



## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PRACTICES OF THE PROPHET (SUNNAH) FOR MODERN PEOPLE:**

### **A Study of the Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi**

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#### **Abstract**

*This article discusses Nursi's ideas on significance of the Practices of the Prophet for modern people. In the present day, many modern people deal with some problems such as existential restlessness (existential vacuum), moral degradation, spiritual crisis and so on. On the other hand, according Said Nursi, Practices of the Prophet are all highly beneficial remedies for sicknesses of the spirit, mind, and heart, and particularly for social sicknesses. Accordingly, Practices of the Prophet could give the best solution for modern people problems, both individual sicknesses and social sicknesses. Before proposing Said Nursi's perspective about significance of sunna, the paper forwards epistemological questions: How were the meaning and function of sunna according Said Nursi? How are the urgent problems of modern people? What is the significance of Practices of the Prophet for modern people in the view of Said Nursi? By using sociological approach, this article analyzes the significance of the Practices of the Prophet in our era and in the future. Accordingly, this paper would be a valuable work for islamic studies since it can make a significant contribution to Practices of the Prophet as a solution for our problems in the present day and in the future.*

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini membahas gagasan Nursi tentang pentingnya Sunnah Nabi bagi orang-orang modern. Pada masa sekarang, banyak orang modern menghadapi beberapa masalah seperti kegelisahan eksistensial (kekosongan eksistensial), degradasi moral, krisis spiritual dan sebagainya. Di sisi lain, menurut Said Nursi, Sunnah Nabi adalah solusi yang sangat bermanfaat untuk penyakit jiwa, pikiran, dan hati, dan terutama untuk penyakit sosial. Dengan demikian, Sunnah Nabi dapat memberikan solusi terbaik untuk masalah orang modern, baik penyakit individu maupun penyakit sosial. Sebelum mengajukan perspektif Said Nursi tentang signifikansi sunnah, makalah ini mengajukan pertanyaan epistemologis: Bagaimana makna dan fungsi sunnah menurut Said Nursi? Bagaimana masalah mendesak orang modern? Apa pentingnya Sunnah Nabi bagi orang modern dalam pandangan Said Nursi? Dengan menggunakan pendekatan sosiologis, artikel ini menganalisis pentingnya Sunnah Nabi di zaman kita dan di masa depan. Oleh karena itu, makalah ini akan menjadi pekerjaan yang berharga untuk studi Islam karena dapat memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan untuk Sunnah Nabi sebagai solusi untuk masalah kita di masa sekarang dan di masa depan.

**Keywords:** *Significance, Sunnah of the Prophet, Modern People, Said Nursi*

### **A. Introduction**

Certainly there are some articles explore *the Messages or Practices the Prophet*. One of this, by Thomas Michel. Michel writes about: *The Prophet: a Blessing for Humankind*. In the begining of this article, he compares between Jesus' dan Muhammad's teachings. Eventhough he finds many similarities between the Christian and the Islamic understanding of prophecy, there are also some differences between both of them. He regards the difference that make each religious community unique, distinguished from all others.

Afterward, Michel describe three messages of Muhammad as a blessing for humankind. Firstly, the prophet bring to mankind God's teaching on people's duties toward God, toward their neighbor, dan towards themselves. In other words, the Prophets offer God's guidance on how people should behave and how society should be structured. Thus, the Prophets teach that people should approach God humbly, recognizing each one's limitations of knowledge, strength, and goodness, and serve God as a faithful servant. This is what the Qur'an means by saying believers should be guided by God-given morals.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Michel, *Insight from the Risale-I Nur* (USA: Tughra Books, 2014), p. 213.

Secondly, speaking to the heart. A second blessing of the Prophet for humankind, according to the *Risale-i Nur*, is that prophetic teaching is not limited to offering information to the mind about religious subjects, but goes beyond that to teach the human heart about God. Of itself, the acquisition of information or cognitive knowledge cannot change attitudes, cannot transform people, and cannot provide people with the courage and strength to change their lives.

This can only come about by a change of heart, and this is what Prophetic teaching is all about. In the view of Said Nursi, of all the teaching of the Prophet, the most exalted is that of God's oneness. Although through philosophy the mind might arrive at a concept of monotheism, such knowledge is able to reside in the heart only among those who follow Prophetic guidance.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, revealing the mystery of life. A third way in which the Prophets have benefitted humankind is by revealing the mystery of life itself, as a gift flowing from the eternal life of God. According to Nursi: The essential nature of life also looks to the pillar of 'belief in the Prophets', and proves it indirectly. The universe was created for life, and life is the greatest manifestation of the Pre-Eternal Self-Subsistent One. His perfect inscription, His most beautiful work of art. Eternal Life shows itself through the sending of Prophet and revealing of scriptures, for if there were no Books or Prophet, that Pre-Eternal Life would not be known.<sup>3</sup>

Although Michel explores the *the Messages or Practices the Prophet* as a blessing for humankind, he doesn't analyze the significance of the Practices of the Prophet (Sunna) according to Said Nursi for Modern People yet.

## **B. The Meaning and Function of Sunna**

The Practices of the Prophet (Sunna) is the record of the messenger's every act, word, and confirmation, as well as the second source of Islamic legislation and life (the Qur'an is the first-one).<sup>4</sup> God sent the Prophet Muhammad as His messenger to instruct all people how to obey and to follow His guidance. What the prophet did was to explain, to inform and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 215–16.

<sup>4</sup> Amir Sarifuddin, *Ushul Fiqh Jilid 1* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2008), p. 27.

to give some examples. Everything from the prophet was considered as the sunna or prophet's tradition, and it is the second source of Islamic teaching. Therefore, what the prophet did and said and also what his companions did and he agreed to all of these are the sources of Islam.<sup>5</sup>

In Said Nursi's view, there are degrees in the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH): some are compulsory; these may not be given up. Another sort are voluntary and these are of two sorts: one sort are those Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) that concern worship. The other sort are called "conduct" (adab). This sort is to follow the Messenger's (Peace and blessings be open him) actions in customary, natural acts and dealings, which are known through unanimous reports. For example, there are numerous Practices showing the conduct of speaking, and explaining the principles of the conduct of eating, drinking, and sleeping, and concerning social relations. Practices of this sort are called "conduct". One who follows this conduct transforms his habitual actions into worship and receives significant effulgence from the conduct. Practising the smallest aspect of such conduct recalls God's Noble Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him), and impart a light to the heart.<sup>6</sup>

According to Said Nursi, there are many functions of Sunna. But here, I would like to mention some of them. *Firstly*, as spiritual compass. As spiritual compass, the Practices of the Prophet could save human being from doubts, scruples, and anxieties.<sup>7</sup> Man has so many disposition in this life. One of their disposition is to attach their heart, feeling, and thought to this world only.<sup>8</sup> They hesitate, neglect, and even forget the life of hereafter.

But according to the Prophet, this worldly life is just a short stage of our life. Then there is the other life. The first life and the second life are separated by the death stage, which is a transitory stage between the stage of the first and the stage of the second life. The type of the second life a person deserves depends on his deeds in the first life. At the end of the death stage

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<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Abu Zahrah, *Ushul Fiqih Abu Zahrah Also Divided Sunna into Three Categories: Sunna Qauliyah, Sunna Fi'liyah, and Sunna Taqririyah.*, trans. Saefullah Ma'shum (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2005), p. 149–60. Abu Zahrah also divided sunna into three categories: sunna *qauliyah*, sunna *fi'liyah*, and sunna *taqririyah*.

<sup>6</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Flashes* (Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 2000), p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>8</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words* (Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 2002), p. 604.

comes the Day of Judgment. On this day, God rewards or punishes people according to their deeds in the first life.

The practices of the Prophet, tells us about this future with all of its mysteries. In Nursi's word: Our Prophet speaks truly about a future in comparison with which the future in this world is like a tiny mirage. And he tells most seriously of a happiness in comparison with which all worldly happiness is but a fleeting flash of lightning in relation to an eternal sun.<sup>9</sup> From this perspective, the Practices of the Prophet become spiritual compass in spiritual journey.

*Secondly*, as guidance, that is to guide people to know and service of God.<sup>10</sup> We were not created only to eat, drink, and reproduce; these are natural fact of our life and natural needs. Our main purpose is to recognize and serve God. All Prophets were sent to show us how to do this: *We never sent a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: "There is no god but I, so serve Me"*.<sup>11</sup> And: *"We sent forth among every nation a Messenger, saying: "Serve God, and eschew taghut [idol and tyrants, Satan and his followers]"*. *Then some of them God guided and some were justly disposed to misguidance*".<sup>12</sup>

God sent Prophets to guide us to His service. Their missions were the same. However, whereas the earlier Prophets were sent to their own people and for a set period, Prophets Muhammad was sent as a mercy to humanity and jinn, and for all time.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the Practices of the Prophet can give us guidance to distinguish what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is allowable and what is prohibited, what is the mistaken path and what is the right path.

*Thirdly*, to be the best example for all human being. From the Practices of the Prophet, we know the best example for whatever we do in this life. We know God, the creator, from the Practices of the Prophet. They taught us love and brotherhood. They asked all muslims to be polite and to be

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>10</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Al-Mathnawi Al-'Arabi Al-Nuri*, ed. Ihsan Qasim al-Salihi (Istanbul: Sozler Yayinevi, 1999), p. 55. Here, Nursi pointed out that there are three great and universal things which make known to us our Sustainer: The book of the universe, the Seal of the Prophet, and the Qur'an of Mighty Stature.

<sup>11</sup> Qur'an, 21: 25.

<sup>12</sup> Qur'an, 16: 36.

<sup>13</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Quran* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), p. 48.

kind to others. They asked all muslims to love children and to respect elders. They stopped people from doing harm to others and gave the best example to all muslims to be always truthful. They taught all muslims how to behave at home, how to behave with our parents, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbours, and strangers. Indeed, the Practices of the Prophet are the best example for all men and women in all parts of the world and for all times. To put in Nursi's word: "The most acceptable, the most direct, and the shortest among the ways of obeying Him is without doubt the way God's Beloved showed and folloed."<sup>14</sup>

*Fourthly*, to establish balance. At a time when some people lived in monasteries and others drowned in luxury, Prophets Muhammad came with the Qur'anic intruction: *Seek the Last Abode amidst that which God has given you, and do not forget your portion of the present world.*<sup>15</sup> All Prophets came to establish balance between the material and spiritual life, reason and soul, this world and the next, and indulgence and abstinence. While we should declare all that God has bestowed on us to show our gratitude and due praise for Him: *And as for your Lord's blessing and bounty, declare it,*<sup>16</sup> we must not forget that we will have to account for every good we enjoy (*Then you shall be questioned that day concering every goog you enjoy.*<sup>17</sup>

In Nursi's view, because the Prophet was created with a most moderate character and in the most perfect form, his actions and rest all proceeded on moderation and equanimity.<sup>18</sup> Nursi gave some examples about this moderation: for example, free of willness and stupidity, which are the excess and deficiency, like the corruption and darkness, of the power of reason, his reasoning faculty always functioned with wisdom, the middle way and means of moderation. Similarly, far from rage and cowardice, which are the corruption of the power of anger and its excess and deficiency, his power of anger was always employed with sacred courage, which is the middle way and means of moderation of that power. And so too, purified of licentiousness and frigidity, which are the excess and deficiency of the power of animal appetites and its corruption, his power of passion always

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<sup>14</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 84.

<sup>15</sup> Qur'an, 28:77.

<sup>16</sup> Qur'an, 93:11.

<sup>17</sup> Qur'an, 102: 8.

<sup>18</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 92.

took chasteness, the means of moderation of that power, as guide, at the degree of maximum virtuousness.<sup>19</sup>

*Fifthly*, to cure spiritual problems. For Nursi, the Practices of the Prophet not only taught people how to behave with our God, other people, and universe, but also could cure mental, moral, and spiritual problems. Nursi really believed that the Practices of the Prophet are all highly beneficial remedies for sicknesses of the spirit, mind, and heart, and particularly for social sicknesses, and that matters put forward by philosophy cannot take their place.<sup>20</sup>

*Sixthly*, to keep Prophet's traditions when they are corrupted. It is so important for us to keep the Practices of the Prophet when innovations are prevalent. According to Nursi, following the Practices of the Prophet is certainly most valuable, and it is even more valuable to follow them when innovations are prevalent. Particularly when the Prophet's Community is corrupted, to comply with a small matter of conduct of the Practices signifies a powerful belief and fear of God. Following the Practices directly recalls the Noble Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him), and such recollection and remembrance are transformed into recollection of the Divine Presence. The moment the Practices complied with in even least significant dealings, in the conduct of eating, drinking, or sleeping, such habitual, natural acts become meritorious acts worship in compliance with the Shari'a. For through such common place actions a person thinks of following God's Noble Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) and conceives of them as conduct of the Shari'a. Then he recalls that he is the owner of the Shari'a. And from that his heart turns to Almighty God, the True Lawgiver, and he gains a sort of awareness of the Divine Presence and a sense of worship.<sup>21</sup>

*Seventhly*, to gain happiness in this world and in the life hereafter. For Nursi, the Practices of the Prophet are so comprehensive and true guidance to be followed by all people. Whoever tries to follow the Practices of the Prophet, he will gain complete advantages for this life and for the life hereafter. Because, the Practices of the Prophet, show us how to be

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

successful for eternal life and for worldly life.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the Practices of the Prophet, not only tell us how to get success in this world, but also how to get success in the next world. Thus, by following the Practices of the Prophet, we will gain the true happiness: happiness in this world and in the life hereafter.

### **C. The Urgent Problems of Modern People**

There are so many urgent problems of modern people. But, here I want to mention some of them that are relevant with the Practices of the Prophet.

#### **1. Spiritual Crisis.**

From Martin E. P. Seligman's point of view, The Director of the positive psychology Network, so many modern people trap in spiritual crisis. The belief that we can rely on shortcuts to happiness, joy, rapture, comfort, and ecstasy, rather than be entitled to these feelings by the exercise of personal strengths and virtues, leads to legions of people who in the middle of great wealth are starving spiritually.<sup>23</sup>

Before Seligman's view about the problems of modern people, Seyyed Hosein Nasr noted that spiritual crisis was one of the urgent problems of modern people. According to Nasr, the world is still seen as devoid of a spiritual horizon, not because there is no such horizon present, but because he who views the contemporary landscape is most often the man who lives at the rim of the wheel of existence and therefore views all things from the periphery. He remains indifferent to the spoken and completely oblivious of the axis or the Centre, which nevertheless remains ever accessible to him through them.<sup>24</sup> For Nasr, modern man has burned his hand in the fire which he himself kindled when he allowed himself to forget who he is.<sup>25</sup>

In the words of Thomas Moore, most modern people have lost their soul. For Thomas Moore, the great malady of the twentieth century, implicated in all of our troubles and affecting us individually and socially, is "loss of soul". When soul is neglected, it doesn't just go away; it appears

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup> Martin E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness* (New York: Free Press, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Pight of Modern Man* (London: Longman Group, 1975), p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *and Sufi Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1981), p. 164–70.

symptomatically in obsessions, addictions, violence, and loss of meaning. Our temptation is to isolate these symptoms or to try to eradicate them one by one; but the root problem is that we have lost our wisdom about the soul, even our interest in it.<sup>26</sup> Even, Thomas Moore noted some crisis of modern people, such as emptiness, meaninglessness, vague depression, disillusionment about marriage, family, and relationship, a loss of values, yearning for personal fulfillment, and a hunger for spirituality.<sup>27</sup>

According to some experts, there are some reasons that trigger spiritual crisis. *First*, pleasure-oriented. Modern people only make their orientation to physical pleasure. A contemporary psychiatrist from New York, Dan Baker, describes that in the third millenium there are so many riches looking for physical joy, but they don't find out satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, most of them feel boring in their lives. Psychologist calls this phenomenon as hedonic treadmill. Hedonic treadmill means that the more someone consumes physical needs, the more he needs them.<sup>28</sup>

*Second*, riches/money-oriented, that is orientation to rich or collect money only. After doing reasearch more than ten years, David Myers reports about American people in his unique book under the title: *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty*. Myers noted that American has good schools, good livings, a big library in each village, good food, guaranted security, and good air. They have big malls, beautiful recreation place, pretty women, big living and wide chance of bussiness. But in the midst of the prosperity, Myers find out misery. In one chapter of that book, Myers describes American paradox under unique title too: *money and misery*.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, Myers finds out the same phenomenon in other countries, such as Canada, Swedia, Germany, France, and England. Financially they are rich people, but they are bankrupt spiritually. For they, money and wealth

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), p. xi.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

<sup>28</sup> Dan Baker and Cameron Stauth, *What Happy People Know* (New York: St. Martin Griffin, 2003), p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> David Myers, *The American Paradox: Spiritual Hunger in an Age of Plenty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 136–37.

are not solution of the problem, but part of the problem it self. Indeed, money and wealth can not buy happiness.<sup>30</sup>

*Third*, success-oriented. Nowadays many people believe that they could become happy if they are successful in their career. Daniel Goleman makes reasearch to top executive that are successful in their career. Goleman finds out that so many top executive become successful materially and socially but they fail spiritually. The drive to establish ourselves and make our mark in the world is most urgent in our twenties and thirties, and into our forties.

But by our mid-forties or early fifties people typically reevaluate their goals, because they often come to the radical realization that life is limited. With this acknowledgment of mortality comes a reconsideration of what really matters.<sup>31</sup> These people begin trying to find more fulfilling livelihoods. In Goleman's word, that is because they don't have self-awareness and don't follow their innerrudder. Consequently, they feel spiritual crisis, existential vacuum.

## **2. Moral Decadence (Moral Degradation)**

Moral decadence can be described as the deterioration or decline of moral and ethical traditions. This happens when other things like vices are put before people, honesty, integrity and moral values.<sup>32</sup> This includes drug, abuse due to peer pressure, criminal activities, corruption, suicide, and many more. Life in the twenty firstcentury is really different than before. Unfortunately, we will feel difficult to see anything positive in all developments of or way of life. Technology becomes better and makes our life easier, but most people don't become better in their morality.

Many people commit suicide, corruption, drug abuse, free sex, drinking, and so on. In big cities, the changes of social life have continuously increased the number of teenage suicides. Those who are not quite intelligent feel unhappy in high competitions for jobs and education. This kind of feeling often leads them to negative thought. They think that is not worth living. They feel worried and sometimes frustrated of being unable to meet

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<sup>30</sup> David Myers, *The Pursuit of Happiness* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), p. 40.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Muhammad Somali, *Relativisme Etika*, trans. Zaimul Am (Jakarta: Serambi, 2005).

various kind of requirements. These young people feel hopeless and helpless. They do not know how to find a better way giving up.<sup>33</sup>

The phenomenon of corruption has complex reasons that include flaws in legal system, the lack of democratic traditions and political accountability, social and economic difficulties, and low pay for public officials. Corruption affects people's lives in a multitude of ways. In the worst cases, corruption cost people's lives. In countless other cases, it costs their freedom, health, or money. It is becoming an international problem due to increasing level of globalization and international trade.<sup>34</sup>

Youth drug abuse is a serious problem also nowadays in many cultures. Not only is illegal drug use on the rise, but children as young as ten years old are experimenting with alcohol and tobacco. The widespread availability of drugs means teenagers are faced with the temptation to experiment. Drugs are used as a means of expressing dissatisfaction with the pressures they face in society.

The effects of drugs abuse are well known. Many young people's talents are wasted, and addiction to hard drugs can coast a user his or her life. Furthermore, those who drink and drive may be involved in fatal road accidents. The cost to society is great, and enormous amounts of money are spent on convicting drug dealers and on education programmes. Furthermore, most young children commit free sex in most developed and developing countries. In short, according to Hassan Hanafi, nowadays there are acute value crisis or ethical crisis both in western countries and in eastern countries.<sup>35</sup>

Actually Said Nursi confesses that western civilization caused immorality or moral degradation. Said Nursi describes that western civilization bases on five negative principles:

“Its point of support is force instead of right, and the mark of force is aggression and hostility, and their result is treachery.

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<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Lang, *Bahkan Malaikat Pun Bertanya*, trans. Abdullah Ali (Jakarta: Serambi, 2002), p. 303.

<sup>34</sup> Amien Rais, “Here I Conclude about Corruption,” in *Selamatkan Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: PPSK Press, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> Hassan Hanafi, *Islam in the Modern World*, vol. II (Cairo: Dar Keeba Bookshop, 2000), p. 410–21.

Its goal is mean self-interest of virtue, and the mark of self-interest is rivalry and dispute, and their result, crime.

Its law of life is conflict instead of co-operation, and the mark of conflict is this: contention and mutual repulsion, and their result, poverty.

Its principle for relations between peoples is racialism, which flourishes through harming others and is nourished through devouring others.

The mark of negative nationalism and racialism is ghastly clashes, disastrous collisions, and their result, annihilation.

The fifth is this: its alluring service is to excite lust and the appetites of the soul and facilitate the gratification of whims, and their result is vice.

The mark of lust and passion is always this: they transform man into a beast, changing his character; they deform him, perverting his humanity.

If most of these civilized people were turned inside out, you would see their characters in the form of apes and foxes, snakes, bears, and swine.”<sup>36</sup>

#### **D. The Significance of Sunna for Modern People**

*First*, spiritual peace contribution for modern people. As mentioned above, one of the urgent problem of modern people is spiritual crisis. This problem is caused by their loving to this world so much. Many modern people trap in pleasure-oriented, money-oriented, and success-oriented. They put and cling their heart to this world. That’s why they feel spiritual crisis.

Whereas the Practices of the Prophet taught us to love God only. In Said Nursi’s view, man was created with an infinite innate love for the universe’s Creator. For included in human nature is love of beauty, worship of perfection, and love of bestowal. Man’s love increases in accordance with the degrees of beauty, perfection, an bestowal, reaching the furthest degrees of ecstatic love.<sup>37</sup>

For Said Nursi, since inherent in human nature is such an infinite capacity to love bestowal, beauty, and perfection; and since the universe’s Creator possesses infinite sacred beauty, the existence of which is self-

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<sup>36</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, p. 745.

<sup>37</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 89.

evidently established by His works apparent in the universe; and since He possesses infinite holy perfection, the existence of which is necessarily proved by the embroideres of His art to be seen in beings; and since He is the owner of infinite bounties, the existence of which is certainly, indeed, self-evidently established by the infinite varieties of His bestowal and bounties to be observed in living creatures; these surely demand infinite love from man, who is the most comprehensive, the most needy, the most thoughtful, and the most yearning of conscious being.<sup>38</sup>

But when man only puts his heart's infinite capacity to this temporal world, he will suffer, they will face existential vacuum (spiritual crisis), the fundamental crisis of humanity. Said Nursi described this principle in logical words: "In respect of the comprehensiveness oh his nature, man is connected with virtually all beings, and in addition, a boundless capacity to love has been included in his nature. For these reasons man nurtures love towards all being. As he loves the huge world as though it were a house, so he loves eternal Paradise as though it were a garden. However, the beings he loves do not stop, they depart, and he constantly suffers the pain of separation.

That boundless love of his becomes the means of boundless torment. The fault in suffering such torment is his, for his heart infinite capacity to love was given so that he might direct it toward One possessing an infinite undying beauty. By misusing it and spending it on transitory beings, he has done wrong and suffers the punishment for his fault due to the pain of separation."<sup>39</sup> So human beings are not only material being, but also spiritual being. In Karen Armstrong's words, this because human beings are spiritual animals. They are not only *Homo sapiens*, but also *Homo religiosus*.<sup>40</sup>

Here, Said Nursi gives us subtle reason: because we have infinite innate love for our God, when we put our love just for this world, we will suffer, we will feel spiritual crisis. In onother of his writing, Said Nursi explains that if man relies on his ego, and making worldly life his goal, attempts to taste temporary pleasures while struggling to make his living, he becomes submerged within an extremely constricted sphere, then departs. All the members, systems, and faculties given him will testify against him at the resurrection and will bring

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29–30.

<sup>40</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), p. 3.

a suit against him. Whereas if he knows himself to be a guest and spends the capital of his life within the sphere of permission of the Generous One of Whom he is the guest, he will strive for a long, eternal life within a broad sphere, then take his rest and ease. And later, he may rise to the highest of the high.<sup>41</sup>

Because all the wonderful faculties given to men were not for this insignificant worldly, but for an everlasting life of great significance. Therefore, if we keep using our wonderful faculties from God for this insignificant worldly life only, Nursi states in convincing word: *in short who ever makes this fleeting life his purpose and aim is in fact in Hell even if apparently in paradise.*<sup>42</sup> And “One who recognizes Him and obeys Him is fortunate even if he is in prison. While one who forgets Him is wretched and prisoner even if he resides in a palace.”<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, when we love this temporal world and we regard this world eternal, it is like we love the image that appears in the mirror. Said Nursi explains this comparison in the best style: “If you have a mirror in your hand which you hold up to a house or a town or a garden, the image of the house, town or garden will appear in the mirror. If the tiniest movement or smallest change occur to the mirror, the images become confused and distorted. The fact that the actual house, town or garden outside the mirror continue and are constant is of no avail to you, for the house in the mirror in your hand and your town and garden are only in the scale and proportions which the mirror gives you.

Your life is the mirror. The support and mirror of your world and its centre is your life. Every minute it is possible that the house and town and garden will die and be destroyed, their condition is such that any minute they may collapse on your head and your doomsday will come. Since it is thus, do not burden this life and world of yours with loads they cannot raise and support!”<sup>44</sup>

From this analogy, Said Nursi suggests us to love God only. But this doesn't mean that we cannot love other things like money, our house, our

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<sup>41</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, p. 333.

<sup>42</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Short Words*, Trans. Sukran Vahide, (Istanbul: Sozler nesriyat, 1998), p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>44</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 159.

families, our friends and companions, fruit, delicious foods and the like. We can love all these things in the name of God, for the sake of God. I cannot express about this principle as beautiful as Said Nursi does:

“We do not tell you not to love the things you enumerated, but rather to love them for God Almighty’s sake and in the name of His love. For example, to love delicious foods and luscious fruits as being the bounty of God Almighty, the All-Merciful and Compassionate One, is to love His Names of All-Merciful and Bestower of Bounties, and, moreover, takes on the meaning of thanks. This love is to seek gain contentedly within the sphere of the licit, which shows that it is not only for the sake of the instinctual soul but is in the name of the All-Merciful One. It is to eat thoughtfully and with gratitude.

In short: Love this world and the creatures in it as pointing to a meaning beyond themselves, like a word. Do not love them just for themselves. Say, “How beautifully they have been made”. Do not say, “How beautiful they are”. Do not give any opportunity to other loves to enter into your inner heart because the inner heart is the mirror of the Eternally Besought One and pertains only to Him. Say, “O God, grant us love for You, and love for that which will draw us closer to You”.<sup>45</sup> Thus when we love all these things in the name of God, it means that we love our God too.

But in Said Nursi’s outlook, love of God has to be followed by following the Practices of Muhammad. Why? “For to love God is to do what pleases Him, and the things that please Him are manifested in most perfect form in the person of Muhammad (PBUH)”.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, for Said Nursi, there are two aspects of resembling Muhammad’s (PBUH) actions and deeds. (First): Obeying Almighty God’s commands in respect of loving Him and within the bounds of what pleases Him necessitates following them, for the most perfect leader in such matters is the person of Muhammad (PBUH).

*Second:* Since the person of Muhammad (PBUH) is a most important means to innumerable Divine favours for man, he is surely worthy of boundless love for the sake of Almighty God. If man is capable of resembling someone he loves, by nature he wants to do so. This definitely necessitates that those who love God’s Beloved try to resemble him by following his Illustrious Practices.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, p. 670.

<sup>46</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 90.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90–91.

Said Nursi based his argument on this verse: *"If you do love God, follow me: God will love you."*<sup>48</sup> From this verse, he concludes: "Since you love God, you will act in the manner He loves. To do that, you must resemble the one God loves, and he may be resembled by following him. Whenever you follow him, God will love you too."<sup>49</sup> From all argumentations above, it is clear that if we want to cure our problem in spiritual crisis nowadays, we must practice the Practices of the Prophet.

*Second*, ethical contribution to the society undergoing moral degradation. The Practices of the Prophet with their universal values, I really believe can give real contribution and guidance for modern people. For our Prophet brought the divine message and gave the best examples in all aspect of life to all mankind, not only to any one people or to a particular geographical area. God sent His beloved Prophet Muhammad to all peoples, all countries, and all the time. That's why his masses therefore including all humanity. God has declared in Qur'an: *"We have not sent you but as a universal (Messenger) to men,"*<sup>50</sup> and *"We sent you not, but as a mercy to all the worlds."*<sup>51</sup> And our beloved Prophet stated: *"I was sent to perfect morality."*<sup>52</sup>

If we consider from this point of view, we will realize that whatever our Prophet Practices is not only universal values, but also beneficial for all humanity in all the time. In one of his writing, *Letters*, Said Nursi gives the reason about the universality of the Practices of the Prophet: "Since the highest and best moral qualities, the most elevated and perfect attributes, and the most precious and acceptable virtues were present in his self, his duties, and his religion, for sure, that being was the exemplar, model, personification, and master of the perfections and elevated moral qualities in beings. In which case, these perfections in his self, his duty, and his religion form a support for his veracity and truthfulness so powerful that it can in no way be shaken".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Qur'an, 3: 31.

<sup>49</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 89.

<sup>50</sup> Qur'an, 34: 28.

<sup>51</sup> Qur'an, 21: 107.

<sup>52</sup> Quraish Shihab, *Membaca Sirah Nabi Muhammad Saw* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2011), p. 110.

<sup>53</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Letters 1928-1932*, trans. Eng (Istanbul: Reyhan Offset, 2001), p. 231.

From above we know that Said Nursi bases his ethical concepts on Qur'an and the best morality of the Prophet Muhammad. He also connects his ethics from Qur'an to civilization and names it Qur'anic civilization. He expresses five positive principles of Qur'anic civilization in conclusive words:

“Its point of support is truth instead of force, and the constant mark of truth is justice and balance. Security and well-being result from these, and villainy disappears.

Its aim is virtue instead of self-interest, and the mark of virtue is love and mutual attraction. Happiness results from these, and enmity disappears.

Its principles in life is co-operation instead of conflict and killing, and its mark is unity and solidarity, and the community is strengthened.

Its service takes the form of guidance and direction instead of lust and passion. And the mark of guidance is progress and prosperity in way befitting humanity;

The spirit is illumined and perfected in the way it requires. The way it unifies the masses repulses racialism and negative nationalism;

It establishes in place of them the bonds of religion, patriotic relations, ties of class, and the brotherhood of belief.”<sup>54</sup>

Then Said Nursi also bases his ethics on belief: belief in God and in the hereafter.<sup>55</sup> For if this belief does not apply in society, vices like malice, self-interest, false pretences, selfishness, artificiality, hypocrisy, bribery, and deception will dominate, displacing sincerity, cordiality, virtue, zeal, self-sacrifice, seeking God's pleasure and the reward of the hereafter, which are bases of good conduct and morality. Anarchy and savagery will govern under the superficial order and humanity, poisoning the life of the town. The children will become troublemakers, the youth will take to drink, the strong will embark on oppression, and the elderly start to weep.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Nursi, *The Words*, p. 745–46.

<sup>55</sup> *Said Nursi's Fundamental Purpose Is to Construct Firmly the Foundation of Belief That Bases on Qur'an and the Practices of the Prophet*; for more detail insight, see Sukran Vahide, *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Specially Part Two* (Istanbul: Sozler nesriyat, 2000), p. 187–326.

<sup>56</sup> *Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, The Rays* (Istanbul: Sozler Publication, 2006), p. 246.

On the contrary, if this belief rules the society, true respect, earnest compassion, disinterested love, mutual assistance, honest service and social relations, unhyphocritical charity, virtue, modest greatness, and excellence will all start to develop.<sup>57</sup>

From these principles, modern people can follow the Practices of the Prophet because they are the best courtesy. Almighty God has decreed in the Holy Qur'an: "*And you (stand) on an exalted standard of character.*"<sup>58</sup> According to sound narrations, when a distinguished Companion like Aisha the Veracious (May God be pleased with her) described the Prophet (Peace and blessings be upon him), she would say: "His character is the Qur'an". That is to say. "Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him) is the exemplar of the fine moral qualities described in the Qur'an. He conforms to them more than anyone, and his nature was created in accordance with them".

Thus, while the deeds, states, words, and actions of such a person are each worthy to be a model for mankind, how unfortunate are those heedless members of his Community who believe in him yet give no importance to his Practices or want to change them, as even lunatics may understand.<sup>59</sup>

While our beloved Prophet said: "*My Sustainer taught me good conduct, and how well he taught me*". For Said Nursi, one who studies the Prophet's biography and knows his Practices will certainly understand that Almighty God gathered together in His Beloved all the varieties of courtesy and good conduct. One who gives up the Practices abandons courtesy. He verifies the rule, "The ill-mannered person is deprived of Divine favour", and is discourteous in a way that causes him loss.<sup>60</sup> That's why, Said Nursi declared that the Practices of the Prophet are all highly beneficial remedies for sickness of the spirit, mind, and heart, and particularly for social sickness.<sup>61</sup>

From this point of view, it is in this context that the Practices of the Prophet become very significant and find out their relevances. In Said Nursi's view, it is clear that modern people's moral degradation could be cured by the Practices of the Prophet. It is suggested that modern people

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>58</sup> Qur'an, 68: 4.

<sup>59</sup> Nursi, *The Flashes*, p. 92.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

have to apply them in their daily lives. If modern people always implement the Practices of the Prophet in their daily lives, they (Sunna) will prevent and keep them from trapping in moral degradation in its all aspects. Because the Practices of the Prophet not only teach us how to serve our God, how to behave with others, and how to do the best action in all situations, but also teach us how to abstain from all bad things, including corruptions, drug abuses, free sex, suicides among the young people and the like.

## **E. Conclusion**

As we have elaborated above, In the present day modern people feel spiritual crisis because of pleasure oriented, money oriented, and success oriented. But they forget their religion, their God. Consequently, even though they live richly, they keep feeling existential vacuum. Many modern people feel and face spiritual crisis and moral degradation. Therefore they need religious intrinsic values. In the present day, people need something spiritual.

In this paper we have discussed about the function of the Practices of the Prophet, the urgent problems of modern people and significance of the Practices of the Prophet for modern people in the view of Badiuzzaman Said Nursi. At this point, Said Nursi brings Islamic religion, specially the Practices of the Prophet to the unhappy and unsanitary society, modern people. In this way, Said Nursi really believes that the Practices of the Prophet could cure the urgent problem of modern people: spiritual crisis and moral degradation.

Finally, I would like to close this paper with the inspiring statements from Bediuzzaman Said Nursi: “Since as the fruit of following him, millions of the people of perfection have advanced through the degrees of attainment and reached the happiness of both worlds; for sure his Practices and actions are the finest examples to be followed, and the safest guides, and the soundest laws to be adopted as principles. Happy is the one whose share of following the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) is great”.

“If we were to display through our actions the perfections of the morality of Islam and the truths of belief, without doubt the followers of other religions would enter Islam in whole communities; some entire

regions and states, even, would take refuge in Islam”<sup>62</sup> And it is Islam that will be the true, and spiritual, ruler over the future, and only Islam that will lead mankind to happiness in this world and the next. [.]

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<sup>62</sup> Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Damascus Sermon*, trans. Eng (Istanbul: Sozler Publications, 1995), p. 30.

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