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Peacemaking Skills: Anatolian Sufi Verses and the Peace Education

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ABSTRACT

Timoty Reagan says “Peace is our future, and peace education is a key means toward reaching that future” (2003: 2). It is assumed that Anatolian Sufis have been using that key means since thirteenth century. Regardless of the geographical, religious, cultural and chronological distances among them, the verses of Sufis in Anatolia contain similar messages with the peace education today that highlights values like humanism, peace, conflict resolution and tolerance. In addition to these values, the Sufi verses reflect the themes of love toward both God and the whole range of existence. The aim of this present study is to explore the peacemaking skills in some of the verses of Mevlâna Jeleddin Rumî, Yunus Emre, Kul Himmet, Pir Sultan Abdal and Gaybî Sunullah and to discuss their approach to the concepts like conflict/conflict resolution and humanism for a peaceful world.

Key Words: Peace education, Conflict resolution, Conflict, Peace, Nafs, Sufism.

Barış Sağlama Becerileri: Anadolu Tasavvuf Dizeleri ve Barış Eğitimi

ÖZET

Timoty Reagan “Barış bizim geleceğimizdir ve barış eğitimi geleceğe erişmemizde anahtar araçtır” der (2003: 2). Bu çalışmada barış kavramının, Anadolu mutasavvıfları tarafından on üçüncü yüzyıldan beri işlenmekte olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Yazıldıkları ülkeler ve dönemler itibarıyla, Anadolu tasavvuf şiirleri, aralarındaki coğrafi, dinî, kültürel ve tarihsel farklılıklara rağmen, günümüz barış eğitiminde vurgulanmakta olan insanlık, barış, uzlaşma ve hoşgörü mesajları içermekte olduğu görülmektedir. Bunların yanı sıra, tasavvuf şiirlerinde hem Tanrı’ya ve hem de varlıklar âlemine karşı duyulan sevgi teması işlenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Mevlâna Celaleddin Rumî, Yunus Emre, Gaybî Sunullah, Kul Himmet ve Pir Sultan Abdal’ın şiirlerindeki barış sağlamaya yönelik çabaları tespit etmek, barış dolu bir dünya için çatışma/uzlaşma ve hümanizm gibi kavramları toplumsal kazanımlar ölçeğinde açıklık getirmektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Barış eğitimi, Uzlaşma, Çatışma, Barış, Nefis, Tasavvuf.

INTRODUCTION

Contemplating upon the verses of Mevlâna Jeleleddin Rumî (1207-1273), Yunus Emre (1283-1320), Gaybî Sunullah (1615-1663), Kul Himmet (the sixteenth century) and Pir Sultan Abdal (1510/14-1589/90), one may come to realize that the peace education texts share similar values with the Sufi verses in spite of the geographical, religious, cultural and chronological distances among them. These values are conflict resolution, humanism, love toward God and the whole range of existence. In peacemaking skills found in the peace education, the framework is not quite different from what is emphasized in the Anatolian Sufi verses. The goal of this paper is to explore these similarities and discuss their understanding of the nature of conflict and ways for the resolution and peace. It is also supposed that this paper could contribute to highlighting the values of Anatolian Sufism as dealing with the contemporary philosophy in enabling people with peacemaking skills.

DISCUSSION

Within these shared frameworks, peace education has been defined as education that promotes concepts of non-violence, human rights, social

justice, world-mindedness, ecological balance, meaningful participation, and personal peace (Carson, 1997; Hicks, 2004). Ian M. Harris, in *Peace Education*, defines peace education as

“Currently considered to be a philosophy and a process involving skills, including listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process involves empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. The philosophy teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life. Peace education confronts indirectly the forms of violence that dominate society by teaching about its causes and providing knowledge of alternatives. Shortly, peace education aims to create in the human consciousness a similar commitment to the ways of peace, and how to solve problems caused by violence.” (2003: 10)

Conflict is one of these problems, a natural part of our daily lives and cannot be avoided.¹ One part of the focus of this study is on social conflict: conflict between individuals and groups on the basis of competing interests and different attitudes toward each other. Conflict resolution seems to be one of the essential skills especially emphasized in the peace education. Their focus is upon the management of conflicts at the interpersonal level. Conflict resolution experts and peace educators have identified many skills that facilitate the smooth management of conflict. These include working cooperatively, developing good communication skills, learning to express our feelings constructively, and tolerance of diversity (Kreidler, 1984: 52).

The management of conflicts can be achieved through one’s acquiring some values like tolerance, love and empathy. Widely known as the symbol of such values like love, peace, brotherhood, and tolerance, Mevlâna Jelaleddin Rumî embraced those of every language, creed and race or color as read in the following lines which can be taken as an example for the tolerance of diversity:

“Come, come again, whoever you are, come!
Heathen, fire worshipper or idolatrous, come!
Come even if you broke your penitence a hundred times,
Ours is the portal of hope, come as you are.”²

Beside the importance of human being and peace which are the basic values in peacemaking, Mevlâna points out that having positive feelings and valuing each other will help living in peace in these lines:

“Come, come and let’s know magnitude value of each other.
Because it is unpredictable, one day we can suddenly be apart from

each other. Seeing that our Prophet (SAV) commanded that ‘a Muslim believer is another believer’s mirror’, so why do we turn our faces from the mirror? Grudge and revenge darken the friendship and wound hearts. Why do we not eradicate all grudge from our hearts?”³

As for Mevlâna, the feelings of revenge and grudge is the enemy of a peaceful mind which give harm not only the person who has such feelings but also others whom he encounters with. David S. Werman argues for such feelings that “The desire for revenge can so pervade the inner world of an individual as to become an obsessive and destructive force in that person’s life” (1993: 301). He continues his advice people on behaving well each other in these lines: “Hey beloved, do not ever breath upon the mirror. / Do not give it harm and mist it up.”⁴ (Ey can, sakın aynaya hoh deme./ Ona ziyan verip buğulandırma.) He emphasizes the importance of being patient and tolerant for others, and not hurting anyone even if insulted. Mevlâna in *Fihi Ma Fih* explains his advice through the metaphor of the mirror. This can be interpreted that if you judge somebody, and find a fault in the other person’s behaviors, it means that the fault you see, in fact, already exists in you; thus, you should first judge yourself.

In the Sufi verses selected for this paper, one can see that they similarly advice people to establish behaviors and language to resolve conflict as found in the peace education. However, there is a difference in Sufi understanding of the reasons for conflict. It can be asserted that conflict also happens due to corruptions which are brought about by people. It is in human nature to have weaknesses as stated in the Quran where Mevlâna referred to “Human was created as meager.”⁵ Therefore, one should be aware of this natural fact in him/her and improve it for better.

The path that might lead the world to conflict resolution and peace exist in the purification of the soul (*nafs*) as emphasized in the Sufi discipline. The process is generally a long and difficult one. It is the lower, carnal soul which incites people to commit evil as Julian Baldick states (2000: 38). One should struggle to overcome *nafs* so that s/he can rise to the highest level of humanism. Michael Winter defines the concept of *nafs* in Sufism not as an evil force, but as the crafty and the naturally selfish part of man. It should be treated with suspicion and held in check, but should not be entirely ignored (2009: 117). Reaching perfection in this respect will mean the purifying of mind, heart, body and tongue; this eventually will prevent conflict among people. Mehmet Demirci (2008: 122) explains this process in his book “Mevlâna ve Mevlevî Kültürü” and states that one’s happiness and peaceful mind depends on building up a balance between his physical and

spiritual needs, and between his nafs and his heart; and this balance can only be maintained through controlling and purifying them. In Sufism, the purification is supposedly achieved through as follows:

- a) The body is purified by keeping it free from dirt, by preserving its members from harm and by not indulging in sexual license.
- b) The tongue must be purified by restraining it from backbiting, malicious gossip and vain talk, or from using it to alter the truth.
- c) The mind must be purified by abstaining from suspicion, plotting and thinking ill of others.
- d) The heart must be purified by keeping it free from lust, jealousy, greed, selfishness, hatred and pride.
- e) In this stage, a Sufi constantly examines the motives of his likes and dislikes.”⁶

Mevlâna’s humanism reflects both the result of this process and the main principle of Islam which is love of human being and forgiveness (Kabaklı, 1983: 106).

Like Mevlâna, Yunus Emre, Pir Sultan Abdal, Gaybî Sunullah and Kul Himmet personally followed this spiritual journey and declared it to people of their times and of today as well. This journey supposing to take people eventually to peace and humanism is expressed in their verses. Yunus Emre stands as an exemplary who succeeds to overcome his *nafs* by indirectly advising people that feelings of hatred and grudge should be got rid of.

Poor is what they call me,
Hatred is my only enemy;
I don’t hold grudge against anybody,
To me the whole wide world wide world is one.⁷

Purified from these feelings, Yunus Emre believes that “Water that flows from a fountain cannot be both bitter and sweet.”⁸ He emphasizes that all people are equal and same because they are created by the same Creator; therefore it is useless to feel superior him/herself and to devalue others and have such negative feelings towards them. His other peacemaking lines are as follows:

“If you are a believer, you must love all seventy-two nations
If you break a heart, your daily prayer (salat) will not be accepted
The one who does not love all seventy-two nations
can be a teacher in a medresse but he is a disobedient human to God.”⁹

In order to be a real dervish, one should first be control his *nafs* and be aware of the importance in behaving well to others regardless their nation, race, color, language and religion; they are all the creatures of God. The path to the love of God goes through loving all people, *the seventy-two nations* in Emre's terms. Nail Tan explains this "seventy-to nations" in Emre's lines as all creatures of God pointing out the belief of Adam and Eve are the parents of all human beings, therefore they are children of the same parents and they should not be discriminated according to the differences (1995: 340). Otherwise, that person will be a disobedient one to God. Praying five times a day is one of the five basic acts in Islam, and it is obligatory for all Muslims. A believer of Muslim faith is supposed to obey this act, but Yunus Emre says that it will not be an acceptable prayer even in the eyes of God and other people if one hurts a person.

Tuncer Baykara (1991: 39) argues that Yunus Emre contributed to founding a unity and solidarity among people during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century when there was a social and military chaos. After the great Seljuq Empire was collapsed in the middle of the thirteenth century, the Mongols invaded Anatolia in the 1260s. Then, Anatolia was divided into small Anatolian beyliks and it was this period of time that the chaos was observed in the society and it was Emre who reflected his ideas on unity and solidarity in his lines as Önder Göçgün (1991: 364) states. Göçgün points out Emre's words:

"For those who really love God, everybody on this world is his brother."¹⁰

According to Göçgün, Emre continues his call for unity and peace within these lines:

"Come and let's get to know each other and let's make things easy
Let's love and let's be loved, this world will remain to nobody."¹¹

With such a sensitive approach to human beings, Emre teaches people some of the basic elements of the peace education; which is to respect for the feelings and rights of others.

The following lines also support this attitude:

"Whatever you wish for yourself
Wish for the others
This is the meaning of the four books
If there is any meaning."¹²

While Emre calls for treating people equally, he also teaches about good character one part of which is to help the poor, to share what they have with others especially with those in need. This is also a kind of struggle against *nafs* but only in this way, one can reach to ultimate happiness and peace in mind and heart. His teachings are:

“Work, earn, eat and share your food with others.

Win people’s heart.

To make someone happy

is better than to worship in Kabaa.”¹³

In “the Cemetery”¹⁴, Yunus Emre looks at a cemetery and tells what he sees there; regardless their status, wealth, education, rank or profession, all people die and buried with the same white shroud in the same place. He reminds people that they are all equal because they will all die one day; thus, before death comes, they should always remember the equality among people and treat each other accordingly. It is proposed that Emre’s teachings are a kind of figurative summary of what the peace education suggests for acquiring peacemaking skills. Emre also openly calls humans of all faiths, all nations to come together and make peace in his poem entitled *Elhamdülillah*: “Come here, let’s make peace, / and if we are strangers, let’s get acquainted with.”¹⁵ It is obvious that Emre respects all religions. His teachings apparently targets to strip off many of the current wars, bloodshed, and animosities which all basically come out of conflict. For the conflict resolution, he manifestly suggests to prevent main reason for conflict by not reacting to insulting: “When hit, you must not react/ when cursed, you must not reply.”¹⁶ He states that one who wants to be a dervish, s/he must behave accordingly, but this is valid for everyone who wants to live peacefully. To control one’s anger is another solution for a peaceful mind; Emre stresses upon this fact and expresses a world without anger in his poem *Dervişlik Der Ki Bana*: “You cannot be a dervish because you get angry for small things.”

Gaybî Sunullah, who is known as a devoted follower of Yunus Emre (Güneş, 2011: 125), reflects the similar ideals and values as stated in the peace education and in the verses of Yunus Emre and Mevlâna, and provides ways of alternatives for conflict resolution. He focuses on love towards God and the whole range of existence. In the following verses, he goes on his teachings on the importance of tolerance regardless the insult or abuse one faces because he believes good or evil happens with the God’s will and they are all the unknowable intentions of God. The verses indicate that his advices would stop the conflict among people if taken; at least, they will create consciousness in the way of peace. In his well known poem,¹⁷ he tells

people not to get hurt and angry when insulted. He even points out the importance of tolerance for hostile attitudes from others in order to be a good person and a real dervish:

4

If someone attempts to kill you,
Do not see him as your enemy

5

Even if all your possession is taken away from you
Even if your house is demolished by others

6

Even if you are sold as a slave in Egypt
Even if you are shut up in a dungeon
Do not feel hurt and angry.

Sunullah's nazire poem for Suleiman the Magnificent's poem called "Budur" (That's it) (Ceyhan, 2010: 45) contains similar essence of peace:

5.

Be helpful to others, do not be harmful; everything and everyone has God's names/attributes.

Always be merciful; that's the meaning of humanism.¹⁸

Kul Himmet like Mevlâna, Yunus and Gaybî Sunullah advises people to be tolerant and to get rid of feelings like hatred and revenge. He tells to be humble like soil where people step on: "Be like the earth, your origin is also the earth / Take revenge and pride away from your heart."¹⁹ The metaphor of the earth in Sufism is explained as the following:

"The wise servants of God are like the earth. They accept every type of refuse to be cast upon them and yet nothing issues from them but sweetness. Both the righteous and the sinner walk upon it. The earth is characterized by strength. Whatever God wills, the earth accepts. It has no will of its own. In this respect, the Sufis resemble the earth in that 'every vile and ugly thing is cast upon' then, and they accept it. Yet, after the Sufi accepts to be such a dump, the verse continues, 'nothing comes from him or her except goodness.'"²⁰

Patience is considered as the enemy of Satan who challenges people for conflict. According to the Muslim faith, human beings are all tested by God in life in various ways. Some lose their beloved ones, or have incurable illness, etc. Most of the time, it is unbearable so people may fall into despair. However, the faith leads them to have patience and not to lose hope in such

hard times. Kul Himmet advises people to be patient with a promise of reward; one who exercise patience is believed to be given tidings:

“Patience brings peace
little patience, much miracle
be patient my heart, be patient.”²¹

Himmet’s following advices indicate a resemblance to the teachings of peace education. Like Mevlâna, he says “Do not judge people, do not seek for their faults and do not break their hearts and love every creature of God.”²²

Pir Sultan Abdal emphasizes the similar teachings like Himmet. God’s house in human being’s heart. If you hurt them, then you will hurt God.²³ He tells people to control their ego (*nafs*) and not to judge others and but to help them as much as they can.²⁴

“When you become a close friend with someone,
and share your food with him,
do not taunt him
as you see any fault of him.”

In his allusive lines for Muhammed the Prophet, who was tolerant and patient even when he was attacked and thrown stinking tripe (Özcan, 2005), Abdal advises people to be tolerant and patient:

“Be like earth
It is always stepped on
They may throw tripe on it
Don’t get hurt”²⁵

He makes a resemblance between earth and being tolerant; people step on earth and they even put tripe on it but it never reacts. Therefore, he advises people to be as tolerant and patient as earth despite all mistreats they might go through.

CONCLUSION

The peace education promotes concepts of non-violence, human rights, social justice, world-mindedness, ecological balance, meaningful participation, and personal peace. The basic component within the understanding of peace is the conflict resolution. Since conflict is one of the problems that nobody can avoid, its resolution seems to be one of the

essential skills to be acquired for a peaceful world. In this sense, when reading the verses of the Anatolian Sufi poets, one can observe that they offer teachings for acquiring peacemaking_skills based on the conflict resolution.

The humanistic values in the verses of Mevlâna Jelaleddin Rumî, Yunus Emre, Gaybî Sunullah, Kul Himmet and Pir Sultan Abdal appear similar to those components emphasized in the texts of the peace education in spite of the geographical, religious, cultural and chronological distances among them. It should be noted that the Sufi verses selected for this paper belong to almost the thirteenth to the seventeenth century whereas the peace education is known to appear in the 20th century. The process aimed at the peace education involves empowering people with the peacemaking skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. It teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life. At this point, it is observed that the mystics of the olden times in the Anatolia suggest similar alternatives as the philosophy of the peace education for the conflict resolution and a peaceful world. However, the slight difference seems to be in their approach to these elements; for the possible reason for conflict, they touch on *nafs* in which four components of human being's nature can be found; these are lust, greed, discontent and seeking higher ranks. For them, the best way for rehabilitation of people who are the reasons for the conflict in the society is to make them free from being a slave of ego, or *nafs*, and help them to be content with what they have at hand.

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NOTES

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- ¹ Carolyn Duffy, <http://eca.state.gov/forum/journal/pea3background.htm#ideation>, (Retrieved in August 3, 2010)
- ² The original text is as follows:
"Gel, Gel, ne olursan ol, gel!
İster kâfir, ister mecûsî, ister puta tapan ol, gel!
Bizim dergâhımız ümitsizlik dergâhı değildir.
Yüz kere tövbeni bozmuş olsan da yine gel!"
- ³ The original text is as follows:
"Gel, gel de birbirimizin kadrini, kıymetini bilelim. Çünkü belli olmaz, birbirimizden ansızın ayrılabiliriz. Mademki peygamber efendimiz 'Mümin, müminin aynasıdır' diye buyurdu, ne diye aynadan yüz çeviriyoruz? Garazlar, kinler dostluğu karartır, gönlü yaralar. Ne diye garazları gönlümüzden söküp atamıyoruz?"
- ⁴ Translated by the author.
- ⁵ 4/Nisa, 28
- ⁶ <http://muslim-canada.org/sufi/sufism.htm> (Retrieved in February 4, 2011)
- ⁷ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Adımız miskindir bizim
Düşmanımız kindir bizim
Biz kimseye kin tutmayız
Kamu âlem birdir bize (Öztelli, 1992: 132)
- ⁸ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
"Bir çeşmeden akan su acı tatlı olmaya"
- ⁹ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Yetmiş iki millete kurban ol âşık isen
Bir kez gönül yıktın ise şol kıldığın namaz değil
Yetmiş iki millete bir göz ile bakmayan
Halka müderris ise hakikate âsidir (Tan, 1995: 342-343)
- ¹⁰ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Hakk'ı gerçek sevenlere cümle alem kardaş gelür
- ¹¹ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Gelün tanışuk idelüm işün kolayın turalım
Sevelüm sevelilüm dünya kimseye kalmaz (Gölpınarlı, 1972: 55)
- ¹² Four holy books: Torah, Zaboor, Gospel, Quran
Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Sen sana ne sanırsan
Ayuğa da anı san
Dört kitabın mânâsı
Budur eğer var ise. (Öztelli, 1992: 130)
- ¹³ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:
Çalış, kazan, ye, yedir
Bir gönül ele getir

Bin kabeden iyirektir
Bir gönül ziyareti. (Tunç, 2007: 21)

14 Mezar

Sabah mezarlığa vardım,
Baktım herkes ölmüş yatar,
Her biri çâresiz olup,
Ömrünü yitirmiş yatar.

Kimi yiğit, kimi koca,
Kimi vezir kimi hoca,
Gündüzleri olmuş gece,
Karanlığa girmiş yatar.

Vardım onların katına,
Baktım ecel heybetine,
Ne yiğitler muradına,
Daha ermemiş yatar.

Nicelerin bağrın deler,
Kurtlar üstünde gezeler,
Gepegencecik tâzeler,
Gül gibice solmuş yatar.

Yarı kalmış tüm işleri,
Dökülmüş inci dişleri,
Dağılmış sırma saçları,
Hep yerlere düşmüş yatar.

Çürüyüp durur tenleri,
Hakka ulaşmış canları,
Görmez misin sen bunları?
Nöbet bize gelmiş yatar. (Özkan, 2009: 50)

15 Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Beri gel barışalım, yâd isen bilişelim. (Öztelli, 1992: 138)

16 Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Dövene elsiz gerek
Sövene dilsiz gerek (Öztelli, 1992: 57)

17 The original text as a whole is as follows:

1
Belâ baran gibi yağsa semâdan
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir
Serapa bâr-ı gam sana akarsa
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

2
Bütün âlem iderse ger seni zem
Olar hakkında bir söz dimemekdir
Düşüp şirke getirme kendine gam

Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

4

Seni öldürmeğe kasd etse bir can
Sakın olma ana ebedî düşman
Hayât-ü- mevt ola yanında yeksan
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

5

Elinden halk-ı âlem malın alsa
Ya yakıp evini viran kılsa
Kamu eşya diken kesilse (başa) kalsa
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

6

Eğer Yûsuf gibi çâha atılsan
Köle diyü Mısırdı hem satılsan
Konup zindanlara her an ezilsen
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

7

Ger İbrahim gibi nâra salalar
Ya İshak gibi kurbanlık kılalar
Tenin Eyüp gibi kurtlar deleler
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

8

Nebi İsa gibi çarmıha gerilsen
Zekeriya gibi bıçkıyla biçilsen
Nebi Salih gibi yurdundan kovulsan
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

9

Eğer Hamza gib kanın içilse
Alî veş seyf ile başın yarılma
Hasan - asa zehr içip yakılsan
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir

10

Hüseyin gibi boğazından kesilsen
Nesimi gibi derinden yüzülsen
Ya Mansur gibi dara hem asılsan
Hakikat sofilik incinmemekdir (Gaybi Divanı, 1999: 45/7)

18 Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

5. Nafi' ol olma muzır Hakk'a mezhahirdür kamu
Da'ima rahmet-resa ol işte insanlık budur. (Ceyhan, 2010: 45)

19 Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Türab ide özün türab ol türab
Kalbindeki kini kibrini bırak (Kaya, 2004)

20 <http://www.islamicssupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/spirituality/2-the-sufis-enlightened-community-builders.html> (Retrieved in February 5, 2011)

21 Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Sabrın sonudur selâmet
Az sabırda çok kerâmet

Sabreyle gönül sabreyle (Kaya, 2004)

²² Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Gel gönül kimsenin aybına bakma

Hazer kıl sevdiğim değme gönüle

Arif ol cihanda bir gönül yıkma

Hazer kıl sevdiğim değme gönüle (Kaya, 2004)

²³ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Erenler yanında bu ne davadır

Benden sana emanet, değme gönle

Müminin gönülü Hakk'ın evidir

Benden sana emanet, değme gönle (Kaya, 2008: 6)

²⁴ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

ABDAL PİR SULTAN'ım nefsinı gözet

Benden sana emanet, değme gönle

Bir kardaşa meyil verip

Tuz ile ekmeğin yiyip

Azıcık noksanın görüp

Tez başına kakma gönül (Öztelli, 1989: 275)

²⁵ Translated by the author, the original text is as follows:

Turâplık cümlenin başı

Daim çiğnenmektir işi

Üstüne atarlar leşi

İncinme gönül incinme (Öztelli, 1989: 371)