

Twentieth Century Islamic Thought and the Challenges of Modernity

(A Study of the Perspective of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi)

*Hafiz Abdul Ghani

Abstract

In this article I have discussed the nature of socio-religious challenges that modernity has brought to the contemporary world, its particular impact on the Muslim societies and how the Islamic thinkers suggested to cope with the modern challenges in 20th century. It is a study of the methodology of Said Nursi. Said Nursi (1877-1960) also known as Bediuzzaman is a very prominent Turkish religious intellectual who made untiring struggle to deal with the challenges of modernity in modern Turkey. Modernity is a complex phenomenon which has had manifold effects and side-effects on contemporary societies. The real challenge before the Islamic intellectuals of 20th century was to decide how to deal with modernity especially the newly ascendant mentality (within the Muslim societies) that want to uproot Islam and eradicate its practices in the name of progress and prosperity. For Said Nursi there were two options:

- (1) Lead a political resistance against modern secular forces, or
- (2) Adopt a non-violent way of empowering individuals by strengthening faith.

Said Nursi realized that the second option was the best way to fortify Islamic faith and practices. This study furthermore examines the scope of the application of Said Nursi's methodology across the Muslim world.

Keywords: Self-Empowerment, Faith, Modernity, Secularism, Modern Islamic Thought

Introduction:

The issue of Islam and modernity along with its progeny, difficulties, and issues proceeds with today as the matter amongst the most crucial issues looked by the Islamic thinkers and Muslim community. It has been and keeps on being tended to by various Muslim philosophers and thinkers, covering about the entire extent of the range of Islamic scholarly action since the 20th century. This encounter goes back to the beginnings of the intellectual encounter between the Islamic scholarship and the Western modernity, in the early 19th century. It has attracted figures as different as Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Zia Gokalp, Muhammad Iqbal, and Said Nursi to understand modernity, analyze its impact and the position of Islamic thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. Very few Muslim intellectuals of the twentieth century have been as successful in saving faith and Islamic identity of their people as the Ottoman intellectual, philosopher, theologian, and spiritual figure Said Nursi has been in modern Turkey despite of the several severe challenges brought by modernity and secularism. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in Bitlits province of eastern Turkey in 1877. It is believed that he was a child of great prodigious memory, excellent learning ability and a wonderful vision. He used to wear a simple dress but he always sported a sword/dagger at his waist. He happened to be a brave fighter, skillful horseman but at heart he loved nature and preferred solitude. Nursi was a role model of deep sincerity, extraordinary intelligence and a strong belief.

*Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies, F.C. College, Lahore.

Bediuzzaman was a self-directed, self-made and self-learned person who did not attend institutions as a formal student. He had a great command over traditional and classical Islamic sciences (*Qur'ān*, *Sunnah*, *Fiqh*, Arabic and *Kalam* etc.), and he also learnt and got command over modern Western sciences especially on chemistry, physics, mathematics, astronomy, and history. Muslim identity and the safety of faith of modern Turkish Muslims is the result of Nursi's untiring non-violent struggles. Apart from his socio-political efforts he also wrote some books which are collectively called *Risale-i-Nur* (Epistle of light). In *Risale-i-Nur* he emphasized on preaching and developing belief and inculcating Islamic moral values in the Muslim readers through clearly reasoned arguments, easily understood stories and comparisons between a faiths based life and a life of disbelief. The central theme and main claim of *Risale-i-Nur* is that the holy *Qur'ān* offers a logical, scientific and spiritual explanation of the universe and its existence. The holy *Qur'ān* further explains how and our universe works.¹

Modernity and its Challenges in 20th Century:

The term 'modernity' is very commonly used in social sciences and has become a way of life. It appears to be suitable to define the term 'modernity' and explore its concise meaning. Modernity is "dissolving the traditional understanding of the universe that previously had enabled human beings to explain all their relevant experience".²

According to this definition we see that modernity is a great challenge to traditional understanding of reality and classical way of life. It claims that modernity has dissolved the old traditional and classical institutions of social life. Modernity is a phenomenon that has brought numerous challenges and changes to human life during the 19th and 20th centuries.

Identifies and comprehensively explains the numerous sources of the changing conditions of the present day life. He points out some remarkable and thrilling shifts in human life due to modernity. For instance, he says that due to incredible scientific discoveries (apart from material progress) there is a changing standpoint of the universal reality and the place and position of humans in it. The industrialization is another big leap in the history of human endeavour. It has transformed human knowledge into technology and created many new venues for us and discarded many old ones. New social dynamics and new social class systems have also evolved as a result of the boom in technology.³ New centres of political powers are emerging which develop new human situations and annihilate old ones. The era of industrialization accelerates the entire beat of life and produces new types of corporate power and class struggles. Modern age has also separated a large number of individuals from their hereditary environments, throwing them most of the way over the world into new lives. The history has seen fast and frequently calamitous urban development; a great migration from rural areas to cities. Human life has been further influenced by the frameworks and tools of mass communications. The most assorted individuals and social orders are concealing and binding together. New world scenario includes bureaucratically organized, progressively

¹ Sukran Vahide, *Toward an Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi*, (Retrieved from: <http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/60742.pdf>), 3.

² Smith, Gary Scott, *The Seeds of Secularization. Calvinism, Culture, and Pluralism in America 1870-1915*. (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press.1985), 20.

³ Marshall H. Berman (1940-2013) was an American philosopher and Marxist humanist writer. He was a Distinguished Professor of Political Science at The City College of (New York: source https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Berman)

effective national states, always endeavouring to grow their forces; mass social developments of individuals, people groups challenging their governments and financial rulers, and struggling to increase some control over their lives; bearing and driving every one of these individuals and establishments along, a regularly extending, definitely fluctuating entrepreneur world market.⁴

The above mentioned perspective of the social procedures released by these changes which constitute what we know as 'modernization' is particularly affected by the Western experience of modernity. However the effect of modernity has been felt in Western as well as in almost all other social orders. Particularly in Muslim nations, the twentieth century has turned into a noteworthy field of interruption and dynamism in scholarly social, religious and political life.

Modernity is a direct challenge to the Islamic worldview, which claims the knowledge of reality based upon not reason alone, but also revelation and inspiration. There is also a direct clash between the values that modernity propagates and the values that Islam teaches. We see that modernity has compelled Muslim thinkers to reconstruct their thoughts in the twentieth century.

The devastating experience of post-colonial Western authority in many areas of the Muslim world has additionally had its impact in forming the Islamic paradigm of reason and reality. It has drastically affected both of the self-esteem and of the broader world. Similarly this experience has moulded the way in which contemporary Muslims invoke conventional Islamic values and social frameworks. This was the intellectual test of the Muslim thinkers to set the direction for Islamic thought and lead their societies in twentieth century and onward in the light of classical Islamic (*Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*) sources.

The distinction between the Islamic and the Western encounters of modernity is noteworthy. The present day changes were to a great extent seen by Muslims as outsider and externally enforced, while the same were natural, innate and inseparable for the Western development. That is why the intellectual, religious and social resistance to modern changes was sometimes striking and strong in the Muslim world. Muslim understanding of modernity is also different in another way. The West celebrates modernity and considers it as a triumphant, while the Muslims have never accepted it as a rejoicing experience. Muslims know that all the institutions, values and systems of modernity have been articulated in foreign languages and were premised on materialism and secularism.⁵

This circumstance turned into a wellspring of ceaseless strain in Muslim societies. This situation turned the Islamic discourse into a discussion of crisis in the twentieth century. Consequently the Muslims today live in the middle of innumerable moments of obviously beyond reconciliation tension and threatening differences amongst modernity and Islam. Some of the examples of these differences include the differences of the values taught by religious seminaries and the mosques, and the values that are promoted by the secular public spheres; the laws derived from the fundamental sources

⁴ Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, (New York: 1982), 16.

⁵ Albert Hourani, *How Should We Write the History of the Middle East?* *IJMES*, 23, (1991), pp.125-136 (Albert Habib Hourani CBE (1915-1993) was a British historian, specializing in the Middle East. He was of Lebanese descent).

(*Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*) of Islam, and the laws of the secular governments that everyone must follow; the world view exhibited in the Islamic teachings, classical sources, and conventional writings and the world view presented by modernity and its agents.

The twentieth century Muslim scholars were very much conscious of the philosophical understandings of the impacts of modernity. We observe a continuous intellectual effort by the twentieth century Islamic thought to define the place of the revealed teachings and the position of human intellect and reason in understanding reality and interpreting it. The twentieth century Islamic thought was also under the challenge to explore and chart a meaningful path between a consistently persevering past and a regularly evolving reality and changing future. It is regularly clouded by the way that much modern Muslim thought, in a response to the real or perceived threat of socio-cultural underestimation or demolition, has progressively turned out to be hesitantly Islamic.⁶

Before the 19th and 20th centuries Muslim thinkers there were some noteworthy and critical challenges of modernity. They especially addressed the following ones:

1. Materialism that weakens faith and spirituality
2. Secularism that crushes religious ideology and traditional practices
3. Individualism that compromises unity, solidarity and family ethics
4. Meaninglessness that breeds confusion and disorder

Since modernity did not bring only critical challenges but also some good changes. For Muslim thinkers, therefore, come across to a great dilemma. The real challenge for them is to decide what to do and what not to do. It is easy to say that we should focus only on classical practices and reject modernity but difficult to implement. It is also easy to suggest that we should accommodate modernity moderately but difficult to implement in the real sense of the word. Islamic world, therefore, is at the crossroads. The balance of time is broken, characters changed, values are overturned. Clashes between the ideas and generations are occurring. The twentieth century Islamic thought has been divided into two major blocks (1) Orthodox or classical scholars, and (2) Reformist modern scholars.

In this context, the case of Said Nursi is enormously important and relevant. Nursi's life is divided into two phases (1) before 1925 as called "Old Said", and (2) after 1925 as called "New Said." Old Said was a political activist who made great struggles against communism and secular forces in Turkey. But after the capture of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923 in Turkey, Said Nursi felt that he should change his strategy of saving faith and Islamic practices from newly ascendant secular forces. These new forces were not external enemies but internal challenges from within the nation. His people became the agents of secularism and modernity. He, therefore, shifted his focus from political struggle against external challenges to faith development and Islamic education. He found out that the best way to combat modern challenges was to teach *Qur'ān* to his people and save their faith.

⁶ Roxanne L. Euben, *Premodern, Antimodern or Postmodern? Islamic and Western Critiques of Modernity*, *Review of Politics*, 59, 3 (1997), 429-460. (Roxanne L. Euben is an associate professor of political science at Wellesley College. Her teaching and research focus on the intersection of Western and non-Western political theory—a newly emerging field called comparative political theory- source: <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/people/roxanne-l-euben>)

New Said Nursi resembles Egyptian Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Abdhu (1849-1905) in this regard. He was of the view that the most important means of preserving and strengthening faith of the Muslim people in the modern age was not political struggle but it was the time to turn towards the *Qur'ānic* teachings and its commentary. When he read a verse from the *Qur'ān* which was about belief, he presented and explained it in the light of other verses about faith. The verses that were related to character and moral teachings, he explained the effect in shaping and changing the nation in the light of the principles that are implied in these verses. He also highlighted the illuminating aspects of these verses. He used to examine the verses that were related to social life and elucidated them considering the significance of these standards in the life of his people.⁷

Numerous later scholars in the Islamic world followed the same methodology as suggested by Shaykh Muhammad Abduh to combat modernity and its challenges in 20th century. Explaining the method which Bediuzzaman Said Nursi adopted in his *Risale-i-Nur*, he himself states that the *Risale-i-Nur* is a direct and clear evidence of the holy *Qur'ān*. It is a very strong and effective explanation of the teachings of *Qur'ān*; and awesome, splendid and blaze of *Qur'ānic* miraculousness. It is a spectrum and beam of light of *Qur'ān* as well as a drop from this great ocean. The *Risale-i-Nur* is enlivened by the *Qur'ānic* knowledge of truth and reality, and is an interpretation of its significance continuing from its brightness.⁸

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was born in the same year when Pakistani intellectual and philosopher Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was born, but Said Nursi lived longer. Both Said Nursi and Allama Iqbal have the same approach and attitude towards the Western civilization, its impact and future. None of these great thinkers considered Western civilization as a great civilization for the betterment of humanity. They were not-at-all impressed by the Western civilization's deceptive and glittering exterior. Understanding the deep spirit and materialistic nature of the Western civilization, both of them exposed its real face and displayed its weaknesses. These Islamic intellectual were not against science and materialistic progress but they looked for ways to be saved from its tyranny.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's nation was more vulnerable to be affected by the Western civilization and its secular approach. He expressed his views regarding the real face of the Western civilization and modernity in the following words:

“O you despondent and unrest soul which spreads and disperses unbelief and selfishness! Can a man who is enduring torments and is beset with horrendous disasters in both his soul and his inner-self and his head and his heart, be glad and satisfied through his body being in a shallow, misleading sparkle and riches? Would it be reasonable to say that he is happy? Do you not feel that a person who becomes disappointed and despaired at small matters and his expectation being extinguished concerning some fanciful goals and his being disillusioned at some immaterial business, such a man's sweet hope turned out to be intense for him. The world becomes a prison and bitter place for such a man?”⁹

He further questions the glittering and material success in these words:

⁷ Rashid Rida, *Tarikhu'l-Imam; Akkad, Muhammad Abduh*, (Cairo, 5th edn.), 329.

⁸ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Words*, (Istanbul: Süzler publications 2013), 576-7.

⁹ Said Nursi, *Lem'alar*, (Istanbul: Süzler publications 2013), 111-2.

"Is it possible to say about someone whose body is in a false and fleeting heaven and whose emotions and soul are suffering the torments of Hell that he is satisfied and fully happy? Obviously, you have driven off track from the right direction the miserable humankind along these lines. You have pushed mankind into the torments of Hell in a false paradise."¹⁰

Allama M. Iqbal, Said Nursi and many other Muslim intellectuals predicted that the European civilization would commit suicide because its inner soul is blowing its ultimate breath because of the lack of sustainable foundation. It is based on wrong principles and poor values. European experience and progress is a deceptive mirage which appears as civilization. Regardless of the possibility that not today, it will positively do so tomorrow. The reason is that the foundation pillars of Western civilization have broken because of the lack of control, and it can't bear the lightest challenge. All that is true for capitalism is equally correct and true and correct for communism and socialism. Both of these ideologies are against human being's natural needs. Allah Almighty has made human being His earthly representative but these two ideologies are against this goal. Half of the forecast was acknowledged with the crumple of socialism, and it is hoped that the materialization realization of the other one isn't inaccessible. We see many signs of the start of the fall of western civilization in almost all major areas including political systems, financial institutions, and social values.

Said Nursi's Perspective:

To solve a problem, one must first understand the problem and its nature. Describing, indentifying, and diagnosing the problem(s) of a society is the most fundamental requirement towards its solution. Said Nursi was such a visionary intellectual that he clearly identified the problems and challenges that modernity had brought in 20th century to the Muslim societies in general and the Turkish people in particular. He recognized the modern challenges, studied their causes, analyzed consequences, considered alternative solutions and suggested and adopted the best possible way to combat modernity and its challenges.

Said Nursi realized that the best solution lies in self-empowerment. The most effective way to combat modern challenges and changes is to build the capacity of the individuals in the light of the holy *Qur'ān* so that they could save their faith and religious practices. No political system or institution can save faith and religious identity if the personality of a Muslim remains weaker. Said Nursi, therefore, shifted his paradigm and struggle from socio-political field (Old Said) to socio-religious field (New Said). The main focus of Risale-i-Nur seems to enhance human personality by way of inculcating faith and moral values. The holy *Qur'ān* says that only faith and moral values can save people from the loss and challenges:

"By the time. Verily, man is in loss. Except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to perform all kinds of good deeds, and recommend one another to patience."¹¹

Faith development and Said Nursi:

Said Nursi had drenched himself in the *Qur'ān* after 1925, investigating for a suitable way to apply and relate the *Qur'ānic* facts and truths to the present day life. During his exile in a mountainous small village Barla, he realized that the *Qur'ān* and its

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Al-Qur'ān, Al-Asr:1-3

truths were under the direct attack of modernity and its agents; therefore he began to write *Risale-i-Nur* highlighting and exhibiting the *Qur'ānic* teaching, facts and truths in a modern and rational way. In *Risale-i-Nur* Said Nursi opened up an immediate way to deal with reality and knowledge of Allah. He described this methodology as the highway of the *Qur'ān* and method of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) through the 'heritage of Prophethood,' which develops 'true and certain faith.' He didn't ascribe the works to himself, but said they continued from the *Qur'ān* itself, and were 'rays sparkling out of from Quran's truths.'

Said Nur gave no importance to political efforts in the new circumstances. He had been a political activist in the past like some other Muslim scholars who suffered from the pathetic situation of Muslim world, but his new struggle was to attach Muslims to the Holy *Qur'ān* and develop belief in them. He was of the view that political activity in Islam was to strengthen religious beliefs and ethical values but now in the meaning, in which politics is being used, is to do the opposite of what is meant.

The distinctive style of the holy *Qur'ān* is that it welcomes and invites its follower to reflect and ponder upon the universe and deeply think about the cosmological reality. Said Nursi follows the same strategy and brings evidence and examples for the reality of faith. He considers the whole universal phenomenon like a book, and looks at the universe in the way the *Qur'ān* does. He reads the universe like a book and learns of the Divine Attributes and other truths of faith.

The aim of the book of nature is to explain and elaborate its Creator and Author (Allah). All creatures in the universe are the signs and evidences to their Master and Creator. In this way and along these lines, a vital component of *Risale-i-Nur* is introspection or reflection. *Risale-i-Nur* reads universe like a book keeping in mind the end goal to increment in the knowledge and understanding of Its Master (Allah) and to develop 'genuine, certain and true faith' in every one of the realities of faith.

Faith, to Said Nursi is the first thing to be developed for the true preparation of a strong and fulfilling life. Faith is the language of all of our faculties- body, mind, heart and soul. It is an expression of the hope that goes beyond the current situations and conscious mind. The greatest attainment one can have in life is faith, because faith keeps us focused and hopeful and saves us from undergoing either emotional or intellectual infidelity. It keeps us calm, stable and live with dignity and strength at the time of highly critical crises. Faith enables the faithful to meet challenges and helps him save his future. Faith in *Risale-i-Nur* is the real source of peace, power and happiness. Faith is "trust and loyalty to God". Faith is a sacred, deep, emotionally involved kind of trust. It is the trust in something from the core of the whole being (body, mind, heart, and soul). Faith is the innate and integral part of our being. It drives us to search for meaning, purpose, greatness, and truth. It is an inner certitude that inspires to make great efforts for higher causes.

The individuals who are steadfast lead favored, glad and effective lives, in spite of the different hardships experienced along the way. The individuals who don't have faith in Allah are typically miserable, hopeless and show inclined. Life for them resembles an unsolved secret loaded with question, perplexity, stress and a general addressing of their own existence and being. Thus, the skeptics have an absence of respect and less comprehension of the esteem and motivation behind their lives.

Said Nursi elaborates through stories the distinction between the life and attitude of a believer and of a non-believer. The story of a selfish man and a godly man stated in the second Word beautifully compares the benefits and bounties of faith and the problems and sorrows of disbelief.

The story starts thus that once upon a time, two men went on a voyage for both joy and business. One set off in a narrow minded, ominous course, and the other on a virtuous, auspicious way. Since the narrow minded man was proud, egotistical, and skeptical, he wound up in what appeared to him to be a most evil nation because of his cynicism. He glanced around and wherever observed the frail and the tragic regretting in the grip of fearsome harassing despots, sobbing at their annihilation. He saw the same intolerable, agonizing circumstance in every one of the spots he voyaged. The entire nation went up against the type of a place of grieving. Aside from getting to be plainly flushed, he could discover no chance to get of not seeing this horrifying and solemn circumstance. For everybody appeared to him to be a foe and outside. And surrounding, he saw frightful cadavers and despondent, sobbing vagrants. His still, small voice was in a condition of torment.¹²

Having highlighted the problems of disbelief, Said Nursi states the benefits and rewards of faithful life in these words:

“The other man was genuine, passionate, devout, reasonable, fair-minded, and with fine ethics so the nation he came to was most amazing in his view. This great man saw all inclusive celebrating in the land he had entered. Wherever was a cheerful celebration, a place for the recognition of God flooding with bliss and joy; everybody appeared to him a companion and connection. All through the nation he saw the happy festivals of a general release from obligations joined by cries of good wishes and much obliged. He likewise heard the sound of a drum and band for the enrollment of warriors with glad calls of "God is Most Great!" and "There is no god but God!"¹³

And the end of the story Bediuzzaman Said Nursi compares the representation of belief and disbelief in the following way:

“O my soul! Know that the first man represents an unbeliever, or someone depraved and heedless. In his view the world is a house of universal mourning. All living creature are orphans weeping at the blows of death and separation...With respect to the next man, he is an adherent and faithful. He perceives and asserts Almighty Allah. In his view this world is a habitation where the Names of the All-Merciful One are continually chanted and recited, {this world is} a place of guideline for man and the other creatures, and a field of examination for man and jinn... That is to state, faith in Allah bears the seed of what is as a result a Tuba-Tree of Paradise, while unbelief conceals the seed of a Zakkum-Tree of Hell. That implies that salvation and security are just to be found in Islam and faith. We must persistently say and pray, “Praise be to God for the religion of Islam and perfect belief.”¹⁴

At the time of crisis, challenges, and defeat when one may lose everything, one must save his faith. It is only faith that can help the faithful to regain his lost position in past. The story in the second Word describes that our paradigm is strongly affected by our faith. Said Nursi is of the view that the power of faith is the real power of making

¹² Said Nursi, *The Words*, (Istanbul: Süzler Publications, 2013), 27.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ *Words*, 28.

things possible. Faith is not fanciful; it is scientific, logical, and practical. It is not belief without proof, but yes a trust without reservation. Perhaps our faith cannot move mountains. But what's to stop us from climbing them? Enthusiasm is nothing; it comes and goes. But if one believes, then miracles occur. Life is full of obstacles and challenges. We cannot choose most of our circumstances but we can choose to have faith. Faith provides power to face adversities and serves as a bulwark against undesirable reactions of despair and hopelessness.

Describing the difference between the Risale-i-Nur and the writings and poetry of other scholars, Said Nursi explains:

“In their time, there was no attack on the fundamentals of belief and the pillars of Islam were not being shaken. Now, however, there is a severe and concerted attack on those fundamentals. Most of that poetry and those scholarly works addressed particular believers and individuals; they were not repulsing the awesome assaults of this age.”¹⁵

The Risale-I-Nur secures the essentials and fundamentals of faith. It helps through its numerous splendid evidences in illustrating, giving, and safeguarding faith, and sparing it from questions and doubts.

“The poetic works of the saints says: “Become a saint, then you will see! Rise in spiritual rank, and look! Receive the lights and effulgence!” The Risale-i-Nur, however, says: “Whosoever you are, you have only to open your eyes and behold reality and save your belief, the sky to eternal happiness.”¹⁶

In this way Said Nursi found the solution of the problems of Muslim Ummah in the renewal and recharging of faith in the light of *Qur'ān*, because a faithful does not find himself in the state of disappointment even in the worst moments of his life. A faithful believes that every problem can be solved and every halt can be settled with the help of the power of faith. A man of faith can only overcome disappointment and hopelessness. For this very reason, it seldom happens that a truly faithful person suffers from the acute reactions of desperation like suicide, nervous breakdown or psychic illness which are the results of dissatisfaction and pessimism.

Skepticism is a brainchild of modern philosophy and atheism. Said Nursi warns us to be careful in this regard by saying that the instinctual soul, lust, want, and Satan exercise awesome impact over man. Keeping in mind the end goal to harm his faith, they are a significant part of the time ready to exploit his carelessness and negligence to deceive him with their wiles. In this manner these enemies stifle the light of faith with questions and vulnerability. Likewise man is inclined to act and express words which obviously contradict the Shari'a, and which in the perspective of some religious specialists are no less than unbelief. Therefore, there is a need to recharge faith constantly, consistently, every hour, every day.¹⁷

Said Nursi's methodology and strategy was to analyze and compare the impacts of faith and unbelief. The purpose was to indicate logically, legitimately and empirically that in not only is it conceivable, by embracing the strategies of the *Qur'ān*, to demonstrate every one of the realities of faith, for example, God's presence and solidarity, prophethood, and real restoration in next life, but also that these certainties are the main sound clarification of existence, man and the universe.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Said Nursi, *Lights of Reality*, (Istanbul: Süzler Publications 2014), 159-60.

¹⁷ *Lights of Reality*, 120.

Through the Risale-i-Nur Said Nursi tried his level best to save and revitalize the Islamic faith and identity in Turkey at the time when there was a rapid social change. Through Risale-i-Nur Said Nursi assumed a noteworthy part in preserving the Islamic legacy and heritage in respect of faith and practices. Since the time of its composing the role of Risale-i-Nur has continued to expand in significance till date. Further to this, his work is extraordinarily fitted to address Muslims as well as all humankind for many reasons. For example it is composed as per modern man's mindset that whether Muslim or not has been profoundly pervaded by materialist philosophy. Risale-i-Nur particularly answers all sort of inquiries, questions, confusions and disarrays that modernity causes. It also answers all 'why type questions' that capture the secular mind of the modern man. At the point when his strategy is taken after, a man accomplishes a true faith. This strong faith will be a sound and sufficiently firm way to withstand any questions that may arise even with the unpretentious assaults of atheism, realism, naturalism, and secularism. Said Nursi was sent to banish by Mustafa Kemal for a long time yet these years saw the written work of the Risale-I-Nur, which quietly spread and flourished. Risale-i-Nur was a successful and the most helpful way to combat any endeavor that wanted to remove Islam and instill the unbelief and materialistic philosophy in the Muslim individuals of Turkey.

Zubeyir Gunduzalp, one of Nursi's students, expressed the challenges to faith in the modern age in these words:

"This century, the enemies of religion and Islam made the weakening of the bases of belief and the plan to destroy them the first matter in their programmes. Particularly this last twenty five years, the conspiracies against the pillars of belief under various disguise and in dissembling fashion in a way hitherto unseen in history, have been quite dreadful; they have been carried out in most destructive fashion...It is because of this that the most important matter now is to strengthen belief by transforming it from imitative belief into certain belief; it is to reinforce belief, to save it." ¹⁸

The need of faith saving and faith development in the modern era is also highlighted in the following extract from Bediuzzaman said Nursi:

"I reckon that if people of note like Shaykh Abdul Qadir Geylani and Imam-I Rabbani Shaykh Ahmad Sirhandi were alive now, would expend all their efforts on the strengthening of the truths of belief and the tenants of Islam." ¹⁹

To Said Nursi faith is more important than any other religious teaching or practice even spirituality is less than belief. Faith is the key to our profound sense of being. Nursi prefers the way of the *Qur'an* over customary Sufism. He explains the difference between the Risale-I-Nur and the Sufi tradition. Said Nursi says that reading the Risale-I-Nur helps save faith, whereas the Sufism and Sufi Tareeqas develop sainthood. It is more vital and more praiseworthy to protect one's faith than to develop ten adherents to the rank of sainthood. ²⁰

In traditional sufism the individual was considered as a little universe , and in this manner the aphorism 'know thyself' was the premise of gnosis. Said Nursi has a fascinating enunciation of this principle, in that every individual conveys as internal world inside the bigger world. In addition everybody has his own huge world in this

¹⁸ Zubeyir Gunduzalp, *Afterwordj*, i-ii.

¹⁹ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters*, (Istanbul: S  zler Publications 2014), 20.

²⁰ Uhan Yildiz, "*The Search in the Transitional Period (1924-1950) for a Religious Educational Model*", 5th International Symposium on Bediuzzaman (Istanbul: S  zler publications, 2002).

world. Basically, there are universes one inside the other to the quantity of people. In any case, the mainstay of everybody's private world is his own life.

"Moreover everyone has his own vast world in this world. Simply, there are worlds one within the other to the number of human beings. But the pillar of everyone's private world is his own life."²¹

Moral development and Said Nursi:

Belief of a person should be internalized and manifest in his everyday life. Belief without practice demonstrates a false claim and a pseudo matter. It is because of this purpose that whenever the *Qur'ān* referees the man of belief, it constantly refers to righteousness of deeds as an essential requirement of belief. The upright are not just the individuals who have a verbal claim, but rather those whose claims are appropriately upheld by deeds and are demonstrated in their actions.

The essential point of Risale-I-Nur is to influence the reader to acknowledge himself and his position in the world and thus it doesn't come in the shape a deliberate religious philosophy. Consequently, the Risale-I-Nur contains no ethical hypothesis in the strict sense. Nonetheless, being a commentary of the *Qur'ānic* teachings regarding faith and ethos it contains all the components required for the development of the rational vision of *Qur'ānic* moral teachings.

Morals are traditionally classified into two types (1) Normative ethics, and (2) Meta Ethics. The first one is much more related to the rules and regulations of proper conduct. For example 'what and how should we do that what we do?' Meta-ethics on the other hand, are more concerned with appropriateness of our conduct. For example 'why should we do that which we do?' Thus ethical philosophy is not worried about how individuals in reality act, but with how they should act. When we talk about Said Nursi's ethical views we find that his theory of morality depends on the *Qur'ānic* teachings and displays a genuine *Qur'ānic* perspective. The Risale-i-Nur develops its philosophy of moral teachings with reference to the cosmic reality as explained in the Holy *Qur'ān*.

It is obvious that the Enlightenment movement of giving a logical and rational vindication of good morals has failed in breaking its traditional association with the Divine. The contemporary world revoked the idea of a divine law-provider yet endeavored to hold the plan of ethical quality, not understanding that, "In throwing God away, they have additionally abrogated the states of seriousness for moral good and bad too. The abrogating pattern since the seventeenth century has been to search for a premise of profound quality autonomously of the significance of human presence. Today's philosophers have debated in various ways that ethical quality ought to be based in reason. At the end of the day man has the ability to find the substance of ethical quality all alone using reason without the assistance of the divine revelation.

By following the footprints and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) we can transform our everyday acts into the acts of worship. Said Nursi keeps up that following the Prophet (PBUH) and he believes that in the long run it is changed into remembrance of the divine presence in our world. Along these lines, our everyday acts and practices become the acts of worship."²²

²¹ Said Nur, *A Guide for Youth* (Istanbul: Yeni Asia 1991), 60.

²² Said Nursi, *The Flashes* (Istanbul: Yeni Asia 2006), 81.

Said Nursi encourages Muslims to recognize their inside foes and sicknesses and cure them by replacing them with moral and righteous deeds. He writes:

“Our enemies are ignorance, poverty, and conflict. We shall wage jihad against three enemies with the weapons of industry, learning, and unity.”²³

While repeating this matter Bediuzzaman sometimes substitutes the words ‘science and knowledge’ for ‘learning’, and ‘poverty and need’ for ‘indigence’, and ‘brotherhood’ for ‘unity’, and ‘dissension and unrest’ for ‘conflict’, and ‘malice and hatred’ for ‘enmity’, and ‘labour’ for ‘science and industry’.

Conclusion:

Said Nursi (1877-1960) made an awesome battle for the general population of Turkey to save their faith and Islamic identity and character. He was a standout amongst the most significant scholars having charge over the customary Islamic established sciences as well as concentrated current science. He had earned the title of Bediuzzaman (wonder of the age), in his childhood on the premise of his exceptional learning capacity. He stayed extremely dynamic political lobbyist until the point when the years following the WWI. His efforts for the cause of Islam were dynamic and even drove a volunteer regiment against the assaulting Russians in eastern Turkey in 1914. Two simultaneous transformations happened together. The history saw the transition from Ottoman Empire to republic in Turkey likewise it observed the change in the life of Said Nursi. This transformation is known as the transition from the 'Old Said' to the 'New Said'. The 'New Said' shifted his efforts from political and public life to education, thought, contemplation, examination, and supplication. He set himself up for what was required now was a clash of a distinctive sort.

Bediuzzaman comprehended a basic reason for the decrease of the Islamic world to be the debilitating of the very foundation of faith. What was required was to use all endeavors to reproduce the building of Islam from its establishments, faith, conviction and to reply at that level those assaults and attacks with a ‘peaceful jihad’ or ‘jihad-e-Manavi.’

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi accurately distinguished that one of the real reasons of the Islamic world was the numbness of the lessons of the Holy *Qur’ān* and the crippling of the foundation of faith. This debilitating, together with the extraordinary attacks on those pillars of faith in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, put by materialists, agnostics, atheists and others for the sake of science and progress, drove him to understand that the pressing and superseding need was to fortify, and even to secure people’s faith. What was required was to endeavor every single conceivable push to recreate the working of Islam from its foundation of faith. It was likewise the need of great importance to answer at that level those attacks and assaults with a ‘tranquil jihad.’

His technique and procedure to combat the difficulties and challenges of morality, secularism, and skepticism is similarly applicable at all parts of the Muslim world. We should look for direction and light from his knowledge in his work known as ‘Risale-I-Nur.’

²³ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Divan-i-Herb-i-Orfi* (Istanbul: Sûzler 2004), 57.