



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Importance of Nursi's Thought in Empowering Muslim Identity

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| Received: Apr 6, 2024 | This study delves into the pivotal role of Nursi's thought in bolstering Muslim identity amidst contemporary challenges. Nursi, a prominent Turkish scholar, offered profound insights into Islamic spirituality and worldview, which have significant implications for Muslims worldwide. This research aims to explore the relevance of Nursi's ideas in shaping Muslim identity in the modern era. In an increasingly globalized world marked by cultural, ideological, and socio-political pressures, Muslim communities often face identity crises. This study addresses the pressing question of how Nursi's thought can serve as a guiding framework for Muslims to navigate these challenges and reaffirm their identity rooted in Islamic principles. Furthermore, it examines the extent to which Nursi's ideas resonate with contemporary Muslim realities and aspirations. This research adopts a qualitative approach, drawing upon textual analysis of Nursi's writings and interviews with scholars well-versed in his thought. Additionally, surveys and focus group discussions within Muslim communities will be conducted to gauge perceptions and experiences related to Nursi's teachings. Comparative analysis with other influential Islamic thinkers may also be employed to enrich the understanding of Nursi's unique contributions. Preliminary findings indicate that Nursi's thought offers a comprehensive framework for empowering Muslim identity by emphasizing spiritual revival, intellectual engagement, and social responsibility. His emphasis on faith-based education, moral values, and communal solidarity resonates deeply with contemporary Muslim concerns, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. |
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INTRODUCTION

The thought of Said Nursi is an invaluable intellectual legacy for the Muslim community in their efforts to strengthen and solidify their identity. Nursi, a prominent Muslim scholar from Turkey in the 20th century, through his monumental works such as "The Risale-i Nur," highlights the importance of deep religious education, the integration of religion and science, and the development of strong moral character as the main foundation of Muslim identity. In the context of Nursi's thought in empowering the identity of the Muslim community, his holistic approach provides perspectives that enrich and strengthen the understanding of Muslims about their values, identity, and roles in society.

Through a deep analysis of Nursi's thought, we can understand how his extensive contributions shape the mindset and attitudes of Muslims towards various aspects of life, ranging from education, science, to social responsibility. In this introduction, we will explore the importance of Nursi's

thought in strengthening the Muslim identity, and its implications in building a society based on strong and inclusive Islamic values.

Brief Biography of Said Nursi

Said Nursi was a respected Islamic scholar and thinker who left an intellectual legacy that influenced contemporary Islamic thought. Born in 1877 in Turkey, Nursi was considered a prominent figure in responding to the intellectual and social challenges faced by the Muslim community of his time. Through his extensive and renowned works, especially the *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi introduced new concepts in understanding religion, science, and the relationship between religion and science.

Said Nursi was born in 1877 in the city of Nurs, Turkey. In his youth, he showed exceptional intellectual talent and a deep interest in religious studies. After completing his formal education, Nursi embarked on an intellectual journey that included studies in religion, philosophy, and science in various places in the Middle East (Mohamad et al., 2014; Zaidin et al., 2014).

One of Nursi's greatest contributions was through his monumental work, *Risale-i Nur* (Epistles of Light). In *Risale-i Nur*, Nursi discusses various important issues in Islam, ranging from the existence of God, the relationship between religion and science, to fundamental concepts in Islamic theology. His work not only drew attention among Muslims but also among non-Muslim scholars (Kuru, 2010; Yavuz, 2003; Ibrahim, 2007).

A prominent aspect of Nursi's thought is his approach to the relationship between science and religion. Nursi believed that modern science and Islam are not contradictory but complementary. He encouraged Muslims to acquire scientific knowledge alongside a firm understanding of religion, believing that holistic understanding would benefit society.

Nursi also had a strong social vision, emphasizing the importance of education, peace, and interreligious tolerance. He viewed robust education as essential for humanity to reach its highest potential, while peace and tolerance were prerequisites for the harmony and progress of society.

Although Nursi passed away in 1960, his legacy lives on through his widely researched and studied works by Islamic scholars. His thoughts continue to influence contemporary Islamic thought, especially in the context of the intellectual and social challenges faced by the Muslim world in the 21st century (Ibrahim, 2007; Unal, 2007; Zakariya, and Wardat, 2023).

In conclusion, Said Nursi was an extraordinary figure in the history of Islamic intellect, enriching religious thought and making significant contributions to promoting interreligious dialogue, peace, and a profound understanding of the relationship between religion and science.

Challenges Facing the Ottoman Empire and the Malay World in the Context of Muslim Identity

There are several major challenges faced by the Ottoman Empire in maintaining Islamic identity within its society. The same applies to the Malay World. However, in terms of impact, undoubtedly, the Ottoman Empire received a much greater impact compared to the Malay World because the Ottoman Empire was the nerve center of the entire Islamic world. Whatever befell the Ottoman Empire, its repercussions undoubtedly spread throughout the Islamic world. Among these challenges are:

i. Colonization

Around the 19th and early 20th centuries, both regions, the Malay World and the Ottoman Empire, faced strong colonial pressures. In the Malay World, Western colonization, especially by the British and Dutch, threatened Malay sovereignty and Islamic identity. Similarly, the Ottoman Empire faced

colonization by European powers such as Britain and France, which not only threatened territorial integrity but also raised doubts about Islamic identity.

ii. Local Traditions and Culture

In both the Malay World and the Ottoman Empire, challenges to local traditions and culture emerged as serious challenges. Modernization and globalization brought significant changes in social and cultural structures, which in turn created uncertainties about how to maintain Islamic identity in the face of rapid change (Ahmad, 1998; Shaw, 1977).

iii. Sovereignty and Freedom

Political sovereignty and independence became major challenges for both regions. The Ottoman Empire, once the center of Islamic power, began to weaken under the pressure of European imperialism and nationalism. Meanwhile, in the Malay World, various Islamic kingdoms and territories faced similar threats to their political independence, both from within and outside (Ahmad, 1998; Shaw, 1977; Khairudin, 2011).

iv. Religious Identity Crisis

Both regions also experienced deep religious identity crises. Amidst modernization and secularization, many Muslims in the Malay World and the Ottoman Empire experienced doubts about the values and principles of Islam in the face of changing times. This poses challenges to the preservation of Islamic identity and strong religious heritage (Alneyadi et al., 2023a; Mohamad et al., 2023).

v. Economic and Social Challenges

Economic and social challenges also plagued both regions. Global economic changes and social transformations led to economic instability and widespread social inequalities. This raises concerns about social justice and economic sustainability, which in turn affect the well-being of Muslims and the preservation of Islamic values (Kunt, 1983; Reid, 2010; Barkey, 2008).

Similarities between the Thought of Nursi and Figures from the Malay World

The thought of Said Nursi, a prominent Muslim scholar from Turkey in the 20th century, shares many similarities with leading figures from the Malay World in their efforts to strengthen the Muslim community's identity. Nursi, through his famous works such as "The Risale-i Nur," emphasizes the importance of deep religious education, the integration of religion and science, and the development of strong moral character in strengthening Muslim identity. Figures from the Malay World, such as Hamka and Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, also put forward thoughts aligned with Nursi in their efforts to strengthen the Islamic foundations in society, promote robust religious education, and integrate Islamic values into various aspects of life.

Nursi's holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of modern times has strong connections with the thinking of figures from the Malay World. Through a comparative analysis of Nursi's thought with the thought of leading figures from the Malay World, we can gain deeper insights into joint efforts to strengthen the Muslim identity, both in Turkey and in the Malay regions, in facing the complexities of modern times.

Hamka

A figure in the Malay World whose thinking closely aligns with Said Nursi regarding identity is Hamka, or Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah. Hamka was a prominent Indonesian scholar, writer, and Islamic intellectual. His holistic thinking about Islam and the strengthening of Muslim identity often parallels Nursi's thought.

Like Nursi, Hamka emphasizes the importance of deep religious education, the integration of religion and science, and the development of strong moral character in strengthening Muslim identity. He also highlights the need for solidarity and unity among Muslims, as well as the importance of economic self-reliance and social welfare (Hamka, 2005).

Hamka's works, such as "Tafsir Al-Azhar" and "Tasauf Modern," reflect similar thinking to Nursi's in efforts to strengthen the identity and spiritual strength of Muslims in facing challenges (Hamka, 2003).

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas

Another figure with thinking aligned with Said Nursi in the context of strengthening Muslim identity in the Malay World is Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. Al-Attas is a renowned Muslim scholar from Malaysia known for his works in Islamic thought and education (al-Attas, 1980; Alneyadi, 2023b).

Like Nursi, al-Attas emphasizes the importance of deep religious education and a firm understanding of Islamic values as the foundation for the development of a strong Muslim identity. He also highlights the integration of knowledge and religion and the need to preserve the intellectual and spiritual heritage of Islam amidst globalization and modernization.

Al-Attas's works, such as "Islam and Secularism" and "The Concept of Education in Islam," depict his vision of the development of Muslim identity rooted in a deep understanding of religious teachings and traditional wisdom, in line with Nursi's thought (al-Attas, 1993).

Below is a more in-depth comparison between the thought of Said Nursi, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, and Hamka (Wardat et al., 2024; Nursi, 2007a; al-Attas, 1993, Hamka, 2005).

| Aspects of Thought | Said Nursi | Al-Attas | Hamka |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Religious Education | Nursi emphasizes the importance of deep religious education as the primary foundation for understanding and strengthening faith. | Al-Attas suggests that education should emphasize deep religious understanding and reinforce faith and moral character. Al- | Hamka highlights the importance of strong religious education in building a solid foundation of faith within society. |
| Integration of Religion & Science | Nursi views that religion and science are not contradictory, but rather complementary. Science can be used to deepen the understanding of religion. | Al-Attas emphasizes the integration of religion and science as the foundation for the development of knowledge rooted in Islamic values. | Hamka advocates for the importance of integrating religion and science in the understanding and practice of everyday life. |
| Muslim Identity | Nursi emphasizes the need to strengthen the Muslim identity through a deep understanding of Islamic values, solidarity among the community, and beneficial social activities. | Al-Attas highlights the importance of understanding and maintaining a strong Muslim identity, based on Islamic values and a rich intellectual heritage. | Hamka stresses the importance of strong moral character and awareness of Muslim identity as crucial factors in strengthening the nation's identity. |

The Thought of Said Nursi and Its Relation to Muslim Identity

The thought of Said Nursi has been a valuable source of inspiration for Muslims in strengthening and preserving their identity in the context of constantly changing times. As a visionary Muslim scholar, Nursi not only emphasizes the importance of understanding Islamic teachings deeply but also advocates for the integration of religious values with science and the development of strong moral character. In the context of Muslim identity, Nursi's thought provides a solid foundation for understanding an inclusive, resilient, and relevant Islamic identity in facing the challenges of modern times. In this introduction, we will explore how Nursi's thought is closely related to the formation and strengthening of Muslim identity, as well as its impact on shaping the views and attitudes of Muslims towards various contemporary issues. The connection can be seen in the following aspects:

i. Tawheed and the Greatness of God

Said Nursi's thought is closely related to strengthening the concept of Tawheed (the Oneness of God) in Islamic understanding. Nursi emphasizes the importance of understanding and honoring the greatness of God as the core of Muslim identity. In his works, he highlights how important it is to understand and glorify Allah as the sole creator and ruler of the universe.

ii. Relationship between Religion and Science

Nursi emphasizes the importance of integrating religion and science in the lives of Muslims. For him, science and religion are not contradictory but complementary. This idea reinforces a Muslim identity rooted in a holistic understanding of life, where science is used to deepen understanding of religion (Nursi, 2007b).

iii. Appreciation of Diversity in Unity

Nursi views diversity as part of the divine plan that reflects the greatness of Allah. For him, Muslim identity involves appreciation of diversity within the unity of the community. He emphasizes the need for mutual respect among people of different religions and ethnicities as an integral part of an inclusive Islamic identity.

iv. Priority of Worship and Obedience

Nursi's thought also emphasizes the importance of worship and obedience in building a strong Muslim identity. He emphasizes that consistent worship practices and obedience to religious teachings are the primary foundation for the spiritual and moral development of Muslims (Yavuz, 2003; Unal, 2007).

v. Personal and Social Development

Nursi encourages Muslims to contribute to personal and social development. For him, Muslim identity is not only related to the spiritual dimension but also to social responsibility in creating a fair, harmonious, and just society.

vi. Emphasis on Noble Character

Finally, Nursi emphasizes the importance of noble character in shaping a good Muslim identity. For him, moral integrity and good behavior are characteristic of a true Muslim. Therefore, in his works, he often emphasizes the importance of practicing Islamic ethical values in daily life (Ibrahim, 2007; Kuru, 2010).

Steps to Strengthening the Identity of the Malay Nation Based on the Thought of Said Nursi

In the context of efforts to strengthen the identity of the Malay nation, the thought of Said Nursi offers valuable and relevant insights. Nursi, through his profound works like "Risale-i Nur," highlights the

importance of robust religious education, integration of religion and science, and the development of strong moral character as foundations for strengthening Muslim identity. Through his holistic approach, Nursi teaches values that promote unity among Muslims, appreciation of diversity, and economic self-reliance. In this introduction, we will explore the steps that the Malay Nation can take to strengthen their identity, referring to Nursi's thought as a source of inspiration and guidance in facing the challenges of modern times. Some of these steps include:

i. Value-Based Religious Education

The Malay Nation needs to strengthen its education system that encourages a deep understanding of Islamic values. This includes introducing curricula that cover teachings on tawheed, noble character, and principles of Islamic ethics in both formal and informal education settings.

ii. Promotion of Diversity and Interfaith Tolerance

The Malay Nation should promote appreciation for religious and cultural diversity as part of the national identity. This involves initiatives to build interfaith dialogue, strengthen cooperation among religious communities, and respect differences as sources of cultural richness.

iii. Development of Economic and Social Self-Reliance

Following Nursi's principles of self-reliance, the Malay Nation needs to focus on sustainable and inclusive economic development. This involves investing in economic infrastructure, human resource development, and empowering communities to combat poverty and social inequality (Nursi, 2007a; Ibrahim, 2007; Unal, 2007; Jarrah et al., 2022).

iv. Strengthening Moral Leadership and Ethics

The Malay Nation should strengthen moral leadership based on Islamic values inspired by Nursi's thought. This includes emphasizing noble conduct, integrity, and justice in the actions of government, community leaders, and individuals.

v. Increased Awareness and Social Engagement

A key step is to increase public awareness of their role in building and strengthening the nation's identity. This can be achieved through awareness campaigns, voluntary activities, and community development initiatives that promote values of solidarity, unity, and social responsibility (Kuru, 2010; Nursi, 2007b; Yavuz, 2003).

CONCLUSION

Thus, the importance of Said Nursi's thought in strengthening the Muslim community's identity is evident through his profound contributions in religious education, integration of science and Islamic values, and the development of strong moral character. Through his emphasis on Muslim unity, appreciation of diversity, and economic empowerment, Nursi leaves behind an intellectual legacy that is relevant and inspirational for current and future Muslim generations. Therefore, understanding and applying Nursi's thought is not only an intellectual task but also a moral obligation in facing the challenges of modern times and strengthening the Muslim community's identity as meaningful contributors to the development of a fair, harmonious, and just society.

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