

REMEDIAL HUMANITARIAN MESSAGE IN BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI'S RISALE-I NUR TO REDRESS CONTEMPORARY SOCIO-POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD

Dr. Sheikh Jameil ALI

Islamic University of Science and Technology, Department of Islamic Studies,
sheikh.jameil@gmail.com, DOI: 10.31120/katre.2018.52

Abstract

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's thought was greatly evolved and mature when he started writing *Risale-i Nur*. As the Turkey was undergoing transformation, Said Nursi had encountered many challenges in his endeavor to resuscitate its Islamic socio-political structure. Throughout his life, which is divided as old and new Nursi, he attempted for many options and even opted for practical solutions in his struggle from Van to Istanbul and to Damascus and back, to resurrect the society on religious lines. Finally realizing failure and losses incurred by misadventures, he isolated himself in the remote areas engrossed and concentrated on the study of Qur'an came out with a solution in the form of *Risale-i Nur*. *Risale-i Nur* which is an embodiment of esoteric and exoteric all encompassing approach and solution to human problems and sufferings. Dedicating his whole life's work to the avowed aim of fostering renewal of belief and abhorred the dubious art of politicking that is buttressed by religion or exploitation of religion for political ends. Muslim world which is passing through worst kind of crisis in the history is in need of panacea which indeed can be found in the teachings and experiences of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. The present paper will try to focus on the teachings of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi especially his *Risale-i Nur* to address the contemporary socio-political crisis.

Key Words: Politics, Islamic Unity, Positive Action, Jihad, *Risale-i Nur*, Revival

İslam Alemindeki Mevcut Sosyo-politik Buhranı Çözmek için Said Nursi'nin Risale-i Nur'da Verdiği İyileştirici İnsancıl Mesaj

Öz

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi Risale-i Nur'u yazmaya başladığında fikri oldukça gelişmiş ve olgundu. Türkiye bir inkılaptan geçerken Said Nursi, İslami sosyo-politik yapıyı canlandırmak için çabalarında pek çok sıkıntılarla karşılaştı. Eski ve Yeni Said diye ikiye bölünen hayatı boyunca pek çok seçenekleri denedi ve hatta toplumu dini manada hayatlandırmak için Van'dan İstanbul'a ve Şam'dan geri dönerken ki mücadelesinde uygulamalı çözümler denedi. Nihayet talih-sizlikler sebebiyle başarısızlık ve kayıplarını anlayıp uzak mekanlarda inzivaya çekilerek Kur'an'ın tetkikiyle meşgul olup Risale-i Nur şeklinde bir çözümler meydana çıktı. Risale-i Nur hususi ve umumi şumullü bir yaklaşıma sahip olup beşerin sorunları ve sıkıntılarını çözümdür. Hayatını imanın tecdidine adanmış ve dinle desteklenen siyasetin şüpheli yöntemlerinden veya siyasi emeller için dinin istismarından içtinap etmiştir. Tarihin en kötü buhranından geçmekte olan İslam alemi ihtiyaç duyduğu her derde devayı Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'nin derslerinde ve tecrübelerinde bulabilir. Bu makale Bediüzzaman Said Nursi'nin özellikle Risale-i Nur'da mevcut sosyo-politik buhrana hitap eden derslerini inceleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyaset, İttihad-ı İslam, Müsbet Hareket, Risale-i Nur, Tecdid

Introduction:

In the development of Islamic thought Badiuzzaman Said Nursi occupies a special place in the Islamic world generally and specifically in the modern Turkey. He led movement for the revival of Islamic belief and faith, and displayed a rare combination of integrity, dedication and clarity of thought. Unlike other religious leaders he sought to reverse the decline of Muslim world not through political struggle or the establishment of the Islamic state or other means, but through the revitalization of faith or belief (Iman). The main focus of his mission was the re-establishment of faith among masses. He emerged as one of the leading Alim, religious scholar of the highest standing who had wide knowledge of modern science and many areas of modern life and learning, to say that he stands like a colossus above twentieth century Muslim scholarship in Turkey is no overstatement. He is regarded as the *Mujadid* and is deemed to be the savior of Islam in Turkey, and the most proficient Turkish Muslim theologian and exegete in the modern era who interpreted the tenets of the Qur'an in

accordance with the understanding and demands of the day. Throughout his life he endeavored to defend the Islamic faith and respond the menacing challenges Muslim world was facing. He fought for the defense of Islam and the Ottoman Khilafah in the battle field. He fought also with his pen, producing many works, writings too for newspapers and journals. He gave sermons and speeches and addressed gatherings large and small. Although not a work of exegesis in the technical sense of the word, his magnum opus, the *Risale-i Nur*, is for all intents and purposes a commentary on the Qur'an. *Risale-i Nur* is his main contribution which he left for posterity, to reorient believers towards their Creator and instill in them a Qur'anic worldview which would also render them capable of coping with the intellectual and ethical challenges of the rapid secularization and Westernization that took place in Turkey following the founding of Republic in 1923. *Risale-i Nur* continues to satiate the thirst of many for belief and knowledge in Turkey and outside it.

Formative years and Revivalist Endeavour's of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

From his earliest youth, Badiuzzaman Said Nursi was possessed with the desire to restore Islam to its rightful position as “master of the science” and fount of knowledge, for it was source of “true” civilization and human progress. To this end he dedicated himself to reform and updating of *madrasah* education in his native eastern Anatolia, and of the disciplines taught therein.¹ It was with the prodigious learning and erudition Said Nursi's popularity and fame was growing, so was his difficulties, he was often expelled from a city after the conclusion of the debate mostly because of the jealousy of the lesser scholars and students of area, but he never stopped revivalist and reformist endeavours. It was in Tillo, where he had gone to confine himself to memories an Arabic Lexicon, the *Qamusu'l- Okyanus* , and later worked among the tribes as conciliator and a man of religion. Said Nursi relates, their, he dreamt of Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani who instructed him to go to Mustafa Pasha, the head of the Miran tribe, “and summon him to obedience to the Shari'a : to cause him to stop his acts of lawlessness and to begin praying” , this he did accordingly without any fear and peremptorily conveyed the message. Their by moving on to Mardin, where besides contests of successful scholarly debates with 'Ulam, he came across several personalities who according to his own words, “awakened him politically” and became aware out the wider issues facing the Islamic world. There he studied the works of Namik Kemal (1840- 88) especially 'The Dream'. It is written in the form of an address to the nation by a heavenly representative of 'Freedom' and urges

1 Sukran Vahide, *Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*. p. 56

liberation from despotism, struggle in the way of nation, progress, and the prosperity of the fatherland (vatan). Thus, it was at this time in Mardin that young, Said Nursi first became aware of the struggle for Freedom and Constitutional government which the Young Ottomans had been pursuing since the 1860's. Since then he espoused the ideas of Freedom, constitutional government, and the rule of law throughout his life. He also got acquainted with the ideas of other Islamic thinkers like Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afgani and Sanusi leaders in Mardin. He then moved to Bitlis and on the insistence of the Governor, Omer Pasha, he stayed there for two years in his residence. During these two years Said Nursi was able to greatly augment his knowledge of Islamic sciences. He embarked upon the comprehensive study of all the Islamic sciences, with a mature brain, these include such as Logic and Arabic grammar and syntax, as well as the main sciences of Qur'anic exegesis (*taffasir*). He committed to the memory around forty books in two years, including works on theology (kalam), like the *Matali'* and *Mawaqif*, and the work of Hanefi fiqh, *Mirqat*. In Batlis he began to memorise the Qur'an, by reading one or two *juz* each day, he learnt the greater part in this way, but did not complete it. Simultaneously he engaged in the study of 'ilm al-kalam and modern science and it appears that he began to sense the growing need for a fresh exposition and defense of the Qur'anic message in the face of modern materialism. The Governor's residence in Batlis provided a favorable environment to pursue this programme.

Said Nurse's eventful life of eighty-seven years embrace the final decades of Ottomans caliphate and the first 35 years in the life of the Turkish republic, and reflects the fundamental change that have taken place in the twentieth-century Turkey. Indeed Said Nursi himself used to divide his life into the period of the "Old Said" (*eski Said*) and the "New Said" (*yeni Said*), the change coinciding approximately with the institution of the Secular Republic. Said Nursi responded to the modern challenges in a scholarly pattern. Envisaging the growing effects of atheism and materialism in the society, he engaged in the study of 'Ilm Al -Kalam and modern science at an early age of 17 years during 1890/ 1892 in Bitlis and Van under the support and encouragement of Tahir Pasha, then the governor of Van. Thereby, he was able to gain knowledge of the broader problems facing Ottoman society and the wider Muslim world. It was probably at this juncture that he realised for the first time that traditional Muslim theology alone was unable to answer the doubts concerning Islam that has been raised as a result of the growth of materialism, and that a study of modern science was necessary. It appears that he began to sense the growing need for a fresh exposition and defense of the Qur'anic message in the face of modern materialism. Fundamental to his projects for the restructuring of the education was the reintrodu-

ction of the modern physical and mathematical sciences and their combined teaching with the religious sciences, as used to say:

*The religious sciences are the light of the conscience; the sciences of civilization are the light of the intellect. The truth is made manifest through the combining of the two.*²

Following First World war and the Ottoman defeat, Nursi suffered a spiritual crisis, and after a period of inner turmoil, emerged as New Said. The upshot of this inner struggle or quest for “a way to the essence of reality” was that he took the Quran with its message of pure divine unity (*Tawhid*) as his “sole guide,” and attempted to divest himself of the influences of “philosophy” and science. These had “plunged him into materiality” and provided him with no answer to the fundamental questions he had been driven to ask by war, death and the transitoriness of things. However, according to his own account, the pressing social and political questions of the day diverted him, and it was only later that he addressed himself to it seriously.³

Islamic Unity in Nursi’s Thought

Throughout his life, Said Nursi emphasised the need for Islamic unity and to prevent the fragmentation of the Muslim world, following Jamal al-din al-Afghani’s line in this respect. In the Damascus Sermon he said:

‘for the strongest bond of Arabs, Turk, Kurd, Albanian, Circassian and Laz, and their firmest nationhood is nothing other than Islam. The foundations of an array of states are being laid, due to negligence and strife incited with the revival of the partisanship and tribalism of the Age of Ignorance, which died one thousand three hundred years ago [meaning with the establishment of message of Islam by Prophet Muhammad S.W.A.]. We have seen this.’ (Damascus Sermon, 83)⁴.

His belief that Islamic brotherhood was key to the whole issue of Islamic resurgence was something that should be seen primarily as a Divine command rather than as a means to political ends (Celik, ‘Nursi and the Ideal of Islamic Unity’, 311-21). He believed that working towards Islamic brotherhood and unity was a religious obligation and one of the most important means of societal change. For Said Nursi, nationalism of any kind was a secular political phenomenon which would break the

2 Badiuzzaman Said Nursi, *Münâzarat* (Istanbul: Sozler Yayınevi, 1977), p. 72

3 Sukran Vahide, p. 56-57.

4 The Damascus Sermon by Said Nursi, (To Dispel Any Fear, Volkan No: 90, 9 rebiulevvel 1327/ 18 Mart 1325/ 31 march 1909) p. 93.

Islamic bonds between Muslims. He supported the idea of pan-Islamic unity, rather than Western notion's of nationalism. He rejected the unqualified adoption of the western ideals for their own sake, without thought for their deleterious impact on Muslim societies. In an answer to the question posed to Said Nursi: "which is more necessary and should be stronger, religious zeal or national zeal?" Nusi replied: "*With us Muslims religion and nationhood are united, although there is a theoretical, apparent and incidental difference between them. Indeed, religion is the life and sprit of the nation. When they are seen as different and separate from each other, religious zeal encompasses both the common people and upper classes, whereas national zeal is felt by one person out of hundred,..*"⁵ He further said: *Religious zeal and Islamic nationhood have completely fused in the Turks and Arabs, and may not now be separated. Islamic zeal is a luminous chain which is most strong and secure and is not born of this world. It is a support that is firm and certain and will not fail. It is an unassailable fortress that cannot be raised.*⁶ In Nursi's understanding, nationhood is akin to a body, the spirit of which is Islam and the intellect of which is the Quran and belief. In response to a question posed to him about being Kurd nationalist, he replied "*Islam has abrogated the tribalism of ignorance'. For years I have considered negative nationalism and racialism to be a fatal poison, since it is a variety of European disease. And Europe has infected Islam with that disease thinking it would cause division, and Islam would break up and be easily swallowed. My students and those who have had anything to do with me know that for years I have tried to treat that disease.*"⁷ Badiuzzaman Said Nursi in spite of being a Kurd he never overplayed his Kurdish originality and did not seem to have supported or struggled for the cause of separate Kurdish State before or after the demise Ottoman Empire. He supported the idea of *Wahdat-i- Islami* (pan-Islamic unity), rather than Western notion of nationalism. According to his belief, the melting down of nationalistic feeling and the uniting of all Muslims under the umbrella of Islam lays the solution to conflicts among the Muslims⁸ which was true then and now also. While interpreting the Quranic verse of *Sura Al-Hujraat* (49.13):

O mankind! We created you from [a single pair of] a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other.

According to Nursi, this means that God is saying to man:

5 The Damascus Sermon by Said Nursi, (First Addendum, a summary of the Addendum to the Arabic text of the Damascus Sermon) p. 66.

6 Ibid.

7 Letteres /Sixteenth Letter – p. 86.

8 Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, *Said Nursi* (Oxford University Press,2009), p. 93-97

I created you as people, nations, and tribes, so that you should know one another and the relation between you in social life, and assist one another; not so that you should regard each other as stranger, refusing to acknowledge one another, and nurturing hostility and enmity. (The Letters 1997, 379)⁹

In the Damascus Sermon he puts forth the concept of *Ittihad-I Muhammedi* and Says: We have been the members of the *Ittihad-I Muhammedi* (The Muhammadan Union) (S.W.T.) since man undertook the trust in pre-eternity (“*Qālū balā.*” See Quran, 7:172.). The reason for our unity is divine unity: our oath and pledge is belief; we are united because we affirm divine unity. (Reality, volkan No: 70). At another place he explains it as: “*divine unity is the means to the Ittihad-I Muhammedi (The Muhammadan Union)’s unity, which in reality is Islamic Unity. The oath and pelage is belief, its associations and councils are mosques, religious schools, and Sufi meetings-places. Its membership consists of all believers. Its code of rules are the practices of the Prophet (S.W.T.). Its laws are the commands and prohibitions of the Shari’a. This union consists not of numbers but of worship.*” (The Voice of the Truth, volkan No: 86). Like other religious scholars of the Muslim World, Said Nursi considers the Islamic Unity obligatory act of greatest importance.¹⁰ Said Nursi admonishes:

As for the present, when the peoples and tribes are most in need of one another, and each is more oppressed and more poverty-stricken than the other, and they are crushed beneath European domination, to regard one another as stranger due to the idea of nationalism and to consider one another to be enemies, is such a calamity that it cannot be described. It is quite simple a lunacy like turning one’s back on dreadful serpent so as not to be bitten by a mosquito and struggling with the mosquito-due to the idea of nationalism-to attach no importance to the European nations, which are like huge dragons, at a time with their insatiable greed their grasping hands are open, indeed, to in effect help them and to nurture enmity against fellow-citizens in the Eastern Provinces or brother Muslim to the South, and to take up position opposed to them, is extremely detrimental and dangerous. In any event there are no enemies among those to the South so that they should be confronted. What comes from the South is the light of the Quran; the light of Islam came from there; it is present among us, and is found everywhere.

Thus, to be hostile towards those fellow Muslims is indirectly harmful to Islam and the Qur’an. And hostility towards Islam and Quran is hostility of a sort towards the lives

9 Also quoted in Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, *Said Nursi* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.96 and also see Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim (ed), *Islam at the Crossroads: on the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), p. 62.

10 The Damascus Sermon, op.cit. pp. 88-90.

*in this world and in the hereafter of all those fellow-citizens. To think one can serve their social life in the name of patriotism while destroying the foundation of their two lives, is not patriotism but stupidity!*¹¹ This statement of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is self explanatory and need not any elaboration; it is like a revelation for the contemporary Muslim engaged in struggle in-between.

Attitude towards Political Struggle in the Cause of Islam

During world war first Old Said fought and strove to defend his Ottoman Sultante as the Commander of a volunteer regiment and was applauded by the Commander-in-Chief of the army and Enver Pasha. He was wounded and taken prisoner-of-war in Russia, finally returning from captivity after three years. He had also fought British Occupational forces in Istanbul.¹² Said Nursi did not remain indifferent to the politics in the capital of Turkey, even though playing no important part in it. He was to be a champion of freedom, constitutional government, and role of law. He became involved in the struggle for constitutional government, and for three or four years after the constitutional revolution of 1908 worked for its acceptance, especially among his fellow-countrymen of the Eastern Provinces. Said Nursi also supported the independence struggle and was invited to Ankara by the national government in October 1922, and was offered various religious posts in the Eastern provinces by Mustafa Kemal, which he refused, on the pretext that his hopes for the country's future were at odds with the new leader's plans for its Westernisation and secularisation.

However, he claims that he was "awakened politically" by the works of Namik kemal, and by two students, one among them the follower of Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afgani(1255/1839 -1315/1897),(who in the summer of 1892 was invited to Istanbul by Sultan Abdul Hamid in order to use him in furthering his pan-Islamic politics) and another member of the Sanusi movement, which played an important role in north Africa¹³. He was not entirely hostile to the Sultan Abdul Hamid, but he appears to have favoured the Society of Union and Progress and supported the rebellion of July 1908 against the Sultan that resulted in the re-establishment of the Ottoman Constitution. Later he was disappointed with the Society of Union and Progress as he saw the liberty claimed by the movement assuming an anti-religious aspect. He countered this by contribute articles to the news paper *Volkan*, organ of the group

11 Letters / Twenty-Sixth Letter- third Topic, p.381

12 Letteres / The Addendum to the Sixteenth Letter – p. 98, The Eight Reason.

13 Sukran Vahide, *The Auther of the Risale-i Nur Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, (Ankara. İhlas Nur Neşriyat, 2004) p. 33

known as the *Ittihad-i Muhammedi*, (this organisation was led by a Bektashi dervish from Cyprus called Vahdeti) having its aim the regeneration of the Ottoman State on the basis of Islam and the promotion of Islamic unity. As far as the Constitutional Movement in Turkey is concerned, he supported the constitution only to be based on *shari'ah* and argued, as long as it was consonant with the corpus of Islamic injunctions, it would be 'means of upholding the might of Islam and exalting the word of God'¹⁴. In Salonika he delivered speech in the defence of Constitutionalism and its essential compatibility with Islam. He even attempted to arouse sympathies for the constitutional cause among the masses. As it is quoted that he has said "so that the *shari'ah* might be elevated through the constitution and the constitution strengthened through the *shari'ah*". According to him monarchical government tended to deprive the Muslims of responsibility for their own affairs: everything was left to the Sultan, and a loyalty was accorded to him that belonged properly to Allah.

In 1923 after the war of independence the new forces came to power, Said Nursi delivered lecture to the assembly. In it he laid the stress upon the necessity of continued adherence to Islam as the condition of national unity. Islam was the only strength of the Muslims and abandonment of it would be an act of treason. European culture was on the point of collapse and it would be folly to replace Qur'anic civilisation with the bankrupt norms of Europe. However, in Ankara, Said Nursi realised much to his chagrin that the government was pursuing the politics of secularisation, Atheistic ideas of philosophic materialism were being propagated and lax attitude towards Islam and its obligations. Failing to change the situation he left Ankara. Realising the state of affairs he retreated from the arena of disputation and a disengagement from political activity, remained in isolation, regularly withdrew from social life, seeking solitude in places far from Istanbul life. He devoted himself to the reading of the Quran, *futuh al -Ghayb* of Shykh 'abd al- Qadir Gilani and the *Maktubat* of Shykh Ahmad Sirhindi. Under the influence of these readings he felt all darkness dispelled within him, and the light of the Quran pervading his whole being. Consequently he concentrated on his dream project of writing the *Risala i Nur - "The Treatise of Light"*. The task was to occupy him for the rest of his life, and by the time of his death 130 separate sections of the *Risala- i Nur* had been written. The reason for embarking on it at this stage of his life was his realisation that the abominable current of atheism was treacherously attempting to subvert, poison and destroy their morale. Said Nursi

14 Sukran Vahide, 'The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi' in the Muslim World (*Special Issue: Said Nursi and the Turkish Experience*) 89 (1999), p 216 as quoted in Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, p. 14. On Bediuzzaman's ideas on constitution and freedom also see Sukran Vahide, *The Author of the Risale-i Nur Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, pp. 84-90.

had been conscious for several years of the rise of scepticism and materialism and its challenge to the traditional primacy of belief. He realised the need for a new Qur'anic *commentary*- one which, he believed, would prove the truths of belief by a new method which blended science with the truth of religion, and which would address the mentality of modern man and confront the dangers of materialist philosophy. The real need of the age, he was convinced, was to save people from the inauspicious direction in which they were going; to shed the light of the Qur'an on their path so that they might see "*the impure and pestilential swamp*" that lay ahead of them unless they revert to the Straight Path of Islam. Turning away from all political concern, and fortified by an intensification of the inner life, Said Nursi remained, in his own words, "*Face to face with Qur'an*", immersed himself in its luminous wisdom, and sought to refract some of its light through the prism of his own writings.

However, he never supported the use of force, for example, during the uprising of April 1909 in which *Ittihad-i -Muhammedi* organisation played a significant role, Said Nursi wrote number of articles for the Istanbul press, on the one hand urging the soldiers to abandon their mutiny and on the other stressing the essential legitimacy of their demand. In 1925 when there broke out a full-scale insurrection against the regime in Ankara, led by the *Naqshbandi Shaykh Said*, Said Nursi had no connection with the revolt, but it is recorded that he attempted to dissuade the rebels from shedding the blood of the soldiers, who were, after all, fellow Muslims, irrespective of the nature of the regime¹⁵. He wrote the following to Shaykh Said:

*"The Turkish nation has for centuries been the standard bearer of Islam. It has produced many saints and given many martyrs. Weapons may not be drawn against the sons of such a nation. We are Muslims, they are our brothers. We may not set brother against brother. It is not permissible according to the shari'ah. The sword may be drawn against an external enemy; it may not be used internally. Our only salvation at this time is to offer illumination and guidance through the truths of the Qur'an and belief; it is to get rid of our greatest enemy, ignorance. Give up your attempt, for it will be fruitless. Thousands of innocent men and women may perish on account of a few bandits."*¹⁶

This can be justified by the Quranic injunction also, in *surah 'Al-Fath'* (48-29):

15 Hamid Algar, "Said Nursi and the *Risala-i Nur*: An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey," in *Islamic Perspective*, Kurshed Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, eds. (Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 1987), p, 319. and also see Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, p. 22.

16 Sahiner, N. *Said Nursi*, 254-5 quoted from the personal notes of Zubeyir Gunduzalp, one of Bediuzzaman's closest and most influential students in the last ten years of his life. As quoted in Sukran Vahide. *The Author of the Risale-i Nur Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*. pp. 294-2250.

“*Muhammad (SAAS) is the Allah’s Apostle. Those who are with him are hard on the unbelievers but merciful to one another*”. (Al –Quran). By implication of this *Ayat* of Quran, a Muslim should not be harsh or cruel to his brother Muslim and should not use ordinarily sword against one another. Instead they should be sympathetic to each other. In the same *surah* (Chapter of the Quran) there also is indication of not going against or drawing sword against fellow Muslims. ‘Al-Fath” (48-25): “...*But for the fear that you might have trampled under foot believing men and women unknown to you, and thus incurred unwittingly guilt on their account, (Allah would have commanded you to fight it out with them: but He ordained it thus) that He might bring whom He will into His mercy. Had the faithful stood apart from them. We would have sternly punished the unbelievers among them.*” (Al- Quran)

From these *Ayat* of Quran, it can be incurred that Prophet (SAAS) with the army of believers was stopped from entering Makkah by Allah (SWT) Himself, fearing that the ‘will be believers’ of Makkah may not be massacred during confrontation. Therefore how is it possible that Muslims will be allowed to use sword against one another. Here it seems that Said Nursi approach was justified and legitimate by not allowing the use of sword against fellow Muslims instead persuading them with the light of the Message of Quran. In short, according to Said Nursi, the use of force within “the realm of Islam” is impossible; force may be used only against external aggression, Which Nursi personally experienced and practised during early life. He states that at this particular juncture of human history there is a great difference between external jihad and internal jihad. As far as the external jihad is concerned Said Nursi accepts, historically, the spread, establishment and progress of Islam occurred partly through the use of sword. The use of weapon might have been justified in the past, he admits, but for him, as far as the future is concerned, it is the metaphorical (ma ‘nawi) sword of true civilisation, material progress, truth and justice which will defeat and scatter the enemies of Islam.¹⁷ Said Nursi argues, in the Middle Ages, Islam was compelled to respond to the hostility of its European enemies by restoring to warfare, yet in general managed to do so without forsaking its principles of justice and moderation: jihad was waged according to strict regulations, and Islam never instituted inquisitions or perpetrated genocide. In this regard, Nursi is of the view that force may be resorted to only to combat the barbarity of savages.¹⁸

17 Colin Turner, *Reconsidering Jihad: the Perspective of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*, Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religion, pub. By: University of California Press, Vol. 11. No 2 (November 2007), pp. 94-111.

18 Ibid., p. 106.

But for now, according to Said Nursi, Action within the country, that is, within “the sphere of Islam” as well as without should to be “positive action.” Since the destruction which threatens the Muslim community is not physical or material but rather moral and spiritual (ma ‘nawi), the struggle against it has to be of the same kind:

Our duty is to act positively: it is to act not negatively. It is solely to serve the cause of belief (in the truths of religion) in accordance with divine pleasure, and not to interfere in God's concerns. We are charged with responding with patience and thanks to every difficulty we may encounter in the positive service of belief, a consequence of which is the preservation of public order and security.¹⁹

Nursi stressed the formation of an individual consciousness as precondition for a just society. He wanted to offer a new conceptual ground to Muslims to defend their inner world against the expanding ideologies of the West. Therefore, as per his opinion, to serve the cause of belief positively, the social calm and stability are prerequisite for the implementation of the truths of the Quran in men's hearts and minds. Else, the peace and security of the collective / society cannot be imposed from above, it grows out of the conscious individuals, whose morals and faith is sound and strong. A society can live without freedom but it cannot live without law and order. It seems that Said Nursi also found public order and social harmony convenient environment to reform and resuscitate individual belief and spread message of Quran than the anarchy and disturbed public order, which according to him is outcome of unbelief.²⁰ Said Nursi instructs the students of Risale-i Nur:

For the essential matter at this time is ‘jihad of the word’ it is to form a barrier against the moral and spiritual (mânevî) destruction, and to assist internal order and security with all our strength. Yet, there is a power in our way, but this force is for preserving public order.²¹

He further instructs his students:

Nevertheless, do not attack those men of religion who, supposing that they are made essential by the time, support innovations. Do not strike at those unfortunates, who unknowingly act on the supposition of “there being necessity.” For this reason we do not employ

19 The Last ‘ders’ (instruction) Ustad Badiuzzaman Said Nursi gave the Risale-i Nur Students before his death, also quoted in, Sukran Vahide , “Jihad in the Modern Age: Bediuzzaman's Interpretation of Jihad” quoted by Colin Turner, *Reconsidering Jihad*, p. 104.

20 See Colin Turner, *Reconsidering Jihad*, p. 104.

21 The Last ‘ders’ (instruction)

our force internally. We do not interfere with the unfortunates who oppose us saying “such-and-such has become essential,” even if they are men of religion. I previously held out on my own against so many opponents,...and was successful in the service of belief: now there are millions of Risale-i Nur students, but I still endure all their insults and persecution through acting positively. We do not consider the world, if we do consider it, we try to assist them- we assist in positive fashion the preservation of public order and security. Because of the fact like theses, we have to tolerate it, even if they persecute us.

Also, internal jihad of the word is to work against the moral and spiritual devastation. It is not material or physical service that is needed, but non-physical and moral. For this reason we do not interfere with politicians, nor have politicians any right to busy themselves with us.

In 1934 when Said Nursi was brought to trial and accused of establishing a secret religious society that had as its goal the subversion of the foundation of the republic. He conducted his own defence, and laid particular stress upon the absurdity of the prosecution claim that he was “exploiting religion for political purposes” in response to that, he said:

‘the Quran uncovers the talisman of existence; its scope embraces the entirety of being. How then could religion be made the tool of the narrow and limited sphere of politics? It would be like confining the ocean in a jar²².

So, to say, Said Nursi’s appeal lay in his uncompromising belief that it is belief (*iman*) which must be renewed and protected, and that other endeavours must be approached with the primacy of belief in mind. That is why he repudiated the dubious art of politics – and, more importantly, the dubious art of politicking that is buttressed by religion. As he himself averred, serving Islam by means of politics is of little significance when compared with serving it through belief.²³

It seems that Said Nursi had realised that whenever politics intervenes with an act, it disrupts it. Therefore he avoided fusing politics with reform and tried to separate politics from “Renewal and Reform” the mission he had adopted to resuscitate Muslim *Ummah*. Realising the power of the adversaries and weakness in his camp he adopted this sagacious strategy, after all the “Mission, Cause” was dear to him then his self. . Said Nursi defines his struggle in terms of positive action (*musbat amal*)

22 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: Hayati, Mesleki, Tercume-i Hali, Istanbul 1960. Pp203 -210, as quote in Hamid Algar, p. 321.

23 Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, pp. 3-34.

and jihad of the word (*Jihad-i Manevi*), by which he meant a non-physical or moral jihad. In a passage interpreting the Quranic verse of *sura Bakara*, “let there be no compulsion in religion,” (2:265), he argues that given the circumstances of the day, *jihad* should take this form:

By[the matters of] religion being separated from [those of] this world on that date, freedom of conscience, which is opposed to the force and compulsion in religion, and to religious struggle and armed jihad for religion, [was accepted as] a fundamental rule and political principle by government, and [this]state [also] becomes a secular republic. In view of this, [jihad] will be a non-physical religious jihad with the sword of ‘belief of investigation’ (iman-i- tahkiki)....a great hero in the contest of this jihad of the word.....is the Risale-i Nur.... for its immaterial sword has solved hundreds of the mysteries of religion, leaving no need for physical sword....

.....it is due to this mighty mystery that the Risale-i Nur students do not interfere in the politics and political movements of the world and their material struggle, nor attach importance to them, nor condescend to [any involvement with] them... they feel not anger at their enemies, but pity and compassion. They try to reform them, in the hope that they will be saved.²⁴

Furthermore, the primacy of the individual is a recurring theme in many parts of the *Risale-i Nur*, he maintains that an individual may not be sacrificed for the sake of a nation, and that certain rights enjoyed by society as a collective are indispensable, particularly where the sanctity of an individual life is concerned.²⁵

The pure justice of the Quran does not allow the blood of an innocent individual to be spilt, even when for the whole of humanity. For the two are the same, both from the point of view of divine power and the point of view of justice. But through self-interest man becomes such that he will destroy everything that forms an obstacle to his ambition: he will destroy the world if he can, and wipe out the whole of mankind.²⁶

Thus the New Said started to make use of **Soft power**, silent struggle and passive resistance against the forces of irreligion. So he embarked upon the task of strengthening the belief of people which had been shaken rather than engaging into political

24 Nursi, Rays, p. 290.

25 Colin Turner, *Reconsidering Jihad*, p. 105.

26 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, “Seeds of Reality” in *The Letters* (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 1997), p. 549.

disputation. Sayyid Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, (Indian Religious Scholar) in his book²⁷ “*Ridatun –Wala AbuBakar laha*” (*the new menace and its answer*) observes that; “a good number of Muslims have lost their faith and they have become apostate, apparently they seem like Muslims but they do not practise and believe in Islam. And it should be our concern how to address this new menace”. It seems that during his stay in Ankara, Said Nursi had realised this situation of weakening of the faith and belief and, therefore, any attempt to ameliorate the situation politically or to make any effort, use **hard power** and to push for change would be fruitless and wastage of energy and resources, given that the policies of the new Turkish republic were based on secular materialism. This New Said undertook to renew the belief of Muslim individuals, (*Insan Sazi*) and to form a community or group of the individuals, “Islamic society”, (*islami ma’ashirah*) rather than to advocate the idea of re-establish the political structure of the Islamic world. His main concern now was the strengthening of the individual’s belief and the search for solution to the important questions thrown up on human existence. He dealt with the irrefutable truths of belief and demonstrated the logical absurdity of materialist philosophy, making it possible for man to attain belief so firm and certain that it could withstand any doubts caused by science or philosophy. Emphasizing that the Qur’an was the only truth and reality, and that man’s true happiness and progress could be achieved through adoption of new forms of education and theology.²⁸

Given the current situation in the Muslim world the pain and agony is rampant simply because of the wrong approach to the problems and issues adopted by the Islamists as well all the others. Today Muslims are devastating other fellow Muslim, ignoring the basic principles of Quran and *Hadith* in the name of elevating the banner of Islam or freedom. This again is the repetition what was happening during the Badiuzzaman Said Nursi period, (hundred years back or so), unfortunately we have not learned from his teachings and approach which he adopted to rescue Muslim world. His teachings and approach to problems is still relevant and will work as remedial humanitarian message to redress contemporary socio-political crisis in the Muslim world, if adopted and followed effectively and efficiently. To ameliorate the conditions and the crisis in the Muslim world the *Risale-i Nur* has not lost its efficacy and relevance, it will work as panacea to all ills throughout the world.

27 Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *The New Menace and its Answer*, (Nadwatul-Ulma, Lacknow. Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, n.d.)

28 *Ibid.*, pp33-34

Bibliography / Kaynaklar

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *The New Menace and its Answer*, (Nadwatul-Ulma, Lacknow. Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, n.d.)

Colin Turner and Hasan Horkuc, *Makers of Islamic Civilisation Said Nursi*, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford University Press, 2009) .

Badiuzzamzn Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, trans. ŞhükranVahide, Sözlcr Publications, Barla Impex India Pvt.Ltd. 2010.

....., *Münâzarat* (Istanbul: Sozler Yayinevi, 1977).

....., *The Rays Collection*, trans. SükranVahide, Sözlcr Publications, Barla Publications, India,. 2015.

....., *The Letters Collections* trans. ŞhükranVahide, Sözlcr Publications, Barla Publications,India,. 2015.

....., *The Flashes Collections* trans. ŞhükranVahide, Sözlcr Publications, Barla Publications,India,. 2015.

Hamid Algar, “*Said Nursi and the Risala-i Nur, An Aspect of Islam in Contemporary Turkey*,” in *Islamic Perspective* , Kurshed Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, eds. (MarkazI Maktaba Islami, Delhi, 1987).

M. Said Ozdemir, *Badiuzzaman Said Nursi (Tarihçe-i-Hayat)*, trans. Şhükran Vahide, Ihlas Nur Publication, Ankara, 2004.

Sukran Vahide, “*The Life and Times of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*” in the Muslim World (*Special Issue: Said Nursi and the Turkish Experience*),1999.

Colin Turner, “*Reconsidering Jihad: the Perspective of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi*,” Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religion, pub. by: University of California Press, Vol. 11. No 2 (November 2007), pp. 94-111.