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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING AS THE QUINTESSENCE OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION

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*Abstract:* The paper focuses on the philosophical and socio-historical subtexts of the ideas on education and upbringing in Constantinople in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with examples from the works of Armenian female authors: Elpis Kesaratsian, Srbuhi Tyusab, Sipil, Haykanush Mark, Zapel Yesayan. According to them, the main historical and philosophical prerequisites for changing attitudes towards women's education and upbringing relate not only to women but also to men. The aim of the paper is to study the issues of women's indisputable right to education and upbringing, their natural learning abilities and opportunities as the quintessence of emancipation formed in Constantinople. The problem of the study is to show the philosophical subtext of the establishment of institutions for women's education and upbringing, the organization of education, as well as the processes of overcoming the patriarchal tradition through education. This kind of study has been attempted for the first time. Since the 50s-60s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not only the nature of work and status of women but also the issues of their education and upbringing had special significance in Constantinople.

*Keywords:* philosophy of education, quintessence, Constantinople, women's education and upbringing, charitable schools and colleges.

### Introduction

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the development of women's education in the Ottoman Empire was conditioned by geopolitical, socio-historical, socio-cultural and economic prerequisites.

After the proclamation of the first Tanzimat<sup>1</sup>

decree in 1839, *Gulhan, e Hatt-i Serif*, and the second one, *Hatt-ı Hümayun* decree, some reformation movements began to take place in the Ottoman Empire, and the dictatorial and closed patriarchal model of governance more or less

lished in decrees *Gulhan, e Hatt-i Serif* in 1839 and *Hatt-ı Hümayun* in 1856 which envisaged reforms but were not implemented. Tanzimat was admitted to the Ottoman Empire in 1839-1876, at the same time, the first constitution of the Empire was adopted.

<sup>1</sup> Tanzimat - In the Ottoman Language, Code of Reforms, the Basic Principles of which were set out and pub-

softened (at least seemingly) not only for the Muslims living in the Empire but also for ethnic Christians (here, Armenians) forming a national minority (Kharatyan, 1989, pp. 5-6).

Many young Armenians educated in the best universities in Europe, who initiated an intellectual movement full of new ideas for education and upbringing, culture, art and language reforms, joined the movement. At the same time, this intellectual movement was the organic continuation of the Enlightenment movement, which promised a new rise and awakening to the Armenian nation. Not only men but also women writers and publicists of that time, Elpis Kesaratsian, Srбуhi Tyusab, Sipil (Zapel Asatur), later Haykanush Mark, and Zapel Yesayan, addressed the mentioned reformation processes in separate articles, essays, reviews.

It should be noted that until the 50s-60s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women did not have political, economic and educational rights in the Ottoman Empire, nor could they be involved in science. However, parallel to the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), female intellectuals began to consistently rise through the ranks of self-improvement and self-development. Their independence, self-identification and self-awareness also developed.

In the civic and cultural value systems of the ethnic-national minorities (here, the Armenians) living in the Empire, socio-economic, legal, national, and political consciousness and its manifestations acquired importance, which began to deeply influence the internal and external policies of the Ottoman Empire. That is the reason why all the initiatives of the Armenians were subjected to the most profound censorship (Kharatyan, 1989).

### The Philosophy of Social Transformations and the Implementation of Education

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be considered the period of the awakening of Western Armenian women's literary and philosophical thought, social transformations and implementation of education. This is the time when, despite the criticism received from men, women wrote about the transformation of their needs, opportunities and that of reality.

In 1861-1863, Elpis Kesaratsian was the first to establish the first Armenian language magazine "Guitar", *about women and for women*, and in it, she began to publish essays and articles on education and its philosophy, work, freedom of voice and speech, defending the equal rights of women to those of men in society. A little later, from the 1880s, other women intellectuals also began to raise their voices in their works and propose their own ideas on the realization of the position and role of women in society, as well as examine the issues of children's (Kesaratsian, 1879, pp. 70-80) and women's (Kesaratsian, 1862b, pp. 2-8) education and upbringing. The perceptions of them as the quintessence of women's emancipation summarize the whole philosophy of women's education because the processes themselves were not limited to domestic skills, abilities and other achievements, as it was, for example, in England<sup>2</sup> in the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Trevelyan, 2013).

In the beginning, many opposed women's undertakings. Thus, after the publication of the monthly magazine "Guitar", especially Elpis Kesaratsian became the target of criticism (Voskanian, 1864, pp. 9-13). The emancipation movement initiated by women intellectuals unfolded in several directions:

- a. establishing charitable and humanitarian (poor, red cross) societies and associations by women (Hambardzumyan, 2022b, pp. 61-70),
- b. founding charitable colleges and schools for girls (Hambardzumyan, 2021, pp. 35-43),
- c. opening sewing workshops and reading rooms for women and girls from poor families (Poghosian, 1953),
- d. establishing publishing houses and editorial offices (Kharatyan, 1989),
- e. publishing journals and books (Kharatyan, 1989).

Before that, women had the right only to go to church, attend church services, they could learn biblical rules, folk songs, fairy tales, etc by heart.

The issues of education and upbringing adopted by the female authors were mechanisms that were used by them to carry out activities to the benefit of the nation and to reform the Western Armenian society living in the Ottoman Empire, as it bore the direct impact of the Muslim major-

<sup>2</sup> These processes helped middle- and upper-class women to find a husband, so, it was enough to teach girls to dance, sing and embroider.

riety and maintained the patriarchal and closed-tyrannical unwritten rules that acted towards women in the Empire.

### The Role and Importance of Girls' Colleges

From 1867, girls' colleges and schools began to open on charitable bases. In such educational institutions, girls from poor families received the simplest knowledge, food and clothing (Poghosian, 1953). Girls' education depended on their parents' will and desire. Young girls often stayed at home out of fear because on the way to school or church, and they could be kidnapped by Turkish farrashes<sup>3</sup> (Yesayan, 2018). Such schools or colleges also took advantage of girls' humanitarian work, providing free charitable jobs.

Discipline in these colleges and schools was no more strict than in ordinary public schools so that the young girls did not lose their desire for learning. Like any educational institution, girls' schools also had their own rules and customs, which were regulated by statutes and were strictly observed. The girls admitted to these institutions followed and complied with the rules and laws of the schools. College charters were drawn up through the mediation of the board of trustees, based on and emphasizing the high level of education. Much importance was also given to teaching languages, especially French, Greek and English. The girls were taught to express themselves properly so that they could carry on a conversation. They had to read as many books as possible and study different subjects so that they could perceive the world around them and make their own judgments.

As for middle- and upper-class girls, they had more opportunities for education and advancement. They were sent to private schools or were hired as private teachers<sup>4</sup> to familiarize themselves with different science branches or to study different subjects. Those private schools had big

libraries<sup>5</sup>. Young women and girls had the opportunity to use such libraries without restrictions and to read Homer's or Plato's famous ancient Roman philosophers' or their contemporaries' works in the original; among such works, there could also be morals. Specially invited teachers from abroad also gave middle- and upper-class Armenian girls dancing and music lessons. By receiving this kind of home education, a girl from a rich family could get a worthy husband and be equally established. The best example is Srбуhi Tyusab<sup>6</sup>, who married her music teacher and court orchestra leader Paul Tyusab.

Despite the above-mentioned, from the documentary study "The Armenian Woman"<sup>7</sup> by the famous Armenian novelist Raffi we find out that among Eastern Armenians, Tiflis-Armenians in particular, these processes acquired a certain snobbish character, and the goals of providing education to the girls of rich families were not just conditioned by the issues of education and upbringing but were aimed only at finding a wealthy husband (Raffi, 1991, pp. 99-154). To educate middle- and upper-class boys, private tutors from Europe, mostly from France, were also invited, as a rule.

Language learning was also somewhat fashionable in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, so upper- and middle-class girls could speak one, two, or more foreign languages (French, English, Greek, Arabic, Latin, Italian, etc.). Thus, we know by Elpis Kesaratsian's example that she mastered at least a few languages: Armenian<sup>8</sup> (especially Old Armenian), Turkish<sup>9</sup>, and Arabic<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Zapel Yesayan tells about a case like this in her "Gardens of Silihtar" related to her grandmother.

<sup>4</sup> Studying Srбуhi Tyusab's biography, we see that in order to educate her daughter in the best way her mother, Nazly Vahan, sent her to study with different teachers. As is known, the famous Armenian writer Mkrtich Peshiktashlyan was Srбуhi Tyusab's Armenian language and literature teacher.

<sup>5</sup> One of the distinctive features of this period was the presence of big and extensive libraries in upper-class families. They had libraries consisting of volumes of both modern and ancient Greek and Roman literature. As is known, the Tyusabs owned one.

<sup>6</sup> A girl educated at home could sometimes have no less knowledge than a university-educated youth of the same age.

<sup>7</sup> Raffi travelled around Eastern and Western parts of Armenia and wrote down what he saw with his own eyes.

<sup>8</sup> All her essays are mostly in Armenian.

<sup>9</sup> She lived in Constantinople and communicated in that language very well.

<sup>10</sup> For about 12 years she lived in her nephew's house in Alexandria (Egypt).

## The Constitutionality of Women's Education and Upbringing

Although ahead of the reforms taking place in the Ottoman Empire while drawing up and ratifying the Armenian National Constitution in 1863 (National Constitution of Armenia, 1863, p. 24), a relevant article defining women's rights was also included in it. However, the desired changes were still not present in the Empire (Hambarzumyan, 2022a, pp. 48-54), although, as was mentioned in the introduction, the flow of brilliant minds of the Armenian intelligentsia educated in the best English and French universities to the Empire was too much. However, the intellectual life and education of national minorities (here, Armenians) living in the Ottoman Empire were gradually being coordinated, and women were getting involved in those processes. On the other hand, questions arise: "How did it happen that a whole galaxy of Western Armenian female authors (editors, poets, novelists) was formed in the 1880s when women were deprived of opportunities for proper education?" and "How did they manage to engage in creative activity in the literary-cultural domain equal to university-educated men?". Probably, considering this circumstance, Srбуhi Tyusab wrote in the "Preface" of the novel "Mayta", published in 1883, that a woman had no right to have a mediocre pen (Tyusab, 1981, pp. 13-14). Tyusab did not exclude the study of various branches of science by women, but she considered the main goal of the development of intellect to be a woman's ability to hold a conversation on any topic. According to Elpis Kesaratsian and Srбуhi Tyusab, a wise woman is kind and has moderate behaviour. In her essays, Kesaratsian repeatedly highlighted the idea that a woman's education should become a necessity and gain great importance for the man who would become her husband. A woman should be educated not to please her future husband but to become wise because no one needs a stupid wife.

In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were no colleges or schools for girls in the Ottoman Empire yet. There were mostly day-to-day or Sunday single-gender schools affiliated with the church, but they were attended only by boys, and the rules of education were strict.

Already in the 1880s-90s, in Constantinople, e.g. the Surb Khach (Poghosian, 1953) mixed-

gender school operated on the principle of an organized school, the conditions of education of which, later in 1935, are thoroughly described by Zapel Yesayan (2018) in her novel "Gardens of Silihtar" (pp. 115-127), indicating the year of her studies there (1888). The process of girls' education in such schools also predetermined their future: the girls studying here could as well "not be happy" (by traditional perceptions) because the quintessence of the educational process itself was recorded as a deviation from unwritten patriarchal laws<sup>11</sup>.

Private schools, such as Karapet Agha's in Yesayan's novel "Gardens of Silihtar", did not have clear syllabuses for the girls' education and upbringing or good teachers<sup>12</sup> (Yesayan, 2018, pp. 103-108) because the initiators themselves often performed the role of the teacher. However, this was also an achievement for the Armenians, who were forming a national minority in the Ottoman Empire.

As mentioned above, girls' colleges and schools were opened mainly by wealthy ladies on a charitable basis, and they themselves taught various skills to their female students. As an example, we can refer to the "College of School-Lovers", which was opened in 1867 by the efforts of Nazly Vahan, Srбуhi Tyusab's mother and later achieved exemplary results (Poghosian, 1953). "Thanks and gratitude to the guardian ladies of Ortagyugh, and especially Mrs Vahanian Nazly (Nazly Vahan), who supported "Hripsimyats College" (Utudjian, 1867, p. 3). In such colleges and schools, the founding member ladies taught the girls everything they knew: reading, singing, playing the piano, embroidering, sewing hats or clothes, and so on.

<sup>11</sup> Judging by the examples described in Zapel Yesayan's "Gardens of Silihtar", we can get a clear idea of the patterns and differences of education between early and late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Zapel Yesayan's grandmother and her own examples are noteworthy. Yesayan's grandmother was not educated, because she was somehow rescued from the kidnapping of Turkish farrashes at the age of 14 and immediately married through an intermediary, while Zapel's father chooses the girl's school himself, and then sends her to Paris to get higher education.

<sup>12</sup> The conditions of education in the private schools opened on a charitable basis varied from strict discipline to learning the Bible by heart.



## Philosophy of Education in the Works of Female Authors

The improvement of women's social position in society promoted feminist sentiments and thinking, helping to promote women's beliefs in self-perfection and hopes for self-improvement, and the confidence that they were not inferior to men in their capabilities and capacities.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's education, upbringing, social role and position allowed them to more openly express their own desires and talk about rights and equality. The change in status, coupled with the significant improvement in education, helped women to express their demands more boldly. Thus, Western Armenian intellectual women expressed their thoughts and feelings, philosophical and anthropological perceptions by means of letters, diaries, novels, essays, publicists, and pedagogical-educational articles, publishing them in the press. They questioned the accepted traditional standards that restricted women's rights based on the evaluation of mental abilities.

In the 1880s-90s, interest in women's rights, social position and behaviour also grew conditioned by the non-radical but significant changes in the institution of marriage, which was based on the quintessence of women's education and upbringing. Seeing the highest value in intelligence, Western Armenian female authors questioned the traditionally held belief that women should adopt only femininity and rejected the irrational ideal that stupidity and incompetence should actually be encouraged as feminine traits<sup>13</sup>. On the contrary, they considered incompetence as an unworthy trait of an adult woman. In their works, female authors (Elpis Kesaratsian, Srбуhi Tyusab, Zapel Yesayan) rejected the patriarchal perceptions of women's nature and role in society while accepting the national. Thus, in her novel "Mayta" (1883), Srбуhi Tyusab expressed the idea that a woman should get rid of her miserable marital status and value her own *self* and the man according to merit. In the novel "Siranush", she urged women to do with forced marriages imposed by their parents because a family could only be based on love and solidarity (Tyusab, 1884).

<sup>13</sup> Although, most of them (Srбуhi Tyusab, Sipil, Haykanush Mark) were considered representatives of romanticism.

Female authors were not indifferent towards women's education and upbringing (Kesaratsian, 1862b, 1879), their economic and social independence (Tyusab, 1925), and in their works or letters, they realized the quintessence and philosophy of education (Yesayan, 2018, 1977). Following the logic of their works, several directions of ideological references can be identified:

- a. reflection of man-woman social rights and equality ("Mayta"),
- b. reflection of an economic issue (conditioned by education and work, in particular) ("Araksia or the Governess"),
- c. social problems aimed at overcoming unwritten patriarchal laws and taboos (novels "Siranush", "A Girl's Heart", "Gardens of Silihtar", Elpis Kesaratsian's essays),
- d. vectors aimed at the realization of voice and speech, as well as men-women rights and equality (Kesaratsian, 1862c, pp. 2-4), etc.

In the works of Western Armenian female authors, we can meet two types of women: *ill-educated and sometimes illiterate* characters of lower and middle classes, who have completely unsolvable social problems or live at the expense of their husbands, and a new type of women, *educated and advanced*, who earned money on their own, such as Araksia (Tyusab, 1925).

The institute of *family*, often seen as a mutually beneficial union with equal wealth, status, and social standing (without asking or caring about the personal preferences of the parties), was now seen as a partnership of people with common interests who longed for happy family life. The ideological contrast of this problem is present in Srбуhi Tyusab's novel "Siranush" (Tyusab, 1884).

According to the new way of thinking, a woman should also have a voice in choosing her future husband whom she would trust and who could value and treat her as her dearest friend ("Araksia or the Governess"). Moreover, a wife should receive a good education in order to become a worthy companion for her husband. Despite all this, women still held subordinate positions to their husbands, and patriarchal traditions were still strong in society, as women were economically and socially dependent on their husbands (Sipil, 1891).

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the improvement of Western Armenian women's education in the Ottoman Empire was partially conditioned

by the literary-cultural awakening, which included not only women's works but also theatre, public libraries (Hambardzumyan, 2022b, pp. 61-70), publishing houses, and editorial offices as part of it.

### The Philosophy of Education and Upbringing in Elpis Kesaratsian's Essays

Elpis Kesaratsian (1830-1913), the first female author of the literary and cultural awakening of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, played a tremendous role in the education and upbringing of women. He believed that women occupied a lower position compared to men, not because of natural differences but because of a lack of education. According to Kesaratsian, the most important thing in education is not just the acquisition of knowledge but also the training of the mind. She advocated the establishment of educational centres for women, although, in the 1850s-60s, many still considered the idea absurd.

Kesaratsian's essays give us a hint that she was not religious, although she considered women's education to be a combination of moral, educational and national goals. Kesaratsian saw the main goal of women's education and upbringing as the continuity of women's development. He believed that a woman should continue to be educated after marriage as well because she will also be educating her children (Kesaratsian, 1879, pp. 48-70).

According to her, ignorant mothers raise ignorant children, and then these ignorant children become incomplete members of society. According to her, such an approach can correct the existing mistakes and improve the future of generations because by gaining wisdom and getting the necessary knowledge, women can then pass this knowledge on to their children. Such an approach aims at liberating women from the ignorance imposed by social tradition to become a source of solid and useful knowledge so that women's spiritual nature is no longer neglected.

Elpis Kesaratsian made the philosophy of women's education more comprehensive. The advantage of this idea was that she did not mean only the education of upper-class women. In her essays "Upbringing of Maidens" (Kesaratsian, 1862b) and "Parents' Education" (Kesaratsian, 1879), Elpis Kesaratsian tried to draw women's

attention to the need and significance of education, persuaded them to leave their usual frivolous lifestyle and turn to spiritual development (Kesaratsian, 1879).

Kesaratsian believes that women will not give in. Moreover, they will raise their merits with education, and men will appreciate them. It is noteworthy that in her philosophical thoughts published in Theodik's "Amenu Taretsoyts" (Everyone's yearbook), Kesaratsian has a rather aggressive disposition towards men, blaming them for the lifestyle of women only thinking about clothes and coquetry. According to her, girls and boys should be brought up under equal conditions so that they clearly realize their place and role in society. Moreover, Kesaratsian urges to drive away the mediocre "crow men" who have unfairly taken the place of wise and thoughtful women: "Many times we have seen that a woman is more thoughtful, more organised and more economical than her husband, but she is forced to willingly and blindly obey her violent husband, for the woman ought to be a tonguetied bird according to the blind law, and the man, like a crow, ought to domineer boldly" (Theodik, 1911, pp. 128-130). Kesaratsian believed that education should only derive from women's real interests and that education should in no way seem too difficult or unattainable. One shouldn't memorize words for hours but learn the material meaningfully. One should learn as many languages as one needs to read useful authors. Instead of reading a huge number of meaningless magazines or books, they should read well-chosen quality literature.

Kesaratsian's ideas are also noticeable from the point of view of women's piety and morality, but at the same time, she believed that they should seek the meaning and truth of things and phenomena as a combination of piety and reason. Therefore, at school, girls should be educated in a simple and unpretentious environment, where they should learn to be content with the few things they have (Kesaratsian, 1879). It should be noted that Kesaratsian was also one of the founders of the "Plain-Loving Armenian Women's Society" (Poghosian, 1953). According to her, a woman who has self-respect will not spend money on her appearance and will never be proud when the poor bless her kindness. Thus, according to the editor, piety and grace are the bases on which an educated, well-brought-up

and happy society is based, whose soul is full of love, and there is no room for envy and vice (Kesaratsian, 1879). In 1862-1863 Elpis Kesaratsian's essays caused intense controversy in society.

## Conclusion

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was still difficult for men to imagine that a woman could become a writer, editor, publisher, scientist, or politician. They rejected the idea of women being smarter than men or having equal rights with them, at the same time accepting them.<sup>14</sup> As Kesaratsian and other female authors believed, a woman's education and philosophy should be realized in the process of overcoming the perversity, whim, stubbornness and bullying of an uneducated woman, making her a good mother, a reasonable and tolerant woman. Women wanted equality not only in the field of education but also of literary-cultural, socio-economic and political. Only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were Western Armenian women intellectuals able to achieve rights to higher education and employment. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked as an important turning point with respect to the position of Western Armenian women. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can rightfully be considered the era of Elpis Kesaratsian, Srбуhi Tyusab (Vahanian), Sipil (Zapel Khanjian), Haykanush Mark (Topuzian), Zapel Yesayan, and other famous female authors, who made their important contribution to the development of Armenian Literature, the philosophy of education and the improvement of society. They proved to have abilities and talents equal to men in various fields and could be perfect speakers, writers and poets.

Gender identification factors are implicitly present in the philosophical and pedagogical literature of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are the main components of the structure of the gender system in pedagogy and play a significant role in the differentiation and shaping of genders.

<sup>14</sup> There are many pro and con articles about it in the press.

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