

The Southern Asia in the Magazine “Mullah Nasraddin”

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“Mullah Nasraddin” published by Jalil Mammadguluzade (1869-1932), the eminent Azerbaijani writer and great democrat, was the first magazine of satire in the Turkish- Muslim world. Because of its goals and direction the magazine was considered to be the book of liberation for the Eastern world. The question of renaissance, enlightenment, modern culture, liberation and development of the Muslim world would prove to be the leitmotif of “Mullah Nasraddin”. This magazine played the role of a cultural bridge between East and the West. Total number of 398 issues of the magazine were published in Tiflis which was considered to be the administrative centre of the Caucasus, 8 issues were printed in the biggest Azerbaijani city of Tabriz and 378 issues in Baku during 1906-1917. The magazine was circulated not only in the Caucasus and Iran but also in Africa, India and Afghanistan stimulating seriously the development of democratic press, realist literature and society in general. In terms of its scale of spreading and influence “Mullah Nasraddin” has no match in the world.

India and Afghanistan occupies a special place among the countries to which the magazine paid special attention. In spite of being ten hundreds of kilometres far from Azerbaijan, due to the attempts of Jalil Mammadguluzade, the Editor-in-Chief, the social and political processes in the Southern Asia found their real reflection in the magazine. It is obviously observed that the magazine paid special attention to the ideas of national liberation in India and

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Afghanistan, to the struggles of these countries for independence. The journalists of the "Mullah Nasraddin" specially emphasized the Southern Asian Muslims' being kept far from school and enlightenment. They believed, the main reason of backwardness in the Muslim world in general, and in India and Afghanistan in particular was their ignorance, unawareness, lack of education and school. In the article named "Bad news" (7.07.1908, No. 27) it is shown that the cultural backwardness of Indian Muslims and their living in servitude are connected with the lack of education. In the article "Some Affairs" (06.12.1909, No. 49) published in the magazine, absence of enlightenment is explained as the main reason of the Muslims' not being able to be represented in the social environment. The article says, "... in Bombay, the Muslims have more than one hundred mosques. But they have only two religious schools in which there are not more than fifty pupils". The author of the article thinks that it is because of this reason that the Muslims cannot be represented in the government posts. The article "Telegraph News" (15.03.1909, No. 11) dealing with Afghanistan says that the Ottoman education staff did not stay in Kashgar and left for Siberia was a hint to the fact that there was no enlightenment environment in Kashgar.

In the article dealing with the Southern Asia the journalists contributing to "Mullah Nasraddin" considered it urgent to focus their readers' attention to the attitude towards press in India and Afghanistan. The journalists were sure that science and school press together also stimulated the culture-social development as a motive power. That is why "Mullah Nasraddin" considered the position of press and the Muslims attitude to press in Southern Asia as issues of great importance. In the article "Foreign News" (15.11.1909, No. 46) it is informed that the journalists of the illustrated magazine "Ayina" (Mirror) published from Kabul moved to Japan which is the sign of unpleasant attitude towards press in Kabul. In the article "Flattery" (25.08.1908, No. 34) the author shows that the newspaper "Hablul Matin" published in India and considered as a highly respected newspaper sometimes glossed over the socio-cultural backwardness in the Muslim world. Criticism of the newspaper shows that the author believes that press can play an important role in the development of any country.

The journalists of "Mullah Nasraddin" believed that it was ignorance, lack of schooling, being deprived of education, not paying

attention to the spread of press that enabled the European countries to carry out their plans in the Southern Asia. According to "Mullah Nasraddin", at the beginning of the last century the English government could act mischievously to organize a fight between Muslims and fire worshippers only because of the people's being uneducated. That is why "Mullah Nasraddin" considered the spread of ideas of enlightenment and people's sympathy for school and press to be very important in the Muslim world in general and in the Southern Asia in particular.

"Mullah Nasraddin" giving priority to the struggle or national liberation published articles and caricatures about the renaissance of the Southern Asia as well. The caricature drawn by the famous German painter Josef Rotter (29.11.1909, No. 48) on the motive of "the crow and the fox" taken from "Kalila and Dinme" which appeared in India was dedicated to the criticism of injustice and deformity in the society. From this point of view the caricature named "The English and India" presented to the readers by the magazine was very relevant to the region. This caricature, which occupied a whole page in the magazine, reflects the main stage of the policy of colonization of England in Southern Asia at the beginning of the twentieth century. Four different caricatures drawn on the same plot serve to reflect the history and future of the policy of colonization in India. It is obviously felt that "Mullah Nasraddin" is against the policy of invasion and aggression in Southern Asia. Besides, the reader realizes that the publisher believes that the Indian people will free themselves from the colonial yoke by means of struggle. The first caricature is about the measures taken by the English government in order to occupy India; the second caricature reflects the realization of their intention. The idea of India's national liberation movement is expressed in the third caricature. At last the fourth caricature is the expression of belief in the freedom from colonization. Thus "Mullah Nasraddin" could tell forty years ago that India would get freedom and enjoy liberty.

It can be said that, the caricatures "The English and India" has got a great power of generalization. The fate and struggle of the Muslim world in general was reflected in this caricature. All these show that the publisher of "Mullah Nasraddin" not only had extensive information about the ongoing processes of the time, but also could foretell the future.

“Mullah Nasraddin” also hinted the idea of Pakistan. It means that “Mullah Nasraddin” closely studied them and even could foretell the events. All these facts are the expression of the respect of the Azerbaijani people for the people of Southern Asia. Interrelations based on firm foundation between our countries are still going on and getting firmer. Azerbaijani people accept Pakistan as a fraternal and friendly country.¹

1 At the end, I would like note with pleasure that by publishing the book entitled “The Great Thinker of Azerbaijan – Jalil Mammadguluzade” in Urdu, the Leaf Publication of Islamabad has accomplished a valuable task of presenting both the selected works of author and my researches on the topic to the Pakistani readers in one book. It is noteworthy that, the translations of Ms. Najma Rafiq, who is a researcher in Azerbaijani literary studies, offers an insight both into the magazine of “Mullah Nasraddin” and its remarkable influence in the region along with bringing forth the literary works of the author which carry significance and relevance to the progress of our nations. In my opinion, as work and life of the national poet of Pakistan — Allama Muhammad Iqbal are widely read and disseminated in Azerbaijan, in the same way it will be of great importance to introduce the Azerbaijani poets and authors to the Pakistani readers in terms of creating more opportunities for our fraternal nations to benefit each other mutually by sharing our thousand years old spiritual and cultural heritage through literary exchanges of this kind.