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Received: 09/2023

Published: 03/2024

Abstract:

This research aims to provide an analytical reading of "Risale-i Nur" El kalimat (Words and Writings) as a model of sign/symbolic language used by Said Nursi in his works in general and in particular in his interpretation of the Holy Quran. It explores the pedagogical and symbolic use of stories and proverbs to stimulate the mind and draw attention to the ethical and moral dimensions that Said Nursi seeks to instil in the hearts of both the general public and the elites, creating an ethical foundation for the morally upright individual without relying heavily on Sufi interpretive terminology. Nursi's approach is characterised by a reasonable and simplified style that can be embraced by any intellectual group, leading them to God through the messages of "Risale-i Nur". The ultimate goal is to cultivate proactive, positive and fruitful human beings who can contribute to the establishment of an Islamic nation based on the Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings, challenging the secular reality that contradicts the faith and morals of contemporary Muslims.

Keywords: Nursi, Risale-i Nur, symbol, ethic, man.

*Tob Regul Sci.*TM 2024;10(1): 2013 - 2030

DOI: doi.org/10.18001/TRS.10.1.127

Introduction:

Sufis who follow the paths of self-discovery towards Allah have always adopted approaches that do not rely solely on rational knowledge, transmitted teachings or conventional language. They delve into the realm of the invisible and return with sparks of prophecy and traces of the messengers, creating a language that elevates their journey and imbues it with profound meanings and symbolism that go beyond ordinary communication and discourse among the general public. In his letters, Said Nursi had his own unique language to convey his ideas and elucidate their pedagogical meanings. Sometimes it is clear and straightforward, while at other times it is symbolic, making it difficult to subject it to analysis, definition, criticism and review according to the rules and principles of language

However, this language serves as a key to its cognitive and ethical system, the fruits of which can only be grasped by those who delve into the messages of the "Risale-i Nur" and understand its essence through their personal experiences in the search for the Self, the Universe, the World and God. In this way, they reach a cosmic vision that represents the model of Ibrahim (peace be upon him) when he challenged and shattered falsehood.

In this article, we are not concerned with delving into the ethical system of Said Nursi's works in detail. Rather, our focus is on exploring the mechanism and symbolic language of Sufism in conveying the meanings of values and ethics and embedding them in behaviour through the narrative method and encoding of existential issues such as monotheism, death, life, religiosity, and behavioural aspects such as uttering the basmala (in the name of Allah) at the beginning of actions, human inclinations towards perfection and happiness, and the meanings of innate disposition. These themes are linked to the heroes of stories and myths in ways that emulate the Qur'anic narrative style of education and refinement, or through aesthetic interpretations that appeal to emotions and uplift the individual and the community. This enables individuals to be effective representatives of spiritual and aesthetic values, and it is in their moral imagination that the criteria for goodness, truth, reform and reconstruction converge.

This research paper focuses on the symbolic aspect of Nursi's writings through the letters of Nur El kalimat (words and writings as examples) and their use in the construction of human values. It examines the construction of a specialised language that prepares him for reformative action and aims to provide interactive/interconnected meanings between human selfhood and the religious elements of faith and worship.

On this basis, why did Said Nursi resort to symbolic/indicative language (stories and parables) in the construction of human values, despite their clarity and explicitness in the Qur'anic and prophetic texts? Does symbolic language have a different impact on the consolidation of values in Nursi's messages? What role does it play in building and strengthening human values in the formation of an effective individual/Muslim and his performance of positive actions?

The work was carried out according to a plan that briefly presents the following:

First topic: Said Nursi: His life, Sufism and historical and social context.

Second topic: The meaning of signs and symbols and their use in education.

Third topic: Symbolic Language in the Letters of Nur and its Impact on the Construction and Improvement of Human Values.

1.1 Birth of Said Bediuzzaman Nursi:

He pierced the veil of non-existence and emerged into existence as a light and a guide. The eminent scholar, noble fighter and fearless defender of the supreme truth of Islam, the servant of the Qur'an, Bedi'u zaman¹ Said Nursi, was born in 1294 AH/1877 CE in the village of Nurs,

¹ Bedi'a zaman mr Nursi, Autobiography, translated by Ihsan Qasim Al-Salehi, 6th edition, Souzler Publishing, Cairo, Egypt, n.d., p. 87.

From an early age, he showed exceptional intelligence and a thirst for knowledge. He excelled at memorisation and travelled among villages and their scholars, gaining fame as a genius who engaged in debates on the most challenging scientific questions. He was nicknamed "Said the Renowned" for his mastery of rational², traditional and modern sciences, while also embracing a Sufi inclination. Throughout his life, he faced exile, imprisonment and even the death penalty for his criticism of the secular government and accusations of rebellion and revolution based on his political writings and activities. However, he was acquitted during the trials due to his eloquence³, the strength of his arguments and his unwavering commitment to truth and steadfastness in his beliefs.

He championed the project of educational and political reform by establishing an Islamic university called the Zehra School⁴, which combined religious and secular sciences. It aimed to serve the Qur'an, create a modern generation capable of assimilating new developments, cultivate an authentic culture and uphold human values. The turning point in his life came when he shifted his focus from seeking religious and secular knowledge to immersing himself in the Qur'an and composing the Letters of Nur. He used what he had learnt to serve the Qur'an, driven by the realisation of the conspiracy against the Qur'an propagated by Europe, as expressed in the statement of the British Colonial Minister, who advocated the need to create a separation and disconnection between the Qur'an and the Muslims to enable Europe to rule them⁵.

During his lifetime, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi led a nomadic life, moving between caves, mountains and countries, experiencing exile and imprisonment⁶. He had no fixed abode. He was both a son of the earth and a master of his environment until his death in the city of Urfa in 1960 AD. However, the military authorities moved his tomb to an unknown location for fear that it would become a shrine for his followers. Some believe it is in Isparta⁷.

1.2 Historical and social context of the era of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi:

The era of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was a major turning point in the religious and intellectual life of Muslims. It occurred at the end of the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth century AH (nineteenth and twentieth centuries CE). During this period, the Ottoman Empire, under the reign of Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the most prominent and powerful of the Ottoman sultans, began to deteriorate and disintegrate due to the alliance of Western powers seeking to divide his legacy, known as the "sick man of Europe". Organised intellectual attacks were launched against Muslims, striking at the heart of the spiritual and faith-based links between

¹- See: Jamal al-Din Faleh Al-Kilani, Ziyad Hamad Al-Samiddai, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: A New Reading of his Enlightened Thought", 1st edition, Dar Al-Zanbaqa, Cairo, Egypt, 2014, pp. 13-24. / Ali Al-Qadi, "What Do You Know About Bediuzzaman Said Nursi", 1st edition, Dar Al-Huda, D.m., 1422 AH / 2001 AD, p. 5.

²- Ali Al-Qadi, p. 5.

³- Autobiography, pp. 133-135 and 221-225.

⁴- Same reference, pp. 103, 114 and 561.

⁵- Biography, page 88.

⁶- Same reference, pages 242-244.

⁷- Same reference, page 593 onwards.

Muslims and the Qur'an¹. These attacks were aimed at reinterpreting and translating the religious heritage that had been built up through generations of spirit, blood and truth. The use of journalism, the media, scientific missions and cultural exchanges between Turkey and the European world by preachers, diplomats and Orientalist studies, which took on a scientific character, facilitated access to Islamic sciences with the Qur'an as their core and source. All this drew Nursi's attention to the Qur'an in order to protect it from these intellectual attacks.

From a political and social point of view², entry into the Ottoman Empire was achieved through parties and associations with liberal ideas, such as the Turkish Maiden Society and the Union and Progress Society, among others. These organisations aimed to raise the consciousness of the Ottoman people for change and liberation, but by spreading nationalist rather than religious sentiments. They undermined the foundations of religious commitment. This party had a significant impact on the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the secular republic in 1924. The turban was replaced by the hat as a symbol of cultural and social change, indicating the transformation of Turkish civilisation. In addition, the Arabic script was replaced by the Latin script as a new face of culture and science. European laws were used to govern the country, leading to a detachment from identity while preserving Eastern traditions. As a result, prominent Turkish scholars such as Sheikh Mustafa Sabri and Sheikh Zahid al-Kawthari emigrated around the time of Nursi's birth and death, further widening the gap between the Turkish people and their spiritual leaders.

Badiaa al-Zaman Nursi took it upon himself to confront this movement, which aimed to divide Muslims in general and Turkish Muslims in particular from within. He recognised the rich and long history of Turkey, represented by the Ottoman Empire, which served as the centre, beacon and leadership of Islam. In his writings, he focused on a renewal that encompassed religious and educational discourse and aimed to strengthen the Islamic mentality as proof, evidence and faith to counter the secular wave that was fragmenting Turkish identity. It sought to bring together tradition and modernity, sharia and civil principles, based on the principles of consultation (shura) and justice. When the secular state was established, he withdrew from social life and devoted himself to the Qur'an, drawing insights from it and keeping its light alive in the hearts of Muslims, while immersing himself in a Sufi journey until his death. He devoted himself to conveying the creed and Qur'anic values through a new approach that used scientific and argumentative methods, Sufi symbolic language, using symbols, examples and stories to achieve the desired goal. He used various rhetorical, linguistic, media and pedagogical techniques, which have been analysed by many scholars in their articles on his entire body of work, especially his collection "Risale-i Nur".

1.3 Mr. Nursi as a Sufi:

When we discuss the biography of Said Nursi as a Sufi, we immediately realise, after understanding his political and intellectual positions in his life and his confrontation with falsehood, that he was a unique and exceptional personality. He was a rebellious Sufi, an

¹ Al-Kilani, Al-Samidai, page 98.

² See: Master's thesis, Yahya Fatima Al-Zahra, "The Phenomenon of Sufism in Said Nursi - A Study of the Sufi Experience in Said Nursi's Letters of Light", supervised by Dr Gradi Al-Arabi, Doctoral School of Anthropology, Mostaganem, 2017/2018, page 50 and onwards.

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enlightened fighter, a disciplined interpreter and a sheikh without followers. His character has been described as balanced and guided by a sound methodology in inviting people to Allah, purifying and nurturing the self based on Qur'anic and prophetic values, without neglecting the behavioural aspect of Sufism, making him a figure whose approach can be studied as a behavioural path to Allah without fear of isolation, stagnation or innovation.

The political, social and cultural pressures formed a clear path that strengthened Said Nursi's sense of responsibility.

His voice was active in confronting this reality, accompanied by his fight against the Sufi paths, rejecting the sheikhdom system and its methodologies, accusing them of stagnation, escapism, spreading innovations and violating the Sharia. He called for an ethical and behavioural education based on Qur'anic values and purification methods according to the methodology of the Prophet Muhammad, which he practised to refine himself and his followers (such as remembrance gatherings, recitation and contemplation in the mountains). However, he never declared himself to be a Sufi in the sense commonly understood at the time. On several occasions, Professor Nursi, may Allah have mercy on him, explicitly stated that he was not a Sufi. However, in all his teachings, advice and guidance to his students and followers, he remained within the framework associated with Sufism, which was essentially synonymous with Islam during the era of the righteous predecessors (may Allah be pleased with them)¹. This made him a representative of Sunni Sufism in its true and pure form, attracting the youth who rejected the secular Turkish regime, which made the authorities angry with him². He was not given the opportunity for the Sufi paths to revolve around him, as most of his followers had dual backgrounds, combining scientific, religious and educational knowledge.

Mr Nursi divided himself into (the old Sa'id) and (the new Sa'id). His initial training was influenced by Abdul-Qadir al-Jilani and Ahmad al-Faruqi al-Sirhindi³. This deep influence of Sufi language is evident in his letters, supplications to his Lord, descriptions of the Prophet Muhammad, his repentance and seeking forgiveness, as well as his writings about himself in prayers, narrative style and literary texts. He was also a disciplined critic of the works of Muhyiddin ibn Arabi, sometimes defending him against misinterpretation or misrepresentation of his words⁴. In his writings, Nursi focused on guiding his followers to liberate themselves from the authority of the sheikh. He did not impose himself as their sheikh, but positioned himself as their guide and teacher.

The symbolic/language of symbols was one of the manifestations of the renewal of Said Nursi's discourse, in which he tried to reconcile an era of decadence, which used Sufism as an excuse to

¹- Mohamed Said Raman Al-Bouti, "Spiritual Radiance in the Life of Professor Said Nursi - A Study on Spiritual Perception between Sufism and Nursi", Cultural and Scientific Foundation, Nursi Letters Center, Istanbul, 26-27 July 2005, page 6.

²- Same reference, page 6 and onwards.

³- Imam Al-Rabbani (may Allah have mercy on him) was born in the city of Sarhind, which is part of the state of India, in the month of Shawwal in the year 179 AH. He is known as "Al-Farooqi" because his lineage goes back to our Master Umar ibn al-Khattab. He learnt the Qadiri and Jashdi paths from his father, who authorised him in both paths. He wrote works such as "Adab al-Murid", "Ithbat al-Nubuwwah" and "Al-Ma'arif al-Laduniyyah". Please refer to: [URL] (Note: The URL given is not accessible to me).

⁴- Al-Bouti, page 11.

escape from facing life and fulfilling the duty of stewardship, with submission to politics and compliance with the orders of the new state, which violated Turkish identity and ruled with iron and fire. Nursi did not try to break away from this dominant system of Turkish spiritual life and original education, which formed the basis of his early education on the one hand, and the need to keep up with contemporary knowledge on the other. He was well aware of the nature of his audience and the style of discourse required at that time and in that mindset. He had to navigate between political discourse in newspapers, sermons in mosques, educational guidance as a spiritual guide, scholarly arguments and, at times, the use of symbolic and allegorical language. He often had to combine and blend these different approaches.

2.1 Symbolism in Sufi Terminology and the Meaning of Symbols:

Sufi terminology represents the pinnacle of linguistic and literary eloquence. It compels the reader or listener of Sufi writings and compositions to delve into meanings beyond the clear comprehension of the mind. One is compelled to interpret in order not to fall into the injustice of the Sufi masters who hold the keys to language and taste. Sufi terminology has a unique nature that makes its handling a subject of academic research and study, especially when it is encountered alongside religious terminology. It is a dictionary that can only be understood through experience, and perhaps silence is the best response to the language of the Sufis, who have found an outlet for the narrowness of meaning in the vastness of expression. They do not descend to the level of practical and conventional interaction because of the difficulty of describing the reality of their experience. "People do not understand by indication unless they know its interpretation and perceive its relation to what is indicated"¹.

Indication is something that is perceptible to the senses and that allows belief in something else that is imperceptible or impossible to comprehend². The Sufi may resort to symbolism and hidden meanings to express divine love, paradise, obedience, closeness to God, and following the example of the Prophet. These meanings often lead to the assertion of the unity of existence, annihilation and union, the nullification of Sharia law and the condemnation of others on the basis of it. Thus, their words and ideas have been judged as polytheistic, unbelief, and the transfer of spiritual experiences to situational religions and others, such as Muhyiddin ibn Arabi, Hallaj, Ibn al-Farid, and others.

As for the symbol, it is no different from the meaning of the indication; it is generally defined as "something that represents something else". So what is the relationship between the symbol and what it signifies?³ The connection between them lies in the meaning, the structure of the poem, and the reflective mirror of language that expresses what cannot be said explicitly. It is a condensed representation of the intended meaning, but it is a definition that does not provide the necessary clarification.

¹ Jamil Saliba, "Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi" (The Philosophical Lexicon), 1st edition, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Lubnani, Beirut, Lebanon, 1982, volume 1, page 86.

² Saliba, page 85.

³ Erich Fromm, "The Forgotten Language - An Introduction to Understanding Dreams, Fairy Tales and Myths", translated by Mohammed Mounqid Al-Hashimi, 1st edition, Dar Al-Hawar, Latakia, Syria, 2011, page 26.

In language, the term "symbol" refers to gestures, signs and marks. It has several important meanings in use. First, it refers to the representation of abstract ideas by sense objects, such as numbers representing quantities. Secondly, it refers to the representation of sensory objects by imagined meanings, such as a fox symbolising deception, a dog symbolising loyalty, a chameleon symbolising change, a butterfly symbolising recklessness, a crown symbolising royalty, and a flag symbolising a state. The term "symbol" is also used to describe any element in a chain of metaphors that represents a corresponding element in a chain of realities¹. It is used when one word takes on the meaning of another word metaphorically, representing a symbolic meaning. Symbols can be derived from a common language or culture, where the pronunciation of a symbol is sufficient to understand its meaning and intended message, leading to a solid understanding.

In the functional sense of symbolism, it is "an indirect expression of an idea by means of appropriate metaphors, allegories, mythical, epic and poetic narratives. Symbolism lies in comparisons, metaphors and stories, in tragedies and tales and their protagonists. People in ancient times used it to emphasise the value of an idea through sensual metaphors, or to conceal it, as in the case of the Sufis². As mentioned earlier, Mr Nursi's Sufi inclination and preoccupation in his retreats and practices is evident in his interpretation (tafsir) and his call to Allah and service to the Qur'an. It is therefore reflected in his style of disseminating Qur'anic values and presenting them in a symbolic narrative format.

We do not mean by Symbolism what is commonly understood by philosophers and writers, or what is commonly called Symbolism today. Symbolism, or the Symbolist artistic and literary movement, emerged as a European school in the second half of the 19th century. Symbolism is the interpretation of ancient beliefs or doctrines in a symbolic way, similar to what Plato and some Arabic philosophers did by dressing philosophical truths in symbolic clothes. There is a doctrine which says that the human mind can only comprehend symbols³, because the use of symbols is a method and a mental approach which is inherent in human nature and teaching methods. Therefore, it is not limited to any particular teaching or school. There are many details in this matter that the interested reader can understand in their proper context, which is beyond the scope of this research.

The Noble Qur'an is full of this approach of using symbolism to convey meaning by allusion. Scholars and poets have differed in their compositions, some focusing on meaning and rhyme, others on content and meaning. However, Nursi was among those who did not lose sight of both aspects and used them together to achieve his purpose. He emphasised "reviving the religious sense, nurturing faith, and instilling the concepts of virtue and ethics in souls, minds, and thoughts so that they transcend the ages and generations"⁴. His style varied between concise and elegant, depending on the subject he was addressing, using similes and artistic imagery to guide

¹- Saliba, page 620.

²- This is Fatima Al-Zahra, Aesthetics of Symbolism in Sufi Poetry: Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi as a Model, Master's Thesis, Abu Bakr Belkaid University, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Tlemcen, 1427 AH / 2006 AD, page 62.

³- Saliba, page 621.

⁴- Biography, page 51.

the self to the spiritual, educational and moral depth of meaning¹. Therefore, when we refer to symbolism and allusion in the context of Mr Nursi, we mean his personal style derived from his progress in the path of free Sufism and what he extracted from the method of Qur'anic narration for the purpose of education and refinement.

2.2 Symbolism of Story and Parable and its Impact on the Formation of Human Character

The Noble Qur'an relies throughout on narrative style and the use of parables to illustrate the travels of the Prophets and their people. It begins with the story of creation (the creation of Adam) and uses the technique of dialogue (the dialogue between Allah, the angels and Satan) to convey wisdom and moral lessons (the story of the mother of Moses). Stories, by their very nature, leave a lasting impression on the self through the imagination, association, analysis and deduction that they involve, which become fixed in the memory and resonate within the self (the stories of Job and Lot). These stories also include accounts of conversations that reflect the human psyche and the process of its purification, both internally and externally (such as the story of Al-Khidr and the story of Joseph). They clarify and correct the thought processes of different communities (the story of Mary with the Children of Israel and the story of Dhul-Qarnayn). They also describe the methods of communication between the prophets and their followers (the story of Abraham and Noah). The Prophet Muhammad also used stories as symbols to convey specific messages to his companions, such as symbolizing the importance of enjoining good and forbidding evil in the story of the hole in the ship, symbolizing blind adherence and imitation of Jews and Christians with the gesture of the hand, and other examples that rely on objective symbolic storytelling to convey truths through the actions of animals that represent individual and collective human realities with spiritual, political, and social values. The purpose is to educate, to sharpen the methodology of criticism, and to use ancient myths or Qur'anic stories (such as the story of the golden calf, the cow, the companions of the elephant, and Pharaoh) to describe emerging ideas, to provide warnings and moral guidance, or to promote a holistic vision of civilisation.

A story, therefore, is "the culmination of excitement and creativity in encompassing an event or series of events by tracing the details and understanding the transformations, whether realistic or purely imaginative, beginning with their actual occurrence or formation in the mind of the creator and ending with the reader or listener through El mektubat writing or narration. This may be followed by material or moral influence, criticism and the production of knowledge"². This is what Nursi has worked on using in some of his dialogues and responses, which begin with a story and end with its intended meaning. Some of these dialogues generate ideas. One of the peculiarities of using stories in compositions is that they guide the mind to the knot that stimulates the intellect to produce solutions and deepen the moral lesson after the process of analysis, possibilities and weaving the narrative to engage the mind in consideration, commitment and criticism. Storytelling is one of the educational methods for children from a very young age, and its content evolves in line with human growth, the development of the mind, comprehension and facilitating the retention of information for them.

¹ Same reference, pages 51-52.

² Ahmad Raja Adwan, Kings of the Earth in the Noble Quran, Master's thesis, supervised by Abdel-Monem Bishnati, Jannan University, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Tripoli, Lebanon, 1434 AH / 2013 AD, page 17.

Thus, the Sufi perceives divine speech as based on symbolism and indication. This is due to the gap between the Creator, Allah, and human beings, as well as the limitations of ordinary human understanding in comprehending divine speech. Revelation was revealed in the language familiar to all human beings, but it contains indications, expressions, symbols and signs that connect the outer with the inner. The understanding of these signs is specific to the people of Allah who are firmly grounded in knowledge¹. It serves as a model for the chosen teachers and the knowers who have made indication and expression two methods that vary in their presence according to the level, ability and progress of the learner in the hierarchy of knowledge.

3.1 Symbolic Style in the Letters of Nur El kalimat (Words and Writings)

3.1.1 Words:

The themes that Mr Nursi addresses in the letter "Words" are diverse. He focuses on the human self, its inner secrets and the purification of its desires by showing the consequences of deviating from the ladder of ethics. He links it to Allah by defining His majesty, greatness, power and the wonders of His creation. At times, he uses the reminder of His punishment and emphasises moral education, instilling the importance of adhering to values. He tells stories that end with clues and symbols to convey first human values and then Islamic values. He tells the story and symbolises its content through characters, animals, strange phenomena and new universes. He then clarifies the intended meaning behind each symbol, shedding light on it. It is as if he presents a puzzle and solves it himself, leaving no room for interpretation. An example from 'Words' is as follows:

1- In the fourteenth discourse², Mr Nursi spoke about the destruction of humanity because of its sins, quoting the verse: "When the earth is shaken with its [final] earthquake" (Quran 99:1)³. He warned believers of Allah's punishment of fear and panic when values and morals disappear from their land and among them. He saw it as a worldly punishment to regulate their behaviour and bring them back to the right path before corruption spreads among them. The earthquake mentioned in the verse is a symbol of immediate discipline and punishment, not just a natural phenomenon. The Qur'an uses it as a symbol of worldly and hereafter punishment, both internal and external. It purifies the soul and directs it towards the righteous path before the Day of Judgment actually arrives.

The Divine Tribulations and Punishments are not only reminders to the wicked, but also to those who remain silent in the face of injustice or neglect their duty to forbid evil and promote good, both individually and collectively. As for the innocent, it is a purification for them, elevating them to the rank of martyrdom and eternal bliss in exchange for temporary punishment. This is also attributed to divine wisdom and the mystery of destiny, which remains hidden from the believer and the unbeliever. It conceals the competition in the ranks of faith and good deeds.

¹ Nasr Hamid Abu Zeid, *Philosophy of Interpretation - A Study of the Interpretation of the Quran* by Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, 6th edition, Arab Cultural Centre, Casablanca, Morocco, 2007, pages 266-268.

² Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, "The Words", translated by Ihsan Qasim Al-Salehi, 6th edition, Souzler Publishing and Distribution, Egypt, 2011, page 183.

³ Surah Al-Zalzalah, verse 1.

All these wars and destructive natural phenomena are nothing but the awakening of humanity from its recklessness, and they are not merely natural reactions of materials and components¹. Behind every action there is a planner and a wise being.

In the eleventh discourse², Mr Nursi tells a short story that symbolises the mystery of the universe, the reality of human creation and the secrets of prayer. He symbolises the divine realm with a kingdom ruled by a ruler who possesses great knowledge, wisdom and wealth. The creation of the universe is depicted as a great exhibition where the owner of the kingdom decides to display his possessions. He sees them from a different perspective, outside himself and through the eyes of others.

The story also symbolises the levels of those who discover the truth of this grandeur through different tables, each tailored to their respective groups and according to their needs and abilities. It also symbolises the messengers with the evidence that will guide the inhabitants and subjects, acquainting them and teaching them about this magnificent palace. It reveals to them its symbols and its complex contents, all under the authority of the owner of the palace.

The story illustrates the protocols of honour and the etiquette of entering, leaving and wandering within the palace, according to the wishes of the invisible ruler, who can only be glimpsed from behind a veil. This serves as a metaphor for the beliefs, worship and moral values to which those who enter this kingdom must adhere. The purpose behind this is nothing more than for Him to draw closer to us, to make Himself beloved to us, and for us to acknowledge His worthiness with gratitude.

The audience was divided into two groups: a contemplative group with sharp minds and calm hearts, seeking wisdom, listening attentively to the teacher and obediently following the wishes of the palace owner. The second group was dominated by their desires, their minds corrupted and their hearts extinguished. They turned a deaf ear to all guidance and succumbed to their instincts of eating, drinking and intoxication until they fell into recklessness and corruption, breaking the laws and ending up in prison.

Mr Nursi concluded by explaining his story and the symbols it contained, emphasising the need to follow the path of God. If a person grasps the meaning conveyed by the imagination depicted in the story, it will firmly establish in his being the etiquette of movement in the universe and the avoidance of prohibitions and pitfalls. It will facilitate the mind's ability to compare the image of the palace owner with the ultimate Sovereign, with Allah as the supreme example. This is the benefit of symbols when they serve as reminders, evoking the lessons whenever their scenes are repeated in the world of perception and materiality.

In the same discourse, there is a symbol of cleverness of mind and wisdom in dealing with blessings through the story of the servant, the master and the suit. Furthermore, in the twelfth discourse, Mr Nursi balances the moral education between the students of the Qur'an and philosophy. He symbolizes the student of philosophy with the Pharaoh, who worships whatever benefits him and takes it as his lord. The atheist's arrogance is nothing but a cover for his

¹- The Words, page 127.

²- Same reference, page 135.

weakness and dependence on what he depends on. He is overwhelmed by self-interest and utilitarianism, a selfish schemer who does not serve the good of his community.

As for the student of the Qur'an, he is symbolised by the noble servant because his ultimate goal is his servitude to God. He is poor among men but rich in God, strong in his reliance on the absolute power of his master. He serves the individual and collective good and acts only in accordance with the virtues. These are the meanings that Nursi lived by throughout his life, even when he was repeatedly sentenced to death. Whoever is with God, God is with him. Whoever has these values in his heart is honoured by God and does not expect any reward or gratitude for fulfilling his duty. They are generous without expecting anything in return, detached from what people possess and eager for what is with God, which is better and eternal.

In the twenty-third discourse¹, Bediü zaman relies on the juxtaposition of contrasting meanings to guide people towards noble values. He achieves this by presenting a story that contains two opposing models, thus highlighting the face of comparison. This approach enables the reader to grasp the meaning and allows the vision to manifest through its opposite. It is through opposites that one recognises things, distinguishes between the wicked and the righteous, and establishes the optimal meaning within oneself by realising the safest and most ideal path to follow. In this way, people build their positions on the basis of conviction and certainty, without hesitation, fear or the need to weigh up data and alternatives.

Sheikh Nursi directs the heart, the secret, the soul, the mind, the imagination and the human faculties towards eternal and everlasting life and instils a desire for it. This guidance leads individuals to direct their behaviours and intentions towards the pursuit of lasting good in exchange for the renunciation of temporary and fleeting desires. This creates an effective individual who strives for good because he has his eyes fixed on eternity, overcoming all obstacles that hinder the pursuit of temporary benefits.

When a person reaches this stage of servitude, they will form a harmonious society that serves without bowing to pleasures and threats. They will act as a united front against everything that threatens security and peace, and help their fellow human beings to cross over to the optimal world if they adhere to patience and love for what is with God.

The essence of the story revolves around a city with two large palaces, each guarded by a dog. The first dog is disobedient, playing with its master instead of fulfilling its guard duty. On the other hand, the second palace dog diligently protects the palace from any harm, strangers or attackers. The story then describes the state of the two palaces from the inside. The first palace lacks order and discipline, and its inhabitants mingle freely without regard for gender segregation or respect for hierarchical positions. The lord of the palace shows no interest in enforcing order or holding people accountable. In contrast, the second palace is adorned with order, discipline and tranquillity. Its proper function is fulfilled, and the lord is concerned with establishing justice among the inhabitants by listening to their needs through an intermediary. The two palaces symbolise human social life and the civilised nature of human civilisation. The differences in their systems represent human beings. The inhabitants of the palaces represent their limbs and souls. The symbol of the "dog" represents the power of carnal desires and anger in man. The

¹- Same reference, page 139.

difference between the willful and the obedient self is clarified by restraining one's desires and regulating them in a way that serves worldly life, seeking contentment and success in the hereafter.

It was profound and enlightening when he spoke of the transience of the world and the return of some aspects of the world of permanence. He used symbolic expressions to describe the integration between the hidden truth and the apparent image, and their reversal on the path to annihilation when the earth is transformed beyond recognition. He explored the possibility of opposites such as good and evil, beauty and ugliness, shadow and light, light and darkness, transforming into paradise and hell, into an eternal realm where opposites will separate and manifest in their true essence. This transformation begins with the Tree of Creation, which represents the reality of this world created by God for the purpose of glorification, praise, and for man to test himself and refine his character by drawing inspiration from the Names of Allah, especially His Wise Name. It is through this Wise Name that the reality of the account will be revealed after the Resurrection, distinguishing between the believers and the unbelievers¹. This was one of the profound meanings that resonated deeply with me, as Nursi presents a unique perspective on the transformation of our present actions into a form of worship and the establishment of the Hereafter. From the same elements, the good and the evil will unite, the positive and the negative will converge, which explains Nursi's idea that there is no ugliness or evil in this world, except that beauty is inherent in it. For a profound reason, everything that confronts man with evil is nothing more than a representation of goodness from another perspective. In fact, Nursi, may God sanctify his secret, used to correspond with his disciples during the days of his exile, informing them that he had achieved the solitude he desired, for which he had called upon God, and he used it to preserve, revise and write.

And in the thirtieth word² there is a symbol of the human "self", the key that unlocks the treasures of the Beautiful Names and elevates its possessor to the revealer of the mysteries of the universe and the solver of the riddles of creation. The essence of the human being is made the key to the knowledge of God and His Names, because within it is the ego (the self) through which one imagines one's own divinity and asserts one's little dominion, thus realising through one's apparent possession the true possession of one's Creator. It reveals the secrets of the self, through which one draws closer to his Lord. For he who knows himself knows his Lord.

1- The danger of the ego is illustrated by the symbol of a large serpent, which attacks a person if it expands unchecked. Despite the tranquillity of its letters and the smoothness of its pronunciation, its essence will grow secretly like a seed under the ground until it spreads throughout the individual and, through the power of neuroticism and nationalism, turns into a snake that devours him. It becomes a rebellious devil, measuring all creation and actions by its own desires, opposing the commandments of God Almighty. It hides from them all the lights of God and His signs. Then a two-faced coin is used as a metaphor for the ego: one face symbolises prophethood and servitude to God, while the other face represents philosophy and its teachings, which limit benefits to the self and resemble the duty of "the Creator". Thus the constitution of cooperation and generosity is abolished and replaced by a constitution of conflict and debate.

¹- The Words, pages 363-365.

²- Same reference, page 624.

Ultimately, when the ideology of the group lacks an ideal goal, or forgets or becomes unaware of it, individual selfishness prevails and the mind becomes preoccupied with individual concerns. Those who love themselves do not really love others, and this strengthens the 'ego' of each individual, making it so rigid and unbreakable that it cannot become 'we'. So those who love themselves do not really love others¹. This phenomenon has revived civil secular politics in the midst of this contradiction between the ego and the collective, dedicated to dividing them and introducing the ambitions of the ego or the minority in exchange for the interest of the "we".

sacrificing the majority. This contradicts the Qur'an, which considers the killing of one person to be equivalent to the slaughter of the whole of humanity: "That is why We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever kills one soul, except for one soul or because of corruption in the land, it is as if he had killed the whole of mankind. And whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved the whole of mankind. And our messengers had certainly come to them with Clear Signs. Then many of them, [even] after that, were transgressors throughout the land" (Qur'an, 5:32)². This is the most effective remedy in the system of societies where a small group dominates over the majority, using knowledge and philosophy as a means to serve self-interest, breaking the unity of society and thus lacking the spirit of community in fulfilling social responsibilities and diminishing the effectiveness in developing the state, its people and its economy. Nursi, through his parables, gradually leads us to understand the dilemma of the individual and then leads us to understand the general dilemma, which he always addresses through his nuanced, clear and luminous reading of God's verses, using his mastery of contemporary understanding and sciences. This is the secret of the distinction of this eminent scholar.

3.1.2 Writings:

In selected writings, Nursi delves into the depths of the human psyche and its connection to the fear of death. Using his spiritual language, he attempts to redirect the vision towards the blessing of death, artistically portraying it as the happy life that awaits the righteous and committed. He also discusses the destiny after death, stressing the need for rectification and hastening to embrace the path of Allah and strive to emulate His names and attributes. Furthermore, he does not overlook the spiritual and metaphysical realm of human beings and how they can understand spiritual communication/connection with the higher world/kingdom. These selected examples from his writings demonstrate the variety of stories and parables in Nursi's work and his openness to any subject that encompasses the three powers of man: intellectual, psychological and physical, and their adaptation in the service of the moral power that makes him a representative and leader on earth.

In the first book³ of Bedi'a zaman Nursi's writings, he speaks of death as a blessing and emphasises its positive aspect. He reinforces this concept with examples and supports it with visions. In fact, it is his vision of the stages of death and the life of martyrs after death that explains Nursi's fearless character in the face of blame and condemnation, and that makes him remain steadfast in his path despite denial and death sentences. If a believer understands the

¹ "Al-Kalimat" (The Words), p. 836

² Surah Al-Ma'idah (verse 32)

³ Badi' al-Zaman al-Nursi, (The Writings), translated by Ihsan Qasim al-Salhi, 3rd edition, Sozler Publishing and Distribution, Egypt, 2001, (The Sixteenth Writing), p. 5.

blessing of death and what comes after it, as Nursi teaches us, he will become an active and positive individual who is not suppressed by fear, hunger, need or personal interest, in return for fulfilling his duty and succeeding as a vicar on earth and conveying the message of his Lord to the best of his ability.

Nursi symbolises the movement of death with the death of plants, which is a means of life in other parts anew. The death of food in the human stomach is a revival of its spiritual and physical powers, and this applies to the death of a human being and his departure from this world to bear fruit in the world of the grave. Death also brings relief from sickness, old age, worldly burdens, reunion with loved ones, safety from wars, and other blessings that come with death. It is the thing most feared by the human soul when its secrets are not known. It is a vision seen by the righteous believers, the working believers, the accomplished believers who strive for what is with Allah. As for the wrong-doers, death is a punishment for them, as was their life.

In the thirteenth book¹, Nursi uses a metaphor to symbolise the state of the umma (Muslim community) in its adherence to the truth. It is a path on which those who walk it are divided into three categories: a group that finds a safe path, a group that manages to save itself from the treacherous swamp by using the means available to it, and the majority who continue to walk in the midst of the dark darkness in the putrid, filthy swamp with their hammers (which symbolise political parties). A few of them, because of their excessive intoxication, mistakenly think it is musk and amber. The majority of them recognise it as mud and filth, but they cannot find refuge or escape from it. They swing their hammers in the faces of the intoxicated, seeking their destruction without knowing how to save themselves. They seek the light to find refuge and safety (the light being the Qur'an). This metaphor represents the form of social life we live, the conflicts, rejection and lack of tolerance towards the misguided, and the advice to them will only perpetuate the current state or even descend to lower levels. It serves as a symbolic example of what a believer must adhere to: the light of the Qur'an and the salvation of the confused and their political parties. Everyone needs Allah's light and the sure path.

In fact, one of the most profound symbols we came across in our reading of the Messages of Light, which can be a turning point in a person's life², is the double naming of Bediuzzaman himself as "Sa'id al-Qadim" (the Happy Old) and "Sa'id al-Jadid" (the Happy New). These two names serve as clear symbols and expert evidence of the complete transformation in his way of thinking, his approach to events and his handling of situations. The essence of human beings lies in their ability to change, evolve and progress based on the information, experiences and truths available to them. They should not stick to a single pattern in order to avoid the tongues of men, nor should they cling to what they have learned from their ancestors for fear of exploring the unfamiliar paths of scholars and preachers. The true man is the one who knows that Allah is approached through different paths, and who uses the means for intellectual and spiritual development and invests in the gifts and blessings bestowed by Allah in the service of his religion.

When Nursi realised that his involvement in politics and public speaking could hinder his service to the Qur'an, his exploration of its secrets and intricacies, and his defence against the campaigns

¹- Same reference, page 56.

²- Same reference, page 76.

launched against it, he withdrew from the world of politics. For eight years, he did not follow political trends or read newspapers, although he was one of their faithful followers. He justified his seclusion to his students by explaining that he had chosen to follow the path of the diamond (the Qur'an) because the long-term effects of Qur'anic education extend to future generations of politicians, students and the general public. He dedicated himself to interpreting the Quran, constructing arguments and providing answers. He also focused on spiritual purification and self-discipline. Despite his exile and imprisonment, he remained active to positively influence himself, his people and his nation. He never stopped writing, interpreting and teaching his disciples and students.

Mr Nursi emphasises the purification of the human character and focuses on the relationship between individuals as the basis of the relationship with God. He calls for the establishment of virtues such as love, cooperation, forgiveness, tolerance and the avoidance of hostility and hatred. He symbolises this with the story of a ship¹, where just as the ship would reject and repel a criminal who tried to sink it along with the innocent people on board, the construction of a divine human being does not allow hatred and resentment towards someone who has committed a single negative act. This is in accordance with the Qur'anic verse: "And if you were to count the favours of Allah, you could not count them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful" (Quran 14:34)². Rather, the approach is to enhance one's own innocent qualities and work for their reform and salvation, cutting off all paths of enmity through love and accepting the positive aspects of others. If one dislikes a certain quality in someone, one should rejoice in another aspect of that person. They should avoid envy and resentment because the envious person suffers more pain and harm than the envied person, because envy consumes good deeds like fire consumes wood, as mentioned in the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Another reason for hostility towards others is that Nursi's recommendations include considering the positive aspects of a person who has made mistakes and sinned, which will lead to their correction and reintegration into society. Consequently, this strengthens the bonds within the community and facilitates collective efforts to reform society through united action. This is one of the most important effects that Mr Nursi tried to institutionalise through symbols, statements, teachings and education. It represents the unity of faith in the hearts of believers, including the unity of heart, tongue and action. This requires the unity of the community and mutual recognition.

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In the twenty-fourth work³, Mr Nursi makes a connection between the beautiful names of Allah and what they mean to human beings. He explores how a single name encompasses such diverse reflections, such as the name "Al-Hakeem" (The Wise), which assists in the search for God by revealing the secrets of His creations to those with insight. He delves into the inscriptions of the beautiful names and the great gifts of Allah's mercy. He contemplates the manifestation of "Al-Qadir" (The Almighty) in the universe through the movement and regularity of things and the

¹ "Al-Maktubat" (The Writings), p. 340.

² Surah Ibrahim, verse 34

³ Al-Maktubat (The Writings), p. 367.

effectiveness of beings in their actions. These actions are nothing but praise and thanksgiving to Allah, the silent speech of the universe. Consequently, the effects and manifestations of these meanings are reflected in man's activity through his choices and desires for voluntary and loving servitude, embodying the Beautiful Names and Attributes of Allah in his movements and actions towards mankind and the universe. In this way, man willingly accepts the responsibility (trust) of freedom and its consequences and uses it to serve the universe and its creatures.

In the twenty-eighth letter¹ he touches briefly on another subject, the realm of visions, intuition and insight, considering them to be symbols of divine dignity. Although he does not provide a precise scientific explanation to justify them, he acknowledges that they involve a perception beyond the realm of rationality that is experienced by those who are granted such abilities. These abilities are given to those who have walked the path to God and enable them to have truthful visions and to articulate foreseen events or alignments of individuals and events. These abilities are among the mercies of Allah, the Exalted, bestowed upon His close servants and those who have attained divine subtleties. They are granted through inspiration and the providential impulse specific to their nature. Even if a dishevelled, dusty man were to swear by Allah, he would be believed.

Righteous visions serve as a window to the unseen, offering solace and tranquillity to those burdened by the demands of life. When a person finds interpretations for his visions and discovers refuge and comfort in them, he becomes convinced that sleep is a divine tradition to nourish the soul from the realm of the spirit and the unseen. This strengthens faith in Allah and supports the renewal of the soul after each little death. It instils in the spirit a love for achievement and excellence, and after each new resurrection one realises that these are gifts from Allah given to every soul to contribute to the flourishing of the earth. Every conscious individual who is aware of this reality leaves a legacy after death.

Conclusion:

Our journey through the writings of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (The Words and the Letters) has allowed us for the first time to grasp the depth of spirituality in his writings, stories, and captivating style of conveying ideas and symbols. He has dedicated himself to preserving the remaining honour of Turkish and Arab Muslims and has fiercely defended everything that is directed against the Islamic world. He has chosen to serve the Qur'an because it is the guiding light that will continue to enlighten future generations as long as there is life on earth. His uniqueness lies in his use of allusion and symbolic language, relying solely on the Qur'an as his methodology.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- Said Nursi is a Sufi who does not belong to the Sufis, but he follows the correct Sunni Sufism, which balances between heart and action, purification that unites soul and body, and combines preaching with striving. He is a dynamic advocate of education.

¹- Same reference, page 444.

- People need stories and parables to contemplate and internalise meanings. Sermons cannot be engraved in the heart if they are not accompanied by the excitement of the story, its symbolism and meaning.

- Said Nursi does not isolate moral values as mere qualities to be possessed, but rather associates them with correct faith and prepares the self to commit to them in conjunction with the pillars of faith and their requirements. He considers the goals of beliefs in strengthening faith and values together, recognising that character cannot be upright without faith, nor can faith be complete without good character.

- Said Nursi is keen on refining individuals by first instilling human values in them through methods of encouragement and exhortation, carrying their hearts between fear and hope, through interpretation and transmission of the Noble Qur'an with indications.

- Said Nursi has spared no effort to establish human values in all human and civilisational dimensions. He aims to create an effective, positive and fruitful human project that serves as a solid foundation for the establishment of an Islamic nation based on the Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings, challenging the secular reality that corrupts the spiritual, committed and ethical inclination of contemporary individuals/Muslims.

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