

The Elements of Sufism in the Da`Wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi

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Abstract

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is among the leaders muslim preachers and thinkers who believe that sufism which rooted from purification of the soul and nobility of spirit is the catalyst to allow a Muslim to know Allah The Almighty. It is important to make sure that everyone have a bodily and spiritual balance, according to the standards laid down in the Quran and Hadith. Thus, this article aims to analyze the elements of sufism in the da`wah of Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi from his masterpiece, *Rasa'il Nur*. Therefore, the primary data for this study is based on content analysis from *Rasa'il Nur*. This content analysis only analysed the sufism dimensions from his books to find out the sufism elements. The study found that Bediuzzaman Said Nursi used the sufism to educate people and bring them to Allah The Almighty. The study also discover that the fundamentals of Sufism in the perspective of Bedi`uzzaman Said Nursi are divided into four, namely *al-`ajz* (weakness), *al-faqr* (poverty), *al-syafaqah* (compassion) and *al-tafkīr* (think).

Keywords: Bedi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi, fundamentals of sufism, da`wah Sufism

Introduction

An eminent muslim scholar, Bedi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi has seen some major changes were recorded in the history of the Islamic world during the middle of the second century up to the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. It is because he lived in the days, when the Ottoman Daulah started to weak, and watched the day-to-day of last Caliph system and the brutal attack on Islamic law. The attack started sagging after the advent of Islam in Turkey consciousness movement spearheaded by Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi as one of the leaders of the movement.

The title *Bedi`uzzaman* is a manifestation of the stature and his extensive da`wah efforts which take a long time. This is evidenced by the birth of his magnum opus '*Rasa'il al-Nur*' authored aimed at inviting people in his period to believe in Allah, and save them from the darkness of ideological of secularism and atheism, which headed by Mustafa Kamal Artatuk, the leader of Turkey at that time. The research on da`wah efforts by Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi

through Rasa'il al-Nur shows that he emphasize Sufism and education soul based on the Quran and al-Sunnah, which is required by every human life. This article aims to analyze the elements of sufism in the da`wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi from Rasa'il Nur. The topics focused to uncover the background of his life, his relation with sufism and sufism fundamentals from the perspective of Bedi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi.

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative study based on content analysis ; that is an analysis of the content of several books related to the research topic of the Rasa'il Nur, namely Al-Syi`aat, al-Kalimat, and Al-Lama`at. Therefore, these three books is the primary data for this study. Rasa'il Nur used in this study is the Arabic version translated by Ihsan Salihi.

The Life Background Of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is a Kurdish who was born in 1824H/ 1877M in a village named Nurs, Talis located in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. His father, Mirza Said was called Sufis among the people because of his piousness. His mother, Nuriyah Mula Tahir also famous for her piousness. For example, his mother always make sure that she give a breast-feeding to her sons after she is performed her ablution. (al-Mula: 50)

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi ingenuity is evident from an early age. Through his hobby of reading, researching information and making him stand out from his age peers. Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi like to attend the religious program held by his father to the adults in her home and held discussions on various topics with Islamic scholars in his hometown. In such a young age that he was paying attention to the issues of philosophy and deep thinking which led him to read and think (Ihsan Kasim al-Salihi: 277). In addition, Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi's ingenuity also present at the school until he was called *Tilmiz al-Sheikh*. This proves that he has a strong tendency to study since early age. This tendency became stronger after he dreamed about calls for his study and his dream was always in his memory until the end of life. (`Ali: 12)

Therefore, he asked his father for permission to go to Batlis in 1888M and enrolled in school al-Sheikh Amin Afandi. However, he only studied briefly at this school because the *sheikh* did not want to accept it there to study for the age factor; he was too young. Next, Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi moved to the school Hasan Mir Wali in Max, then to school in Kawash, Wan. However, all these schools are not able to meet a very strong desire for him to seek knowledge, because the syllabus is taught only limited to grammar and idiomatic only. Also he does not get the attention it deserves from his teachers as he is the primary level students. (`Ali: 12)

The story of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi education history is amazing because he only spent a short time only to act, but the rest is spent in studying the scriptures which he tries hard to memorize. In addition, he also interacted with scholars to finally leave his masterpiece "Rasail Nur" which contains more than 130 letters, which reflect his principle's thinking and preaching. Rasail Nur is divided into four groups, the main group named "al-Kalimat", which produced the second treatise group called "*al-Maktubat*", then divided again to the third treatise called "*al-Lama`at*" and lastly the fourth treatise called "*al-Syi`aat*" which is a fraction of the letters of the previous group. In addition, these groups also included a pamphlet with three attachment named Mulhaq Barllan, Mulhaq Qastamuni and Mulhaq Amirdagh. It is a pamphlet to guide al-Nur students

(*Tullab al-Nur*) about the *uslub* to serve to the Quran, fiqh da`wah , and the current issues they faced.

After making significant contributions to the Turkish Muslim community, on March 23, 1960, Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi's death, to leave valuable property to Muslims, namely *Rasail Nur* which is read, studied and learned by Muslims around the world.

The Relationship Between Badi`Uzzaman Sa'id Nursi And Sufism

Some people think that Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi was a Sufi or *tariqat* leader, and sometimes as if there was evidence that could justify this assumption. But a careful reading of *Rasa'il al-Nur* can uncover these assumptions need to be reviewed. Furthermore, Sa'id Nursi ever denied himself a Sufi by saying I am not a sufi sheikhs, but I am a religious person in religion, these days are not *tariqat* times (Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 79) but this is the time to save the faith (Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 263 & 309).

Although Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi denied himself a Sufi (Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 245,428,431,558,133,145,166,208,218,219,220, 262.267 & 276), but if you look at the background of his life and the details of *Rasa'il Nur*, it will be revealed the existence of personal outburst of sufism by Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi. This aspect was the work of *Rasa'il Nur* touches the combine discussion between heart and mind, besides he also uses terms that are usually only known among sufis. There are three (3) factors that affect the formation, whole construction Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi himself, his family atmosphere that emphasizes the seeking of knowledge, and the social situation of his day. All this makes his personal absorbed between assertive and aggressive as well as gentle and compassionate. Moreover, the situation in his family also quite influential in which his father was a pious and ascetic, while his brother also is a member of a sufi *tariqat* (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 133), the social situation also took his interest in the sufi *tariqat*.

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi has also started his life with abstinence and moderation and that situation continued until his death. Therefore, it is not surprising that his words which he was mentioned when his youth time : When I was 20 years old I always repeat: I will retreat in the cave alone away from public life as ascetics alone in the hills, so I decided when I was captured. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 407)

The period of captivity for two (2) years during World War I, which was followed by violent events perpetrated against individuals and the state of `Ottoman and Islamic world as a whole. This has a huge impact in the lives of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi, the case is described so well by Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi in the pamphlet (*al-shuyukh*), in which he explains that the situation that led to the soul's defeat of his major life (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 233).

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi also considers Imam al-Ghazali as a teacher and his example, as Imam al-Ghazali not only confine to the methodology of the Sufi-based *zauq* and mental training, but more than that he thinks there is a lack in the existing methodology which can not meet the needs of the society of his time, which was a time of struggle and exposed to materialistic philosophy against religion. Therefore, Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi has used a methodology based on the Quran. It is true that Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi admire Imam al-Ghazali and the like. But he saw that the situation of his time makes sufism are not able to

cope hardness currents of thought that casts doubt on Islam, as sufism is based on the personal experience of an individual in the understanding of the fact, and it is not based on arguments of logic and scientific evidence that a claim in those days.

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi says that the top of Sufism must be built on the authentic true belief of faith and perfect worship towards all religion's enforcements. Its purposes are to implement the authentic true belief, directly serve the religion and the Prophetic Sunnah, and seeks to eliminate the psychological problems. Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi believes that if the perfect sufi (*al-qutb*) live in his day they would devote all their energy to strengthen the true faith and belief of Islam as it is a source of eternal joy. It is true, we may not be able to go to heaven without the true faith, but a lot of people who will enter Paradise without sufism. Humans may not be able to live without bread, but they can live without fruit, sufism is like the fruit, and the true faith of Islam is like the bread. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 27).

The Methodology Of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi In Sufism

Bedi'uzzaman Sa'id Nursi asserted that sufism can not prevent schools of thought opposed to religion. He make a comparison between how Rasa'il Nur and the sufi *tariqat* to explain the shortcomings and weaknesses of how a sufi *tariqat* in addition to explaining the way Rasa'il Nur not concerned unveiling (*kashf*) and miracles (*karamah*) that serve as the main thing for some follower of a sufi *tariqat*. On the other hand, Rasa'il Nur is limited for the task of spreading the light of faith and saving the Muslim believers' faith (Bedi'uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 219). Yet, Sa'id Nursi has pointed out that the actual student is a priority serve to save the faith, he said: So when they bestow dignity in the perfect sufi (*al-Qutub*) they still give priority to maintain a sincere faith. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 218).

The methodology of Rasa'il Nur does not require a temporary *zauq* and *karamah* (miracles) as required by other sufi's *tariqat*. Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi explains there are many reasons in disguise, among which the most important are:

- i. The secret of sincerity, because *zauq* and *karamah* (miracles) are only temporary in the world. It only become a major destination for people who are unable to control themselves and unfamiliar with the sincerity, so they will be confused.
- ii. *Karamah* and *kashf* are the self-confidence in the public that are involved with sufi order. Because Rasa'il Nur can cultivate true faith then it is no longer necessary for miracles like this.
- iii. Rasa'il Nur's methodology is not focused on the interests of individuals, but it is more focused on the purpose of imparting knowledge of Islam and spread the essence of faith to the community. Unlike most members of a sufi who claim to have miracles and dreams sometimes have elements of envy and rivalry between them, especially in this age where selfishness is rampant.
- iv. Rasa'il Nur students do not try to get *zauq* and *kashf* in the world as they will perish. The essential pleasures is in the eternal hereafter. (Bediuzzaman Ssa'id Nursi: 218)

Furthermore, in "al-Lama`at" Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi also pointed out that his methodology is different with a sufi order, as he said: There are several terms that are often used among Sufis, such as *al-fana' fi sheikh*, *al-fana' fi al-rasul*, and I am not a Sufi. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 245).

He describes the methodology of Rasa'il Nur's students and said: But *al-fana' fi al-ikhwan* (working diligently to help other Muslims) is a beautifully suited to our methodology. It means each individual to forget their personal interests, and thought of Muslims brothers special. Our basic methodology is Muslim brotherhood and the ties that bind us are fraternal actual not as the relationship between parents and children, also not like the relationship between sheikhs and students, but the necessary relationship is simply a relationship between a student and a teacher. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 245). He also warned his disciples to always feel they are on the dignity of the seeker of knowledge and the eternal of Quran. This is necessary so that they can prevent themselves from selfishness, deceit, love themselves and always look for opportunities to achieve a position that could bring fame (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 166).

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi also very concerned about the current issues, he studied terms: sufism, *tariqat*, *wilayah*, *al-sayr*, *al-suluk*, the prevalent term in the society at that time. But his discussion is from the perspective of sharia, and the aspects that can contribute to Islam. The world is not a place where you do receive a revenge. Therefore, do not seek the pleasures of the world and not for the purpose of getting miracles, but must committed o the sharia because of the truth (*haqiqat*) dan *tariqat* are two timeless medium that can be used to serve the religion, as well as the beginning of it. (Badi`uzzaman Sa` Nursi id: 583)

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi also maintain the *tariqat* by explaining that one should not humiliate the *tariqat* because of the disrepute by religious sect that claim as *tariqat* while they are out of piety and the teachings of Islam. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 574). In addition, he stressed that the ethics which were outlined by Islam is come from the highest revelation of *tariqat*'s manners that builds on inspiration. He said that the most important basic of *tariqat* is the sunna of the prophet (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 583). Then he continues: Those who follow the Sunnah of the prophet is the main guardian, it is the way of the heir to the prophet from among their friends and salafussoleh. (Bediuzzaman Ssa`id Nursi: 575)

The Fundamental Of Sufism In The Da'wah Of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi

This analysis aims at identifying the fundamentals of sufism in the da'wah of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi. As a great Muslim preacher and thinker Bediuzzaman Said Nursi has had his own methodology of da'wah which clearly indicates that he has based on the firm fundamentals of sufism which aim to cleanse the soul of humanbeing. These fundamentals are *al-`ajz*, *al-faqr*, *al-shafaqah* and *al-tafkir*.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi expresses the education soul with sufism, as he has been concerned with this matter since his childhood days. Ihsan al-Salihi told about it by saying: Surely Nursi was concerned in the purification of his soul, he has strong ability in self-reflection and thus striving to implement the will of the soul. (Ihsan al-Salihi: 4).

Thus, it is clear that the concept of sufism by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi is manifested in one's journey towards Allah The Almighty who is the source of all purification. Besides, he also drew the methodology of soul education based on the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This is called as Sunnis Sufism that has been practiced by the Prophet p.b.u.h. and all his companions. It is built on a foundation of faith that is true to the essence of faith in Allah and

doing all the obligatory. The aim is to believe, directly to God and seek to eliminate psychology problems.

In summary, an explanation of the four fundamentals of sufism in the da'wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is as follows:

1. *Al`Ajz (Weakness)*

According to Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi *al-`ajz* means: disclose all weaknesses watched by Allah The Almighty, not disclose in the presence of men. Allah has placed in nature in human beings need to feel weak and God is very great. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 362). More than that, a man must show that there is a strength behind a weakness, so that they could fully trust in Allah The Almighty. *Al-Ajz* also is the shortest way for someone to get closer to God s.w.t (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 195).

He also mentions the example of *al-`Ajz* meant to explain the importance of prayer and dimensions of soul and understanding the utterance meaning which is felt by every one. That prayer was started by "Allah Akbar" and was ended by "Salawat ibrahimiyyah" completed with *tasbih* and *zikir*. Thus, according to him: Prayer is a connector between man and his creator, O people make invocation to the Prophet p.b.u.h. as a means to come to him, then hold firmly to it so that you can attain the mercy of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Through prayers and blessings be upon the Prophet p.b.u.h, Muslims will be able to know surely the enormity of the blessings and how valuable the gifts from Him. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 125). He also explained the meaning of *`ubudiyyah* which includes prayers consisting of *zikir, doa, tasbih, khushu', khudu`* and *inabah*. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 52)

He also explained how the prayers of a Muslim believer can rise up and deliver a high position and praiseworthy attributes such as love, gratitude, obedient, piety and confident. In explaining the dimension of the soul of the prayer he said: Prayer will raise up a Muslim position five times a day and night. It has been the outpouring of human feeling (*zauq*), with the capture of thought, soul and body (to Allah). (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 20). Prayer itself is also the biggest relaxation for the soul, heart and mind at the same time. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 17). Therefore, *al-`ajz* is the key to prayer treatment in the life and soul of the believer, as well as an important impetus for humans to nourish faith, cleanses the soul and lift the spirit to the highest level of obedience levels.

2. *Al-Faqr (Poverty)*

Al-Faqr according to Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is the understanding of poverty before Allah The Almighty is expressed not in front of people, a sense of need and dependence on Allah The Almighty. From here, people will feel himself deprivation, also weak and poverty forever. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 364)

Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi also of the view that the actual human task is to pray, bowing, imploring the help of Allah The Almighty and expect Him to disclose the nature of the weak and faqir to fulfill all the wishes of Allah The Almighty. This means that basic functions by using *al-ajz* and *al-faqr* to raise to the high position of obedient. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 39)

3. Al-Syafaqah (Compassion)

Al-Syafaqah according to Bediuzzaman Sa'id al-Nursi is *al-syafaqah al-imaniyyah* (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 514). The path of grace that conveys a person to God in the most concise and easiest way. From this perspective will be grow the qualities of compassion and affection for the creatures of God. Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi said: Every time we get a sense of compassion, it will make room for soul and will encourage people to increase benefits and serve the humanbeing, also encouraged to help one another and know one another (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 335)

He added: The most obvious example to specify the nature of compassion and mercy among people is stated in the Quran as (*rahmatan lil Alamin*), the Prophet p.b.u.h. The only way to reach this nature is to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet p.b.u.h. Where Sa'id Nursi mentions that way can convey to the Prophet p.b.u.h. is through *salawat*, and *salawat* is a blessing. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 29). He has made a compassionate nature seems to constitutional matters in life and basic methodology of writing in *Rasa'il al-Nur*. (Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 266). Among the manifestations of *al-syafaqah* specified in *Rasa'il Nur* is as follows:

- a. Parents are the first to qualify for clemency. (Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 230 & 764)
- b. Mercy of the rich to the poor during Ramadan. (Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi: 456)

4. Al-tafkīr (Think)

Al-tafkīr is the most important sufism basis in the methodology of da'wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi which clearly found in *Rasa'il Nur*. Al-tafkīr is the most important privileges that make the whole life of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi. He is based on the guidance of the Qur'an that calls for thinking and analyzing.

Al-Tafkīr by Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is looking for the secret. He expressed by the term *al-tafkīr al-imani al-musil ila ma`rifah Allah* (thinking with the faith that can deliver to the truth). To allow him to stimulate thinking faith, Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi always observe the environment, and he taught his disciples how can thinking about God's creatures. His pupils to accept the science that teaches them increase faith through deep attention (*tadabbur*) parallel with the method of "reading open book of nature". (Ihsan al-Salihi: 533).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the elements of sufism in the da'wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi can be summarized as follows:

- i. In *Rasail Nur* clearly shows the existence of a Sufi's soul education in particular to his disciples and to all Muslims in general. This means Sufi education is the primary basis for the da'wah Badi`uzzaman Sa'id Nursi, moreover, he lived in a secular society that makes an attack on Islam from all angles after the fall of the Ottoman `Daulah in Turkey.
- ii. Sufi education contained in the methodology of da'wah of Bediuzzaman Sa'id Nursi is a knowledge learned from the overflow of the Quran, as well as a shortcut to get to know Allah The Almighty. *Al-`Ajz* will be up to the 'beloved' through worship, as well as *al-Faqr* will know the nature of Allah's name "al-Rahman". While *al-syafaqah* will allow one to know the nature of Allah's name "al-Rahim". *Al-Tafkīr* will bring a servant to Allah al-Hakim. All of this is reflected in a person

who follow the Prophet's sunnah and practicing all the obligation that are required.

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