

VIOLENCE PREVENTIVE EFFECT OF MUSIC OF ALEVİ SOCIETY

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Abstract

Aleviness is a belief and morale precept in Anatolia and has an esoteric and gnostic character. Therefore, the way to reach the God is the way of love and favor. For his reason, good man can be perfect man/women (insan-ı kâmil) and only that person reach the God. In contrast to other beliefs and morale precepts, music is both goal and means of the Alevi rituals. In fact, *deyişes* and *nefes*es (songs of Alevi) are not only music. Furthermore, they are expressive elements of Aleviness. Therefore, music of Alevi directs people to love and favor. In this work violence preventing effect of music of Alevi is discussed by using some characteristics of Alevi rituals and life.

Introduction

It can be seen with a rough observation that there is an increase in the violence behavior in Turkey in all parts of social life. As a result of this observation, Alevi society, who have peaceful life, have taken more attention. Thus, Alevi-Bektashi belief, which follows a different way from Orthodox Islam belief, can be considered as a life model and moral precept.

In this precept, music has a constructive role. Indeed, it is valuable as carrier and narrator of the belief. Thus, it is thought that music, which has an important part in the life of Alevi society, affects on the peaceful structure of Alevi society in which less violence takes place. This study aims to describe the relation between Alevi-Bektashi belief and music which has violence preventive effect.

Violence Preventive Effect of Music of Alevi Society

Aleviness is a gnostic and theosophical moral precept. In addition, this precept has an esoteric god belief (Güleç, 2004). Different from monotheistic orthodox religions, in esoteric beliefs, universe and the God are together and all existing things arise from the God identically. Therefore, good and bad only belong

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to the God. Hence, people should follow the way of love and favor in order to reach the God. Good person should be perfect man/woman and perfect man/woman can reach the God (Gener, 2004). Furthermore, all people are worthy of love since they all get share from the God. Also according to this belief, there is no difference between people, in other words, there is no you and me.

When daily life criterions are considered, Aleviness is a heterodox esoteric belief and moral precept in Anatolia. Alevis attitude to life and rituals of Aleviness are different form orthodox Islam. One of the important differences is that music is sometimes a vehicle of these rituals and sometimes the ritual itself. “Deyiş” and “Nefes” are not only music for Alevis. They are the components which tell requirements of Alevi belief. They are also one of the twelve duties which should be done in Cem, basic religious ritual of Alevis. From this point of view, music can be used to discriminate rituals of Aleviness form orthodox Islam rituals (Top, 1990):

Do not ask brother our sect
We recognize no sects, we have the path
Do not call us to hypocrisy chapter
We do not know (drink) sherbet, we have “dolu”

We don't know mufti, we don't know fetwa
We don't know gossip, we don't know giving a fetwa
We don't know fault in talking the truth
We have majestic like Sah-ı Merdan

Don't wait piety worship from us
We are in the way of salvation from the beginning
Being friends are singed to us
Don't think that we have right or left

....

Nesimi don't blow the gaff
Raw souls can't know how to reach God
God should not be close for who don't know God
We have hands at the level of God

(Sorma be birader mezhebimizi
Biz mezhep bilmeyiz yolumuz vardır
Çağırma meclis-i riyaya bizi
Biz şerbet bilmeyiz (içmeyiz) dolumuz vardır

Biz müftü bilmeyiz fetva bilmeyiz
Kil ü kal bilmeyiz ifta bilmeyiz
Hakikat bağında (bahsinde) hata bilmeyiz

Şah-ı Merdan gibi ulumuz vardır

Bizlerden bekleme züht ü ibadet
Tutmuşuz evvelden rah-i selamet
Tevella olmaktır bize alamet
Sanma ki sağımız solumuz vardır
....

Nesimi esrarı faş etme sakın
Ne bilsin ham ervah likasın hakkın
Hakk'ı bilmeyene Hak olmaz yakın
Bizim Hak katında elimiz vardır)

In order to understand mystery in this deyiş, we should examine Cem, which is the basic ritual of Alevi. This ritual takes a great part in foundation and spread of the precept.

Cem Ritual and Moral Parts

Cem ritual is the basic ritual of Alevi-Bektashi belief. Even some senior dervishes say that “If there is no Cem, there cannot be Aleviness” (Yaman, 1998). Moreover, Cem ritual is a reflection of Alevi morality and life style (Bal, 2005). It is possible to explain this situation with examples below:

Firstly, it is necessary that people who enter Cem ritual should be spiritually clean. Clean brother (the person who enter Cem), should make peace with a person who put out with, should pay his dept and get rid of anything if he takes one's right. Moreover, he should forswear not doing previous mistakes again. People, who are not clean as stated below, do not possible to be in Cem ritual. Spiritual cleaning, or in other words self criticism, is repairing his mistakes by judging himself. Also, these behaviors increase peace of him and the society he lives with.

Secondly, there are males and females are together in the Cem ritual. There is no distinction between males and females. Indeed, everybody is equal in the Cem ritual and all roles are left outside. So, it can be stated that leaving gender and status discrimination outside the ritual, results in a decrease in the violence behavior result from inequality.

Thirdly, we should talk about “düşkünlük”. Düşkünlük is a punishment which Alevi apply for people of forbidden behaviors. For instance, people who steal something, lie, give false testimony, harm people and behave similarly are considered as “düşkün”. “Düşkün” people disallowed to enter the Cem ritual as

punishment. On the other hand, being a respected person is important for all societies. Since being excluded from Cem ritual is a hard moral punishment, people make stand on their weaknesses and immoral behaviors to decrease them to the least level.

The point which we want to emphasis is that: requirements and punishments of Aleviness are worldly because of its esoteric and theosophical nature. Alevi people do not think about posthumousness. They deal with now and goal of Alevis includes only being perfect man/woman. It is also excepted form Alevis to be a good person for himself and for the society. On the other side, punishments do not include violence. The only action is excluding “düşkün” people from ritual. As there is not duality of life before and after the death in the belief, the aim of Alevi is to make this world good and beautiful.

Music in Cem Ritual

There are twelve duties in Cem ritual. One of these is “zakirlik”. “Zakir” plays instrument and sings “deyiş”, “duaz”, “semah”, “mersiye”... Gani Pekşen describes place of music in Cem ritual as follows (Pekşen, 2009, s.408-409):

“It is true that “saz” (stringed Turkish folk music instrument) takes part in Cem, but music takes part at the last phase of Cem. Music is the cleaning and self-criticism of spiritually purified individuals by staying alone in the society and making self criticism of himself and his life from first “Görgü Cemi” (special form of Cem ritual) to the last Görgü Cemi. After the self criticism of individuals with himself and with people who lives together music starts. Music is therapy at the same time.”

Moreover, music can be considered as therapy, since it is a mediator of cleaning and self-criticism of people who participate in Cem. Because of the mood of Cem includes purification and tranquility of all participants, music in the Cem can also be treated as therapy method.

As it was stated earlier, Aleviness advices and wants behaviors which do not include violence. Moreover, this belief uses music to set its directions. Even music so important that during “muhabbet” (kind of ritual in which all people must see each other’s faces so that they come close to themselves so come close to God) or playing saz and singing “nefes”, “deyiş” or any other Alevi-Bektashi song, people sit on their knees, do not eat anything, do not speak and do not smoke. Bedri Noyan tells that

“Saz should be listened with a respect as they listen to Qur’an” (Noyan, 2001). In fact listening to music in Cem rituals is a serious job in Alevi- Bektashi culture. Sound saz is treated as sound of God. In addition, “Semah dönme” (performing ritual dance) treated as being in the way to reach God.

Requirements of Cem

Cem rituals are such ceremonies that people who want to attend should make them ready to learn, desire to be clean. Therefore, it is important to participate the Cem, and it is also important deserve it. In this part, some deyiş examples will be given that explain necessities to enter Cem. As a first example, “If you want to enter Dervishes Cem” can be examined (Dertli Divani, 2008):

If you want to enter Dervishes Cem
Remove grudge and haughtiness and come than
If you want to reach mystery of reality
Reach an august dervish and come than

It is the complaint and sound of nightingale to rose
Don’t waste of day and time
If you want to learn God’s level knowledge
Take the hand of reality and come than

Divani, is it easy to work on reality
Collecting the roses of Hasbahçe garden
It is not required to see fault of others
Look at your mirror and come than

(Erenler Cemine gireyim dersen
Kin ile kibiri at da öyle gel
Gerçekler sırrına ereyim dersen
Ulu bir mürşide yet de öyle gel

Bülbülün güledir feryadı ünü
Zaya verme geçen saati günü
Okumak istersen ilmi ledünü
Bir gerçekten destin tut da öyle gel

Kolay mı Divani gerçeğe ermek
Hasbahçe bağının gülünü dermek
Nene lazım elin kusurun görmek
Sen kendi aynana bak da öyle gel)

This deyiş, whose lyrics and music belongs to Dertli Divani, mentions about attributes of people who can attend to Cem in specific and in general talks about

what kind of attributes is wanted from an Alevi. Since precept is esoteric, means people are the mirrors of the God, the above song also states that in order to be perfect man/woman, people should deal with only own fault instead of the others.

When we examine the peace in terms of melodic structure, it is possible to say that it shows general melodic structure of songs of East Anatolia.

In addition, according to frequency and tempo studies of music, change in the frequency or tempo affects heart rates of people and indeed, it was seen that heart rates slow down and speed up according to the decrease and increase of the tempo of piece (Tamer, 2000; Metzger, 2004; Vink, 2004). In accordance with the results of that works, in Alevi music which does not include mourning, it can be observed that rhythm level of the music causes tremendous excitement. Hence, people are influenced from the messages of the poems rapidly. Bedri Noyan states the importance of the rhythm in Bektashi music as:

“Nefes”s are divided into three according to the form of singing:

- Slow ones and slow usul (tempo) songs are called “oturak”. These kinds of “nefes”s are used at the beginning of the muhabbet.
- Medium tempo ones are called “dört köşe”. These kinds of compositions are played in the middle of the muhabbet when pleasure and enthusiasm are started to increase.
- When pleasure and enthusiasm are increased more, nefes which are called şahlama are played. Şahlamas are more dynamic and have high tempo. They are mostly nefeses of semah.

Second song is a deyiş which belongs to Aşık Halil Yıldız (n.d):

In order to sit İrfan Meclisi
It is pleasant to be wide and come wide
In order to run all the services
It is pleasant to be placate

Do not be supercilious
Do not twit your favor
Be coaxing, do not be unkind
It is pleasant to bond with light of eye

Provide a service that is useful to friends
Do not touch your friends wounds
To prevent calling you as wound
Be a salve, It is pleasant to dress a wound

I am Halil Semavi who is architect of soul

Inside of myself is city and my body is land
 I am keeping God there
 It is always pleasant to seeing with eyes of heart

(İrfan meclisine oturmak için
 Engin olup engin varmak hoş olur
 Hizmetleri tekmiil yetirmek için
 Gönül alıp gönül vermek hoş olur

Kişiye yüksekte bakıcı olma
 Verdiğini başa kakıcı olma
 Gönülleri yap da yıkıcı olma
 Göz şavkı ile örmek hoş olur

Bir hizmet eyle ki dosta yarasın
 Sakın ha azdırma dostun yarasın
 Demesinler sana sen bir yarasın
 Melhem ol sen yara sarmak hoş olur

Halil Semavi'yem gönül mimarı
 İçim bir şehirdir vücut diyarı
 Saklarım orada ulu Gaffarı
 Her an kalp gözüyle görmek hoş olur)

Similar to the previous one, in this song attributes waited from people are mentioned. On the contrary to former one, qualities of good person are mentioned more. Also being benevolent and humble is talked in the lyrics with various examples. Moreover, at the last quarter, equality of the God and human and sake of God are mentioned.

When the song is examined in terms of music, its rhythm takes listeners into the music. Moreover, melody of the song is composed of musical sentences of “Tahtacı Alevi” of Aegean region. There is an important point: it is observed that using authentic melodies, rhythm and makam of societies are effective in the music therapy (Somakcı, 2003). Thus, this deyiş will affect peoples of Aegean region more than previous one.

Forswear

In this part, some deyiş examples, which are about forswear of a person, will be covered. Here it is important to underline two points. First one is people use music to get rid of their faults and secondly it is possible. In other words, in addition to the

fact that the punishments are done before the death, music can be used to enter the society of people who have done no faults.

First example is from the Erzincan. It is a deyiş belongs to Noksani and gathered by Muammer Özkavcı (Hüseyin Baba, n.d)

I came to your ilahi door
I take my fault to my hand
Accept that I vowed
Breath is this breath and, time is this time

I washed my hand with blood
I said yaman to goods
I eat lokma without consent
Breath is this breath and, time is this time

I am Noksai, my face is black
I am ready for your acceptance
My God, do not fire myself
Breath is this breath and, time is this time

(İlahi kapına geldim
Kusurum elime aldım
Kabul eyle töve kıldım
Dem bu dem saat bu saat

Kan ile elimi yudum
Yahşılara yaman dedim
Rızasız lokma çok yedim
Dem bu dem saat bu saat

Noksani'yem yüzüm kara
Mürvet ettim durdum dara
İlahi yandırma nara
Dem bu dem saat bu saat)

Similar to the above examples, rhythmic form of the song causes excitement. In addition, 10/8 time signature is one of the regional property of this deyiş. In fact, ten times time signatures are mostly seen in the region of Erzincan-Kahramanmaraş. One can find this lyric with another melody (Top, 1990).

Second example is a deyiş in the form of duaz-ı imam (deyiş comprising lyrics on twelve imams) which takes an important part in Alevi- Bektashi music. (Yaman, 1998):

I have done faults, my works is incomplete
Forswear for our faults estağfirullah
I am engaged to Muhammed Ali
Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

If Hasan Hüseyin is a flashing light
 If İmam Zeynel is a secret in the secret
 If we are arrogant and hog
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

Do not stop following Muhammed Bakır
 Take your load with Cafer and do not deal with others
 Do not offend anyone
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

I have always beg of Musa-i Kâzım
 My soul is dependent to İmam-ı Rıza
 We are all deficient, faulty
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

Taki and Naki are similar to the moon
 We hope that Ali will not waste our efforts
 Because of our faults and curses
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

We hope that roses of Hasan-Askeri spring up
 We hope that Mehdi dispel our sadness
 Because of our lies and gossips
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

Can Hatayi'm says Bagdat Basra
 We have to live such a day, such a century
 Yâ Ali, you are generous, forgive us
 Forswear for our faults estağfirullah

(Hatalar etmişim noksandır işim
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah
 Muhammed Ali'ye bağlıdır başım
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Hasan Hüseyin balkıyan nur ise
 İmam Zeynel sır içinde sır ise
 Özümüzde kibir benlik var ise
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Muhammed Bakır'ın izinden çıkma
 Yükün Cafer'den tut gayriye bakma
 Hatıra dokunup gönüller yıkma
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Musa-i Kâzım'a daim niyazım
 İmam-ı Rıza'ya bağlıdır özüm
 Eksiklik, noksanlık, hep kusur bizim
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Taki ile Naki benziyor aya
 Ali emeklerimizi vermeye zaya
 Ettığımız kem işlere kötü bed-huya
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Hasan-Askeri'nin gülleri bite
 Mehdi gönlümüzün gamını ata
 Ettığımız yalan koğu gıybete
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah

Can Hatayi'm eder Bağdat Basıra
 Böyle güne kaldık böyle asıra
 Yâ Ali cömertsin kalma kusura
 Tevbe günahlarımıza estağfirullah)

Conclusion

In this study, it is examined whether Alevi- Bektashi music has an effect on preventing violence and bad behavior. While doing it, gnostic, theosophical and esoteric structure of Aleviness is taken into consideration.

Although it is need to support with more research, it is shown that Aleviness does not have violence as its nature. Thus its music does not include violence. Since lyrics of songs include self-criticism more than criticism of others, listeners concentrated themselves more than other peoples. In other words, suffering is chosen instead of hurt, looking at his mirror is chosen instead of looking for other people's fault is as taken as base.

It should be noted that violence preventing effect of Alevi- Bektashi music can be seen in the societies where this culture is dominant. Moreover, in order to use these positive consequences of Alevi- Bektashi music in other societies appropriate listening ambiences should be set.

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