

The Concept of Neo-Sufism of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi

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Abstract

This research discusses the concept of Modern Sufism or Neo-Sufism through the perspective of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, a great thinker from Turkey in the 20th century. Neo-Sufism is a modern development of traditional Sufism that seeks to answer the challenges of globalization, identity crisis, and materialism in the modern era. Nursi through his *magnum opus*, Risale-i Nur, introduced a spiritual approach that is relevant to the context of contemporary society, emphasizing the importance of integrating spirituality in everyday life. Nursi's main ideas in Sufism include a new understanding of clairvoyance, the concept of ikram ilahi, shortcuts to ma'rifatullah, and interfaith dialog as part of efforts to create social harmony. Nursi also emphasized that Sufism is not only a path to personal closeness to God, but also a means of building inclusive communities and contributing to social welfare. Through his views, Nursi offers a new perspective on Sufism that is more open, rational and in tune with modern values, without losing

the essence of traditional Sufism.

Keywords: Neo-Sufism, Said Nursi, Islamic Spirituality, Social Dynamics.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini membahas konsep Sufisme Modern (Neo-Sufisme) melalui perspektif Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, seorang pemikir hebat asal Turki abad ke-20. Neo-Sufisme adalah perkembangan modern dari Sufisme tradisional yang berupaya menjawab tantangan globalisasi, krisis identitas, dan materialisme di era modern. Nursi melalui magnum opusnya, Risale-i Nur, memperkenalkan pendekatan spiritual yang relevan dengan konteks masyarakat kontemporer, menekankan pentingnya mengintegrasikan spiritualitas dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Gagasan utama Nursi dalam Sufisme termasuk pemahaman baru tentang kewaskitaan, konsep ikram ilahi, jalan pintas ke ma'rifatullah, dan dialog antaragama sebagai bagian dari upaya untuk menciptakan harmoni sosial. Nursi juga menekankan bahwa tasawuf bukan hanya jalan menuju kedekatan pribadi dengan Tuhan, tetapi juga sarana membangun komunitas inklusif dan berkontribusi pada kesejahteraan sosial. Melalui pandangannya, Nursi menawarkan perspektif baru tentang tasawuf yang lebih terbuka, rasional dan selaras dengan nilai-nilai modern, tanpa kehilangan esensi tasawuf tradisional.

Kata Kunci: Neo-Sufisme, Said Nursi, Spiritualitas Islam, Dinamika Sosial.

Introduction

Sufism or Tasawwuf, as one of the aspects of religious teachings in the Islamic tradition, has long been known as a spiritual path that emphasizes inner development and personal experience with God. Historically, Sufism has played a role not only in the spiritual development of individuals but also in shaping the social and cultural dynamics of various Muslim societies¹. Over time, a new form of Sufi practice emerged, known as Neo-Sufism. Neo-Sufism, or contemporary Sufism, refers to modern adaptations and interpretations of traditional Sufi teachings, adjusted to fit the context of contemporary

¹ Muhammad Muhsin Habib and Irfan Ullah, 'The Influence of Sufism on Islamic Spirituality and Cultural Practices', *ASSAJ: Advance Social Science Archive Journal*, 3.1 (2025), 1166–84.

society.

The development of Neo-Sufism has garnered attention due to its influence, which extends beyond individual spirituality to significantly impact the formation of social activities in modern society². In the context of globalization and modernization, societies face various challenges such as identity crises, materialism, liberalism, and the disintegration of social values. Neo-Sufism emerges as one of the solutions, offering spiritual and ethical responses to the challenges of the modern era³.

Neo-Sufism emphasizes universal values such as love, tolerance, and peace principles that resonate with the social dynamics of contemporary society. This movement often engages with various aspects of social life, including education, charitable activities, and interfaith dialogue, all aimed at building a more harmonious and inclusive community⁴. For instance, many contemporary Sufi orders and communities participate in social activities such as providing healthcare services, education, and humanitarian aid.

Moreover, Neo-Sufism contributes to strengthening social networks through the formation of communities grounded in spiritual values⁵. These communities serve as spaces for individuals to gain social and spiritual support, which in turn enhances their psychological and social well-being. Amidst an increasingly complex and diverse society, Neo-Sufism offers a model of social interaction that is inclusive and rooted in ethical values.

The Basics and Understanding of Neo-Sufism

Among Western intellectuals, tasawwuf is also known as Sufism. Although the term "Sufism" is not mentioned in the Qur'an, the concepts of "Sufi" and "Sufism" became widely known during the third century of Hi-

2 M. Arifin, 'Neo Sufism and the Concept of Seven Dignities of Muhammad Nafis Al-Banjari', *AJCD: Amca Journal of Community Development*, 1.2 (2021), 31–34.

3 Muhammad Faiz, *Mengarusutamakan Moderasi Di Tengah Pluralitas Agama* (Tulungagung: Akademia Pustaka, 2023).

4 Derya Iner and Mirela Cufurovic, 'Moving beyond Binary Discourses: Islamic Universalism from an Islamic Revivalist Movement's Point of View', *Religions*, 13.9 (2022) <<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13090821>>.

5 G. Falach and R. Assya'bani, 'Peran Tasawuf Di Era Masyarakat Modern: Peluang Dan Tantangan', *Refleksi: Jurnal Filsafat Dan Pemikiran Islam*, 21.2 (2021), 191–206 <<https://doi.org/10.14421/ref.v21i2.3183>>.

jrah. There are various opinions regarding the origin of the term Sufi. Some scholars suggest that it is derived from the word *safa*, which means “holy,” “pure,” or “clear”⁶.

One interpretation proposes that Sufi originates from the word *saf*, which means “line” or “row,” reflecting the idea that Sufis would always be in the first *saf* during prayers to seek the mercy of Allah SWT. Another perspective suggests that it comes from *suffat*, referring to a simple porch made of earth, slightly elevated from the floor of a mosque. Historically, early Sufis were companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW who dedicated themselves to worship and lived in the porch of the Prophet’s Mosque.

Additionally, some argue that Sufi is derived from *safwat*, which translates to “the chosen people,” symbolizing purity and spiritual elevation. Others believe that it originates from *suf*, meaning “coarse wool,” as early Sufis were known for wearing simple woolen garments as a sign of humility and asceticism⁷⁸.

According to Nasr, the goal of Sufism is to achieve a holistic state of purity. This is not attained by suppressing reason and intellect, as is sometimes observed in the devotional practices of certain Sufi movements. Instead, this goal is realized by understanding every aspect of one’s existence and directing it toward its true center⁹. Sufism is not merely the product of a particular ideology, but a profound vision of the heart cultivated through a distinct way of life.

The ultimate goal of a Sufi is to instill divine values within himself. When he contemplates God, his mind becomes calm, and he feels as if he is united with Him. This sense of unity cultivates noble behavior and encourages him to consistently demonstrate a gentle attitude, a pure heart, orderly and polite speech, and insightful thinking. His perspective is broad, and he remains connected to social life, possessing a strong spirit to face various ob-

6 Fahmi Rizal Mahendra, *Sufisme: Sejarah Spiritualisme Dalam Islam Dan Perkembangan Tarekat Sufi Dari Masa Ke Masa* (Yogyakarta: Anak Hebat Indonesia, 2024).

7 S. Kuehn and L. Pokorny, *Neo-Sufism*. In *Routledge Handbook of Sufism* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

8 Al Kalabazi, *Al-Ta’arruf Li Mazahabi Li Al-Tashawuf*, trans. by Rahmani Astuti (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), pp. 25–30; Mahendra.

9 I. Maryana and D. S Hidayatulloh, ‘Peranan Tasawuf Dalam Menghadapi Zaman Millennial’, *Aswaja: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Keislaman*, 2.1, 85–95 <<https://guru-aswaja.com/ejurnal/index.php/aswaja/article/view/53>>.

stacles and trials in life.

Over the centuries, Sufism has evolved into various orders (*tarekat*), each with its own methodology and teachings, yet all remain focused on the pursuit of closeness to God. Some of the well-known orders include *Qadiriyyah*, *Shadziliyyah*, *Syattariyah*, *Naqshabandiyyah*, *Ahmadiyah*, *Rifa'iyyah*, *Chishtiyya*, *Mevleviyya*, and many others¹⁰. Each order has its own prominent figures who have become role models and key developers of Sufi teachings, such as Abdul Qadir al-Jilani, Abu Hasan Ali al-Syadzili, Jalaluddin Rumi, and Bahauddin Naqshband¹¹.

Entering the 20th and 21st centuries, Sufism underwent a significant transformation known as Neo-Sufism¹². This term refers to new adaptations and reinterpretations of traditional Sufi teachings, adjusted to fit modern contexts¹³. This phenomenon can be seen as an effort to address the emerging challenges faced by Muslims in the era of globalization, modernization, and rapid social change¹⁴.

Neo-Sufism emerged as a response to the identity crises experienced by many modern Muslims living amidst complex global dynamics. Unlike traditional approaches that often emphasize monastic and ascetic lifestyles, Neo-Sufism offers a way to integrate Sufi spiritual teachings into everyday life, enriched with social activities and interactions. Figures such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Martin Lings played important roles in spreading the discourse of Neo-Sufism through their works, which link Sufi spirituality with contemporary thought¹⁵.

Neo-Sufism is built upon the foundational principles of traditional

10 Y Styawati, 'Mengenal Tarekat Di Dunia Islam', *Spiritualis*, 5.1 (2019), 63–68 <<https://doi.org/10.53429/spiritualis.v5i1.61>>.

11 Sri Mulyati, *Mengenal Dan Memahami Tarekat-Tarekat Muktabarah Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Prenada Mudia, 2004), pp. 48–49.

12 M. Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

13 A. F. Rozi, Nurwahidin, and M. Hannase, 'Dinamika Transformasi Tasawud Era Kontemporer: Neo-Sufisme Dan Gerakan Islam Transnasional', *Tasamuh: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 16.2 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.47945/tasamuh.v16i2.1393>>.

14 J. Arberry, *Sufism: An Account of The Mystics of Islam*, trans. by Bam-bang Hermawan (Bandung: Mizan, 1993), pp. 12–13.

15 Rivay Siregar, *Tasawuf Dari Sufisme Klasik Ke Neo Sufisme*, II (Jakarta: Raja Grafinda Persada, 2002), p. 115.

Sufism but emphasizes interpretations that are more relevant to the needs of modern society. Some of the key tenets of Neo-Sufism are as follows:

1. Universality and Inclusivity

Neo-Sufism emphasizes that Sufi values are universal and inclusive, highlighting the importance of love, peace, and tolerance as the essence of spiritual life. These values are not confined to any specific group or religion but can be embraced by everyone in various contexts and situations. These principles teach that living with love, peace, and mutual respect is the core of true spirituality. In multicultural and multireligious societies, Sufi values are highly relevant, contributing to the creation of harmonious and understanding communities. Neo-Sufism teaches that by applying love, peace, and tolerance in social interactions, we can build an inclusive society where differences are respected, and unity is upheld¹⁶.

2. Integration of Spirituality into Daily Life

Unlike traditional approaches that emphasize asceticism, Neo-Sufism encourages its followers to integrate spiritual practices into their daily lives. Rather than withdrawing from the world, Neo-Sufism invites its adherents to apply ethical values in all aspects of life, including work, family, and social relationships¹⁷. Spirituality is not limited to rituals and meditation but is reflected in everyday actions and interactions. Followers of Neo-Sufism are encouraged to live a life full of meaning and awareness, where every action is guided by the principles of love, honesty, and peace. This approach helps them become more wholesome individuals who are attuned to the world around them, bridging the gap between spiritual and worldly lives¹⁸.

3. The Quest for the Deepest Knowledge (Ma'rifat)

Neo-Sufism continues to uphold the importance of the quest for

16 Totok Jumantoro and Samsul Munir Amin, *Kamus Ilmu Tasawwuf*, I (Wonosobo: Amzah, 2005), pp. 267–68.

17 J. D. Howell, *Sufism and Neo-Sufism*. In R. A. Jones (Ed.), *Cambridge Handbook of Islamic Mysticism*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., 2020).

18 Martin van Bruinessen, 'Tarekat Dan Politik: Amalan Untuk Dunia Aatu Akherat?', *Majalah Pesantren*, 1992, pp. 3–14 (pp. 3–14).

knowledge (*ma'rifat*) as a means to know God, but its scope is broader than traditional approaches. In Neo-Sufism, the pursuit of knowledge is not limited to theological and metaphysical aspects but also includes scientific and intellectual understanding relevant to contemporary progress. Its followers are encouraged to comprehend and appreciate modern science, integrating it with their spiritual insights. Through this integration, Neo-Sufism creates harmony between spirituality and rationality, blending ancient wisdom with contemporary understanding. Modern Sufis strive not only to draw closer to God through meditation and prayer but also through scientific exploration that deepens their understanding of the universe and their place within it¹⁹. This approach enables followers of Neo-Sufism to become more knowledgeable individuals who contribute positively to society, combining spiritual depth with intellectual acumen²⁰.

4. Social and Humanitarian Activities

Neo-Sufism teaches that spirituality should not be separated from social responsibility, emphasizing the importance of active involvement in social and humanitarian activities. As a result, many Neo-Sufi communities participate in various initiatives aimed at improving community welfare. They engage in educational programs to empower the younger generation, provide healthcare services to those in need, and distribute humanitarian aid to disaster victims or other vulnerable groups.

Through these efforts, Neo-Sufism integrates spiritual practice with tangible action, demonstrating that love and compassion for others are true manifestations of faith. Its followers believe that helping others and contributing to the common good are integral parts of their spiritual journey, creating a widespread positive impact on society. This approach highlights Neo-Sufism's commitment to human values and sustainability, showing that deep spirituality is always accompanied by meaningful and beneficial actions-

19 M. Sedgwick, *Western Sufism: From the Abbasids to the New Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

20 Sayyed Hussein Nasr, *Living Sufism*, trans. by Abdul Hadi W. M (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1994), pp. 44–45.

for all²¹.

5. Interfaith Dialogue

In an increasingly interconnected world, Neo-Sufism encourages interfaith dialogue and cooperation as a means to foster peace and harmony. This principle seeks to address conflicts and misunderstandings between different communities. Neo-Sufism views interfaith dialogue as a pathway to build deeper understanding, mutual respect, and acceptance of religious diversity. Its followers are encouraged to participate in open discussions and establish networks of interfaith cooperation to promote inclusivity and peaceful coexistence. In this way, Neo-Sufism not only strengthens interreligious relationships but also lays a solid foundation for peace and harmony within multicultural and multireligious societies²².

Although Neo-Sufism is rooted in traditional Sufi teachings, there are significant differences between the two that reflect the adaptation and evolution of Sufi principles in the modern context. One of the primary distinctions lies in their approach to worldly life. Traditional Sufism tends to emphasize asceticism, often encouraging its followers to withdraw from worldly affairs to achieve closeness to God. Practices such as '*uzlat* (seclusion) and monastic living became common among traditional Sufis. In contrast, Neo-Sufism emphasizes the importance of engaging with the world while maintaining spirituality. In this framework, Neo-Sufism encourages its followers to be active in social, economic, and political spheres, applying spiritual values to every action they take.

The focus on community is another major distinction between Traditional Sufism and Neo-Sufism. Traditional Sufism emphasizes the spiritual journey of the individual under the guidance of a teacher or *mursyid*. The life of the order tends to be closed off, concentrating primarily on the relationship between student and teacher. Conversely, Neo-Sufism encourages the formation of inclusive and open communities, where members support one another in their spiritual journeys. These communities are often actively involved in various social initiatives that benefit the broader society. Accessibility and education also mark clear differences between the two movements. Traditional Sufism typically spreads its teachings through orders (*tarekat*)

21 Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1979), p. 195.

22 Nurcholis Madjid, *Dialog Keterbukaan: Artikulasi Nilai Islam Dalam Wacana Sosial Politik Kontemporer* (Jakarta: Paramidina, 1998), p. 332.

with hierarchical structures. Access to Sufi knowledge can be limited and often requires special initiation. On the other hand, Neo-Sufism adopts a more open approach, spreading Sufi teachings through modern platforms such as books, seminars, the internet, and social media. This strategy makes Sufi teachings more accessible to a wider audience without the need for formal initiation²³.

Interaction with modern science is also a distinguishing factor between Traditional Sufism and Neo-Sufism. Traditional Sufism tends to focus on spiritual and metaphysical knowledge, often separate from modern scientific knowledge. In contrast, Neo-Sufism attempts to bridge the gap between spiritual and scientific knowledge. Neo-Sufi figures often engage in dialogue with modern scientists and thinkers to demonstrate the alignment between Sufi teachings and scientific discoveries. Moreover, the role in interfaith dialogue is another significant difference between Traditional Sufism and Neo-Sufism. Traditional Sufism tends to concentrate more on internal teachings and spiritual development within the Muslim community. In contrast, Neo-Sufism is actively involved in interreligious dialogue, promoting peace and mutual understanding among various religious traditions. This involvement is a response to rising tensions and interreligious conflicts in the modern world.

With these foundations and principles, Neo-Sufism offers a spiritual approach that is relevant to the needs and challenges of contemporary society. It seeks to integrate traditional Sufi values into modern contexts, creating space for dynamic and adaptive spiritual practices. Neo-Sufism recognizes that in a rapidly changing world, it is important to find a balance between temporal and spiritual life and encourages its followers to be agents of positive change in their society²⁴.

The Concept of Sufism According to Said Nursi: Renewal of Contemporary Sufism

Said Nursi (1877–1960 AD), known by the nickname Bediuzzaman (the wonder of the age), and he was a *mujaddid* (a renewer of Islam) and *mu-*

23 Muhammad Faiz, 'Said Nursi's Thoughts and Its Contribution in Mainstreaming Moderation at Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia', *Jurnal Tamaddun*, 11.2 (2023), pp. 52–53 <<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.24235/tamaddun.v11i2.14936>>.

24 Jumantoro and Amin, pp. 267–69.

*fassir*²⁵. Born and raised in Nurs Village, in the Isparit region of Eastern Anatolia. From a young age, he was recognized for his enthusiasm for learning. He began his studies with his older brother, Abdullah, and later completed his basic religious education under the guidance of local scholars and religious leaders²⁶. The fourth of seven children born to Mulla Mirza and Nuriyah, Nursi was introduced to Sufi practices from an early age, particularly through the Naqshbandi community in his hometown. In addition to his exceptional intelligence and strong passion for acquiring knowledge both in religious and modern sciences, Nursi emerged as a prominent figure in Turkey during the period preceding the fall of the Ottoman Caliphate and the transition to the Republic of Turkey²⁷.

This article aims to highlight Said Nursi's thoughts and ideas on Sufism as articulated in his masterpiece, *Risale-i Nur*. A collection of Nursi's writings is compiled in a pocket-sized book entitled *Anwar al-Hakikat*, which serves as the primary reference for this article. Although concise, this booklet comprehensively presents Said Nursi's ideas and concepts on Sufism. This is evident from the range of quotes and thematic discussions drawn from several volumes of *Risale-i Nur*, including *al-Kalimat*, *al-Maktubat*, *al-Lama'at*, *al-Mathnawi al-'Arabiyy al-Nuriy*, and *al-Malahiq*.

The main themes explored in this article include: a) The definition and understanding of Sufism from Said Nursi's perspective, along with his commentary on Sufi order practices. b) The concept of waliy Allah (guardianship) and Said Nursi's views on this spiritual status. c) Said Nursi's idea of ikram *ilahi* (divine grace) and its distinction from *karamat* (miracles) and *istidraj* (false miracles). d) Said Nursi's perspective and explanations regarding the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of ex-

25 Shereeza Mohamed Saniff, Norullisza Khosim, and Azrin Ibrahim, 'Usaha Dan Strategi Dakwah Badi' Al-Zaman Sa'id Al-Nursiy Dalam Pembangunan Insan', *JURNAL YADIM: International Journal of Islam and Contemporary Affairs*, 2.2 (2022), 19–32 <<https://doi.org/10.61465/jurnalyadim.v2.70>>.

26 Norullisza Khosim, 'Konsep Pembangunan Insan Berteraskan Nilai Mahabbah Berdasarkan Kitab Kulliyyat Rasa'il Al-Nur Karangan Badi' Al-Zaman Sa'id Al-Nursiy' (Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2023).

27 W. J. W. Sulaiman, *Mujaddid Islam Sheikh Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*. (Ankara: Ihlas Nur Nesriyat, 1987); H. Horkuc, 'Said Nursi's Ideal for Human Society: Moral and Social Reform in the *Risale-i Nur*' (Durham University).

istence). e) The concept of a shortcut to *ma'rifat* of Allah SWT, explaining Said Nursi's ideas about the four steps to get closer to Allah SWT.

The Concept of Sufism from Said Nursi's Perspective

In the book *Anwar al-Haqiqat*, Said Nursi explains his understanding and views on Sufism by presenting nine notes (*al-talwihat al-tis'at*) that outline his concepts and perspectives in interpreting Sufism and the *Tarekat*. In his first note (*al-talwihat al-awwal*), Nursi defines Sufism as “the path to understanding the essence of faith and the essence of the Qur'an through a spiritual journey guided by the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad SAW, beginning with the steps of the heart and progressing towards a sense (*dhauq*) that brings one closer to the level of witnessing (*syuhud*) the presence of Allah SWT”²⁸.

Nursi's definition emphasizes the objectives and goals of Sufism itself, specifically the attainment of the essence of faith and the unveiling of the essence of kalam Allah (the Qur'an) as the foundation and guidance for human life. Furthermore, it indicates that the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW serves as a guideline that directs one's Sufi journey towards a state of closeness to Allah SWT, which is known in Sufi terminology as *muraqabat* Allah (awareness of Allah's presence) and *ma'rifat Allah* (gnosis of Allah).

According to Nursi's perspective, one's spirituality can be nurtured and sustained through constant remembrance (dhikr) of Allah SWT and continuous contemplation (*tafakkur*)²⁹. Nursi believes that these practices are capable of dispelling gloom, fear, and the profound sense of alienation often felt by the human soul³⁰. Dhikr is generally understood as an oral act, while

28 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, trans. by Ihsan Qasim Salih (Cairo: Sozler Publication, 2002), p. 59.

29 B. S. Nursi, 'Al-Maktubat (Risalat Al-Talwihat Al-Tis'at) (۱۹۹۹) ۱۰۰۰۰۰ - ۱۰۰۰۰۰, Ihsan Qasim As-Shalihy (Trans)', *Risale'i Nur*, 2025 <<https://said-nursi.com/2025/02/13/۱۰۰۰۰۰-۱۰۰۰۰۰-۱۰۰۰۰۰-۱۰۰۰۰۰/>> [accessed 3 June 2025]

³⁰ Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, p. 60.

tafakkur is considered a mental reflection. However, Nursi emphasizes that dhikr is not limited to verbal recitation; the heart must also engage in its own practice of remembrance³¹ by continually feeling the greatness and power of Allah SWT. This concept is what Nursi underscores in his second note (*al-talwih al-thaniy*).

In relation to the rules and customs of the *tarekat*, Nursi emphasized that the practice of dhikr or *wirid* that generates *dhauq* (spiritual taste) in the heart should serve as an opening path to a higher and nobler consciousness specifically, to fulfill all the commandments of Allah SWT (*fard*) and to practice the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW. It should not be the other way around, as is the custom of some lay adherents of the *tarekat* who prioritize dhikr and *wirid* over the obligatory (*fard*) and Sunnah practices³².

In Nursi's concept, Sufism and *tarekat* are merely *wasilat* (intermediaries) and not the ultimate goals in the Sufi journey. Therefore, he emphasized that performing obligatory practices in obedience to the Sharia of Allah SWT is far greater and more important. This cannot be equated with the practices of dhikr or *tarekat*³³, let alone considering the practices of *tarekat* as more important than religious obligations (Sharia)³⁴.

Nevertheless, Said Nursi highly appreciated the role of the Sufi orders, especially in light of the undeniable historical fact that the *ukhuwwat* (brotherhood) among Muslims, built through the strong bonds of *tarekat* brotherhood, contributed significantly to the preservation of the headquarters of the Islamic Caliphate³⁵. This solidarity enabled it to endure for more than 550 years during the rule of the Ottoman Dynasty in Istanbul, even in the face of major Christian empires that were hostile to Islam³⁶.

In addition, in his last note (*al-talwih al-tasi*) while discussing the con-

31 Abdul Bari Al-Nadwi, *Bayna Al-Tasawuf Wa Al-Hayat* (Damaskus: Dar al-fath, 1963), p. 55.

32 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, p. 83.

33 J. D. Howell, 'Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 60.3 (2011), 701–29 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2700107>>.

34 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, pp. 81–82.

35 Muhammad Faiz, 'RISALAH NUR DAN GERAKAN TAREKAT DI TURKI: PERAN SAID NURSI PADA AWAL PEMERINTAHAN REPUBLIK', *Journal Al-A'raf: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Dan Filsafat*, 14.1 (2017), 23–46 <<https://doi.org/10.22515/ajpif.v14i1.588>>.

36 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, p. 65.

cepts of Sufism and the *tarekat*, Nursi highlighted several spiritual and social benefits of the *tarekat* that are deeply impactful and spiritually enriching. These benefits include:

1. Through the organization of the *tarekat*, it becomes easier to uncover the essence of faith and free oneself from confusion and doubts (*syubuhat*).
2. This process leads to the level of certainty of faith ("ain al-yaqin), provided that it is pursued through a proper and non-deviant *tarekat*.
3. A person can realize the essence of his true existence by dedicating every part of his body and all five senses to fulfilling the purpose for which he was created—worshipping Allah SWT alone.
4. Through the *tarekat*, one can escape isolation on the path to Allah SWT. He will be able to feel the connection of the heart with fellow travellers on the Sufi path (Sufistic caravan), experiencing genuine friendship and sincere affection as he journeys toward the eternal realm (the Hereafter).
5. The *tarekat* can liberate the human soul from worldly attachments and release it from the painful sense of alienation often felt in relation to the universe.
6. A person can come to truly feel the essence of *taklif* (the burden of religious obligation) that he carries. He will be able to sense the true weight and beauty of Sharia law through a heart that is alive and pulsating with the remembrance of Allah SWT.
7. Through proper *tarekat* education, the levels of *tawakkul* (complete trust in Allah SWT) and *rida* (contentment with Allah's decree) are more easily attained. These levels represent the pathways to true happiness, spiritual delight, and eternal joy that will last forever in the Hereafter.
8. The Sufi order (*tarekat*) can save people from *syirk khafiy* (hidden polytheism), *riya'* (showing off), *pretence*, and other despicable qualities. Therefore, *ikhlas* (sincerity) is both a requirement and the most important outcome of every *tarekat* practice. It also

serves to guide and free a person from the shackles and dangers of uncontrolled anger (*al-nafs al-‘ammarat*) that constantly drives people toward evil. Additionally, the *tarekat* helps cleanse the soul from selfish attitudes and other disgraceful traits.

9. A follower of the *tarekat* will be mindful and strive to turn every habit and daily activity into an act of worship, transforming every worldly affair into a matter of the Hereafter.
10. The *tarekat* is a spiritual practice that aims to form *al-insan al-kamil* (the perfected human being) through *tawajjuh* (turning the heart) toward Allah SWT during one's journey of worship, in an effort to elevate one's inner spiritual life. A true *tarekat* serves as the path to reach the level of a genuine *mu'min* (believer) and a true Muslim.

The views and comments above³⁷ are the result of Nursi's extensive experience in studying the history of Sufism and his interactions with Sufi discourse during his time. This perspective reflects Nursi's accepting and permissive attitude towards *tarekat* schools in general, as long as they do not contradict Sharia. However, it is important to consider other aspects of Nursi's thought, where he issues firm warnings to those intending to enter the world of *tarekat*.

Some of the points that Nursi presented to balance his views on Sufism and at the same time demonstrate his objectivity regarding *tarekat* include his firmness and seriousness in warning Muslims against *tarekat* practices that do not comply with Sharia. In this regard, Nursi outlines the challenges and negative aspects of *tarekat* as described in his eighth note (*al-talwih al-thamin*) in *Anwar al-Haqiqat*³⁸, namely:

- a. If a person engages in the spiritual path without following the guidance of the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW, he risks falling into the misconception that the status of a *walīy* (saint) is higher than Prophet SAW. In fact, there is a consensus among scholars

37 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, pp. 94–97.

38 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, pp. 89–93.

regarding the superiority of *nubuwat* (prophethood or guardianship)³⁹.

- b. If the scholars of *tarekat* and Sufism excessively glorify *awliya'* (saints) above the Companions of the Prophet SAW, or even above the rank of the Prophets themselves.
- c. When there are members of the *tarekat* who display *ta'assub* (fanaticism), prioritizing the *wirids* (devotional recitations) and the disciplines of *tarekat* over the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW.
- d. Misinterpreting *ilham* (inspiration) as *wahy* (revelation), which can lead to serious errors. This misunderstanding occurs when inspiration is perceived as divine revelation, even though revelation is exclusively reserved for the Prophets, who are pure and noble beyond ordinary inspiration.
- e. The *tarekat* is not the ultimate goal in the journey of Sufism. However, for members of the *tarekat* who do not understand this subtle distinction, it becomes easy to fall into the trap of desiring *karamat* (miracles), *dhauq* (spiritual taste), and *nur* (divine light). They may even compete to achieve these experiences, forgetting that all these are merely graces from Allah SWT, not things to be pursued or contested.
- f. There is a group of Sufi practitioners who fall into confusion and misunderstanding, believing that the *maqam* (spiritual rank) of a *waliy* and all the images or visions they witness are the true and ultimate *maqam*. Some even believe that they are greater and hold a higher status than the great saints, and sometimes even think of themselves as superior to the Prophets⁴⁰.
- g. This abyss of destruction traps some members of the *tarekat* who, after experiencing a small amount of *dhauq*, become proud and arrogant about their achievements. They begin to boast about

39 Zahir Syafiq al-Kabby, *Fiqh Al-Tasawwuf Li Syaikh Al-Islam Ibn Al-Taymiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-fikr al-arabi, 1993), p. 128.

40 V. J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1998).

the *karamat* or *syatahat*⁴¹ they have experienced, forgetting that the true principles and secrets of servitude are *tadarru'* (humility), *tahmid* (praising Allah), prayer, solemnity, *al-'ajz* (feeling weak before Allah), *al-faqr* (recognizing one's need for Allah), and not expecting anything from others⁴².

- h. There are practitioners of *tarekat* and Sufism who desire to achieve the status and rank of *waliy* while still in this world. They forget that one reward in the Hereafter is more valuable than a thousand good deeds in this world. However, if such a status is granted by Allah SWT without being sought, it should be accepted with full humility, gratitude, and praise to Allah SWT, without considering it as a personal achievement or reward.

The Concept of Guardianship (Waliy Allah) from Said Nursi's Perspective

The path of guardianship, according to Nursi as explained in his fourth note (*al-talwih al-rabi'*), is described as an easy path that is accompanied by hardship, a very long shortcut, a path of height and glory filled with danger, and a wide road that is paradoxically very narrow. In fact, the secret of this journey is so subtle that many practitioners of the Sufi order end up overwhelmed some are tormented by it, while others abandon it entirely, returning to worldly life and leading others astray⁴³.

To understand this problem, according to Nursi, it is necessary to understand the two types of guardianship as follows. First: *Al-Sayr al-Anfusiy* (The Journey of the Soul): This is the path of *taqarrub* (approach) to Allah SWT through the purification of the soul. By following this path, a person can focus on the heart and turn away from the distractions of the external world. When the heart is purified, one is able to perceive the essence of faith without any hijab (veil), and the external world merely confirms what the heart has already witnessed. This is the path taken by most Sufi scholars, emphasizing the destruction of *mazmumat* (reprehensible traits) and the reconstruction of

41 Yusri Abdul Karim, *Indahnya Tasawuf Dan Hidup Sufi* (Selangor: Yamani Angle, 2011).

42 Muhammad Faiz, 'Konsep Tasawuf Said Nursi: Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Islam', *Millah: Jurnal Studi Agama*, 19.2 (2020) <<https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol19.iss2.art2>>.

43 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, pp. 65–66.

mahmudat (praiseworthy traits) upon their ruins.

Second: *Al-Sayr al-Afaqiy* (The Journey of the Universe): This is the path of *taqarrub* through the observation of *ayat kauniyyat* (nature). Through this method, Sufi practitioners observe the manifestations of al-Asma' al-Husna (the Beautiful Names of Allah) in every corner of creation. Immersed in the greatness of Allah SWT, what they witness in the physical world reflects back to their hearts, instilling a profound sense of servitude and submission to Allah SWT. This journey brings about deep regret for past forgetfulness and heightens the awareness of Allah's greatness throughout the universe. In this state, the heart becomes a mirror reflecting the majesty of Allah SWT⁴⁴.

The acknowledgment of guardianship or *syatahat* that may occur to a person can be forgiven and considered beyond one's control if it happens to someone who truly upholds Sharia, is known for distancing himself from worldly deceptions, and is recognized for his gentle character and piety. In such a case, the individual is considered beyond reproach and unaccountable for the incident⁴⁵. However, if it occurs to someone who still harbors great worldly ambitions, it is deemed negative and may lead to the abyss of humiliation, rendering his good deeds worthless. Worse still, it can result in two common consequences among members of the *tarekat* and Sufism: becoming obsessed with reputation or falling into heretical teachings by claiming equality with the *awliya'*.

According to Nursi, the straight and safe path of guardianship requires three main conditions. First: Adhering to the Sunnah of the Prophet SAW. This means understanding the Prophet's Sunnah and using it as the foundation for all actions and behaviours, while also making sharia the guiding principle in social interactions (*mu'amalat*) and all other deeds.

The second condition: *Ikhlas*, which serves as a crucial foundation when walking the path of guardianship and engaging with the practices of *tarekat*. This is because only sincerity can protect a person from the trap of *syirk khafiy*, which manifests as *riya'*.

The third condition: Recognizing that this world is merely a place for '*ubudiyyat* (deeds and wisdom as servants of God), not a place for final re-

44 Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi', *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008); B. S. Nursi, 'Al-Maktubat (Risalat Al-Talwihat Al-Tis'at)', (رونالد لی اسر - ۃعسیتہ تاجی یولتہ ۃلیسرا), Ihsan Qasim As-Shalihy (Trans).

45 Muhammad Mahfudz Bin Abdullah Al-Tarmasiy, *Bughyat Al-Adzkiya Fi Al-Bahts An Karamat Al-Awliya* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2008), p. 116.

wards or retribution. True rewards and punishments, whether good or bad, will only be experienced in the realm of *barzakh* and the Hereafter. It is in those realms that the fruits of one's actions in this world will be fully realized.

A person who wants to walk the path of clerical and *tarekat* at the same time dreams of clerical rewards on this journey (such as *karamat*, *kasyaf*, *dhauq*) or he always expects the results in the world then the gift will be a result that is of worldly value as well, therefore he will lose sincerity and sincerity in all his acts of worship.

In the issue of guardianship according to Nursi's observation there is a matter of *khilaf* or dispute among Muslims, namely whether guardianship can only arise from the Ahl al-Sunnat group or not? According to Nursi, this issue has caused the views of the ummah to be patterned into three groups: First, the opinion that guardianship can only arise from the Ahl al-Sunnat. The main supporters of this group are the *zhahir*.

The second group considers that the truth does not belong to Ahl al-Sunnat alone. This group forgets that the one who guides himself is not always capable of guiding others. Although the *syaykh* (teacher) may be forgiven for mistakes made unknowingly, the student will not be forgiven if he follows the teacher's mistakes deliberately.

The third group is the one that takes the middle path. They do not reject the emergence of guardianship from groups outside the Ahl al-Sunnat nor do they reject the nature of their piety, but nevertheless they cannot accept the deviation of the sects and orders they follow. Their argument about the error is that the so-called speech that is contrary to the Sharia may be due to a person drowning in *ahwal* (circumstance) beyond his control and thus making them wrong. Or it may also be due to the emergence of a *syatahat* whose meaning and essence are not understood.

Seeing these differences in views, Nursi has the position that some of the guardians, even though they seem sane and normal and they have the ability to understand logic, they are sometimes also easily drawn into a realm that they are unable to control themselves (*majdhub*). Some of these people experience confusion and are unable to distinguish between two things that are similar but not the same. What he sees when he is drunk *ma'rifat* (*fana'*) is used when they are in a state of consciousness so that sometimes they forget about themselves and the people or circumstances around them⁴⁶. These *majdhubin* are protected in the sight of Allah SWT, because they are not from the heretical group like the other groups. They are just like crazy people who are kind and even blessed. The law of madness is attached to them so that

46 Karim, p. 101.

they are free to do what is considered to be beyond the limits of sane human beings because in fact they are no longer *mukallaf*.

Since they are no longer *mukallaf*, they cannot be judged or punished⁴⁷. That is because their guardianship is an abnormal guardianship, such as supporting the innovators and even committing innovations themselves. This is the reason why many supporters of the truth and believers feel confused and unknowingly get involved in this wrong path⁴⁸.

The definition of *karamat* according to the scholars is the emergence of extraordinary things from a righteous person that is not followed by prophetic recognition, so if it is not accompanied by good deeds it will be *istidraj* while if it is accompanied by a prophetic message it is called a miracle⁴⁹. *Karamat* also known as a form of peculiarity that arises from someone who possesses a high level of piety and obedience⁵⁰. It is also a glory that Allah SWT bestows on His chosen servants who uphold the Sharia, and it is not a prerequisite that the appearance of *karamat* be in the form of events beyond human reason or have the form and characteristics of certain events.

The scholars divide *karamat* into two types, namely *karamat* that is *zahir* (*hissiyat*) and *karamat* that is inner (*ma'naviyyat*). *Karamat* that is *zahir* is a type of *karamat* that is commonly known to the general public, which is in the form of extraordinary events in the pious people that are visible to the naked eye. For example, such as the famous narration of the companion of the Prophet SAW, Umar bin Khattab who gave a warning sound heard by Sariyah who was on the battlefield at that time to climb the mountain to avoid the enemy, while the distance between the two was like a journey of one month away⁵¹.

While *karamat ma'naviyyat* is an advantage that Allah SWT gives to His chosen servants in the form of His guidance and *taufiq* in maintaining the Islamic Sharia, *istiqamat* in His way inwardly and maintaining his morals and behaviour and in the form of other things that are meaningful. As explained by al-Qusyairiy in his *al-Risalat* that this type of *karamat* is the greatest *kara-*

47 Karim, p. 102.

48 Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat* (Kairo: Syarikat Sozler, 2011), pp. 426–28.

49 Al-Tarmasiy, p. 62.

50 H. Anasom, Naili Anafah, and Nor Lutfi Fais, *Karamah Dan Kharisma (Sebuah Kajian Analisis Wacana Kritis Atas Komik Walisongo)* (Semarang: Penerbit Lawwana, 2022).

51 Abu Nashr as-Sarraj ath-Thusi, *Al-Luma'*, trans. by Wasmukan and Samson Rahman (Surabaya, 2002), p. 277; Abu al-Qasim Abd al-Karim Al-Qusyairi, *Al-Risalah Al-Qusyairiyyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2001), p. 521.

mat that Allah SWT gives in the form of a person's consistency in obedience to Him and always be awake from immoral acts and other sinful things.

Meanwhile, according to Nursi, *karamat* is divided into two types. The first is *karamat i'tiyadiyyat* (ordinary), which is commonly understood by ordinary people as the glory and honour that Allah SWT bestows upon some of His righteous servants. This sometimes takes the form of events beyond reason (*khawariq li al'adat*) that must be concealed from the view of others to avoid slander, desire, anger, selfishness, and self-deception (*al-ananiyyat wa al-ghurur*), so that it does not turn into *istidraj*.

The second type of *karamat*, according to Nursi, is the *karamat salimat* (safe and secure), which is free from deception and slander and occurs among *siddiqin* (true believers). This type arises unconsciously and without their own awareness. For example, a person may be questioned harshly but suddenly find all the answers in his heart in order to uphold the truth. This type of *karamat* is not considered dangerous, so the person who experiences it is not required to hide it. However, he must remain vigilant so that arrogance and pride do not emerge, as things that are extraordinary from birth often involve a slight role from the individual, which could lead to pride⁵².

On the other hand, *ikram ilahi* is a form of *karamat* that is subtler and higher than the second type of *karamat* mentioned above. The difference is that *ikram ilahi* does not need to be concealed; instead, it is openly displayed as an act of gratitude for Allah's blessings (*tahadduth bi al-ni'mat*). This is because, in *ikram ilahi*, the individual's role is non-existent, and lust does not influence its occurrence⁵³. For example, as Nursi explained, the writing of the *Risale-i Nur* is an *ikram ilahi* that Allah SWT granted as a confirmation of Nursi's efforts to preserve faith and reveal the essence of belief through his interpretation of the meanings of the Qur'an. In fact, according to Nursi, this blessing could be felt in every activity related to the writing of his treatise, including copying, dissemination, and even in the understanding of his books. There are many extraordinary stories that seem to affirm all of Nursi's efforts in maintaining and preserving the faith of Muslims⁵⁴.

The Concept of Wahdat al-Wujud in Said Nursi's Perspective

In the fifth note (*al-talwih al-khamis*), Nursi explains the meaning of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of existence) as "the concentration of the heart on the

52 Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat* (Kairo: Syarikat Sozler, 2011), pp. 39–40.

53 Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat*, p. 40.

54 Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat*, p. 465.

existence of Allah SWT, who is necessarily existent (*wajib al-wujud*), while forgetting all else. Every creature is merely a shadow or an illusion that does not possess an essential nature of existence and does not deserve to be attributed with true existence in the context of the necessary existence of Allah SWT. It is nothing more than a reflection of the great attributes of Allah SWT through His al-Asma al-Husna." *Wahdat al-wujud*, which encompasses *wahdat al-syuhud* (unity of witnessing), is considered a significant station in the path of Sufism. The essence of understanding *wahdat al-wujud* is to believe that every object and every creature (*mumkinat*) is erased from perception, revealing that everything visible is essentially non-existent. This implies a denial of existence apart from Allah SWT⁵⁵.

However, according to Nursi, this understanding can be dangerous as it may affect one's belief in the six pillars of faith. Besides belief in Allah SWT, the pillars of faith also include belief in the Hereafter, which affirms the existence of *mumkinat* that cannot be established merely on imagination and illusion. Therefore, a person experiencing the stage of *wahdat al-wujud* should not act with the belief of denying the existence of other creations of Allah SWT while being conscious (not in a state of *fana'*), so as not to contradict the principles of sharia.

Additionally, this stage of spiritual experience should not be conflated with the foundations of scientific logic and interpretation of meaning. This is because the disciplines of science and logic, which are based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, are not capable of explaining this phenomenon, much less practicing it in a physical sense.

For this reason, the companions of the Prophet SAW and the *khulafa' al-rasyidin* (the four main companions of the Prophet: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) did not pursue this path. This indicates that *wahdat al-wujud* is neither a privilege nor the pinnacle of the Sufi journey⁵⁶. It also reveals that although it may seem noble for a moment, it is flawed in its truth. Nevertheless, many adherents of the *tarekat* consider *wahdat al-wujud* to be a high rank in Sufism.

According to Nursi, the path of *wahdat al-wujud* can only be traveled by *khawas al-khawwas* (the elite among Sufi scholars)⁵⁷. Even then, it occurs only when a person is in a state of complete detachment from materialism

55 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Anwar Al-Hakikat*, p. 72.

56 Kautsar Azhari, *Tasawuf Perennial: Kearifan Kritis Kaum Sufi* (Jakarta: Serammbi Ilmu Semesta, 2003), p. 147.

57 Zakaria Stapa, *Pendekatan Tasawuf Dan Tarekat Wadah Pemerksaan Jati Diri Umma* (Malaysia: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2012), p. 15.

and worldliness, severing all ties with anything other than Allah SWT. However, when this spiritual understanding is transferred from the Sufis to those who follow logical reasoning and *mantiq* (philosophical logic), it becomes susceptible to the traps of *tabi'iyyat* (naturalism) and materialism, which are far removed from the Islamic perspective⁵⁸.

Those who believe in the concept of *tabi'iyyat* (naturalism) and consider cause and effect as the sole measure of every truth combined with their greed for worldly gains will eventually begin to believe that this world is eternal. This is because it becomes too difficult for them to imagine this world dissolving and being destroyed before their very eyes. Starting with the concept of *wahdat al-wujud*, they begin to elevate this world as an object of worship and the pinnacle of survival. At that point, a space opens up before them to gradually deny Allah SWT little by little.

The materialist group (*maddiyyat*), according to Nursi, argues in front of the *ahl al-iman* (believers) by claiming that they also believe in the existence of *wahdat al-wujud*. This claim is fundamentally false, as the idea of materialism contradicts the essence of *wahdat al-wujud*. Those who experience the state of *wahdat al-wujud* have faith in Allah SWT with such deep conviction that they perceive nothing in their hearts except Him. The existence of Allah SWT negates the existence of other beings, while materialism, on the other hand, deifies material objects and denies the existence of Allah SWT.

Therefore, the person who passes through this path of *wahdat al-wujud*, if his soul is completely free from material relations, will be able to break the curtain of *asbab* (causes) and free himself from their bonds. He will then experience *maqam syuhud* (the level of witnessing of the heart), which overwhelms his entire intellect. Practitioners of Sufism like this can reach the level of *wahdat* in a form that is experiential and not merely based on knowledge.

According to Nursi, the right path is actually only the path of the Companions, *Tabi'in*, and the *Salihin* group who are steadfast in their faith and always recognize that the essence of everything is fixed. This is the general rule in the journey of Sufism. These people understand that the highest manners in comprehending the substance of Allah SWT is the belief that “there is nothing like unto Him” (al-Syura:11). Thus, it is clear that the expression ‘there is none but Him’ is incorrect. On the contrary, what is correct is ‘nothing exists except from Him’, because everything that comes into existence is not *qadim* (pre-eternal) in nature, as only Allah SWT is truly *qadim*.

This means that everything other than Allah is not *azaliy* (eternal)⁵⁹.

Therefore, inviting and teaching the general public about the understanding of *wahdat al-wujud* as it is understood today will bring great harm - especially if this teaching moves from the hands of the special class (*khasas*) to the general group or from the hands of scholars to the hands of the ignorant. In such cases, the truth becomes misguided. On that basis, Nursi expressed concern that there would be three great *mudarrat* (harms), as he explained in *al-Lama'at*⁶⁰. The first harm: the general understanding of *wahdat al-wujud* implies the denial of the existence of nature and other creatures apart from the substance of Allah SWT. However, when this understanding spreads to those who are negligent (*ahl al-ghaflat*), especially those who are entangled in materialism, it will lead them to deny divinity and glorify only material existence.

The second harm: understanding the existence of *wahdat al-wujud* in a way that firmly rejects any divinity other than Allah SWT to the extent of denying any existence other than Him, as well as rejecting the existence of anger and other attributes. However, in this era, materialistic understanding has taken hold of the Islamic world, and the lust for anger (*ghadab*) has become more intense especially for those who have begun to make their own lusts objects of worship besides Allah SWT.

The third harm: this understanding will give rise to seeds of thoughts and delusions that are unworthy of the substance of Allah SWT, whereas the substance of Allah is the purest, the highest, and the holiest free from change, substitution, division, and categorization. Such thinking becomes the root cause for the emergence of heretical sects.

Said Nursi's Discourse on Neo-Sufism: Four Steps to Allah SWT

The process of *taqarrub* (getting closer) to Allah (SWT), known in the discourse of the Sufi order as ascending the ladder of *ma'rifat Allah* (knowledge of Allah), consists of many forms and specific rules. Among the concepts mentioned by Nursi in *Risale-i Nur* are the concept of *al-lataif al-'asyr* (the ten steps) and the concept of the seven dignities⁶¹.

Al-lataif al-'asyr is a term used in the method of soul purification as

59 Said Nursi, *Al-Maktubat*, pp. 108-9.

60 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at* (Jakarta: Risalah Nur Press, 2018), pp. 407-8.

61 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*, p. 157.

an effort to get closer to Allah SWT, commonly practiced by Sufi institutions, especially the Naqshbandi order⁶². This concept, as described by Imam al-Rabbani⁶³, consists of *al-qalb* (heart), *al-ruh* (spirit), *al-sirr* (secret), *al-khafiy* (hidden), and *al-akhfa'* (most hidden)⁶⁴. According to Nursi, this concept represents the multi-level potentials of the soul found in every human being. The mention of the ten levels refers to the most well-known classification among Sufi scholars and serves as the foundation for recognizing other forms of potential. For instance, the five physical senses (*zahir*) are considered mirrors of five inner senses⁶⁵.

Likewise, the potentials familiar to ordinary people in the human body such as *al-wujdan* (feelings), *al-a'sab* (nerves), *al-hiss* (senses), *al-'aql* (intellect), *al-hawa* (desire), *al-quwwat al-syahawiyat* (sexual drive), and *al-quwwat al-ghadabiyat* (anger impulse) are also connected to *al-lataif al-'asyr* in Sufi discourse. This connection gives rise to other spiritual potentials such as *al-saiqat*, *al-syaiqat*, and *al-hiss qabla al-wuqu'* (the ability to sense events before they happen)⁶⁶.

Meanwhile, the dignity of the seven represents the stages of the soul's journey to understand the essence of Allah SWT⁶⁷ more intimately, corresponding to the seven levels of the human soul. This concept of soul purification is influenced by the understanding of *wujudiyat* or *wahdat al-wujud*⁶⁸.

In the Sufi discourse of the Malay Archipelago, the dignity of the seven is a crucial doctrine for practitioners of philosophical Sufism. This concept primarily draws its influence from a work by Muhammad bin Fadhlullah al-Burhanpuri al-Hindi titled *al-Tuhfat al-Mursalat ila Ruh al-Nabiy*, written around the 17th century CE⁶⁹. It was further disseminated through the writings of later Sufi scholars, including Abd Shamad al-Palimbani (d. 1788 CE)

62 Mulyati, p. 90.

63 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*, p. 548.

64 Utsman Nuri Thubbasah Utsman Nuri, *Rihlah Al-Haq Min Al-Iman Ila Al-Ihsan* (Beirut: Dar al-fikr, 2012).

65 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*, p. 157.

66 Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Lama'at*, p. 157.

67 M. Solihin, *Melacak Pemikiran Tasawuf Di Nusantara* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2005), p. 94.

68 Mohd Nidzam Abd Kadir, *Tasawuf Kontemporeri: Implementasi Tasawuf Dalam Dunia Kini* (Kuala Lumpur: Kuala Lumpur: Telaga Biru Sdn. Bhd, 2010), p. 200.

69 Alwi Shihab, *Akar Tasawuf: Antara Tasawuf Sunni Dan Tasawuf Falsafi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Iman, 2009), p. 171.

in his book *Sayr al-Salikin*⁷⁰ and Daud Fathani through his work *al-Manhal al-Safiy*⁷¹.

Among the contents of the seven dignities teachings is the recognition of seven levels of the soul, namely the dignity of *al-ahadiyyat* (Indeterminacy/Absolute Oneness), *al-wahdat* (the essence of al-Muhammadiyyah), *al-wahidiyyat* (*haqiqat al-insaniyyat*), *nur muhammad* (the spirit), the idea (*alam of misal*), the material things ('*alam ajsam*) and '*alam al-insan/martabat al-jami'ah* (the dignity of man)⁷².

In his commentary, Nursi stated that the *al-lataif al-'asyr* practiced by the *salik* (practitioners) of the Sufi order through hidden means, as well as the dignity of the seven which is practiced through the real path, are stages and paths that are very difficult for laypeople to pass. Therefore, Nursi initiated four steps to achieve the essence of Allah SWT which can be easily followed by laypeople because it is closer to the essence of Sharia (*al-haqiqat al-syar'iyyat*) than to the essence of Sufism⁷³. The four paths are *al-'ajz*, *al-faqr*, *al-syafaqat* and *al-tafakkur*.

Nursi explained the meaning and privileges of the four shortcuts that bring *salik* to the essence of Allah SWT as follows: the first way, *al-'ajz*, which means weakness, is the quality that can bring a servant to Allah SWT. This path is a very short and safe route because this *al-'ajz* will lead the servant to the *al-Habib* (Beloved) through the vessel of *ubudiyat*. This trait is actually like *al-'ishq* (longing), which reflects the nature of al-Qadir (The Omnipotent) of Allah SWT.

The second way, *al-faqr*, which means poverty (dependence and need for Allah), is a trait that can lead the servant to understand the nature of al-Rahman (The Most Merciful) of Allah SWT. What is meant by *al-'ajz* and *al-faqr* here is to realize and present that feeling before Allah SWT and not to display it in front of others (His creatures).

The third way, *al-syafaqat*, means affection. It is a quality that will lead a servant to a broad and serene path to Allah SWT, because with this quality, the *salik* will reach the nature of Allah SWT in the form of al-Rahim (The Most Compassionate).

The fourth way, *al-tafakkur*, is to reflect and use the potential of reason to worship Allah SWT optimally. This trait gives rise to a sense of '*isyq* (long-

70 Solihin, p. 94.

71 Kadir, p. 201.

72 Shihab, pp. 119–21; Solihin, pp. 94–95.

73 Said Nursi, *Al-Kalimat* (Kairo: Syarikat Sozler, 2011), p. 549.

ing) that is more prominent, more luminous, and expansive. This quality will guide a *salik* to the nature of Allah SWT as *al-Hakim* (The Most Wise).

Meanwhile, the procedure for dhikr in Said Nursi's concept is to practice all the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, to perform all the obligatory commandments of Allah SWT such as carrying out prayers by fulfilling their conditions and harmony followed by reciting dhikr as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW and abstaining from major sins⁷⁴.

This step, which is easy to practice by laypeople, is a common *tarekat* and is different from the stages in the *tarekat* of Sufism, which are long and difficult to pass. The concept initiated by Nursi here is a safe path, free from *syatahat* or any claims that exceed the limits of human power. This is because humans will inevitably encounter the qualities of *al-aiz*, *al-faqr*, and *al-taqfir* within themselves qualities that are impossible to avoid.

This path is like an easy-to-walk toll road that does not require the assumption that creation does not exist at all, as the *wahdat al-wujud* group believes when they say, "There is no *maujud* (existent) except Allah SWT," which is expressed solely to achieve tranquility in their *ubudiyat* and attain the consciousness of the heart (*al-hudur al-qalbiy*). Similarly, the followers of *wahdat al-syuhud* attempt to set aside beings to the realm of *nisyan* (forgetfulness/unconsciousness) to gain peace of belief, which is a difficult and confusing path for ordinary people⁷⁵.

Conclusion

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's new ideas and views have also refreshed the discourse of Sufism and *tarekat* in modern era. The challenges faced by religious people (ulama) in particular are getting bigger in facing an era that is entirely materialistic and even atheist. Nursi contributed to the concept of his moderate Sufism, which is easy to digest and follow by the layman, because in principle, Nursi believes that saving the faith of the ummah today is more important than the practice of the *tarekat*, which is exclusive and almost becomes a luxurious dish for the lay audience of Muslims.

The essence of faith in the principle of Nursi is like rice or other staple foods, while the practice of Sufism and *tarekat* is like fruits that are only complementary supplements. This is because the reality of the world's Muslim community today is that it needs more spiritual staples than supplements

74 Said Nursi, *Al-Kalimat*, p. 549.

75 Said Nursi, *Al-Kalimat*, p. 552.

(vitamins) for the soul. Nursi tries to restore the contemporary Muslim paradigm to refer directly to the basic values of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

Thus, the study of Said Nursi's concepts and views in the discourse of Sufism needs to continue to be explored and developed so that the practice of Sufism in the modern era today is more applicable and targeted. *Risale-i Nur*, as the main source documenting Nursi's thoughts, ideas, and reforms, needs to be discussed so that the discourse of excavating the essence of the light of the Quran continues to guide and enlighten the ummah in this age full of slander.

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