



## **EXPRESSION OF IDEAS OF TOLERANCE IN THE WORK "NATHAN THE WISE"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The article under discussion analyzes the issues of inter-religious harmony and tolerance in the work "Nathan the Wise". The author of the article considers that the German critic and art theorist Gotthald Ephraim Lessing supported humanism throughout his career and placed the concept of interpersonal tolerance at the center of the drama "Nathan the Wise". Through this work, the writer showed a life that celebrates peace and tranquility, kindness and love on earth. At a time when the world was experiencing various conflicts on a religious basis, the ideas of religious tolerance put forward in the Lessing's drama were gaining relevance.*

**KEYWORDS:** *tolerance, upbringing, religion, hero, enlightenment, character, nation, society, life, idea.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Lessing, who left a huge mark on German literature with his multifaceted work, became known throughout the world as an enlightener who brought literature and life closer together. Throughout his career, the writer, known as a militant, revolutionary enlightener, defended the interests of the affected strata of German society. His works, written in a critical spirit, combined the spirit of freedom and heroism, promoting the national unity of the country, the ideas of humanity.

His work played an important role in the literature of the Western Awakening, as it was sung in the national spirit. This raised key issues for the development of the German nation.

N. G. Chernyshevsky expressed the following opinion about him. "Lessing fought for German literature to be at the center of public life. In this way, he accelerated the development of his people" [1]. Indeed, throughout his career, the writer, like other representatives of the revolutionary bourgeois democracy of the eighteenth century, fought for the idea of human equality. The issues raised by him have not yet lost their force.

Lessing sought to reveal the peculiarities of the various arts in order to further strengthen their connection with life. By this time, "Europe in the eighteenth century was at the forefront of the ideological struggle against feudal regimes, enriched with the philosophical and political teachings of the literary and artistic period of the Enlightenment" [2].

Lessing took the leading position in this struggle. One of Lessing's achievements was that he was one of the first creators to bring a spirit of social protest to German literature. The writer promotes this idea with great passion and courage, believing that the ideas of mutual equality, justice and truth can be realized not through revolts, but through the enlightenment of man, his spiritual maturity.

Therefore, by the 1960s, Lessing was recognized as an art theorist not only in Germany but throughout Europe. His views in the field of drama and theatrical theory went through the same basic stages in its development as the whole bourgeois doctrine of the eighteenth century.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The purpose of this study is to scientifically substantiate and analyze the ideas of inter-religious harmony and tolerance in the work



"Nathan the Wise". Tolerance is a necessary attribute for every individual and is an important phenomenon that has been valued for centuries, regardless of religion, worldview, beliefs.

The great German writer Lessing summed up the ideas of tolerance in the poetic drama "Nathan the Wise". The drama was originally written in prose. Later, in accordance with the traditions of the Enlightenment, this work was transformed into a dramatic poem. Throughout his career, he has created in almost all genres with great passion.

The dramas written by him clearly showed the social environment of that period. G.E. Lessing was between two of the greatest literary movements of his time - Enlightenment classicism and sentimentalism. But Lessing would not include himself in any of these areas" [3].

His critical views were clearly felt in his works. Through this article, we focus on the analysis of the issue of the artistic expression of the ideas of tolerance in Lessing's "Nathan the Wise". "It is going to be the most impressive play I've ever written," the playwright said.

This work was really a very heartfelt play and left a deep mark on the heart of the reader. Incorporating his debates with the church and its leaders on racial and religious equality, as well as differences, the playwright concludes that "it would be better to strike them from the theatrical stage than to speak from the old pulpit" [5].

The reason was that at that time the relationship between Lessing and the clergy was becoming tense. Lessing filled the factor of tolerance with the need to resist religious persecution. Tolerance was first and foremost about protecting people from all kinds of oppression and violence on an equal footing with people of other religions. Lessing raised the issue between religion and society at a time when religious conflicts in Europe, the relationship between religious and secular authorities, were becoming more serious.

The spread of religious ideas is often explained by social events that exist in society. The play was completed in 1779. When staged at the Weimar Theater in 1801, Goethe reacted to the play by saying that "the feelings of patience, sorrow and remorse that are reflected will remain sacred feelings in the hearts of the peoples."

Indeed, while this play is very impressive among the playwright's works, it shows the author's return to enlightenment-philosophical drama. The play takes a strong place on the stage with its richness of deep human ideas and images. The drama is still alive today. Today, theologians Heinrich Schmidinger and Karl-Josef Kuschel consider the work of the sage Nathan universal for that period and claim to have made a great turn in theology.

Indeed, the drama, along with the interreligious relationship, shows that members of different religions treat each other harshly, disregard their customs, or do not follow the rules of punishment that are not specified in religions at all. Disobedience to religious customs, disagreements between different fanatics or theologians began to cause various conflicts among the people.

In this sense, the playwright, fed up with the filth of society, expressed his attitude to religions and the conflicts that arose between them in "Nathan the Wise". The work is fully interpreted as inter-religious harmony and tolerance.

"Although the problem of tolerance was initially related to religious intolerance, the principles of tolerance are very important for many religions. they call not to violate the fourth commandment, which is set forth in the books, which God commands the other to love himself as himself" [6].

So, in the person of the Jew Nathan, Lessing, adorned with all kinds of propaganda, disorder and discrimination in society, tried to be fair on all fronts, to protect human rights.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the ideas of the work, Lessing wanted people of different religions to live in harmony in a society, and wanted their rights in society to be equal regardless of which religion they represented. Lessing does not emphasize religious controversy in the play, but confronts the hostile priest Getze against the spirituality of a strange universe. This was a severe blow to the unclean people in the society of that time. The ideas that express the first ideas of tolerance in the drama can be seen in the conversation between Nathan and the monk.

Nathan:

No, no! I won't leave you anymore!  
Be friends! May my people  
Worse than your jinn you look bad  
But we can't choose it  
Besides, you and I are not a nation yet  
People, what is it?  
Judaism, Christianity  
In fact, isn't everyone human?  
Oh, I'd be glad to see you  
Generous as a human being [7].

Nathan demonstrates humanity through friendships with representatives of other religions. Nathan offers friendship at a glance to the monk who rescued his adopted daughter Rexa from the torment of fire. Nathan tells the priest this offer not only because he saved his daughter, but also because he wants to live as one united nation.

The author depicts the events of his life through the image of Nathan, and promotes the idea



of a member of society, a family, regardless of which religion mankind represents. Although the monk was a member of a different religion, he was primarily a human being. He also had a heart, and he was also a man of high intellect. Nathan knew that such a quality was embodied in every human being. Through this, the playwright seems to put an end to the debate in society.

G.E. Lessing's humanistic ideas about inter-religious harmony, religious tolerance are revealed in the dialogue of Nathan the Wise with Sultan Salohiddin through the "Legend of the Three Rings." Orientalist O. Mann admits that "G.E. Lessing considers the humane behavior of Sultan Salohiddin as an enlightened and historical figure as a manifestation of Eastern culture" [8].

The playwright sees the positive aspects of Salahiddin in religious tolerance, in harmony between people. Lessing, first and foremost, expresses the notions of religious tolerance in Eastern culture as the main idea in the play "Nathan the Wise". King Salohiddin asks Nathan which of the three religions is superior. Nathan wisely tells the story of the three rings. The legend of the three rings is illuminated in an oriental style.

"It is based on the idea that Christianity, Judaism and Islam are united in discussing the struggle for inter-religious conflict and the development of cultures, the prevention of human rights abuses and the establishment of unity and peace among peoples." The legend of the three rings is illuminated in an oriental style.

Nathan:

In ancient times in the eastern country  
One man lived: in his arms  
There was a precious pearl ring

Lessing also expresses his views on religion in his book "Educating Mankind". It states, "If any religious rule is not enlightened by reason, if it does not pass through its powerful critique, then such rules are nothing but superstition. But it is also true that the content of any religion is imbued with the spirit of universal morality, such as reason and love for people." counts" [9].

According to the author, a person should have human qualities such as reasonableness, honesty, tolerance, generosity. During a conversation with Sultan Salohiddin, Nathan says that the connection between religions is that no religion is superior to any other religion. The continuation of these ideas can also be seen in the following dialogue:

Nathan:

Only on the basis of  
Rather, their basis is holistic:  
History is one, isn't it?  
Ancient chronicles, narrations

That's all there is to it.

But we do not believe in history!

The garden in which we believe rests on us,

Who wears enamel, who wears no clothes,

He is even willing to give his life for us

Qibla is our father and mother

It has always been a symbol of my faith

Leaving the spirit of my fathers, I am yours

Shall I repent of the spirit of my father?

Or vice versa: what a demand

I can - you blame your own people

In a lie, admit mine?

The same can be said of imitation

Is that not the case with Christians?

In a conversation with Sultan Salohiddin, Nathan the Wise emphasizes that the history of the three religions is one, which has been witnessed by legends since ancient times, and explains to the sultan that the essence of religious beliefs is common. It is all based on the ideas of goodness and is based on qualities such as goodness, peace, friendship. It calls people to honesty and purity, kindness, brotherhood and tolerance. Therefore, the Jews say that they should honor their parents by placing them in the direction of the qibla, that is, they should be after God. In every religion, parents are equally valuable. That is why they always deserve respect. In Islam, the qibla is the place where Muslims turn their backs when praying or worshipping, the place where Mecca, the house of God, is located. It is clear from this that for all three religions, the qibla is one side, a sacred place.

In the person of Nathan, the students of that time seemed to see the image of Lessing. He was a kind, intelligent man, a person who was opposed to evil and ignorance.

"Lessing is our pride and our love," Hayne said. With his work, German dramaturgy gained strength, flowing with the ideas of great freedom. His whole life was spent on the path of perfect justice. "Nathan the Wise" appeared in the form of an enlightenment-philosophical drama in form and content.

From the beginning to the end of the drama, the issue of inter-religious harmony and tolerance is at the forefront. The protagonists depicted in the play - representatives of Judaism, Christianity and Islam - take part in a scene and unite as one family at the end of the drama. In the following dialogue, the playwright puts forward the ideas of true tolerance:

Nathan:

I recently returned from a long trip,  
Collecting my debts, I thought:  
Is that too much money for me?  
We have reached a time when  
Every aspect you need to think about



How can I save so much money?  
And the thought came to my mind: after all  
The country is in the throes of war, war means  
Unexpected expenses  
Maybe You need something too

The merchant Nathan offers to transfer the property he had accumulated for a lifetime to the treasure of Sultan Salohiddin, who was on the verge of war. At first he did not accept this complement, but the country's treasury had become much more vulnerable. Nathan wisely explains to the sultan that he cares for the country, and that he, too, thinks of the development of the country as a citizen.

Lessing deals a severe blow to the aristocracy, the rich, through this conversation. Because at the same time the country had become very poor, and the aristocracy had nothing to do with anything, only to squander their wallets. The drama portrays a generous, open-minded man in the person of Salahiddin, along with the image of Nathan. In Western Renaissance literature, however, the presence of such images was a special case. Because the presence of two almost equal positive images in the play it was considered unusual. It is not surprising that in this way the author brought a special direction to the European Awakening literature. The writer seemed to embody two protagonists. Indeed, in the reader, the sultan is embodied as the main character, as is Nathan. Both tried to help their people as much as possible.

The image of Salohiddin is also full with the qualities of religious tolerance like Nathan. Nathan is a Jew and the Sultan is interpreted as a man with positive qualities like all Muslims. The two images are close in these respects. Like other religions, Islam states that human beings have equal rights, that they were created from one mother and one father, and that they were created as a nation and a tribe to get to know each other and exchange cultures.

Momsen notes that "the writer approached Islam as a humane and enlightened doctrine and tried to evaluate it objectively" [10]. Lessing interpreted such ideas in the example of the sultan. Therefore, the sultan, as a representative of Islam, also cares for Christians and other religions in the country, or atheists in general.

Salohiddin:  
Money from Egypt before it arrives,  
Izgisin poverty, well, here it is  
But he walked beside the coffins  
I have to please the beggars.  
Until the visitor is every Christian  
With dry hands without leaving here!  
Oh, if it...

The writer reveals the human qualities such as generosity with the image of Salohiddin.

G.E.Lessing challenged the negative views of some European orientalist on Islamic civilization and advocated the reality of the East. His dramatic and religious works called for the elimination of European-style religious superstitions. His main goal was to reunite the bonds of mutual understanding and harmony between religions through his artistic and scientific-philosophical works and to unite them as one family. The peak of the idea of tolerance in the play is depicted in the image of Daya. A Christian woman who had long lived in the Jewish house of Nathan was delighted with the true gift of tolerance. Rexa tells Zita the following about him:

Rexa:  
Christian  
Night and day she is a propeller to me,  
She grew up and brought up.  
Yes, motherhood  
God bless you!

The widow was a nurse in a Jewish home. Daya gives Nathan's adopted daughter Reha a motherly affection. She appears in the play as a sometimes harsh and sometimes open-minded character. Daya shares her thoughts about her master Nathan during a conversation with the monk.

Daya:  
If he is not generous  
How long have I lived in it?  
After all Christianity is my faith  
I didn't notice a speck

In the play, Daya gives a low profile but plays an important role in the end of the play. She stands between Nathan and his daughter, Judaism and Christianity. Daya, who embodies the image of an uneducated woman, does not participate in public life. She spends most of his time raising Rexa.

Although Daya is a Christian, she does not feel humiliated in the Jewish home. Daya, who has lived in Jewish home for a long time, has not lost her Christian faith. Merchant Nathan sees her as a representative of his family. With these thoughts, the author demonstrates the idea of religious tolerance, the coexistence of people of different faiths in one land, one Motherland, as partners and solidarity in the path of noble ideas and intentions.

"The new hero of the German Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was a secular citizen. For such a person, it is strange to approach the events around him in his own interests. He seeks good people from all walks of life or from different faiths and they become a hero." Another manifestation of tolerance can be found in the dialogue between Sultan Salohiddin and the monk:

Salohiddin:  
I will test you now,  
Would you like to stay in the palace?  
Do you agree to live with me, tell me?



Christian, Muslim — we are all human!  
Wear a turban or a hat.  
It's all the same to me! Who he never was  
All trees in the same form,  
I didn't want it to be the same color.

In his doctoral dissertation, the researcher Z.M.Muslim states that "Lessing tries to describe Salohiddin in the light of historical facts. He refers to his biography in revealing the political and human actions of the Muslim Sultan" [11].

Indeed, the great enlightened writer appealed to Eastern views as representatives of the literature of the European Renaissance. In the image of Salohiddin, he creates a noble representative of Islam and a morally exemplary Muslim personality. The Sultan asks the monk to stay with him in the palace and tells him that his religion will not interfere with this.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the German critic and art theorist Gotthald Ephraim Lessing supported humanism throughout his career and placed the concept of interpersonal tolerance at the center of the drama "Nathan the Wise". With this work, the creator Weimar paved the way for Goethe and Schiller's subsequent poetic tragedies of the Classic era.

The relationship between religion and clergy plays an important role in the drama. In this sense, the writer uses the religiosity of the protagonist to try to counteract the intolerance that results from inequality in the Enlightenment. For Lessing, the power of reason plays an important role in Enlightenment literature.

It is no coincidence that Heinrich Hayne wrote about him as a living critic of his time, and that this criticism left its mark on religion, science, and art in a wide range of areas of thought and passion. Lessing's drama "Nathan the Wise" is one of the most enduring works of world literature. The work expresses a noble idea of great vitality and current universal significance, instilling it in the hearts of generations, urging them to refrain from inhumane behavior.

In a word, through this work, the writer showed a life that celebrates peace and tranquility, kindness and love on earth. At a time when the world was experiencing various conflicts on a religious basis, the ideas of religious tolerance put forward in the Lessing's drama were gaining relevance.

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