

## Literary Intercultural Worldviews According To Mehmet Akif Ersoy

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### Abstract

Mehmet Akif Ersoy's literary activity is notable for his various writings, especially in poetry and prose. He has published numerous works mainly in poetry and prose, he is notable for writing letters to friends. But what sets him apart the most is the themes he deals with in his writings, as in addition to poverty, illness, weakness, the path of help, charity and hope is also shown. Faced with weakness and difficulties of life, the poet calls for work and determination. An outstanding worldview for readers and lovers of work. Researchers conclude that Mehmet Akif's poems are adorned with a very high artistic level, philosophical thought, and a flowing, powerful and dynamic style. His verses, written in the Ottoman language, are riddled with many Arabisms and Persianisms, making transcriptions from Ottoman to modern Turkish in Latin script a major headache for even the most skilled writers and translators.

**Keywords:** writer, friendly, literary, work, determination

### Introduction

Akif Mehmet Pejani (Ipekli Mehmed Akif), or as he is better known in Turkish literature - Mehmed Akif Ersoy (1873-1936) is one of the many poets of Albanian origin, whose works flourished abroad, to the point that he is considered the chief poet of modern Turkey. From the beginning, it should be noted that such a great figure of Albanian origin, like Akif Mehmet Pejani, was not known, not documented, not translated and not researched enough by Albanian historians. In fact, not even in the Albanian Encyclopedic Dictionary, there is no data about him.<sup>1</sup>

According to Dr. Selim Selimi: "Mehmet Akif Ersoy's literary and artistic worldview was presented in the article "Edebiyat" (Literature), in the published magazine Sebilurreshad, as well as the path that the magazine will follow." Mehmet Akif Ersoy's idea and worldview is:

- Literature is food for us.
- Literature has a homeland, and we do not want to copy the literature of any country by our country.
- We will develop and process our feelings and ideas.
- Where shamelessness begins, literature ends because there is morality in literature.
- Criticism not of our values, but of our shortcomings.

- We must write for the people.
- Write in a language that the people understand...etc.

Both in the subject matter and in the style of our writings, we will first and foremost think only of the Ottomans, meaning that, as much as possible, we will publish works that speak and raise the awareness of the people.<sup>2</sup>

The essence for us is to write simply. Especially the expressive wealth of our language, we will not allow any foreign foot to trample, even if it is written with Napoleon's boots, even if it is worn by Englishmen. In this specific case, we will show the most possible fanaticism and conservatism. Yes, we will attack with all our might the past writings, then in Turkish after, as the ancients did, they were first thought in Arabic and Persian or, as today's young people do, they were first composed in French or German! Because we have firmly believed in this truth that just as a nation without a language, a language without its means of expression will not survive.

- Do not tread on this earth pretending not to know!
- Think of the thousands who lie on it without a shroud!
- You are the son of a martyr, do not insult him in any way:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mekulipress.com/1913-poeti-nga-peja-qe-me-zemren-plot-shqipni-thuri-himnin-e-turqise-tre-milione-njerez-po-vuajne-nga-tri-koka-pa-tru/> - Shyqri Nimani. You visited this page on 12/25/21.

<sup>2</sup> Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Safahat, Ertuğrul Düzdağ, s. 89, İstanbul, 1989.

- Do not give this homeland as if it were heaven, the world as if it were given to you!

Mehmet Akifi, in a conversation, told how he was inspired to write his own poetry: "Inspiration in poetry happens very rarely. Poetry is made with work and effort. They think that the poet stands in front of nature, gathers inspiration, then immediately takes up the pen and writes poems. But that's not the case at all! He will lock himself in a room, he will sweat, he will think, he will get tired, it will try... I bring the landscapes to my room, there I lose my mind, sweat and write my poetry within four walls!<sup>3</sup> I think a lot before I write a poem. Just like an engineer, like an architect! Just like an architect who, before starting to build a building, first thinks, then makes a plan, then draws the implementation project and only then starts building. I am like that too... Before I write a work, I prepare all the premises. How I will enter the work, what conclusion I will reach. I raise all this in my imagination. Then I start writing and reach the conclusion I want."

Mehmet Akifi has achieved, without any effort, the highest art and beauty in his poems. The famous poet and prose writer Sulejman Nazif says about him: "I proudly and tastefully claim that, in the languages of the East and the West that I know, and in this field, whether as an original or as a translation, I have not read any poem so beautiful and flawless! To write this poem, it is not enough to be a poet like Mehmet Akifi, but it is also necessary to be religious like Mehmet Akifi! The poet who cannot unite in his ego with the same strength and prosperity these two creative necessities, whether he is Eastern or Western, cannot create a proverbial poem like this. The poet's passion and faith are poured from his heart, into the pen and from the pen, into the paper!"<sup>4</sup>

Rare are those figures who weave the traditionally good relations between the Albanian and Turkish people, as our great poet Mehmet Akif Ersoy did. He embodied Kosovo, the birthplace of his father, to which he dedicated one of his best poems, "I am Albanian" (Morina, 2009:5) (Beni Arnavudum), where he says:

Wherever I am, I imagine myself as a ghost  
A bloody field.  
Are you real or a fantasy?  
Deserted Kosovo?

To continue:

"Hear this from me, who truly am an Albanian..."

I can't say anything else... Behold, my homeland has been destroyed."

He also became incarnated with Turkey, his homeland, for which he wrote the lyrics of the national anthem entitled: "Independence March" (Istiklal Marsh)<sup>5</sup>

## Literature Review

### Mehmet Akif – poet of Islam

Under this title, Dr. Abdul Vehab Azam begins his writing, "I had read the name of Mehmet Akif among the most famous contemporary writers of Turkish literature, but I had had the opportunity to get acquainted with a very small part of his poetic activity.

Mehmet Akifi had great respect for many poets, from the Arabs Ibn al-Farid, from the Turks Fudul, from the Persians Saadi, and from the French La Martini.<sup>6</sup>

Mehmet Akifi was very interested in poetry, especially in the last two years of school. In many of his poems he imitated the literature of the Divan and wrote long letters in verse to his friends. Later, not liking the writings of these years, he destroyed them all.<sup>7</sup>

Mehmet Akifi in his works also deals with issues such as the development of education for the healing of society, the assessment of the value of science, the importance of education in the positive sciences, and the eradication of ignorance. He closely links the situation in which Islamic countries have fallen to ignorance:

The source of misfortune, without a doubt, is our ignorance.

And the cure for this evil is only through education. (Safahat, 258)<sup>8</sup>

Akif believed that the only way out of this situation could be through education and science. He tried to reveal the importance of science and the evil of ignorance with the following explanations: "Education, Education! ... There is no other choice for us; If we want to live, first of all, we must embrace education. In the world with education, in religion with education, in the hereafter with education, everything and anything can be achieved only with education." (Gashi:2020,158)

He wants to benefit from the progress of Western civilization, especially their technology. (Gashi:2020,158) He made the following statements at the Sulejmaniye course:

Take from the West the knowledge of its art

And give your effort the same speed.

Today, finally, you cannot live without these. (Safahat, p.178)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg. 92

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg. 96

<sup>5</sup> Mehmet Akif Ersoj, Fletët (Safahat), Logos A, Skopje, 2006, pg. 568

<sup>6</sup> Edukata Islame, Islamic, Cultural and Scientific Journal, Prishtinë, 2009; Qemajl Morina "Mehmet Akif Ersoj, Journal "Errrisale", Kairo, pp. 5-12.

<sup>7</sup> Edukata Islame, Islamic, Cultural and Scientific Journal, Prishtinë, 2014; Skënder R. Hoxha "Mehmet Akif Ersoj, biography and literary activity", pp. 263-268.

<sup>8</sup> Edukata Islame, Islamic, Cultural and Scientific Journal, quarterly/year L, no.122; Prishtinë 2020; ass. prof. dr. Feim Gashi "Kuptimdhënia e unitetit dhe solidaritetit sipas Mehmet Akif Ersoj", pp.147-162

In his works, Akif also calls for the removal of obstacles to the creation of unity in society and declares that he is in favor of unity in the Islamic world as well as in Anatolia. He says: "The best response to give to those who have aimed for our independence and future is to embrace unity and solidarity." (Gashi:2020,158) According to him, it is unfortunate that the Islamic world is close to division and fragmentation, while the whole world will join forces. Our unity and integrity is so important that the people living in these lands must ensure this unity regardless of religion, language or race. We understand from Ersoy that moving away from unity means leaving faith and religion aside.<sup>9</sup>

If you do not want to be, if you do not intend to disappear without a trace,

Do not attack Islam by seeking to disperse this community!

And if you depart from the faith, do not separate yourself from your people.

Listen, it is a truth that cannot be denied.

(....)

Look around you at the nations that are like one body,

Learn what unity is, from their unity learn.!

(Safahat, 382)

It is significant that in the last years of the Ottoman Empire, Akif saw Anatolia as the last bastion of the Islamic world and the inhabitants of this geography as the most important representatives of the Islamic world. He expresses this in his poem entitled "Karagun Dost":

Islam was burned and scorched by divisions,

(...)

Look: Today, her life is also her blood!

(....)

Eternal bonds found strength,

Even if forty crusader armies attack side by side,

Four hundred million people don't fall captive, believe me! (Safahat, 447)

The verses of the Quran inspired these poems, and they became verses that inspired the believers, because the only way out of the dark tunnels of the era, according to him, was through the unity of Islam. The Quran and the Sunnah were the two stable sources that had to be held tightly to achieve this unity.<sup>10</sup>

Researchers conclude that Mehmet Akif's poems are adorned with a very high artistic level, philosophical thought, and a fluent, powerful and dynamic style. His verses, written in the Ottoman language, are interspersed with many Arabisms and Persianisms, in which case transcriptions from Ottoman to modern Turkish with Latin letters cause great headaches, even for the most skilled writers and translators. Several well-known Turkish writers, such as Dogrul, Kuntay, Olgun and Duzdag, have collaborated in

the transcription of his work SAFAHAT (Sheets). This capital work, skillfully woven into poetic verses, deals with important events in world history from ancient times to the author's time.

Mehmet Akif's work SAFAHAT, so much republished in Turkey, for its extraordinary value, even more so when it also contains the excellent poem dedicated to Albanians and Albania, in the tragic moments of this century. It is precisely this poem that expressed the anger, the rage and the rise of the intellectual and patriotic voice of Mehmet Akif Pejani against the massacres committed and the devouring of Albanian lands. The creation of this work with Albanian motifs cost him his job, Akif resigned from high state positions to defend his ideals, for the homeland, Albania. The poem, which has the First Balkan War as its subject, consists of 96 verses. The poet finished it on March 6, 1913. The poem begins with the verses:

"Three million people are suffering from three heads without brains."

(...)

Albania is burning... This time (the fires) are very big.

(...)

Father, your dearest Mother, true motherland <sup>11</sup>

The work "Safahat" is the general name of the poetry collection of Mehmet Akif Ersoy. This is a collection of poetry books with special names. The books that make up this collection were printed at different times as separate volumes. All editions of the first six books were made in Istanbul, while the seventh book was printed in Cairo.

"Safahat (Sheets)" means stages, phases, periods and in a broader sense, appearances, appearances. (This shows that Mehmet Akif Eroji had distinguished literary views on human and social issues based on the true word). All the poems in this work are written in the original with the arud prosodic meter. The form and size of the poems start from one stanza and go up to a monocolumn of 2292 lines such as the poem "Education".

Book I: "Safahat" - These poems deal with human and social issues. By drawing the reader's attention, they are asked to think about them and, ultimately, find the right solution. In addition to poverty, illness, and weakness, the path of help, charity, and hope is also shown. Ignorance, despotism and the habit of drinking are described in detail that cause disgust and hatred. Faced with weakness and difficulties of life, the poet calls for work and determination. The work expresses amazement and admiration for the comforting and calming power of faith and for the secrets of the divine world. (ibid., 89)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. cit./Gashi:2020, p.158

<sup>10</sup> Ibid: cit./Gashi:2020, p.158

<sup>11</sup> Translation of poems, G. Catapano and N. Vlora Falaschi - S. Rizaj, Shqiptarët, popull i ndarë, Pejë, 1996.

Book II – “In the Suleimanian Palace” – The expected constitutional freedom has come, but it seems that it will not save the country as expected. Anarchy is experienced throughout the country due to the lack of understanding of freedom of speech and thought. Starting with the newspapers, everyone curses each other, parties and nationalism are tearing the country apart. Intellectuals seek to follow Europe, leaving aside religion and everything national, while the people oppose everything new, even if it is good and appropriate. While intellectuals misunderstand religion and try to eliminate it, the people, leaving behind the true religion, deal with superstitions and superstitions. Literature, while it should push the people to the good and beautiful, encourages them to prostitution. The poem takes the form of a sermon in the Suleimanian Mosque.

Book III – “Voices of Truth” – The grave consequences warned by Mehmet Akif, by the Suleimanian Government came one by one. The Balkan War, national fragmentation, internal anarchy seems to be leading the country towards complete destruction. Seeing that all these disasters come from ignorance, from not opposing evil and laziness, the poet turns to the ideological sources where truth and orientation are found. This book consists of ten poems. Eight are inspired by verses of the Quran, one poem is inspired by a prophetic message, while the last is a rather bitter poem, which calls on the Prophet for help.

Book IV – “In the courtyard of Fatih” – Consists of two parts entitled “Two friends on the way to Fatih” and “The preacher in the courtyard”. The first part of 322 verses consists of a conversation between two friends who get off the steamer at the Galata Bridge and go to the Fatih Mosque. The issues of society and culture that the friends discuss are given in a sharp ideological style and pleasant in expression. The conversation that the preacher has in the second part resembles the conversation that the poet himself had during the days of the Balkan War from the courtyard of this mosque. At the beginning, the divine order in the universe is treated. In the heavens and on earth, everything functions within a perfect order and without stopping. If a small piece does not perform its duty, this can cause the overthrow of the universe. Even people are subject to the same law. Here is the hardworking West that commands the heavens and the earth, and here is the lazy East in misery, whose carcass will finally be thrown into a pit!

Book V – “Memories” – The disasters resulting from the First World War, which came immediately after the Balkan War, make the poet write poems again as in Voices of Truth. Such are seven poems that occur at the beginning of the book and that were published between July 1913 and February 1915. The eighth poem of 126 verses, titled In al-Uksur, was written inspired by Mehmet Akif’s impressions of the ruins of al-Uksur (Luxor) that he saw during his trip to Egypt, at the beginning of 1914. Describing the environment, the poet, through an association created in his mind after a chance encounter with a group of travelers, returns again to the

issues of Islam. The largest part of the book is occupied by “Berlin Memories” of 608 verses. Mehmet Akif, who was in Berlin at the end of 1914 and the beginning of 1915, wrote this poem, which is an important ideological work as a product of his observations and meditations in that place.

Mehmet Akif had investigated and studied the causes of the progress and elevation of German society and had come to the conclusion that spirit and matter and religion and the material world should go hand in hand, while in his country the exact opposite was happening! In his country, the educational-cultural system prepared young people far from life, only as consumers; old literature had dulled the minds of the people, while new literature spread immorality; etc.

The last part of the Memories is the poem “From the Deserts of Najd”, in Medina, with 204 verses. A special place in this poem is occupied by the poet’s powerful impressions from visiting the Prophet’s tomb, where the love and longing for the Great Messenger stand out!

Book VI – “Education” - This poem of 2292 verses, which Sulejman Nazifi has described as a poetic miracle, is the work on which Mehmet Akif has worked the most. The ideas, feelings and emotions poeticized piece by piece in previous works, are summarized here by re-expressing them with a very beautiful language and a wonderful expression. This work can be examined in two parts:

- a) Conversation between Imam Qose and Hoxhazade. This constitutes the largest part of the work. Here almost all individual and social human issues are debated, starting from those of the closest environment. While both are believers and supporters of freedom and innovation, Imam Qose is more conservative and critical, while Hoxhazade is more innovative and tolerant. Hoxhazade defends the younger generation against the old Imam Qose.
- b) Conversation between Hoxhazade and Arsim. In this part, Hoxhazade, after telling Arsim why their society has been left behind and what are the factors that elevate society, tells him that what is expected of them that day is not a coup, but education. He emphasizes that material developments alone do not make a society happy, but even peoples who are not materially strong cannot preserve their morals and values. The work ends with Arsim, who listens to the poet’s words, setting off for Germany with his friends to study. The hero of the work is Imam Qose, the dear friend of Mehmet Akif, Ali Shevki Hoxha, while Arsim is a completely imaginary hero.

Book VII – “Shadows” – This book was printed in 1933, in Cairo. The last poem of this book and the entire collection is the poem Artisti, of 208 verses written in 1933. This poem, the second part of which begins with the verse, “happiness; so, ë?...”, is one of the most beautiful, highest and most touching poems of Safahati.

In this poem, through the mouth of the Artisti, Mehmet Akifi has poetically expressed with a very touching language and with a submissive but bitter attitude towards fate, his life spent with disappointments and sorrows, his own world of feelings and the life full of suffering and despair of the Islamic world. The great poet, who began his poetic work with the poem where he said, "I cry, but I cannot make anyone cry, I feel but I cannot say"<sup>12</sup>

The Turkish people have immortalized their great poet Akif and his work with the greatest respect. Many institutions, squares, cultural centers, neighborhoods and schools have been named after him. Akif Mehmeti's portrait is even found on the Turkish banknote worth 100 liras.<sup>13</sup>

As can be seen, Mehmet Akif Ersoy wants to benefit from the advantages of unity of faith, unity of emotions, unity of purpose and conscience. According to him, maintaining unity and togetherness is a great source of strength. While reminding his readers of material and spiritual values, he also does not fail to cultivate faith.

Akif wants Muslims to achieve unity within the framework of this faith, within the criteria of the Quran and Sunnah. Apart from that, Muslims have no other choice. Akif, by bringing verses from the Quran and Sunnah, tried to enlighten people on this issue. He proves this most clearly in his instructions through his poems, writings, sermons given.

Akif argued that the religion of Islam commands the advancement of science and work. It is important to preserve the spirit of the religion and pass on Islam to future generations:

Taking inspiration directly from the Quran

This is not done with empty claims, but seeks with knowledge (Safahat, 378)<sup>14</sup>

In conclusion, according to Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the Islamic religion has the power to correct the negative structure of society. In order for religion to fulfill this function, it determines that the gap between thinkers and people must be eliminated, that there must be a good dialogue and unity between them. Once these conditions are met, there will be no reason for Muslims not to unite. Ersoy's literary activity, both in poetry and prose, is truly an outstanding contemporary literary asset, because the treatment of the topic in each poem and prose is a special treatment for the development of literary knowledge through writings based on the word of God, in the Quran.

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