

NURSI'S CALL TO HIS RHETORICAL AUDIENCE IN DAMASCUS SERMON*

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Abstract

The notion to consider audience in rhetorical situation has been an important concern ever since the ancient times. However, little attention is given to the significance on the projection of audience by an orator and the role of an audience in rhetorical analysis. Therefore, this study aims to identify the projection of audience through a rhetorical analysis in *Damascus Sermon* written by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960). Specifically, the analysis focuses on Nursi's call to his rhetorical audience to be mediators of change. The *Sermon* is analysed using a qualitative research method through an explanatory case study based on Bitzer's (1968, 1980) rhetorical situation theory. The findings reveal that Nursi's call for 'positive action' to his present and envisioned rhetorical audience is embedded in the solution he provides in the form of six 'Words' to cure the "six dire sicknesses" of Muslims in particular. Although there are limitations in this study as it only focuses on the audience, the findings are worth considering as audience play an important role through their actions which are crucial for positive modification in any rhetorical situations. The implications from the study can benefit audience, create orators' awareness and contribute to the field of rhetorical studies.

Keywords: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Damascus Sermon, Rhetorical Audience

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Nursi'nin Şam Hutbesinde Muhataplarına Yaptığı Çağrının Retorik İncelemesi

Öz

Hitabet ortamında dinleyiciyi dikkate alma, antik çağlardan bu yana önemli bir konu olarak görülmüştür. Ancak dinleyicinin bir hatip tarafından 'projeksiyon' yapılmasına yani "yansıtılmasına" ve hitabet tahlilinde dinleyicinin rolüne pek az önem atfedilmiş ve dikkat çekilmiştir. Bu sebeple bu makalede Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960) tarafından yazılan *Hutbe-i Şamiye*'de dinleyicinin yansıtılmasının bir hitabet tahlili yoluyla belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Tahlil özellikle de Nursi'nin hitab ettiği dinleyiciyi değişimin bir aracı olma çağrısı üzerinde yoğunlaşmıştır. *Hutbe* Bitzer'in (1968, 1980) Hitabet Durumu Nazariyesine dayanan ve açıklayıcı durum çalışması yoluyla nicel bir araştırma yöntemi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar göstermektedir ki Nursi'nin hazır ve gelecekte öngördüğü muhataplarına yaptığı "müsbet hareket" çağrısı, özellikle Müslümanlara ait "altı dehşetli hastalığı" tedavi etmek için sunduğu altı "Kelime" içinde verilmiştir. Dinleyici üzerinde yoğunlaştığı için çalışmanın sınırlılıklarına rağmen, herhangi bir hitabet durumunda olumlu değişim için gerekli olan dinleyici hareketleri aracılığı ile önemli bir rol oynadığından dikkate değer sonuçlar ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışmanın ortaya koyduğu sonuçlar hem dinleyici çalışmalarına, hem konuşmacıyı bilinçlendirme durumuna hem de hitabet alanındaki çalışmalara katkılarda bulunabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Hutbe-i Şamiye, Dinleyicinin Yansıtılması, Müsbet Hareket Çağrısı, Dinleyici Hareketleri

Introduction

Rhetorical situation occurs when there is an issue. The occurrence causes urgency in the situation as it invites a problem which calls for response. A rhetorical situation consists of the dimensions of exigence, constraints and audience (Bitzer, 1980). According to Bitzer's theory, the exigence is the urgency

in the situation, the constraint is the response or solution while the audience is the group of people whom the orator targets. The orator and audience play a crucial role in eliminating the exigence through the constraints. The effectiveness of an orator's persuasive skills can influence an audience to make changes, while the audience who are capable of being mediators of change can bring positive modification as the result. There are many studies that focus on the orator in a rhetorical analysis, but less focus on the projection of audience and their roles in a rhetorical situation. Hence, this study aims to analyse the rhetorical audience in a sermon delivered by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960). Nursi's ideas and thoughts have been influencing millions of adherents that includes *Nur community*, one of the most leading religious social movements in the present Turkey (Abu-Rabi,' 2008a). However, there are fewer studies on how they were influenced by Nursi's writings and the importance of their roles as rhetorical audience. Therefore, this study aims to analysis one of Nursi's writing, *Damascus Sermon* delivered in the Umayyad Mosque in 1911 in order to explain Nursi's call to his rhetorical audience to be mediator of change.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Rhetorical Situation

This study uses Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation theory to analyse the rhetorical audience in *Damascus Sermon*. According to Bitzer, a rhetorical situation does not refer to the setting where the orator and audience interact in a historical context as "A work is rhetorical because it is a response to a situation of a certain kind" (p.3). He says rhetorical situation exists in response to a situation and invites a discourse capable of being a fitting response to the situation. It consists of the dimensions of exigence, audience and constraints. An exigence is "a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done" (p. 6),

and only exigencies that can be modified are rhetorical. The rhetorical audience, “consists of only those who are capable of being influenced by the discourse and being mediators of change” (p. 8), while the constraints consist of “beliefs, attitudes, documents, etc” (p.8) that can modify the exigence.

1.2. Related studies

Earle (2014) examined Paul Tillich’s sermons selected from the three volumes on the rhetorical situation. Paul is a theologian and philosopher who uses language to assert the significance of Christianity and believes that religion could only be understood in culture’s surrounding context. In order to confront the exigencies with the constraints, Paul uses the sermons to reach the audience by translating religious language to a language of the culture in order to make his theological thoughts more accessible. This method creates a communion between the audience and himself. Thus, through his method of approaching the audience, he has created an interaction through persuasion. He has managed to create a connection with the audience as he has something to offer them and something they can receive.

Willhite (1990) conducted a comparative analysis on rhetorical audience relevance of selected sermons of John F. MacArthur, Jr. and Charles R. Swindoll, (1970-1990). The findings reveal that these two preachers possess different perceptions when projecting what is relevant to their audience. MacArthur relies heavily on audience participation through his implicit message and language that explains the meaning of the biblical passage whereas Swindoll focuses on audience response through rhetorical stance of exhortation in order to urge his audience to act. Apparently, his language that relates the meaning of the biblical passage to human experience is

perceived as relevant to his audience. They both seem to be audience oriented when appealing to their audience.

Metz (2005) analyses Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X's persuasive techniques to utilize prophetic discourse during the social revolution in order to develop sense of identity in social issues. These two prominent leaders appeal to their intended audience in order to make changes. They are the two influential figures in American history who called their audience to take actions in order to aim for a secure future.

2. Method

This study is based on a qualitative research method. It is an explanatory case study design based on Yin (2009) using Bitzer's (1968) theory of rhetorical situation. The source of data is the English translated version of *Damascus Sermon* by Şükran Vahide. The pages that contain the *Sermon* are from 25-58. The *Sermon* is read thoroughly and the phrases that identify the rhetorical situation are identified using the analytical framework as shown in Table 1.1 below. The findings on Nursi's call to his rhetorical audience are interpreted in the results section according to the problems and solutions he provides in the rhetorical situation.

Table 1.1 Analytical Framework

Rhetorical Situation and its dimensions	Characteristics of the dimensions
Exigence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -signals an issue -invites a fitting response -invites a positive modification
Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -capable of being influenced -capable of being the mediators of change who can affect the situation -capable of influencing
Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -beliefs, attitudes, documents, facts, traditions, images, interests, motives - capable of being a “fitting response” -capable of positive modification

Sources: (Bitzer, 1968; Crowley & Hawhee, 2004; Kinneavy, 1971)

3. Results

This section illustrates the results of the analysis of the rhetorical audience in a rhetorical situation. As this study focuses on the dimension of audience, the analysis on the dimensions of exigencies and constraints are just briefly stated. The findings are supported by phrases and sentences from the *Sermon* and the numbers of the pages are stated for the convenience of referencing.

3.1. The solution of six ‘Words’ for the “six dire sicknesses”

In the spring of 1911, Nursi delivers his *Damascus Sermon* in the historic Umayyad Mosque after a group of religious scholars invited him to present a sermon (Vahide, 2012). Nursi begins to deliver his *Sermon* by uttering the name of the God who possesses merciful and compassionate attributes which reveals his awareness of God's presence. He utters "we" and "us" (p. 25) as he includes himself as part of the audience to make offer of praising and thanking God in order to show gratitude to Him as the Creator. He appeals to the audience to show their appreciation for all the endowments that God has granted. Thus, in the initial stage of the *Sermon*, Nursi has already guided his audience in actions of offering praise and thanks as a means of acknowledging God as the Creator who has the supreme power over His creation. Then he quotes the verse "Do not despair of God's mercy" (Qur'an, 39:53) and the utterance of the Prophet Muhammad "I came to perfect morality" (p.25) to arouse and engage his audience in a positive mood and console them before he delivers the context of his *Sermon*.

Nursi addresses his audience as his brothers in order to create a sense of belonging in the community as he utters "O my Arab brothers who are listening here in the Umayyad Mosque!" (p.26). He also senses his audience's efforts to be attentive from the beginning stage of the *Sermon*. Then, he also includes himself as the audience in a humble manner while displaying his respect to them by honoring them as "masters." According to the publisher of *Damascus Sermon*, Nursi's present audience consists of nearly ten thousand including one hundred scholars (Nursi, 2012). Nursi is aware of his audience's capability as they are knowledgeable scholars. He agrees to accept the offer to present the *Sermon* as he anticipates them as capable mediators of change in the rhetorical situation. Thus, he is being audience-

centered at the initial stage of the *Sermon* and this creates a good impression among his audience.

Nursi is aware of the situation his audience are going through, based on the knowledge he has gained from the lesson he has learned in his social life's interactions. He became aware of his audience's backwardness which causes anxiety as the foreigners are progressing rapidly in material development. They are confined to the situation of spiritual, moral and material weaknesses which eventually become the controlling exigence as it made them be "arrested" and "kept" in the problem of "six dire sicknesses" (p.26). Nursi elaborates these sicknesses as despair and hopelessness, deceit, enmity, disunity, distress and individualism. Thus, the problem of these spiritual sicknesses calls for a fitting response as a solution. Then, Nursi provides a solution by means of six 'Words' (p.27). They consist of guidelines, rules, advice based on the lesson from the Quran which are the constraints. The word "cure" is a fitting response because the lesson has curative properties that can remove the controlling exigence by healing the sicknesses. Therefore, it is considered as a positive modification.

Nursi appeals to his audience to gain spiritual and intellectual insights as they are "wise and thoughtful." His expression of the phrase "students of the Quran" (p. 32) implies that the audience consists of learners who take the Quran as an essential guide in life. Thus, he conveys that the Quran is their teacher which can provide practical wisdom based on principles, rules, instructions and guidelines. Nursi's propositions relate to the knowledge of the Quran is based on the science of belief (*ulum-u imaniye*) (Nursi, 2008b). According to Vahide (2008), he refers to belief as affirmative belief (*iman-ı tahkiki*) that relates to the science of belief and also the attributes of God and it does not refer to belief by imitation (*taklidî iman*) as it

suffuses men's heart, spirit and other faculties.

Eventually by adhering to the “truths of belief through reason, thought and their hearts” they will gain the insightful knowledge. It will benefit their own well-being and create good social interactions as they will be able to think rationally, control their negative emotions like anger, hatred and able to express their positive emotions like love and compassion. However, Bitzer (1968) mentions that in a rhetorical situation besides the controlling exigence, there also exist ancillary exigencies which are caused by the exigencies that still exist. In this *Sermon*, each of the “six dire sicknesses” is the problem that occur from these ancillary exigencies. The next section explains how Nursi calls to his audience to be mediators of change as he provides and elaborates the six ‘Words’ as the solutions for the “six dire sicknesses.”

3.2. The first ‘Word,’ hope for the sickness of distress, despair and hopelessness

Nursi explicitly utters the first ‘Word,’ hope (p. 27) as a solution for the implied sickness of distress and also as the first solution for the sicknesses of despair and hopelessness. Nursi asserts the solution of hope before he mentions the ancillary exigencies that lead to the problem of these sicknesses. He relates the virtue of hope with God's merciful and compassionate attributes. Hope closely relates to belief (Nursi, 2000; Abu-Rabi', 2008). Hope involves working hard to achieve a desire and it's a theological virtue that activates when a person who believes of positive changes (O'Hara, 2013). Nursi considers the significance of the virtue of hope and emphasizes it because it is based on belief and it brings happiness. He asserts that hope brings happiness through progression in Islam and then he affirms of the “sun of happiness” (p. 27) that reflects the bright future of Islam in contentment. A positive well-being life

is a content, good, meaningful and worthwhile life based on happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2008).

Nursi calls his audience as he provides the first 'Word,' hope. He appeals to them to "nurture a strong hope of God's mercy" and to "submit to the Divine Determining"(p. 27). These two actions relate to his 'positive action' principle as taking constructive actions to make changes in order to overcome the internal weaknesses as a man's responsibility. Thus, by not interfering with God's concern, he appeals them to work and strengthen their belief. He assures that his audience can be mediators of changes based on the past history as he utters "History shows that the Muslims increased in civilization and progressed in relation to the power of the truths of Islam; that is, to the degree that they acted in accordance with that power" (p. 28).

Nursi senses the urgency in the situation his audience is facing. He continues his *Sermon* by referring to the "veils" as the "eight serious obstacles "which consist of despotism" (p. 32). The serious condition of despotism has caused oppression in the situation which eventually becomes an ancillary exigence. He also refers to the phrase "eclipsed the sun of Islam" (p. 32) as blocking the growth of Islamic strength. Then, he asserts the phrase "true dawn" which refers to the first 'Word,' hope (p. 27) as the response. Nursi has explained about the virtue of hope which is based on God's mercy and it relates to happiness. He is aware that his audience's oppressed situation has caused them extreme anxiety and it leads to the implied sickness of distress which is the opposite of happiness. Nursi implies this sickness of distress as one of the "six dire sicknesses" (p. 26). Thus, before he elaborates the problem of distress and provides the constraints as the fitting responses and he consoles his audience by providing the solution of hope.

Nursi utters again “O my brothers who are here in the Umayyad Mosque and those who are in the mosque of the world of Islam half a century later!” (p. 35). He continues to address his present audience in the Umayyad Mosque as his brothers and also his future audience in other mosques from the Islamic regions. He foresees that the problems faced by his present audience are also faced by other Muslims in different regions, so he widens his scope of audience. He hopes for unity in diversity of thoughts among the Muslims and true Christians as his expectation. He advises his students that it is their task to avoid arguing with those who have belief and with the Christians who recognise God and accept the reality of the Hereafter as he mentions “*Risale-i Nur* students are obligated to act with tolerance in order not to put social or political barriers in front of the flourishing of the *Risale-iNur* in the Muslim world” (Nursi, 2006, p. 247).

Nursi asserts the fitting responses of hope for the sickness of distress as follows: “increased,” “progressed,” “the most indisputable,” “established,” “prevail,” “benefits,” “cleansed” and “secured.” The verbs in the sentence “...the Muslims *increased* in civilization and *progressed* in relation to the power of the truths of Islam...” (p. 28) imply that the Muslims have implemented the truths of Islam and they have developed the quality in their strength. The adjective in the sentence “It is well-known that *the most indisputable* virtue is that which even its enemies testify to and affirm” (p. 34) signifies the quality of the virtue of hope. The verb in the sentence “For *established* in the heart of the Islamic world’s collective personality are five extremely powerful, unbreakable ‘strengths,’ which have blended and coalesced” (p. 36) indicates the positive results of the strengths which are based on hope in God. The verb and the adjective in the sentence “God willing, through the strength of

Islam in the future, the virtues of civilisation will prevail, the face of the earth *cleansed* of filth, and universal peace be *secured*” and the verb in the sentence “You should understand that what I mean are the good things that are civilisation’s virtues and its *benefits* for mankind” (p. 38) signify the positive results of nurturing hope. The verb in the sentence “In a short period of time it will *prevail*” (p. 38) denotes the positive results of the hope.

Although the solution of hope enables his audience to access “the road to future happiness” (p. 38) and discard distress with material and moral progress, the weakening in spiritual matters still exist as an ancillary exigence. Nursi senses that the situation of spiritual weakening leads to the sickness of despair and hopelessness and invites a response. Then, he provides the response as he asserts “You may expect from Divine mercy to see true civilization within universal peace brought about through the sun of the truth of Islam”(p. 39). Nursi refers to the phrase “Divine mercy” as the “strong hope of God’s mercy” (p. 27) and the phrase “the sun of the truth of Islam” as the means of salvation. (p.43). Thus, he provides the first ‘Word,’ hope for despair and hopelessness.

Nursi also asserts the fitting responses of hope for the sickness of despair and hopelessness as “delivering,” “cleansing” and “securing.” The verbs in the sentence “the truths of Islam will be the means of *delivering* man from the low and debased degree to which he has fallen, of *cleansing* the face of the earth, and *securing* universal peace” (p. 43) also reveal the positive outcome as the audience are free and protected from the external negative influences. Nursi appeals to his audience to make ‘positive action’ through the virtue of hope in God’s mercy to overcome distress, despair and hopelessness. Eventually there is positive modification as the positive actions

are implemented. Hope was defined by Snyder et al. (1991) as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal-directed energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals)” (Snyder, 2000, p. 8). Hope relates to the features of positive elements which drives a person to be goal oriented. The ability to achieve future goals in a positive frame of mind that focuses on specific outcome is having hope (Lopez, 2011). Positive emotions that are based on goal attainment are associated with hope as Snyder et al. (1996) mention while negative emotions are related to goal blockages (Diener, 1984).

3.3. The second ‘Word,’ courage for the sickness of despair

Nursi is still conscious of his audience’s condition and observes that the situation of weakening in spiritual matters still exists. This weakness has caused the sickness of despair to reach the stage of “the most grievous” (p. 43) of all the “six dire sicknesses” as the audience have not been practicing the ‘positive actions’ of nurturing strong hope in God and submitting to Him consistently. The sickness of despair destroys morality and it causes them to be confined to personal benefits while ignoring the social rights. Nursi asserts that “millions” of Muslims are confined in their spiritual weakening which made them unable to resist the negative external forces. Then, he asserts the causes of despair which are having low spirits due to their unwillingness to make efforts, giving up courage and failing to implement their Islamic duties. Eventually, Nursi provides the implied second ‘Word’ courage (p. 44). He asserts the virtue of courage indirectly. As despair is the most serious sickness and it has prolonged, Nursi advises his audience to overcome it. He calls them to implement ‘positive action’ by practicing the virtue of courage based on belief and perform

their Islamic duties. The fitting response of courage is “unfurl” as it signifies the positive outcome and eventually indicate a positive modification. The efforts to resolve despair are made with courageous belief and firmly believing in the hope of Divine Mercy which encompasses all things. The verb in the sentence “...and will *unfurl* the banner of the Qur’an in every part of the world” (p. 45) signifies the results of the courageous action of disseminating God’s Words to every part of the world.

Thus, Nursi appeals his audience to make courageous efforts as a means of strengthening their spiritual life. Noe (2006) asserts that the willingness to take positive action in the face of perceived danger is courage and one can overcome fear by implementing positive action. Aquinas (2002) states that courage is a difficult virtue as it may lead to egotism or individualism. However, courage is a cherished virtue which is necessary for social order in human culture, therefore it should have a goal oriented target (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2013). Therefore, Nursi appeals to his audience to abstain from despair and adhere to courageous belief that reflects the attribute of belief as despair displays the attribute of unbelief. Despair is in itself a form of unbelief, for it questions the power, the mercy and the goodness of God to overcome our weaknesses (Michel, 2005).

3.4. The third ‘Word’ truthfulness for the sickness of deceit

Nursi is aware of the challenges his audience is still facing due to the changes in the social life from the lesson he has learned in life. He observes the condition of “the ups and downs of social life” (p. 45) which indicates the good and difficult situations that affect the spiritual life. The changing conditions of good and bad times and the high and low spirits create uncertainties and unpredictable situations. It becomes an

ancillary exigence and leads to a problem. However, Nursi asserts the response before he states the problem, thus he indirectly provides the third 'Word,' truthfulness as the response to the problem. He illustrates the attributes of truthfulness as the ground that unites good characters and increase high emotions and also displays the attributes of the implied problem of deceit. He compares truthfulness as belief and falsehood as unbelief. He displays the distance as "the East is from the West" and it cannot be associated "like fire and light" (p. 45) to make his audience conscious of the significance of truthfulness and insignificance of deceit. Nursi also illustrates the virtue of truthfulness as "the most valuable" and "the most sought-after" as it is an "established" principle.

Nursi calls his audience to implement two positive actions by appealing "we must bring to life truthfulness and honesty, and cure our moral and spiritual sicknesses with them" (p. 45). He describes truthfulness with phrases "cure," "established," "support most unailing" and "strongest chain". The verb "cure" signifies recovering from moral and spiritual sicknesses and "established" (p. 47) refers to the quality of the principle of truthfulness which is a virtue that is widely accepted and recognised. The phrases "support most unailing" and "strongest chain" signify the powerful attachment to salvation through the practice of the virtue of truthfulness (p. 48). It is a virtue that enables men to abstain from deceit through the strength of spiritual support. They also indicate the strong connectivity from the relationship between God and men. The words "cure," "established," "support most unailing" and "strongest chain" are the fitting responses that become positive modification as the results bring positive outcome. Nursi is addressing to his present audience in the Umayyad Mosque as his brothers again. He also addresses his future audience as brothers with great expectation

when he expresses “four hundred million believers in the vast mosque of the world of Islam” (p. 48). He aims to be engaged with his audience and create a sense of belonging in their community when he addresses them as his brothers again. He senses their needs and desires in the situation they are facing in the social life and expect them to be mediators of change. Thus, he is not only targeting his present audience as mediators of change as he also puts his expectation on his envisioned audience whom he accepts as his future brothers.

3.5. The fourth ‘Word,’ love, for the sickness of enmity

After Nursi provides hope, courage and truthfulness, he senses again the urgency in the situation from his experience through social interactions. He conveys the implied causes of love and enmity from his “life-time of study” (p. 49) regarding the causes of the virtue of love as most worthy and the causes of enmity as unworthy. The causes of love are the good outcomes that can be gained from mutual compassion while the causes of enmity are the weak outcomes from mutual hatred. Therefore, he considers these causes as the lessons he has been learning throughout his life. Eventually, the situation of the causes of enmity becomes an ancillary exigence and invites the problem of enmity. Then, Nursi implicitly provides the response to this problem as love which is the fourth ‘Word.’

Nursi elaborates the virtue of love through his expressions. He expresses “the causes of love” which is “as great as a mountain” (p. 50) to signify the intensity of the power of spiritual love which increases in amount. He also claims that “the causes of love” is “as immense as a mountain” (p. 51) to indicate the power of love’s degree which is extremely large. The fitting responses of the spiritual love are “strong luminous chain,” “immaterial fortresses” and “bond.” He utters, “Indeed the causes of love, like belief, Islam, humanity and fellow-

feeling, are strong and luminous chains and immaterial fortresses” (p. 50). These phrases signify the mutual support among believers through a protective stronghold as Nursi is referring “immaterial” as the spiritual fortresses. Then, he utters, “In Short: Love, brotherhood, and affection are basic to Islam, and are its *bond*” (p. 51). The noun “bond” indicates the ability of spiritual love to produce positive effects through strong connection among the believers in “love, brotherhood and affection.” Thus, the positive results of the capacity of love are revealed through “strong and luminous chains” and the strength of love as the “immaterial fortresses” that managed to create “bonds” of brotherhood and affection. Eventually, Nursi’s expressions of “strong and luminous chains,” “immaterial fortresses” and “bond” becomes the fitting responses that lead to a positive modification.

Nursi refers to the “Twenty-Second Letter of the Risale-iNur” (p. 50) to appeal his audience to “Love for the sake of God.” He senses that spiritual love has the essential attributes that can provide energy. Then, he asserts the ‘positive actions’ as practicing the attributes of love which are justice, gentle, concord, unity; responding with forgiveness, pardon, magnanimity and abstaining from enmity, hostility, revenge, egotism, fame-seeking (Nursi, 2010). Nursi asserts that “We are the guardians of love, we have no time for enmity” (Nursi, 2013, p. 60). He also claims that “Love, friendship, and affection are the bond that connects us as it is the characteristic of Islam” (Nursi, 2011, p. 43).

3.6. The fifth ‘Word,’ solidarity for the sickness of disunity

Although love is provided as the solution, Nursi is aware that there are some causes of enmity that still exist which cause another ancillary exigence. Nursi implies the causes of enmity

that ignore the principles of equality. He also says “They resemble too an unfair, pessimistic person who so long as it is possible to distrust, never thinks favourably” (p. 51). Thus, this situation leads to the problem of disunity and invites a fitting response as a solution. The phrase “never thinks favourably” signifies the condition of not agreeing with each other due to not having good thoughts. Eventually it causes the situation of hostility.

Nursi asserts about the shared values and outcomes of “mutual consultation” (p. 51). If it is based on a single sin, the outcome becomes negative as it can “swell” where else if it is based on good deeds, it becomes a positive outcome as it “progresses to the order of thousands of good deeds.” Nursi is conveying that the united brotherhood spirit is based on the reasoning of freedom in accordance with the law and the consultations enjoined by the law. He asserts an evidence of working in unity among the brotherhood of the Arabs and Turk. They do not compete with each other but they help to complete their duties with spiritual strength as they are like “the shell and citadel.” Then, Nursi provides the implied fifth ‘Word,’ solidarity (p. 52). He conveys his implied message of the unity of feelings and actions among the Muslims as a unifying community. Their mutual support that creates the strong connection is able to produce positive effects.

Nursi utters “O my brothers who are listening to these words of mine here in the Umayyad Mosque! And O Muslim brothers in the mosque of the world of Islam forty to fifty years’ later! (p. 52). He calls to his audience again to consider the benefits of unity in true Islamic brotherhood. Once again, he addresses his present audience in the Umayyad Mosque and the future audience as his brothers. He refers to his future audience as his envisioned audience from the mosque in the different

Islamic regions. He considers his audience as being very attentive as he observes them. However he reminds them of the consequences of ignoring to display Islamic unity and brotherhood. As when there is no working spirit in a community, the problem of disunity arises and causes hostility.

Nursi calls again his present and envisioned audience as his brothers with expectation. He identifies their roles when he addresses them as “teachers” and “leaders” (p. 53). He is aware of their ability to be mediators of change, who can defend the rights and also show good influence. He even considers them as strivers of Islam as he is aware that they can be the mediators of change. He asserts that their good acts and morality can influence not only the different Arab groups but also those from America. Therefore he appeals to them to make changes through their decision and actions by striving in their sacred duty in working spirit of Islamic unity and true Islamic brotherhood. Then, Nursi conceptualises the Islamic society in terms of a factory through his strong vision and expectation. His perception of unity in a society that can be developed and built in the form of a factory depends on the members as the components of machines. Thus, the factory which resembles the community can develop well when the members of the community work together in unity and not paying attention to the mistakes of others in order to avoid the problem of disunity.

Nursi advises his audience to assist one another morally and if necessary materially and also bounding to each other to create a “luminous chain” (p. 52) as the ‘positive action’. The fitting responses for the solution of solidarity are “assist,” “luminous chain,” “beneficial” and “strengthen” that leads to a positive modification. The verb “assist” refers to the rewarding strong support while the phrase “luminous chain” indicates the

ability to produce positive effect that binds the connection among believers. The adjective “beneficial” (p. 53) indicates the positive effect of unity where millions of believers can “strengthen” (p. 53) their bonds through mutual moral, spiritual and material support. The verb “strengthen” indicates being stronger through mutual support. Nursi mentions that “Since at this time irreligion and those who deviate from the path of truth, take advantage of disunity, they confuse those who follow Islam and ruin the acts of worship and against Iman there are strong forces, for sure against this awesome force the door of even small dispute and disunity must not be opened” (Nursi, 2011a, p.213). He also states that life is the fruit of unity and oneness but spiritual life will disappear if there are no harmony and unity. “If solidarity is broken, the essence of the community is lost”. “Beware, do not open the door of criticism and dispute between each other!” (Nursi, 2011b, pp. 45-6)

3.7. The sixth ‘Word,’ sincerity for the sickness of individualism

Nursi is still aware of his audience’s condition when he reaches the final stage of the *Sermon*. He observes that they are being confined to the situation of deficiency in moral, spiritual and material matters. His audience has been going through the domination of external forces that causes them to be influenced by the negative values. Eventually, their characters are affected with negative qualities as they are drawn to be selfish and ignore the community. He conveys the implied negative causes of individualism when “one confines his view to his personal benefits” (p. 55) as self-interest, egotism and self-advantage. Before he provides the sixth ‘Word,’ as a solution to the sickness of individualism, he elaborates “mutual consultation enjoined by the Shari’a”(p. 56) as the constraint. Then, he provides “freedom according to Shari’a” (p. 56) as the next constraint because the

Muslims are kept as “captives.” These constraints can free man from oppression, despotism, being degraded, humiliated and abased.

In the final stage of the *Sermon*, Nursi refers to “the Twenty-First Flash of his *Risale-i Nur* on the Treatise on Sincerity” (p. 57). He asserts the traits of “collective personality” as moral strength (Nursi, 2011b). Eventually, in order to discard individualism, the traits of collectivism are practiced and he conveys the implied response which is the sixth ‘Word,’ sincerity as the solution. Nursi asserts “In the first place, the *Risale-i Nur* teaches us to have real sincerity and to restrain one’s egoistic tendencies and to be constantly aware of one’s own personal faults in order to prevent venturing down the path of self-centredness. We are not demonstrating these as individuals, but instead we show the collective personality of the *Risale-i Nur* to the people of faith” (Nursi, 2014).

Nursi provides the positive causes of sincerity from the constraints of mutual consultation and freedom according to the Shari’a. He asserts in the Treatise of Sincerity of the attributes of sincerity as “the greatest strength, the most acceptable intercessor, the firmest point of support, the shortest way to reality, the most acceptable prayer, the most wondrous means of achieving one’s goal, the highest quality and the purest worship” (Nursi, 2011b, p. 213). Moreover, in the Treatise, Nursi also displays the implied attributes of the disease of individualism as well as the attributes of the virtue of sincerity which are collective personality and self-sacrificing characteristic. Eventually, he asserts the virtues of sincerity as the response to the sickness of individualism as follows:

“Now the cure and remedy for this appalling disease is sincerity. Sincerity may be attained by preferring the worship of God to the worship of one’s own soul,

by causing God's pleasure to vanquish the pleasure of the soul and the ego, and thus manifesting the meaning of the verse, 'Verily my reward is from God alone' (Quran 11:29)" (Nursi, 2011b, p. 202).

Nursi reminds his audience again to implement the positive actions by upholding truthfulness, hope, courage, love, solidarity and sincerity in the closing part of the *Sermon*. His call to his audience to implement the 'positive action' based on sincerity is stated in his Treatise of Sincerity as follows: perform the sacred duty of serving belief and the Quran; work with all the strength to gain, instil and preserve sincerity and avoid things that harm sincerity.

The fitting responses for sincerity are "progress," "support," "assistance," "benefits," "freedom" and "secure." Nursi asserts that "the freedom based on the Shari'a" is displayed through God's merciful and compassionate attributes. This freedom has the characteristic of belief which is a spiritual manifestation based on trust in God and thus becomes a fitting response because it has the strength and capability to solve the problem. The adjective in the sentence, "Thus, three men between whom there is true solidarity may *benefit* the nation as much as a hundred men" (p. 57) signifies the reward from mutual consultation from the implied message of the "three 'alifs' become one hundred and eleven" The sentence, "In the face of those endless enemies and innumerable needs, man can continue his personal life only through the support and assistance proceeding from belief" (p. 58) indicates that the sole way for man to continue his personal life is by getting "support" and "assistance" by living in a community through the virtue of sincerity which is based on the truths of belief. The verb "support" and the noun "assistance" signify the aid they receive from the Muslim community. They can strengthen the spiritual

sustenance through mutual support and be free from being confined in the situation of deficiency in moral, spiritual and material matters. Thus, sincerity is able to discard the trait of individualism with the trait of collectivism. Eventually, the adjective in the sentence “It is only thus that he can halt his enemies and open up a way to *secure* his needs” signifies being free from despair and hopelessness, deceit, distress, enmity, disunity and individualism. Thus, the six ‘Words’ are the solutions in the form of the spiritual sustenance that enable man to access the way to freedom based on belief and recover from the six “dire spiritual sicknesses.”

Nursi advises his students to attain real sincerity by adhering to ‘positive action’ and restraining from egoistic tendencies which cause the self-centredness trait (Nursi, 2015a). A Muslim’s struggling for self-interest is negative act while working solely for God’s pleasure is positive act (Basar, 1995). Nursi asserts abandoning the causes of individualism and self-interest because there should be mutual support solely for God as a means to respect Him (Nursi, 2013a). Individualism affects relationship as it causes negative effects and negative emotional responses (Rothwell, 2010). In European and American cultures, individualism has long been fostered for example in economic systems (Uskul et al., 2008). There is a belief that individualism causes positive influences on individuals, such as a high social mobility, social interaction for choosing desirable people (Schug et al., 2009). It is because it increases happiness (Fischer & Boer, 2011). It is also believed to have strong sense of self-efficacy (Kitayama et al., 2004). However, negative potential effects in the individualistic culture exist particularly in pursuing personal achievements which creates competition between individuals (Triandis, 1995). It can also result in high social anxiety due to high social mobility

(Oishi et al., 2013). Eventually there is focused attention on personal achievements and thus, it affects the interpersonal relationships (Park & Crocker, 2005). According to Oishi (2012), although the values of individualism are adaptive in European and American cultures, it might not be adaptive in other cultures. Thus, the causes of individualism relates to self-interest, self-absorbed, egocentric trances which are damaging effects as it neglects the responsibility of social relations and mutual consultationengagement based on sincerity.

4. Discussion

The findings reveal that Nursi aims his call to his present audience in the Umayyad Mosque and his envisioned audience from different regions in the Islamic world when he delivers his *Sermon*. He focuses on them as his target audience whom he foresees as he predicts a good future and also considers them as his brothers who are capable of being mediators of change. According to Bitzer, "a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (Bitzer, 1995, p. 62). He says that they also have the capability to influence others. Thus, audience plays a very important role in a rhetorical situation through their actions. Nursi's rhetorical audience has shown their capability of being mediators of change. Nursi is able to influence millions of adherents through his writings and the *Nur community* is one of the most prominent religious and social movements in the contemporary Turkey (Abu-Rabi', 2008a). He is able to display his charismatic qualities and his audience centred attributes when he portrays his concern for his audience's needs, interest and expectations. Nursi displays his real engagement with the audience who not only listen to his speech but also those who read as he is able to illustrate the "six dire sicknesses" and provide the exact solutions in the form of

six 'Words'. Cicero considers being engaged wholeheartedly with the audience is an important matter and he mentions three attitudes towards an orator which are being hostile, indifferent or accepting (Crowley & Hawhee, 2004).

Nursi provides the six 'Words' as solutions to the six "dire sicknesses" and instils the 'positive actions' which are able to remove the problems from the exigencies in the situation. The fitting responses of these six 'Words,' positively fit and become the positive modification in the rhetorical situation. According to Bitzer (1968), in order to eliminate the exigence, there must be a positive modification. Nursi appeals to his audience to make positive changes after he is aware of the consequences of the exigencies in the rhetorical situation which make them react negatively. In order to save their belief, he provides the solution in the form of six 'Words' from the Quran. The six 'Words' that Nursi provides for his audience are based on positive thoughts and emotions which create 'positive action' thus, they are constructive. Positive emotions promote creative actions and social bonds and when there are sufficient positive emotions, they can generate creative resilient for an optimal well-being (Fredrickson, 2004). In this *Sermon*, Nursi's call to his audience to implement the 'positive action' is for optimal well-being of spiritual growth which focuses on his main aim which is to save his audience's belief. Nursi's writings are based on the main theme of belief as his intention is to save and strengthen people's belief in God (Vahide, 2008).

'Positive action' (*musbet hareket*) refers to Nursi's lifelong principle which he practices based on knowledge, learning, persuasion, love, compassion to convey the message of truth in order to bring people to God's pleasure as a means of eternal happiness (Basar, 1995). Nursi's appeals to his audience

arebased on a persuasive mood as he mentions that the *Risale-i Nur's* way is mild, polite and persuasive (Nursi, 2011b).

Nursi wrote the instructions of the principle of 'positive action' for his followers in his last letter (*Emirdag Lahikasi II*) before his death in 1960 (Basar, 1995). Hecalls his audience to adhere to the principle of 'positive action' as its concept is a method of service based on belief. Nursi uses 'positive action' as a method of patient struggle (*jihad*) of the word which is spiritual struggle (*manevi cihad*) in order to save and strengthen belief in God and the other truths of religion by peaceful means (Vahide, 2012). Thus, his constructive method is for the preservation of internal order, peace and stability in society for moral and spiritual progress by avoiding destruction. Nursi strongly practises the principle of 'positive action' even in hopeless situations and within absolute despair and desolation and also appeals to his students to implement it (Sayilgan, 2012).

The solution of six 'Words' that Nursi provides consists of the virtues of hope, courage, truthfulness, love, solidarity and sincerity. They are theological virtues which are also universal. They are based on the truths of belief as they are moral virtues. Nursi states the first 'Word,' hope directly to his audience, but the other five 'Words' are implied. It reveals that Nursi is focusing on the positive causes of the solutions and as he elaborates the constraints and the fitting responses, he wishes to engage his audience with the meaning of the words. Nursi calls his audience to concentrate on the meaning (Nursi, 2008a). He provides the solutions in the form of six 'Words' as positive truths of Islam which are based on the belief and morality of Islam (Nursi, 2012). In the 'second addendum-second part' of the *Sermon*, Nursi mentions that belief comprises affirmation, commitment, surrender and compliance based on positive ideas

(Nursi, 2012). According to the publisher of Nursi's writings on *The Short Words*, Nursi affirms that belief in God is the basis of men's virtues and true progress while the cause of their problems is rooted from their weakening of belief in God (Nursi, 2015b). The publisher states again that Nursi writes with the purpose of saving, strengthening and renewal of belief (Nursi, 2015b). His advice on the six 'Words' which are based on the theme of belief relates to the attributes of his 'positive action' principle as follows:

Our duty is to implement positive action; it is not negative action. It is a service towards belief solely done for God's sake alone. It does not try to interfere with the work of God and His Decree. We are charged to endure all hardships with patience and thankfulness through positive faith service which results in protecting the public order (Nursi, 2011, p. 8).

Conclusion

Nursi's *Damascus Sermon* can be considered as the foundation of his call to his rhetorical audience who are listening and reading his writings, to adhere to the 'positive action' by means of six 'Words.' His appeals to his audience continue in his other writings that form the whole volume of *Risale-i Nur* in years later. According to Basar (1995) 'positive action' is Nursi's method of guidance in his writings which is based on knowledge, learning, persuasion, love and compassion conveyed through the teachings of Islam. Numerous theorist claims that positive effect facilitates approach behaviour (Cacioppo, Gardner and Berntson, 1999; Davidson, 1993; Watson et al.,1999) or continued action (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Clore, 1994). Those who are prone to positive effect are able to be engaged in better social interactions(Watson., 1988;

Watson et al., 1992). Bitzer (1968, p. 8) states that “rhetoric always requires an audience,” and that a “rhetorical audience consists only of those who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change.” Bitzer also asserts that the constraints that are capable of being the fitting responses to the problem are able to bring positive modification. The *Damascus Sermon* is Nursi’s persuasive discourse for his rhetorical audience. The constraints in the *Sermon* are the fitting responses that bring positive modification through his rhetorical audience who are capable to be mediators of change. Thus, Nursi’s ‘positive action’ corresponds with Bitzer’s positive modification. Nursi’s projection on audience in the rhetorical situation also reveals his rhetorical skills. Keith and Lundberg (2008) state that thinking about the audience can be considered as the most important rhetorical skill.

Although this study only focuses on the audience, the findings are worth considering as audience play an important role through their actions. Their actions can bring positive modification in the rhetorical situation. This study can be beneficial to audience, create orators’ awareness and also contribute to the field of rhetorical studies. Nursi asserts about the significance of the meanings of wordings which has rhetorical features and he states that “concentrating on meanings requires greater and deeper care and study” (Nursi, 2008, p. 80). Hence, it is recommended that more in-depth studies are needed to concentrate on the meanings which have deeper values for the purpose of making correct and refined interpretations especially in Nursi’s writings, which are rich in rhetorical features and implied meanings.

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