

AN ASSESSMENT OF SAID NURSÎ' S IDEAS AND OPINIONS (İÇTİHAD) ON FORMATION OF PEACEFUL INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETIES

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Abstract

The article focuses on the idea and opinion of Nursî about the formation of a peaceful society. According to Nursî; betterments in the welfare and capability of people and the community are brought about to produce a peaceful and libertarian environment; and this is the environment in which the duties of the people are fulfilled. Nursî hence emphasized the importance of calmness in the individual and society and showed that faith and Islamic values carry out great functions. According to him, religion is a way of life in agreement with nature. For this reason Nursî's community model is one that is based on religion and centered around belief as well as Allah's consent to determine the correct actions when dealing with the outer and inner world. Sometimes Nursî referred to the functionality of God's attributes in the Risale-i Nur as means of expounding the harmony in the universe and as a reflection of Allah's name "Vedûd". Thus, macro and micro cosmic entities in the universe have gravitational forces in synchrony and fine tuning which can be considered as portends and which constitute an amazing unity which should be a good example for human societies. To keep communities together, to enable them to live in harmony and for people to love one another depends on the reflection of Vedud's name. Whenever this name is reflected by individuals in communities then connections in communities become powerful and unity arises. Nursî's opinion about jihad takes into consideration historical contexts and the very central principles of religion.

Keywords: Jihad, Society, People, Individual, Soul.

Said Nursî'nin Dingin Fert ve Toplumun Oluşumuna Dair Analiz ve İctihatlarının Değerlendirilmesi

Özet

Bu makale dingin bir fert ve toplum oluşturma konusunda Nursî'nin fikirleri ve düşüncelerinin analizi üzerinde odaklaşmaktadır. Nursî'nin toplum modeli, dini esas alan, inancın merkezde olduğu ve bütün muamelelerde Allah rızasının esas tutulmasının lazım geldiği ve münafese eden (iyilikte yarışan) bir toplumdur. Çünkü din fitrattır ve gerçek anlamda dini yaşayan bir toplumda fitrat dinginlik kazanır, ilahî ruh canlanır, fitrat tekâmül elde eder ve millet en ideal bir toplum haline gelir. Nursî dini fitrî bir ihtiyaç olarak görmekte hem fert hem de toplumun mükemmelliği ve yeteneklerinin inkişaf etmesinin en hayati unsuru olarak dini kabul etmektedir. İman insana sorumluluk yüklemektedir. Bundan dolayı insanın gerçek anlamda milletine fedakârlıkta bulunması dini duygunun insanda hâkim olmasına bağlıdır. İslam dünyasını bir araya getiren, toplumdaki fertleri kaynaştıran en büyük iksir dindir. Dinin toplumda ihmal edilmesi toplumu dağıtan ve onu kaoslara sürükleyen en büyük neden olmuştur. Sık sık Risale-i Nur'da Esmâ-i Hüsnâ'nın fonksiyonerliğine atıfta bulunan Nursî evrendeki cazibeyi Allah'ın Vedûd isminin tecellisi olarak tefsir etmektedir. O halde evrendeki gezegenlerin cazibe kanunu ile fezada devran etmesi ve ahenkli bir birlik oluşturması toplumlar için bir örnek olmalıdır. Toplumlara bir arada tutma, onları ahenk içinde yaşatma Vedûd isminin tecellisine yani toplum fertlerinin birbirlerini sevmesine bağlıdır. Bu isim toplum fertleri tarafından ne kadar davranışlarda yansıtılırsa toplumdaki bağlar da o derece kuvvetli ve ahenk o derece sarsılmaz olur. Nursî'nin cihat hakkındaki düşüncesi, ayetlerin tarihi bağlamları ve dinin merkezi ilkelerini esas almaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cihat, Toplum, İnsanlar, Birey, Nefis

Indeed Islam gives importance to the serenity of the individual and society. Because the person and the society develop their skills in a peaceful environment and, since ideally they reveal their duties assigned to them, The Quran thus states “*Retreat to the cave. Your Lord will spread out for you of His mercy*” (Al-Kahf, 18/16). This verse is related to the companions of the cave and shows the truth that divine Mercy comes to peaceful places and bodies. Thus divine Mercy is not granted to people and places that acquire agitation and tension. For example, breast-milk comes directly from the receptacle of Mercy. It is the evidence that while there is not milk in the breast before

the baby is born, the life-giving drink flows from there when the baby is born. But when the mother gets agitated, the flow of milk stops immediately. This situation is the same with animals too. When animals get stressed, they do not give milk. Thus calmness is a sign of health in terms of mental and spiritual unity, which comes from the frequency of connection with the metaphysical world. There was a similar situation with İfk (which is also known as the ‘neckband’ case). The Messenger of Allah got upset due to the situation and wanted and expected to have divinely-inspired information which would immediately provide clarity to the situation. But divine inspiration did not come in any way, shape or form. After he had stress for nearly one month, divine inspiration came and Aise was proven to be innocent. The same case is relevant to dreams also. Anyone who is conditioned by his mind to have a dream does not simply dream anything. Sleeping in such a state of conditioning causes tension in body. Such a dream occurs only when related memories are forgotten.

Nursi believed that the capability of peoples and communities will develop in a libertarian environment. He said “*This good action gives a piece of good news about the capability of attaining perfection and will adorn Asia and Rumelia with the fertile rains of (this) liberty*”, during his declamation that he gave to the public and journalists at Salonica Liberty square. When individuals fully manifest and attain their nature in communities their liberty comes under guarantee and their security is provided. Yet their nature shrivels under the yolk of oppressive governments.

So Nursi says that a socially conducive environment will possess a valid constitution, the valid constitution will be attained with consultancy and with a council that sharia orders, “*consult them in the matter...*” (*Al-i İmrân, 3/159*) “*whose affair is (determined by) consultation among themselves,*” (*ash-Shurâ, 42/38*). When a society reveals such a phenomena, it will provide a fortune both for Islam and Asia.¹

Sometimes Nursî referred to functionality of God’s attributes in the Risale-i Nur which expounds the attraction in the universe as a reflection of Allah’s name “*Vedûd*”. Thus, macro and micro cosmic entities in the universe have gravitational forces in synchrony and fine tuning which can be considered as portends and which constitute an amazing unity which should be good example for human societies. To keep communities together, to provide them with constancy and affection will depend on the reflection of the *Vedud* name. As this name is reflected by individuals in communities so connections in communities become powerful and constancy becomes stable. With respect to this, Nursî says that affection, brotherhood, and love is the character

1 Said Nursi, *Asar-ı Bediyye (Münâzarat)*, İstanbul, Ensar Neşriyat, 2010, s. 299-298.

of Islam and the bonds that tie it.² For this reason we are protectors and maintainers of community and we have no time for hostility.³

Indeed, İbn Al-Arabi points out by the following words to this reality, namely the reality of functionality of God's attributes: Life in this World is a process through which the traces and properties of divine names come to be actualized. Revelation is necessary if people are to become qualified by the names in proper harmony and equilibrium. Only a perfect harmony of divine attributes can lead to the full blossoming of human nature, the realization of the deformity latent in soul. One of the most important and fundamental of the divine attributes that need to be actualized is love. God is called "the Lover" in both the Qur'an and the Hadith.⁴ For İbn Arabi, the objects of God's love help delineate the qualities and character traits that human beings must acquire in order to gain perfection.⁵

So all things are infused with love, as chemical compounds in the formation of matter in the constitution of the very nature of every being. This is because God's attribute of love brings them into existence and motivates all their activities. Muhyiddin İbn Al-Arabî said that Allah loves the cosmos. Hence, there is nothing more beautiful than the cosmos. And He is beautiful, while beauty is intrinsically lovable, so the whole cosmos loves God. The beauty of His artisanry permeates His creation, while the cosmos is the loci wherein He becomes manifest. Therefore the love of some parts of the cosmos for other parts and the infusion of beings with each other derives from God's love for Himself.⁶ In this sense, İbn Al-Arabî states; that individuals in the community who love each other are expressing a love for Allah and likewise this is the cause of their presence.

Nursî's community model is a community that bases itself on religion, that requires that belief is a center and Allah's consent should be based on all treatments and consents in kindness.

So Allah says that ,*"When I love My servant, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees his hand through which he grasps and his foot through which he walks"*⁷

2 Nursi, *Asar-ı Bediyye (Hutbe-i Şamiyye)*, s. 383.

3 Said, Nursi, *Tarihçe-i Hayat (İlk Hayatı)*, İstanbul, Tenvir Neşriyat, 1999, s. 69; Nursî, *Asar-ı Bediyye (Hutbe-i Şamiyye)*, s. 382.

4 William C. Chittick, *Ibn Arabî Heir to the prophets*, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2007, p. 30.

5 Chittick, *Ibn Arabî Heir to the prophets*, p. 31.

6 William Chittick, *Sufism*, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2005, p. 65.

7 Bukharî, *Rikâk*, 38, Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, VI, 256; Muhyiddin İbn Al-Arabî, *Al-Futuhât*

The faith gives the consciousness of responsibility to people in social life. Thus the faith has got a great value both in terms of the individuals' life and the community's life. Islamic population scientists (such as Farabi) have classified people into good and bad communities in terms of the degree of their belief and reflection.

Muhyiddin Ibn Al-Arabî who believed the Oneness of Being (Wahdat al- Wujud), sees God inside of all layers of existence. In this sense he said that *"This is similar to what happens to a man looking into a mirror in the empirical World. When you are looking at forms or your own form in a mirror you do not see the mirror itself, although you know well that you see these forms or your own form only in the mirror."*⁸ In another place he says that we are able to penetrate into the interior of ourselves by our self-consciousness and experience from inside the Divine activity of self-manifestation which is going on there. It is this sense that to *"know ourselves"* can be the first step towards our *"knowing the Lord"*. Only he who had become conscious of himself as a form of the Divine self-manifestation is in a position to further delve deep into the very secret of the Divine life as it pulsates in every part of the universe.⁹

Some psychologists accept divine guidance in human behaviors too. In this context, they articulate the following : The person reflects important aspects of the Names of Allah - namely that of rationality, will, and goal-directedness. God offers a lure, a call or guidance, to each conscious creature, influencing that creature's consciousness and (depending on the creature's response) possibly altering the future course of events".¹⁰ Philip Clayton who accepts the scientific insufficiency of explanation of natural phenomena says that *"The most we can say empirically is that the goal-directed behavior of life forms reflects a sort of proto-purposiveness, a forerunner of the conscious, goal-directed action that characterizes conscious agents."*¹¹

All of these opinions show us that God's activity is manifest inside of creatures and when we act properly for consent of God, God can bring us to a level that civilizations will envy.

Islam has very erudite principles to strengthen social connections. One of them is to say that forgiving is a great virtue: *"Those who restrain anger and who pardon the*

Al-Makkiyya, Qairo, Al-Maktabat Al-Arabiyya, XII, 240.

8 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2005, p. 34.

9 Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, p. 39.

10 Philip Clayton, *The Impossible Possibility: Divine Causes in the World of Nature (In the God, Life And the Cosmos)*, Pakistan: Suhail Academy, 2004, p. 274-275.

11 Clayton, *Ibid*, p. 275.

people”(Âl-i İmrân, 3/135), “And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive” (Ash-Shura, 42/ 37). This is one of the great factors which integrates the believer into the community. This case is emphasized in the hadiths also. “Shall I tell you whom I consider the worst of you? He who goes by himself to meals and withholds his presents and beats his slaves. But who is worse even than these? He who does not forgive faults and does not accept apologies, he who does not forgive offences. But who is worse even than He who is angry with others and with whom others are angry in return.”¹² “He (who on his deathbed) forgives his murderer-pious Muslims make their master say-is certain of paradise. But he who refuses to accept the apologies of others is considered as sinful as a tax collector before God.”¹³ According to my understanding, often the expression of religion in the Qur’an is used as nation implying that the strongest element in the creation of united society is religion.

The Quran even suggests that all believers are to acquire a condition of universal peace, “O you who have believed, enter into peace completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan” (Baqarah, 2/208). The Quran sees all believers as familiar. With respect to this there is an article on the constitution of Medina which considers Muslims and Jews as a community.¹⁴

Belief is a very important thing in Nursi’s thought. Belief is something that comprises the bonds and relations of things in existence, as well as a relation with God. This is acquired through the mystery of Unity and through the relation with all other beings. That means, through the mystery of Unity every being which knows its relation with the Necessarily Existent One, or whose relation is known, becomes related with all beings which are related to Him.¹⁵ Therefore, the largest bond holding society together is religion. In reality, religion is the means of this bond. Namely ad-Din binds us to God. In our opinion, since the religion is generally stated as a nation in Quran (Al-Baqarah, 2/120, 130) then it becomes the most powerful support towards the constitution of a uniquely valuable community. Approximately Nursi takes on the same view:

“The unity of belief necessitates also the unity of hearts, and the oneness of our creed demands the oneness of our society. You cannot deny that if you find yourself in the same

12 Abu Al-Abbas Muhammad b. Yazid Al-Mubarrad, *Al-Kâmil*, Beyrut, Müessesetü’r-Risale, 1993, I. 88.

13 Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies (Trns: C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern)*, London, George Allen and Unwin, 1967, I. 26.

14 Muhammed Hamidullah, *İslam Peygamberi (Çev: Salih Tuğ)*, İstanbul: İrfan Yayınevi, 1980, I. 224-228.

15 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters (Translated by Şükran Vahide)*, Sözlere Neşriyat, 2001, p. 342.

regiment as someone, you will form a friendly attachment to him; a brotherly relation will come into being as a result of your both being submitted to the orders of a single commander. You will similarly experience a fraternal relation through living in the same town with someone. Now there are ties of unity, bonds of union, and relations of fraternity as numerous as the Divine Names that are shown and demonstrated to you by the light and consciousness of belief.”¹⁶ In this sense, Nursi says that “religion and nation are the same things for us Muslims... religion is life and spirit of the nation.”¹⁷

Thus, Nursî appealed to the soldiers who were in the act of rebellion against Abdülhamid II. (i.e. before the events of 31 March 1909), telling them that: “Hey, soldiers of al-movahids! I announce the royal decree of the Messenger of Allah so that obedience to authorities in sharia is fard (compulsory). Your decrees are your officers (your high-ranking). The place for military service looks like a great and an extreme factory. If one of the wheels disobeys, all of the factory breaks down.”

Overall world history witnesses that interventions of soldiers in policy has resulted in great damage by state and nation. So your service to Islam will preclude you from harming the life of Islam under your responsibility”¹⁸ Nursî responded to the request for help by Sheik Said and his followers, who intended to revolt in East in 1926; he told them that the Turkish People have carried the banner for Islam for centuries. They have grown many saints and have given many martyrs. The descendants of such a nation can not be attacked with the sword. We are Muslims, we are siblings with them, we do not allow siblings to conflict with each other. This is illicit for sharia.¹⁹

Nursi also stated that “Dispute and discord among the believers, and partisanship, obstinacy and envy, leading to rancour and enmity among them, are repugnant and vile, are harmful and sinful, by the combined testimony of wisdom and the supreme humanity that is Islam, for personal, social, and spritüal life. They are in short, poison for the life of man”.²⁰

Nursi’s views about jihad are based on the first fitrah of entities of all the phenomena in the universe.

It is very true that Nursî provided opinion related to jihad as he considered histor-

16 Nursi, *Letters*, p. 313.

17 Sefâ Mürsel, *Bediüzzaman Said Nursî ve Devlet Felsefesi*, Yeni Asya yayınları, 1976, s. 285.

18 Said Nursi (Bediüzzaman), *İctimâ-i Reçeteler II*, İstanbul, Tenvîr Neşriyyat, 1990, s. 148.

19 Necmeddin Şahiner, *Bilinmeyen Taraflarıyla Bediüzzaman Said Nursi*, Yeni Asya yayınları, 1976, s. 251.

20 Nursi, *Letters*, 2001, p. 311.

ical context and verses of the Quran with appropriate care. Classical legislators and commentators made strict opinions related to disbelievers as they remained under the effect of the environment that they were born and bred in, although God leaves the belief to personal choice and preference as God commands “*There is not any obligation in religion,*” (Bakarah, 2/256) in The Quran. Even if Nursî is paralleled with today’s scholars about the issue, he is different from them. He gives his opinion about this issue with the light of evidence; as foreigners were to be brutal in ancient times, so the Ittihad-i Muhammedî (The Union of Mohammadans) had to be a challenging force against the ferocity of their contenders. Nursî’s analysis is a correct commentary for us, it is an opinion to take into consideration historical contexts to understand religious rulings and their legal applicability. He says those in the same parallel about the jihad: “*The jihad of this time is by love, not by terror. The outside jihad being by the glory of the certainty of Islam. Because outside enemies are civilized people we must do jihad with evidence of Shari’a (Sari’a)*”²¹

Consequently, Nursî sees religion as a natural need and puts it into the center of calm individuals and communities. He accepts religion as a vital factor through which the perfection and maturation of the capabilities of individuals and communities develop. Faith gives responsibility to people. Thus, since people sacrifice themselves for their nations it really indicates that people have a feeling of religion. The greatest elixir is religion to bring Islamic world together and integrate individuals in a community. The negligence of religion in society is the main cause that devastates society and leads to chaos. Nursî’s taking into consideration as well as the comment of jihad verses in historical context is noteworthy. In our view Nursî got true ijtiḥad (opinion) in accordance with the case and the spirit of Islam by that perspective.

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