

LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AND SOCIAL REFORMS IN *RISALE-I NUR*

Mohamed Mohamed Tolba Said¹, Krishnan Umachandran²

Abstract

This paper aims to cover the philosophy of science or the religious Islamic epistemology through Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's thought carried out with the fraternization of natural sciences with the religious sciences, to strengthen the truths arranged on modern advanced scientific beliefs and spiritual alignments for development, for guiding and enlightening the modern-day youth. The cautious use of freedom and its protection with clear definition on the liberty limits was narrated by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* (1910 – 1950), provided the desired the celestial and modern facts to right channelize with the determination to validate the evidences for Islam's assurance for religious revival. Reasoning the ignorance in individuals and exploitation of supremacy for rigid unsophisticated ideals of moral values, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's prospered on the issue of the Islamic world from the oubliettes of inexperience and deficiency; with the spirit and liberal thought, that a superior demand on learning can place the society obsessed for development by protection from the onslaught which could disturb relationships for personal advantage, exclusive treatment and disenchanted extravaganza. Appeals to normalize the leadership character for materialism and the interest in properties have historically been connected to evolution, methodical substantiation of knowledge, and excellent protection for socio-economic expansion. To overcome numerous hindrances and sustained teaching with understandings of Islam, education needed to inspire erudition method towards development across all societies. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's solid propagandizing's laid the foundation to peace and harmony do not use any force and avoid any disruption turned out to be effective, when it shared character and spiritual instruction. Core temperament and consciousness in its truthful real form will exhibit the quality of humankind, therefore and reveal facts about themselves.

Keywords: *Islamic culture, liberty limits, humanity, Consciousness, education, development.*

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Introduction

Looking into the intellectual and epistemological roots, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi³, wrote volumes of exegesis on the Quran titled as The Epistles of Light (*Risale-i Nur*), which laid foundation to the text-based Islamic movement of Turkey. Using technology moved from the conventional oral-based teaching text, evolved with print culture for quick reproducibility⁴. *Risale-i Nur* illustrated the importance of a faith-based approach to concepts of authority and trust, increased on the substantial role established and cherished in response to the human ego or self. The reality of consciousness and cognition has consequences that are comparably pervasive; while subjectivism and realism value depend on truthful responses. A robust linkage in common to progression is through knowledge accumulation supported with socialism, natural compassion and associated sensitivity among people. It was pertinent to then current state of Western theory, given the gamut of intellectual developments that have taken place since Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's intervention, surpassed the performance of all earlier approaches that could facilitate development⁵.

Need for *Risale-i Nur*

Leadership is generically affected by the existing culture. The required modified culture needs to be first induced and implanted into the future leaders⁶. True happiness is a channelized pursuit of the good towards a God-conscious path, hence Islam has been connecting people, science and development within the liberty limits. The members were free wheeled in the thought process as they had no bounds of control being outside the politics of the state, self-supporting, voluntary, and informal in nature⁷.

There was a misfit between the required and the wanted. The wants are doles of selfishness, haughtiness and ravenousness for direct desires; while the mandated need was being realistic,

³ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876–1960) span can be divided into young (before1909), adult (1909-1918) and parent stages (1919-1960). The young age was experience combined with learning; while the adult stage implemented the learning applications; and the parent stage started early with all suffering till the end.

⁴ Yavuz, M. Hakan (2003), *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*, Oxford University Press, Inc., ISBN 0-19-516085-1, pp. 343.

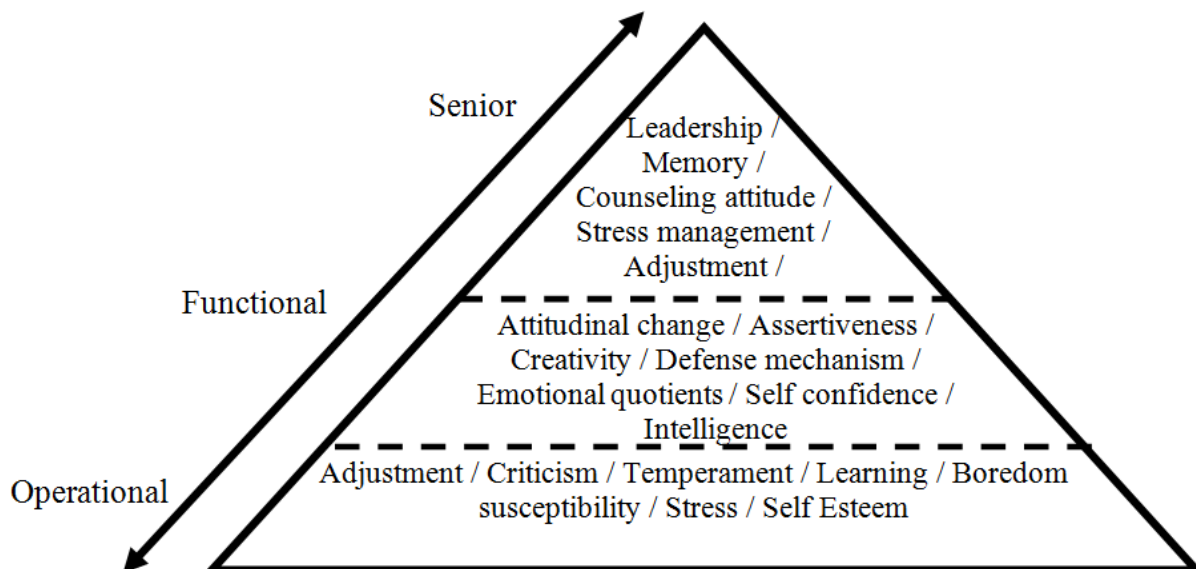
⁵ Sabet, Amr G. E. (2008), *Islam and the Political: Theory, Governance and International Relations*. Pluto, London, ISBN 978 0 7453 2720 4, pp. 321.

⁶ Krishnan Umachandran (2007), *Planted leadership Transition*, Research gate, pp. 5.

⁷ Walter D. Mignolo (2011), *The darker side of western modernity, Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Duke University Press, Durham & London, ISBN 978-0-8223-5060-6, pp. 226.

reasonable and open. The obstacle to scientific growth was that, the knowledge thoughts were compulsorily to be modified towards Islamic traditions so that the claim of science and technology was accepted to be corresponding for protection and redemption. Modern civilization is the product of the thought of mankind through which material progress has greatly improved the materialistic lives of a people but not the happiness and spiritual fulfillment for humanity. Level centric leadership quality parameters include the essential character skills, relational or application skills, emotional balancing skills, performance skills, motivational and wisdom skills. Hence targeted development dimensions are directions, implementation, networking / team building, people development, and personal leadership; aggregating these skillsets over various levels lead to internal development needs as in figure 1.

Figure 1. – Internal quality parameters for development in leaders



Source – Krishnan Umachandran, 2007.

Existence associated to excellence evolves a tougher than an ordinary human being with cleanliness of intention, thereby small deed is nurtured in a level deep within the mind and the heart and attributions filled within the conscious mind ⁸.

The western knowledge in this development has disconnected ethics and moral principles due to implementation of materialistic values and ideologies ⁹. The *Risale-i Nur* meant at creating a

⁸ Faruk Arslan (2014), A hear -based Sufi mindfulness spiritual practice employing self-journeying, Theses and Dissertations (Comprehensive). Wilfrid Laurier University, Pp 213

pure community constructed on trust, influencing continually and diligently the youth from the global character of the destruction caused by western civilization and the persuasion to stay away from political rivals and to evade nourishing their ego ¹⁰. In globalized situation conditions a leader may enumerate failure when having good tendency to cooperate but being dismayed by tyrannizing disagreeableness of subordinates. A vigorous development envisages expelling the variances in enterprise, economics, and social collaboration in everyday life, and brings harmony to reduce incongruence to align for the sake of peace and development.

Relevance to Social Upliftment

The ethical notion of good is consequently the change of self, which acts as a vital part in the search of pleasure, in a celestial surround the extending of limitations of time and space leads to qualms of higher scale, creating connections through the foundation of hope, retaining unlimited forte of interminable rewards offered for metaphysical needs. Naturalism took control of science only after Darwin ¹¹. Hence combination of the natural sciences with the religious sciences will strengthen the truths on beliefs. Despite the period through which disaster and perdition affected the Islamic world, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in *Risale-i Nur* versioned that the modern science was not opposed to religion and hence absolutely responded to the materialistic and anti-religious claims of the scientific and innovative references to scientific discoveries in scientific commentary on the Quran which was very appropriate, rewarding and progressive. With the accompaniment of secularism and modern development, the inspiration of Islam activated to be relegated and was gradually substituted by Western model of development ¹².

The verses mostly expounded in the *Risale-i Nur* are those concerned with the truths of belief, such as the divine names, attributes, activity in the universe, the existence, oneness, resurrection, prophethood, divine determinations or destiny, and man's duties of worship. Bediuzzaman Said

⁹ Harvard (2011), International encyclopedia of ethics, Harvard Scholar. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/dft/files/political_ethics-revised_10-11.pdf.

¹⁰ Shenner Dalk (2016), Approach, Method & Purpose of the Risale-I Nur, Research Gate, DOI 10.12816/0024544.

¹¹ Thomas Nagel (2012), Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature is Almost Certainly False, Copyright Oxford University Press, Print ISBN-13: 9780199919758, Pp. 23.

¹² Fadhlullah b. Jamil (2012), Badiuzzaman Sa'id Nursi; His Influence and Impact upon the Malay World: An Overview, The International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, pp.21.

Nursi in *Risale-i Nur* revived the basic tenets of Islam and reconciled these creeds with innovative ideas keeping in view the contemporary settings of the world, and provided a system which is equipped with religious, scientific and logical arguments ¹³ such as the claim that the science and technology will prevail, while in that certainty there will come a time when the Quran will gain ascendancy and invite the reason to confirm its pronouncements. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi categorically criticized and guided to overcome the hurdles ignorance, barbarity, bigotry, excessive domination, blind obedience, despotism and degeneracy; as a need to move towards development, and later advised and elaborated with logical reasoning that hope; honesty; affection and brotherhood; unison and mindfulness of the uniting luminous bonds; and mutual consultation, as the six words for materialistic development.

Materialistic development

Unlike the previous generations of reform-minded Muslim scholars, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi garnered the movement with informal membership network with collective cohesively based on interpersonal trust and reciprocity with an ideological alignment and linkage to undo the unilateral western influence. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi had a great life characterized by dedication, pious efforts and selflessness, that which we no longer find in the lives of most other Islamic preachers ¹⁴, but felt the Islamic community restrained the influence and power leading to an anguish look towards Western civilization; which was interpreted as their success towards progress and superiority due to secularization. The healthy civilization envisions banishing the differences in politics, economics, and social interaction from everyday life away from one another to reduce incongruence and match an alignment of convenience for peace and development.

Thus, the reach over various spectrums of people irrespective of ethnic, social, and economic classification were inclusively covered. *Risale-i Nur* guided and enlightened the people to be cautious on the use of freedom and its protection with clear definition on the liberty limits. Development needs to be contingent rather than the necessary consequence of its recursively

¹³ Ishtiaq Ahmad Gondal, Shumaila Majeed (2014), Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Methodology for the Revival of Muslim Society with Reference to his Damascus Sermon, http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/szic/pdf_files/3-%20Dr%20Ishtaq_june2014.pdf

¹⁴ Andreas Christmann (2007), Islamic scholar and religious leader: A portrait of Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Būti, *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 9:2, 149 - 169

organized operations; and should be identified with three key organic determinants which constituted the basic components of a pre-modern Islamic historical super structural order: The tribe -people; the spoils -money; and the religious faith –Islam. The natural state is to live in absolute independence, whereas in the urban societies humans required a relative independence¹⁵. The strategy conceptualized by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was geopolitics of knowledge for the people undergoing the transformation from a confessional community to a secular national society ¹⁶. Discrete elements in science are not recognized to reach sound conclusions about the reality of existence, hence science needs to be interlinked with spirituality in an inclusive form to upholds the basic, strong relation of being, knowing, identity, time, and space; for its development. The Islamic culture exists on a quest to purify their selves through prayer, regularity, and complete submission to God, self-control, and self-effacement. Islamic religious and social affairs are rationally determined attempting at comprehensive social, political conservative culture, yet progressive for development, with emphasizes on principles of social justice, social solidarity, mutual social responsibility, strengthening the economy and increasing prosperity.

Religious political consequence

According to Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, all the obstacles would become driven towards extinction with the help of science, knowledge and by the virtues of civilization. With the element of optimism in his methodology which as a very attractive tool for human psychology, created the hope for the Muslims and caused high morale which was the core prerequisite for the revival of society.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's *Risale-i Nur* has noticeable Islamic political discourse lastingly with submission of unique concepts for addressing political and sociocultural problems lead to several millions of followers around the world . Science as a source of knowledge is an essential dynamic element which can guide and clear through beyond the perspectives for profound

¹⁵ Vaffi Foday Sheriif (2016), Faith As The Foundation of Human Progress: Nursi's Perspective, Quest Journals Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science Volume 4 ~ Issue 8 (2016) Pp: 73-80, ISSN: 2321-9467.

¹⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen (2004), Towards a global civilization of love and tolerance, Çađlayan A.S. Izmir, Turkey, ISBN 1-932099-68-9, Pp 291.

compassion towards the society. The consequence of modernity and globalism has the societies in the world, altered and extended within the setting of origination, fairness, variety in freedom of thought, ethnic broadmindedness and harmony. Self-sacrifice is the foundation of love and the utmost obsession of people, displaces emotional state of abhorrence and bitterness. Tolerance displays as deference, empathy, sympathy and calmness is result of an affectionate emotion resilient to modest conduct. This raising spiritual consciousness exercised casual contacts with those in power. Protection of freedom is focus on internal and external locus of control affecting the imagination, questioning and action, through enabled technology, innovations and targeted interventions; where the arrangement incorporates many diverse variables such as culture, religion, commerce, domestic regime type, and geography.

The western influence on development

The socio-economic development of the West was a historical accident which cannot repeat had it been given another chance to recreate. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi found the Madrassah system was incompatible with the requirements of the modern age, and the outmoded form of Islamic theology was insufficient for informative apprehensions hence he wanted to establish a university in the form of Madrassah al-Zahra, to transformation that existing education system ¹⁷. Faith is a mainstay of human kind and it differentiates people from all other living beings including animals and insects. Socio-economical and moral liberty limits are actions which are carried out to forego for fairness and includes the freedom of choice, power exertion, wellbeing and fairness. It extends into impersonal relations, freedom to pursue personal advantage, exclusive and rival in consumption, purely want-regarding, and dissatisfaction through exit ¹⁸. Moral authority reflects the existing religious ideas and encourages its proponents to engage in reasonable reflection to convince others about both the sides of these ideas. They hold the status as a source of social power and utilize them to promote the reinterpretation of these ideas, implement, and institutionalize them. Later influence to be adopted into legal norms.

¹⁷ Zubair Hamid (2106), Nursi's School of Brilliance - Madrassah al-Zahrā, Social Science Review Vol 2, Iss.2, December 2016 ISSN 2518-6825, pp. 39-44.

¹⁸ Irene van Staveren (2008), Communitarianism and the market: a paradox, Nijmegen center for Economics (NiCE), Institute of Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands, Pp 25.

Consequently, historically evolved educational system, within the limits of an advancing Islamic civilization has always expressed the basic Islamic impulse of personal salvation and facilitated the role of education as the medium, concentrated through Islamic values for easy transmission, perpetuation and representation of the Islamic culture. The climax of view is the ascertaining truth or reaching reality, it must follow divine revelation, which according to Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was a condemned philosophy in the sense, and it was because it has not submitted to revelation, therefore yielding results harmful for humanity. Sufism is a lifelong process of spiritual development, which demands the individual's active participation. It requires the strict observance of all religious obligations and Prophet Muhammad's example, which enables individuals, through constant worship to God, to deepen their awareness of themselves as devotees of God. The Knowledge and sensing the epistemology incongruent, required the focus to be turned on to the youth with the vision to cover modernization, development for progressive and preemptive protection against being swayed away from religious roots.

Rebuilding the Islamic world

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi recognized that by virtue of civilization having no iniquities and other evils, the society will flourish materially; for which five indestructible assets of Islam which includes unity, need for civilization and industry, competition for glorious things, fearlessness and credence in God as precondition to true evolution. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi felt the then leaders were negligent and unable to support the fortress of the Faith from the decaying columns of infidelity, requiring an urgent need to concentrate all efforts on the source of the Faith, accentuating the inner life, moral existence, conscience, and belief system based on the oneness of God as the foundation stone of Islam specified in Quran ¹⁹.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi viewed to make up the Islamic world to become a great dominion, can be gained over the material and technological development realized through the harmony and collaboration of very diverse mechanisms among peoples. Learning resources are vital as it can ignite self-learning using technology and social network support. Being worried with knowledge based on belief in God is very much worthy of reflection, he thought that the conscience is

¹⁹ Fadhlullah b. Jamil (2012), Badiuzzaman Sa'id Nursi; His Influence and Impact upon the Malay World: An Overview, The International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, pp.21.

illuminated by the devout disciplines and the mind is well-lit by the knowledge of evolution and wisdom occurs from the mixture of these two. Relative freedom to voice the use ²⁰, of freedom by imagining, questioning and action is encouraged, with consistency, coherency and no ulterior motive on information flow, evolution of realistic ideas and application of authentic suggestions for all initiatives that are new and recognizable for growth. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi retorted building the aesthesis by overriding debates with theories found meaningful and offer approaches that could convincingly deal with contemporary encounters through reconstructing the Islamic cultural concepts and practices to handle with new conditions by creating new ways for cohesion to the regular life requirements. Progressive is an essential thread of the argument which stresses the emancipatory power and purpose of education in initiating young people into forms and fields of specialized knowledge. This is to be identified and then followed in formal schooling, theorizing the idea of curriculum has followed the practice of teaching ²¹.

Culture in the verge of destruction

On the contrary there was ample evidence that influenced the young Nursi Bediuzzaman Said Nursi being significantly affected by the cultural dominance in the environment that had impacted him, with the change necessitated for progression. Hence it implied appropriating the necessary contributions to reform in the age of modern cynicism, he was critical of certain aspects of tradition which he felt was banal learning and faith performing an inadequate role in social challenge. Integrating the faith and modern knowledge will lead to enormous development in human progress.

As a religion Islam makes no discrepancy between the worldly knowledge and Islamic knowledge, hence when people imbibe both the devotion and materialistic science they can stride to evolve superiority in every field of science all through the history. There existed a huge ideological deviation of principles on the leadership dimensions, types, leader follower relationship, leader characteristics, and relationship to power, when viewed from Islamic

²⁰ On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang (2005), *Mirroring the past, The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China*, ISBN-10: 0-8248-2913-1, University of Hawai Press, Honolulu.

²¹ David Lambert (2014), *Curriculum thinking, capabilities and the place of geographical knowledge in schools*, Japanese Educational Research Association for the Social Studies (JERASS), *Prace komisji, edukacji Geograficznej* 2014, t. 3, s. 13–30.

perspective *vis-a-vis* the modern concepts²². Islam was compassionate and aligned with servant leadership to include: placing service before self-interest, listening first, inspiring trust by being trust worthy, focusing on what is feasible to accomplish, and lending a hand. This difference was mainly due to cultural differences impacted on the dimensions of leadership compared with the transformational leadership of the west. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's message was that Islam must be compatible with modern science and that the scientific description of the world can also be given a religious metaphysical explanation. He spoke of the mechanics of nature in which there is room both for modern physics and traditional Islamic philosophy. The Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's movement therefore aspires to a synthesis between Islam and science, acceptance of democracy, and just government within the framework of Islamic law and he stressed the importance of a good education. The process of modernization should come from within and not from outside. When such influence was exercised in the process, there is more antagonism to it than acceptance. With Islamic paradigm in the nucleus of the Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's strategy, it has backed enormously to the development of Islamic cultural authenticity and practice in justification of modern progress. As being intensely absorbed in the current events and the media, he understood the modern unilateral western materialization seep-through into the society. *Risale-i Nur* comprising of 130 parts, was a result of technology upgradation from the orthodox oral-based instruction method, advanced to printing methods for speedy output of pamphlets, which challenged the religious traditional, social norms as unacceptable as they hindered and endangered the liberty to progressive development;

thereby Bediuzzaman Said Nursi positioned himself as a regenerator of religion who conveyed the message of religion, and a man of action²³.

Protecting the Islamic civilization

²² Mahmoud Haddara and Faiza Enanny (2009), Leadership: An Islamic Perspective. University of Newfoundland, pp.77. <http://manal.ca/sites/default/files/Leadership.pdf>

²³ Ibrahim Ozdemir (2003), Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Approach to the Environment, The American Muslim, http://theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/bediuzzaman_said_nursis_approach_to_the_environment/

Experience to growth is a testimony towards detrimental existence of existing native products and process. Material realizations and miracles were primarily prearranged to mankind as a gift, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi observed that with the science released from the thin boundaries should be reformulated in view of the divergent currents of thought of the existing age and discourse it to ordinary believers so that their rational might be remedied, their credence transformed, and civilization might be renewed ²⁴. Being linked to superior changes brings the normal human being to one with purity of purpose, thus unimportant action is controlled in lower level of mind; while the heart and attributions are filled within the conscious mind. Islamic actions have shaped the world by the intense engagements for a productive approach contributing to make the world be transformed within communities, with the ability to handle errors, attempts and failures, humbly confirms the validity of leadership with no arrogance. The reciprocal leadership influence of Islamic thought and positive nationalism was required as pillar to support development ²⁵. Modern disciplines and the Islamic legacy would be mastered and critically valued before being synthesized and disseminated in the form of knowledge. Islam is egalitarian and addresses all races, vibrant and easy to understand. Theorists accept the principles of human philosophy and the Western way of thinking and depend on them in their struggle which reinforce and strengthen the truths of Islam.

The Western world portrayed Islamic religious groups and their business theology as fixed and constant variables that determine a religious group's entrepreneurial action, to provide a consistent and parsimonious explanation of the behavior of religious and business actors based on their cost-benefit calculations and preferences, by assuming that these actors maximize their instrumental and material interests in order to achieve their goals ²⁶.

Conclusion

²⁴ Usama Hasan and Athar Osama (2016), Muslim Responses to Science's Big Questions, Muslim World Science Initiative, Report of İhsanoğlu Task Force on Islam and Science. Pp. 217-220.

²⁵ Soleimani K. (2016) Kurdish Nationalism and Khilafa in Nursi's Pre-exile Writing. In: Islam and Competing Nationalisms in the Middle East, 1876-1926. The Modern Muslim World. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, Online ISBN 978-1-137-59940-7.

²⁶ Kamil Fadel and Eren Tatari (2016), A Political Analysis of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Damascus Sermon, Humanities and Social Sciences Review, CD-ROM. ISSN: 2165-6258 :: 05(03), pp. 303-322.

Islamic archetype as the center, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi strategized it and supported the massive progression of Islamic community with cultural legitimacy and action in justification for contemporary advancement. Many earlier religious leaders missed the sight off materialistic development, upon which Bediuzzaman Said Nursi elaborated as tool for advance which proved as a real testimony towards societal progression for the Islamic community. The western studies project the leader emergence in a group is cumulated based on the leadership effectiveness on the fair level of role performance; similarly, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi convinces the self that pursuing the good within the limits of the world will turn opposite, rather than bringing happiness, it would load unbearable. Hence suggests true happiness is a channelized pursuit of the good towards a God-conscious path ²⁷. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi thought political involvement can never bring in social change, hence needed to nurture an intellectual group to construct for delivering a counter discourse of Islamic identity, morality and consciousness mapping a meaningful guidance in routine life. To influence innumerable ranges of expectations within the people irrespective of ethnic, social, and economic classification, was an uphill task in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi for raising the people to the spiritual consciousness and exercise towards development with rejuvenated scientific education and cultural appendage. From a spiritual and pietistic perspective, it is believed that the recitation of Quran, people's knowledge and materialistic development is facilitated along with emergence of speculations on the ethical significance by clarifying the arguments that the human perfection is possible through being a comprehensive in knowledge and as a polished mirror reflection through divine process.

Risale-i Nur by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi though challenged the mechanistic, materialist, and modern world-view, had headed towards the evolution of meaningful life, that can be derived by human beings in the universe who aim to live a life of development guided by principles of Quran.

²⁷ Nisanci, Zubeyir, (2015), *The Dialectics of Secularism and Revivalism in Turkey: The Case of Said Nursi*, (2015). Dissertations. Pp 532.

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