

Feminist Discourse Specific to Ulviye Mithat (U.) Between 1935-37 in Cyprus

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Abstract: Although Cyprus was under control of United Kingdom from 1878 to 1960 movements which affect Turkey were also affecting Turkish Cypriots who were living in Cyprus. 5th of December is a meaningful day in our calendars because the Turkish women earn their right to vote and stand for the election in 1934. Ulviye Mithat (U.) was born in 1906 in Kastamonu, Turkey; married to a Turkish Cypriot then moved to the island in 1923. She lived in Cyprus until 1940. Between 1935-37 she wrote articles in local newspapers called *Ses* and *Embros* about women's rights. She was the most- of best knowledge of author- criticized columnist because of her modernist, egalitarian and reformist ideas of her. In this paper Discourse-Historical Approach from Reisigl and Wodak was used in order to find discourses specific to Ulviye Mithat between 1935-37 in Cyprus. As a result, although Ulviye Mithat was write in 1930's her ideas about women's rights and gender equality is far beyond of her era.

Keywords: Cyprus, Ulviye Mithat, Women's rights, Discourse-historical approach

Introduction

The feminist movement, which began to develop in the second half of the 19th century, first tries to bring about a new opening to the patriarchal system and argues that every individual living in the society should have equal rights without being bound to the gender base (Berkday, 2004:4-8). In the concept of developing feminism, women are dependent on social and cultural reasons only because of their gender, this situation can be changed only if the awareness of women increases and the solidarity to be developed between women for the natural rights to be acquired.

Due to its geopolitical position, the island of Cyprus has become a land piece that must be obtained and maintained in every period of history. After the defeat of the Mamluks to the Ottoman Empire in 1517, Cyprus became legally part of the Ottoman Empire and in 1571, it was conquered by II. Selim at the request of indigenous people living in the island. Even if the Turkish presence was due on certain resources before the conquest (Beratli, 2015:), the actual Turkish settlement in Cyprus was realized by bringing artisans, craftsmen, and artisans from Anatolia. This was part of the population policy applied at that time in the Ottoman Empire. After the arrival of Ottoman Empire to the island, the social and political developments directly applied to Cyprus as well as other parts of the empire. In the years that Ottoman Empire starts to lose power, it was rented to the British Crown Colony with the condition of all rights and ownership of the island belong to Ottoman Empire (Emgili, 2015:381). Until the island rented to British Crown Colony Ottoman Empire ruled the island under their laws as well as education, religion and other policies (Özkul, Tufan ve Özsezer, 2017:568).

When the island was rented to the British Crown Colony in 1878, a governor was assigned to the island and Cyprus began to be governed by the laws and policies of the United Kingdom. For Turks and Greeks, two large groups living in island, education and religious practices according to their own religions were permitted. However, according to the information obtained from different sources, the Greek Cypriots living in Cyprus until the uprising of 1931 were seen as more privileged by the British administration and behaved that way (Cicioğlu, 1983:211-215, Öz, 2016:1268).

Till 1960 Cyprus was a colony of United Kingdom and under the guarantee of Turkey, Greece and United Kingdom Cyprus Republic was founded. Although Cyprus was governed by British administration between the years of 1878-1960 the changes in Turkey has also affected the Turks living in Cyprus. (Öz, 2016: 1270-1271). The implementation of Turkish education system in Cyprus can be given as an example. In this context, the development of the feminist movement in the late 19th century and early 20th century also affected Cyprus, which experienced the Victorian era. At the same time period women in Turkey also affected by the feminism and they start to advocate their civil rights. The Ottoman Empire entered and lost in First World War and after the war, they struggle for their independence at the end in 1923 with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Republic of Turkey was founded. The feminist movement, which began to develop in the second half of the 19th century starts to affected Ottoman women, with the revolutions of the new republic in Turkey new women identity of the newly founded republic was started to shaped (Çelik, 2012:70-71, Aydın,2015:86-93).

Ulviye Mithat was born in 1906 in Kastamonu, married a Turkish Cypriot and settled on the island in 1923. Between the years of 1935-1937, she wrote articles in *Ses* which was published in Turkish and *Embros* which was published in Turkish, English and Greek (Azgın, 1998: 4-5). Her articles took too much reaction and criticized a lot. Ulviye Mithat has written, despite all the criticism, that she has never given up on her own beliefs and has clearly stated that women's rights, women's well-educated necessity and, most of the time, Turkish women living in Cyprus have not made any effort to improve themselves.

Looking at the content of the core texts written by Ulviye Mithat in *Ses* and *Embros*, it can be concluded that she is one of the first representatives of the feminist awakening in Cyprus. The importance of the study was the investigation of feminist discourse in Cyprus specific to Ulviye Mithat within the interaction of Ottoman Empire and Victorian Era.

Method

Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) as one of the major flows of critical discourse analysis. DHA involves 3 interconnected aspects which text or discourse-immanent critique, socio-diagnostic critique and prospective critique (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001:32-35, Reisigl, 2017: 50-51). In this research, DHA was chosen because it provides tools to reveal the techniques used in texts. The following heuristic questions are used in DHA analysis:

- Referential and Nomination Strategies

Referential and nomination strategies stand for the discursive construction of social actors, events, phenomena or objects and processes or actions (Wodak, 2015:8).

- Predication Strategies

These strategies are dealt with the discursive qualification of social actors, events, phenomena or objects and processes or actions more or less positively or negatively (Wodak, 2015:8).

- Argumentation Strategies

Argumentation strategies are the strategies which justify or question the truth that claimed and normative rightness of the issue (Wodak, 2015:8).

- Perspectivization Strategies

This topic in DHA deals with the writer's point of view expressing involvement or distance over the issue (Wodak, 2015:8).

- Intensification and Mitigation Strategies

The last topic in DHA tries to answer the questions about the articulation of respective utterances overtly by either intensified or mitigated (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: 93, Wodak, 2015:8).

Fatma Azgın's book named *Ulviye Mithat Feminist Buluşma (Feminist Meeting with Ulviye Mithat)* was published in 1998. Fatma Azgın is a Turkish Cypriot researcher collect all of Ulviye Mithat's newspaper articles in her book. Ulviye Mithat's newspaper articles were investigated with DHA in order to draw a conclusion about the feminist movement between 1935-1937. Between 1935-1937 Ulviye Mithat wrote 26 newspaper articles of which 14 of them is strictly related to women's rights. The researcher eliminated the articles which are not related to women's rights. These eliminated articles are several poems which can be classified as requiems after the lost ones, articles that make an open request for farmers to write their problems in the area of agriculture and several articles that discuss why Turks who living in Cyprus are not sensitive enough to establish charity foundations for help their needed ones. Articles included are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Ulviye Mithat's articles

Article Name (Turkish-English)	Publication Date	Journals Name	Genre
Kıbrıs Kadınlığına (To the women's of Cyprus)	24/04/1935	SES	Education
Utaniyoruz Hanımlar (We are ashamed ladies)	27/07/1935	SES	Niqab
Kızlarımız ve Spor (Our girls and Sports)	17/08/1935	SES	Education
Kız Kültürü (Girl's Culture)	24/08/1935	SES	Education
Tesettür (Niqab)	07/09/1935	SES	Niqab
Niçin Kadınlar Erkeklerden Geri Kaldılar? (Why women left behind?)	17/10/1935	SES	Equality
Bay M. Hakkı'ya; Kadınlar bünyece, dimağca ve kudretçe zaif değildirler. (To Mr. M. Hakkı; Women are not powerless - physically, mentally and capability – than men.)	24/10/1935	SES	Equality
Kadın Kültürü (Women's Culture)	13/02/1936	SES	Education
Kız Okulumuzun: Yeni Müdürden memleket ne bekliyor? (Our Girl's School: What we need from our new headmistress?)	27/02/1936	SES	Education
Harb ve Kadınlık (War and Womanhood)	30/12/1936	SES	Education
Kıbrıs Kadınlığına Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (To the women's of Cyprus from Mr. Ulviye Mithat)	15/10/1937	EMBROS	Cultural similarities, Education
Kıbrıs Kadınlığına Hitap Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (Addressing to Cyprus Women from Mr. Ulviye Mithat)	01/11/1937	EMBROS	Family Name, Equality
Nasıl izah edersiniz? İngiliz Bayanlarına Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (How can you explain? To English women from Mr. Ulviye Mithat)	08/11/1937	EMBROS	Cultural similarities, Education
Açık Mektup (Open Letter)	19/11/1937	SES	Education

The prospective questions were asked to answer the question of 'What is the feminist discourse on those days in Cyprus?'

- How are key social actors and actions represented?
- Who has power?
- Who is capable of acting?

Results and Discussion

A DHA on Ulviye Mithat's Articles

Each article investigated with DHA in order to answer the questions mentioned above. The investigated articles can be divided into sub-categories such as education of women and cultural/ lifestyle similarities between Turkish, English and Greek women living in Cyprus, niqab and women-men equality. For each sub-group of articles, the above-mentioned questions were answered.

Articles about Education, Cultural/ Life-Style Similarities

Ulviye Mithat published 7 articles about education. Nominations from these articles are Turks, Turkish women, Cyprus women, women of the world, womanhood, Turkish women of our island, foreign women, Turkish Cypriot girls, Cypriots, Greek Cypriot girls, Greeks, Greek society, Cyprus Turks. The mostly used nomination about women's who are living in Cyprus is Cyprus women. Within these nominations, the in-group and out-group membership was classified into two major categories. Turks living in Cyprus was 'we' category and Greeks and English women were assigned as 'other' category. Also from these nominations, Ulviye Mithat was not separate Turkish Cypriot women from women who are living in Turkey.

The main concern of Ulviye Mithat was the reluctance and indifference of Cyprus Turkish women upon education. She mentioned Victoria High School too many times in her articles and she was disappointed about the education that they offer. She claimed that Victoria High School courses and education level are not enough for Turkish Cypriot girls to enter universities. One of her articles was written especially about Miss Bullen -the

new headmistress- that was appointed to the Victoria High School. She clearly defined the needs of Victoria High School in order to achieve the goals of higher education.

Some of Ulviye Mithat's articles about education was indicated to the comparison of Cyprus Turkish women and women of other nationalities. In the article which is written about War and Womanhood, she compares Russian women and Turkish Cypriot women. Ulviye Mithat's disappointments about Turkish Cypriot women continues the attitudes towards war. She seems Turkish Cypriot women again reluctant and undifferentiated about war again because of the level of education.

Also, we can add two more articles on this topic a bit different in positioning. Although 'Kıbrıs Kadınlığına Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (To the women of Cyprus from Mr. Ulviye Mithat)' and 'Nasıl izah edersiniz? İngiliz Bayanlarına Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (How can you explain? To English women from Mr. Ulviye Mithat)' can be categorized as cultural similarities they basically be about the educational system. In those articles, she cannot separate the lifestyle differences between English, Greek and Turkish women who are living on the island. Their education levels are limited and also all of them are very reluctant about education. Their lifestyle is very similar too.

She offers some solutions to the problems of education system especially that belongs to women's. She seems the English Government in the first place and Turkish Cypriot women in the second place who have the power to solve the deficiencies in the education system. The English government has the power to establish a new curriculum which must be meet the needs of Turkish Cypriot women's in Cyprus. Also, she mentioned and retired headmistress named Mr. Suat Sait who tried to make changes especially in sports education. But she again disappointed with the retirement of her the efforts that she made was forgotten. The second major group upon education was Cyprus Turkish women themselves. Nearly in every single article written by Ulviye Mithat she advice Turkish Cypriot women to follow the improvements about science in Turkey and also in the world in order to gain power and also claim their natural rights of being women and also human beings.

Ulviye Mithat saw Turkish women capable of doing reforms and educate themselves. Atatürk's reforms in Turkey gave Turkish women the contemporary civil rights to educate themselves with the rights that men have. She also advice Turkish women to establish associations for advocacy and to earn their rights.

Articles about Niqab

Between 1935-1937 Ulviye Mithat was written two articles about niqab. Nominations from these two articles are Turkish women and Turkish women in Turkey.

The first one is about women who wear niqab and instead of entering to a club they climbed to the walls of that club to see what was going on inside. In her article, the main topic and advice are if the niqab prevents you from living your lives freely than remove it. Live your lives in a more modern way.

In the second article, Ulviye Mithat mentioned the reform of aptire in Turkey and added that the effects of this reform not only changed the lives of women who are living in Turkey but also women living in Cyprus. The first article is more about Ulviye Mithat shock and disgrace about women who climbed to the walls of the club to see inside. The main reason for them not to enter the club was niqab. Her disappointment can be read between lines and she advise women to remove their niqabs.

In the second article, Atatürk has seen the main character who has the power and with his reforms especially the reform of aptire in Turkey he was the most powerful individual who can change the lives of women in the entire Muslim world. Also in this article, Ulviye Mithat gives the solid rock proof that niqab is not a tradition belong to Islam. She explains in detail that niqab is a tradition of the Jewish religion. The niqab is the male dominance over women.

Ulviye Mithat's article called 'Tesettür' (Niqab) is one of her articles that can be counted as most feminist one. Although Atatürk seemed to the most powerful individual who has the vision to bring Turkey to advance civilization level the second most powerful individuals in the society were women again to achieve their goals.

Articles about Equality and Law of Marriage

Niçin Kadınlar Erkeklerden Geri Kaldılar? (Why women left behind?), Bay M. Hakkı'ya; Kadınlar bünyeçe, dimağça ve kudretçe zaif değildirler. (To Mr. M. Hakkı; Women are not powerless -physically, mentally and capability – than men.) and Kıbrıs Kadınlığına Hitap Bayan Ulviye Mithat Tarafından (Addressing to Cyprus Women from Mr. Ulviye Mithat) were three articles that address equality between men and women.

Nominations in these three articles are especially women and men; no other membership categorization mentioned in these articles. Especially in the first article, she explains in detail the development of patriarchy. Ulviye Mithat starts her argumentation about why women left behind from men with describing the primitive human that live just to survive. Then she moved to the settled lifestyle of human groups who start to live in small groups. With this settled lifestyle men start to gain power and they change the society from matriarchy to patriarchy. The born of the patriarchy in Ulviye Mithat' perception is because of the male partners need to know the newborn baby's father. In other words, patriarchal system is an end product of the need to know your ancestors. Also, her other discussion about the patriarchal system was about when men get the power in their hands they made women captivated in their own houses not to lose the power.

The second article is a response to Mr. M.Hakkı. He wrote an answer and criticism about Ulviye Mithat's ideas in the above-mentioned article and he tries to prove the opposite of men and women equality that Ulviye Mithat defends. Mr.M. Hakkı wrote his opinions as women are physical, mentally weak and also weak in their abilities than men. In this article, Ulviye Mithat cynically criticizes Mr.M. Hakkı's view of point. And also with this article, she again showed that she was a well-educated intellectual.

The third article about equality is related to why women do not have the right to use their family names after marriage. This article is her second article that the reader can easily read the feminist discourse that she expresses obviously.

The power again admitted to women because they are going to defend their own rights.

Discussion

Ulviye Mithat's nominations in her writings about women who are living in Cyprus based on three major groups which are Turks, Greeks, and British. In her articles, she uses Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot identities very seldom. Instead of using Turkish Cypriot she chooses to use Turks and Turkish women in order to point out the Turkish women living on the island. The identity according to Ulviye Mithat in her articles is Turkish identity. According to Hall; a nation is a symbolic community which constructed discursively. Identities always constructed through discourse and in order to understand the identity of a certain community researcher must know specific historical, institutional and political aspects of that certain time period (Hall,1996:4).

As mentioned before Cyprus is a part of Ottoman Empire for 307 years than a part of British Crown Colony for 82 years. The discourses and also the life practices in Cyprus mostly affected by these two major regimes. Some of the topics that are discussed in Ulviye Mithat's articles can be both as a result of either Ottoman regime or British regime the clear reason of the lifestyle practice cannot be differentiated. The collective memory of a certain community contributes the definition of national identities which includes traditions, life practices, beliefs and discourses about them (Ricoeur, 1997, cited in Wodak and de Cillia, 2007: 343). Especially the Victorian era of British Crown Colony captivated women into their houses as holy saints to serve their husbands and raise their children. The same tradition is very common in Ottoman Empire too. Ulviye Mithat's discussions about women-men equality can be based on these regimes mandatory lifestyle practices upon women. Ulviye Mithat was a well-educated intellectual and accept the revolutions made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and can be described as secular and Kemalist. That's why in her writings the main power was first given to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and then the Turkish women. At this point, it is clear to read the feminist discourse in her writings. Because feminism upholds the equal rights for women and men.

Ulviye Mithat saw the main route to have equal rights between women and men goes through the education of women. If women pay attention and give an importance to their education, have an aim to enter universities as in the other developed countries they are going to stand for their rights. The key concept of women-men equality was seen as education and higher education. Although the women rights movement in Ottoman Empire starts with the Ottoman Reform in 1839 the real women rights movement dated late in Second Constitutional Era of Ottoman Empire between 1908-1918. Ulviye Mithat was born in 1906 and her childhood and adolescence

period overlaps with this period. In this period the Ottoman women start to develop and defend the idea of women-men equality especially in education (Avcı, 2016:230-231, Tor ve Ađlı, 2016:68). The women-men equality in education is still an important issue in Turkey. According to Turkish Statistical Institute (TUİK), 2017 report about women in general population the rate of illiterate women is five times more than men population. In general, population 9% of women are illiterate. Again in general population only 13.1% of women having a graduate degree in Turkey (TUİK,2017). On the other hand, there is no detailed statistics about Cyprus literate level except the census which done in 2006. Although in the year of 2011 another census was done there is no information about literacy. In 2006 census total population of North Cyprus was 237,418 and total 8436 individuals reported that they are illiterate. 2226 men and 6210 women were illiterate in 2006 in Cyprus (KKTC Devlet Planlama Örgütü, 2006). 3.55% of general population is illiterate. From general population 1% of men and 2.62% of women are illiterate. From this numbers, it can be clearly seen that the rate of illiterate women is nearly three times more than men. From given statistical data are given for Turkey and Cyprus, we can say that education of women is still a serious issue that must be dealt with.

Another major topic that Ulviye Mithat discussed was wearing of the niqab. She saws niqab as an obstacle in the way of modern life. Again in both major regimes that ruled Cyprus wearing the niqab is a tradition. She discussed that wearing the niqab is not a Muslim tradition on the other hand in Victorian Era British Crown Colony women wares niqab like outfits to symbolize their loyalty to their husbands and Christianity. With the revolution of Aptire in Turkey, the wearing niqab is not mandatory for Turkish women and her advice Turkish women who are living in Cyprus to follow their cognates in Turkey. Niqab or in other words headscarf defined as a problem till 2010 in Turkey but it is not a problem in Cyprus. The discussions about niqab start with the II. Constitutional Era in Ottoman Empire. Some intellectual's perception about niqab is as Ulviye Mithat's ideas. They saw niqab as an obstacle for women to enter not only to the modern life but in public life too. After the establishment of Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ideas about niqab is obvious. With the Revolution of Aptire; Atatürk placed Turkish women above other nations women in terms of more modern and innovator. Using of niqab is nor restricted till it is not conflicted with the principles of conscience and secularism (Çiftci, nd:4-5). The headscarf problem begins in 1967 in Turkey with one of a theology student tries to enter the university with her headscarf. She banned to enter the university campus then expelled from the university. This issue stays as an unsolved problem for over 40 years in Turkey (Toruk, 2011:485). Wearing niqab or headscarf at the beginning signifies the religious standards but then with this developments or conflicts in the political area make it to change the context from religious one to a more political one.

Ulviye Mithat's article about the law of marriage is still discussed nowadays. She criticizes the changing of the family name to the husband's surname in the course of a marriage. Using husbands surname is a result of the patriarchal family system, hegemonic masculinity and it is against gender equality (Uluđ, 2015: 48-49). In law literature, the recent discussions about the surname of married women discussed a lot and they also saw the women's surname issue as an unsolved problem (Altunel, 2015: 179-183, Öcal Apaydın, 2015:436-449, Kılıçođlu Yılmaz, 2014:581). In 2015 Supreme Court of Turkey in the case of book a file the married women can have the right to use her family name and in the case of divorce, she can give her family name to her children instead of the child's father (Özal Apaydın, 2015:456). This issue shows once again how Ulviye Mithat is modernist, egalitarian and reformist. She is the first representative of feminism in Cyprus.

Conclusion

In Ulviye Mithat writings, the resources that affect the feminist movement in Cyprus was clearly affected by the reforms and acts that have been occurred or accepted in Turkey between the years of 1924-1934. The new republic in Turkey with the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk has accepted The Unification of Education in 1924, The Law of Aptire in 1925, The Reform of Alphabet in 1925, The Act of Surname in 1934 and again in 1934 Turkish women earn their rights to vote and stand for the elections. Ulviye Mithat was far beyond her era. Her issues that try to make her readers pay attention are still the issues that we have conflicts and discussions about them. The issues that Ulviye Mithat paid attention in 1935 is still unsolved problems after 83 years which shows how she is an innovator to her people.

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