Abstract

Adventure of Westernization in Turkey has a long history. Changes/Westernization in social, political, cultural and economic fields reaches to an important point with the Tanzimat. Society of Turkey enters a new period of civilization starting with the Tanzimat.

Westernization in the field of literature began with the Tanzimat literature and with Servet-i Fünun literature reached its peak. During this period, successful examples of Western literature types are produced. In particular, novel has gained a Western style. The most obvious reflection of the Westernization process in the period novel takes place over the phenomenon of woman.

Mehmet Rauf is one of the prominent novelists of Servet-i Fünun literature. In his works he often dealt with issues of love and women. The novel Genç Kız Kalbi (Heart of a Young Girl) of Mehmet Rauf was published in 1912. In the novel themes such as phenomenon of Westernization, cultural differences and women's rights are dealt with. Women's rights are one of the most important themes in the novel.

Keywords: Mehmet Rauf, Genç Kız Kalbi, Women’s Rights, Patriarchy.
MEHMET RAUF’UN GENÇ KIZ KALBİ ROMANINDA ‘YENİ KADIN’

Özet

Türkiye’deki Batılılaşma macerası, köklü bir geçmişe sahiptir. Sosyal, siyasal, kültürel ve ekonomik alanlardaki değişme/ Batılılaşma, Tanzimat’ın ilanıyla önemli bir noktaya taşınır. Türkiye toplumu, Tanzimat ile beraber yeni bir medeniyet dairesine girer.


Anahtar Kelimeler: Mehemet Rauf, Genç Kız Kalbi, Kadın hakları, Ataerkillik.

INTRODUCTION

According to Tanpinar, “Modern Turkish Literature has started with a crisis of civilization” (Tanpinar, 1995, p. 101). Because, Turkish society having been included in a new civilization cycle after the political reforms made in the Ottoman State in 1839 has had a civilization change. The new Turkish Literature is a result of civilization change. Who benefited most from this change are women. Self-expression of woman is possible only in her limited area set for her in the Ottoman State based on masculine dynamics.

Together with the reforms, women and act of women tried to find a way to express them. One of these ways is literature. In classical Turkish Literature, woman is only a creature that is fallen in love with. This excluded the women out of real life. In reform literature, women mostly were equipped with eternal verities or reflected as immoralist. The primary duty of her in society is, undoubtedly, to be moral. In fact, the sole responsible of social morality is her. The Wealth of Science (Servet-i Fünun) novel based on French Literature aesthetic is “a novel of a generation that is west fan” (Bas, 2010, p. 359). That period artists included woman characters in their works more than writers before them. According to Huseyin Tuncer, women were shown much interest in that period. Women exist together with specific objects and in house in novels (Tuncer, 1992). In this period literature, woman stands with her beauty and femininity and creates and identity that can fall in love. She falls in love and cheats like a man. This new type of woman that has desires starts to be seen in society. Because, woman is also a sign that is used for expressing feelings and thoughts for man of letters of Wealth of Science (Kirtıl, 1995).

The more European specific cultural factors such as foreign language, West literature knowledge, picturing, playing piano exist in the society, the more reflections they will have in...
the society (Okay, 2005). In Reform and Wealth of Science periods, status symbol of woman characters in literature is to play piano (Yavuz, 2010).

Among Wealth of Science novelists, the one who has the most musical interest is Mehmet Rauf. Modern women play piano in his novels. They enjoy listening to West music. However, “the fact that these women have strong will and self denial distinguishes them from naturalness. Thus, they seem with the psychological qualifications that writers want them” (Akyuz, 1995, p. 119).

Young Girls’ Heart novel of Mehmet Rauf that comes into prominence with psychological analyses after September novel is first serialized in Wealth of Science journal in 1912 and published as book in the same year. Woman and woman rights are the topic of fiction. The novel is diary of Pervin. Pervin is both focal character and the narrator of the novel. We learn all acts or dialogs from Pervin. The first written time of memories is 15th June, 1327 (1911). And the last time is 5th August, 1327. The book named ‘Dairy of Pervin’ consists of 22 parts. The novel mostly consists of internal monologue by force of psychological novel. The other narrating methods referred are dialog and narrating.

The novel includes the actions occurring in a love. However, woman rights, social and political subjects and clash of civilizations are dominant in the novel rather than love. And love symbolizes an expectation for healthy people.

1. The Plot

The hero narrator of the novel, Pervin is a nineteen-years-old teenager. Her father who is an officer in Izmir grew her up carefully with tutorials. She has experience about west art and literature. Pervin who loves the life and having fun dreams of getting married with a man that she can fall in love with. Izmir is a shallow city for realizing her dreams. Therefore, she dreams about Istanbul as the heart of modern life. She can find the man there she can fall in love with. Istanbul is the only city that she can realize her dreams

Pervin goes to her uncle’s house in Istanbul in summer holiday. She reaches the city of her dreams. However, this convergency is a flop for her. Because, she finds an oriental city although she was expecting a modern city in her dreams. Everyone is busy with gossip and wearing purdah. Everyone makes prearranged marriages. Both Istanbul and people are dirty and uncared. People have no real activity about art and literature. The biggest misery of her is not to stay in an environment that is available for her upbringing and pattern of education. What is underlying her anger she feels for Istanbul is the absence of love, art and literature she looks for.

Staying in her uncle’s house in Istinye, Pervin witnesses the masculine system her uncle created. Her uncle’s wife, Hediye, his children, Nigar and Abdi got used to this masculine system. Only she finds odd this life. Even though Nigar cares for herself by the help of Pervin, the father doesn’t accept this situation.

The historic moment of Pervin’s life in Istanbul is Hediye’s visit to her relative Mehmet Behic. Having modern ideas, Behic is closely acquainted with West culture and life. For the development of Turkish society, women have to be included in public life as men. The sensitiveness of Behic about woman rights who is also a poet draws Pervin’s attention.

The more visits are often, the more Pervin loves Behic. Her love is based on a ideal base. Both adopt West life and both are sensitive about woman right. Feeling happy about
having same thoughts with Behic. Pervin later learns that Behic is also interested in her. However, Behic explains the family members that he cannot marry Pervin because she is not a member of a wealthy family. Pervin cannot notice Behic’s love for money. In fact, it is a controversy with his ideas. As a result, having disappointed in her first love, the young girl returns to Izmir.

2. ‘New Woman’ Style

The novel named ‘A Young Girl’s Heart’ points out the fact of Pervin who grows up in Eastern civilization along with Western civilization. There is a controversy between what she learned and how she lives. This stalemates her. Because, she physically belongs to the East and spiritually belongs to the West.

Pervin has an improper education as the other girls in her period. Her parents enable her to learn West languages and take piano courses. She is a girl grown-up with joy of literature and engrossed in poem. In spite she is a fine person, her biggest misfortune is her existence in a mean environment. That is why she is in a disaster that is caused by foreignness of her. “All women around her are mean” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 19). The young girl doesn’t accept keeping an unqualified life although she cannot create a life style according to her value judgment. This contradiction causes anger for her. This anger is also the source of her critical thought about society.

Although Pervin has never been in Europe, she knows European culture from books and movies. Therefore, she admires the aesthetic of this culture. The name of the cinema she goes in Izmir is ‘The cinema of Femina’. The fact that the name is a French name reminds feminity both shows the reaction for sexist discourse in society and holds a symbolic value that shows sensitiveness for woman.

What differs Pervin from other girls is her thought about love. She never dreams a life without love. When considered the social life of that period, this is a radical attitude. For Pervin, love is “the biggest and most sacred thing in life” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 9). She thinks that the man that will be fallen in love must deserve this emotion. The mutual loves are also the source of respect. Because, the togetherness based on love is the key for lifetime happiness. In fact, Pervin is a symbolic name that is the forwarder of love that all young girls look for. Her difference is that she doesn’t have a passive attitude toward love.

“I want to fly in the sky with the whole poem and passion of my heart. I want to wander on stars and tremble with excitements like no one ever. I want to get surprised by enjoyments that didn’t enrapture anyone before. I want such loves that is lightened with gold dreams of young girls. I want one love for my one body that is adorned and jeweled with all beautiful flowers of my heart. My existence and the whole love of my heart boiling for years and the virginity of my love will belong to his…only to his..forever” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 43).

Pervin regards her feeling of love as controllable. In spite of many meanings assigned for love, it is mental. For her, love is a result of life style. Therefore, for the existence of love, people need to know each other and have same anxiety for life. It is impossible for Pervin who dreams of Western life to marry an Eastern man. That is why, she will say that “I didn’t love; because I haven’t met a man deserves me until now” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 43).
The sense of love dignified this much can also be harmonized for social structure of the period. Pervin rejects the physical intercourse before marriage. Because, love “consists of marriage” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 43). Love without aim of marriage is nonsense. She also describes her love with a man that she will not marry as viliness. The thought of marriage and love as a fact completing each other is the result of the thought that can be completed with the sacredness assigned for marriage by society.

3. Prearranged Marriage

Prearranged marriage is a concept that is used for marriages made with different references and mostly assent of the big members of families. In such marriages, the couples meet to realize the marriage that is prearranged by family members. The essence of this meeting is only about physical approval.

The subject of prearranged marriage are one of the subjects come out since the first samples of reform literature. The play of Sinasi named Poem Marriage (1860) reveals ironically the inconveniency for both individually and socially of regular marriage. The theme of the play is that prearranged marriages must come to an end to create a good society. The approaches about the harms of prearranged marriages and how a good marriage must be are the subjects that Namik Kemal, Ahmet Mithat, Fatma Aliye, Halit Ziya and Huseyin Rahmi Gurpinar mentioned in their works after Sinasi’s play.

The most criticized subject in Young Girl’s Heart novel is prearranged marriage. When considering that most marriages are made as prearranged marriages in the beginnings of 20th century, the importance of this subject can easily be understood for society for that period. For the focal character of the novel, Pervin, “all young girls who are aware of their own value damn and reject prearranged marriages” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 10). Goofy boys adhere to traditional marriages sacrifice both themselves and the girls they choose. The writer points that the trivialized side is woman in prearranged marriage and boys gets their share. According to Pervin, “the fact of regarding of love for someone with someone’s idea and judgment as adequate is a fake and fraudulent marriage” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 22).

In prearranged marriages, status, money and honor are taken into consideration. Morals, tendance and ideas are ignored. However, these values are more important for a marriage. “They unconditionally wive their esteemed daughter to a wealthy looking; rumor has it that honorable and a good behavior man” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, 23). Therefore, they deliver their daughter to the claw of a man looking as described. Bad character of the man coming out soon after causes the girl to be unhappy. The parents will be the shareholders of the lifetime unhappiness of their daughter. While ninety nine per cent of the marriages in the society continue unhappily, the society regards it as bad luck. Pervin declares all troubles with wrong marriage decisions made dazedly. Parents hide behind the fortune for getting rid of responsibilities. Mistakes assigned to fortune means no more than taking the easy way.

Pervin wants to rebel against this wrong marriage. She doesn’t believe in a life like this. Having no idea about how to declare this to society, she mentions death. Failing young girl decides to kill herself. Thus, she will take revenge from her parents, society and her husband who somehow shares the same fortune with her. And people may give up insisting this wrong decision:
“Child is not wived like this...and the child grown up and brought up, the child wanted to be wived to a man kills herself rather than sacrificing her soul as carrions threw to mouths of dogs...She prefers pegging out” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 51).

Woman body is used as a means of the situation. The revenge the woman took with her own body will be successful with killing herself. In fact, suicides of women because of prearranged marriages that are traditionalized have existed and ignored in paternalistic societies. However, prearranged marriages that are the reason for deaths are never interrogated. Even if it is not interrogated, the only thing condemned is suicide.

Pervin has difficulty in understanding the girls regarding a lifetime squabble as marriage and feeling happy at least to be married. Because, “fighting like cats and dogs whole day is difficult for everyone” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 62). However, young girls can spare time for them and improve themselves if they don’t get married.

The author does not only focus on the reflections of prearranged marriage on women. In the novel, the reflections of prearranged marriage are also given. The damage caused on a man by prearranged marriage, is narrated through Cemil Bey, who is married to a young girl named Nerime, with whom Pervin met in Istanbul. Cemil Bey himself does not appear in the novel. Nerime, to whom he married out of love, is Cemil Bey’s spokeswoman.

Like many others in his period, Cemil Bey also experiences a forced and unhappy marriage, a prearranged one, and has a couple of kids. After he meets Nerime, a love begins between these two, and he leaves his wife and children due to the feelings he has about Nerime. This extraordinary situation causes many rumors in the neighborhood. According to Nerime, everybody sees Cemil Bey as “the most heartless of all men” because they are happy. If they were unhappy, nobody would neither call her or Cemil Bey’s name. The only difference that separates them from the married couples in the neighborhood is that, they are married out of love.

Cemil Bey spends the best years of his youth with a wife that he does not love. He cannot find the happiness with her that he seeks for. After meeting Nerime, he believes that he can be happy. “Now, who can stop this man from devoting his life to this young girl for happiness?” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 64). According to the author, people hardly meet the right person that can make them truly happy. Whether it is a man or woman, he or she must seize these rare opportunities. Yet, different from women; if men cannot find the happiness they seek for, they will always be in a search even if they are married. They are tend to amuse themselves with different women. And this will lead to many deep wounds to be inflicted on the personality of the wives.

The author implies that prearranged marriages are the products of an imposition. It can be seen that given the slightest chance, impositions reveal many problems and that they also make people unhappy. In order to overcome that, man and woman both must know, like and love each other like their Western fellows. A lifetime can only be spent with love. Lives spent unhappily and wrathfully, will be unbearable from the partners’ aspect.

4. Patriarchal Society and Woman

In patriarchal culture, social roles are determined by traditions. The structure in which masculine identity is the main determinant of role distribution, marginalizes the woman. The
woman is obliged to make her presence felt in only the fields that she is allowed. These fields are mostly surrounded by four walls. Therefore, she is expected to fulfill the roles of only a good wife and a good mother. She is not expected to stand out in public spheres or take a role in these. The first reaction against the women that attempt to stand out in these fields, comes from their fellows.

The author thinks that every tradition in which man is dependent on woman, downgrades the humanity. According to Pervin, “it will never be enough how much you hate the men that are dazedly dependant on all the things they call as rule or tradition” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 10).

In the novel, the most important representative of patriarchal society, is an anonymous novel character. This person is Pervin’s uncle who lives in İstinye, Istanbul. The reason why this person is not called with a name in the novel is that, it might be aimed to show him as a representative of social identity rather than an individual. And we will mention this person as ‘uncle’.

The uncle is the most important representative of masculine society. He plays his most important role against the women. He marginalizes, de-identifies and disregards the women. At the same time, the author presents this person as a typical Eastern male. Through him, the author wishes to decipher the patriarchal characteristic of the Eastern Culture. Concretization of the uncle’s defective personality and his approach of being the representative of patriarchy, is fulfilled thanks to Pervin, ‘a new woman type’ who knows the Western culture and sees herself as a representative of that culture. By means of Pervin’s observations and of the information given on the uncle’s past, we can get to know to him. The uncle, who is ‘the other’ in Pervin’s opinion, will not confront us with any positive characteristic.

At the age of twenty, the uncle becomes a civil servant without finishing his high school education. The author wants the reader to assume a negative attitude towards the uncle right from the passage where the uncle is first mentioned. This attitude will continue until the end of the novel. The uncle is someone who is not any different from a “hollow nutshell”. The uncle who marries for the third time after the death of his first two wives, has been able to pull himself together a little thanks to his second wife. When he is about to abandon “that old foul traditions” thanks to his new wife, she passes away, too. After her wife’s death, he remains ‘unguided’ and adopts his former identity once again. Women that improve themselves, can also change the man who makes their life unbearable. The change by the women, is not only welcomed by the society, but it also has the characteristics to change the society.

The death of his second wife, leaves the change in him undone. He; is an ignorant, selfish and stubborn man. He has all the characteristics of the class he belongs to. The author emphasizes the uncle’s dominant personality despite his ignorance. He is “so tyrannical that he gives great importance to shown and prove by his each word and action that he is the chief and ruler of the house”. (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 13). His appearance in the house, and this deep effect on others is mentioned as:

“When it gets dark and he comes home, he changes and bathes as usual, then they eat our dinner with the sound of prayer calls, then go up to the terrace; the uncle sits in a chair, lays his feet on the other, gathers his daughter Nigar, third wife Hediye Hamım and 25 year old son Abdi around
him, then starts to talk about his day at work without moving a muscle” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 12-13).

The first person who questions the uncle’s central position in the family is his daughter Nigar, who is also a woman. She shows her reaction to this situation by snoozing in the chair she is sitting. However, the uncle kicks her out as her attitude has started to question his dominance. Following the ultimatum “Get off that chair and go to bed” Nigar ends up in her room. This “self-complacency” of his, is due to the fact that he is the owner of the economic cycle in the house. Without him, it will not be possible to meet the house’s needs, to buy clothes for anyone in the house. Each member of the family spends a life that is dependent on the uncle. The author tries to show that the economic cycle exposes the woman to the abuse of man. Therefore, the uncle is the determinant of role distribution on what the household should and should not do. The most significant mission of the uncle as the distributor of roles, is concretized through the women in the family. He prevents his wife from showing up before other men, and only he decides what his wife and daughter should wear.

According to Pervin, her uncle’s imposition on women’s clothes, is a ‘medieval age’ tradition. Her way of dressing and hair style attract the people around. He becomes a young woman who is taken as a role model by other teenage girls. Especially her uncle’s daughter Nigar treads in her footsteps, and learns that she must show more attention on her clothing and hair to become a well-groomed lady. What Nigar does to tidy her hair, is a meaningless effort for her uncle which is made in order to look like a “chanteuse”.

When she wants to go out, she must “receive the uncle’s permission” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 17). The uncle does not hesitate to bring the household into line by saying “hey, what is that thing you are wearing?” when the women in the house wear something he does not like. The only person who ignores the uncle’s scoldings, is Pervin. Even, the uncle abstains from Pervin’s reaction. Because Pervin knows that her uncle makes such pressure in order to satisfy his personal ego. All his scoldings are an attempt to maintain his authority.

The author feels it necessary to emphasize that these scoldings are not a product of any level of consciousness, and that they have no contribution to the development of any level of consciousness from women’s aspect. Because the pressure push people to act more reactively, the uncle’s impositions arising from the apparent moral concerns, cause a total opposite behavior to develop on his daughter. It is emphasized that a behavioral change on people by pressure is not possible.

Everything in the house, is shaped by the uncle’s wishes. The food to be eaten, music to be listened, and issues to be talked, are all shaped by his direction. Because, “there is nothing important other than his own pleasure” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 15). Even though he wants his children to show respect to their mother, he does not abstain from disgracing his wife with the most vulgar and filthy words in front of the kids and servants.

The ideological theme of the novel, is narrated through Pervin, the focal character of the novel, and through Behic who shares the same opinions with her. Behic is a relative of the uncle’s last wife. He is aware of the pressure applied by the uncle in the house, therefore he always argues with him. According to Behic, morality does not only depend on clothing. While a kerchiefed woman can be bad, a non-kerchiefed woman can also be morally justified. Morality
Mehmet Bakur Şengül

will be meaningful when the personality of an individual rather than his/her physical appearance, gains a particular characteristic. One cannot be ethical by pressure, a cowering situation might come out in case of tyranny. In the event that tyranny remains in the background, then moral corruption will come out exceedingly. The reason of moral corruption, is men’s desires rather than women’s clothes. In any case, they do not refrain from making a comment on women. Rather than women, men are much more responsible for morality weakness.

5. Comparison of Eastern and Western Civilizations through Women

In the novel of A Young Girl’s Heart, Behic enters into different discussions with the uncle about the place of women in Turkish society. While the uncle characterizes the women as ignorant and unperceptive, Behic does not accept this. If such thing is in question, the main reason for this is not women, but men. Because women are “sacred and esteemed beings”. Women brings life into existence. Without them, neither life nor happiness is possible. In this way, it is essential to value this gender, to which the society owes.

According to Behic who does not think that women are given the right to live in Turkish society in a period when women want “the right of election and commission”, this is the main reason why we’ve fallen behind. Behic, who possesses Western values in Pervin’s opinion, is indifferent to “a noble and rich flower grown by care and attention for years” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 36).

According to Behic, it is not possible for us to resemble the West as we do not possess literature, art, trade, artisanship and politics. Because while they were advancing in science, we just imitated them and trivialized what we had in our hands. By asking “What have we discovered for six centuries?” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 55), he expresses our situation against the West from his own perspective. Because the Ottoman society “fell behind as it had no concern for art, no aesthetic thrill, and no purpose of progress and development….it was just in a stertorous sleep” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 56). And in order to make progress, we must work continuously like western societies. We must keep away from unnecessary discussions and works, and give the women the value they deserve.

These opinions of Mediha Hanım that Pervin knows from Istanbul, point out that our society needs to become Westernized along with its social enterprises. In addition, thanks to the Western culture, Turkish women have now learned that they have several rights:

“A woman should get involved in her husband’s social life and should also accompany him in his life. The only deficit standing before our nation’s great future is that, we have no social life and that we keep the women away from men” (Mehmet Rauf, 2011, p. 40).

CONCLUSION

In his novel named a Young Girl’s Heart, Mehmet Rauf opens women’s position in Turkish society in 1910s into discussion. The novel questions the thought that women should lead a social and individual life that is dependent on men, and show themselves in the fields allowed or determined by men. According to him, the reason for woman’s identity turning into a hunchback, is the imposition of a patriarchal life style.

Just like men, women should also contribute to social development by taking responsibility in every field of social life. In a field where women does not get included, it is not
possible to reach a successful healthy outcome. In order to fulfill that, firstly it is required to acknowledge the women as individuals. Especially, disregarding the women in a house environment, causes her to be erased from the social life. The woman who learns to live in the house by her own choices, will also learn how to survive outside the house.

According to the author, marriage institution must be saved from a patriarchal platform. This is essential for both men and women. In the novel, it is frequently mentioned that; for a healthy choice of spouse, the partners must know each other well and then decide their future together. Leaving the marriage decision to the women, will pave the way for them to improve themselves in the fields such as art, literature etc. In order to realize these, individual freedom is not sufficient. Areas of free personality development to be provided at the social level, will save the society from its sexist identity.

Pervin, focal character of the novel, is a young girl who has the privilege of being an individual. Her family has paved the way for her self-improvement. And she shows with her behaviors and ideas that she has internalized this change. She is able to gather the European approaches in her personality. As she follows the western art and literature closely, she manages to look at the society critically. She criticized the society, and tries to undertake a social role by emphasizing the events and people she sees important. She does not take a step back against the masculine identity of the society. She even attempts to change the people around her by means of her European manners, knowledge and manners of approaching. Due to this characteristic of hers, she is ‘the new woman type’ in Turkish society.

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