On Moralistic Approaches in Mirza Jalil's Dramas

Mirza Celil'in Tiyatro Eserlerindeki Ahlâkî Yaklaşımlar Üzerine

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Abstract: Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, also known as Mirza Jalil, was one of the most prolific and efficient writers in the modernization period of Azerbaijani literature. He created a literary movement with his magazine “Molla Nasraddin” (ملانصرالدین) during the modernization process of Azerbaijani literature. He also gained a widespread reputation as the founder of the magazine, in a wide range of areas where Turkish and Muslim peoples lived. Mirza Jalil, except for “Molla Nasraddin”, wrote for some newspapers like “Kaspi”, “Şərqi-rus” (Eastern-Russian) and “Yeni Yol” (New Way). Mirza Jalil was ahead of his time with what he did in Azerbaijani society. He was a writer who questioned and criticized social and political issues in his works. So he sometimes experienced unpleasant and difficult times because of his works. He was rather an intellectual who wrote for society than a literary man who wrote only for art. So since Mirza Jalil was very keen on social improvement the facts of the society he lived in had an important place in his literary works. His works can be classified in two periods: The Tsarist period and The Soviet period. In this article, the dramas of Mirza Jalil have been treated in terms of the moral codes in his society, Azerbaijan. Mirza Jalil was one of the most important figures who criticized traditional morality in Azerbaijan. In this article, sociological and historical criticism have been taken into account. The facts about Mirza Jalil's life and social situations of his time were examined and the context in which he wrote has been considered and evaluated.

Structured Abstract: Mirza Jalil (1869-1931) was a well-known writer in Modern Azerbaijani literature. He wrote many short stories and dramas, some of which attracted a great deal of public attention because of their critical style. Today there is general consensus among many researchers and scholars from the fields of Azerbaijani literature that Mirza Jalil was one of the first innovative drama writers in Modernization period of Azerbaijan. Not only was he a literary man but also a social critic who especially focused on sociological and political issues in his society. However much as he only wrote in Azerbaijani Turkish, he managed to reach a lot of people among Muslim communities that suffered from the same social problems and moral obstacles. But it goes without saying that his works were very disturbing for some environments, because his criticism was quite sarcastic, especially in “Molla Nasraddin”. Mirza Jalil usually addressed the social issues or political problems explicitly and he tried to be as clear as possible to the reader in his works. However much as he tried to express his opinions explicitly in his works, it is also possible to see that he conveyed some messages implicitly with his humorous approach in some works like “Tea Set”.

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Cite as/ Atıf: İşgören, T. (2020). On moralistic approaches in Mirza Jalil's dramas. *Turkish Studies - Language, 15*(2), 727-737. <https://dx.doi.org/10.29228/TurkishStudies.42757>

Received/Geliş: 04 April/Nisan 2020

Accepted/Kabul: 20 June/Haziran 2020

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Published/Yayın: 27 June/Haziran 2020

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It is known that at different times of his life he had some difficulties because of his works. Because his criticism was sometimes morally subversive for some comfortable habits. Like Mirza Fatali Akhundov, he intended to make people question every imperfection he saw in the society. And he always had a critical outlook on traditional moral codes in his society. That is why he wrote for people and took the advantage of functions of literature and humor. He wrote his dramas with the idea that it would be a very efficient and effective way to get people excited and he had an enthusiasm to put them on the stage. In this study, his twelve dramas called “Tea Set”, “The Game of Raisins”, “The Corpses”, “The Mute”, “Kemancha”, “The Book of My Mother”, “The Teacher of Danabash Village”, “The Players”, “The Mute”, “The Man”, “The Gathering”, “The Madmen Gathering” have been examined. And in these dramas, Mirza Jalil’s perspective on moral codes of his society (and other Muslim societies) has been addressed.

Of course some of moral rules were acceptable and others unacceptable to him. That is why he supported some of them whereas he was opposed to others. It wouldn’t be accurate to say that Mirza Jalil was always opposed and critical to every moral conduct and value of his society in his works. Yet, it is obvious that he mostly objected to ones which he regarded as irrational. It can be seen that the rules Mirza Jalil mostly criticized were strict and strong religious precepts, but the attitudes that he generally supported were secular actions that he thought were far from revelation.

Like Abbasgulu Bakikhanov and M. Fatali Akhundov, Mirza Jalil also tried to raise awareness about women's rights that he was always sensitive about. In his magazine “Molla Nasreddin”, he wrote a lot of essays in favor of women's rights (His wife Mrs. Hamide stated in her memoirs that she decided to get married to him due to one of his essays about women). And he broached this issue in some of his dramas like “The Corpses”. Mirza Jalil mostly criticized some religious practices, which prevented women from living freely and gladly. He was also a strong supporter and advocate of equality and justice among people in his works. Although he thought it was impossible to eliminate the injustice and inequality, he tried to disclose them as far as possible with his works. He especially intended to disclose fraud and corruption in his dramas like “The Corpses” and “The Madmen Gathering”. He satirized the manipulative characters in these dramas.

He was an advocate of providing insightful, peaceful and rational solutions to ethnic problems, beside religious ones. He respected differences and diversities among people but he was never a silent witness to moral exploitation in society. In order to deal with this deception, either he wrote some critical words in his essays or created some characters in his short stories or dramas. Mirza Jalil was always in favor of tolerance which he thought was absolutely necessary for people to live together. This, according to him, could only be possible with reason.

In this study sociological and historical criticism have been used. Besides the historical conditions which Mirza Jalil lived in, his other works like essays, short stories and the memoirs of him and his wife Mrs. Hamide have all been examined for this study. In addition to that, as quoted in the study, we have benefited greatly from Bertrand Russell’s philosophy in the examination. Here it has been intended to shed some light on how Mirza Jalil considered moral codes of his society in his dramas.

Keywords: Azerbaijani Literature, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, Drama, Moral Codes, Azerbaijan.

Öz: Mirza Celil olarak da tanınan Celil Mehmetkuluzade, Azerbaycan edebiyatının modernleşme dönemindeki en etkili ve üretken yazarlarından biridir. Azerbaycan edebiyatının modernleşme sürecinde “Molla Nasreddin” dergisiyle ses getiren çalışmalara imza atan Mirza Celil, bu dergi sayesinde Müslüman-Türk halklarının yaşadığı geniş bir coğrafyada tanınmıştır. Yazar, “Molla Nasreddin” dergisi yanında “Kaspi”, “Şərqi-rus” ve “Yeni Yol” gibi gazetelerde de yazmıştır. Hikâye, tiyatro, satirik şiir, deneme, mektup ve anı türünde eserler kaleme alan yazar, birtakım çevrilere de imza atmıştır. Mirza Celil, Azerbaycan toplumuna sunduğu entelektüel katkılarıyla, zamanının önde gelen yazarlarından biri olarak kabul edilir. Eserlerinde sosyal ve siyasi meseleleri sorgulayıp eleştirdiği için zor zamanlar da geçirmiştir. Mirza Celil, sadece sanat için yazan bir edip olmaktan ziyade; toplum için yazan bir entelektüeldir. Bu yüzden, içinde yaşadığı toplumun gerçekleri eserlerinde önemli bir yer tutar. Eserleri, Çarlık Dönemi ve Sovyet Dönemi olmak üzere iki ana dönemde ele alınabilir. Bu makalede, Mirza Celil’in tiyatro eserleri, toplumundaki ahlâk kodları açısından ele alınmış ve kendisinin toplumdaki ahlâk yasalarına ilişkin durumu incelenmiştir. Nitekim Mirza Celil, edebi eserlerinde ve kültür sanat yazılarında Azerbaycan’daki geleneksel ahlâkı eleştiren en önemli sanatçılardan biridir. Bu çalışmada yazarın bütün tiyatro eserleri incelenmiş;

sosyolojik ve tarihi eleştiri yöntemleri kullanılmıştır. Yazarın hayatı ve döneminin sosyal ve siyasi durumuna ilişkin gerçekler de dikkate alınmıştır. Dolayısıyla yazarın diğer eserlerine de müracaat edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Azerbaycan Edebiyatı, Celil Memmedkuluzâde, Tiyatro edebiyatı, Ahlâk yasaları, Azerbaycan

Introduction

It is known that modernization period of Azerbaijani literature started in second half of 19th century. This period was very important not only for social progress and also for literature in Azerbaijan. In this period Azerbaijani writers started to write their literary works in a style, which was different from the traditional one in Azerbaijani literature. They also gave the first examples of the modern theatre plays in this century (Isgoren, 2018: 160).

It is a known fact that the first realistic works of drama, which may be considered as an innovation for Azerbaijani literature started with Mirza Fatali Akhundov. The reason why Akhundov cared about drama was because he aimed to reach people and be intellectually effective to them. When viewed from this aspect, Akhundov, in terms of literary stance and approach to literature was not different from those who adopted Marxist literature. His main intention was very clear: He wrote for people to live their life freely and well. So he was (satirically) critical of dogmatic rules of the traditional morality in the Islamic world. It is possible to see his some opinions and aims in his letter to Ali Khan on 22 September 1872: *“My aim is to remove the ignorance, which undermines the Muslim people; to develop science and art, and to improve justice in order to increase the freedom, prosperity and wealth of our people...”* (Axundzadə, 2005: 168). However because of the censorship of tsarist Russia, it is known that Akhundov's dramas were not published in Turkish Language before 1859 (Akpınar, 1994: 53).

Considering the Azerbaijani drama, from Akhundov to Mirza Jalil, some prominent writers who were remarkable should be mentioned like Zerdabi, Najaf Beg Vezirov, Abdurrahim Beg Hakverdiyev, Nariman Narimanov etc. It can be said that all of them continued the realistic and critical style of Akhundov. Akhundov was the first one who brought the western theatre in Azerbaijan with his six comedies. He was quite keen on comedy genre. According to him, criticism was a strong instrument in order to struggle against the problems of the society (Qasımzadə: 1962: 130). This opinion was very close to Mirza Jalil, who regarded him as a respectable mentor. So in order to understand Mirza Jalil's literary perspective in his works, it would be useful to understand the literary approaches of Akhundov.

Mirza Jalil always wrote his works in Azerbaijani Turkish. According to the memoirs of his wife Hamide Mammadguluzadeh, his dramas, just like his other works, were written in difficult social and economical conditions. Yet it is known that Mirza Jalil managed to reach many people by writing, especially in his magazine Nasraddin which was published in Tibilisi, Tabriz and Baku. And that the magazine generally had a consistent style (of course it can be questionable and debatable during its latest stages, in the period of USSR) and a remarkable success made a significant contribution to Azerbaijani literature.

Mirza Jalil, throughout his life, wrote twelve theatre plays: “Çağ Dəstgahı” (Tea Set) in 1889, “Kişmiş Oyunu” (The game of Raisins) in 1892, “Ölülər” (The Corpses) in 1907-1909, “Kamança” (Kemanca) in 1920, “Anamın Kitabı” (The Book of My Mother) in 1920, “Lal” (The Mute) in 1921, “Oyunbazlar” (The players) in 1922, “Danabaş Kəndinin Müəllimi” (The Teacher of Danabash Village) in 1921, “Lənət” (The mute), “Dəli Yığıncağı” (The Madmen Gathering) in 1926, Yığıncaq (The Gathering) in 1928-1929, “Ər” (The Man) in 1930. Some of them are unfinished. Mirza Jalil's dramas include some moral and social criticism against the society which he lived in. And this made him very important in Azerbaijani literature.

Moral Approaches In His Dramas

It is known that Mirza Calil generally wrote against some religious moral rules in practice, or other traditional creeds in practice not only in his community Azerbaijan, also in all Middle East in his time. So he was always opposed to the idea of unquestioning obedience to rigid moral codes in his society. However, since some of moral rules were desirable and others undesirable to him, he also supported some of them whereas he objected to others. For instance he approved people helping each other, but he criticized practice of polygamy. It would be hardly accurate to assert that Mirza Jalil, even if he lived in a Muslim society, in his works, was opposed and critical to every moral conduct and value of his society, but he mostly criticized and even teased them, which he regarded as irrational in secular life.

How the moral rules are known? According to Bertrand Russell, “*the usual answer, historically, is that they are known by revelation and tradition.*” (Russell, 1927: 236). As one of Turkic societies adopted Islam, Azerbaijani people have common moral rules with other Muslim-Turkish societies, naturally with some differences. So it is possible to see some practices of taboo morality, which can be regarded by Mirza Jalil as pernicious or useful. For instance according to him, some of them like telling people the truth or being kind to people were useful, because they were based on reasonable grounds but not because they came from religious morality.

It is known that Mirza Jalil lived and wrote in both political terms of Azerbaijan: One is the tsarist regime and the other is the Soviet regime. In 1920, when the Bolsheviks came to power in Azerbaijan, Bolshevik ideology started to be indoctrinated then. And obedience to the communist party was regarded as a virtuous action. Mirza Jalil kept writing then, because Soviet regime in 1920s was not so strict as it was in 1930th (Kengerli, 2008: 37). Soviet Union adopted strict rules based on Stalin’s dogmatic principles in 1930th. But Mirza Jalil hardly changed his literary style and perspective in 1930th. But as far as it is known from his wife Mrs. Hamide’s memoirs, it is obvious that Mirza Jalil had a tough time in his last period. Yet Mirza Jalil, in his literary works - namely dramas-, approved and adopted some moral approaches rather than others. It would appear that the rules that Mirza Jalil mostly criticized came from revelation and tradition, but others that he generally supported were secular actions that he thought would produce “*harmonious rather than discordant desires*”. This is the supreme moral rule that Bertand Russell stated. According to him, “*acting so as to produce harmonious rather than discordant desires.*”(Russell, 1927: 242) should be a supreme moral rule. Because there would be a total satisfaction when two people’s desires harmonise than when they conflict (Russell, 1927: 240). So Mirza Jalil always showed tendency to this approach. Because he was opposed to hatred not only in his articles, but also in his life and works. For instance Mirza Jalil, in his play “Kamancha” written in Shusa in 1920, tried to make readers (or audience) feel that fighting needlessly with Ermanian people might be pointless. The compassion that the “Heroic Captain” shows for an Armenian lame bakshy who plays his instrument impressively, is one of the indicators of that. In the play, Gazanchi Armenians kill four young and brave Azerbaijani men. So the Captain and his men are full of hate against Armenians. And their intention is to kill the Armanien bakshy. But the bakshy is unaware of the situation. He is a lame, poor and needy man. When they intend to kill him, they notice his instrument. And the captain wants the bakshy to play it. He starts playing in the melody type “Rast” and “Shikestey-e Fars”. He plays so impressively that the captain and his men become speechless and extremely surprised by his talent. At the end of his performance the captain says: “*Oh my child, Armenian, tell me! What do you want from us? ... I am asking you, why are you not speaking? Are you deaf? Why don’t you leave us in peace?*” And the bakshy said: “*Oh sir! For God’s sake, I have done nothing.*” (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.I: 435). In this drama, what is particularly important is that the captain is impressed and fascinated by a beauty performed by their “enemy” and then ignores the social hatred and their revenge. Since the captain is convinced that the bakshy is an individual, who

doesn't have anything to do with the conflict between Armenian and Azerbaijani people, lets the bakshy go by saying *"Take your kamancha and get out of my sight!"*.

Mirza Jalil, in the outer world, held the view that hatred in a society was nonsense. For instance he often made mention of the conflicts between Armenians and Azerbaijanis that broke out immediately after the Russo - Japanese War (1904-05). It can be seen that Mirza Jalil usually tried to be analytical in his criticism, in his memoirs and essays. Because he, on the one hand, criticized Armenians when he saw hate-based actions, but on the other hand he appreciated them when he saw love-based ones. For instance, while he was trying to publish a newspaper (Novruz) in Azerbaijani Turkish, he criticized two Armanian censors, Kishmishov and Garakhanov, who were in charge of the censorship committee in "Tiffliski Listok" (Tibilisi Paper, published by Khachaturov in Russian) because they run a big campaign against Turkish press (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015: 96). But, on the other hand, when some Armenian provokers stirred up people in the Armanian district of Tibilisi, (where Mirza Jalil and other Azerbaijanis also lived) and Turkish press was captured by provokers, Mirza Jalil appreciated some Armenians with gratitude, because they were so kind to him: *"I remember two young Armenian guys with endless thanks, because they protected us in the Armenian district and helped us get our press back."* (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015: 89). It can be inferred from this approach that Mirza Jalil used to believe that *"there was more happiness to be derived from love, than from hate."* (Russell, 1927: 240).

Mirza Jalil ascribed the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis to the politics of tsarist Russia. He thought Russia fanned the flames of this conflict. He said:

"The hostility between Armenians and Muslims is a black mark in the history of these two neighbors and is a bloody memory. And whatever happened in the past, are over now. I say with my most sincere feelings and with all my soul that those dark days will permanently remain as sorrowful souvenirs in our country." (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015: 89)

And to him, Russia had an important role on this point:

"Then why do two neighbors, who fraternally lived together for centuries suddenly, turn out to be two predatory animals and make an attempt on eachother's life? Everyone was very aware of the situation and policy of tsarist Russia that had gotten weak in consequence of the Russo- Japanese War, and was able to see the animosity between Armenians and Muslims (Azerbaijanis) came in very handy for the policy of Peterbusg." (Məmmədquluzadə, 2015: 91).

Mirza Jalil's critical approaches about social and political issues in his memoirs and essays can be clearly seen in his literary fictions. It is also seen that he was very hard on some attitudes of his people in his dramas. He never consented to any kind of hostility among people, because of a political provocation or a social agitation based on hatred. For instance in "The game of Raisins", Armenians were fictionalised as victim. In this work, he intended to criticize some negative sides of his people by way of showing their deceit. And in "Kamancha", an Azerbaijani captain characterized as a high minded man doesn't let his friends kill a poor but talented bakshy. He is reluctant to allow his friend to treat him unfairly and ruthlessly. It would be more accurate to regard that Mirza Jalil, in the play "The Game of Raisins", was self-critical on behalf of the society to which he belonged. He created a story in his play "Kamancha" to convey that in a society, it might be seen all kinds of people who could have different conscience and opinions from those widely held among the public.

The conscientious attitudes of some people whose various values are criticized in "The Mute". There are two abandoned kids in the drama, one of them is 6 and the other one is 8 years old. They shiver in the cold, holding a piece of dry bread. The kids dressed in tatters constantly cry.

Four men come near the kids. One of them is an Azerbaijani dressed as an intellectual, one is a Muslim merchant, the other is a Muslim civil servant and the last one is a mute whose an unknown identity. They don't understand why the kids cry. Just then, it becomes noon and the intellectual one and the civil servant look at their watch and leave. The Muslim merchant also leaves for the prayer. Before leaving, all of them give the kids some money. Yet the kids continue to cry. When the mute sees the kids cry, he kneels and hugs them. Then the kids stop crying. And the mute leave there with the kids together. As it can be seen from here, in this drama Mirza Jalil doesn't care about any religious doctrines, beliefs, national belongings or social positions, but the practice of human actions. To him, all these actions should be reasoned. Mirza Jalil, tried to convey this by way of the mute character in the play.

It goes without saying that rational criticism is very important in his essays. This is also valid for his dramas. What kind of a rational criticism style he followed in his essays is surely another subject that can be discussed. But what is clear, is that he didn't adopt the strict moral codes of his society. He criticized it with the arguments, which he tried to base on reason. So it is clearly seen in these dramas that he disapproved moral conventions, which might be adopted by people whose humanity was blinded by social, political and religious dogmas. So when Mirza Jalil's essays in his magazin "Molla Nasraddin" and his works are considered from this point of view, it can be said that Mirza Jalil was a liberal-minded critic in his society.

Mirza Jalil wrote many essays relating to the social status of Azerbaijani women and he also broached this subject in his literary works. Even though he received many reactions because of these essays he published in "Molla Nasraddin", he never gave up dealing with the situation of "Azerbaijani women", comparatively with the other women both in the region and around the world. He always stood against those who regarded women as inferior because of the traditional morality in the society. In this regard he came to a conclusion in his essays and illustrations that the general condition of women in the Western civilization was better. In these works, he openly criticized the attitudes that he regarded as irrational in his society, whereas he approved the rational side of moral approaches of the Western civilisation. Mirza Jalil lived in Nakhchivan, Tibilisi, Tabriz and Baku. He had also opportunities to observe the social and cultural life in Moskov and Petersburg (Mehmetkuluzâde, 2002: XVIII). So this provided him some opportunities to compare and evaluate the politics and morality of the societies, which he lived in. In fact Mirza Jalil wasn't sure which moral rules in these societies were better. Because his intention was not to be on a side, but to find ways to increase the happiness of those whom he criticized. For instance Mirza Jalil, in his play "The Book of My Mother", dealt with the concept of cultural alienation in his society. He, in this play, characterized one Azerbaijani mother and her three sons who adopted and admired different cultures that they once lived in. And Mirza Jalil satirically portrayed their cultural conflicts. One of these conflicts, for instance, is that the three siblings who had been educated in France, Turkey and Iran couldn't often understand each other because they used different words in their native language. Consequently Mirza Jalil, here, asserted that the alienation about language and culture wouldn't lead to any satisfying results either. Another conflict is about the opinions of the siblings. The three siblings have different opinions relating to whom Gulbahar should get married to. In the play, Mr. Rustem who is a liberal one, stands against his sister's forced marriage. Even though Mr. Rustem states that his sister should get married to whoever she wants, he wishes her to get married to "Mr. Aslan", a western man. On the other hand, Mirza Mahmadali, who is a very bigoted one, wishes his sister to get married to Mirza Baksheli, an eastern man. And the last one, Samed Vahid, an intellectual and admirer of the Ottoman Empire, wishes his sister to get married to a literature teacher called Huseyin Shahid. But Gulbahar rejects all of them. She gets married to a shepherd called Gamber, whom she loves, understands and thinks to be happier with.

Mirza Jalil, always regarded the problems of women as sociological issues. He is not the first one to give a thought to this problem in Azerbaijani literature. Before Mirza Jalil, the problem of forced marriage in Azerbaijani society was addressed in some literary works. For instance

Abbasgulu Bakikhanov, in his work “Kitabi Əsgəriyyə” published in 1837 (Nəhmətova, 2013: 3), described a love story based on mutual love and respect between a man and a woman. And again, the story called “Rechid-bey at Saadete-Chanime” written in French, in 1835 by Ismail Bey Kutkashinli is very important in terms of equality between men and women. This story is based on a marriage arisen from the mutual love and respect of Mr. Reshid and Mrs. Saadet. He portrayed quite modern characters here (Baykara, 1996: 109). Another example can be seen in the works of Akhundov. Akhundov, as an innovative pioneer in Azerbaijani literature, was also a mentor for Mira Jalil. Akhundzade, in one of his comedies “Sərgüzəşti-vəzir-xani-Lənkəran” (The Vizier of the Lankaran Khan) criticized the phenomenon of forced marriage in 1850. So Mirza Jalil, in his essays “Mirzə Fətəli Axundov və Qadın Məsələsi” (Akhundov and The Woman Question), praised Akhundov for his innovations and contributions in the field of theatre in Azerbaijan. He especially appreciated Akhundov because he enabled the eastern women to get on the stage with men for the first time in Azerbaijani theatre (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.IV: 270).

Mirza Jalil, throughout his life, took a resolute stance on the freedom of women and he got into some serious trouble because of that. For instance he wrote an essay entitled “Erməni və Müsəlman Övrətləri” (Muslim and Armenian Women) in “Molla Nasraddin”. This essay, which was became the target of bigots, severely criticized the unnecessary insistence of the reactionary clerics that women had to wear chador (Mehmetkuluzade, 2002: 22). And that is why Mirza Jalil had to live in a house, where was far from the Muslim quarter but close to Georgians. (Mehmetkuluzade, 2002: 23) On the other hand Mrs. Hamide, because of the influence of this essay on herself, decided to get married to Mirza Jalil. Because Mrs. Hamide was close to the philosophy of life of Mirza Jalil. Mrs. Hamide said in her memoirs that when they were in Shusha in 1919, British General Digby Inglis Shuttleworth wanted to learn her name and then said that she reminded him the participants of the suffragette movement in England (Mehmetkuluzade, 2002: 87).

Mirza Jalil wasn't the first writer to object to some conventional moral codes in his society. Mirza Shefi Vazeh, in spite of being brought up in a moslem theological school, was critical of religious practices. This can be seen in his poet “Tulla Çadranı” (Shed Your Chador). The basic idea that dominates in this poet is that women shouldn't be outcast and ostracized from society. And when it comes to the subject of being critical of religious convictions, there is not much difference between his disciple Akhundov and him. Because Akhundov also received some serious reactions from the religious society. And what made Mirza Jalil different was that he, despite all the obstacles and poverty, tried to integrate his intellectual struggles in “Molla Nasraddin” with the fictional world he created in his dramas and short stories. That was one of the hallmarks of him. He questioned traditional taboos, which he thought would hinder social progress. For instance he, in his essay “Erməni və Müsəlman Övrətləri”, criticized the perspective of Muslim (Azerbaijani) men on Muslim women:

“We confine our women to the cell, but we attend the meetings of dancers and hug them...

We confine our women to the cell, but we spend the livelihood of our wife and daughter for foreign blonde whores.

We confine our women to the cell, but whenever we like a woman, we temporarily get married to her.” (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.II: 170).

As he was opposed to the idea of the mandatory chador for Muslim women in his society, he gave some examples in regard to the condition of Muslim women from other Muslim societies like Ottoman Empire and Iran. And he criticized that the religious men wanted to impose the chador on Muslim women, because they thought Muslim women would be dishonourable otherwise. Mira Jalil also accused them of double standards in their approach to Muslim women in

Azerbaijan. Mirza Jalil tried to make these moralists question in this essay: “*If our women are really dishonourable and shameless, then let’s not allow them to go out. However, is this true? Let’s face it; our assertion is true? Do we have any arguments to accuse our women of being faithless and impudent, or not?*”. The fundamental point that he accentuated in this essay is that:

“*I mean, no matter what their nationality are, it can not be asserted in general that some nations’ women are disreputable and dishonest whereas the others are faithful and honest. All human beings in the world today belong to the same species. People start being trained, after being born and they turn into an adult based on the way they are brought up.*” (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.II: 170).

Mirza Jalil compared Kant, Stuart Mill and Muslim clerics in terms of women's rights in his satirical essay “Filosoflar” (Philosophers) that he wrote in “Molla Nasraddin”, in 1908. He drew attention to the difference between their opinions. It can be clearly said that Mirza Jalil discussed many subjects about women, differently from the majority of his community. One of his dramas in which he dealt with woman questions is “The Corpses”. He, in this play, criticized the moral rules which he thought the majority of people got accustomed to. “The Corpses” is like a declaration against some doctrines of conventional morality. So this play is important in terms of not only freedom of women and also stance of intellectual people in Azerbaijan.

In the play, the main protagonist Iskender says to his sister: “*My dear sister, you are staying at home from morning till night, learning from your mother how to cook Bozbash; but why don’t you come to me so that I can talk about the cities where I’ve been to and so you can see what is going on in the world.*” Iskender is portrayed as a secular and an open-minded character in the drama. He was educated in France. He is not understood by his community. He constantly drinks alcohol because he witnesses sad situations in his community. Mirza Jalil especially fictionalized this behaviour, which was disapproved by the society because of their religious doctrine. In the drama, Iskender is the only one who defends his sister against the other family members, when his sister Nazli 12 year-old is forced to get married to Nasrullah whom she doesn’t want.

In the drama “The Corpses”, Iskender struggles with the antagonist Sheikh Nasrullah. Nasrullah claims to resurrect people and many people who hear that miracle believe in him with all their heart. But he doesn’t like it when people question what he says; he just wants them to obey him. So he built a reign of fear, by taking advantage of the weaknesses of people who believe in miracles and revelations as a part of their religious belief. For instance Iskender drinks alcohol and thinks that his sister shouldn’t be forced to wear chador. Then Nasrullah manipulates the community and fans the flame of their hatred against Iskender because he drinks alcohol (religiously forbidden) and objects to the traditional practice (wearing chador), both of which is regarded as heresy. Mirza Jalil was, not only in this drama, but also in other essays and literary works, always opposed to child marriages or early marriages. In this drama, he also criticized this tradition. Because in the early part of twentieth century, it is known that Azerbaijan as a Muslim society traditionally had high levels of early first marriages (UNFPA, 2014: 4). Of course there were different reasons for that like mentality, different religious beliefs, customs and traditions, and they all played an important role in early marriage (UNFPA, 2014: 4). Mirza Jalil who regarded these as religious and traditional practices in an Islamic society, told that “The Corpses” was based on a true story in the outer world (Mehmetkuluzade, 2002: 41). So he created Sheikh Nasrullah.

Mirza Jalil used some quotations in this drama. The antagonist character Sheikh Nasrullah recites the words of Imam Sadik, who is a cleric in the outer world. When Nasrullah says the words in Persian (the original language) the crowd starts admiring him and they get sentimental. Mirza Jalil maybe especially preferred to make Sheikh Nasrullah speak in Persian language, which people couldn’t understand properly. Because Mirza Jalil, always disapproved the attitudes of people who emotionally believe in anything without understanding. A similar motif can also be seen in various

places in this drama. The real reason why people cry has nothing to do with rational argumentation. This clearly shows what Mirza Jalil thought about religious practices. As Bertrand Russell stated in "Why I am not a Christian", Mirza Jalil also thought that the real reason why people in his society accepted religion had nothing to do with argumentation, they accepted religion on emotional grounds. (Russell, 2015: 15) And it can be clearly seen in his literary works including this drama.

In "The Corpses", the dominant idea is that: The people who refuse to be rational and adopt the idea of obedience are already dead. That is why the drama was called "Ölüler" (corpses / dead people). When Sheikh Nasrullah demands the daughter of Hajji Hasan, Hajji Hasan himself forces his daughter to go to Sheikh Nasrullah. And Hajji Hasan even challenges Iskender who stands against him, saying "*If she is not willing to go, I will break her ribs.*" In the drama it is emphasized that fanaticism hinders people from thinking rationally.

The subject of science and education is dealt with by means of a village teacher in "The Teacher of Danabash Village". Hasanov is described as a very tolerant, patient and also progressive teacher. He is assigned by the government to Danabash Village in which there are no schools at all. Hasanov talks and socializes with people there. Even though the people in the village are described as illiterate and ignorant, they ask pretty sensible questions and express their opinions within the framework of their own world. For instance when Hasanov gives some information about the anatomy of grasshopper, a character called "Qasim Kishi" tells him that it is not important to know where the eyes of a grasshopper are but it is more functional and meaningful for them to know how to prevent grasshoppers from eating their plants. Another example, when Hasanov explains the word "ot" has two phonemes, a cleric objects to him and asserts there are three letters there. Both points of view have merit, because according to Hasanov, who educated in Russia, the word consists of two phonemes /o/ and /t/; but according to the cleric who reads Arabic alphabet (because at that time, the Arabic alphabet was used among Muslim community) the same word consists of three letters /ا/, /و/ and /ت/.

Since Hasanov knows that they have their own social dynamics, he tries to be compatible with them. For instance, even though he has a tendency to be a secular one, he prays in Arabic and wants them to repeat himself before the lesson. Mirza Jalil, in this drama, fictionalized Hasanov as a character, who is very similar to Aleksey Osipovich Chernyayevsky (алексей осипович черняевский). Because Aleksey Osipovich was an innovative teacher who was closely associated with scientific pedagogy. Even though he was a Russian origin teacher, he was born in Shamakhi and according to the statements of Feridun Bey Kocherli, he spoke Azerbaijani Turkish and knew its alphabet (based on Arabic) very well. Feridun Bey wrote "*In our opinion, the book 'Vətən Dili' (Native Language) written by Chernyayevsky is as precious to Azerbaijani schools as the book 'Radnoye Slovo' (Native Word) written by Ushinsky is to Russian schools.*" (Nəzirli, 2011: 107) Chernyayevsky, who was influenced by Konstantin Dmitrievich Ushinsky (Anar, 2008: 76), influenced Mirza Jalil in terms of modern pedagogy. And Ushinsky was also influenced by John Locke and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Chernyayevsky, in Azerbaijani literature, was also fictionalized as a historical character in the novel of Ismail Sikhli "Deli Kür". Chernyayevsky, whom Mirza Jalil loved and admired so much (Mehmetkuluzade, 2002: 4) tried to teach his textbook "Native Language" instead of classical literary books like poetry of Khafiz. It can be said that the efforts of Chernyayevsky contributed some new methods to Azerbaijani education by his book "Native Language". So a similar approach is seemed in the drama. Hasanov wants to teach Chernyayevsky's "Native Language" instead of poetry of Saadi. Hasanov also breaks the traditional rules of education here. And at the end of the drama, he talks about the importance of those pedagogs like Chernyayevsky, Ushinsky and Nikolay Ivanovich Pirogov (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.I: 509).

Another important drama of Mirza Jalil is "The Madmen Gathering". There are two groups of people in the drama: One group is described as ordinary, sane or senile; and the other group is

described as mental patient, insane or mad. The people in the first group believe in some religious superstitions. On the other hand the people in the second group regard those religious superstitions as intellectual nonsense and funny. And this approach also makes them very sensible in the drama. For instance main protagonist Molla Abbas, who was brought up and educated in a religious society, but then apostatized from his old faith (Əlimirzəyev, 1979: 226) makes fun of praying in a certain position and expects to be recovered (Məmmədquluzadə, 2004, V.I:535). The antagonist character, Fazil Mehmed, is portrayed as an exploitative moralist man, who can practise anything in the name of religion. He is described here as a hypocritical man who tries to use people's traditional beliefs to excuse his exploitative behaviors. This drama is very close to "The Corpses" in terms of the critique of irrational and traditional morality that can not be acceptable in the modern age of Azerbaijan. "The Madmen Gathering" is a comedy that can make audience or readers look inside and make them question some aspects of their irrational traditions.

Towards the end of his period, Mirza Jalil had some difficulties about Bolshevik policy. It first began to emerge around 1920. Bolshevik policy alleged that Mirza Jalil, because of his criticism, damaged their political relations with Iran. According to his wife, Mirza Jalil initially belived in Bolshevik revolution because of their promises of freedom. But it is known that he had a dissapointment about that (Askerova, 2006: 269). He was obliged to write some complimentary essays for the Bolshevik government in his magazine "Molla Nasraddin", which gradually lost its own value because it diverted from the aim. So his life between 1929 and 1932 was quite difficult. He was blamed for being inadequate in political issues. The name of his magazine was changed as "Allahsız" (Godless) in 1931. Even though Mirza Jalil objected to this decision, the magazine was published untill 1933 without Mirza Jalil.

Conclusion

It is known that even though Mirza Jalil was born in a religious family and society, he'd rather live a secular life and he always remained suspicious about beliving any supernatural faith. And it clearly seems from his memoirs, essays and the memoir of his wife Mrs. Hamide that that his opinions were reflected in his literary works, especially dramas, since he thought it was an effective way to reach to vast majority of people. Since moral codes always differ in different times and places to a great extent, Mirza Jalil's life and works within the time and place have been taken into account in this examination.

The moral rules which Mirza Jalil mostly criticized in his dramas were those that came from religious revelation and tradition. It seems that he supported secular actions that he thought would produce compatible and concordant congruity for people. It is always possible to see an exaggerated contradicton in his dramas, arised from different emotional feelings. For instance some characters are very fanatic and bigoted, whereas some of them are rational and aware of the dangers of religious fanaticism to humanity. To Mirza Jalil people should tolerate each other rather than hate. And it is only possible with reason. So he always paid attention to reason in his dramas. It would be accurate to say that he objected to unquestionable customs, a strictly standardized morality and dogmatic sanctions in society.

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