

## THE IDEAL TURKISH YOUTH AND TEACHER IN MEHMET AKİF ERSOY'S POEMS

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### ABSTRACT

*Mehmet Akif Ersoy is a poet and an intellectual who dedicated his literary works to public and tried to educate them by all means. Aiming at realism in art and usefulness to society, the poet touched upon a different subject matter in his every work of art. Within the variety of subject matters, the only invariable thing in his works is the messages he gives to his readers. It is inevitable for a poet, so sensitive on social matters, to emphasize youth, who is considered as the leading part of the society, and teachers who educate them. Mehmet Akif, as he described the state of the youth on one hand and indicated the qualities of a youth he longed for on the other in his poems, conducted the contemporary youth. The poet, not only indicates the qualities of an ideal teacher, but also disposes the unfavorable qualities of a teacher in his poems. Having been a teacher himself, the views of Mehmet Akif on youth and teachers, are of high-quality to shed light on present and future.*

**Key Words:** Youth, teacher, education.

### ÖZET

#### Mehmet Akif Ersoy'un Şiirlerinde İdeal Türk Genci ve Öğretmen

*Mehmet Akif Ersoy, sanatını toplumun hizmetine adanmış, içinde yaşadığı toplumu her anlamda eğitmeye çalışmış bir şair ve yol göstericidir. Sanatta gerçekçi olmayı ve topluma faydayı hedefleyen şair, her eserinde farklı bir konuya*

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değirmiştir. Bu konu çeşitliliği içinde şairin eserlerinde değişmeyen şey ise okuyucusuna gönderdiği ince mesajlardır. Sosyal konulara bu kadar duyarlı bir şairin toplumun temeli sayılabilecek gençler ve onların yetiştiricisi öğretmenler üzerinde durması kaçınılmazdır. Mehmet Akif, şiirlerinde bir yandan gençliğin içinde bulunduğu durumu anlatırken diğer yandan özlediği Türk gencinin vasıflarını şiirlerine yerleştirerek günümüz gençliğine yol göstermiştir. Şair, bir yandan şiirine olumsuz öğretmenin vasıflarını yerleştirirken diğer yandan ideal öğretmenin özelliklerini işaret etmektedir. Kendisi de öğretmenlik yapmış olan Mehmet Akif'in gençliğe ve öğretmenlere dair görüşleri günümüze ve geleceğe ışık tutacak niteliktedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Gençlik, öğretmen, eğitim.

## INTRODUCTION

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, who started his school education at the age of four at "Emir Buhâri" Quarter School near Fatih province, completed his education in various schools. Mehmet Akif, being discontent with what he learnt at school during his education, also tried to broaden his knowledge with studies outside school and at home:

*"As I was going to Junior Highschool, I studied Arabics with my father and I was considerably improved. My level of Arabics was more advanced than the school programme. My father was following up the approaches and books of the time. I was not satisfied with Persian taught at school. After the mid-afternoon prayer at Fatih Mosque, I used to continue my studies with Esad Dede who taught works of art such as "Hafız Divanı", "Gülistan" and "Mesnevî". I was interested, after all, in foreign languages the most during my junior highschool education. I was the first at rank in four languages (Turkish, Arabics, Persian and French) and I loved poetry."* (Düzdağ, 1975: XIV) His father had a great influence on the poet's education.

The poet, joining the civil service right after graduating from Veterinary School, was not content with his job, so he also worked as a teacher. Writing poems on one hand, Mehmet Akif, with the declaration of Constitutional Monarchy in 1908, on the other hand published his poems in *Sirat-ı Mustakim*, carried on his job as a civil officer, gave private lessons and made translations from Arabics. Although he resigned from his official duty, Mehmet Akif, carrying on teaching at schools and madrasahs, was never occupied only with writing essays. During the ten years of time in Egypt, the poet, who was appointed as a professor of Turkish Language at Egypt University, Faculty of Literature, worked on the translation of Koran when he was not lecturing. An institution called Dâr-ül-Hikmet-ül-İslâmiye was established in Meşihat-ı İslâmiye (High Islamic Council) and Akif was

appointed as the first secretary. At the end of the World War I, the Turkish public rebelled against those victorious countries who wanted to share our land. Mehmet Akif, going to Balıkesir when these rebellions started, addressed the public and called them for war in order to protect their country. Interrupted by his actions, Ottoman government in İstanbul discharged his duties at Dar-ül-Hikmet. Meanwhile, Akif carried on with his lectures and writings. (Düzdağ, 1975)

Mehmet Akif, although he was appointed to Halkalı Agriculture School as a literary composition teacher in 1906, to Çiftlik Machinist School as a Turkish teacher on August, 20, 1907, to Darülfünun as a literature teacher on November, 11, 1908, because of his ongoing publishing activities, was forced to resign. (Kaplan, 2005: 88) Though he quitted actual teaching, Mehmet Akif dedicated his life to education and aimed at enlightening public through his works of art.

Mehmet Akif is a poet who views literature from a point of view of social and moral benefits. Based on this view, it is seen that social problems in particular are discussed in his poems and that he creates solutions as he exposes the problems. Mehmet Akif, regarding his poems as a source of the reflection of his ideas, lists his expectations from every section of the society with a manner of a teacher and his didactic style. In doing so, considering art of secondary importance, he tells the truth although it sounds like “obnoxious” as he calls it and he prefers to stay away from delusion. Using his impressions on Anatolia, Rumelia and Germany as his sources, Mehmet Akif collects and discusses them around social values. Patriotism and piousness are at the top of the list of social values Akif believes. Around these principles, unite the human values and activities which rise a nation and make man human. Studying and education lead all. (Enginün, 2001)

Mehmet Akif dealt with education, which has a great importance for the future of the society, in many respects. Mehmet Akif took interest in education which had a great importance for the future of the society, from various points. Because of being a teacher himself, the close relation between the poet, who not only states his views on the importance of education, but also his principles and methods, and education is both theoretical and practical. (Özer, 1986: 179) Writing and reading are Mehmet Akif's the greatest pleasures. Giving great importance to what he studies, the poet knows topics of his own purview and holds aloof when he does not know. (Düzdağ, 1975)

When considered from educational perspective, it is seen that Mehmet Akif, who approaches poetry from a point of social benefit, frequently emphasizes his views on Turkish youth and teachers as their educators.

## Turkish Youth

Education is a long process which begins at birth and goes on as long as one lives. Man learns and experiences new things everyday. From this point of view, it is crucial to educate children carefully at young age in order to prepare a better future. As it is emphasized in the proverb “Trees bend when they are young”, it may not be possible to give people certain moral and sacred values after a certain age. Our poets and authors, defending the idea that literature should be educational, mostly put emphasis on children, attach importance to children’s education and see the future through children. Children in Mehmet Akif’s poems are considered young and given responsibilities. In poems which children are described, youth is given messages, inspired from children. The “boy”, featured as the chubby menace in his poem entitled “Hürriyet”, is described as an individual who will capture the future:

*Geçti mazi denen o devr-i melâl,*

*Haydi fethet: Senindir istikbâl.*<sup>1</sup> (p. 92) (The past referred to as the unrestful period is over. Future is yours. Come on, capture it.)

As the poem entitled “Dirvas” describes how a child fascinates everyone with his wit and repartee, it is quite meaningful for that child to save his country from desperate conditions. This child is the assurance for the youth and the youth is for the future. During the reign of Hişam bin Abdülmelik, an Umayyad ruler, there occurs a drought near Damascus for three years and bedouins become dead skeleton due to hunger. Tribal sheiks gather and decide to come to the presence of Hişam to inform him about the situation. They take Dirvas, who is younger, yet good at repartee, with them. Dirvas, coming to the presence of the ruler with the sheiks, begins to talk after the prayer. The ruler finds a child speaking instead of the leaders, strange and he scolds the child. Dirvas’ answer to the ruler shows his maturity:

*Mikyası mıdır zekâvetin sin?*

*Dirvas’ı çocuk mu zannedersin?*

*Bir dinle de sonra gör çocuk mu?*

*İnsâf nedir o sizde yok mu?*(p. 114) (Is age the measure of wit? Do you believe Dirvas is a child? Just listen to decide. Don’t you have justice?) Then summarizing the difficult conditions of people, Dirvas asks the ruler

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<sup>1</sup> Ersoy, Mehmed Akif, Safahat, Hazırlayan: Ertuğrul Düzdağ, İnkılap ve Aka Yayınları, 10. Baskı, İstanbul, 1975. (Alıntılardaki sayfa numaraları kitabın bu baskısına aittir.) (The pages of the quotations belong to this edition of the book)

who the true owner of his treasure is. If this treasure belongs to God, it should be divided equally among man. If it belongs to public, it could be given to its owners. If it belongs to the ruler, it should be given to the poor as a tip. Fascinated by the wit of the child, the ruler, speechless, orders the child to be given whatever he asks for. Despite of his age, the description of Dirvas as a mature person and his close attention to the social problems, is a reflection of the poet's expectations and dreams. Patriotism at young age is the assurance of the future of the societies.

Mehmet Akif is a farsighted poet who has modern approaches to child education. Mehmet Akif, whose essay, titled as "Hasbıhal", is full of modern ideas which are also accepted in our present education concept, believes in the necessity of education concerning the own time of the children: *"If we try to upbringing our children with our own measures, we will commit a murder. Cenab-Ali, directly regarding wisdom of our Prophet, says: Do not try to adopt your own discipline to your dearests. Keep fully in mind that they are created for an other time than yours."* (Abdulkadiroğlu, 1987: 44) According to Mehmet Akif, children, for the sake of the future of the society, should be educated with respect to the needs of the century. It is not even important if parents had no education, because they represent past. Despite being uneducated, the support of the parents for their children's education is more important.

Complaining about the unnecessary information he learnt in his school days, Mehmet Akif mentions about the disadvantages of useless knowledge in his essay entitled "Hasbıhal". The course books used at schools are incomprehensible. Children instead of comprehending what they read, they carry those books as if they are "consigned money". Mehmet Akif offers a competition to be held by the Ministry of Education for the preparations of school course books: In his essay entitled "Yeni Bir Mektep Kitabı", mentioning his gladness about the improvements on the preparations of the school books, Mehmet Akif does not find them satisfactory. Books for the children of a nation, who rarely read, must be prepared with care. According to the poet, it is as important as the defense of the country. *"Rearming our soldiers with new weapons is same with giving our children books written in accordance with the era."*(Abdulkadiroğlu, 1987: 94) Teachers also should be trained as teacher's books besides new course books are prepared. While the poet draws attention on the similar applications in Europe, he feels happy and considers himself and the future generations lucky at each step taken for the preparation of books.

The poet, personally, wanted to address to the new generation, who fought in Dardanelles, beyond time and thus he used living Turkish language in his poems and essays. By this way, he proved that he is not a man of short

terms. (Abdulkakdirođlu, 1987) In his “Amin Alayı” poem, the trust in the youth who walks towards to future is described. It is impossible to stand against the youth who wants to improve. Youth does not like to tolerate the moments he lives in, therefore runs forward. Mehmet Akif thinks of the future of the society in every poem in which he addresses to children or youth and seeks long term solutions for the problems. The poet’s trust in the youth, whom he sees as the key to social problems, is endless.

Mehmet Akif, constantly showing improvements of the West in knowledge as an example, considers overseas education as important. In the section entitled “Avrupa’da Tahsil” of the book *Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde*, young people, who were sent to Europe for education, are described. Most of those young people, who were sent to Europe for education, actually returned with a good education. However, some of them made those wealthy benefactors, who sent them to Europe for education, feel regretful. In the poem, young people, who do not protect their social values, forget about their identity after an education in Europe, are criticized by a benefactor. Young people are sent abroad to be educated enough to protect their country from desperate conditions. Yet, some of those young people came back with insecure thoughts. Those degenerated young people perceive the ways of improvement as rooting out religion and becoming more like a Russian. According to them, Turkish women live like a slave and this slavery ends when clothing style is changed. Women, later, learn maternity from men:

*Servetinden bölerek nâ-mütenahî para ver;*

*Sonra bir bak ki, međer karga imiş beslediđin!*

*Hem nasıl karga? Deđer öyle senin bellediđin!* (p. 167) (Divide your fortune and give limitless money. Then look and see that you have fed a crow. What a crow, unlike you know.)

Being the subject to the poem, the wealthy man, supporting the young students, feels regretful to give his money to those degenerated ones. This man, supporting those young people who go overseas for education, is ready to give money if schools for girls are opened. For him, money spent on those western immitators is wasted and he was “cursed” with his own money. In the section entitled “India” of the book *Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde*, the poet expresses his admiration to young people he saw in this country. Young Indians, who are educated in England, only adopt the principles of Western science and never forget about their national customs. Mehmet Akif is sure about the strength of the future of the society those young people form:

*Böyle evlat okutan milletin istikbâli,*

*Haklıdır almaya âgûşuna istiklâli.*

*Yarın olmazsa, öbür gün olacaktır mutlak...*

*Uzak olmuş ne çıkar? Var ya bir âti, ona bak!* (p. 172) (The future of a nation, which educates such children, has the right to secure independence. Sooner or later this independence will surely be gained. What if it takes long? There is a future, so mind that.)

In the poem, the words of an Indian boy is also mentioned. This young boy, educated in England, is hopeful about the future. However, his father does not trust his nation and has doubts about the future. In real, what the young boy tells his father is what Mehmet Akif wants to hear from the ideal Turkish youth. Education in England gave this young boy the opportunity to discover the reasons of his nation's problems:

*Milletin, memleketin böyle sefil olmasına*

*Bir sebep varsa, havassın geriden bakmasıdır...*

*Yoksa, Şark'ın bu zekî unsuru her feyzi alır.*(p. 173) (The reason to the misery of the country and the nation is the lack of intellectuals' keeping up-to-date. Otherwise the Eastern clever mind would get it all.)

The Indian boy expects the members of Islam, as a high religion, to improve themselves. What the East misses is the absence of intellectuals to enlight public and a leader to lead people.

*Adam ister, yalnız etmeye bir kavmi adam!*

*"Doğru yol işte budur, gel!" diye sen bir yürü de,*

*O zaman bak ne koşanlar göreceksin sürüde!*(p. 173) (To make a nation civilized, a man is needed. Address public by saying: "This is the right way", only then you will see the followers running.

In "Berlin Hatıraları", the poet talks about patriotism which youth needs to have and young men who are ready to die for their nation.

*"Fedâ-yı can edeceksin!" demiş "vatan" hissi...*

*Demek: Heder değil oğlun, vatan fedaisi.*(p. 339) (The feeling of patriotism orders to "die for the nation". So your son did not die without a purpose. He gave his life for his nation.)

In the poem "Cenk Şarkısı", which is written for the soldiers, soldiers are motivated to be courageous:

*İşte Hudâ yâveriniz, hem Nebî.*

*Haydi gidin, haydi, uğurlar ola.* (p. 553) (Both God and Mohammed are your assistants. Get moving. So long.)

In the book Asım, Asım's father, who is hopeless about future, waits for a savor. According to the poet, Asım's generation is the one to save the

future. The young generation is full of patriotism and they, hungry and clothless, fight non-stop like a lion in the front-line:

*Yine vardır bir ölüm korkusu arslanda bile;*

*Yüzgöz olmuş bu çocuklar ölümün şahsiyle!*(p. 424) (Eventhough a lion has the fear of death, those boys become familiar with it.) The Turkish youth, by showing great courage at the time of hopelessness, not only saved the country from difficulties, but also craved their names to future. Youth is the one to protect the nation against enemies and rebuild our collapsed and burnt country. Mehmet Akif, after describing the power of Turkish soldiers against the enemies then announces the good news of testimony to those brave soldiers

*Ey şehîd oğlu şehîd, isteme benden makber,*

*Sana âgûşunu açmış duruyor Peygamber.*(p. 427) (You martyr, the son of a martyr, do not ask for a grave. Our prophet is waiting with his arms wide open.)

Köse İmam, listening to the poet, gets very sentimental. The poet asks Köse İmam of his together complains about Asım. Köse İmam finds his son aggressive. In Ramadan, as he was coming from Üsküdar with Asım, one of the men at the ferry port blew the cigarette smoke on the face of Köse İmam and insulted those fasting. As a result of this, Asım, out of control, hit the man on the face. The friends of the man, who was hit by Asım, attacked Asım and in return Asım, after pulling himself back together, beat them all. Soldiers, coming just then, ended the fight. His father is frightened by Asım's anger. There occurs lack of respect between the son and the father and Asım rebels against his father. The poet praises Asım. For the poet, Asım is an independent person. His father tries to understand Asım, who has a sensitive heart, a great understanding and mercy. Strong in knowledge and wisdom, Asım is a "human" by all means according to the poet. Asım is quite powerful physically. The poet praises Asım both personally and physically as he describes his strength in wrestling competitions. Asım wrestles with a soldier and although he can easily beat him, he loses. Because he believes that he is not equivalent to the soldier physically. Besides, Asım does not feel that it is right to beat a hero, who everyday fights with the enemy, in wrestling. The sensibility which the poet points out, is quite important. Asım, having great moral values, is a model of Turkish youth. Asım is a person, who cares for the problems of others around him, tries to solve them and stands against those unjust. His father also complains about these attitudes of Asım. According to his father, the problems around him are too many for Asım to solve and therefore Asım should quit struggling. Asım bursts the ale-house and threatens those who



spend their money on alcohol when their families go hungry, he even beats them. Asım's father believes that it is inappropriate for Asım to beat those who have no harm to him. However, Asım complains about those people disturbing others and shouting. Getting angry on hearing that the ale-house uses a lot of gas a week while houses are lightless due to the shortness of gas, Asım asks the grocer to only sell gas to public and he takes thousand liras by force for the orphans. The fact, that some people live on comfort while the nation goes hungry, bothers Asım. Asım does not expect those careless people to mourn for the conditions of the nation, yet their laughter distracts him. He wants them not to shout out loud and bother their neighbours. Otherwise, Asım would do something to for it. His father who believes in the punishment of the unjust by law, but not by physical power, finds Asım wrong. The nation would get powerful by law, or else stays a spreaded crowd. It is not right to act to with emotions when the nation is in disorder. Besides the sincerity of Asım's father's warnings of his son on following the laws, his expectations of his son to be careless to all the negativeness around him, has a close relation with the values that the poet wants to reflect to his readers. Asım symbolizes the fututre, whereas his father the past. Mehmet Akif is content with Asım's generation that seems very similar to his own by means of sensibility to the events in the environment:

*Aferin, doğrusu, cevherli çocuklar, belli!*

*İftihar etmeli gördükçe bu gürbüz nesli.* (p. 439) (Good, they are talented boys. It is clear. One must be proud to see such a powerful generation.)

According to the poet, we have qualities inherited from our ancestors. However, because of lack of "ability", in other words knowledge, the society is buried in illiteracy. The thing that needs to be done is to unite the great moral values of true Islam with the knowledge of the West. (Kaplan, 1987: 202) Asım is a young man who comprehended the importance of knowledge and is aware why the country our country is not up to date. Our country's being under-developed lies in the reason of not following neither the old nor the modern knowledge. Society is so under-developed and helpless that neither they are aware of the values nor they gain infinite power even from a small piece of coal. Being happy with Asım's conciousness, the poet wants him to be educated in Berlin. In addition, young men should complete their education as quick as possible and return back to the country:

*Şark'ın âgûşu açıktır o zaman işte size;*

*O zaman varmanın imkânı olur gayenize.* (p. 444) (The arms of the East is then open to you. It is then possible to achieve your goal.)

Mehmet Akif emphasizes that revolution would be possible when young people are educated in the West. Akif's sending Asım to Germany for him to learn the science of the future is similar to Tevfik Fikret's sending Haluk to Scotland to bring back the ways of overcoming laziness.(Enginün, 2006) Although Mehmet Akif addresses to Asım, he really speaks plural and sends messages to the Turkish Youth. It can be estimated that the idealized Asım character emerges from the features of the poet's own and those he longs for. Köse İmam will raise Akif's generation who declares Constitutional Monarchy and that generation will defend both its own and Asım's generation who does miracles in Dardanelles.(Erişirgil, 1986: 277) Mehmet Akif, by expressing his endless trust in Asım, who is a son of a generation which won a war, states his trust for the future. Akif realizes how strong the Turkish nation is to overcome all difficulties, by looking at the qualities present in Asım. He believes that a nation which won a victory in Dardanelles would for sure save the country and he never loses his confidence in this belief.(Düzdağ, 1975: XLV)

In his poem, which addresses to adults, entitled "Yeis Yok", only one line is reserved to mention how to raise a child:

*Evladına sağlam bir emel mâyesi aşla.* (p. 466)(Create a strong will power in your child.) That "sağlam emel mayesi", the poet wants to be created in children includes the moral values comes out in Asım. This will power created in childhood, will save both the child and the society.

In the seventh section of the book *Safahat*, the poem, entitled "Çocuklara" which appears under the main title "Kıtalar", gives messages to both youth and children.

*Ne odunmuş babanız: Olmadı bir baltaya sap!*

*Ona siz benzemeyin, sonra ateştir yolunuz.*

*Meşe halinde yaşanmaz, o zamanlar geçti;*

*Gelen incelmış adam devri, hemen yontulunuz.*

*Ama dikkatli olun: Bir kafanız yontulacak;*

*Sakın aldanmayın: İncelmeye gelmez kolunuz!* (p. 496) (What a blotheaded person your father was, that he had no line of business. If you imitate him, your path would be of fire. The time of living like a log has passed. It is time of cultivation, immediately refine yourselves. But refine your minds only. Do not fall into a mistake. You need your hands.) Mehmet

Akif expects youth to adopt themselves to the developments of the period. Those who keep up with the developments should be strong.

In his poem “Nevruz’a”, advices for the youth are given. To talk big and too much does not go with manfulness. The manly youngster does not imitate those who talk too much, but work hard. Our ancestor, true with their words and actions, must be taken as models:

*Sözü sağlam, özü sağlam adam ol, ırkına çek.* (p. 509) (Be true in your words and actions, be like your old people.)

When a general overview is given to the poems of Mehmet Akif, it is seen that he created a new type of person. That person is someone who accepts the principles of Islam, respects historical values, is decisive, hardworking, open to reforms, diligent to prepare a future, considerate of laws and is encouraged by his own natural background and historical values. (Aktaş, 2007: 37) Young people, who read the works of art of Mehmet Akif, may find all the values they need to have in his poems.

### **Teacher and Education**

Being a teacher at Halkalı Ziraat School and Darülfünun, Mehmet Akif gives importance to education and teachers, who educate those future makers. While he directly presents the ideal teacher in his poems, he expects his readers to find the truth by sometimes drawing a negative model of a teacher. Amazed by the scientific developments in the West, Mehmet Akif quotes the views of the Westerners on education. Education must be widespread. There can be nothing unsuccessful in an educated society. The poet, as he emphasizes the importance given to education in Germany, in his book entitled *Fatih Kürsüsünde*, wants us to take it as a sample. Germans are aware that army and navy force are of mandatory need. Yet, teachers to educate those who will use these mandatory sources, are more important. Realizing this fact, Germans worked hard to build the Germany of today. Stating that French also understood the importance of education, Mehmet Akif wishes us to take their ideas on education as a sample. French understood that although a war is won by the soldiers, the true victory is won by the efforts of the teachers.

As a matter of fact, all the views on education that Mehmet Akif defends and wishes to be taken as a model, are all stated and even applied by Atatürk. The fact that completion of a victory achieved at war is only possible by teachers was frequently mentioned by Atatürk: “*When a nation does not have an educated population, no matter how victorious they can be in battle fields, the long lasting results of those victories only depend on educated ones. Dear Teachers, the military, political and administrative*

*reforms, which Turkey fit into several years, will consolidate with your social and intellectual achievements.” Turkish Republic was declared in accordance with the educational targets of Atatürk and the nation, coming out of war, overcame problems through education.*

According to Mehmet Akif, what troubles our nation is a result of illiteracy. Local schools must be opened and people must be educated. It is easy to deceive an illiterate public. A good school education would help to solve many problems. No Kurd, no Turks and no Laz, have any connection with neither a book nor a school and the nation is being dragged into illiteracy everyday. It is the time of knowledge and in no time schools must be opened. Emphasizing that, the first step to knowledge is the local schools, the poet points out an important problem. The quality of the teachers in local schools is of great importance. The idea of how a teacher should be is emphasized in Mehmet Akif’s poems:

*Muallim ordusu derken, çekirge orduları  
Çıkarsa ortaya, artık hesap edin zararı!  
Muallimim diyen olmak gerektir imanlı,  
Edebli, sonra liyakatli, sonra vicdanlı.*

*Bu dördü olmadan olmaz: Vazife, çünkü büyük.* (p. 281) (Imagine the cost if a group of grasshoppers come along pretending to be teachers. The one who calls himself a teacher must be religious, decent, fair and skillful. The task is a great one, therefore those four features are a must.) The poet wants everyone who calls themselves not to be trusted and those who insist on their skills to be invested.

In his poem entitled Husrân-ı Mübîn, he describes a boy whose mother and father have different views on education. His father wishes his son to be “a good person” and his mother wishes him to be “a pasha”. The child becomes neither of them. To be a good person is hard itself, however the child could not success the easy way either:

*Hep böyle harâb olmada etfâl ara yerde!* (p. 135) (Children are wasted in between.) In the poem, no information about why the child is so pessimistic or why his goals are not achieved is given. In Mehmet Akif’s poems the dilemma between madrasahs and schools is emphasized. In Safahat usually madrasahs and schools are together. It is almost essential to have one if the other is present. According to Mehmet Akif, to become a good person is only possible by learning religion and world science on equal levels. The absence of one or the other may cause dreadful results for the society. Mehmet Akif classifies madrasahs as former and present madrasah. Former madrasah was a center of learning which fulfilled expectations as it was expected and the present madrasah, however, is a center of fanaticism

where worthless knowledge is taught. According to Mehmet Akif schools with madrasahs is a sign of dilemma. The contradiction between the class of religious functionaries who represent the old insight and intellectuals who are supposed to represent a world-view that is suitable to the conditions of the century, has become financial with madrasahs and schools. This is such a great contradiction to prevent the improvement of the nation. Both institutions have deficiencies and mistakes on this subject. It is not understood by both the intellectuals that a concept of knowledge which does not give religion a place it deserves would be imperfect, and also by people of madrasahs that the technical improvements would not be against religion. Madrasahs could not satisfy the needs of the time and new schools could not reach to the level of the similar schools in the West and could not train good employees. (Malkoç Öztürkmen, 1969: 124)

Mehmet Akif also explained his views on education in his articles. In the article titled as “Darül-Fünun Talebesine Tebşir”, the poet praises the qualities of a university lecturer as a researcher. This lecturer, to search a single word and to correct a simple mistake, goes from library to library by paying a considerable amount of money for that period. The poet wants students to know the value of that lecturer and to ask him anything they do not understand without hesitation. (Abdulkadiroğlu, 1987: 3) Teachers should strive for being useful to students and improve themselves. Children, educated by teachers who improve themselves according to the needs of the era, will be the assurance of the future.

In the book entitled *Süleymaniye Kürsüsünde*, the observations of a clergyman who travelled around the Western countries are told. When in India, the clergyman, on hearing the declaration of Constitutional Monarchy, feels excited and hopes that the problems will be solved. He dreams of new schools being opened, all males and females going to school, domestic materials being woven at factories and useful works of art for the public being published. When he goes to İstanbul, the picture he sees is shocking. Misunderstood independence turned İstanbul into an uninhabitable city. Everyone in the city behaves as if “he is mad”, makes meaningless speeches and no one listens to one another. The clergyman, expecting to have new schools opened in this independent environment, hears that schools for “children to well understand the joy of independence” are closed down. To impart knowledge within this environment in which the values are reserved, is considered as “despotism”. Therefore, children are set free forever. Teachers make speeches in every corner and students unconsciously run from place to place. Mehmet Akif, who gave importance to social order and education, does not in any way approve schools being closed down. Moreover, in this poem the reason to close down the school is entirely illogical and “ironic”.

*Asım* is a book of Mehmet Akif in which he insistently dwells on the subjects of education, teacher and ideal Turkish Youth. The teacher model presented in this book is striking. The poet, by presenting the negative model, leaves the criticism of ideal teacher to the reader. Mehmet Akif, in his book *Asım*, describes a village in Konya. The village teacher is expelled by the people of the village. The school with no teacher is closed down:

*Hiç muallim kovulur muymuş, ayol, söyleyiniz!*

*O sizin devletiniz, nimetiniz, her şeyiniz.*

*Hoca hakkıyla beraber gelecek hak var mı?*(p. 395) (What a shame to expel a teacher, isn't it? He means country, blessing, he is everything to you. Is there anything equivalent to a teacher's labor?) The poet gets very upset when the teacher whom he considers as a great luck is expelled. While eighty percent of villages do not have any teachers, villagers losing the chance given to them, will be regretful. Mehmet Akif emphasizes that the efforts of a teacher would be judged even in the afterlife. One of the villagers, Mestanlı dayı, explains the truths to the teacher. Although the villagers are illiterate, they are aware of some truths. Education is very important to them. The villagers, upon realizing that a road and a school are the two most essential things for them, together built a school building in winter. Tired of requesting a teacher from the government, after completing the school building the villagers say "we will pay for the teacher if you send one" and they start waiting. The teacher who comes to the village disappoints the villagers:

*Sen oğul ezbere çaldın bize akşam kararı...*

*Görmeliydin o muallim denilen maskarayı.*(p. 396) (Last night you got angry to us for nothing. You should have seen the fool who is a so-called teacher.) This teacher is someone who has living habits completely dissimilar to the villagers. He neither fasts nor prays. He, who has long nails and hair and a bad smell because he does not take a bath, constantly trims his moustache. He down looks on villagers, he neither greets nor replies them, he drinks alcohol, shortly, exposes behaviours not suitable for a teacher:

*Ne ayıptır desen anlar, ne tükürsen utanır.*

*Tertemiz yerlere kipkirli fotinlerle dalar;*

*Kaldırımından daha berbad olur artık odalar;*

*Örtü, minder bulanır hepsi, bakarsın çamura.*(p. 397)

In order to better emphasize the negative features of the mentioned teacher, Mestanlı Dayı makes comparisons. Despite being from a foreign country, water engineers who coming to the village, did not insult the villagers and they gained their love by uttering nice words. Although they

had a different religion, those engineers respected the beliefs and life-styles of the villagers. What the villagers really ask for is respect for their life-styles. After this comparison, Mestanlı Dayı lists negative habits of the expelled teacher again and he rather wants his child to stay illiterate if he is to be educated by a teacher like that:

*Şimdi ister beni sen haklı gör, ister haksız,  
Öyle devlet gibi, nimet gibi laflar bana vız!  
İlmi yuttursa hayır yok bu musibetlerden...*

*Bırakın oğlumu, cahilliğe razıyım ben.* (p. 397) (Now, you either consider me right or wrong. Words, such as country and blessing are not of the slightest importance to me. There is no use of those ill-fated ones eventhough they cause to learn knowledge by heart. Let my son be illiterate, I accept it.)

School is a place where humanity is indoctrinated and closing down a school because a teacher is expelled is disadvantageous. However, matters pointed out by the villagers are very important. A teacher working in a village should act in a favorable manner and should not only educate children but also the villagers. To do this, he should respect the beliefs and the life-styles of the villagers and not act oppositely. Not having water engineers who are brought up in different cultures in opposite terms with the villagers is striking. The poet gives his readers the opportunity to compare as he mentions about the “foreign” engineers and “native” teacher together in his poem. The villager prefers to have his child to be illiterate as a reaction to a teacher whom he does not feel close to.

### **Conclusion**

In the poems of Mehmet Akif, children are also considered as young and responsibilities are given to them.

If parents wish to raise their children according to their own time, they would have problems. Children should be raised suited to the era. Education at schools should be applicable to the era. Course books should be rearranged according to the needs of the era. Students should not be filled with useless knowledge.

The students who are the future makers, should be trusted, their wish to improve should not be inhibited, but supported. Mehmet Akif is sure of the strength of the future of the society which is formed by the youth.

Represented as the ideal Turkish young man by Mehmet Akif, Asım is a person who is concerned about the problems of others, who tries to solve problems and stands against the unjust.

Mehmet Akif, admiring the improvements of the West in knowledge, supports the idea of young people getting educated in Europe, in his works of art. Most of the young men, sent to Europe for education, returned back with a good education, however some made their benefactors regret it. Those young men, who forget their identity and who do not protect their social values as a result of the education in the West, are criticized by the poet in his works of art. Young men are sent abroad to be educated adequate enough to save the country from the conditions it is in. Some of those who are sent abroad see the ways of improvement as rooting out religion and becoming more like a Russian.

The young generation is full of patriotism and they, hungry and clothless, fight non-stop like a lion in the front-line. The poet talks about patriotism which youth needs to have and young men who are ready to die for their nation, so he presents a model for the youth.

It is very important for a teacher to respect the habitants of the place where he lives or works. School is a place where humanity is indoctrinated and it is also necessary that the habitants respect and value the teacher. The quality of teachers, teaching at schools, is very important. The teacher should be moral, religious, fair and skillful. The adequacy of the teacher should be analyzed before the start of his duty. Otherwise, expectations for a good education could not be fulfilled. The teacher should make researches in order to teach correctly and be helpful to his students.

Relating all the misery experienced to the illiteracy of the society, the poet advises the local schools to be opened to educate the public at that time. To deceive an illiterate society is too easy. Schools will be a way of solution to most problems.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy sheds light from past to present on the conditions of the Turkish youth, the principles of teaching and his views on education. It can be seen, when his views in his works of art are correctly interpreted, that Mehmet Akif presents values which shed light on not only present, but also the future.

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