

IMAM RABBANI IN THE WRITINGS OF BEDIUZZAMAN SAID NURSI

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Abstract

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1877-1960 AD) while evolving from *old* to *new* Said has been influenced by many thinkers, scholars, and Sufis. In his writings he frequently refers to personalities like Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani, Imam Ghazalli, Imam Abu Hanifa, Shah Naqashband, Maulana Khalid and many others. However, most significant among them, whom Said Nursi refers to frequently and with added emphasis, is Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Mujaddid Alf-i Thani*, whom he prefers to address as Imam Rabbani. Said Nursi quotes, invokes and refers to Imam Rabbani frequently in his writings in order to substantiate the subject under discussion in his collection of *Risale-i Nur*. The present paper aims to identify and highlight the references on Imam Rabbani in the Writings of Said Nursi spread over in *Risale-i Nur*. The *Risale-i Nur* will serve as the primary source and the descriptive methodology will essentially be followed.

Key words: Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *Risale-i Nur*, Imam Rabbani, Naqashbandiyyah Silsilah, Naqashbandiyyah-Khalidiyyah Silsilah, *Maktubat-i Imam Rabbani*, *Mujaddid Alf-i Thani*.

Introduction

On his way to evolution to a mature thinker, scholar and a reformer of the highest order Said Nursi was influenced by many great personalities of the past and present. He mentions them in the writings spread over in *Risale-i Nur*. Among them the most important personality is none other than Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, *Mujaddid Alf-i Thani* addressed in the writings of Said Nursi as Imam Rabbani. Nursi invokes and quotes him while dealing with various theological, spiritual, Sufi, philosophical, moral or historical issues. In this paper references on Imam Rabbani in the writings of Nursi will be identified, located and annotated. However, before locating and discussing Imam Rabbani in the writings of Said Nursi it would be worthwhile to explore his link with the Naqashbandiyyah Order.

Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf Prince of Songkla University, Thailand rightly puts it when he writes that “the link between Said Nursi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi is neither geographical nor nationalistic but a spiritual interface exhibiting the universal dimension of Islam’s Ummatic consciousness. It is founded in their Naqshbandiya fellowship, a Sufi order from Muslim Asia associated with Muhammad ibn Muhammad Bahauddin Naqshband (1317-1389 AD) of Bukhara.”¹ The Naqashbandiyyah Silsilah is said to have been introduced in Turkey by Maulana Khalid Baghdadi. Maulana Khalid, from Ottoman province of Mosul, born in 1779-80 AD went to India (Jihanabad) in 1809 where he was initiated into Naqashbandiyyah Silsilah through its Mujadiddiyah (turkish-muceddidi) branch.² The Naqashbandiyyah Silsilah spread from India to different parts of the Muslim world including Ottoman Turkey. Maulana Khalid Baghdadi, known as mujaddid of the 13th century of Islam, introduced the Naqashbandiyyah Order into eastern Ottoman Turkey, as such the order is known in Turkey as Nuksibendi-Halidi (Naqashbandiyyah-Khalidiyyah).³ His near ancestors are said to have been the members of the Naqashbandiyyah-Khalidiyyah branch.⁴

Said Nursi came in contact with the Naqashbandiyyah-Khalidiyyah order when in his teens through Khalidi Shayukh. With the inspiration from the achievements of these two important Naqashbandi Shayukh (Imam Rabbani and Maulana Khalid) in restoring the originality of Islam in their respective milieus Nursi positioned himself to face the modern challenges of materialism, atheism and scienticism.

Nursi’s early interface with Imam Rabbani

Nursi’s early interface with Imam Rabbani, especially in his former days, took place when he had gone through a period of hesitation in quest of a way to reach the truth. In one of these hectic times, for instance, when he had been pondering upon the phenomenon of death, his heedless head, as he himself laments, had become a target of terrible and fateful blows. Such compelling situation eventually prompted him to look for a saviour who would cure his psychological illness.⁵ And he remarks that he found his way to the Qur’an reflecting on the advice of Shaikh Sirhindi, “Make your Qibla one,”⁶ meaning that take recourse to one master only and follow him strictly, and that one master he later explored to be the All-wise Qur’an.

Nursi’s spiritual crisis had prompted him to withdraw from society and seek solitude in places removed from Istanbul life. He retreated to Yusha Tepesi, a high hill on the Asian side of the

Bosphorus near its junction with the Black Sea. Following this he took a house in Sariyer, on the European side, and it was here in an old wooden house that is still standing that Nursi's crisis was resolved and he found what he was searching for. It was Gawth al-A'zam, 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, who came to Nursi's aid. A copy of his *Futuh al-Ghayb* came into Nursi's possession "by a happy coincidence," and on opening the pages at random, his eye fell on these lines: "You are in the Darü'l-Hikmet, so search for a doctor to cure your heart."⁷

Nursi interprets this coincidence as follows:

"Oh, you unfortunate! As a member of the Dar al-Hikmet al-Islamiye, you are as though a doctor curing the spiritual sicknesses of the people of Islam, whereas you are sicker than anyone. You first of all find a doctor for yourself, then try to cure others!" (. . .) So I said to the Shaikh "You be my doctor!" and I took him as my doctor and read the book as though it were addressing me. But it was terribly severe; it smashed my pride in the most fearsome manner. It carried out drastic surgery on my soul. I could not stand it. I read half of it as though it were addressing me, but did not have the strength and endurance to finish it. I put the book back on the shelf. Then a week later the pain of that curative operation subsided, and pleasure came in its place. I reopened the book and read it right through; I benefited a lot from that work of my first master. I listened to his prayers and supplications, and profited abundantly.⁸

The second work that was instrumental in transforming the Old Said into the New Said was the *Maktubat* (Letters) of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, known as Imam-i Rabbani. Sometime after his "cure" through the mediation of Gawth al-A'zam, Nursi opened Sirhindi's *Maktubat* to see what it had to offer.⁹ He wrote:

"It is strange, but in the whole of *Maktubat* the word Bediuzzaman appears only twice and those two letters fell open for me at once. I saw that written at the head of them was: *Letter to Mirza Bediuzzaman*, and my father's name was Mirza. "Glory be to God!" I exclaimed, these letters are addressing me. At that time the Old Said was also known as Bediuzzaman. Apart from Bediuzzaman Hamadani, I knew of no famous person in the last three hundred years with that name. But in the *Imam's* time there was such a person, and he wrote him these two letters. His state of mind must have been similar to mine, for I found that these letters were

the cure for my ills. Only, the *Imam* persistently recommended in many of his letters what he wrote in these two, which was: “Take only one *qiblah!*” That is, take one person as your master and follow him; do not concern yourself with anyone else.”¹⁰

Nursi writes that this most important piece of advice seemed inappropriate for his state of mind, and he was bewildered as to whom he should follow. In the introduction to the Turkish edition of *al-Mathnawi al-‘Arabi al-Nuri*, translated in the 1950s, he explained this in greater detail: “Since the Old Said proceeded more in the rational and philosophical sciences, he started to look for a way to the essence of reality like that of the Sufis (*Ahl-i Tariqat*) and the mystics (*Ahl-i Hakikat*). But he was not content to proceed with the heart alone like the Sufis, for his intellect and thought were wounded by philosophy; a cure was needed. Then he wanted to follow some of the great mystics who approached reality with both the heart and the mind. He looked, and each had different points that attracted him. He was bewildered as to which of them to follow.”¹¹ None of the great figures, such as Imam Ghazali, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, or Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, answered all of his needs. While in this state, “it was imparted to the Old Said’s much wounded heart” that the one true master was the Holy Qur’an. It occurred to him “through divine mercy” that “the head of these various ways and the source of these streams and the sun of these planets is the All-Wise Qur’an; the true single *qiblah* is to be found in it. In which case, it is also the most elevated guide and most holy master. So I clasped it with both hands and clung on to it.”¹²

Imam Rabbani-Inspiring Nursi to only one Qibla (al-Qur’an)

Thus, we can say that Nursi’s enlightenment occurred in three stages. In the first, he realized the deficiency of the “human philosophy” he had studied and how it had been an obstacle to his enlightenment and progress. In the second, as he himself confessed, through the “bitter medicine” of Shaikh ‘Abdal-Qadir Gilani’s *Futuh al-Ghayb* “I understood my faults, perceived my wounds, and my pride was to a degree destroyed.” Then to complete the process of his transformation into the New Said, he understood through the Maktubat of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi that he should take the Qur’an as his sole master.¹³ The instruction in divine unity he then received from the Qur’an through the phrase “There is no god but God” was “a most brilliant light” scattering the darkness in which he had been plunged and allowing him to breathe easily. Nursi describes how the devil and his “evil-commanding soul” would not brook this, and

“relying on what they had learnt from philosophers and the people of misguidance, attacked his mind and his heart,” but that the ensuing debate resulted in “the heart’s victory.”¹⁴

Imam Rabbani-An Individual of Great Stature

While elaborating on the relevance of the type of response to be exhibited in consonance with demands of the time he writes “The present is not the time for egotism and the personality for those who follow the path of reality (*ehl-i hakikat*); it is the time of the community (*cema‘at*). A collective personality emerging from the community rules, and may survive. To have a large pool, the ice blocks of the ego and personality have to be cast into the pool and dissolved.” While in the past, the age of individuality, persons of great stature like ‘Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Imam Ghazali, and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi had been sent to guide the Muslim community in accordance with divine wisdom, the unprecedented difficulties and conditions of modern times demanded that a collective personality undertake such duties.¹⁵

The Spiritual Journey’s Final Station-the Truths of Belief

Both Imam Rabbani and Said Nursi devoted their energies in strengthening the faith of the Muslim and presenting the message of Unity of God (Tawhid) to the agnostics and atheists both within and outside the Islamic fold. While discussing the issue in the Fifth Letter Nursi writes: Imam Rabbani, a “sun” and greatest master of the Naqshbandi way, says in his Letters: “I would prefer to make one matter of belief known in plain terms than attain thousands of spiritual pleasures and ecstasies and work miracles. He also says: “The final station of all spiritual journeying is to attain the full perception of the truths of belief.”¹⁶

Again, he says:

There are three kinds of sainthood: that known to everybody (minor), that of a medium degree, and that of major sainthood (the greatest one), which can be attained through direct succession to the Prophetic Message. This greatest one paves the way to the truth without entering the intermediate realm of spiritual orders.... One can progress in the Naqshbandi way by having a firm belief in the pillars of belief and performing the religious duties. Neglect of or deficiency in either makes this way impossible to follow.

This means that the Naqshbandi way encompasses three kinds of mission. The first and greatest is directly serving the truths of belief without mediating influences. Imam Rabbani entered into such service especially in the closing years of his life. The second is to try one’s hardest to

perform and promote the obligatory religious duties and the Sunnah of the Prophet by following a spiritual order. The third is to follow a Sufi way in order to be purified of spiritual diseases. The first is obligatory, the second is necessary, and the third is supererogatory.

At other place Nursi writes:

The Imam said too: “In former times, great persons said that someone will arise from among the theologians and the scholars of the science of theology. He will prove all the truths of belief and Islam with rational proofs and the utmost clarity. I wish to be that man and maybe I am.” He continued his instruction by saying that belief and the assertion of Divine unity were the foundation, substance, light and life of all human perfection; that the Hadith “An hour’s reflective thought is better than a year’s worship”.¹⁷

Imam Rabbani-The Highest Saint

Nursi received his early education from various *madrasas* in the Eastern provinces, some of them associated with the Naqshbandi Order. At the age of eight or nine, despite the fact that all of Nursi’s relatives were members of that Order, Nursi started to take sides against them in favour of ‘Abd al Qadir al Gilani and Ahmad Sirhindi (Imam Rabbani), whom Nursi called ‘the Highest Saints’.¹⁸

Acknowledges his debt to Imam Rabbani

The influence of mysticism on Nursi during his early career cannot be overstated, as evidenced by his subsequent writings. The wisdom of the mystics imbues his work, informs the metaphors that dot his language and finds expression in his approach to personal acts of devotion. He once said, for example, that he had recited over a period of fifteen days a collection of invocations taken from the writings of Sufis and mystics that usually take several months to recite. Furthermore, the *Risale-i Nur* lays great emphasis on contemplation of the cosmos and the ‘signs of God’ showcased therein-again, something that Nursi had in common with the Sufi sages. Nursi mentions a number of mystics and Sufis by name and acknowledges his debt to them. These include Ghazali, Shah Naqshband, Ahmad Sirhindi and Maulana Khalid; interestingly enough, he also cites members of the household of the Prophet, such as ‘Ali b. Abi Talib and his sons, Hasan and Husayn, and great Sufi ‘poles’ such as Junayd al-Baghdadi, as models for people to follow.

Nursi received his early education from a number of prominent Sufi shaykhs of Eastern Anatolia has led some to speculate whether Nursi himself is to be counted among Sufi adepts. Such speculation would appear to be strengthened by Nursi's numerous references to Jilani, the founder of the Qadiri Tariqat; Sirhindi (known as Imam Rabbani in Turkey), the founder of Mujaddidi or 'Revivalist' Order; and Maulana Khalid (1776-1827), the successor of the Mujaddidi tradition and the link, it is claimed, between Sirhindi and modern Naqshbandi activism.¹⁹

Alongside the Qur'anic Commentaries

Alongside the Qur'anic commentaries of the early pious exegetes, Nursi classes the works of Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Ghazali, Ibn al-Arabi and Ahmad Sirhindi as they offer insightful interpretations into the meaning and understanding of the truths embedded in the verses dealing with the faith.²⁰

On most Efficient Method for the Journey towards the Truth

Nursi straightforwardly declares that all of his masters before him such as Ghazali, Imam Rabbani and Rumi have chosen healthy combination of the intellect with the heart alongside the luminous guidance of Islamic faith as the healthiest and most efficient method for the journey towards the truth. They are indeed, he proclaims, the people of reality (*ahl-e haqiqa*) in the truest sense of the word, for they all have cared to employ a balanced method in their respective questions, a method that have saved them from drowning in an abyss of darkness.²¹

Imam Rabbani-an Enlightened Fruit

While addressing his students Nursi says: Now, come! We shall look at the centuries, which will turn above us. See how each has opened like a flower through the effulgence it has received from that Sun of Guidance! They have produced millions of enlightened fruits like Abu Hanifa, Shafi'i, Abu Bayazid Bistami, Shah Geylani, Shah Naqshband, Imam Ghazzali, and Imam Rabbani.²²

He put across similar comments in his another writing:

O fellow traveler, do you need to see more? Do you want to acquire complete knowledge of the Prophet? Even if we stayed in the Arabian Peninsula for 100 years, we still could not comprehend fully even one dimension of his mission and accomplishments. Let us return and,

traveling through forward in time, see how each century “flourished” [with his Message] and to what extent it benefited from that Age of Happiness. While doing so, we see that innumerable “flowers” opened in the “Sun” of that Age of Happiness, and that through the light of guidance he diffused, each century yielded thousands of illustrious fruits, such as Abu Hanifa, al-Shaifi‘i, Abu Yazid al-Bistami, Junayd al-Baghdadi, Shaykh ‘Abd alQadir al-Jilani, Imam al-Ghazzali, Muhiy al-Din ibn al-‘Arabi, Abu alHasan al-Shadhili, Shah Naqshband, and Imam Rabbani.²³

Quoting Imam Rabbani on Human Heart

The human heart is the mirror of the One, Eternally-Besought-of-All. However, as Imam Rabbani explains, unlike other mirrors it is conscious of and has deeply felt relations with what is manifested in it. Thus the heart can feel countless instances of happiness.²⁴

Imam Rabbani-Purified and Veracious Scholar

Nursi recounts: Muhammad (Peace and blessings be upon him), the living, articulate proof of Divine unity, demonstrated and proclaimed Divine unity throughout his life with the two wings of messengership and sainthood, that is, with a strength that comprised the consensus of all the prophets who had preceded him and the unanimity of the saints and purified scholars who came after him. He opened up a window onto knowledge of God as broad and brilliant and luminous as the World of Islam. Millions of purified and veracious scholars like Imam Ghazzali, Imam-i Rabbani, Muhyiddin al-'Arabi, and 'Abd al-Qadir Geylani look through that Window, and show it also to others. Is there any veil that can obscure a Window such as this?²⁵

Imam Rabbani-A Beloved of God

Nursi records of Ahmad Sirhindi as:

Imam-i Rabbani, Ahmad Faruqi, (May God be pleased with him) said: “While traversing the degrees in my spiritual journeying, I saw the most brilliant, splendid, subtle, and sound among the levels of the saints to be those who took following the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) as the basis of their way. Even the ordinary saints of that level appeared to be more splendid than the highest saints of the other levels.”

Yes, Imam-i Rabbani, the Regenerator of the Second Millenium (May God be pleased with him) speaks the truth. One who takes the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) as the basis rises to the station of being beloved of God under the shadow of God's Beloved.²⁶

Imam Rabbani and Ten Subtle Faculties

Nursi answering the students about Ten Subtle Faculties:

It is not appropriate to give instruction in the Sufi way at present; there are in any case the works of the scholars of the Naqshbandi way about the Ten Subtle Faculties. Our duty at the present time is the discovery of mysteries, not the relating of existent matters. Don't be offended, I cannot give the details. I shall only say this much that Imam-i Rabbani defined the Ten Subtle Faculties as the heart, spirit, inner heart [sirr], khafi, akhfa, and a faculty related to each of the four elements in man, and discussed briefly the progress of one faculty in each stage of the spiritual journeying.²⁷

Imam Rabbani-Hero and a Sun of the Naqshbandi Order

Nursi quotes Ahmad Sirhindi:

In his Letters (Maktubat), Imam Rabbani (May God be pleased with him), the hero and a sun of the Naqshbandi Order, said: "I prefer the unfolding of a single matter of the truths of belief to thousands of illuminations, ecstasies, and instances of wonder-working."²⁸

Nursi further recounts: My conjecture is that if persons like Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani (May God be pleased with him) and Shah Naqshband (May God be pleased with him) and Imam-i Rabbani (May God be pleased with him) were alive at the present time, they would expend all their efforts in strengthening the truths of belief and tenets of Islam. For, they are the means to eternal happiness.²⁹

Nursi in Opposition to Imam Rabbani

Opinions on Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) and Jacob (Ya'qub):

Nursi writes, On this point I would like to emphasize, in opposition to some researchers, people of discernment and even Imam Rabbani, whom I consider my master in most subjects, that what Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) deeply felt for his son Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) was affection, not love. Affection is keener, purer, and more sublime than love, and thus more suited to Prophethood's exalted rank. Love seems unsuitable, in my opinion, particularly when deeply felt for mortal beings. Thus Prophet Jacob felt deep affection, so wonderfully expressed in the Qur'an, for Joseph. Moreover, affection enables one to manifest the Divine Name the All-Compassionate. Love can make one manifest the Divine Name the All-Loving when directed to the real Beloved One. This is how Zulayha, wife of the 'Aziz of Egypt (Potiphar in the Bible), felt for Joseph. Compared with love, affection is so much more sublime and profound that the Qur'an regards Jacob's feelings as being more exalted than Zulayha's.³⁰

Nursi further explains: My master, Imam Rabbani, did not consider metaphorical love to be altogether fitting for the rank of prophethood and therefore said: "Joseph's virtues were virtues pertaining to the hereafter, so love for him was not of a metaphorical kind so that it should have been defective." But I say: "Master! That is an artificial interpretation; the truth of the matter must be this: that was not love, but a degree of compassion a hundred times more brilliant, more extensive, and more elevated than love." Yes, in all its varieties, compassion is subtle and pure. Whereas many varieties of love and passion may not be condescended to.³¹

Imam Rabbani-on using *radi-allahu ta'la anhu* (may God be pleased with him) for other than Companions

Answering the question: Since the phrase, May God be pleased with him, is used for the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), is it appropriate to use it for others with the same meaning? Yes, it may be used, because unlike upon whom be blessings and peace, which is a mark of God's Messenger (PBUH), the epithet, May God be pleased with him, is not a mark particular to the Companions, but should be used for persons like the four Imams, Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, Imam-i Rabbani (Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi), and Imam Ghazali, who attained to the 'greater sainthood' known as the 'legacy of prophethood,' reaching the station of God's pleasure. But generally among religious scholars, May God be pleased with him has been used for the Companions; May God have mercy on him, for the next two generations succeeding them; May God forgive him, for subsequent generations; and May his mystery be sanctified, for the great saints.³²

In League with Imam Rabbani on Hadrat Ali's Position as a Spiritual Guide and the King of Sainthood

Writes Said Nursi on this very vital issue: Too much or too little of anything is not good. Moderation is the middle way and has been chosen by the Sunnis. But, alas, Kharijite ideas have infiltrated the Sunnis to an extent; so too addicts of politics and some atheists criticize 'Ali. They say, God forbid, that he did not understand politics so was not entirely worthy of the Caliphate and could not govern, and because of these unjust accusations, 'Alawis feel affronted at the Sunnis. Whereas Sunnis hold no principles or basic beliefs that necessitate such ideas. Indeed, they prove the opposite. The Sunnis cannot be condemned because of ideas that come from Kharijites and atheists. Indeed, the Sunnis are firmer followers of 'Ali than the 'Alawis. They mention 'Ali in the laudatory fashion he deserves in all their Khutbas and prayers. And the saints

and purified scholars, the vast majority of whom belonged to the Sunni school, recognized him as a spiritual guide and the king of sainthood [Imam Rabbani, *al-Maktubat*, I, 134]. The ‘Alawis should ignore the Kharijites and atheists who have deservedly earned the enmity of both the ‘Alawis and the Sunnis, and not take sides against the people of truth. Some ‘Alawis even abandon the Prophet’s (UWBP) Sunnah out of spite for the Sunnis. Anyway, we have said too much on this matter, for it has been discussed inordinately by the religious scholars.

O Sunnis, who are the people of truth, and ‘Alawis, whose way is love of the Prophet’s (UWBP) family! Quickly put an end to this meaningless, disloyal, unjust, and harmful dispute between you. Otherwise the atheistic current which is now so influential will make one of you a tool against the other, and use the one to crush the other. And after defeating the one it will destroy the tool. As believers in divine unity, it is essential that you leave aside unimportant matters that cause division, for there are a hundred fundamental sacred bonds between you that enjoin brotherhood and unity.³³

On the Divine Name—the Self-Subsistent

Commenting on the Divine names Nursi says, The Greatest Name of God or the Divine Name that has the most comprehensive manifestation is not the same for everyone; it may differ according to individuals. For example, for Imam ‘Ali, may God be pleased with him, it was these six Names: the All-Independent, Single One, the All-Living, the Self-Subsistent (by Whom all subsist), the All-Wise, the All-Just, and the All-Holy. For Imam al-A‘zam Abu Hanifa, it was two Names: the All Wise and the All-Just. While for Ghawth al-A‘zam ‘Abdul-Qadir al-Jilani, it was O All-Living One. For Imam Rabbani, the Greatest Name was the Self-Subsistent, and so on; many other people considered the Greatest Name to be yet others.

...In the same way that some matters concerning the Greatest Name are so comprehensive that they cannot be comprehended, there are also others that are so subtle that the mind cannot distinguish them. Not all minds may be able to comprehend the matters concerning the Names the All-Living and the Self-Subsistent, or, in particular, the allusions that life makes to the pillars of belief, particularly to the pillar of Divine Destiny and Decree, which are discussed above, or the matters that will be discussed below concerning the Name the Self-Subsistent under the heading of the First Ray. However, they will not remain without some share of them and, in any event; these matters will strengthen their belief. The strengthening of belief, which is the key to

eternal happiness, is of tremendous importance. Even an iota's increase in belief is a treasure. Imam Rabbani Ahmad al-Faruqi, said, "A small matter of belief being unfolded and known in plainer terms is preferable to me than experiencing hundreds of spiritual pleasures or working wonders."³⁴

Appearance of Prophets in India

Nursi quotes Ahmad Sirhindi:

Relying on both evidence and illumination, Imam-i Rabbani said: "Numerous prophets appeared in India. But because some of them had no followers or their followers were restricted to only a few people, they did not become well-known, or were not called prophets."³⁵

Sunnah Superior to a Thousand Practices of Sufism

Nursi quoting Ahmad Sirhindi:

As is proved in many of the Words, and as leading scholars of the Sufi path like Imam Ghazali and Imam Rabbani said: "The degree of acceptance gained by following a single of the Practices of the Prophet (PBUH) cannot be won by means of a hundred personal practices and private acts of worship. And just as a single obligatory act is superior to a thousand acts taken from the Practices of the Prophet, a single of those Practices is superior to a thousand practices of Sufism."³⁶

In the 11th Gleam he writes: Imam Rabbani, Ahmad Faruqi, may God sanctify him, says, "While passing through the ranks in my spiritual journeys, I saw the most brilliant, magnificent, appealing, sound, and reliable among the groups of the saints to be those who follow the Sunnah of the Prophet, upon him be peace and blessings, as the principle of their path. Even the ordinary saints of this group appeared to be more magnificent than the distinguished saints of other groups." Imam Rabbani, the Renewer of the Second Millennium, may God sanctify him, speaks the truth. One who takes the Sunnah as the basis of their path is on the way to the station of being a beloved of God under the guardianship of God's Beloved, upon him be peace and blessings.³⁷

Nursi concludes: The conclusion of a hero of the truth and the Shari'ah such as Imam Rabbani shows that the elevated Sunnah is the foundation of happiness in both worlds and the source of all excellence and perfection.

O God! Favor us by enabling us to follow the elevated Sunnah.

Our Lord! We believe in what You have sent down and we follow the Messenger, so record us among the witnesses (of Your Oneness and Lordship, and of the truth You have revealed). (The Qur'an 3:53)³⁸

In Old age found in Imam Rabbani, a Companion and a Tender-hearted Friend

In old age while pondering over the phenomenon of death Nursi writes: The Qur'an and belief demonstrate this truth so certainly and convincingly that unless one is entirely lacking in heart and spirit, or unless misguidance has suffocated one's heart, it must be believed as though seeing it. For, most certainly and self-evidently, the All-Munificent and All Compassionate Maker, Who adorns this world with His uncountable varieties of favors and gifts and so demonstrates His Lordship in an all-munificent and caring manner, preserving even the least significant things like seeds, would not annihilate or waste humanity—the most perfect, most comprehensive, and most important and beloved among His creatures—by sending it into eternal extinction or never-ending separation from those they love. Rather, as proven in the Tenth and Twenty-Ninth Words, like the seeds a farmer scatters over the earth, the All-Compassionate Creator temporarily takes that beloved creature of His under the ground, which is a door of mercy, in order to produce shoots in another life.

And so, after receiving this reminder from the Qur'an, the graveyard became more lovable to me than Istanbul. Solitude and seclusion became more pleasurable to me than conversation and company with people. And I found a place of seclusion for myself in Sariyer on the Bosphorus. There, Ghawth al-A'zam al-Jilani, may God be pleased with him, became a master, doctor, and guide for me with his *Futuhu'l-Ghayb* (Conquests Concerning the Unseen), and Imam Rabbani, may God be pleased with him, a companion, a tender-hearted friend, and teacher with his *Mektubat* (The Letters). Then I was extremely pleased I had entered upon old age, renounced the pleasures of modern civilization, and withdrawn from social life. I thanked God.³⁹

Conclusion and Suggestions

Thus we observe that Bediuzzaman Said Nursi invokes, refers and quotes Imam Rabbani, whom he counts as his spiritual mentor, on the myriad issues and subjects, be it on Sufism, theology, spirituality, morality, Islamic history, Qur'an or Sunnah. Said Nursi substantiates and quotes with agreement the position of Imam Rabbani in most of the cases. All these observations only substantiate and highlight the degree of influence and impact of Imam Rabbani on the personality and writings of Said Nursi. The object of the present article identified was brief

introduction to the subject of Imam Rabbani in the Writings of Said Nursi; however there is further scope of this subject being elaborated into a detailed writing.

References and Notes:

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- ¹ Dr. Imtiyaz Yusuf. "Relationship between God and Human Being: The Spiritual Interface between Two Mujaddids: Mujaddid-I Alf-I Thani Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960)". <https://sorularlarisale.com/bediuzzamansaidnursi>
- ² Sukran Vahide. 2005. *Islam in Modern Turkey: An Intellectual Biography of Said Nursi*. New York: State University of New York Press, p. 238.
- ³ The main characteristics of the Naqshbandiyyah are: a strict adherence to the Shari'ah, sobriety in devotional practice and adherence to the practices of Prophet Muhammad. It represents a socially engaged Islam.
- ⁴ Sukran Vahide. Op. cit., p. 3.
- ⁵ Bilal Kuspinar. 1995. "Nursi's Evaluation of Sufism", Istanbul. http://www.nur.org/en/islam/nurlibrary/Bediuzzaman_Said_Nursi_s_Evaluation_of_Sufism_187
- ⁶ Said Nursi. 2007. *Letters*. Pdf. New Jersey: The Light. 28th Letter.
- ⁷ Sukran Vahide. Op. cit., p. 165.
- ⁸ Said Nursi. *The Letters*, p. 418.
- ⁹ Sukran Vahide. Op. cit., p. 165.
- ¹⁰ Said Nursi. *The Letters*, p. 419.
- ¹¹ Said Nursi. 2007. *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri: Seedbed of the Light*. New Jersey: The Light, Inc. p. 7.
- ¹² Said Nursi. *The Letters*, p. 419.
- ¹³ Sukran Vahide. Op. cit., p. 166.
- ¹⁴ Said Nursi. *Flashes*, p. 306.
- ¹⁵ Sukran Vahide. Op. cit., p. 244.
- ¹⁶ Said Nursi. 5th Letter, pp. 29-30.
- ¹⁷ Said Nursi. *The Rays*, p. 188.
- ¹⁸ Colin Turner & Hasan Horkuc. 2009. *Said Nursi*, I.B. Tauris, London, p. 17.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 86-87.
- ²⁰ Ibrahim Abu Rabi [ed.] 2003. *Islam at the Crossroads: On the Life and Thought of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, p. 152.
- ²¹ Ibid. p. 161.
- ²² Said Nursi. *The Words*, p. 249; 19th Letter, p. 218.
- ²³ Said Nursi. *Al-Mathnawi Al-Nuri: Seedbed of the Light*. Op cit., pp. 28-29.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 346.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 721; 19th Word, p. 252-53.
- ²⁶ Said Nursi. *Flashes*, p. 81.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 155,
- ²⁸ Said Nursi. *The Letters*, p. 40.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 41.
- ³⁰ Said Nursi. 8th Letter, pp. 47-48.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 49.
- ³² Said Nursi. 23rd Letter, p. 299.
- ³³ Said Nursi. 4th Flash, p. 43-44.
- ³⁴ Said Nursi. The 13th Gleam, p. 272-74.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 453.
- ³⁶ Ibid., p. 531-32.

³⁷ Said Nursi. The 11th Gleam, 2008. New Jersey: Tughra Books, pp. 64-65.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁹ Ibid., The 26th Gleam, p. 333.