

# Children in the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh<sup>#</sup>

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Accepted 11 July, 2023

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## ABSTRACT

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh are among the leading literary figures in the world of emotions, thought, and culture of the nations to which they belong. Children play an important role in the poems of these three intellectual leaders of Türkiye, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan. In Mehmet Akif Ersoy's *Safahat*, Muhammad Iqbal's *A Mother's Dream*, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *Autumn Thoughts*, *A Day Worth A Thousand Months*, and *Talking to Myself*, poems, children are the heirs and bearers of the civilization to which they belong and are carefully emphasized. In their poems, all three poets see children as the assurance of the future and try to approach them with love and compassion. In the poems of all three poets who see children as the architects of the future, it is emphasized that they should be well-raised, hardworking, religiously sensitive, and well-educated. All three poets emphasized the importance of raising children as educated and conscious individuals; they share the idea that generations that respect their religion, culture, customs, traditions, elders, and ancestors will glorify Islamic civilization. This study analyzes the representation of children in the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh. The poems analyzed in this study include Mehmet Akif's *Safahat*, Muhammad Iqbal's *A Mother's Dream*, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's *Autumn Thoughts*, *A Day Worth A Thousand Months*, and *Talking to Myself*, poems. On the basis of the poems examined under the title "Child", the perceptions of children and the purposes of value transfer to children of all three poets were comparatively analyzed.

**Keywords:** Child, poem, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh.

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<sup>#</sup>This study is an improved version of the paper presented at the International Three Countries Three Thinkers Symposium held at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University on October 16-17, 2014.

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## INTRODUCTION

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh are three important poets who symbolized the independence of Türkiye, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan with their fighting and leading personalities. With a wealth of knowledge about their countries and Islamic civilization, these three masters had the task of influencing and shaping the future of their nations. It is the common characteristic of these poets to instill in the people the spirit of struggle for the independence of their oppressed and occupied homeland, to revive the national resistance, and to adhere to Islam. All three poets have personally

experienced the dark periods of their nations, assumed the responsibility of intellectuals in the difficult times of their countries, and tried to construct the future of the geography in which they lived. For example, "Mehmet Akif and Muhammad Iqbal, two great poets of the Islamic ummah, are two soul twins, two brothers, two comrades. Few are as similar and cross paths as they are. [...] They are both founding poets. Both were Islamists. Both of them were concerned with nothing but the dignity of Islam and the ummah. While Iqbal was trying to galvanize the depressed Hindu peninsula, Akif was raising his voice in

the Ottoman homeland” (Şahin, 2008, p. 55). Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is the representative of the strong voice of Mehmet Akif and Muhammad Iqbal in Azerbaijan. Akpınar (2011) characterizes him as a poet who articulates national problems and builds his wise poetry over time by deepening his feelings and thoughts about humanity and time (p. 13). The reason why all three poets are considered wise and pioneering is that they had social sensitivity, shed light on the future of the geography in which they lived, and led their country through a difficult period.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh believed that a happy and peaceful future in the geography they lived in could only be achieved through knowledge, faith, and work, and by assuming intellectual responsibility for the nation and ummah to which they belonged. In their opinion, a Muslim should be knowledgeable in all aspects of life, adhere to the faith, avoid hesitation, and never compromise on diligence. In fact, “Mehmet Akif does not accept ‘half knowledge or half morality. For him, learning and knowledge are a complete thirst. He gladly suffers many hardships for this cause. He has been taking many lessons from Neyzen Tevfik for months. He endures many hardships for this cause” (Yetiş, 2006, p. 42). Similarly, when Muhammad Iqbal talks about the past, he is not stuck in the past; he looks to the future by analyzing the ‘past’ and the ‘present.’ He examines the individual, society, religion, culture, politics, and many other topics individually, draws conclusions about their interrelationships and consequences, and produces messages that shed light on the future of Muslim nations with his ideas” (Soydan, 2013, p. 213). Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, “as a patriot who understands and interprets the realities, history, and present of his homeland, he wants to shed light on the future and be the spokesman of his people” (Mayadağlı, 2010, p. 137). In all three poets, “the child” forms the basis of the unity of determination, enthusiasm, hope, and ideals for the future. For them, elements such as language, beliefs, traditions, and culture from the past to the present can only be carried into the future by children.

Aware that the future of nations lies in children, “child” occupies an important place in the poetry of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh. All three poets use poetry as a means of addressing the generations under enemy occupation and oppression in their homelands and try to address them with excellent examples of the mother tongue so that children can be educated and nourished with their poetry. At this point, poetry has the characteristic of being an effective genre in the child’s world of association and thought, especially in the world of emotions. Poems have a great effect on children in terms of their feelings of beauty, humanity, and love for their nation and country. Poetry has a great function in the education of children in terms of loving the mother tongue, introducing its richness, and teaching the artistic expression of feelings, thoughts, and impressions (Oğuzkan, 2013, p. 250). For this reason, all three poets

are concerned with educating the reader by raising his or her awareness and guiding him or her by instilling national and spiritual values.

## METHODOLOGY

This study examines how the concept of “child” is treated in the poetry of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh.

### Research design

This study employed the method of document analysis, which involves the analysis of written materials that contain information about the phenomenon or phenomena in question (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2018, p. 189). The purpose of this research was to explore the depiction of the “child” in Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s *Safahat*, Muhammad Iqbal’s *A Mother’s Dream*, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s *Autumn Thoughts*, *A Day Worth A Thousand Months*, *Talking to Myself*, and *Poems*. Purposive sampling was used to select information-rich cases that fit the purpose of the study and allowed for in-depth study (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, and Demirel, 2013, p. 90).

### Documents analyzed

The scope of the study consists of the poems titled “Hüsrân-ı Mübîn”, “Çocuklara”, “Hürriyet”, “Âmin Alayı”, “Azim”, “Fâtih Câmiî”, “Bebek or Hakk-ı Karâr”, “Selmâ”, “Ahiret Yolu”, “Küfe”, “Bayram”, “Kocakarı ile Ömer”, “Hasta”, “Seyfi Baba”, “Meyhane” in Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s *Safahat*; “Çocukluk Günleri”, “Ey Ufak Bebek!”, “Bir Annenin Rüyası”, “Çocuğun Duası”, “Çocuk ile Mum”, “Yeryüzü Allah’ındır”, “Namaz”, “Hârunürreşîd’in Son Nasihati”, “Ey Öğrenci!”, “Öğretmenlere” in Muhammad Iqbal’s *A Mother’s Dream*; “Ana Dili” in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s *Autumn Thoughts*, “Annem Yeniden Büyüyor”, “Aynı Binada Doğduk”, “Babamın Kulübesi”, “Babam, Atam, Ben”, “Korku”, “Benim Ad Günlerim”, “Karusel-Atlıkarınca”, “Yakın, Uzak Oldu” in his *A Day Worth A Thousand Months*, “Anne ve Evlatlar”, “Yetim Yuvası” in his *Talking to Myself*, “Yaşdan Gileyliem”, “Menim Anam” in his *Poems*.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Children in Mehmet Akif Ersoy’s poems

Mehmet Akif Ersoy (1873-1936) was not only a poet but also a thinker, translator, editor-in-chief of *Sirat-ı Müstakîm-Sebîlürreşâd* magazines, first deputy of Burdur Parliament, and the famous poet behind the national

anthem. During his lifetime, he devoted his attention to a wide range of issues and his works had a deep impact on society. Mehmet Akif Ersoy was an exceptional and gifted individual due to his diverse talents and remarkable contributions. He paid attention to all the issues of his time, resonated in society with his works in a very wide range of fields, and is an outstanding and talented person. His poems contain all the turmoil that the Turkish nation experienced in the first quarter of the 20th century” (Ercilasun, 2021, p. 44). Children and childhood are one of the themes that Mehmet Akif emphasizes in his poems. His poetry often includes children, whom he considers to be very special and precious. Arabacı (2022) attributes Mehmet Akif’s interest and love for children primarily to the fact that he gave his safahat to his student Mehmet Ali and that he believed that the way to understand humanity was to show interest and compassion to children (p. 97). Gürel (2016) points out that Akif, who acted with awareness and care for children, had a special interest in children and characterized them as the “generation of Asım,” the faithful generation he envisioned (p. 193). In the eyes of the poet, Asım’s generation is an exemplary youth model with knowledge, morality, and virtue in the eyes of the poet. Karakoç (1987) states that Akif saw this generation, which he longed for and applauded, as the generation of the future that suddenly rose to greatness in war and assumed success, superiority, and virtue in peace (p. 40). The poet, who especially includes his childhood impressions and observations about children in *Safahat*, is both a father of many children and a person who has a deep love and affection for children. Doğan (2015) argues that in the poems “Fatih Camii, Küfe, Meyhane, Hasta, Mezarlık, Bayram, Selma, Azim, Hürriyet, Kocakarı ile Ömer, Dirvas, Seyfi Baba, Âmin Alayı, Bebek or Hakk-ı Karar” in *Safahat*, Mehmet Akif portrays children who are sick, orphaned, poor, hungry, unable to study, and in need of attention and compassion (p. 178). Giving children such an important place in his poems is an indication of his interest in and love for children.

The difficult period in the country and the long years of war had a great influence on Akif’s concern for children surrounded by poverty and desolation. His poem “Hüsrân-ı Mübîn” is important in showing the negative traces of the period and the social atmosphere on children. As a matter of fact, in the verses of “Başlattığı gün mektebe, duydum ki, diyordu / Rahmetli babam: ‘Âdem olur oğlum ilerde.’ / Annemse, oturmuş, paşalıklar kuruyordu / Âdemliği geçtik! Paşalık olsun, o nerde? / Âmalı tezâd üzre giderken ebeveynin / Hep böyle harâb olmada etfâl ara yerde!” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 111), the poet expresses his grief that the children, who were expected to be good and successful people who would become pashas by studying in the eyes of their parents, were wasted away in the difficult period they were in. In this poem, the story of children who are left in the wild and ruined in the grip of poverty, orphanhood, and indifference is told.

Despite all the negativities of the difficult period, in Akif’s

eyes, the child is the symbol of hope, future, and dynamism, the forward carrier and architect of Turkish-Islamic civilization. In the minds of the new generation taking on this role, there must be a place for Islamic sensitivity as well as dynamism. The good education of children is of great importance in determining the future of both the nation and the Islamic civilization. Indeed, the new generation must be aware and vigilant in the face of the expansionist/exploitative policies accelerated by the West’s advances in science and technology. In his poem entitled “Çocuklara” written under a photograph he took with his sons Emin and Tahir in Egypt, Akif self-criticizes himself and the period in which he grew up, and describes the bold generation he longs for with the following words: “*Ne odunmuş babanız: Olmadı bir baltaya sap! / Ona siz benzemeyin, sonra ateştir yolunuz / Meşe hâlinde yaşanmaz, o zamanlar geçti / Gelen incelmış adam devri, hemen yontulunuz / Ama dikkatli olun: Bir kafanız yontulacak / Sakın aldanmayın: İncelmeye gelmez kolunuz!*” (Ersoy, 1990, s. 420). He believes that hardworking children and youth who value reason, science, and education will develop and strengthen Islamic civilization.

Âkif believes that enlightenment and liberation from Western civilization can be achieved through education. Islamic civilization can be salvaged from the decadence it has fallen into through reason, by acquiring the science and knowledge of the West but staying away from its morality (exploitative, materialistic, and hedonistic morality). The first and most important thing necessary for this is to abandon laziness and encourage work (Taşdelen, 2008, p. 152).

Children and youth are Akif’s hope on this path. In fact, in the poem “Hürriyet,” he expresses his belief that the country and the future are in the hands of children, that new generations will shape the future, saying “*Ya şu oğlan şu tostopaç afacan / Ki fezâlar gelir sürûruna dar / Taşıyor sanki sığmıyor kabına / Kendisinden büyük de bayrağı var / Geçti mâzî denen o devr-i melâl / Haydi feth et: Senindir istikbâl*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 73). The poet says that the children who have been raised by a sad generation that has been tested by all kinds of hardships and difficulties are filled with joy as the bad days are behind them and they are no longer overwhelmed by the liveliness and agility in their behavior. According to Akif, the future belongs to these happy children and the exuberant mood fostered by their vitality and mobility will effectively shape it.

In his poem “Âmin Alayı”, Mehmet Akif says, “*Evet, ilerlemek isterse kârbân-ı şebâb / Yolunda durmaya gelmez. O, çünkü durmuyarak / Sabâh-ı sermed-i âtiye eylemekte şitâb / O çünkü isteyemez hâle katlanıp durmak*

/ *Onun kudümü için nâzenîn-i istikbâl / Açar da sîne, o olmaz mı per-güşâ-yi visâl / Durur mu artık onun karşısında, mâzî, hâl*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 119), To express the desire of children and young people to break free from the past and the present and to spread their wings and fly into the future. With these verses, he emphasizes that when the caravan of youth wants to move forward, it will recognize no obstacles in its path and that the past and the present will never stand in its way. His verses “— *Siz ey heyâkil-i bî-rûhu devr-i mâzînin / Dikilmeyin yoluna kârbân-ı âtînin / Nedir târikını kesmekte böyle isti’câl / Durun, ilerlesin Allâh için, şu istikbâl*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 119) are a clear sign that he trusts children and young people, in short, the new generation. Akif opposes the efforts of the generation, which he characterizes as the soulless statues of the past, to block the path and enthusiasm for progress of the new generation. Believing that only with this enthusiasm and dynamism can the sluggishness and lethargy of the past be overcome, the poet expresses that all his hope lies in “youths”, that is, “the future generation”. Again, in the poem “Âmin Alayı”, he compares the child to an angel by saying “*En önde, rahlesi âgûş-i ihtirâmında / Ağır ağır yürüyen bir dokuz yaşında melek*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 118). This metaphor reveals that he sees children as beings as pure and clean as angels. In Akif’s poems, the child is a very special and precious being that adults protect and adore. In fact, the verses “— *Biz de gitsek azıcık, ağababa, olmaz mı? / — Gidin / Çok koşup terlemeyin ha! Amanın dikkat edin*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 74) in the poem “Hürriyet” is evidence that in the Turkish-Islamic world children are cared for and protected by adults and parents. Similarly, in the poem “Azim” there is a father who, despite losing his child in the desert, does not lose his determination to search and finally finds his son and finds peace. In the verse “*Gördüm ki ciğer-pâresinin tutmuş elinden*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 53), Akif describes the happiness and affection of a father whose efforts have borne fruit for his child. Akif, who attaches such value to the child that it is part of the father’s lungs, describes it as the light of his eyes in the verse “*Gördüm gözümün nûrunu karşımda nihâyet*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 53). The joy of this father, who searches for his lost son in the desert and does not let him die, reveals the love of children.

In addition to his love for children, Mehmet Akif, who valued them highly, was a child himself. This child, raised in a family of scholars, shares a childhood memory in his poem “Fâtih Câmii” in *Safahat*, saying “*Sekiz yaşında kadardım. Babam gelir: ‘Bu gece / Sizinle câmi’ e gitsek çocuklar erkene / Giderseniz gelin amma namazda uslu durun / Merâmınız yaramazlıksa işte ev, oturun’ / Deyip alırdı beraber benimle kardeşimi / Namâza durdu mu, hâliyle koyverir peşimi / Dalar giderdi. Ben artık kalınca âzâde / Ne âşikâne koşardım hasırlar üstünde*” (Ersoy, 1990, pp. 6-7). In these verses, the love of Akif’s father, Mehmet Tahir Efendi, one of the madrasah teachers of Fatih Mosque, for children and the religious sensitivity he showed while raising them come to the fore. Tahir Efendi

tried to introduce his children to the mosque and worship at an early age, and his desire to raise individuals with good morals is remarkable. In fulfilling this desire, he takes on the role of a caring father who pleads with and respects his children rather than ordering them around. This tolerant father gives his children the right to choose and prepares them for life by giving them advice. As a matter of fact, Akif expresses his love and gratitude to his father, who was the first teacher in his life, in “Hakkın Sesleri” with the following words: “My father was İpekli Hoca Tâhir Efendi, one of the Fâtih mudarris, who was both my father and my teacher. I learned everything I know from him.” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 171). Another prominent theme for children in “Fâtih Câmii” is “play”. Considered an innate biological need, just like eating and sleeping, play is considered a necessity for children’s physical, emotional and social development (Kurt and Özkaya, 2015, p. 125). This need, which is indispensable for children and does not need time and space, is “a complex human behavior. It is a dynamic process involving interest, spontaneity and fun” (Özdoğan, 2004, p. 101). Play has an important role in the child’s maturation and self-realization. Mehmet Akif’s running on mats in a sacred place like a mosque while his father was busy praying and turning it into a playground is an indication of both child purity and love and tolerance towards children. As a matter of fact, it is possible to see the traces of the Prophet Muhammad’s understanding of not building a wall between children and the mosque in Mehmet Tahir Efendi.

Another poem in *Safahat* in which Mehmet Akif includes games and toys is “Bebek yâhud Hakk-ı Karâr”. In this poem, the poet describes his daughters Cemile and Feride’s fondness for dolls in the following verses “*Bizim Cemîle Ferîde yle bir sabah gelerek / ‘Unutma beybaba, akşam birer hotozlu bebek / Getir, kuzum...’ dediler. Ben de kızların keyfi / Kırılmasın diye reddetmedim şu teklifi / Kiraz dudaklı, üzüm gözlü, inci dişli, iki / Edâlı yosma getirdim. Aman o akşamki / Sevinme hâlini bir görmeliydi yavruların! / Durup oturmadılar hiç, dedim: ‘Yatın da yarın / Bütün gün oynayınız...’ Nerde! Kim yatar?’*” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 123). The poem emphasizes the joy of the children when the father character returns home with toys in the evening, and reveals the children’s interest and love for play and toys. In “Bebek yâhud Hakk-ı Karâr”, it is seen that Mehmet Akif has the character of a loving and understanding father who values his daughters, cares about their wishes, and meets their toy needs immediately. In the poem, the fact that his daughters specifically ask Akif for a turbaned doll is an indication of religious, national and cultural sensitivity. As a matter of fact, Egemen, Yılmaz and Akil (2004) underline that although the doll is universal in terms of its psychological effects on human history, children especially need dolls that carry their own cultural and ethnic roots (p. 40). At this point, it is noteworthy that girls ask their fathers for a doll with a hotoz, a kind of ornate headdress that women used to wear on their heads (Ayverdi, 2010), which is a sign of their attachment to their

national culture. In this poem, Akif skillfully depicts the place of toys in the children's world by emphasizing the joy, happiness and purity of five-year-old Feride and seven-year-old Cemile, who are reunited with their toys.

Another phenomenon that comes to the fore in Mehmet Akif's poems when it comes to children is "death". Traces from his own life are effective in the poet's view of death and his sadness in the face of death. Akif, who lost his first son İbrahim Naîm at the age of one and a half, writes a poem titled "Selmâ" for his sister Nuriye's daughter who died at the age of four. At the beginning of the poem, Akif reveals the fact that he witnessed the death of his niece Selma by saying, "Yeğenimdir. Dört yaşında öldü" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 45) and describes this death, which overwhelmed the family with sadness, in the following verses: "Ne manzaraydı ki bir kuş kadar uçan o melek / Dururdu bîhareket, kol kanad kımıldamıyor! / Gözünde nûr-i nazar titriyor, hemen sönecek / Dudakta nâtika donmuş; kulak söz anlamıyor! / Tûrâb rengine girmiş cebî-i sîmîni / Ölüm merâreti duyduğum, öpünce leblerini!" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 46). By saying that he tasted the bitterness of death while kissing the little lips of his niece Selma, the poet reveals the chill he felt at this catastrophic scene and the helplessness of human beings in the face of death. The heartbreaking situation of a mother, Mrs. Nuriye, who cannot do anything while her sick daughter is passing away on her deathbed and who has witnessed the deaths of her four previous offspring, is expressed in the poem with the verses "Kesildi kardeşin artık yemekten, içmekten / Lâkırdı dinlemiyor, kendini helâk ediyor" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 46). With this warning from his mother, Emine Şerife Hanım, Akif tries to distract his sister Nuriye from her depression and resentment of life.

One of the themes that Mehmet Akif, who often includes the phenomenon of death in his poems, deals with in *Safahat* is orphanhood. The poet, who himself was orphaned at the age of fourteen, often deals with fatherless children in his poems. In "Ahiret Yolu", he describes the plight of a child orphaned at the age of five with the verses "— Zavallı Remziye! Boynun büküldü evlâdım / — Babam ne oldu? / — Baban... Öldü / — Etme Ayşe Hanım / Bu söylenir mi ya? Hicrân olur zavallı kıza / — Ayol, şu öksüzü bir parçacık avutsanıza / Açın da cumbayı etrâfa baksın ağlasın / Göründü cumbada baktım ki tombalak, sarışın / Sevimli bir küçücek kız... Beşinde ancak var / Donuk yanakları üstünde parlayan yaşlar / Zavallının eriyen rûh-i bî-günâhı idi / Benim o mersiye yâdımda ağlıyor ebedî" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 113). In this poem, Akif reflects the anguish of a little girl who witnesses her father's coffin being carried past her house for the last time and her mother lamenting, "— Yıkıldı dostlar evim, barkım... Âh gitti kocam!" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 112). Remziye's asking those around her what happened to her father is an indication of the care given to childlike purity in the poem. Akif's pain for the orphaned children can be seen in the tears that roll down her cheeks when she receives the answer, "Baban... Öldü." (Ersoy, 1990, p. 113) in response to Remziye's

innocent question. The poet, who believes that Remziye, who was orphaned at the age of five, will carry the bad traces of this catastrophic event for the rest of her life, draws attention to the devastation caused by fatherlessness in the psychology of children by saying "Sükûn içinde uyurken şu bir yığın toprak / İlel'ebed o küçük rûh çırpınıp duracak!" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 115).

In Mehmet Akif's poem *Küfe*, which tells the story of an orphan boy's difficult life struggle, Hasan, an orphan who lost his porter father at the age of thirteen, cannot go to school and works as a porter. Although Hasan is a smart and hardworking boy, he drops out of school, takes the big basket on his back, and starts to support the household as a porter, his father's profession. However, Hasan, who tries to take out his anger on his father by kicking the big basket that he believes to be the cause of his father's death, has only one ideal: to get an education. Although Hasan expresses his desire to study by reproaching his mother by saying, "Okutma sen de hamal yap bu yaşta şimdi beni!" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 19), he cannot escape the heavy responsibility that fate has imposed on him. The poet is saddened by the prospect of Hasan's life without education and school, full of difficulties under the weight of the big basket, and advises him, "Fakat, baban sana ısmarlayıp da gitti sizi / O, bunca yıl çalışıp alınının teriyle seni / Nasıl büyüttü? Bugün, sen de kendi kardeşini / Yetim bırakmıyarak besleyip büyütmelisin" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 19). Another topic that Akif advises the children on "*Küfe*" is the importance of halal income. The words of Hasan's widowed mother: "— Oh benim oğlum, gel etme kırma sakın! / Ne istedin küfeden yavrum? Ağzı yok, dili yok / Baban sekiz sene kullandı... Hem de derdi ki: 'Çok / Uğurlu bir küfedir, kalmadım hemen yüksüz' / Baban gidince demek kaldı âdetâ öksüz! / Onunla besliyeceksin ananla kardeşini / Bebek misin daha öğrenmedin mi sen işini?" (Ersoy, 1990, pp. 18-19) reveals that people should work and eat halal food even under the most difficult conditions. At the end of the poem, the poet witnesses Hasan's physical and mental collapse under the harsh working conditions and is deeply saddened by this situation. Akif compares the innocent Hasan, who carries loads on the street instead of going to school, to a prisoner and describes the disaster that fatherlessness and poverty cause to the body of an orphaned child in the following verses: "Geçende Fâtih'e çıktık ikindi üstü biraz / Kömürcüler kapısından girince biz, develer / Kızın merâkını celbettî, dâima da eder / O yamrı yumru beden, upuzun boyun, o bacak / O arkasındaki püskül ki kuyruğu olacak! / Hakikaten görecek şey değil mi ya? Derken / Dönünce arkama, baktım: Beş on adım geriden / Belinde enlice bir şal, başında âbâni / Bir orta boylu, güler yüzlü pîr-i nûrânî / Yanında koskocaman bir küfeyle bir çocuk / Yavaş yavaş geliyorlar. Fakat tesâdüfe bak / Çocuk, benim o sabah gördüğüm zavallı yetim / Şu var ki, yavrucağın hâli eskisinden elim / Cılız bacaklarının dizden altı çırçıplak / Bir ince mintanın altında titriyor, donacak! / Ayakta kundura yok, başta var mı fes? Ne gezer! /

*Düğümlü alnının üstünde sâde bir çember / Nefes değil o soluklar, kesik kesik feryad / Nazar değil o bakışlar, dümû-i istimdad / Bu bir ayaklı sefâlet ki yalnayak, baş açık / On üç yaşında buruşmuş cebîn-i sâfi, yazık!*" (Ersoy, 1990, s. 20). While his peers are happily going home after school, Hasan's miserable situation is depicted in the poem. Akif feels great sorrow for this orphan, shivering in the cold and working as a porter, with his skinny body under his thin clothes, his bare feet, his spindly legs, and his tears begging for help. With the expression "O, yük değil, kaderin bir cezâsı *ma'sûma*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 20), the poet compares the big basket to the weight (crushing of life) on the backs of all orphans in Hasan's/Hasan's eyes.

After painting a portrait of enthusiasm and celebration in the poem "Bayram", in which Mehmet Akif gives his impressions of the Fatih district on a festival day, he again brings the word to an orphaned girl and her sorrow. In the introduction to the poem, the poet assesses the festival as "*Âfâk bütün hande, cihan başka cihandır / Bayram ne kadar hoş, ne şetâretli zamandır!*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 39), describing the joy and enthusiasm of happy holidays. Throughout the poem, Akif describes the joy and fun of the children during the holiday, and at the end of the poem he depicts an orphaned girl crying in front of the joyful children who are having fun on the carousel, the palanquin, and the swing. The poet tries to show the readers the opposition of "joy and sorrow" by contrasting orphanhood and sadness with the happiness and joy that this beautiful day brings to children. In the poem, this orphaned girl, whom her grandfather describes as "- Yetim ayol... Bana evlâd belâsıdır bu acı" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 41), wants to ride the swings like other children, but the old woman cannot fulfill this expectation of her granddaughter. Surrounded by poverty and financial difficulties, the little girl cries with the sadness of being deprived of the festive fun. In fact, at the end of the poem, the orphan girl gets her wish by riding on the swing she so desires. Akif expresses this event in his poem "Bayram" with the verses "*— Salıncaççı! / Kuzum, biraz bu da binsin... Ne var sevâbına say / Yetim sevindirenin ömrü çok olur / — Hay hay! / Hemen o kız da salıncaççının mürüvvetine / Katıldı ağlamayan kızların şetâretine*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 41). With this poem, the poet places the responsibility on society to meet the lack of attention, love, expectations, and needs of orphans and to repair their sensitive and fragile inner worlds. Drawing attention to the socio-economic crisis caused by fatherlessness and society's compassion towards orphans, Akif gives a special place in this poem to the swing maker who fulfills the request of an orphaned girl (just to earn good deeds). Behind this attitude of the poet is the effort to show the world of beliefs of Turkish society and to reveal the kindness and benevolence of Turkish society towards orphans.

In "Hürriyet", another poem in which Mehmet Akif reflects on the pain and difficulty of fatherlessness, he tells the story of two brothers or sisters aged five or six. The five-year-old girl, whom the poet compares to an angel by

saying "*Beyaz entarisıyla kar gibi kız / Sanki Cennet'ten inme zâde-i hûr*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 73), and her six-year-old brother Ahmet, whom the poet describes as "*Ya şu oğlan, şu tostopaç afacan*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 73), are two children growing up without a father. Their grandfather, who takes care of these two innocents, is a very poor man. In this poem, which deals with the period of the Constitutional Monarchy II, the poet describes the sadness of a tearful grandfather who sees his two grandchildren trying to play in the street, where the cries of "Long live freedom!" and "Homeland Song" are mixed with each other, with the verses "*Bakarak arkalarından bu güzel yavruların / Döndü birdenbire sîmâsı, duran ihtiyarın / Ne için ağladı? Bilmem. Şunu duydum yalnız / — Âh bir kerre gelip görse Yemen'den babanız!*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 74). When he hears that his grandchildren are suffering from the absence of his son, who has gone to the Yemen front and it is not known whether he is still alive or not, the old man, although he is in need of care, assumes the duty of fatherhood towards his grandchildren and has great difficulty in fulfilling this responsibility. The poet believes that children who grow up without a father are deficient and deprived, both mentally and physically. Indeed, with the verses "*Bakıyor arkalarından dayanıp değneğine / Haylı düşkün bir adam / — Kız o ne? Düşün mü yine! / Sana bin kerre dedim koşma, yavaş git, yaramaz! / Haydi kalk ağlama... Söz dinlesen olmaz mı biraz? / Silkiver üstünü, Ahmed, bakiver ağlamasın*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 73), Akif reveals that no relative can fill the void of fatherlessness and that even a grandfather forces his grandchildren to look after each other.

Mehmet Akif also includes an old grandmother and two orphaned grandchildren in his poem "Kocakarı ile Ömer," which he wrote for Ali Ekrem Bolayır, the son of the patriotic poet Namık Kemal, with the dedication "To my noble master Ali Ekrem" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 75) and which takes its theme from Islamic history. This poem, in the voice of the Prophet Muhammad's uncle Abbas, describes the hunger and poverty that Umar witnessed in the middle of the night in a tent pitched outside Medina. An orphaned old woman's attempt to appease her grandchildren, who had been hungry for two days, by boiling stones in a pot of water, is described in the poem in a startling way. The poet describes this tragic scene with the words "*Ocak başında oturmuş bir ihtiyarca kadın / 'Açız! Açız!' diye feryâd eden çocuklarının / Karıştırıp duruyorken pişen nevâlesini / Çıkardı yuttuğu yaşlarda çırpınan sesini / — Durund[ü] yavrularım, işte şimdicek pişecek / Fakat ne hâl ise bir türlü pişmiyordu yemek*" (Ersoy, 1990, pp. 76-77). When Umar witnessed the starvation of an old woman and her two orphaned grandchildren in the town he was leading, he was ashamed of the disastrous scene. Returning to the tent with a sack of flour on his back and a jug of oil carried by Abbas, the Khalif fed the orphans the hot morsels he had cooked with his own hands and tried to cool them by blowing on them. Akif describes this happy scene with the verses "*Yemek sıcağı, fakat kim durup da bekliyecek! /*

Ömer çocuklara bir bir yedirdi üfliyerek! / Kesildi haymede mâtem, uyandı rûh-i sürûr / Çocuklar oynuyorlar, kadın ferîh ü fahûr” (Ersoy, 1990, pp. 80-81). In the poem, the Islamic Khalif Omar, overjoyed by the happiness of feeding hungry children, forces the old woman to pay him alimony and asks for her forgiveness. In “Kocakarı ile Ömer”, the poet draws attention to Omar’s love, care, compassion, and benevolence towards orphans and calls upon all Muslims to protect orphans. Tansel (2021) explains that Mehmet Akif’s purpose in writing his historical-mythical poetic stories is to ensure Islamic unity and strengthen the deteriorated morale of Muslims by revealing the greatness and power of their past (p. 159).

Another poem by Mehmet Akif, “Hasta,” which depicts the tragedy of an orphaned and sick child, is presented to the reader with the information, “The incident took place in one of the boarding schools” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 9). Set in Halkalı Agricultural School, where Akif was a boarding student and graduate, the poem tells the sad story of an orphaned child with tuberculosis whose only refuge is the school or the state. This helpless student, whose left lung was rotten, who had a high fever, whose cough would not stop, in short, who was in the last stage of his illness and about to die, was asked to leave the school because of the risk of transmitting tuberculosis. This orphaned boy, who had to leave the boarding school he had attended for three and a half years, wanted to die in his school, not on the streets in the agony of his illness and orphanhood because he had nowhere else to go. The poet reveals the tragedy of helplessness, the tragedy of orphan children, and his grief for orphan children through the reproach of the sick child: “Üç buçuk yıl bana katlandı bu mektep, üç gün / Daha katlansa kıyâmet mi kopar? Hem ne için / Beni yıllarca barındırılmış olan bir yerden / ‘Öleceksin!’ diye koğmak? Bu koğulmaktır. Ben / Kimsesiz bir çocuğum, nerde gider yer bulurum? / Etmeyin, sonra sokaklarda perîşân olurum! / Anam ölmüş, babamın bilmiyorum hiç yüzünü / Kardeşim var, o da lâkin bana dikmiş gözünü” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 11).

In addition to orphans, another issue that Mehmet Akif emphasizes in Safahat is the neglected children of broken homes. In his poem “Seyfi Baba”, the poet characterizes separated couples and their children as “Kocasından boşanan bir sürü biçâre karı / O kopan râbitanın, darmadağın yavruları” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 56). According to him, the separation of spouses causes many helpless widows and many distraught children to face harsh living conditions. Witnessing the damage caused by widowed mothers and indifferent fathers on the psyche of children, the poet emphasizes the importance of united and responsible parents in raising children as happy and healthy individuals. In the poem “Meyhane”, which reflects the drama of a family torn apart by bad habits, Akif paints a portrait of an unemployed, gambling, drunken father who neglects his wife and children. Because of this irresponsible man who does nothing for himself and his

family, the household lives a hungry and wretched life. In the verses “Çalışmadın, beni hep bunca yıl çalıştırdın / Ey yavrucakları çıplak, sefil alıştırdın” (Ersoy, 1990, p. 33), the lament of the suffering woman who supports the household by washing clothes reveals the drama of the children surrounded by indifference and hunger. The wailing of this poor mother struggling for her children means nothing to the gambling father who has not been home for days and has been passed out in taverns. At the end of the poem, this irresponsible father, who is the sole reason why İffet, labeled as “the daughter of a drunkard”, cannot find a fortune and Necip, whose education expenses have not been covered for months, is expelled from school, divorces his wife by saying “You are divorced”.

### Children in Muhammad Iqbal’s poems

Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), the famous thinker and poet of Pakistani and Indian Muslims, was born to Sufi parents in the Punjab region, now mostly in Pakistan and a small part in India. Known as “Allama Iqbal” in Pakistan and given the title of “Islamic Poet”, Iqbal studied the Quran, philosophy, and economics, and throughout his life, he worked on Islam as a universal system of thought and the resurrection of Muslims. Gündoğan (2016) evaluates Muhammad Iqbal as one of the rare figures who knew both the East and the West intimately, and who synthesized these two different perspectives in his thought and developed a unique perspective (p. 951). On the other hand, Yurtdaş (2014) states that the poet was a thinker, politician, educator, and reformer who was nourished by the Sufi tradition and collected and presented his ideals in a unified and integrated system (p. 1). Iqbal, who stands out with his multifaceted personality, calls on Muslims to get rid of laziness and return to their essence, and on Islamic countries to be prosperous in any case. In this call, he sees children and youth as the key to success. Iqbal, the pioneer of the Muslim struggle for independence in India, believed that children were “the guarantee of the future of the Islamic world and wrote poems directly addressed to children and youth” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 5). Muhammad Iqbal’s poems for children were translated into Turkish by Halil Toker and published as a separate book under the title *A Mother’s Dream: Poems for Children by Muhammad Iqbal*. In this book of twenty-seven poems, the child comes forth to the reader in all its purity and cleanliness.

In his poem “Çocukluk Günleri”, in which he describes the beauty and peacefulness of childhood, Iqbal describes the boundless desire to know and learn in a child who observes the environment and life from the lap of his mother, his first teacher. In the verses “Yer ve gök yeni bir dünyaydı benim için / Annemin kucağı kocaman bir cihandı benim için” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 17), the poet draws attention to a child’s effort to discover the world by questioning it in the



warm and safe embrace of his mother. In the verses “*Ne güzeldi, saatlerce aya bakıp durmak / Parça parça bulutlar arasından sessizce süzülüşüne dalmak*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 17), It is emphasized that the child observes the sky and the universe in order to get to know them. In the mind of the curious child, the mother is an omniscient being. This extraordinary being answers all the child’s questions, even if they are within or outside her knowledge. In the poem, the child’s astonishment at his mother’s wisdom is expressed in the following words “*Onun dağ ve kırlardan haber alması ile ilgili sorularıma / Şaşırırdım annemin yalancığından verdiği cevapları duyunca*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 17).

In the poems of Muhammad Iqbal, the child is a precious being who is protected and cared for with love and affection. In his poem “*Ey Ufak Bebek!*” the poet emphasizes the care and love for the child. In this poem, which draws attention to the fact that babies are sensitive beings who need to be protected and cared for by adults, the child is compared to a little lamb in the verses “*Eline batmasın sakın, kalemin sivri ucu / Ağlar duru[r]sun sonra gam ülkesine gelen küçük kuzu*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 40). The metaphor of “lamb” in the poem, a term of endearment often used by adults for children, shows that Iqbal has a loving attitude and approach towards children. Again in the poem “*Bir Annenin Rüyası*”, the mother’s words “*Tanıdım onu, ‘Canım evladım!’ dedim / ‘Beni bırakıp da, anlamadım, nerelere gittin?’*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 14) are clear indications of the love for the child.

In his poem “*Çocuğun Duası*”, Muhammad Iqbal includes the prayer of a Muslim child and explains the qualities that human beings should have and the purpose of life. With the prayer “*Dua olup dökülür gönlümdeki şu arzu dudaklarımdan / Bir mum gibi olsun hayatım ey Rabbim! / Uzaklaşsın sayemde karanlıklar dünyadan / Aydınlansın her taraf parıltıyla ey Rabbim! / Bağın ve bahçenin süsü olan çiçek gibi / Ben de süsü olayım vatanımın ey Rabbim! / Yaşamım pervaneninki gibi bir an sürsün ama / Artsın ilim mumuna olan aşkımdan ey Rabbim! / Fakirleri gözetmek benim vazifem olsun / Dertli ve zayıfları sevmek de gayem ey Rabbim! / Kötülüklerden kurtar beni sen / Beni yürüt doğru yolda ey Rabbim!*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 11), the poet advises children to be good people. According to Iqbal, the ideal human being should read, engage in science, enlighten the environment, beautify the homeland, and help the poor. Children should acquire these important responsibilities at an early age and maintain them throughout their lives. In fact, in the poem “*Çocuk ile Mum*”, the poet says: “*Ey pervane huylu küçük çocuk! Nasıl bir hayretle / Mumun yalazlarına bakıp duruyorsun saatlerce / (...) / Mum sadece bir yalaz, sen ise tümüyle nursun / Fakat bu dünya meclisinde o aşikâr, sen gizlisin*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 50) and sees the child as the light of the universe. Al-An’am (6/165) says, “He is the one who has made you khalifas (rulers) on earth” (Presidency of Religious Affairs, 2011, p. 163), exalting human beings and asking believers to be extremely judicious and conscious in their attitudes and behaviors. In Sufism, the

qualities of the servants who are considered the light of the universe and who are desired to reach “insan-ı kâmil” are to serve as a bridge between Allah and the people; to be moralized with the morals of Allah; to be complete and mature in terms of Sharia, sect, truth, and skill; to be truthful, have good morals, and possess skill; and to know the things and their wisdom correctly (Aydın, 2000, p. 331). In his poem “*Yeryüzü Allah’ındır*”, Iqbal asks children “*Toprağın karanlığında tohumu besleyen kim? / Denizin dalgalarından bulutu yükselten kim? / Batıdan verimli rüzgârları çıkarıp getiren kim? / Kimin bu topraklar? Bu güneş ışığını getiren kim? / Buğday başağının cebini inciyle doldurarak / Mevsimlere değişim özelliğini kazandıran kim?*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 78) and invites them to make an ontological inquiry in order to acquire these qualities. At the end of the poem, the poet says: “*Ey köy ağası! Bu yeryüzü senin değil, senin değil! / Senin babanın değil, senin değil, benim değil!*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 78), where the poet draws attention to the fact that Allah is the true owner of everything. According to Aydın and Çiftçi (2020), under the heading of responsibility towards Allah, which is seen as a higher value in Muhammad Iqbal’s poems, children are especially tried to gain awareness of Allah, the hereafter and prayer (p. 110).

Faith, spirituality, patriotism, diligence, benevolence, truthfulness, and justice have an important place in Muhammad Iqbal’s understanding of children. In the poem “*Namaz*”, the poet draws attention to the importance of prayer with the following warning; “*Sana ağır gelen şu bir anlık secde var ya / Kurtarır insanı binlerce putun önünde yere kapanmaktan*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 86). In “*Hârunürreşîd’in Son Nasihati*”, he says, “*Ölüm meleği kâfire görünmez ancak / O her zaman durur Müslüman’ın gözü önünde*” (Iqbal, 2018, p. 80) and asks Muslim children to be faithful servants in every moment without ignoring death and to strive to gain Allah’s pleasure. He, like Mehmet Akif, believes that the progress of Islamic civilization can only be realized through generations of religious sensitivity and justice. According to Mumcu (2015), Akif and Iqbal were dissatisfied with the Islamic world of their time; in their eyes, the greatness and unity of Islam had disappeared, Muslims had lost their identity, they believed that the ideal life was only in the West and emulated it, and as a result, they lost all their values (p. 77). New generations are the key concept for these people to shake off laziness, as Islam commands, to work hard by protecting their core values, in short, to revive themselves. The only way for Islamic geography to achieve the position and prestige it deserves is to raise generations that are educated with its values.

Muhammad Iqbal’s poetry is shaped by the social and political conditions of the nation to which he belonged. Tears, captivity, and death have historically characterized the lives of Indian Muslims under British colonization. Günarslan (2021) states that the people of India, colonized as British property in the 17th century, were subjected to oppression and persecution, and that the massacre that



resulted in the death of nearly 1500 people when 50 soldiers fired for 10 minutes on 30,000 civilians gathered for a religious festival in the city of Amritsar [on April 13, 1919] on the orders of the British commander General Dyer was one of the great atrocities in history (p. 109). In this sad geography, death is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored and is often reflected in poetry. In "A Mother's Dream," the poet describes the grief and sorrow of a woman whose son died at a young age. In her dream, the mother, walking with fear, anxiety, and trembling in a dark place she does not know, meets a group of children walking in a line. In this encounter, which is described in the poem with the verses "*Kendimi toparlayıp adımımı atınca / Rastladım sıra sıra dizilmiş giden çocuklara / Zümrüt rengi yeşil elbiseler kuşanmışlardı / Her birinin elinde ışıldayan birer kandil vardı*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 13), the mother sees her dead son among the children. The mother's words "*Tanıdım onu, 'Canım evladım!' dedim / Beni bırakıp da, anlamadım, nerelere gittin?*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 14) show that she could not accept the death of her son. The poet reflects the mother's great sorrow and grief against death with the words "*Ayrılık acısıyla perişan yanıyorum / Gözyaşı taneleri ile inci kolyeler diziyorum*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 15). The mourning of the mother, who cannot accept the death of her son is unworthy of a Muslim, and Iqbal sees it as a rebellion against fate. As a matter of fact, in the verses "*Kandilime ne olduğunu sanıyorsun ki? / Senin gözünden akan yaşlar söndürdü kandilimi!*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 15), the poet points out that the lamp held in the child's hand is extinguished due to the mother's constant tears, indicating that death is from Allah and that we should submit to fate. With the words of the child who wants to warn his grieving mother, "*Bilirim, ağlatıyor benim ayrılığım seni / Fakat bunun bana hiçbir yararı yok ki!*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 15), Iqbal says that shedding tears over the dead is useless and that one should surrender to the will of Allah. A similar suggestion can be seen in Mehmet Akif's poem "Selma", written for his nephew who died at the age of four. Describing the deplorable condition of his nephew on his deathbed with the verses "*Ne manzaraydı ki bir kuş kadar uçan o melek / Dururdu bî-hareket, kol kanad kıvıldamıyor! / Gözünde nûr-i nazar titriyor, hemen sönecek / Dudakta nâtika donmuş; kulak söz anlamıyor! / Tûrâb rengine girmiş cebî-ni sîmîni / Ölüm merâreti duydum, öpünce leblerini*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 46), Akif nevertheless remains stoic. The poet counsels her sister Nuriye, whom Selma's unrelenting illness has turned into a living dead, and urges her to stop being rebellious, to submit to fate, and to seek refuge in Allah. The poet, who is aware that it is only Allah who both creates and destroys, reproaches his sister with the words "*Dedim: Nedir bu senin yaptığın, düşünsene bir / Bırak şu hastayı artık biraz da kendisine / Ne çâre, hükmi-kader âkıbet zuhûra gelir / Cenâze şekline girmekte böyle fâide ne? / Senin bu yaptığın Allah'a karşı isyandır / Asil felâkete sabreleyenler insandır*" (Ersoy, 1990, p. 47), emphasizing that parents should remain steadfast and be patient even

if they lose their child.

Another issue that comes to the fore in Muhammad Iqbal's poetry when it comes to children is education. Gündoğan (2020) explains that the purpose of education in Iqbal's thought is to give different messages, to strive for continuous progress by keeping creative powers dynamic, and to raise individuals who accept existing values and add new values to them (p. 595). In his poems, the poet shares his views on the education of children and makes important observations, especially criticizing students, teachers, and the educational system. "He never ceases to warn young people, pointing out that their beliefs have been corrupted and they have been dragged into a clandestine captivity within the understanding of education offered to them by the Westerners" (Kuyumcu, 2011, p. 86). In his poem "Ey Öğrenci!" Iqbal says, "*Allah seni aşına kılsın büyük bir fırtınayla / Çünkü ıstırap yok denizinin dalgalarında / Kitap ile senin bir şey elde etmen mümkün değil / Kitabı okuyorsun da anlamıyorsun onu aslında!*" (Iqbal, 2018, p. 88), describes the lack of understanding of the student who thinks he is studying without caring about his age and without being aware of his duties and responsibilities towards life and Islam. According to the poet, students who do not think about knowing and understanding, who avoid struggling with difficulties, who have no responsibility, and who cannot understand what they read, cannot gain anything from their education. Such a hollow and passive attitude does nothing for the student or Islamic civilization. Muslims cannot succeed just by imitating the West and reading without sincerity. At this point, Çelik (2008) argues that Iqbal finds science without love deceptive, that from a Sufi point of view, intellect is harmful and a delusion that distracts people from God, and that intellect is the only force that does not analyze and synthesize when separated from divine love and is the source of all evil in the World (p. 29). According to Ayvazoğlu (1997), Iqbal was very disturbed by the imitation of the West in the Eastern countries because he knew that works of people should be systematic works, and he saw the superficial imitation as a kind of disease that prevents the realization of the inner dynamics of modern civilization (p. 50). A Muslim child should be active, not passive, in the face of life. Aware that education contributes greatly to the development of personality, the poet urges children to make an effort to produce meaning through questioning. Like Mehmet Akif, Muhammad Iqbal dreams in his poetry of a generation that is healthy, conscious, responsible, alert, and agile. Stating that teachers have a great duty at this point, Iqbal urges them to raise enlightened individuals with qualified curricula and modern teaching methods. In his poem "Öğretmenlere", the poet calls upon educators to produce original knowledge and ideas that will guide all humanity by abandoning outdated and imitated ideas by saying "*Amaç eğer Bedahşan yakutunu eğitmekse / Yolunu şaşırmış güneş ışınları yaramaz işe / Dünya geleneklerin[in] zincirlerine tutulmuş / Okul ve okulluların koşuşturmasının*

*faydası ne? / Dönemlerinin önderliğini yapabilecek olanlar / Takılmışlar köhne fikirlerin peşine*” (İqbal, 2018, p. 90). Just as it is difficult to shape a precious and hard stone, it is equally difficult to shape students. Specialized teachers are needed to cope with this challenge. The task of the teacher should not be to repeat the accumulated knowledge to the students. Teachers who are aware of innovation, dynamism, the requirements of the times, and the needs of students can draw a happy future for their nation.

### Children in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poems

The great thinker Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh (1925-2009), who was the pioneer of Azerbaijan’s struggle for independence, who wrote books and translations in many different genres such as short stories, essays, plays, and articles, and who pioneered his studies to his people with his sincere narration and clear Turkish, is “one of the great poets of today’s Azerbaijani literature and the whole Turkish world, who has poured his observations based on various issues of life into his poems with a unique intense structure of emotions and thoughts” (Araz, 2005, p. 161). Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh is considered the lyric poet of the Turkish world with his books that are the product of fine emotions and thoughts, his teachings based on national unity, freedom, love of the homeland, and his clean Turkish. According to Habıbbeyli (2010), the distinctive features of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poetry are that it reflects the depths of the human heart and the subtle moments of life in a sincere language with unique poetic tools (p. 102). Akpınar (1979) states that his poems are written with a unique, intense thought; that they contain in-depth observations and feelings around a problem or a subject; and that they have the air of articles, reviews, and criticism (p. 9). According to Aktaş (2010), Vahabzadeh, one of the most remarkable poets of Azerbaijani Turkish, skillfully expresses the life and culture of his country with his unique poetry (p. 27). Regarding Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, who was given the title of “Minstrel” of Azerbaijan for the naturalness and clarity of his poems, Tuncer (2009) evaluates that he considers the artist a master of words, defends the clarity of meaning in poetry, and is aware of the creation of poetry by language and the transformation of the word into poetry in the hands of the artist (p. 63). According to Karakaş (2010), Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, as an intellectual, is a witness of his time who tried to reflect all the landscapes of his life in his books (p. 79). Feyzioğlu (2006) explains his assuming intellectual responsibility for his homeland and nation and adopting an attitude that raises public awareness and mobilizes people with the concepts of freedom, independence, and love for the people, which his faith defines as homeland, Allah, and right (p. 118). Vahabzadeh’s love for his homeland and people, combined with his desire for freedom, drives him to write philosophical and consciousness-raising poetry.

Children have a special place in the world of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, who expresses his feelings and thoughts about people, time, faith, and love in his poems. Muradov (2011) sees Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh as a poet who deeply analyzes cultural concepts such as history, language, alphabet, religion, civilization, art, and music; abstract concepts such as right, truth, morality, honor, conscience, trust, faith, doubt, lie, love, sorrow, hatred, fear, love, etc.; glorifies national and spiritual values and succeeds in endearing them to children and young people (p. 108). Vahabzadeh’s love for children is exemplified by naming her daughter after her mother. In his poem entitled “Annem Yeniden Büyüyor” dedicated to his daughter “Gülzar”, the poet says: “*Kızımı ismiyle çağırıram ben / ‘Ey annem’ diyorum, o da hay verir / O benim annemdir / O benim annem*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 83), stating that he loves his child as much as his mother and cherishes her as much as his mother. For him, as for Mehmet Akif and Muhammad İqbal, children are the inheritors and transmitters of homeland, nation, language, and culture, and childhood is a refuge in times of fear and unrest. The uncertainties caused by the political turmoil and climate of fear in the geography where he was born and raised make Vahabzadeh cling to his childhood, his parents, and his happy family home. This attitude of the poet, whose poems show a great longing for his infancy and childhood, is influenced by the social and political conditions of his time, as in the case of Mehmet Akif and Muhammad İqbal. However, “it is possible to evaluate Vahabzadeh’s art, especially his poetry, as a reflection in the field of art of the struggles for national identity and independence in Azerbaijan for centuries” (Türkmen, 2009, p. 174). In these reflections, the poet’s unifying and integrative view of infancy and childhood is effective. As a matter of fact, in his poem “Aynı Binada Doğduk” he says, “*Aynı binada doğduk / Biz her işte bir olduk / Doğduksa da / Biz bunu / O zaman hiç duymadık / Boydan, yüzden / Hiç türlü / Seçilip, ayrılmadık / Beraber olduk demek / İlk adımız bir: / Bebek / İlk elbisemiz belek / İlk sözümüz ağlamak / İlk gıdamız süt oldu*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 51), he rejects the separation and alienation between people. Vahabzadeh, acting with the awareness of the integrative nature of the concept of “nation”, which is “a community of people living on the same land, united by language, history, feelings, ideals, traditions, and customs” (TDK, 2011), states that every person born is called “baby” without any distinction of height, skin color or face. The first dress for the baby who starts life by crying is swaddling clothes, and the first food is milk. The poet, aware of this fact, evaluates infancy and childhood as the purest and most natural periods for human beings.

In his poems, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh emphasizes the concept of the “father’s house”, the first home where the child opens his eyes to the world. In his poem “Babamın Kulübesi”, which he wrote with the preface “Dedicated to İsa Hussein, the author of ‘Kollu koha’” (p. 58), the influence of his father’s house on his mind can be seen

in his call “*Ey benim ilk beşiğim / İlk nefesim, ilk sözüm / İlk gecem, ilk gündüzüm / Gönülümün bu hayatla / İlk büyük kafiyesi / Ey babamın deyesi*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 58). The poet cannot forget the cradle, spelling, language, love, peace, and happiness which are the “firsts” he experienced in the warm atmosphere of this house for the rest of his life, and he feels a great longing for this place which leaves him with pleasant memories. In Vahabzadeh’s poem “*Babam, Atam, Ben*”, he states “*Atamın bir garip âdeti vardı: / Ben[i] kollarında atıp tutardı / Hem bana sorardı: De bakayım beni / Ne boyda seversin? / Diyerdim: Seni / Tam bu dünya boyda istiyorum ben / Sevgimin büyüklük derecesinden / Atam hoşlanırdı!*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, pp. 103-104), which makes it possible to see the interest and love of his family towards him. In return for his father’s great love for him, the poet reciprocates through the same feelings. In this poem, the poet, who expresses that he loves his father like the world, reveals the spiral of love he has formed with his father, who both entertains and loves him very much. The poet, under the influence of his father’s house and his memories in that house, expresses in his poem “*Korku*” that the burn mark on his left hand is a gift from his childhood by saying “*Benim sol elimde yanık yeri var / O bana töhfe dir çocukluğumdan / Odun, odluğundan habersiz vaktler / Elimi mangalda yandırmışım ben / Bana ‘cız’ dediler / Ama korkmadım / Elimi yandırıp tanıdım odu / Benim hayatla ilk tanıdıklığım / Oddan başladı*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 82). Vahabzadeh, who includes the curiosity and fearlessness of his childhood in the poem, explains that a child who tries to discover life will not hesitate to take a risk on this path, even if he is under the strict protection and supervision of his parents. Saying that the child is nourished by the curiosity to know and learn in his struggle against all kinds of difficulties, the poet points out that childhood is a critical period that prepares people for life by giving an example from himself.

In Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poems, the child is a being who is loved and cared for by his parents. In the poem entitled “*Benim Ad Günlerim*”, the poet expresses that the child is the only and most valuable asset of the house with the verses “*Babamın, annemin yegânesiydim / Arzusu, hevesi, gönül sesiydim / Ömrün ne de garip günleri vardı / Benim ad günlerim bayram olurdu*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 26). The poet says that as a child he was pampered and loved by his family, and explains that his birthdays in particular were like a feast at home. The crowd of relatives gathered to celebrate this happy day, the enthusiasm and joy are important factors in Vahabzadeh’s childhood nostalgia. The poet expresses his happiness with the toys given to him on his birthday by saying “*Aldığım o güzel oyuncakları / Koşup gösterirdim dostlara hemen*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 26). He is aware of children’s love of games and toys, and in his poem “*Karusel-Atlıkarınca*” he says, “*Dönüyor karusel bir teker gibi / Aralıksız dönen, dönen yer gibi / Dönüyor çocuklar destebe deste / Biri ‘at’ belinde, biri ‘fil’ üstte / Karusel dönüyor... Öter [Geçer] hoş*

*anlar / Çocuklar el çalır şadlıklarından / (...) / Babalar, anneler çocuklarının / Bakıp sevincine sevinir, gülür*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 45), portraying the joy and enthusiasm of children riding the carousel and the happy family picture formed by the families who share this enthusiasm. In his poems, the poet describes children’s fondness for games and toys with excerpts from his life and his observations, and in his poem titled “*Yaşdan Gileyliyem*” he says “*İsterem gizlenpaç oynayım yéne / Başıma götürüp çölü-çemeni / Éle gizlenim ki, düşüp izime / Héç tapa bilmesin gocalıg meni*” (Akpınar, 1979, p. 125), referring to adults’ longing for childhood with a game. The poet, who complains a lot about old age, desires to play hide-and-seek, to lie down in the countryside and hide skillfully, to relieve this discontent. Vahabzadeh, who aims to get rid of the old age that pursues him in this way, expresses that the child inside him is always alive despite his advancing age. To indicate that he has never lost his childish spirit, the poet says “*Men on beş yaşım da, iğirmi yaşım da / Éle bilirdim ki, gırh, gocalıgıdır / Elliye çatıram, vallah, başım da / Uşaglıg havası hele galıpdır*” (Akpınar, 1979, p. 124) and states that even as he approaches fifty, he keeps his inner child alive. His words “*Odur bah... hayatda gopup velvele / Uşaglar oynaşır, dırmaşır dama / Men de onlar ile tutup el-ele / Gacmag isteyirem uşaglıgıma*” (Akpınar, 1979, p. 125) reveal his longing for childhood, play, vitality, and mobility.

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh feels a deep love for mother and father in his poems. In his eyes, this sacred being who gave birth to the child should be loved, respected, and cherished, just like the homeland. Eliuz (2010) notes that in Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, the concepts of mother and homeland together function as bearers or reflectors of cultural codes of memory, calling the individual or nation to its own existence and providing its internal grounding and transformation into a meaningful being or nation by remembering the past (p. 65). In the poet’s eyes, mothers who strive to raise their children with love, care, and attention are the first and greatest teachers of their offspring, whether they are literate or not. In the poem “*Menim Anam*”, which is one of the best examples of childlike purity and motherly love, Vahabzadeh expresses his gratitude to his mother by saying “*Savadsızdır / Adını da yaza bilmir / Menim anam / Ancag mene / Say öğredip / Ay öğredip / İl öğredip / En vacibi: / Dil öğredip / Menim anam / Bu dil ile tanımışam / Hem sévinci / Hem de gami / Bu dil ile yaratmışam / Her şı’rimi / Her nağmemi / Yoh men héçem / Men yalanam / Kitap-kitap sözlerimin / Müellifi: benim anam!*” (Akpınar, 1979, p. 87). The poet says that his illiterate mother opened a wide window for him by teaching him numbers, months, seasons, years, and most importantly, his mother tongue. The child hears the first sounds, vocabulary, melodies, and harmonies of the mother tongue through the mother’s mouth; the child’s world is woven with the feelings and thoughts nourished by that language. Kanter (2010) points out that according to Vahabzadeh, a mother who does not teach her child

her mother tongue is not a “mother” and cannot claim the right to motherhood (p. 118). Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh (1995), in his poem “Ana Dili”, emphasizes the critical role of the mother in the world of the child with the verses “*Dil açanda ilk defa ‘ana’ söylüyoruz biz / ‘Ana dili’ adlanır bizim ilk dersliğimiz / İlk şarkımız ninniye anamız öz sütüyle / İçirir ruhumuza bu dilde gile gile*” (p. 33). In this poem, the poet emphasizes that the child owes its existence and personality to its mother and underlines that mothers are sacred beings who educate people and prepare them for society.

In his poems, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh attributes important duties and responsibilities to children towards their mother, whom he sees as a sacred being. The poet, who asks children to value, love, and respect their mothers, also includes in his poems the generational conflict caused by the change brought about by age and cultural confusion. In his poem titled “Anne ve Evlatlar”, the poet says “*Çocuklar anneyi tuttu dansağa / — Başkadır, özgedir senin zamanen / Sana söz anlatmak çetindir, anne / Bizi sorularla çok incitme sen*” (Vahabzadeh, 1985, p. 105) and draws attention to the moral degeneration of the children who think that their mother is outdated, sarcastically speak to her, and claim that they will never get along. The poet is disturbed by the disrespect towards the mother and opposes this situation with the verses “*Anne yanıtladı: — Akıllandınız / Ne hız büyüdünüz, beni dandınız (inkâr ettiniz) / Diliniz yok iken ‘inga’ sesinden / Küçük kalbinizi hemen duyurdum / Yalnız dudakların büzülmesinden / Ben sizi ya nasıl hız anlıyordum?*” (Vahabzadeh, 1985, p. 105), and gives an important warning to children with his answer in motherly language. According to him, no matter what children do, they cannot repay the debt they owe to their mothers who brought them into the world, protected them, nurtured them, and educated them. Therefore, children must be good sons and daughters and exemplary citizens in their attitudes and behavior toward their mothers. In this poem, the poet reminds children that they should treat their parents, fathers, and ancestors with respect, and in another poem, “Yakın, Uzak Oldu”, he tries to raise their awareness of progress and civilization. Drawing attention to the difference of opinion between the generations with the observation “*Baba[n] senin gibi dilinde değil / Kalbinde yaşattı aşkı, niyeti / Baban senin gibi dışında değil / İçinde yaşattı medeniyeti*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 115), the poet exhorts children, young people, and new generations to be conscious and awake in the face of the development or change of the age with the advice “*Bilmek medeniyet değildir h[â]lâ / Bana zatındaki aklını göster*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 116), just as seen in Iqbal’s (2018) warning “*Kitabı okuyorsun da anlamıyorsun onu aslında!*” (p. 88). According to Vahabzadeh, every age has its fashions and trends, and children must produce their own original, rational thoughts in accordance with their beliefs. In the poem “Yakın, Uzak Oldu,” the poet says: “*Debler önünde değil, ey bala / Sen fikir önünde secde kı, diz çök /*

*Hizmet et bir fikre, tek bir amala / Bak budur uygarlık, budur büyüklük!*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 116) and advises children to have a belief, a cause, and to work for it. According to him, people can only find the trace of true civilization through respect for thought and striving for what they believe in.

Another issue that Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh focuses on in his poems is the orphaned children, which he is concerned about and saddened by. In the poem “Karusel-Atlı[k]arınca”, the poet, who asks society to show interest and sensitivity towards these children and to feel love and compassion, includes an orphaned child who is content to look at the spinning carousel, just like the orphaned girl in Mehmet Akif’s poem “Bayram” who cannot ride on a swing because she has no money. The poet says “*Bütün bu şenliklerden uzakta ancak / Parmağı ağzında durup bir çocuk / Çocuklar dönüyor... Bakır onlara / Gülüyor / Onun d[a] değişir halı / Uzaktan baktıkça fırlananlara / Fırlanır onun da fikri, hayalı / O da hoşnut olur, hazzalır genden / Duyuyor dönmeğin hoş olduğunu / Çocuk meydançaya tek geldiğinden / Yoktur karusele bindiren onu*” (Vahabzadeh, 1993, p. 46), making readers feel the sadness of orphanhood. Vahabzadeh, who presents sadness and joy together in the poem, places an orphaned child in front of the children immersed in the fun of the carousel. Empathizing with this child, the poet tries to translate his feelings and thoughts and wants him to play and have fun like other happy children. However, since there is no one to take him on the carousel, this wish of the boy is not realized, and he is content to watch the other children. By watching his peers having fun on the carousel and trying to share their joy, the poet reveals his affection and compassion for orphans. Another work of Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh in which he includes orphans is “Yetim Yuvası”, which is the 4th chapter of his poem entitled “Atılmışlar”. In this poem, the poet draws attention to the sorrowful lives of orphans. With the verses “*Dünyaya geleli, onlar dünyadan / Yamanlık görüpler, evet yamanlık / Öksüzler herkesten yalnız her zaman / Bir hoş bakış umar, bir mihribanlık*” (Vahabzadeh, 1985, p. 206), Vahabzadeh notes that orphans have always suffered evil in the world and reminds us that they only expect a little attention, love and affection from their environment and society. The poet warns society about the need for feeling love and compassion for orphans and emphasizes that children are highly emotional and sensitive beings with the following words “*Çocuk yüreğini aldatmak olmaz / Yanılır kalbe kıyıp hükmeden / Seçer / Çocuk kalbi hassastır, hassas / Asıl muhabbeti sahta sevgiden*” (Vahabzadeh, 1985, p. 207). Pointing out that children can easily distinguish fake love, the poet underlines that adults should embrace children with sincere love.

## CONCLUSION

In the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and

Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, children stand out as special beings who hold the future of society in their hands and are held in high esteem. In their poems, all three poets are united in the idea that children should be protected and cared for by paying attention to their love and childish sensitivity. Describing the child as a symbol of love, purity, cleanliness, and a being that inspires hope, all three poets see the child as the true heir and guardian of the homeland. According to all three poets, society's love, compassion, protection, trust, care, and fulfillment of the child's wishes and expectations are effective in raising happy generations and building the country on a solid foundation. For this reason, all three poets assign important responsibilities to the family and society in raising children. In their world of thought, civilizations can only progress and develop with children who are loved, cherished, and cared for by their families and society.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy's, Muhammad Iqbal's, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's perceptions of children, who are the symbols of their nations' independence, bear traces of the troubled and turbulent times their countries were going through. All three of them frequently use the concepts of orphanhood, pain, sorrow, and death when dealing with children in their poetry. Behind this pessimistic outlook are the many motherless, fatherless, and homeless children caused by their own people's struggle for independence. All three poets, pioneers of independence in Türkiye, Pakistan, and Azerbaijan, never stopped looking at the child with hope despite the difficulties and pessimistic atmosphere of their times.

For Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, children are the key to their country's independence. For all three poets, who are aware that the future of their nations will be determined by their children, the only way to ensure that Islamic geography will never again be touched by the evil hand is through the right and well-educated generations. For this reason, all three poets wish in their poems that children will be raised as knowledgeable, cultured individuals who are loyal to Islam and their homeland. In *Safahat, Autumn Thoughts, A Day Worth A Thousand Months, Talking to Myself, and Poems*, children are taught many national and universal values such as love for parents and country, respect, friendship, honesty, kindness, diligence, responsibility, courage, sacrifice, and sharing. These three pioneering poets urge adults and society to treat children with love and understanding, to value them, and to meet their needs for play and toys. They yearn for hard-working generations who are fond of their independence, who do not separate from Allah, who reject the oppressor and stand with the oppressed. In the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, the common ideal in the view and appeal to the child is the reappearance of the "generation of Asim".

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**Citation:** Akdağ, E. (2023). Children in the poems of Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Muhammad Iqbal, and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh. *African Educational Research Journal*, 11(3): 300-313.

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