women in her country. The poem is full of Turkish culture components, idioms and adjectives specially used for calling and describing women. Mutlu shows how women are considered by men: like a Satan, an angel, a flower, or like a sheep whose milk, meat and skin men make use of. Women are present everywhere and ready to serve their men anytime what they ask for them. They exploit women whom they see as tilths to cultivate. She might be inspired by the second surah in the Quran.⁸ It should be noted that this study does not have any intention to claim that the only reason for this issue is religious. These lines just recall what is told in the Quran. Mutlu talks about

⁷ One of his hadiths says: "It is not permitted for a woman to fast when her husband is present, except with his permission; or to allow anyone into his house except with his permission; or to spend any of his earnings unless he has told her to do so, otherwise half of the reward will be given to him." It is taken from Sahih Muslim, 7/115, Kitab al-zakah, bab ajr al-khazin wa'l-mar'ah idha tasaddaqt min bayt zawjaha.

⁸ Surah 2 - Al Baqarah 223: "Your wives are as a tilth unto you; so approach your tilth when or how ye will; but do some good act for your souls beforehand; and fear God. And know that ye are to meet Him (in the Hereafter), and give (these) good tidings to those who believe."



the roles given to women. They are mothers, wives or whores but slaves and properties in any role. She calls husbands, fathers and brothers as women's masters like God. She claims that men have buried women alive for many centuries. She touches the religious motif in men's view on women, too. Mutlu explores their sexuality from the religious and cultural aspect. She says in the following lines that they are restricted to live freely because they are considered as the living icons of one of the greatest sins. They are covered with black veils which cover their faces and identities. These veils are made of some restrictions and taboos imposed by the patriarchal values. Mutlu, like Akin, uses the same Turkish word 'kara' for black to stress the dark, negative and evil feature of the veil.

....

I am a woman
the sinner unforgiven by all religions.
(ben kadınıam)

ıslah olmaz günahkârı bütün dinlerin)

.....

I pay the blood money of all religions
my hands in blood the color of henna

(ben öderim diyetini bütün dinlerin
kına rengi kan içinde ellerim)

After all the suppression, oppression and violence towards women, they, nevertheless, are "very patient like a rock which their anger could not crack." They endure all these mistreatments and "pay the blood money of all religions." They cannot react at all but the poet herself strongly stands against these injustices for all suppressed women. Her poetry becomes her revolting voice for all women. Mutlu adds some other lines to voice their situation by resembling them to some plants and flowers:

I am a violet in thorny fields
sweet basil in pot plants
its branches captive in barred windows
exile behind barbed wires
land occupied for thousands of years

(menekşeyim dikenli tarlalarda
saksılarda fesleğen
dalları kafesli camlara tutsak
dikenli tellerin ardına sürgün
bin yıllardır işgal edilmiş toprak)

The metaphors in these lines seem to explain that women are not free at all. The visual images also enable us to have a picture of women who are captured behind the oriel windows or moucharaby⁹ in the Konaks or palaces especially in the Ottoman times in Istanbul.

Mutlu compares women to violets in thorny fields; that is, they are beautiful flowers but grown not in fertile and cultured fields. It is hard, even impossible, to find such flowers to grow in thorny fields. So, women, like these violets, try to survive in a male-dominant society which is compared to thorny fields. The other metaphor is the basil in flowerpots put out on the windowsills. The basil is widely used herbs for cooking in Turkey but they are mostly grown by women for their beauty and fragrance. Like these herbs whose "branches, captive in barred windows," Mutlu sees women not free and exiled. Finally she compares women to lands occupied for thousands of years. She points out the long time of brutal reality of the women's status.

The succeeding lines of the poem contain several metaphors focusing on the status of women from Mutlu's observations in the society. Her reflection of women is embroidered with some motifs of Turkish culture especially in this line: "my hands in blood, the color of henna." Henna, used for make-up especially in hands, is a part of Asian culture and is still used by most of the Turkish women in villages. It is also used on the fur of the sheep to be sacrificed to God and on the hands of young soldiers just before they go to do their military services. After its application, its green color turns into red. The connotation of blood indicates

⁹ moucharaby, Arabic mashrabiyyah, or mushrabiyyah, in Islamic or Islamic-influenced architecture, an oriel, or projecting second-story window of latticework. The moucharaby is a familiar feature of residences in cities of North Africa and the Middle East. from <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/394471/moucharaby>



that Mutlu draws a portrait of unhappy, insulted and self-sacrificed women. 'Tarhana', 'bulgur aşısı' and 'cariye' are other cultural motifs. 'Tarhana' is a traditional Turkish cereal food consisting of flour, yoghurt, and vegetables fermented and then dried. By boiling it with water, it is consumed as a soup. 'Bulgur aşısı' is a meal cooked with bulgur, which is the oldest processed food known and prepared precooked wheat, originating from the Middle East. It is also called burghul and cracked wheat. Tarhana and bulgur aşısı are known as meals generally consumed by poor or agrarian people. Thus, Mutlu describes men's view on women who are as simple and poor as tarhana and bulgur aşısı, consumed in poor houses, or as the rose jam, which is luxurious compared to tarhana and bulgur aşısı, and is consumed in konaks and palaces. Mutlu addresses the intellectual people, saying that these women have had enough of it and asks their help to solve this problem. She notes:

we were quiet and quiet¹⁰
we forgot our humanity
because of your being God
I am tired
I have been insulted
I am ignorant

.....

-VI-

salute to you, seven wise men,
the wise men of my time, the literate men,
the scholars, studied and devoted themselves
for a rose path
with a strong belief that human beings
deserve roses! Listen to me
I've got my roads to take, arriving at yours,
have got my states worse than yours
my heart beating hard, my feet inexperienced
don't prevent me
don't step on me
ready to fly, my wings are timid
don't break my wings
enough
enough is enough, I paid every smile of mine
I've got delayed loves,
songs waiting for me to sing
my voice will gurgle like a flowing river
and my hands
together with yours
will recreate a new
life.

She says that she is ready to live her life that has been restricted for centuries. Eventually, after pointing out the women's issues through her poetry, Mutlu calls for awareness and solidarity.

Writing on social issues, especially the social problems that women have been facing, Şükufe Nihal Başar¹¹ questions the identity of women in her poem "Woman, Who are You?" (Kadın, Nesin Sen?). Although living in the early 19th. century, Başar shares similar reflections on the women's issues with Mutlu and Akın. In some part of the poem, she describes how men approach women. She also tries to give various answers to the question in the title both from her own perspective and from that of men and women in the society. "Şükufe Nihal approached woman within the patriarchal sexual stereotype, in line with the widely acknowledged attitude by the intellectuals of her time" (Kayhan 6). Women are called with different names and described with various adjectives and characteristics. She expresses that everybody has tried to understand women's personality and identity, but so far nobody has succeeded to give a definite answer for the question:

Who are you, nobody could understand you!

¹⁰ Since the quotation is long, Turkish text of the poem can be found in the appendix.

¹¹ Şükufe Nihal Başar (1896-1973) studied geography at Faculty of Letters at Istanbul Darülfunun (University). She is a poet, author and shortstory writer. She is a follower of the National Literature Movement.



I paid attention to every voice coming behind you,
Your name was uttered differently in every mind...
They say: "What a mad, what a mysterious kind!" ...

(Nesin, anlayamadı seni hiç kimse!
Dikkat ettim arkandan her gelen sese,
Her ağızda bir türlü değişti adın...
Diyorlar ki: "Ne çılgın, ne meçhul kadın!...")

Whatever description is given to them, and whatever they say for women, the main problem, Başar states, is that they have not found the perfect partner who can understand their real personality and how they feel and what they think. She sees being sympathized by men as almost impossible and ends her poem with another question pointing out this problem: "They said, they always said, will say, too./ Who is going to understand you, ah where is that partner?"

3. Religious Perspective

From the religious perspective, Naciye Bacı¹², Kul Figani, Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli¹³ and Mehmet Akif Ersoy¹⁴ seem to share the same strong supportive feeling for women's rights in the patriarchal world despite their different sex although they lived in different periods of time. Religiously, Naciye Bacı, who lived in the mid 19th century, is not the only one who addresses women's issues in the Muslim world; the male poets also contribute to discussions of women's rights addressing women's issues through their poetry, some of whom lived several centuries before her. They focus on misconceptions of Islam while reminding readers of what God says in the Quran and the prophet Muhammed's Sunnah.

The discrimination faced in the early 20th century makes the Alevi poetess Naciye Bacı cry out that women, too, are equal creatures of God, not being *Nakis* (incomplete or deficient) as men call them. She is against all women to be called *Nakis* by asking a crucial question to men. She opposes the degeneration in the Alevi path, which has been gradually becoming patriarchal. Here, Naciye Bacı reflects the misapplications of Alevi thoughts, where the discrimination is strongly condemned, thus men and women are regarded equal as being human beings. She condemns all dervishes who claim to be a good dervish and points out the conflict with what they say and how they behave towards Alevi women. Thus, she reminds them of the basic aspects of Alevi faith and practice which gives women's identity great importance as not only being a woman but also being a mother. The assembly meeting (*cem* or *ayini cem*) is the essential Alevi corporate worship way. It is originally rooted in the teaching meeting of forty spiritual individuals (*Kırklar Meclisi*) led by Hz. Ali. During the assembly meeting in an assembly house (*cem evi*), men and women sit in a circle on the floor facing each other in the presence of the *dede*¹⁵ (literally *grandfather*). There is no discrimination and physical separation of men and women in the meeting¹⁶. However, Naciye Bacı is restless to see this equality being declined. Therefore, she stresses on the crucial place of Eve (Mother Hawwa, the mother of all living) in every individual's existence in life. She accuses men of hypocrisy in their treatment of women by forgetting the Mother while you sometimes say that she is our mother. She says that men all worship the Mother Eve who gave birth to all they sanctify but they call those women *nakis* who first teach

¹² Naciye Bacı (Sister Naciye), born in 1872 in Istanbul, was one of the dervishes of Merdivenköy Dervish Lodge. She was known as a leading Alevi dervish.

¹³ Pir (Saint) Hacı Bektash Veli, born in 1208 (or in 1209 for some documents) is a central figure of Anatolian Alevism.

¹⁴ Mehmet Akif Ersoy, born in 1873 in Istanbul, was best known for his "Safahat" and being the author of Turkish national anthem. He was the foremost representative of Islamism.

¹⁵ A "dede" is the spiritual and moral authority in the Alevi community and is believed that he has a direct blood line connection to the family of the prophet Muhammed.

¹⁶ "Participants in the assembly meeting take off their shoes before entering the room. A visitor will generally not see Alevis perform ceremonial washings (*abdest*) immediately before a public service; worshipers are instructed to come to the assembly after they clean themselves all over by bathing or showering. Most Alevis say coming to worship clean on the inside (*batni* or *iç temizlik*) is at least as important as being clean on the outside (*zahiri* or *dış temizlik*). Many say inner cleanliness is even more important.

The service mainly consists of the *dede* saying prayers, giving short religious messages, singing solo ballads, and leading the congregation in singing. Another key element is a circling ritual dance (*semah*) performed by selected men and women in a group that can vary in size. The *dede* plays a seven stringed lute (*saz*, *bağlama*) while singing and while the dance is being performed. Sometimes an accompanist (*zakir*) will play a lute with, or instead of, the *dede*. During certain parts of the service, the congregation assumes a worship position, kneeling and sitting on their ankles, occasionally bowing their heads to the floor in unison (*halka namaz*).

The service is held entirely in Turkish, including all the prayers and singing. However, in some *cem*s portions of the Kuran may be read in Arabic. The subjects of the ballads, prayers and speeches include encouraging the congregation to love God, to love other people, and to apply the teachings of Muhammed, Ali, the twelve imams, and Hacı Bektash. An emotional climax of the service is one or more ballads in memory of the murders of Ali and his sons. The murder of Ali's son, Hüseyin, at the battle of Kerbela is especially remembered." <http://www.alevibektasi.org/xalevis1.htm> (January 25, 2011)



those whom they sanctify to walk and the faith. Although men accept Eve as the mother of all living and show her great respect, they do not give the same respect to other women. Therefore she notes:

.....

We do have our Hawwa.
Isn't it God that has created us, too?
Isn't a lioness a big cat, too?
Tell me, isn't she an admirable creature of the Compassionate?
We do have our Umm Kulthum, Zainab, Leyla...

Naciye Bacı mentions famous women in the Muslim faith especially in the Alevi belief in order to make men think women are not "nakıs". These are Hawwa (Hazret¹⁷-i Havva or Havva Ana), Umme Kulsum or Umm Kulthum bint Muhammad (Ümmü Gülsüm), Zainab bint Muhammad (Zeynep), Leyla and Fatimah Al-Zahraa (Fatimat-uz-Zehra). They have a very important place in Islam and Alevi faith and also in the Shia Islam of which the Alevis are classified as a branch. Hawwa represents womanhood and the source of human population. In fact, her name means "the source of life"¹⁸. Except Hawwa, the other four women are the first believers of Islam and the first followers of the prophet Muhammad. They are admired for their moral and physical characteristics. Umme Kulsum, Fatimah¹⁹ and Zainab are the daughters of the prophet Muhammad, who remained on their father's side through the difficulties suffered by him at the hands of the Qurasyh in Mecca and helped their brother Imam Hussein against the tyranny and injustices of the Umayyad during the Battle of Karbala in 680. Zainab, like Umm Khultum, showed great patience and suffered from the tyranny of the nonbelievers of Islam. They both struggled for God and the Muslim faith. The other daughter of Muhammad, Fatimah, defended her husband and Caliph Ali's cause after the death of the prophet Muhammad; therefore, she is regarded as superior to all others and also is reputedly known as the ancestress of the Fatimids. So, Naciye Bacı, by telling these important women's names, stresses upon the value and importance of all women. When the men in the Alevi community believe and accept these women as holy and not as 'nakıs', she tells them that the others are also women; they should not be considered as deficient or incomplete. They have equal importance and value as men for God and the prophet Muhammad.

Like these women in the Muslim faith, Naciye Bacı gives another important exemplary woman of the Christian belief, Mother Mary, to make men not to humiliate women. She notes:

Do not ever think that life cannot be without men
Think of Mother Mary!
She bore Jesus Christ with no father
The sisters do not submit to men.

(Sanmayın ki ersiz olmaz dünyayı
Düşünün bir kere Meryem Anayı
Pedersiz doğurdu koca İsa'yı
Bacı'ların yokdur mudarâ'ları)

She again questions men's humiliating women. Mother Mary is the mother of Jesus Christ and the Alevi men believe and respect her like the Christians as well. She is a woman, too. All holiness and all that are known as holy are those who give birth, who teach the language, who guide them in life, who give advice, who protect and who forgive are women. With all that she gives to the one she bears, she is holy; then, why is she not holy herself in the eyes of the men in the Alevi community? Is it possible for one to reach God when one perceives women in this manner?

Like Naciye Bacı, Zehra Bacı (Sister Zehra), another Alevi female poet, is against men who humiliate women:

ZEHRA

¹⁷ Hazret is used as a title before a name of especially an important religious figure to show respect in the Muslim faith.

¹⁸ <http://www.muslimaccess.com/sunnah/sahabah/eve.asp>

¹⁹ The most used title is "az-Zahra" (meaning "the shining one") and she is commonly referred to as Fatimah Zahra. She was also known as *Ummu Abeha* (Mother of her Father) and "*al-Batul*" (the chaste and pure one) as she spent much of her time in prayer, reciting the Qur'an and in other acts of worship. Muslims regard Fatimah as a loving and devoted daughter, mother, wife, a sincere Muslim, and an exemplar for women. It is believed that she was very close to her father and her distinction from other women is mentioned in many hadith. After Khadijah, Muslims regard Fatimah as the most significant historical figure, considered to be the leader (Arabic: *Sayyidih*) of all women in this world and in Paradise. It is because of her moral purity that she occupies an analogous position in Islam to that Mary occupies in Christianity. She was the first wife of Ali, whom Sunnis consider the fourth *Rashidun* caliph and Shias consider the first infallible Imamah, the mother of the second and third Imams, and the ancestor of all the succeeding Imams; indeed, the Fatimid Caliphate is named after her. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatima_Zahra (January 26, 2011)



Dear Muhammad, they humiliate us
Why do they make such mistake?
But they value Ahl al-Bayt.

....

Isn't our mother Hawwa a sister?

.....

Isn't Fatimah Al-Zahraa a sister?
They are glorified and admired in Quran.

Can the wives of Muhammad be 'nakis'?
Can those men who call them 'nakis' reach God?
Can such words be expected from dervishes?
Who gave birth to all prophets?

(Ya Muhammed bize nakıs diyorlar
Nedendir bu erlerin bu hataları
Ehl-i Beyt'e karşı düşkün olanlar
Çünkü doğru değil müddeaları

Validemiz Havva, bacı değil mi?
Haticetül-Kübra, bacı değil mi?
Fatimatüz-Zehra bacı değil mi?
Kuran da bunların var senaları

Ezvac-ı tahirat nakıs olur mu?
Nakıs diyen erler Hakk'ı bulur mu?
Böyle söz erlerden hiç umulur mu?
Kim doğurdu bunca enbiyaları)

Zehra Bacı asks the Prophet Muhammad why dervishes (the men in the Alevi community) humiliate the women and consider them as 'nakis'. She says it does not make sense while the men show great respect, value and belief in Muhammad and his family (Ahl al-Bayt²⁰). In spite of such respect, on the other hand, they make such a mistake. Zehra Bacı wonders if they consider even Hawwa as 'nakis' since she is also a woman. Finally, she asks them who gave birth to all these prophets whom they believe and follow.

While women poets have been addressing women's issues in Muslim Turkey, there are also male poets who speak out about how women should be treated as equal based on religious and emotional perspectives, as the present study aims to depict. The Alevi poets like Sufi Pir Hacı Bektash Veli, Basri Baba and Kul Figani write against the humiliation and discrimination of women although they are men who are presumed to be the oppressors and not the advocates of women. Their lines reflect a positive supporting voice for women against the male dominant treatments to women. Although there are negative opinions like degrading women of Islamic culture both by the Eastern and the Western people and even by those in the Muslim countries, there is no such evidence in Islamic texts which include the Quran and the books of the Sunnah (hadiths) regarding the equality of women and men. These texts differ from, for instance, the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. The Quran, contrary to the Bible, places equal blame on both Adam and Eve for their mistake. The Quran does not say that Eve tempted Adam to eat from the tree or even that she had eaten before him.²¹ Adam was tempted by Satan. "Since both Adam and Eve disobeyed God, women cannot be considered the source of evil. Islam holds women in high respect, and this is reflected in the high status and rights that have been bestowed upon them" (Khan 225). The prophet Muhammad, too, points the crucial position of women by saying 'the paradise is under the feet of mothers.'²² Kul Figani draws a portrait of women with a similar importance in his lines: "She

²⁰ Within the Islamic tradition, the term refers to the family of the prophet Muhammad.

²¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eve#Eve_in_Islam (January 27, 2011)

²² İslam'da Kadın, p. 88 http://www.islamvetasavvuf.org/kutuphane/tasavvuf_kitabligi/hikmet_efendi/islamda-kadin.pdf



inspires humanity/ She is the essential of the universe/ She is the meaning of the truth” (İnsanlığa ilham sunar/ Kainatın binasıdır/Hakikatın manasıdır).

In Alevi-Bektashi discourse, women are given importance and value, and therefore, discrimination is strongly condemned. The human being is valuable regardless gender difference: they are all ‘can’ in Turkish, which means ‘beloved brothers or sisters’. They all have the equal rights and responsibilities in life as stated in the following stanza:

Women are included on an equal footing with men in the rituals
Every creature of God has its own valuable place
For us, there is no difference between women and men
The deficiency and incompetence is in your ideas.

(Erkek dışı sorulmaz muhabbetin dilinde
Hakk’ın yarattığı her şey yerli yerinde
Bizim nazarımda kadın-erkek farkı yok
Noksanlık eksiklik senin görüşlerinde)

Pointing out the verse in the Quran ‘Muslim women and Muslim men are fraternal’ in his lines, Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli defends women against the fanatical men who do not want to accept them in their worship and rituals.

The complaints in Naciye Bacı’s and Zehra Bacı’s poems that men call women as ‘nakis’, undervaluing them, find their answers in a man’s poem as seen in the above lines. They are not the only ones; Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli and Basri Baba address similar issues. Basri Baba, another Alevi poet, advises men not to humiliate women.

Do not condemn sisters,
Do not think they are all same,
Their origin is Fatimah,
Many wise women among them.

(Bacıları hor görmeyin,
Cümlesini bir bilmeyin,
Fatma’dır asılları,
Çok içinde bilginleri.)

He uses the term ‘sisters’ to call all women. He says that it is not right to condemn all women just for some of them are not good. The Alevi path is based on Mother Fatimah (another title used for Fatimah Al-Zahraa). Like her, there are many wise women among them.

Another male poet voicing for equality of women is Mehmet Akif Ersoy. Ersoy, though a strict follower of the Islamism movements, is strongly against women’s oppression and exploitation in the society. He clears that it is not totally related to Islam but it is due to the misconception of the teachings of the religion. Indeed, women are equal to men and in some cases superior to men as stated in the Quran. Ersoy writes about this issue and the rights of women based on the Quran in some of his poems:

The wife will not do the house chores, and will not take care of your baby if you have one;
Doing laundry, scrubbing the floors, and cooking? She will not make a fire.
All these chores belong to you according to the Sharia laws,
You even have to find a nursing mother.

(Kari iş görmeyecek, varsa piçin bakmayacak;
Çamaşır, tahta, yemek nerede? Ateş yakmayacak.
Bunların hepsini yapmak sana ait “şer’an”,
Çocuk emzirmeye hatta olacak bir süt anan)

One of the well-known hadith of Hz. Muhammad is that a husband has to find a nursing mother when the mother is not willing to breastfeed her baby. Ersoy re-uses the hadith to teach men and reminds them of their responsibility and the importance of being a mother and a woman. For Ersoy, like children and old people, women, too, should be treated kindly and with compassion. This is the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it. Without this, one cannot be a real human.



The reasons of the misconceptions of Islam stressed by these male poets can be explained through some scholars' arguments. There is at present a growing recognition that the subordination of Muslim women can neither be read off solely from Islamic ideology and practice, nor be entirely removed from global processes of the socio-economic transformation (Kandiyoti 2). Most of the scholars focus on the patriarchal values which lead the misapplications of the religious texts. Margaret W. Pettygrove states that "although Islam is frequently characterized as protecting women's rights and giving them complete freedom, in actuality, women's freedom is limited in the context of patriarchal interpretations and applications of Islam. Patriarchy has co-opted Islam, making Islam a mechanism for the institutionalization of patriarchal values. Similarly, other scholars argue that Islam is used as a front for the subordination and repression of women" (22). So, in this case, one can assume that Islam is not the problem, to be blamed but the culture that perpetuates patriarchal gender roles using the faith.

The distinction between what Islam as a religion advocates, and what Muslims do as reflected in these poems discussed is also emphasized by some Muslim scholars:

They draw attention to the fact that the laws sanctioning such misogynistic behavior are not advocated in the Quran, but that this traditional Islamic jurisprudence (known in Arabic as shari'ah) was written primarily by Muslim men in the 10th-12th centuries who were interpreting the Quran to fit their own socio-cultural circumstances. Today many progressive Muslims are emphasizing the importance of re-interpreting the Quran for the present day, allowing Islam's ideals of social and gender justice to be highlighted. They point out the many sections in the Quran regarding the equality of men and women. According to these individuals, there is little basis in Islam for these violations of the rights of women. Rather, these practices are the products of laws written by Muslim jurists hundreds of years ago, combined with local customs... practices that don't reflect the egalitarian and humanitarian nature of Islam.²³

Different from the religious perspective through which suppression and undervaluing of women are depicted in the works of the male poets; Nazım Hikmet praises women, especially those in the rural areas. His poems do praise them not in the Muslim faith but in Turkish culture. Aslan describes Nazım's valuing attitude towards women in his country:

Nazım depicted women with a perception of an egalitarian, liberal and participatory justice. He stood against the discrimination. The main point in Nazım's view of women is that they are the ones who equally join the social life with men, who struggle, who produce and have a word or an authority for what they produce, and who are conscious of the class struggle. He reflected all the oppression and violence they faced. (98-106)

Nazım Hikmet reverses an example in the patriarchal and feudal habits in the Anatolian family life and reflects his love and respect to all women in the following lines. This example is related to a wife's service to her husband; wives are supposed to wash their husbands' feet when they get back home from work. Today it is assumed to happen very rarely. He wants to do the same thing for a woman in order to attract men's attention to the fact that men and women are equal and he wants to become a model for them. A man can also wash a woman's feet:

Welcome, my woman, welcome.²⁴
I am sure you are tired,
Let me wash your feet,

(Hoş geldin, kadını benim, hoş geldin.
Yorulmuşundur,
nasıl etsem de yıkasam ayacıklarını)

Among his poems depicting the people of the countryside, villages, "Our Women" sums up his humanist vision. "In Hikmet's poem, the protest against centuries of oppression implies that women are capable of taking power into their own hands."²⁵

²³ Omid Safi, (2003) ed., *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications).

²⁴ Nazım Hikmet, *Welcome* (Hoş geldin), (Adam Yayınları), p. 172

²⁵ Saime Göksu and Edward Timms, *Nazım Hikmet: poetry and politics in Kemalist Turkey*, ed. Edward Timms, Peter Collier, "Visions and blueprints: avant-garde culture and radical politics in early twentieth century Europe", Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 188



OUR WOMEN²⁶

....

And women,
our women:
with their huge sacred hands,
their delicate small chins and large eyes
our mothers, our wives, our beloved
and who die as if never have lived
and whose place at our table
comes after our ox
and those we abduct to the hills and go to jail for
and those at the harvest, the tobacco, firewood and the market
and who are harnessed to the plough
and in barns
in the glint of daggers plunged into the earth
women who become ours
with their heavy rolling hips and their bells,
our women

(Ve kadınlar,
bizim kadınlarımız:
korkunç ve mübarek elleri,
ince, küçük çeneleri, kocaman gözleriyle
anamız, avradımız, yârimiz
ve sanki hiç yaşamamış gibi ölen
ve soframızdaki yeri
öküzümüzden sonra gelen
ve dağlara kaçırıp uğruna hapis yattığımız
ve ekinde, tütünde, odunda ve pazardaki
ve karasabana koşulan
ve ağıllarda
ışılısında yere saplı bıçakların
oynak, ağır kalçaları ve zilleriyle bizim olan
kadınlar,
bizim kadınlarımız)

He has more reverence for women than the previously mentioned male poets. He begins valuing them by defining their hands as 'sacred', because with these hands Turkish women supported Atatürk and the soldiers during the Turkish War of Independence²⁷, beside their efforts in sharing the responsibilities and obligations in earning life, at home, and in the fields beside their husbands or fathers. She is as productive and utile as an ox which is quite important for villagers; they use oxen and cows for their meat, milk, skin and power necessary for their life. While Nazım Hikmet says "whose place at our table /comes after our ox", he does not undervalue women; he gives importance to his family by giving importance and priority to work-an ox. It is a vital mean for earning their lives. If he can supply food or earn money, then he can take good care of his wife and children.

Another line that might cause a misunderstanding in other cultures than the Turkish is "those we abduct to the hills (or mountains) and go to jail for". Abduction of a girl or elopement in other words happens when young lovers are faced with obstacles by their parents to get married for some reasons. Mostly when the young man is not able to give the "başlık" money (i.e. money paid by the bridegroom to the bride's father), or not able to meet the wedding expenses or hostility between the families. In any of such cases, he abducts his lover or elopes with her without her parents' consent. In the past, young men used to abduct their lovers to the mountain in the village where they lived. The abduction is usually ended up in

²⁶ Nazım Hikmet, (1982) *İnsan Manzaranı*, BE,4,5-574(pp. 253-6); English version from Hikmet, Human Landscapes, tr. Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk, New York, pp. 131-2.)

²⁷ As the war developed, they picked up the work of the men in the fields, trundled food and ammunition to the soldiers at the front and nursed the wounded.



marriage with the help and conciliation of the relatives, or otherwise, the young man goes to jail if the girl is under the age of eighteen. So, Nazım Hikmet writes this cultural motif in his poem and stresses on how much value men give to women; they are even willing to go to jail for their women.

Like Ersoy and Nazım, Ziya Gökalp²⁸, too, values women. For him, they are the only key to open the door of being a developed country. Valentine M. Moghadam (2003, 92) argues that Gökalp "in particular associated education and employment of women with the development of the country." One of his poems reads:

Women are also human beings, and as human beings
They are equally entitled to the basic rights of human beings:
education and enlightenment.
So long as she does not work, she will remain unenlightened,
Which means, the country will suffer.
If she does not rise, the country will decline.
No progress is complete without her contribution.

(Bunlar da olmasa kadın insandır
İnsanın en büyük hakkı irfandır:
Kadın çalışmazsa fikri yükselmez,
Tabi o zaman size denk gelmez.
Kadın yükselmezse alçalır vatan,
Samimi olmaz onsuz bir irfan.)

Ersoy lectures the readers the important place of women in the society; he shows that the only way for the equality between men and women is equal rights for education and enlightenment.

Conclusion

Women's issues have been one of the major themes depicted in literature by both male and female writers all over the world. Most of the time they have shared different view on this issue but sometimes one can observe some similarities in their approach throughout the history all over the world. The cultural evaluations of male and female even in literature seem to be universal. Western image of the Muslim world is a portrait of oppressed women of the Muslim world. This study tries to be a reply for such image through literary works. Accordingly, the present study has attempted to reveal that, while generally female poets have been addressing women's issues; male poets are also active in addressing women's issues in Turkey through their poetry, as Turkey being primarily a Muslim country. Male poets argue that women should be treated as equal based on religious, social and economic perspectives. These prominent Turkish poets are Gülten Akin, Ayten Mutlu, Şukufe Nihal Başar, Naciye Bacı, Zehra Bacı Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Basri Baba, Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli, Kul Figani and Nazim Hikmet. There are also many other poets like Attila İlhan, Orhan Veli and Can Yücel, with similar views, valuing women.

Reading these male poets' works, it can be argued that the female poets are not alone in crying out the women's issues from social, emotional and religious aspects; men are also highly sensitive to their problems. Although women are generally known to be oppressed/subordinated by men, surprisingly, these male poets speak out about women's issues through poetry aiming to have a greater influence on the society to change the situation. They can have more power to influence the society because one should accept that Turkey has still the patriarchal and feudal remains and traces in her culture which somehow affect individuals' lives and it is good when a man who has an authority and respect in the eyes of the society points out a problem. The inspiration these female and male poets get for writing on women's problems and ideals for them seem to be based on two main issue: the patriarchy and the misinterpretations/misapplications of the Islamic ideology which is under the influence of patriarchal values as discussed by the scholars above. It should be noted that these two issues are not dominant, pervading issues through the whole country; but still there are cases which women have experienced not to be missed out.

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²⁸ Ziya Gökalp, born in 1876 in İstanbul, a Turkish sociologist, writer, poet, and political activist.



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Appendix

| TURKISH VERSION | ENGLISH VERSION |
|---|--|
| <p>1) Kul Figani NEFES <i>Kadına sevgi yakıştır Aydınlatır görür kadın Emekçidir çok çalışır Menziline varır kadın</i></p> <p><i>Pirini özünde anar Aşkın kuresinde yanar İnsanlığa ilham sunar İkrarında²⁹ durur kadın</i></p> <p><i>Noksanlık var diyen ahmak Bir kendine bir ona bak Başı açık yalın ayak Yar yolunda yürür kadın</i></p> <p><i>Kâinatın binasidir Hakikatin manasidir FIGANİ'nin anasidir Cansıza can verir kadın</i></p> | <p>1) Kul Figani³⁰ SONG <i>Love befits a woman She enlightens and discerns She is a laborer, she works very hard She reaches her goals</i></p> <p><i>She obeys her spiritual guidance in her self She is burnt within the love's sphere She inspires humanity She keeps the pledge³¹</i></p> <p><i>You, the stupid, claiming she has a deficiency Look at yourself and her She, bareheaded and barefooted, Walks on her beloved's path</i></p> <p><i>She is the essential of the universe She is the meaning of the truth She is the mother of FIGANI The woman gives life to the dead.</i></p> |

²⁹ ikrar: eline, diline, beline sahip olma sözü vermek

³⁰ Translated by the author

³¹ Pledge: master of his hand, his tongue, his loins. An Alevi is pledged to the main principle in the Alevi sect that one must take the control of his hand, tongue and sexual desires. Alevi principals and teachings are chiefly central to three archaic pillars that progressively evolves in time:

Deed: Controlling self essence. Never steal. Never take anything that does not belong to you. Control your self-esteem. Mine your actions. Refrain yourself from being deceitful. Don't hurt the weak or the strong. Always help the needy



| | |
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| <p>2. Pir Hacı Bektaş Veli Erkek dışı sorulmaz muhabbetin dilinde Hakk'ın yarattığı her şey yerli yerinde Bizim nazarımızda kadın-erkek farkı yok Noksanlık eksiklik senin görüşlerinde</p> | <p>2. Saint Hacı Bektaş Veli³² Women are included on an equal footing with men in the rituals Every creature of God has its own valuable place For us, there is no difference between women and men The deficiency and incompetence is in your ideas.</p> |
| <p>3. Mehmet Akif Ersoy Kari iş görmeyecek, varsa piçin bakmayacak; Çamaşır, tahta, yemek nerede? Ateş yakmayacak. Bunların hepsini yapmak sana ait "şer'an", Çocuk emzirmeye hatta olacak bir süt anan</p> | <p><i>The wife will not do the house chores, and will not take care your baby if you have one; Doing laundry, scrubbing the floors, and cooking? She will not make a fire. All these chores belong to you according to the Sharia laws, You even have to find a nursing mother.</i></p> |
| <p>4. Nazım Hikmet KADINLARIMIZ Ve kadınlar bizim kadınlarımız: korkunç ve mübarek elleri ince, küçük çeneleri, kocaman gözleriyle anamız, avradımız, yarımız ve sanki hiç yaşanmamış gibi ölen ve soframızdaki yeri öküzümüzden sonra gelen ve dağlara kaçırıp uğrunda hapis yattığımız ve ekinde, tutunda, odunda ve pazardaki ve kara sabana koşulan ve ağıllarda işiltisinde yere saplı bıçakların oynak, ağır kalçaları ve zilleriyle bizim olan kadınlar, bizim kadınlarımız</p> | <p>4. Nazım Hikmet³³ OUR WOMEN And women, our women: with their huge sacred hands, their delicate small chins and large eyes our mothers, our wives, our beloved and who die as if never have lived and whose place at our table comes after our ox and those we abduct to the hills and go to jail for and those at the harvest, the tobacco, firewood and the market and who are harnessed to the plough and in barns in the glint of daggers plunged into the earth women who become ours with their heavy rolling hips and their bells, our women</p> |
| <p>5. Naciye Bacı NEFES Ey erenler erler, nasıl ersiniz? Söyleyin, sizinle davamız vardır. Bacılara niçin (Nakis) dersiniz? Bizim de Hazret-i Havvamız vardır. Bizi de halkeden Suphan değil mi? Aslanın dişisi aslan değil mi? Söyleyin, makbul-u Rahman değil mi? Ummu Gulsum, Zeynep, Leyla'miz vardır... Naciye fakire kemter bacidir, Muhammet Ali'ye kuldur nacidir. Cumle erenlerin başı tacidir; Fatimat-uz-zehra anamız vardır.</p> | <p>5. Naciye Bacı (Sister Naciye)³⁴ NEFES (POEM SUNG BY DERVISHES) Hey dervishes and men! How dervishes are you? Tell me, we have a problem with you. Why do you call the sisters "inadequate" We do have our Hawwa. Isn't it God that has created us, too? Isn't a lioness a big cat, too? Tell me, isn't she an admirable creature of the Compassionate? We do have our Umm Kulthum, Zainab, Leyla... Naciye is the poorest, helpless sister, She is the submissive to Muhammad Ali She is enthroned by all dervishes; We do have the Mother Fatimah Al-Zahraa.</p> |
| <p>6. Şukufe Nihal Başar KADIN, SEN NESİN? Nesin, anlayamadi seni hiç kimse!</p> | <p>6. Şukufe Nihal Başar³⁵ WOMAN, WHO ARE YOU? Who are you, nobody could understand you!</p> |

Desire: Refrain from indecent action. Never commit adultery. Never deceive your partner. Control your desire. Strictly keep decency. Self-cleanse your inner soul from committing sins. Maintain clean spirit and protect self-nature.

Virtual Ethics: Uphold your manners. Never commit blasphemy. Never demean other faiths. Watch what you say. Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Refrain yourself from indecent language. Protect yourself dignity. Don't talk behind others. Don't value gossips. Don't allow others to pollute / litter your language by adding foreign phrases. Control your manners and be polite to everyone.

³² Translated by the author.

³³ Translated by Randy Blasing and Mutlu Konuk.

³⁴ Translated by the author.

³⁵ Translated by the author.



Dikkat ettim arkandan her gelen sese,
Her ağızda bir türlü değişti adın...
Diyorlar ki: "Ne çilgin, ne meçhul kadın!..."
Bilinmez, sezilemez bir isteği,
Değişir her saniye, her an dediği...
Bazı öyle durgundur, sanki bir kaya,
Dalar gökte parlayan kızıl bir aya,
Ne düşünür, ne duyar kimse bilemez,
Ruhunun tozlarını bir el silemez...
Dudakları kilitli aylar geçer de
Açılmaz almindaki esrarlı perde...
Bazı bir çocuk kadar şakrak, neşeli
Gulmektir hayatının bütün emeli...
Güler kahkahalarla ye'se, sevince,
Sesi bir musikidir sevimli, ince...
Efsaneler dinletir size ruhundan
Bir neş'e membaidir içinden coşan...
Bir de bakarsınız ki gözlerinde yaş!
Bazı çilgin, neşeli bazı da bir taş
Gibi soğuk kadından eser yok şimdi...
O, bir lahza evvelki şen çocuk kimdi?
Ruhunda en acikli bir ses çağlıyor,
Bu genç kadın kim için neye ağlıyor?
İşte o da bilinmez, anlaşılamaz...
Ah, o kadın bir zirve ki aşılamaz,
Bulutlara gömülü, göklere yakın,
Başın döner, erişmek isteme sakın...
Bazı o çok güzeldir, şaheser derler,
Güzelliği de ruhu kadar derbeder...
Tutuşan yanakları kızıl bir ateş.
Gözleri ruhunuzu delen bir güneş...
Saçları alev alev, siyah dağınik.
Dudakları bir damla kor gibi yanık...
Çok geçmez, o da geçer, sararır, solar,
Güneşli çehresine sis, hazan dolar.
Bakarsınız ki çirkin, karanlık, renksiz
Ateş renkli güzelden kalmamış bir iz...
Bazı durmaz bir lahza bile yerinde,
Bin yere konar bir tek dal üzerinde...
Canlıdır, kararsızdır uçan bir kuştur,
Gökten göğe kavuşmak ister, sarhoştur...
Lakin düşer, kirlilir yine kanadı,
Hareketsiz bir ufka dalar, bıkmadan
Alakasiz her şeye yansa da cihan!...

İşte sana çilgin bir çocuk dediler,
İşte sana neşesiz, soğuk dediler...
Sana dalgın ve hissiz, aptal dediler...
Bir nefesle kirlilir bir dal dediler,
Sana hem güzel hem de çirkin dediler.
Sana bazı genç, bazı geçkin dediler...
Sana çapkin, sana şulh, olgun dediler,
Kalbi bin bir aşk ile dolgun dediler...
Dediler, hep dediler, diyecekler de,
Seni kim anlayacak, ah o eş nerde?...

7. Gülten Akin

SORUMLU KADIN

Yuzunle bir olmaz hatırlıyorum sen kimsin
Bir yanından öbür yanın görünuyor bomboş
Yeni çarşılar gibi alımlısın geçiyorum

Çarşılarda erkek adları söylenir kadınlar gizli
Sana kim takti bu sorumluluğu kadınsın
Nerden aldın "olmaz"ları o "geçilmez"leri
Bir yanından – senin değil öbür yanın- geçiyorum.

Bu senin yuzunden gulmelere bu ne bu
Tum karşıyız binlerce yıl çoğunlukta

I paid attention to every voice coming behind you,
Your name was uttered differently in every mind...
They say: "What a mad, what a mysterious kind!" ...
Not known, not possibly perceived any desire of hers,
Every second she is changed, she changes what she says...
Sometimes she is calm, as if she were a rock,
she sinks into the shining scarlet moon,
Nobody knows what she thinks, how she feels,
No hand can wipe away the dust in her soul...
Her lips are locked, even months pass
Mysterious curtain in her forehead not opened..
Sometimes as lively as a kid, gaiety..
The only wish in her life is to smile..
Burst into laugh at sadness and happiness,
Her voice is music, sweet, fine...
Plays legends to you in her spirit
A joy spring risen from inside of her...
Then you look at her eyes and see tears!
Sometimes mad, cheerful, sometimes cold
Like a stone, no trace of the woman now...
She! Who was she? Who was that cheerful child a short while ago?
The saddest voice in her soul is crying
For whom and what is this young woman crying?
That, too, cannot be known and understood,
Ah, that woman is such a peak that cannot be reached
Buried in the clouds, close to the sky
You feel dizzy; do not ever think of reaching her...
Sometimes she is very beautiful, magnificent they say,
Her beauty like her soul is shattered
Her burning cheeks are red fire
Her eyes are sun penetrating your soul...
Her hair is with a lot of flames, black and shaggy.
Her lips are burnt like a small ember..
Soon they, too, will fade away,
And fog and fall will fill her shining face
Then you realize she is ugly, dark, colorless
and no trace left from the red colored beauty.
Sometimes she is hyperactive, can't stand still for a second
She perches on thousands points on one branch...
Lively, an uncertain bird she is,
She wants to reach at the sky, drunk she is
However, she falls down, her wing is again broken,
She loses herself in thought looking at the horizon without getting tired
Indifferent to everything even if the world is burned out!...

Here they called you a crazy child,
Here they call you cheerless, cold,
They call you pensive and insensitive, silly...
They call you a branch that could be broken at one breath
They call you both are beautiful and ugly.
sometimes young, sometimes old
rascal, seductive, mature they say,
her heart is full of numerous love
They said, they always said, will say, too.
Who is going to understand you, ah, where is that partner?

7. Gulden Akin³⁶

A RESPONSIBLE WOMAN

I remember who you are, your face is not same as your identity
One can see through you from one side to the other, quite empty
You are charming like new bazaars, I am passing through

In the bazaars men's names are called but women's secretly
Who gave this responsibility to you, you are a woman
Where did you take the 'no's and those 'restrictions'
I am passing through from one side of you- the other side is not yours.

But they are pleased by you, so why all these obstacles

³⁶ Translated by the author.



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| <p>Kara tartılarda ağırlığımız Tum kadın tum utanç tum korku</p> | <p>We are all against it for thousand years We are weighed with black scales All women all shame all fear.</p> |
| <p>8. Ayten Mutlu</p> <p>Bir İsyan Turkusu -I- ben kadının hani şu bildiğiniz ve de bilmediğiniz kimi şeytan, kimi melek kimi çiçek, kimi koyun etinden, sutunden derisinden al nakışlı gömlek edip giyindiğiniz aklı kısa saçı uzun sokakta mutfakta yatakta elinizin altında gönlunuzce ektiğiniz biçtiğiniz tarla tepesinde tepe tepe tepindiğiniz eksik etek kiminizin anası karisi kiminizin ya da orospunun teki</p> <p>-II- çağlar boyu diri diri mezara gömduğünüz uğruna öldüğünüz mulkunuz cariyeiniz taşa tuttuğumuz aldığınız sattığınız kanatmayı erkeklik saydığınız kadın cinselliği gunahın öbür adı sevinci ayıp yasaklarla tabularla peçelerin karasına boyanmış -III- ben kadının islah olmaz gunahkâri bütün dinlerin tanrım, babam, kocam efendilerim</p> <p>menekşeyim dikenli tarlalarda saksılarda fesleğen dalları kafesli camlara tutsak dikenli tellerin ardına sargun bin yıllardır işgal edilmiş toprak -IV- ben kadının sabir taşı, öfkelerin çatlatamadığı bütün gunahlar benden sorulur ben öderim diyetini bütün dinlerin kına rengi kan içinde ellerim erkeğim yılki ati uzun kış çağlarında bense bulgur aşı yoksul evlerde sade suya tarhana gul reçeli konaklarda saraylarda gul kokulu cariye -V- sustuk, sustuk sizin tanrılığınız yuzunden insanlığımızı unuttuk yorgunum</p> | <p>8. Ayten Mutlu³⁷</p> <p>A Rebellion Song -I- I am a woman, a woman whom you know well and whom you don't know well sometimes a Satan, sometimes an angel a flower, a sheep whose milk and meat you consume and whose skin you make a leather shirt with red embroidery a woman! in the street, in the kitchen, in the bed under your hand a field you sow and harvest as you like a woman whom you insult as you like a woman! a mother of some of you a wife of some of you or a whore -II- I, the woman you buried alive for many centuries, the one you died for your property, your slave the one you threw rocks at the one you bought and sold the one you made bleed for your manhood her sexuality is the synonym of sin her happiness is rudeness painted by the blackness of veils with the restrictions and taboos -III- I am a woman the sinner unforgiven by all religions my God, my father, my husband my masters</p> <p>I am a violet in thorny fields sweet basil in pot plants its branches captive in barred windows exile behind barbed wires land occupied for thousands of years -IV- I am a woman a rock, anger could not crack I am the authority of all sins I pay the blood money of all religions my hands in blood the color of henna</p> <p>my man is a horse in long winter ages, but I am boiled-pounded wheat in poor houses, I'm tarhana soup cooked with plain water I'm rose jam in mansions and a rose-smelling concubine in palaces -V- we were quiet and quiet we forgot our humanity because of your being God I am tired</p> |

³⁷ Translated by the author.



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| <p>horlanmışım cahilim -VI- selam olsun size yedi erenler erenleri çağımın, okumuşları insana gul yaraşir diye gulun yoluna kalem kuşanmışları, baş koymuşları duyun beni yurunecek yollarım var, yollarınıza varan hallerim var hallerinizden yaman gumbur gumbur yureğim, ayaklarım acemi önümü kapatmayın yollarıma durmayın uçmaya varıyorum, kanadım urkek kanadimi kirmayın yeter yeter artık,ödedim diyetini her guluşumun ertelenmiş aşklarım var yaşanacak şarkılarım, söylenmeye beni bekleyen sesim gur bir kaynak gibi çağıldayacak ve ellerim bir olup ellerinle hayati yeni baştan kuracak</p> | <p>I am insulted I am ignorant -VI- salute to you, seven wise men, the wise men of my time, the literate men, the scholars, studied and devoted themselves for a rose path with a strong belief that human beings deserve roses! Listen to me I've got my roads to take, arriving at yours, have got my states worse than yours my heart beating hard, my feet inexperienced don't prevent me don't step on me ready to fly, my wings are timid don't break my wings enough enough is enough, I paid every smile of mine I've got delayed loves, songs waiting for me to sing my voice will gurgle like a flowing river and my hands together with yours will recreate a new life.</p> |
|--|--|