

**FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE
IN THE DISCOURSE OF CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIST TUR-
KISH WOMEN WRITERS**

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Women novelists and short story writers have been publishing extensively since the early 1960s in Turkey but as of the 1970s women have actually started to dominate the literary scene. It is not surprising therefore that Islamist fiction too is being written mostly by women especially after the flourishing of religious fundamentalism in the 1980s. Unlike their secular sisters however, most of the Islamic women writers come either from villages or from small, highly traditional cities in Asia Minor and they generally belong to the lower or lower middle strata of society. The parents of most have migrated to large cities when their children were still young. Among these women very few hold college degrees. Of the four writers to be studied here, for example, only one has a university degree. Furthermore unlike the writers using secular discourse, the discourse of the Islamists is neither social nor individual. They see themselves first as Moslems then as Moslem women missionaries. They also publish in Islamist papers and journals, and as far as the main issues on the Islamist agenda in Turkey today are concerned they are as well informed and preoccupied with them as are Moslem men. Consequently their writing displays the prevalent views of the Turkish Islamists on most social, political and personal matters. Along side these mainly militant Islamic writers there are also some women writers whose discourse is not predominantly religious, but nevertheless who show in their fiction that they believe in Islam as a way of life. These writers mainly concentrate on the problems they face as Moslem women who want to practice their religion in all aspects of their lives. Although the writings of this last group are much more interesting, they are not included in this paper because they are few in number and are not read as extensively as the first group and more importantly because these writers are not acknowledged as their own by Islamic circles.

The four Islamist novels we are going to analyze with respect to the concepts of freedom and tolerance are chosen from among those published

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in the last few years. Except for one which was published in 1989, all the others have actually appeared in print during the last two years. The one with the title **Moslem Woman Has a Name** (Kadının Adı Var) was published in 1989, the second, **Sevda!. Come Back..** (Sevda!. Geri Dön..) appeared in 1993, the third, **The Expected** (Beklenen) was published in 1994 and the fourth **Whose Victim Am I?** (Ben Kimin Kurbanıyım) also in 1994. While selecting these texts attention was paid to the writers' educational backgrounds. **Sevda!. Come Back..** is written by Sevim Asimgil, a medical doctor; Şerife Katurcı, the writer of **Moslem woman Has a Name** is also more educated than most. She has had formal education up to the end of junior high school, and years later, after taking appropriate finals she received a senior high school diploma. Now, at the age of forty she is enrolled in the Open University. The writers of the last two novels **Mecbure İnal (The Expected)** and **Emine Şenliklioğlu (Whose Victim Am I?)**, however have backgrounds which are more typical they only hold primary school diplomas. Parallel to their educational background their fiction also represents a fair cross section of what is being produced by popular Islamist writers in Turkey today and their discourse articulates to a great extent what Islamists think, say and do on the subjects of freedom and tolerance.

In their discourse Islamic Turkish women try to define themselves, their concerns, traditions and their role in society against Western norms and values. Therefore their understanding of freedom and tolerance is also described by them as different from but with reference to the present day Western interpretations of these concepts. This is understandable considering the fact that westernization had been introduced to the Turkish society as far back as the Ottoman times when in 1839 Sultan Abdülmecid put into effect a set of political reforms tailored after Western forms and institutions. Until the revolutionary measures taken by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the 1920s and 1930s, however, the westernization of society was carried out only in a very restricted way and then only in form, not in substance. Westernization was not seen as a way of modernizing the society but as a means of setting right what had gone wrong in the Ottoman system so that they could continue with their form of living as of old. (Kılıçbay, 58) In fact Ottomans continuously tried to define its limits and to make sure that they preserved the norms and values of Ottoman culture and tradition which they considered to be ideal and immutable. Consequently during the Ottoman era what was Western and what was Eastern or Ottoman was not brought into a synthesis but remained as a perfect medley (Okay, 358). Atatürk's reforms on the other hand were Western in substance and form and had a very different purpose. They aimed to bring about a cultural change

which would turn a traditional, somewhat feudal, Islamic community led by a monarch who was also the Caliph, into a modern society. Development and modernization in republican Turkey meant westernization. In the process of modernizing central social norms, even that which was seen as "human" was redefined in line with Western culture and thought. Ottoman political and legal systems which were predominantly Islamic were abolished and replaced by a western type of democracy and a legal code.

During the early years of the Republic, that is in the 1920s and 1930s, the Grand National Assembly as the representative organ of a sovereign people found itself busy writing laws that reorganized practically every aspect of life. In 1926, the Assembly adopted the Swiss civil code as the basis of its civil law, which included family law. The new civil law did away with polygamy, prevented child marriages by imposing minimum ages for marriage and recognized women as legal equals of men in areas such as having the right to act as witnesses in court, to inherit and to maintain property in their own name. It also granted women the right to choose their spouses, initiate divorce, and maintain their maternal rights even after divorce. All of these had been either very limited or entirely unrecognized under the Islamic law, which had served as principal source for the Ottoman legal code (Z. Arat, 62-63). Relations between men and women, the organization of life within and outside the house and the space allocated to each sex within these realms are strictly defined in Islam. The rearrangement of these relationships in accordance with codes that do not agree with the dictates of the koran meant effectively the secularization of the state. The Grand National Assembly proclaimed this officially in 1928 by removing from the constitution the articles which stated the official religion of the state as Islam. In fact four years before this decision was taken, that is in 1924, the Assembly had abolished the caliphate and banished the last Caliph who occupied that office.

In short the Kemalist reforms described Islam not as a set of rules that organizes social, political and legal institutions of the community but as an individual matter of conscience. The Islamists have never forgiven Atatürk for this. The Islamic women writers of the 1990s are still addressing this issue and interestingly enough they are advocating a return to the Islamic way of life where, by Western standards, women's rights and liberties hardly exist. Some social analysts attribute this to the limited impact of the Kemalist reforms. Of those who follow this line of argument some assign the reasons for weak impact to the power of conservative groups both within and outside the Grand National Assembly as well as to the strength of the Islamic tradition, especially in rural areas. Others claim that this is because the reforms preceded economic development. Turkey, a largely agrarian

society, lacked both a sizable bourgeoisie and an industrial working class therefore women's rights could not be absorbed and expanded by its small, apolitical labor force (Z. Arat, 58). A third group attributes this to the problem of identity experienced by all those illiterate or hardly literate men and women, who for economic reasons, find themselves having to migrate from villages and small towns to large cities (Coşar, 132). In big cities the migrant women who are generally confined to the home and unable to comprehend the codes of urban life, turn to religion to be provided with norms and values. For the children of the new migrants religion is both a way of attaining power and status and it equalizes them with urban dwellers since in an Islamic context none of the urban standards of achievement matter. It is interesting that three of the four Islamic women writers to be studied here are also children of such migrant families.

Needless to say like all other concepts **freedom** and **tolerance** have been loaded with different significances contingent to the socio-cultural and political state of the communities. In European and Anglo-American societies freedom has been associated at least for the last two hundred years not only with "release from slavery or imprisonment, personal liberty" and "liberation from the bondage of sin" but also with "exemption from arbitrary, despotic, or autocratic control; independence; civil liberty" as well as "the quality of being free from the control of fate or necessity; the power of self-determination attributed to the will" (**Oxford English Dictionary**, 524, 525). In their application these concepts have been defined and redefined but in the West since the eighteenth century freedom has been divorced to a large extent from its religious overtones and today it no longer comes to be associated with "liberation from bondage" including the "bondage of sin"; on the contrary it is seen as "the quality of being free from the control of arbitrary and autocratic control" which also comprises "the control of fate or necessity". At the individual level such freedom demands the application of "the power of self-determination attributed to the will" and at the social and political level, it claims as its due civil liberty. In other words since the eighteenth century the concept of freedom in Western societies comes to be loaded with rational, modernist and secular concerns which are embedded in the discourse of the Enlightenment. Kant in his famous essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" published in November 1784 in **Berlinische Monatschrift** explains why enlightenment as a mode of thinking and behaving is intrinsically conjoined with freedom. "Enlightenment," says Kant, "is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage [Unmündigkeit] is man's inability to make use of his understanding [Verstand] without direction from another. It is self-incurred when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of

resolution and courage to use it without direction from another." Kant then goes on to explain the significance of being set free from the most wide spread form of control - tutelage.

Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction (*naturaliter maiores*), nevertheless remain under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think,...
(90-91)

Kant refuses the protection and guardianship of books and religious men and trusts in man's capacity to reason and decide for himself in private and public matters. The only precondition he considers necessary for the realization of "man's release from self-incurred tutelage," hence his "coming of age" is freedom. "For this enlightenment," he says, "nothing is required but freedom, and freedom of the most harmless sort among its various definitions: freedom to make public use of one's reason [Vernunft] at every point"(92).

The view of man constructed by the Enlightenment in general and by Kant in particular is at the root of modern Western societies today. Accordingly irrespective of the many contingencies that contribute to variant interpretations of freedom in different countries in the West, in all of them the concept of freedom is inextricably based on a rational and secular interpretation of man. The idea of civil liberties and civil rights (freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, freedom from fear, free speech, free press, academic freedom) again irrespective of how they are employed or whether or not they are employed also presupposes a modern and Western understanding of mankind. Foucault in his essay carrying Kant's title "What is Enlightenment?" published exactly two hundred years after Kant points to this state of things when he says:

What, then, is this event that is called the *Aufklärung* and that has determined, at least in part, what we are, what we think, and what we do today? Let us imagine that the *Berlinische Monatschrift* still exists and that it is asking its readers the question: What is modern philosophy? Perhaps we could respond with an echo: modern philosophy is the philosophy that is attempting to answer

the question raised so imprudently two centuries ago:
Was ist Aufklärung? (96)

Foucault then goes on to explain that *Aufklärung* has to do with our interpretation of contemporary reality which of course comprises along other concepts, our understanding of ourselves, other things and people, transcendental beings and the universe.

Tolerance is again a concept intrinsic to the modern and secular interpretation of freedom particularly as it applies to the freedom not of ourselves but of others. Ideally, tolerating other peoples' ideas suggests respecting them without necessarily agreeing or sympathizing with their views hence it is associated with "freedom from bigotry or undue severity in judging the conduct of others and catholicity of spirit". But tolerance as expressed in the **Oxford English Dictionary** includes putting up with things you do not approve of or even "enduring with patience the opinions and practices of others" (112). That is why in secular and rationally organized societies what should be tolerated and the extent of this toleration are more or less defined either by law, or by rules and regulations which are themselves open to discussion and change.

A study of the Islamic women's discourse reveals, on the other hand, that their understanding of man, reason, freedom and tolerance are not modern but intrinsically linked to the central Islamic term "kul" or "servant of god" which is set against the modern concepts "enlightened man" or "responsible citizen." The discourse of the "kul" is formed and delimited by the rule of Allah. A "kul", for example, is not even allowed to be "objective" about events and ideas. In **The Expected Nur**, the devout believer who is aware of the great responsibilities conferred on a "kul" by Allah, explains to Mesut her husband-to-be the sort of attitude a proper "kul" should adopt towards what he sees. She says: "To be objective is to accept the good and the bad without bringing them to a synthesis in your mind. This leads to mental confusion and contradictions... You must first have a clear perspective in line with your ideas and beliefs. You should not observe events as they present themselves but with an eye to morality. If the way you look at things is not clear then what you see also appears to be clouded. A clouded vision leads to being vague about what you comprehend" (42). Education is also expected to serve the purpose of indoctrinating people to become proper "kul"s. A devout believer in **Sevda!. Come Back..** draws attention to this point. She says: "What is the purpose of establishing schools? Are they to serve Islam or the infidels? If they are to serve the infidels why are they being constructed in Moslem communities?"(209). The important role school plays in the upbringing of

appropriate "kul"s who do not question but obey, pray and spread Islam is expressly stated in all the four novels.

In the novel **The Expected** Nur explains what she understands by freedom: "Our freedom lies in serving Allah, our victory in our being in harmony with Islam"(118-119). According to Nur one is either a servant of Allah or a slave of other things. She says to herself: "If you do not fear Allah, you acquire superficial fears and phobias" (125). In fact she discovers in the course of the novel that her non-practicing Moslem husband has an incurable phobia of getting lost. The only reason why she stays with this man who by Islamic standards is a non-believer is to call him to Islam so that he too is saved. She explains her emotions saying:

Dear Allah! What I can't give up is not Mesut, but the idea of being the means to his spiritual salvation. I confess that it would be very hard for me to give him up but I could nevertheless do it... But the thought of his salvation, ah, this tantalizing thought!... I can endure all manner of grief, contempt, misery. I am ready to be consumed by fire for the sake of illuminating him. (168).

The protagonist of the novel **Sevda!. Come Back..** does not refer to the term freedom at all, her main concern is to obey unquestioningly the laws ordained by Allah. She rebukes her brother for not remaining within the bounds of the decency and morals established by Allah, saying: "I am referring to sins. We all have to abide by the limits fixed by Allah. You cannot transgress those limits" (89). She then chides her husband for proposing that some of the rules of conduct prescribed by the Koran be reinterpreted. Cengiz, the husband points out that "these rules do not accord with contemporary civilized man" (144). Sevda is infuriated by this statement and slaps him on the face upon which her husband says "I divorce you". Regretting his words he tries to make it clear to her that the word divorce was used in a moment of anger and he did not mean what he said. But because under Islamic law the husband's word is sufficient to realize a divorce, Sevda considers such reasoning as treating Allah's laws frivolously and leaves home. The civil code by which she was married is irrelevant to her since it does not accord with the Islamic law of marriage. When Cengiz goes to see Mustafa, the devout Moslem in whose house Sevda takes refuge, with the hope of convincing his wife to come back to him Mustafa tells Cengiz of the absoluteness and immutability of everything in the Koran. He says:

The light shed by the Koran on humanity is eternal and undiminished. The Holy Book comprises divine laws capable of addressing the particular issues of all ages, all civilizations and all times. Human beings may not alter any part of it to the thinking of their own age, nor modify it to suit their own ideas. My dear brother, to make the slightest compromise where the holy cause is concerned is to lose the whole case. We ought to struggle constantly to suit our own lives to the Koran, that's all. How can mankind dare to alter the religion sent down to us by God who is the Creator Absolute? How can they even discuss these things? (158)

In the novel **Whose Victim Am I?** the author maintains that she is narrating a true story to which she herself has been in part a witness. From time to time she also addresses her audience directly and sermonizes. While she is explaining the meaning of "iman" or faith in Islam she underlines the necessity of believing in Allah unconditionally and absolutely. She says:

True faith is faith in Allah specifically. To have faith is to believe unconditionally in God, to submit to what he metes out to you even if that's not what you like, or is not to your (worldly) advantage; to have faith is... not to come up with likeness to Allah. (187)

The central theme of this novel is in fact, the unfairness and perversity of man-made laws when compared with Allah's laws and how these human laws victimize innocent people and create chaos rather than order. Therefore here too in this novel human rights, including women's rights, are said to be perverted and unnatural. All that a man and a woman are entitled to is what Allah grants them and sets as their due in the Koran. In **The Expected** Nur says: "Our exalted book the Koran is sensitive to the rights of animals and plants as it is to human rights"(162).

In short in these novels freedom has nothing to do with individual rights and liberties. Only in **Moslem Woman Has a Name** is there a fleeting reference to the declaration of human rights, and to the Western modern concepts of freedom and democracy. Islamist Dilara's friends in the dorm where she is staying refer to them and question the justice of rules that do not respect ethnic and religious differences. We read: "Everything they had learned up to that point, the declaration of human rights, the articles in the constitution saying that nobody can be reproached for his religion, language, race and belief, concepts such as democracy, freedom, all had

been confused (in their minds)" (109-110). Ironically, however, throughout this novel as in the other three the protagonists insistently claim that tolerance which is an intrinsic part of Western concepts of democracy and freedom have no place in Islam. Comparing Allah's laws, which are not open to interpretation and change, with man-made laws which are products of human reason and therefore can be interpreted and even dropped Dilara says to the director of her dorm:

Yes, our religion is a religion of reason. But it cannot stoop and bend in accordance with everyone's reason. This is not the rule of a "kul" (servant of God) therefore it can't be changed tomorrow if it is unpleasing today. Just think, Turkey's population is fifty millions. Do they have the same intelligence? Somebody who is intelligent than you may appear now and interpret your words according to her own reason. Those like you who do not wish to cover themselves may each come up with a different excuse in accordance with their intelligence-the retarded different from the one with mediocre intelligence, and that different from the excuse of the genius.

No, that surely is not acceptable. This order has been ordained for us by Allah who has created brains only big enough to fit into the palm of our hands. His Law cannot be changed in accordance with my or your reason. And it will not be changed until Doomsday. Allah says this Himself. (107)

The noun "islam" by definition means "resignation, handing oneself over, submission" and to be a Moslem means in Arabic "to submit to the will of Allah", that is to be a "kul", anyone who does not submit entirely to the will of God, who tries to interpret the rules God set in the Koran is "kafir", that is an infidel. "Kafir"s cannot be tolerated and at best one tries patiently to motivate them to seek divine guidance. In **Sevda!. Come Back..**, for example, Sevda calls her husband, who says he is a Moslem but wishes to reinterpret the rules of the Koran in line with contemporary conditions of life, a Turkish infidel (118). In **Moslem Woman Has a Name** the protagonist Dilara is a new graduate of medical school. She is expected to dress in accordance with the regulations of the hospital where she is employed. But because she cannot cover her head with a long scarf, she starts wearing the cap that nurses use in the operation room. One of the nurses reminds her of the regulations and tells her to go uncovered in the

hospital and to cover her head when she goes out in the street. Dilara's answer is again based on the immutability and absolutely binding nature of Allah's laws. She explains: "Does Allah exist outside (the building) and not inside? God forbid. What you are referring to is man made rule... What I am talking about is the rule of Allah... Is it possible that you don't believe in Allah?" (161).

The novel **Moslem Woman Has a Name** is actually written in answer to a Turkish feminist novel titled **Woman Has No Name** published several years ago. The Islamist author makes an outright reference to this novel in the last chapter of her book where she addresses her readers directly and says: "A Moslem woman knows the limitations set to her by Allah and does not compete with her man who in certain aspects is created as her superior... Those who have claims to superiority with respect to men are pitiable souls ignorant of Allah's laws" (186-187). In **Sevda!. Come Back** Sevda even refuses to sit at the same table with her brothers-in-law because Islam does not allow women to be in the same room with men. Earlier in the same novel when Sevda's husband maintains that equality of the sexes is the victory of civilization, the learned imam Osman repudiates this statement saying: "The conviction that men and women may be given equal rights, that they may be exposed to the same culture and that they may do the same jobs does not erase the difference in their constitution... Each gender must develop the talents he has in his nature... religious rationale has paid a great deal of attention to the physical and intellectual difference that exists between men and women and religious laws have been written accordingly. To establish a civilized world here and to attain the happiness promised in the life to come one has to abide by all the laws of Allah. This is what Allah demands" (48-49). A similar attitude is displayed by Nur, the protagonist of the novel **The Expected**. Like Sevda, Nur does not go along with her husband's modern way of life. She too refuses to enjoy the rights that the Turkish constitution confers on women, saying: "The rights that my Creator has seen fit for woman are in accord with her nature. These rights guarantee the woman's peace and honor. What the civilization of the twentieth century offers as rights to women are in effect wrongs. It is these rights or rather wrongs which are contrary to woman's natural disposition which casue her to compete with her man, deny her womanhood and seek happiness not in her home but in the streets"(92). These words almost echo the words of the author of **Moslem Woman Has a Name** quoted earlier. A similar argument is also followed in **Whose Victim Am I?** There the protagonist carrying the pseudonym Hülya is married not by civil authorities in accordance with civil law but by an imam. Since Islamic norms of marriage are very different from the norms cited in the Turkish legal code (which grants women a far greater

spectrum of rights), Turkish law does not acknowledge religious marriages as legally binding. The author of **Whose Victim Am I?** uses the occasion of Hülya's Islamic marriage to criticize those who do not consider the Islamic marriage contract sufficient saying: "The enemies of Islam talk about those who are not bound by any marriage contract whatsoever as 'living together, and yet refer to those women who are married by an imam as mistresses" (33).

What the discourse of these writers is trying to convey is that Islam is not merely a religion of conscience; it is not open to interpretation; woman's place is to be subservient to her man and more importantly, that everyone who calls himself a Moslem either follows all the rules spelled out in the Koran and the Hadith or he is an infidel, a non-believer. Sevda explains this fact clearly to her mother-in-law in **Sevda! Come Back..**: "Islam is not an abstract, merely spiritual religion. Its true function is realized when it is applied to life. It encompasses every aspect of life: individual, social, material and spiritual. I am only now beginning to comprehend, mother dear, the alarming gravity of being a Moslem and not fulfilling its requirements, hence leading a life worse than that of an infidel. This is a very shameful state of affairs." She then goes on to tell the old woman that "infidelity has been injected into Turkish society under the pretense of modernity and of being up to date... Mother just think what they have turned us into! We use toilet paper to clean our bottoms"(70). We are told that upon hearing this the mother-in-law is terrified because she realizes that she too has been using toilet paper instead of washing herself. Elsewhere in the same novel Sevda says that according to Islam it is a sin to sing (78). In **The Expected** Nur's husband is warned by another Moslem for not holding the Koran high enough, he says that it is not to be held below the belly (288). Therefore as far as these writers are concerned Islam should guide believers in all respects, even in such trivial matters.

Reason and rationalism, two essential agents of the modern Western conception of freedom accordingly also occupy a very different place in the discourse of Islamist women writers. Their conception of these terms are again premodern, pre-Kantian. In **The Expected** the relation of human reason and divine inspiration is discussed. An unruly group of high school kids dressed in sports' wear appear in the park where Nur is sitting. Seeing them behave in such an irresponsible and improper manner Nur thinks: "This trendy group has moved away from the light of divine guidance and has been enslaved by reason and philosophy. This is the 'ideal' youth that 'intellectuals' are hoping to raise" (39). Later on in the novel the author states outright that "the human being who does not use his gift of reason in the light of divine guidance and does not seek to understand the reason

behind his own creation and live accordingly is bound to be wretched and miserable”(86). In other words we are told that reason and philosophy do not enlighten man; on the contrary they enslave him.

Almost twenty years ago in 1978 Edward Said had discussed in his **Orientalism** how the Eurocentric term Orientalism does not in fact help the Westerners to understand that which is said to be Eastern. On the contrary it creates in their minds a hyperreality which conveys a highly distorted image of the Orient and the Oriental. The same is true for the terms modern and Western so frequently used in the novels of Islamic women writers of the 1990s. The terms Western and modern used interchangeably in their writing, represent for them the “Other” of the Islamic. Therefore, to a certain extent, their discourse is derived from and dependent on their construct “the Western”. In **The Expected** Nur says to her husband who asks her to dress like all the other urban women and take off her scarf: “Let us imagine that you are successful in altering the way I dress. Can you change the way I think? If all were in the apparel, then the liberation of the Moslems could be secured by destroying their outfits which are designed and tailored by Westerns. Moslem brains have been captured (by Westerners), who is going to erase their boot marks (on the brains) so that Moslems can be wholesome again and think soundly?”(118). Later on in the novel the stepdaughter who is said to be attending a drama school in Germany comes home on vacation and tells her father of her plans to marry Letta, a German classmate. The father objects on the grounds that Letta is not a Moslem. The conversation is interesting in pointing to the way Islamists see those Moslems who regard Islam as a religion of conscience, do not practice all the rules of the Koran, and are modern in the way they dress, think and behave.

– Don’t try to argue, you can’t possibly convince me..
Just think you will have children, the mother is a Moslem, the father a Christian... Will you enjoy seeing them turn into passive men and women with no identity because they have been split between two different cultures? Think in long terms.

– I have given a lot of thought to it dad. Besides I don’t believe you can say there is a great difference between our cultures... Letta’s name is Christian, yours is Moslem... that is the only difference between the two of you.

.....
– How can you possibly make such a claim? How can you put me in the same basket with one who is a Christian? I am truly shocked.

.....
 – Reality is difficult to admit, father dear, but there is no use hiding it away. You do not pray five times a day and Letta doesn't either. You are not a hadji nor is Letta. You don't give alms, Letta doesn't either. You don't use alcohol, Letta doesn't either... IF the whole issue is eating pork it is not really fair to force him to become a Moslem. Besides I see no difference between us and the Christian families in Germany in the way we dress and the way we organize family life. We have succeeded in attaining their standards and we should be happy with our achievements. (175-176).

As expressed in these lines with a great deal of irony, modernized Turkish men and women who have obtained educations either in the West or in the secular state schools are seen by Islamists as Westerners. These westernized Turks are, like Christians, at best "giavour" or non-Moslem, and at worst "infidels" or heretics. Mesut, Nur's husband who likes to play Beethoven's ninth symphony on the piano, who goes swimming with his daughter and celebrates new year's eve is considered to be a giavour and Sevda's husband who proposes that Islam should undergo reformation, presuming that the laws pertaining to civil life in the Koran can be interpreted, is referred to by his own wife as "a Turkish infidel". In **The Expected** we see that everything contaminated by the West and the Western is subversive, immoral and indecent. The young high school children in the park behave in an improper and irresponsible manner; Nur's stepdaughter, her sister-in-law and the sister-in-law's friends pass away the time in dissipation, leading frivolous, unseemly, and somewhat indecent lives. Moreover, according to Nur they have no compassion even for their closest relatives, they behave in extremely self-centered and self-righteous ways wasting their time on such trivial matters as the protection of animals.

In **Sevda!. Come Back.** Sevda tries to explain to her mother-in-law that the Westerner is the anti-thesis of the Moslem. She says:

The European is a non-believer. Infidelity and Islamism are antithetical like a soothing medicine and poison. Infidelity kills man spiritually whereas Islam brings him back to life.

It is sheer madness to think that the sign of being an enlightened person is to forego Islam and to live like a Westerner. I, you, my husband and many others have been unfortunately affected by this wrong attitude and

we are continuously plunging into sin. We are a pitiously enlightened group who have squandered our honour, values and power. We are a crowd of people who have forfeited eternal happiness. We are a pack of educated doctors, judges, engineers, teachers etc. who are alienated from their religion, indeed who are an enemy of their religion. (69)

When the mother-in-law claims that they live like Europeans but they are at the same time devout Moslems, Sevda's ironic answer is: "The fact that everyone's ID card states that his religion is Islam does not make him a Moslem" (69). In this novel the author says outright that one is either a Moslem or an infidel: there is no in between.

In **Moslem Woman Has a Name** Dilara is told by a learned Hadji woman to take as her model not the European whores but the genteel women of the era of the Prophet. The Hadji also points out that the reason why the Moslem woman is made to cover her head according to Islam is to differentiate her from the Jew and the Christian (90-91). The novel displays a highly anti-Semitic and anti-Christian attitude to the end. Dilara criticizes her dorm-head who advises her to act according to the times saying: "If the time is warped, if thieves are everywhere and theft is tolerated, am I supposed to be a thief in order to live according to the times? Do not waste yourself away by following that Jewish saying... Learn the dictates of this marvelous religion which you claim as your own and then try to teach it to the young ones"(108). This racist point of view with respect to Judaism and Christianity is repeated again as Dilara maintains that it is the Turkish people's attempt to imitate the Westerners that has caused the evils of AIDS, homosexuality, alcoholism, and heroin addiction to appear in the country.

In the novel **Whose Victim Am I?** the corruption and the arbitrariness of the present social and political order, or rather chaos, is said to be the result of the cooperation of the Moslems with the Jews, the Armenians and the Christians. Hülya the protagonist explains the reasons for the economic problems that both the employers and the employees face in this society in the following words:

It's the day of the bosses, though the status quo is beginning to pinch them, as well. Only big capital can withstand the present state of things... big capital is either Jewish or Armenian or Christian. Everyday small capital is being crushed so the big ones can earn more. This is economic warfare. Vietnam, Northern Iraq, Hama, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Palestine and Somali have shown

us that you can't crush the believers by killing them; so now they (big capital) are turning (from the use of physical force) to economic and psychological warfare (51).

The author insists that our submission to Western culture is the reason for the economic, social and ethical chaos she claims to prevail in the country.

All the four novels use a predominantly religious discourse and aim either to compell subservience or gain adherents. In **The Expected** this is in fact overtly stated by the protagonist, Nur as she describes her views on art to her husband. Nur is an aspiring fiction writer herself. When she is criticized by her husband for using her art to promote her ideas Nur's answer is:

- So you say art is for art's sake, am I correct?
- Yes.
- If art is for art's sake it is like a dead corpse. What brings art to life is the idea it serves and the more sublime is the thought, the more precious is the artwork. Art is not an end like some people believe it but a means to an end. If it has no aim then art is like eating nuts; it simply helps us to pass away the time. (78)

Then she continues to say that her message consists of the teachings of Islam. "Islam has been brought down to earth to dominate every single moment of our lives. Every dish at the table of life must be cooked by the ingredients of Islam" (78). Towards the end of the book another Islamist explains that all devout Moslems must "go door to door spreading the truths (in the Koran) to mankind" (217). Indeed what is "expected" as the title **The Expected** calls to mind is the realization of an all-Moslem society. In **Sevda! Come Back..** Sevda's main ambition is to raise her two children to become "champions of Islam" (119). In the same novel imam Osman is said to be "a devout Moslem and a fine evangelist for Islam" (118). Finally Sümeýra, another young woman says at the end of the novel that her dream in life was to take part in "cihad", that is to participate in holy war. The significance of "cihad" for a Moslem is also pointed out in **Moslem Woman Has a Name**. The hadji who instructs Dilara about the faith Islam explains to her the line of action she is to follow:

My dear, the unenlightened ones of our day will first attack the fact that you cover yourself. A woman's scarf is her banner of virtue. The first thing that an enemy who captures your town will do is to remove your banner from the tower of the fortress. You should carry this

banner on your head proudly. They will torment you with unheard of insults, they will put pressure on you to make you yield. Your holy struggle with human-devils and with your own self begins at that point. You must understand the significance of the scarf you carry on your head. Covering the head is a divine command which God has ordained as a binding duty... to fight for this cause this is "cihad" or the holy war. (89-90)

To sum up, the discourse used by these Islamic women, like most religious discourse, is closed. It shuts off the possibility of questioning, investigating, reasoning and deciding for one's self. In its deference to the Koran, a book believed to be sent by Allah, such discourse furnishes the reader with an absolute authority and with canons of order which are neither clearly understood nor allowed to be interpreted. Their Islamic discourse kindles the passions and satisfies to some extent the need for certainty, power, status, group solidarity, and a sense of communal belonging. But such a disposition neither contributes to "man's release from self-incurred tutelage" nor breeds tolerance by teaching him to "be indulgent to the opinions and practices of others".

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