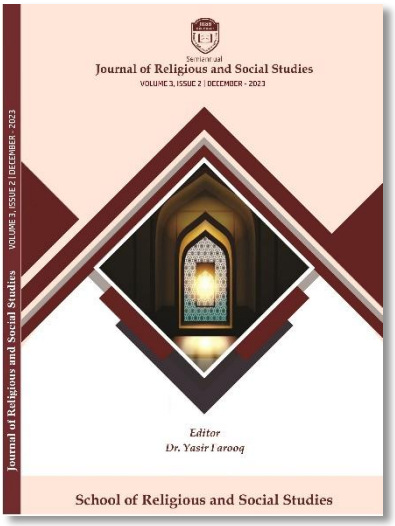


Journal of Religious and Social Studies

http://ejrss.com/index.php/jrss

ISSN (Print): 2789-0317
ISSN (online): 2789-0325
School of Religious and Social Studies,
Faisalabad (38000), Pakistan.

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To cite this article:
Shumaila Majeed, Abid Naeem, and Muhammad Imran Malik. "Revitalization of Belief and Spiritual Development of Individuals against Materialist Philosophy: Appraisal on Risale-i-Nur" *Journal of Religious and Social Studies* 3, no. 2 (2023): 42-59.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.53583/jrss06.03.2023

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Journal of Religious and Social Studies-JRSS
December-2023, Vol.: 03, Issue: 02, PP: 42-59
https://doi.org/10.53583/jrss06.03.2023

REVITALIZATION OF BELIEF AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AGAINST MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHY: APPRAISAL ON RISALE-I-NUR

Shumaila Majeed[1], Abid Naeem[2], Muhammad Imran Malik[3]

Abstract: This paper investigates Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's methodology for the revitalization of belief and spiritual development of individuals through Risale-I-Nur. It analyses Nursi's concept of Human I, methodology of the spiritual training to save an individual's belief from materialist philosophy, spiritual guidance for different segments of society, and understanding of ethical values in the Islamic context. The research methodology of the paper is qualitative. The study reveals that Nursi asserts that reflection on the inner world and understanding of human '*I*', are a means to comprehend the reality of the Creator and man's role as His representative. However, Nursi's understanding of inner reflection and spirituality is different from traditional Sufiism on many counts. He advises believers to seek guidance from the line of prophet hood as opposed to that of philosophy to protect themselves from materialist ideologies. The study also reveals that Risale provides spiritual guidance for almost every segment of society and advises the believers to see tribulations as an opportunity for their spiritual growth. Finally, the research concludes that Nursi sees man and the universe as closely related wherein observing ethical values in the light of religion brings about harmony between the two.

Keywords: R*evitalization, Belief, Spiritual, Materialist, Philosophy, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Risale-i-Nur.*

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December-2023, Vol.: 03, Issue: 02, PP: 42-59
https://doi.org/10.53583/jrss06.03.2023

PRELUDE

Revitalization of the belief of individuals is the central theme of Risale-i Nur. Nursi asserted that because of the assaults of science and philosophy the Risale's is first and foremost purpose is to save belief in such a way as to silence philosophy and materialistic ideas."[4] Thus, the greater part of the Risale addresses the subjects of conscious belief in God through reflective thought.

To achieve this objective, Nursi emphasized the inner dimension of individual spirituality and the development of a new, reflective Islamic consciousness. [5] He trained an individual for his spiritual growth to remind him of his chief purpose in this world mentioned in the verse of the Quran:

"I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship me".[6]

According to Nursi, the verse alludes to the highest aim of the creation, which is worship with the recognition of the Creator who is worshiped.[7]

Nursi's method of reflective thought is comprised of two principles. One is to reach the reality of the Creator by analytical and logical observation of the outer world: he named this universe metaphorically as 'created Quran' in which everywhere there are signs (*Aayāt*) of the existence of the Creator. The second principle, which is the subject matter of this study, is reflective thought on man's inner world or to attain the awareness of God.[8] He considers man a comprehensive index of this universe whose heart resembles a map of thousands of worlds[9]. One can gain conscious awareness of the Creator with detailed insight into this inner human world. This aspect is related to the spiritual side

4 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Emirdag lahikasi*, i, 266, quoted in Sukran Vahide, "A Survey of the Main Spiritual Themes of the Risale-I Nur," in *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, ed. İbrahim M Abu Rabi (Albany: State University of New York press, 2008), 1.

5 M Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (New York: Oxford university press, 2003), 154.

6 Al-Qur'an 51:56.

7 Nursi, *The Rays*, 125; Umit Simsek, "The Style of Reflective Thought in the Risale-I Nur," *Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in The Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sozler, 1995), 31.

8 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri Seedbed of the Light*, trans. Huseyin Akarsu (New Jersey: The Light Inc, 2007), 85.

9 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Letters*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler, 2010), 507.

of Nursi's thoughts. Turner mentions: "In the Qur'anic – and, by extension, the Nursian – schema, spirituality involves man's quest to uncover the reflection of the divine within himself."[10]

The paper is divided into two main parts. The first one presents an analysis of Nursi's understanding of Human I (self); his method for spiritual training to save an individual's beliefs; and, the difference between the line of prophet-hood and the line of philosophy. The second part analyzes the excerpts of Risale devoted to the guidance of different segments of society. The study also examines Nursi's understanding of the ethical values within the Islamic context. The study will be conducted through a qualitative research approach.

1. NURSI'S NOTION OF MAN'S INNER WORLD

In Nursi's view, man is blessed with several hidden faculties other than intellect, which he named at different places as conscience, soul (*nafs*), spirit (*rūḥ*), heart (*qalb*), etc. all of which operate under the aegis of heart.[11] Among these, there is a faculty of Human I, *ana* (ego) which can be translated as human self. If man explores the properties of this human faculty analytically, he can find numerous indications for the existence of his Creator and can reflect several Divine attributes in it. He writes:

> *" I' is the key to the Divine Names, which are hidden treasures, so is it the key to the locked talisman of creation; it is a problem-solving riddle, a wondrous talisman. When its nature is known, both the 'I' itself, that strange riddle, that amazing talisman, is disclosed, and it discloses the talisman of the universe and the treasures of the Necessary World...."*[12]

According to Nursi Human 'I' is such a treasure, bestowed to man by Almighty God as a part of 'trust' mentioned in the verse:

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10 Colin Turner, "The Six Sided Vision of Said Nursi toward a Spiritual Architecture of the Risale-I Nur," in *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, ed. İbrahim M Abu Rabi (Albany: State University of New York press, 2008), 25.

11 Bilal Kuspinar, "The Chief Characteristics of Spirituality in Said Nursi's Religious Thought," in *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu Rabi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 126; Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler, 2010), 331; Nursi, *The Flashes*, 451-52; Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi*, 200.

12 Nursi, *The Words*, 558.

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> *"We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it - he was indeed unjust and foolish."*[13]

Trust is something that a person should use not out of his whims but according to the wishes of the real owner, however, he possesses the freedom to go against the will of the owner. Nursi says that by accepting the trust given to him by his Creator, man has assumed the role of vicegerent and representative of God on earth. [14] As delivered in the Quran:

> *"I will create a vicegerent on earth." … "And He taught Adam the names of all things"*[15]

He interprets the names taught to Adam were the 'beautiful names' (*asma'-al-husanah*) of God Himself. The wisdom behind teaching these names was to enable Adam to recognize the attributes of Divine perfection and to give him the ability to use these attributes wittingly. Moreover "it [was] on account of man's potential to act as God's representative that the angels were asked to acknowledge man's creational status by 'bowing down to him."[16] This also means "if a man uses his knowledge of the names wisely and bows down to God of his own volition, he rises above the angels and fulfills his destiny as the jewel in the crown of creation."[17] On the contrary, if he fails to act according to the status God bestowed upon him, man would sink to a position that according to the Quran is 'lowest of the low' (*asfal al- sāfilīn*).[18]

He further explains human 'I' as mirror-like, a measuring scale and a tool of discovery, whose sole purpose and function is to discover God and His attributes, through the understanding of one's attributes. This view leads a man to the realization that the ownership of its 'I' is imaginary and apparent; it does not have actual existence; "it has no meaning in itself, and exists only to reveal the existence and meaning of the absolute."[19] In this way the human 'I' works as another indicative (*mana-i ḥarfi*) and indicates the

13 Al-Qur'an 33:72.
14 Turner, *Spiritual Architecture of Risale*, 32.
15 Al-Qur'an 2:30-31.
16 Turner, "Spiritual Architecture of Risale," 32.
17 Ibid., 33.
18 Al-Qur'an 95:5; Nursi, *The Words*, 319; Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 311.
19 Turner, Spiritual Architecture of Risale, 35.

reality of the other (the Creator). Reference to man's mirror-like essence with its different aspects can be found throughout Risale, for instance, Nursi says:

> *"There are more than seventy Names [of God], the impresses of which are apparent in man's comprehensive nature. For example, through his creation, man shows the Names of Maker and Creator; through his being 'Most Excellent of Patterns,' the Names of Most Merciful and All-Compassionate, and through the fine way he is nurtured and raised, the Names of All-Generous and Granter of Favours, and so on."*[20]

Likewise, man's poverty, weakness, and impotence are also such constituents of human nature whose true perception can play a crucial role in leading one towards recognizing Divine existence and His numerous Names and attributes.[21] Man's weakness and impotence show that he innately needs to be dependent on someone. If he has needs, it indicates that there must be Someone Who has the power to fulfill his needs.[22] Nursi writes: "Through its impotence, weakness, poverty, and need, my life acts as a mirror to the power, strength, wealth, and mercy of the Creator of life."[23]In this manner, man's conscience (inner world) is like a window to the intellect/mind.[24] "Even if the eyes of reason [mind] are blind [closed], the eyes of conscience are always open" For "the conscience does not forget the Creator; even if it denies its self, it sees Him (the Creator), reflects on Him and turns toward Him."[25]

Another important aspect of Nursi's view of reflective thought in man's inner world is that it works with the collaboration of his reflection on the outer world resulting in the strengthening of his Belief in God. A man being a "comprehensive index of this universe"[26] when understands the true meaning of 'I' "the locked doors of creation [are] open[ed] and the riddle of cosmic existence [is] solved."27 When a person acquires the knowledge of God's existence through his inner world, then through reflection on the

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20 Nursi, *The Words*, 718-19; Nursi, *The Flashes*, 451-53.
21 Nursi, *The Words*, 323-24, 26, 30, 491, 562-64; Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 292-95; Vahide, *Spiritual Themes of Risale*, 9-10.
22 Nursi, *The Letters*, 351.
23 Nursi, *The Rays*, 81-82; Also see Nursi, *The Words*, 719; Nursi, *The Flashes*, 451.
24 Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi*, 368.
25 Ibid., 376.
26 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 452.
27 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 181.

outer world, in turn, he gets confirmation. This process provides him with a conscious and verified belief that can never be harmed by attacks of materialist philosophy.

It is pertinent to note here that although there are a few terms used in Risale which are similar to the expressions employed in Sufism: for instance, "the unseen and visible worlds (*'ālam al-ghayb* and *'ālam al-shahādah*), the principle of continuous creation (*khalq e jadīd*), the Greatest Name of God (*al-ism al-a'zam*),[28] Nursi's spiritualism is different from the one preached by Sufism. Nursi's spirituality works with the collaboration of heart/spirit and mind; whereas Sufism solely depends upon heart or spirit. Secondly, a follower of Sufism neglects the universe in his ultimate stage, whereas Nursi's spirituality in Risale stresses the importance of minutely observing the entities present in the universe for the understanding of The Creator. Thirdly, in Sufism, the role of the sheikh (*ṣūfī* leader or teacher) is very important. On the contrary, Nursi believes there is no need for a teacher or master to get guidance from Risale.[29]

1.2 PROTECTING BELIEF FROM MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHY

One of the major subjects of Risale[30] is saving an individuals' belief from the assaults of materialist philosophy. Nursi says there have been basically 'two lines of thought' right from the beginning of this world that direct human beings in their lives: 'Line of prophethood and the 'Line of philosophy.' History proves that whenever the line of philosophy joined the line of prophethood, humanity experienced brilliant happiness and social life. And whenever they separated, "goodness and light have been drawn to the side of the line of prophet-hood and religion, and evil and misguidance to the side of the line of philosophy". [31]

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28 Stephen Hirtenstein, "Visions of Plurality in Unity, Said Nursi, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, and the Question of the Unity of Being," *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur*, ed. İbrahim M. Abu-Rabi (Albany: State University of New York press, 2008), 291.

29 Sukran Vahide, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to Religious Renewal and Its Impact on Aspects of Contemporary Turkish Society," *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought*, ed. Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 64.

30 For example see Thirtieth Word, Twelfth Word, Twenty-fifth Word in Nursi, *The Words*.

31 Nursi, *The Words*, 561.

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In order to get full understanding of the influence formed by the 'two Lines' it would be helpful to first look at Nursi's explanation of three different human powers or tendencies. He elucidates:

> *"the human soul possesses three powers (quwwa): the power of animal appetites (al-quwwa al-shahwiyya al-bahimiyya), the function of which is to attract benefits; the power of animal passion or repulsion (al-quwwa al-ghadabiyya), the function of which is to ward off harm; and the power of intellect (al-quwwa al-'aqliyya), the function of which is to distinguish between that which is beneficial and that which is harmful. It is how these powers are used by the human 'I' that determines the soul's behavioural states. Each power may be either overused, which leads to excess (ifrat) or it may have a deficiency (nuqsan), in which case it leads to negligence (tafrit). Nursi warns against both extremes – excess and negligence – and cautions man to aim for the 'middle way', which is justice."*[32]

Line of prophet-hood enables an individual to understand his self (I-ness) having an indicative meaning whose existence is dependent shadow-like displaying the manifestation of true and necessary reality. It also helps one to realize that the duty of human beings is to be molded by God-given ethics by knowing their impotence to seek refuge with Divine power." [33] The line of prophethood makes an individual humble, righteous and mild. On the contrary, the line of philosophy regards the 'I' as carrying no meaning other than its own. It declares that the 'I' points only to itself and works purely on its own account. It regards its existence as necessary and essential, that is, it says that it exists in itself and of itself.[34] Furthermore, philosophy closes the doors of impotence and weakness, poverty and need, deficiency and imperfection, which are intrinsic to human beings, thus obstructing the road to worship. When 'I' functions in the light of prophetic guidance, only then can it do justice to the Creation plan of God. One realizes that the powers, knowledge and attributes one possesses are a reflection of the real. True ownership of these belongs the Creator. This realization helps a human being to understand the cosmic reality. He utilizes 'trust' in accordance with the will of God which

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[32] Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 188; for original text see Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Signs of Miraculousness*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler 2004), 29-30; also consult for explanation Ian S Markham and Suendam Birinci Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi: Life, Thought and Writings* (Uk: Ashgate 2011), 172.

[33] Ibid., 563.

[34] Ibid., 562-63.

involves complete and unconditional submission.[35]. Thus, this "surrendered *ana* 'I' forms the basis of what Nursi calls the line of prophet-hood.

As opposed to the line of prophethood, the line of philosophy does not allow any reference to God in its quest for an understanding of the universe. All the attributes at man's disposal are considered to be inherent possession rather than Divine trust. He starts considering them his own and employs them for his motives; not for public-spirited purposes.[36] He worships his evil desires rather than the Creator. Nursi insists that it is in the nature of a human to worship a master. He has to decide if he wants to submit to His creator's will or his own whims because both cannot be submitted simultaneously. [37]

This is the concept materialist philosophy is based upon, considering all human powers and attributes independent, entrapping one into the trap of cause and effect and thus setting one free from the concept of God's existence. However, Nursi believes that if cause and effect phenomena will be studied horizontally, and in light of *mana-i ḥarfi* (other indicative) methodology, that too will prove the existence of God and will lead towards Him.[38] In this way, he instills verified belief in an individual's heart and saves him from falling into the whirlpool of materialist philosophy whose effects were widespread in his time. In Risale belief in God, Unity, Divine attributes all are defined in the same manner.

1.3 BENEFITS OF THE METHOD

Nursi's method of reflective thought inspires a person's conscious belief[39]. This makes every action of a person's life an embodiment of the worship of God. Human faculties such as heart, spirit, intellect, imagination have all worships to perform peculiar to each of them. They have a twofold objective: firstly, to understand divine attributes;

35 Vahide, *Nursi's Approach to Religious Renewal*, 62.

36 Turner, *Spiritual Architecture of Risale*, 36-7; Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 190.

37 Vahide, *Nursi's Approach to Religious Renewal*, 62; Nursi, *The Words*, 560.

38 Yamine B. Mermer, "The Hermeneutical Dimension of Science: A Critical Analysis Based on Said Nursi's Risale-I Nur," *The Muslim World* 89 (1999): 275; Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 311-12; Docent Dr. Ismail Killioglu, "The Concept of the I and Nature in Bediuzaman's Works from the Point of View of Naturalist Philosophy " *Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sozler, 1995).

39 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 301-02, 11-12, 18; Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 165.

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secondly, and as a result of the first objective, to thank and worship the Creator.[40] Nursi differentiates between 'performing sacred acts' and 'making all the acts sacred'. The latter could be achieved through an understanding of the divine attributes and accepting the responsibility of 'human I'. Any act, as long as permitted by the *shari'ah*, can be made sacred through *zikr*, by remembering God at the start of an action; *fikr*, by contemplating his attributes during the action; and *shukr*, by thanking Him at the end of the action. "All deeds, therefore, so long as they are permissible, can be sacralized by adhering to the principle of *ḍikr*, *shukr,* and *fikr*."[41] He connects every action and practice of a believer with a conscious sense of servitude 'ubūdiyyah'. And "in acknowledging the fact that he is created in servitude, he becomes a willing bondsman ('abd) of God"[42] Besides awakening the verified belief, Nursi educates one in a way revealing practical benefits of rites and rituals. For example, his point of view about *salat* is:

> *"Just as man is an example in miniature of the greater world and Sura al-Fatiha a shining sample of the Qur'an of Mighty Stature, so are the prescribed prayers a comprehensive, luminous index of all varieties of worship, and a sacred map pointing to all the shades of worship of all the classes of creatures."*[43]

Similarly, he awakens a conscious sense of worshipfulness about the month of Ramadan by explaining the personal, spiritual, and social benefits of *sawm*. He assures:

> *"Fasting in Ramadan will awaken even the most negligent and obstinate of individuals to the reality of his soul's impotence. Through hunger, he will understand his need for the One who nourishes; through fatigue, he will understand his need for the One Who sustains. In giving up those things which, if not understood properly, tend to fuel the self-aggrandizement of the soul, the fasting believer is able to chip away at the despotism of his own 'I' and make it aware of its true Owner."*[44]

Thus, Nursi's theology instills a conscious sense of worshipfulness in Muslim individuals which are not confined to formal practices of worship; rather it covers all the aspects of a believer's life.

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40 Nursi, *The Words*, 139.
41 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 320, 22.
42 Ibid., 312.
43 Nursi, *The Words*, 52.
44 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 332; Nursi, *The Letters*, 459-60.

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2. SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE FOR DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY

Nursi valued highly the spiritual guidance of different segments of society to improve their conduct towards God and fellow humans. One can find different treatises in Risale comprising instructions for different classes and types of people such as women, the elderly, youth, children, the sick, and prisoners.

I. ADVICE FOR WOMEN

Nursi describes the wisdom of the Quranic injunction regarding the veil in the collection of 'The Flashes'. He states that as women are weaker than men, therefore, they should not excite the appetites of men nor allow any opportunity for assault. The veil protects them as a shield and fortress. Veil also takes care of the feelings of less pretty women to save them from any kind of inferiority complex.[45] He advises Muslim mothers to pay special attention to the eternal life of their children while upbringing them besides taking care of their worldly success.[46] He advises Muslim wives to observe good conduct towards their husbands to save family life. He does not consider husband and wife to be in a temporary relationship of worldly life only, but also as eternal companions for everlasting life. He was worried about the situation because western culture and civilization were also influencing family lives. He said family life, under the guise of culture and civilization, is being destroyed at its very foundations.[47]

II. GUIDANCE FOR THE ELDERLY

In Twenty-Sixth Flash, a treatise for the elderly, he advises them that they should be grateful to Almighty God as old age is a blessing from Him. As Nursi himself underwent distress in his old age, he could empathize with his audience, and his solutions were reached after profound soul-searching.[48] He elucidates that belief in God, His mercy, and the Day of Judgment, and following the path of Prophet Muhammad, give the elderly

45 Markham, *Engaging with Bediuzzaman*, 13-14.
46 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 259-60.
47 Ibid., 262.
48 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 470.

consolation and strengthen their belief.[49] He asserts that impotence and weakness of old age attract divine mercy,[50] so one should not feel bitter in old age, but love it.[51] He gives the example of his painful loss late in his life, which he experienced at the death of his beloved nephew, adopted son, and closest student. He says half of his private world died with his nephew's death.[52] But it was consolation proceeding from the Quran's light that gave him strength. Thus, he advises the elderly that the Quran has the healing power to ease their pain.[53] Furthermore, he counsels them to cultivate optimism, so that they could enjoy eternal youth and happiness in the next life. According to him, belief in the hereafter is a source of consolation for the people who are close to the end of their worldly life, without which honorable and affectionate parents would feel insufferable restlessness in their souls.[54]

III. GUIDANCE FOR THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Nursi combined all his instructions for the youth in Risale into a book form titled 'A Guide for Youth'.55 It answers the questions posed by the youth for the protections of their 'imaan' from the temptations of life and young age. His suggested remedy is belief in God and unconditional surrender to His creation plan.56 He counsels the youngsters to remain within the bounds of the licit to avoid suffering in this world, the grave, and the hereafter. A life spent in the light of Islamic teachings will be the cause of gaining eternal youth."57 He pays particular attention to the youth because in his opinion they were more vulnerable to the attacks of anti-religious ideologies and belief in the hereafter restricted their freedom.

For the well-being of children, Nursi advises the parents to be tender and careful in their behavior with them. The environment in which these innocent souls are brought up considerably determines whether they will grow up to be positive contributors in

49 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 286-94.
50 Ibid., 300.
51 Ibid., 292.
52 Ibid., 310.
53 Ibid., 312-13.
54 Nursi, *The Rays*, 244; Nursi, *The Words*, 110.
55 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *A Guide for Youth*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler, 2007).
56 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 467-68.
57 Nursi, *The Words*, 158.

society or otherwise.[58] Negative experiences during one's childhood such as the death of a near one may leave a perennially damaging effect on his mind. He suggests that belief in the hereafter be instilled in the minds of children so that it will serve as the comforter for their innocent minds.

2.2 SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TRIBULATIONS

There is no concept of human life without miseries and misfortunes. "Man is subject to endless tribulations."[59] Earthquakes, floods, accidental loss of a dear one, or any kind of tribulation leave a strong impact on an individual. Nursi himself went through severe hardships in his life from exile and imprisonment to the sudden death of his close ones. He sees illness and calamities as the sources of spiritual progress for individuals. He guides individuals not only about how to act or react to tribulations as Muslims but more importantly, "to see God through any problem that one encounters." This is the reason that Nursi's methodology has also been observed under pastoral theology.[60] "Pastoral theology in the Nursian sense is the means whereby the afflicted are counselled to see trials and tribulations as coming from the Divine."[61]

I. GUIDANCE FOR THE SICK

In the collection of Flashes, Second and Twenty-Fifth Flash are assigned for the guidance of the sick because in Nursi's opinion "sick and those struck by disaster form one-tenth of mankind". Second Flash is based upon the explanations in the light of Prophet Job's (Ayuob a.s) sickness whereas Twenty-Fifth Flash comprises twenty-five "spiritual remedies for the sickness of the soul"[62] because Nursi is more concerned about "spiritual sickness" of individuals than 'physical illness'.[63] He asserts that if a believer

58 Hermansen, *Faith Development*, 89.
59 Nursi, *The Words*, 324.
60 Pastoral theology is basically a Christian terminology, though does not exist in Muslim theology as a recognized field, but the way it studies and gives attention to human soul, while connecting its relationship with God thus concentrating on the practical side of theology, this element is also present in Nursi's way of training individuals.
61 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 466.
62 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 265.
63 Ibid., 109.

spends his trial period with patience and without complaints such a period is counted as passive worship.[64] He quotes the example of Prophet Job (a.s) by calling him 'champion of patience' and sees in the prophet's story many important lessons which believers should bear in mind whenever they suffer hardships.[65] He begins this treatise with the following supplication of Prophet Job (a.s)

> *"When he called upon his Sustainer saying: "Verily harm has afflicted me, and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful."*[66]

He states that the Prophet only invoked Allah for health when the worms entered his wounds making it difficult for him to worship; before that, he never asked for health. There is a lesson in it for the believers: it was worship that was more important to him than his health. He makes an analogy between the illness of Prophet Job (a.s) and the spiritual ailments of a believer likening sin to a spiritual worm that enters the heart of a believer and extinguishes the light of belief slowly.[67] He says there is always a pearl of divine wisdom behind suffering: once the suffering has performed its duty, normalcy is restored by God Almighty. Therefore, illness and ailments should not be the reason for a complaint because they only happen when decreed to happen.[68]

II. GUIDANCE FOR THE PRISONERS

Nursi suffered arrests and imprisonment several times in his life but never got disheartened. Rather he saw imprisonment as a blessing in disguise for the accomplishment of his mission. He termed prison 'Josephite school' (madrasa-i Yusufiyya)[69] in remembrance of the prophet Joseph (Yusuf a.s) as he followed the practice of Joseph (a.s) who delivered God's message in prison. He educated his inmates through Risale and changed the lives of not only the prison staff but also the hardened criminals. Therefore, he saw his span in prison as a means to attain salvation rather than affliction.[70] He preached that if an innocent prisoner offered obligatory prayers, each hour would be

64 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 266; Kuspinar, *Chief Characteristics of Spirituality*, 141.
65 Turner, The Quran Revealed, 490.
66 Al-Qur'an 21:83
67 See Nursi, *The Flashes*, 22-23; for explanation Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 490.
68 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 491.
69 Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey*, 217.
70 Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 496-97.

the equivalent of a day's worship. If poor, aged, or ill prisoners performed the obligatory prayers and repented, each hour would become the equivalent of twenty hours' worship. The prison would become a place of love, training, and education. He would prefer being in prison to being free, for outside he is confused and subject to the assaults of sins from all sides. He would leave the prison as someone penitent, well-behaved, and beneficial for his nation.

2.3 NURSI'S APPROACH FOR MORAL AND ETHICAL RENEWAL

Comprehensiveness and universality are the two defining features of Nursi's guidance for moral and ethical values in Risale. He gives the example of three basic human qualities namely, frugality, justice, and cleanliness to explain how human beings and the universe are closely related. According to him, the wisdom behind the "economy and lack of waste" principle in the universe is an injunction for a man to be frugal. Similarly, the balance present in the cosmic scheme implies that a person should be just in his life. Lastly, if a man doesn't temper with it, there is a constant cleansing process going on in nature with no ugly features. In this way, Nursi shows how inseparable the Quranic injunctions are from the laws governing the cosmos, so much so that going against these injunctions amounts to the defiance of the whole universe.[71] Nursi's treatise on Frugality (Nineteenth-Flash in Flashes) is also very significant to understand this moral value. Nursi begins the treatise with the Quranic verse:

Eat and drink, but waste not by excess[72]

In his opinion, this verse "gives most important and wise instruction in the form of categorically commanding frugality and prohibiting wastefulness."[73] Frugality and economy also result in contentment which develops self-esteem, opens the door of thanks,

[71] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 398; Vahide, "Nursi's Approach to Religious Renewal," 63; Ozerverli also has discussed this connection of human personal/social life with universal system, M Sait Ozervarli, "The Reconstruction of Islamic Social Thought in the Modern Period: Nursi's Approach to Religious Discourse in a Changing Society," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38 (2010): 543-47.

[72] Al-Qur'an 7:31.

[73] Nursi, *The Flashes*, 189.

and closes the door of the complaint. Throughout his life, the contented person is thankful.[74]

Sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and brotherhood (*ukhūwwah*) are the two other important moral values emphasized in Risale for the spiritual training of a Muslim. He regards sincerity as the foundation to the whole spectrum of beliefs, practices, and behaviors required of the Muslim believer and ascribes the lack of brotherhood among Muslims to the lack of sincerity. He also indicates a sickness of thought among individuals and different groups of Muslims - to consider one's particular opinion as to the only truth, and reject all other opposing ideas. This concept is the reason for dispute and disunion among Muslim communities and helps "people of misguidance to triumph over the people of truth."[75]

In short, ethical renewal has a very significant role in Nursi's program of revitalization presented in Risale. At some places, whole treatises have been dedicated to one of the moral values. In addition to the moral values discussed above, some other virtues Nursi focused on in Risale are truthfulness[76], justice[77], thanks and gratitude[78], love[79], patience, peace and forgiveness and so on. He draws his attention to vices and negative human qualities as well i.e. "lying, hypocrisy, dissembling, tyranny, partisanship, bigotry, arrogance, egotism, despair, despotism, laziness, enmity, malice and betrayal."

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed Nursi's methodology for the revitalization of belief and spiritual training of individuals through Risale. The analysis was done in two major sections. The first section discussed the importance of 'I' for the true recognition of self, the universe, and the Creator. This section also discussed the difference between the line

74 Nursi, *The Flashes*, 198-99.

75 Ibid., 207.

76 Ibrahim Canan, "Truthfulness and Honesty According to Bediuzzaman," *Sixth International Symposium on Bediuzzaman: Globalization, Ethics and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur* (Istanbul: Sozler, 2002), 305-27.

77 Justice is a subject which Nursi dealt with higher detail in Risale-i Nur, for Nursi's thoughts and teachings on the virtue of justice see: Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi, ed., *Theodicy and Justice in Modern Islamic Thought: The Case of Said Nursi* (England: Ashgate Publishing ltd, 2010).

78 Nursi, *The Letters*, 428-32.

79 Colin Turner has assigned a whole chapter for detailed interpretation of Nursi's thoughts on Love, Turner, *The Quran Revealed*, 433-62.

of prophethood and the line of philosophy. The second section analyzed the role of Risale in the spiritual guidance of different classes of society such as women, the elderly, youth, children, sick, and prisoners. The study also discussed Nursi's understanding of moral values within the Islamic context. The research has concluded that according to Nursi, once a person understands the ultimate reality through introspection, he becomes an embodiment of worship where the worship meant unconditional obedience to the Creator. To this end, faith by imitation is to be replaced with faith by inquiry - an ideal weapon to combat skepticism and materialism. He explains that a careful study of one's inner self would lead him to the understanding that human I (self) is a mere reflection of the ultimate reality – The Creator. Through the inner reflection a person realizes that his role is that of a representative of God in this world, and, as his power and knowledge have been entrusted by Him, he should submit himself to His will in every sphere of life. The study shows that though Nursi, like Sufi's, emphasizes the importance of contemplation on one's inner world, his concept of spirituality is different from the traditional Sufiism on three main counts: as his method was inspired by the Quran appealing to heart and reason, he doesn't downplay the role of intellect along with spirit, as Sufism does; unlike Sufiism, he stresses the importance observing the universe to understand the Creator; and, he doesn't see the role of *sheikh* as essential to receive guidance from Risale. The study also reveals how Nursi differentiates between the line of prophethood and the line of philosophy; where the former led to salvation and the latter to faithlessness and failure. Regarding the spiritual guidance for the different segments of society in Risale, the study finds that Nursi guided Muslim women, youth, the elderly, sick, and prisoners about the correct line of thinking and behaving as true believers. The study also proves that Nursi viewed hardships and sufferings in life as part of the Creator's plan and a means to spiritual awakening.

In conclusion, the study will enhance the readers' understanding of Nursi's contributions to the revitalization of belief and inner spiritual development of individuals through Risale. The author believes that this study may be of help to future researchers wishing to undertake a more detailed study exploring the spiritual training methods of believers in the light of the Quran to counter the atheistic trends of present-day ideologies.

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