

The Relevance of Shaykh Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Unique approach to Holy Quran

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Abstract:

Holy Quran is such a miraculous book, which has been extirpating and dominating the evil forces and negative aspects of the societies all the time. Whenever disbelievers have tried to harm Islam and enforce their despotic laws, the word of Allah has defeated and answered them through the selected personalities whom Allah has chosen for the holy mission or cause. Shaykh Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is one of those great reformers of 20th century whose unstopped efforts and valuable contribution to the path of Islam is an example of bravery for the noble cause. He used scientific and psychological way according to the needs and requirements of present times. His vision was so broad and his mission was to re-construct the Islamic ideologies by words and deeds.

The numerous Ayaat of Quran, which invites man to observe the universe and reflect on the divine activity within it. Ustad followed the similar method to provide the proofs and explanations for the truths of belief. He took universe as a book and observed it the way Quran has demanded. Like to read it for the purpose of percipience and to learn the divine names and attributes and other truths and realities related to firm belief. The very purpose of this book is to describe its author and get introduced to Him that leads to His signs and evidences. He uses Quranic methodology of addressing every one's intellect and all the faculties of human. Paper consists:

- 1) Ustad Nursi's Contemplation of signs of Allah.
- 2) Mission for the welfare of all humanity.
- 3) The style and approach of Ustad to present the Quran.
- 4) Lesson of Forbearance in the way of preaching.
- 5) Relevance with present times and Conclusion.

In the name of Allah most gracious most compassionate.

The Holy message of Quran for All:

The universal message of the Quran, and that of its advantages and characteristics are not limited to specific group of people, race, age or place but guidance to all humankind, which

came through the last Messenger of Allah as Quran, says: *“And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a Warner. But most of the people do not know.”*(Al Saba: 28)

Quran contains such a complete code of human life that its teachings and instructions of socio –ethical nature may be acceptable to the entire humanity. As a matter of fact Quran makes no discrimination between one man and the other on the basis of caste, color, creed and race. Because according to Quran a person gains favour in the eyes of Allah only due to his piety and virtue. Quran proclaims that all mankind is offspring of the same father and mother –Adam and Eve. This concept of a common factor among all the members of human family based on the unity of origin creates true inner feelings of human brotherhood among all the people of the world without any discrimination of religion, group, and creed.

Quran is not a book of science or history nor does it claim to be so, it is something beyond this limitation, but it declares itself to be a guidebook for the people of the whole world. Its contents may not contradict science rather science is taking its firm concepts as a base for research and later acknowledges and accepts it, because this is based on human wisdom and intellect.

Since Quran declares, itself to be a book of guidance for the entire humanity and several verses are addressed to the people in general shows the universality of the Quranic message. The teachings of Quran are vast, lucid and comprehensive. It teaches us patience, perseverance and the merits of blessings of forgiveness. It also stresses and favours the welfare of the women and gives priority to charity as well as being of poor and orphan.

The Quran does permit a man to fight back when he is attacked or his property or belongings being grabbed or seized, but he should transgress the limits. He can also fight to establish peace and to maintain law and order in the society or to stop aggression and oppression on the weak and poor people. Quran ensures the sanctity and safety of human life and prohibits killing under pain or severe punishment. Quran says, *“Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.”*(Al Imran: 32)

A brief overview of Risale-Nur:

Risale-Nur is a thematic tafseer (Islamic exegeses on the Quran by Said Nursi, but this commentary does not keep to the order of ayah. A tafseer, that deals with the doubts surrounding the basic doctrines of Islam. This collection includes 14 books. the primary purpose of Risale-Nur is to bring about religious revival in Turkey. It also includes reflections and details about Said Nursi’s own life and interpretations. These reflections and details help the reader to learn how to practice everyday activities according to Quran norms and install Quran to a person’s alternating life situations and emotions. Risale-Nur is known as thafseer-e- manavi or a commentary which expounds the meaning of Quranic truth. the verse is mostly explicated in

Risale-Nur are those especially concerned with the truth of belief such as divine names and attributes and divine activity in the universe, the divine exercise of oneness, resurrection, prophet hood, divine determining of destiny and man's duties and worships. Said Nursi explains how the Quran addresses all men in every age in accordance with their level of understanding and development. It has a face that looks to each age, the face Quran. And what Islam is he said "like the inextinguishable sun which will always shine and give light".

Basic method of Said Nursi:

Quran invites man to observe the universe and reflect on the divine activity within it . Making this fundamental method Nursi provides proofs for the truth of belief. He takes universe as a book which describes its author and maker that becomes the evidence and sign of its creator. The concept of the creator of the universe is explained by him with the simple example of relating the universe to a book and that ultimately leads to think about its creator. Nursi highlights the fundamentals of Islam, oneness and unity. Most importantly the truth and requirements of belief are proved so that even unbelievers can see their necessity for that. Another aspect of Risale-Nur is the face of Quran that looks to the age , wisdom and The purpose of everything is discussed under this which has been considered according to the divine names of Allah. Said Nursi dealt as well as approached to many mysteries of religion. Such as bodily resurrection , divine determining and man's will , constant activity of universe and motion of particles etc .His observation on the signs of Allah through nature: Allah has created everything with a purpose , he has entrusted a person with some duties and obligations in this short-term world just to examine him. He has bestowed upon a person various capabilities in order to make his attributes, signs and symbols discovered and finally be thankful to his creator. His signs are widespread all over this universe that where ever he turns his sight he will find the matchless models and examples of creation.

Therefore Said Nursi clearly seems to be supporting and endorsing the concept that "the highest aim of humanity is to complete their faith with knowledge and love of Allah". As he further states be certain of this, that the highest aim of creation and its most important result are firm belief in Allah. The most exalted rank in humanity and its highest degree are the knowledge of Allah contained within belief in Allah. The most radiant happiness and sweetest bounty for Jinn and human beings are the love of Allah contained within the knowledge of Allah. The pure joy for the human spirit and the sheerest delight for man's heart are the rapture of the spirit contained within the love of Allah.

Indeed all true happiness, pure joy, sweet bounties and untroubled pleasure lie in the knowledge of Allah and love for him. This cannot exist without them..The purpose, decision and foresight behind the creation of the whole universe and human beings could be only known better through the divine revelation which educates and enriches us about the hidden secrets of the mysterious universe where man can never reach by his own. Said Nursi declares human kind as responsible agent of Allah in support of a quranic verse: "*Indeed we offered the trust to the*

heavens and earth and the mountains and they declined to bear it and feared it , but man undertook to bear it. Indeed he was unjust and ignorant” (Alahzab:72).

The central theme of Risale-Nur emerges from the most beautiful names of Allah and further the objective behind the creation of man and the role of humans on the earth. Holy Quran in several places talks about the creation signifying the importance of relationship between humanity and creator, pondering over that leads to the majestic creation of the universe. One of such examples, which has been described in Quran when Almighty is appearing before a great gathering of Angels to announce that He is going to place a vicegerent in the earth Quran says: *“And (mention O Muhammad) when your lord said to the angles, indeed I will make upon the earth a successive authority”*.(Al Baqarah:30). This verse clearly unfolds the man’s creation i.e. to act as vicegerents of Allah on earth. This means that a person has been entrusted with some authorization and control for a particular period of time. But at the same time he is not a master or an owner, his authority is not personal but bestowed .so he has to carry out the orders of his Master i.e. Allah. So he is supposed to be an obedient and sincere to his Lord not rebellious. He has been given the knowledge from Allah, symbolized by the teaching of Adam at the time of creation as in Quran:” *He taught Adam the names, all of them”*.

According to Said Nursi knowledge of the names is the “greatest miracle in the question of supreme vicegerency”. The unique process of human creation and being access to the divine knowledge of Allah’s nature ,human beings were selected for the role of the responsible being on earth, in the context of these verses and favors of Allah for His best creation .Said Nursi’s approach and understanding towards this process creates an unforgettable value and respect for all human beings rather every living being on this earth and that overwhelms the minds with love ,peace ,sympathy, care and sense of belongingness for all. Thus for the noble cause Said Nursi has dedicated his whole life overflowing with affection and ardor (eagerness) for the sake of Islam, in a vast and systematic activism based on sound reasoning under the shade of Holy Quran and prophetic example.

Said Nursi had to deal with the situations very differently and wisely, were degradation of belief among the people in his society had become very common. He knew that modern unbelief originated from science and philosophy and not from ignorance as was the case in past. Then he has focused on the nature which he believed to be among the divine signs from Allah. Makes it clear that science and religion can’t be two contrary and discrepant things, rather they are two expressions of the same truth. He made a beautiful coordination between two sayings that “Minds should be enlightened with sciences, while hearts need to be illumined by religion”.

Mission for the welfare of all humanity:

Sayid Nursi was inspired with faith movement that played a key role in the revival of Islam in Turkey and now millions of followers worldwide. Although writing was not his profession but he wrote a marvelous work namely Risale Nur keeping in view that discord of belief in the society at that time. We can very well understand the mentality of his period while

studying Risale Nur. Also it comprises the clear reflections and the details of Sayed Nursi's venturesome life. The great benefit of this is, it helps reader to deal with their normal life situations and matters according to the norms of Holy Quran.

Although Said Nursi's life was full of adventures and challenges and he has accepted that the great patience and perseverance. He really proved to be a Nur (light of knowledge and wisdom) for that period of darkness. The life full of ordeals, he was oppressed, imprisoned, exiled, and tortured for raising voices against materialists and atheistic trends of ideology. But his steadfastness and patience dominated and defeated the inhuman and evil forces against him. He tried to explain the reality of Islam to the modern minds of every level of understanding. As he focuses mainly on the existence and unity of Allah, the resurrection, divine scriptures primarily including the Quran, invisible domain of existence, divine destiny and goodwill of humanity. Moreover, worship, justice in human life also humanity's status and obligation among the other creations of Allah. **The mission of Said Nursi** was quiet clear i.e. to remove from the people's minds and hearts the accumulated defilement of faults beliefs and conceptions and their frigidity towards the Islamic way of life which is proposed by Allah along with this to purify and enlighten them both intellectually and spiritually. His exciting writing with serious iteration are matchless that incites a reader to think about the universe and its creator which ultimately leads to true belief on Allah. Likewise he appealed the feelings and aims to express his idea into the hearts of people so as to awaken in them the light of belief and assuredness. He reiterated the very fundamental aspect of Islam by providing several proofs for the existence and oneness of Allah in his writings.

The style and Approach of Said Nursi to Present the Quran:

The Quran declares by saying, *"If all trees on earth were to become pens and all the seas ink, if they were to write the words of Almighty Allah, they would never finish them."*

(Luqman: 27) In fact that Quran possesses its own magnificence, sacred glory and honor which are the sources of its sublime and glorious miraculousness. Said Nursi has very judiciously selected the style and systematic process that he first recognizes the problem then provides logical as well as scientific analyses respectively keeping in view the mental level and understanding of the modern man. Therefore he provides the solutions and the treatments according to the present requirements which are very relevant and applicable. His method is based on logics and proofs, to support his arguments and statements made by him. This is actually the style and technique of Quran that invites every human to explore the realities which has now started to disperse. "These obstacles include I European's ignorance II) their barbarity at that time III) their bigotry. Nursi mentions these three obstacles has been removed by virtues of knowledge and civilization". While IV and V obstacles were "domination of clergies and European's blind obedience towards them" which also has started to dispel due to "idea of freedom and desire to serve for truth" VI and VII are related to Muslims are "despotism and degeneracy that arouse from opposing the Sharia". This despotic power in an individual is

declining that signifies the fearful despotism of large groups will also decline as he admitted. Notwithstanding the VIII obstacle is the contradiction between science and outer meaning of Islam, which according to Ustad has also been destroyed. Because the basic factor for this contradiction was the unawareness of inner meanings of Quranic verses which is revealing after pondering over them and the researchers done on its contents and finally science shows its corroboration for its being reality. He firmly believed that future of mankind is Islam and it will definitely prevail. He further proves this logically by quoting that “Eight serious obstacles prevented the truths of Islam completely overwhelming the past” (Ibid, 32-35) .

Hope of Said Nursi:

He further states that “we Muslims are the students of Quran, follow proof, we approach the truths of beliefs, through reason, thoughts and our hearts. We don’t abandon proofs in favor of blind obedience and imitation of clergy like some adherents of other religions. Therefore in future when reason, science and technology prevail certainly that will be time the Quran will gain ascendancy, which relies on rational proves and invites the reason to confirm its pronounce –merits” (Nursi, the Damascus Sermon, 32)

Said Nursi by his universal vision has eluded long before and even proved in Risale Nur that when a person understands the inner meanings of Quranic verses he will be surprised to see their coordination and harmony, even there are treasures and truths in Quran which science is yet to discover. So Said Nursi is convinced that all the transitory obstacles will diminish and vanish off the earth by means of science, knowledge and by virtues of civilization. Moreover he proves the supremacy of Islam by his scientific style saying that “the most indisputable virtue that which even its enemies could not help themselves to testify and affirm (Nursi, the Damascus Sermon, 34,35) . In this regard he gives example of to eminent European philosopher Carlyle and Price Bismarck who accepted the supremacy of Islam. It is now clear that his style was so lucid and relevant that it invokes the reader to observe the creation of Allah and by applying the approach non believers cannot deny the rational points made by Quran. He taught us lesson by his way of presenting the Quran that the method one takes for propagating the word of Allah should be very clear, logical and natural. Besides this the element of optimism is striking and noticeable in him. He always creates a hope and positivism among the readers which ultimately bears the best fruits and leads the person to the success. As Quran itself against disappointment and pessimism while saying: *“Say O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by saying] do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed Allah forgives all sins. Indeed it is He who is the forgiving, the Merciful”* (Al zumar:53)

It seems the Ustad Nursi has taken the very ideas and allocated his effective style and approach for his effective style and approach for the explication and apprising of the holy message of Allah from Quran itself. And this in enough for a person to acknowledge his deep understanding and insight of Quran and the guided ways of our prophet can be well understood

from his sobriety and calm personality. Therefore this is the reason that his approach and treatment with the Quran seems to be appropriate and effective and appealing to all the humans.

He discusses the human issues, their problems and also suggests the relevant solutions in the light of Quran and Hadith. In this way his approach becomes near to psychological nature i.e. problem solving attitude which is the optimum procedure for the betterment and welfare of a society. As Allah declares in Quran: ***“Indeed this Quran guides to that which is most suitable and gives good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward”*** (Al Isra 9). Holy Quran is the divine gift to address and solve all the global problems. The great teaching of this Book are having the mithridatic (panacea) effect on all human being even degraded and miserable societies who can turn into better possible regions by following the directives of the book after having firm belief on the oneness of Allah and acceptance of prophet as his last messenger. The prosperity of such followers is guaranteed. As Allah says : ***“ whoever does righteousness whether male or female, while he is a believer, we will surely cause him to live a good life and we will surely give them their reward [in the hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.”*** (An Nahl :97)

Lesson of Forbearance in the way of preaching:

The whole universe has witnessed the embodiment of compassion, sympathy, love and mercy that Allah (S.W) proclaiming in Quran: ***“And we have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to the worlds.”***(Al Ambia: 107) Prophet (SAW) has established an example during his life span he showed the endless mercy and forgiveness to all. Even his deadliest enemies were forgiven by him. These different manifestations of mercy guide us to good manners which the prophet (SAW) was solely sent to perfect. As Quran declares the same by saying: ***“And indeed, you are of a great moral character”*** (Al Qalam: 4). Thus we can figure out from this all encompassing meaning that Islam is the religion of mercy and prophet (SAW) is the role model for all the teachers and preachers of Islam till the end of this world. No better example than Him has been witnessed nor can be in future.

Ustad Nursi was following the same path of patience and taking lessons and pieces of advice from the life of the Last Messenger. If we take a look/ overview of Ustad’s era, we found that it was the age of darkness, tyranny and atheism in Turkey. In fact Turks witnessed hard times during the previous century and suffered a lot. In such a dark stage, Ustad Nursi was born, his life was full of challenges and ordeals. But how he overcame all such conditions and situations was his firm belief in Allah and right guidance and knowledge of Islam. He can be regarded as an unprecedented example of steadfastness, patience and endurance which are the important requirements for every preacher of Islam and a key to his success. To spread the morality of the Quran was among his priorities. As he once said in his words “patience and endurance to put a stop to anarchy and maintain public order are necessary, with all sincerity in the service of the faith. I am therefore perfectly content to sacrifice my repute to that end” (52)

Emotions like abhorrence and antagonism can be well defeated by love and affection in the initial stage if not later it can take the shape of disturbance, chaos and violence which is the grave side of the matter. Ustad Nursi has shown the great importance of human life that every possible sacrifice should be made to save the life of a single person otherwise this will be considered as great cruelty. He has fetched this idea from Quran as mentioned: *“Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one, it is as if he had saved mankind entirely”*. (Al- Maidah: 32) In his 16th letter Ustad Nursi shows the relation between trust in Allah and patience and forbearance in the face of ill treatment and other forms of evils (Nursi 1997:87). In the process of his mission, he never complained of boredom and he urged his students to stick to steadfastness and perseverance. He was having the unique positive approach by which he can see the clear signs that Islam will prevail. His undefeatable belief reveals to him the victory of Islam. He was having this attitude at that time, when Muslims have lost every hope that Islam will rise. In that tough time of pessimism and darkness he proved to be the light of hope and example of steadfastness. He was such a sincere and devoted to his mission that he never accepted the evil things and resisted against mischief. He was not among the one who accepted defeat but among those who stood up, strove and sacrificed his life for the sake of teachings of Quran. As his life and activities reminds us that verses of Quran, As Allah says: “O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful. (Al Imran: 200).

Relevance in the Present Times:

The 20th century great Muslim revivalist believed that Muslims should work to established peace and security because this responsibility is a command from Allah that believers use all potentialities and means to help spread the way of life proposed by Allah in Holy Quran. And this is a fact that revival of the Islamic world even in present times depends upon the unification as Allah has mentioned “ And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided (Al-Imran: 103)

Ustad Nursi has explained the worst effect of division and disaccord among Muslims as he says: “If a Muslim departs from Muslim community and turns from religion and becomes an anarchist has a poisonous effect on society” (Word 54). Because the real Muslim is one who is true believer and never supports anarchy and wickedness. To achieve the target he invoked every Muslim to take it their obligation to relate the beauties of religion and truths of Quran. And religious morality can bring peace to family and social life and how to fight violence and disturbance; he suggested patience, endurance which are the attributes of true believers. These valuable expressions and words full of wisdom by Ustad Nursi are equally relevant in the present times. So, there is a need of special consideration to the every statement made by this venerated personality and fetching pearls of wisdom from them which he contributed in the reflection of Quran. It is because he has dedicated his entire life for the welfare of the society, full of love brotherhood and wisdom based on the values of Quran. He used his capability and talents

according to the need of time and society he lived. First he played an excellent role of a student then a great knowledgeable scholar, then a friendly and positive teacher and when it was time of warfare he defended his native land with his full energy and strategy. His sincere words and unconditioned deeds reflect his deep faith, complete trust and truthfulness. This is the reason for the relevance of his method of approaching and explaining Quran, which is still extant.

Also what makes his ideology and approach more relevant to present times is his positive and optimistic views, balanced ideas about education and learning and his sincerity towards the service of Islam and teaching of Quran, to raise the word of Allah where it deserves to be. And his openness while treating the other religions, positive action focusing the ideologies like naturalism, materialism, baseless atheism from a unique and comprehensive Islamic point of view makes it more near to current times of scientific nature and rational temperament of the world. And his all those worthy endeavors recall us the two great verses of Quran rather appropriate to him. Allah says: “And those who strive for us – we will surely guide them to our ways. And indeed Allah is with the doers of good”. (Al – Ankabut: 69). And the other place:

“And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, “Indeed I am of the Muslims.”

Therefore to conclude keeping in view the demands of Quran and Ustad Nursi’s longing behind his tireless contribution, it is worth mentioning that ,the religion of Islam is superior to any other, that it guarantees happiness in a man’s life hereafter, if he/she abides by the universal law set in the Holy Qur’an. For Muslims, Islam is a belief system with moral and practical laws that are inculcated in the Qur’an for all human beings. The Quran is a book which provides the human being the spiritual and intellectual nourishment he/she craves. **Its major themes** include the oneness of God, the purpose of human existence, faith and God-consciousness, the Hereafter and its significance. The Quran also lays a heavy emphasis upon reason and understanding. Finally, one should comprehend the greatness and nobility of the Qur’an, reflect upon it's meanings. So everyone needs to be fully attentive when he reads it, and follow the Glorious Qur'an as his way of life, that surely leads a successful and prosperous life here and hereafter.

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