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RESEARCH ARTICLE

SAID NURSI'S CONCEPT OF TASAWUF: AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR MODERN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

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Abstract

This study examined Said Nursi's understanding of Sufism's role as an ethical framework for addressing spiritual and social problems faced by modern Muslim societies. Nursi called for a comprehensive spiritual awakening aimed at rebuilding the individual and society in response to widespread phenomena, such as individual alienation, social disintegration, secularisation and moral ambiguity. Unlike traditional Sufi orders, Nursi developed a Qur'an-centred approach to Sufism based on values, such as individual responsibility, moral behaviour, social justice and collective peace. Nursi's model, which includes the 'impotence', 'poverty', 'compassion' and 'reflection' concepts, functions as a counter-discourse to the tendencies of arrogance, materialism, hedonism and individualism that dominate the modern world. This framework offers a holistic model that prioritises internal transformation and active social participation by integrating fundamental moral values, such as humility, mercy, justice and spiritual responsibility. According to Nursi, inner purification and building a high moral character form the foundation of individual integrity and social welfare. This study analysed Nursi's ethical-spiritual perspective in the context of contemporary issues, such as ethical governance, social justice, moral decay and social disintegration. It argues that Nursi's approach, developed by reinterpreting Sufism, offers the possibility of reimagining Islamic society by synthesising spirituality and morality. It is argued that Said Nursi's Sufi-based ethical vision offers an integrated roadmap for individual rejuvenation and the reconstruction of social cohesion in the context of contemporary Muslim life.

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Introduction:-

Contemporary Islamic societies face multidimensional challenges due to phenomena such as globalisation, secularisation, technological advances and cultural changes. Religion's declining influence on social life has paved the way for the rise of secularism and materialism, which has led societies to place less importance on spiritual

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references, while prioritising material values (Jannah, 2022). This situation is accompanied by several problems, such as weakening of traditional values, identity crises and social conflicts (moral decay, weakened family structure, disputes and economic difficulties) (Akhmetova, 2021; Mir & Anjum, 2024). Current efforts to address common moral, educational, cultural and social problems in efforts to overcome these issues in the Islamic world (Zulqarnain et al., 2022) are insufficient, and it has become clear that more comprehensive solutions are needed.

According to Islamic history, Sufism serves a path for individual spiritual purification and a purveyor of moral values on the social front. The fundamental goal of Sufism can be summarised as ‘purifying oneself of bad habits and adorning oneself with good habits’. Indeed, many Sufis, such as Kettani, have defined Sufism as a discipline of ‘good morals’ (Kuşeyri, 1991). Throughout history, institutionalised orders have ensured the moral education and consolidation of societies through their ascetic and pious education, while spreading virtues and values, such as love, sincerity, generosity and humility. Tekkes served as spiritual centres and ethical educational institutions that reached wide audiences in the Ottoman and other Islamic civilisations.

However, the modernisation process has shaken the core of traditional Sufi institutions involved in social life. Throughout the 19th century, Westernisation and reform movements in the Ottoman Empire weakened the influence of some classical religious institutions, including Sufi orders (Sezgin, 2002). Secularisation policies, which gained momentum with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye, dealt a major blow to the institutional appearance of Sufism due to radical initiatives, such as the closure of tekkes and zawiya (1925) (Vahide, 2005). As religious life withdrew from the public sphere during this period, spiritual crises and moral vacuums began to emerge. The strict secularism policies implemented in Türkiye at the beginning of the 20th century led to the exclusion of Islamic values from social life, thus creating a critical environment for faith and morality (Mardin, 1989). Similarly, modernisation had made it difficult to transmit religious values from one generation to the next in many Muslim societies, bringing to the fore the search for new methods to meet an individual’s spiritual needs.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursî (1877-1960) proposed an alternative spiritual path that preserved the essence of traditional Sufism, while being compatible with modern conditions in terms of form and method. Nursî, a scholar who witnessed the final years of the Ottoman Empire and the early years of the Republic, closely observed the spiritual decline of Islamic society and developed radical ideas as solution to overcome this decline (Vahide, 2005). According to Nursî, the fundamental cause of material and spiritual decline in the Islamic world lied in a weak belief and loss of moral values. Therefore, Nursî prioritised strengthening the faith of individuals and embedding Qur’anic revelations in their hearts through contemplation (Akhmetova, 2021). This approach differed from the seyr ü sülûk discipline of classical Sufi orders, though it ultimately aimed to achieve similar spiritual maturation.

He directly presented Quranic exegesis and lessons on the truths of faith to a wide audience through his collection of literary works entitled Risale-i Nur Külliyyatı. In the absence of tekke training, he established what is basically called a Nur school of faith and morality (Mardin, 1989). Mardin (1989), while discussing the Nur movement that developed under Said Nursî’s leadership as an example of religious and social change in modern Turkey, emphasised that this movement was organised as a text-based community rather than a classical Sufi order; whereby, the text-student relationship takes precedence over the disciple-mentor relationship (Mardin, 1989). In this way, Nursî succeeded in transmitting the core values of Sufism through a different approach during a period when Sufi orders were banned.

Said Nursî’s understanding of Sufism can be defined as a school of thought centred on ‘truth’ rather than the traditional concept of ‘tarikat’ (Sufi order). Nursî stated, “There are many paths that lead to Allah. All true paths are derived from the Qur’an. However, some paths are shorter, safer, and more universal than others. Among those paths, the one I have benefited from the Qur’an with my limited understanding is the path of impotence, poverty, compassion, and reflection” (Nursi, 2015f). These four fundamental principles, namely impotence (realising one’s helplessness), poverty (knowing one’s need for Allah), compassion (feeling mercy and empathy for other creatures), and reflection (deeply contemplating Allah’s creations), form the backbone of Nursî’s spiritual model. The path of impotence and poverty is presented as a safer and more secure path compared to methods based on love and attraction in classical Sufism, as it aims to make the person worthy of Allah SWT’s love through servitude without falling into self-conceit (Nursi, 2015c). According to Nursî, impotence, like ‘love’, is a path that is a safer path compared to love because it reflects the manifestation of the name ‘All Merciful’ in a person, whereas compassion,

like love, but a sharper and broader path, leads to the manifestation of the Compassionate, while reflection leads to manifestations of the name al-Hakîm (Nursi, 2015f). This approach offers an ethical framework, centred on the consciousness of servitude (ubudiyet) and the principles of tawhid inherent in Sufism, that can be understood and applied by humans.

This study examined Said Nursî's understanding of Sufism as an ethical framework for contemporary Muslim societies. First, Nursî's four principles (impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection) were discussed under separate headings to reveal the definition and function of each principle appearing in Risale-i Nur. Next, Nursî's approach was evaluated in terms of how it differs from the classical Sufi model, and determine its place in Sufi tradition. Subsequently, the study discussed the various types of solutions offered by these four principles to mitigate the moral and social issues faced by modern societies, and provide examples of their application in areas such as education, family, economy and social solidarity. This study also aimed to reveal how Nursî's spiritual-moral model can serve as a roadmap for contemporary Muslims. Hence, Nursî's approach, centred on impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection, was evaluated in its role as a guide and solution to problems, such as value erosion, selfishness, hopelessness and meaninglessness, which are frequently emphasised in modern societies.

Methodology:-

This qualitative study employed document and content analysis techniques. The primary data source was Said Nursî's Risale-i Nur Collection, including core literary works (Sözler, Mektubat, Lem'alar, Şuâlar) and supplementary texts (Tarihçe-i Hayat). Concepts and passages related to Nursî's understanding of Sufism, mainly impotence, poverty, compassion, and reflection, were examined, coded and compared with classical Sufi literature. Direct quotations were used to preserve Nursî's style. Secondary sources, including academic articles, theses and symposium papers, were reviewed to contextualize and interpret the findings. Key references include Vasfi Arslan (2013), Elmira Akhmetova (2021), Melahat Beki (2007), Şerif Mardin (1989) and Şükran Vahide (2005). A descriptive-comparative method and inductive content analysis were applied, whereby concepts were first analysed in context, then compared with classical Sufi teachings (levels of the self, Sufi etiquette) to identify Nursî's original contributions. Examples from Risale-i Nur illustrate the role of these principles in moral development and addressing social issues. APA-style author-date citations were used, with references listed at the end. This approach enables an academic evaluation of Nursî's thoughts in the classical Sufi tradition and its relevance to contemporary Muslim societies.

Findings:-

Said Nursî respected and appreciated almost all of the Sufi orders that had emerged in the Sunni tradition up to his time, and he had described Sufism's path as a 'spiritual, joyful and sublime truth', while gratefully acknowledging previous literary works written on this subject (Nursi, 2015c). He had such a positive view of Sufism and Sufi orders that he described them as a 'great treasure' and 'a source of life-giving water' for Muslims in terms of their role in the development the faith's truths (Nursi, 2015c). However, Nursî himself did not join any order and clearly stated that he did not consider himself a sheikh or a Sufi (Nursi, 2003, 2015c). According to him, what is important is not belonging to any order, but rather understanding and living the spiritual truths of the al-Qur'an and Sunnah in the best possible way (Arslan, 2013). Nursî emphasised that his priority was not to attain spiritual ranks in a Sufi order, but to directly obtain the faith's truths. He said, "this is not the time for Sufi orders" (Nursi, 2015a, p. 29). He also stated that, "a person cannot live without bread, but can live without fruit. Sufism is the fruit, and the truths of Islam are nourishment" (Nursi, 2015b: 24), which emphasises that Sufism is the sweet fruit of spiritual life, but the essential nourishment is faith's truths. Nursî's statement indicates that he was not opposed to Sufism, but he changed his priorities due to the circumstances prevailing at that time. He also stated that, "this is not the time for Sufi orders, but the time for 'truth' and for saving people's faith" (Nursi, 2012: 224).

The difference between Nursî and the Sufi tradition is that he changed the method of spiritual education (Tanis, 2016). While classical Sufi orders emphasise a long spiritual journey and asceticism, Nursî anticipated that these paths might be too long and difficult for most people in the modern era (Arslan, 2013). He believed that a shorter and safer method was necessary to convey the truth to people whose faith had been shaken and who were struggling with doubt, especially under the intense influence of materialist philosophy (Akhmetova, 2021; Nursi, 2012b). Therefore, he introduced a path of truth centred on the Risale-i Nur collection instead of the traditional methods of Sufism. Nursî followed a method of knowledge based on the al-Qur'an by writing the Risale-i Nur and stated that this was the most comprehensive and understandable path for humanity (Nursi, 2015d). Instead of the practices adopted by Sufi orders, such as zikr and rabita, he presented a spiritual training model achieved through reading and

understanding the Risale-i Nur. In this model, the Risale-i Nur, which contains the revelations of the al-Qur'an, takes precedence over the murshid-talebe relationship (Nursi, 2003).

Conversely, Said Nursî did not shy away from defending Sufism against its opponents. In response to certain circles that rejected the entire path of Sufism on the pretext of abuses prevalent in some orders, Nursî said, “a sincere member of an order... saves his faith”, meaning that even a sincere member of a Sufi order can protect his faith, and that, “it is unfair to blame genuine Sufi orders because of some unqualified groups that act under the name of Sufism but in reality have strayed from the path of piety” (Nursi, 2015b: 495).

He argued that the entire Sufi tradition cannot be condemned because of a few individuals who act contrary to the essence of Sufism (Nursi, 2015c). According to him, the service of faith and morality, implemented through previous Sufi orders, can be continued with different methods according to contemporary needs. This is precisely what Nursî did, as he took into account the necessities of the time and adopted a new spiritual path based on the principles of helplessness, poverty, compassion and reflection (Yiğit, 2021). He further added that the “two most important principles of this path are the acceptance and acknowledgement of one's material and spiritual impotence and poverty” (Nursi, 2015a). The impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection concepts will be examined individually in the context of Nursî's profession, and the characteristics of the Sufi model based on these concepts will be explained below.

Impotence, Poverty, Compassion and Reflection: The Foundation of Nursî's Spiritual Profession:-

Impotence: The Realisation of Human Imperfection and the Path to Servitude:-

According to the (Yeğin, 2008), impotence refers to ‘weakness and helplessness’, whereas in Nursî's spiritual education model, it refers to one's full awareness of one's weaknesses and impotence. According to Nursî, Allah SWT has given humans infinite weaknesses in order to reveal His infinite power and mercy (Nursi, 2015f). The following statement in Risale-i Nur reflects this stand, “in order to demonstrate His boundless power and infinite mercy, Allah has instilled in humans boundless impotence and infinite poverty” (Nursi, 2003: 13). Thus, humanity is inherent in a state of boundless weakness, to such an extent that it feels an endless need for everything it imagines or desires. Wherever a person goes in their imagination, the circle of need expands to that extent; everything that is not obtained is deemed a need, and unattainable needs extend into eternity (Nursi, 2015f). This situation demonstrates the extent of human impotence.

Nursî compares this path, which he calls the ‘path of impotence’, with the ‘path of love’, which is often mentioned in Sufism, and he emphasises that the ‘path of impotence’ is safer and shorter than the ‘path of love’ in the spiritual journey. While the ‘path of love’ is often a difficult journey filled with ecstasy and absorption, one who realises one's impotence can more quickly attain the rank of a beloved subject who is acceptable to Allah SWT through the means of servitude. The subject turns to Allah SWT with complete submission and trust as he becomes aware of his own impotence, which results in a more meaningful rapport compared to love and passion (Nursi, 2015c).

According to Nursî, when a person analyses himself through introspective contemplation, he will deeply understand his own impotence, whereas a person who imagines himself to be strong and powerful in his youth and good health soon realises that he has no power of his own when faced with even the slightest illness or old age. When faced with the signs of death or a severe calamity, he totally realises how helpless and impotent he is in this world. Conversely, when he contemplates the universe with retrospective contemplation, he also sees his impotence, to this end Nursî said, “a person who cannot find a cure for the illness or death of a loved one, and who cannot prevent natural disasters, is also extremely helpless in the face of events in the external world. This level of awareness makes one fully feel one's impotence, directing one to seek refuge in the All-Powerful and to become His servant” (Nursî, 2015d).

Nursî also draws attention to the practical moral reflection of the principle of impotence. He said that, “faithful virtue cannot be a source of domination, nor can it be a cause of tyranny. Domination and oppression are vices. And especially for people of virtue, the most important way of life is to engage human social life with humility, poverty, and modesty” (Nursî, 2003: 171). This belief summarises how impotence and humility should manifest themselves in social life, whereby “a perfect human being is one who does not consider himself superior, who knows his impotence, and who therefore behaves with mercy and humility towards others”. In the face of the greatest spiritual ailments in modern age, such as selfishness, arrogance and the sense of ‘self’, Nursî's principle of impotence educates the individual in humility and the awareness of servitude. The understanding that manifests as excessive

admiration and love for oneself, otherwise referred to as narcissism, is rejected in Sufi thought; instead, it emphasises that a person's true love can only be directed towards Allah SWT. Nursi's emphasis on impotence also serves as an antidote to modern-day self-centred tendencies by breaking the idol of selfhood and enabling individuals to realise their helplessness and thereby, discipline their egos.

Poverty: Awareness of Absolute Need and Refuge in Divine Mercy:-

According to (Yeğin, 2008), poverty refers to destitution. In technical terms, it refers to a person's awareness that he is absolutely dependent on Allah SWT and does not truly possess anything (Cebecioglu, 2009). According to Said Nursi's principles, it is a concept intertwined with impotence; in fact, it is often mentioned together with the phrase 'impotence and poverty'. Nursi emphasised that humans are poor, both in their existence and in all their material and spiritual possibilities, and that they obtain everything through Allah SWT's grace and generosity. Therefore, humans' own resources are completely insufficient in the face of their countless needs. Indeed, although humans are in need of countless blessings throughout their lives in the form of air, water, food, love, knowledge and health, they cannot create any of these necessities on their own. When this state of absolute need (poverty) is properly understood, it opens the door to the greatest truth for the subject, which is to seek refuge in Allah SWT, who rules over everything and is the owner of all causes, as well as to rely on Him.

Nursi said that if a person can express his poverty in the form of servitude, he can be blessed with boundless mercy by the All Merciful (Nursi, 2003). In other words, a person who realises his poverty does not use it as a reason for rebellion or despair; rather, he understands his state of impotence and poverty and seeks refuge in Allah SWT's mercy through prayer, worship and submission. This attitude is the path to becoming a recipient of the manifestations of the Divine Names, namely Rahman (the Merciful to all creatures in this world) and Rahim (the Merciful especially to believers in the Hereafter). Turning to the inexhaustible mercy of the Divine Treasures in response to humanity's endless needs constitutes the essence of the 'path of poverty'.

A theme frequently addressed in Nursi's literary works is that humans should be grateful subjects in the face of blessings and acknowledge that everything comes from Allah SWT (Nursi, 2015d). In his literary work entitled *Sözler*, he expresses the infinite nature of human needs by saying, "even if the imagination goes anywhere, the circle of needs goes there too... What is not available is boundless" (Nursi, 2015e: 225). Even if a person imagines going to the Sun, they still have needs there; if they imagine a star, they want that too. What they cannot obtain remains countless or innumerable in nature. This truth indicates that human poverty is endless and at no moment in time can a person completely possess anything or everything. Hence, when mirroring this poverty in themselves, humans see the manifestation of Allah SWT's names, namely *Ganî* (self-sufficient, needing nothing) and *Rezzâk* (provider of all needs).

A subject who realises his poverty and turns to Him, saying, 'O Lord, I am in need, You are the All-Sufficient and the All Merciful', is freed from vices, such as worldly greed, avarice and selfishness. A person who relies on Allah SWT and awaits Him is freed from relying on others, enslaved by wealth and property, as well as seeking endless desires. Nursi's concept of poverty invites people to be content, grateful and satisfied with what Allah SWT has given them and to turn to spiritual pleasures in the face of the modern world's promotion of consumerism and its obsession with constantly wanting more. The teachings of Sufism, unlike hedonism, advise its followers to seek divine closeness and be content with the blessings of Allah SWT rather than pursuing selfish desires (Sayın, 2023). In this context, poverty acts like a bridge that turns the subject's heart away from the transience of the world and connects it to the infinite treasure of the All Merciful.

In summary, impotence and poverty are the two fundamental and intertwined pillars of Said Nursi's Sufi path. Nursi saw these two concepts as 'the shortest path to Allah SWT' since understanding one's impotence and poverty gives rise to submission and trust, which are the essence of servitude. A subject who follows this path neither relies on his ego with arrogance nor on his wealth or position; instead, he constantly remains aware of his state of neediness and binds his heart to Allah SWT. A person attains virtues, such as humility, patience and contentment in his personal morality, while contributing to social harmony by purging himself of vices, such as greed, envy and selfishness, that can lead to a corrupted society.

Compassion: The Revival of Mercy in Place of Love and the Key to Divine Love:-

In Sufi tradition, 'muhabbetullah' (love of Allah SWT) and 'love' occupy a central place. Many Sufis view divine love as a means to attain union with Allah SWT and have explored themes for reaching true love or metaphorical

love (Soysaldı, 1998). Conversely, Said Nursî, while not completely rejecting the concept of 'love', emphasised the concept of 'compassion' in his own beliefs. According to Nursî's understanding of Sufism, compassion is viewed as a higher, more refined and inclusive level than love and affection (Duran & Sülükçüler, 2017). Nursî even takes an approach that contradicts the interpretation of the great Naqshbandi sheikh, Imam Rabbani, on this issue.

While Imam Rabbani interpreted the deep longing and sorrow that Jacob felt for his son Joseph as 'love', Nursî believed that this feeling is not love or metaphorical affection, but compassion. He believed that compassion is a more appropriate emotion for a Prophet than love and affection, since intense love for mortal and transient creatures is not compatible with the sublime position of a Prophet (Nursî, 2015c). A Prophet's feelings, such as what Jacob felt towards his son, is a form of sublime compassion manifested in the guise of filial love, and this compassion is a reflection of Allah SWT's mercy. Nursî points out that the al-Qur'an's description of Jacob's laments and tears is not 'love' but "compassion", thus emphasising the higher degree of compassion compared to love, as the al-Qur'an has exalted Jacob's feelings, while indicating Zuleikha's human love for Joseph as being one of a lower value (Arslan, 2013).

Why does Nursî believe that compassion is so superior? Firstly, compassion, unlike love, does not focus on a single object, but is much comprehensive and more inclusive. Nursî explains the vastness of compassion with the following example in his literary work Mektûbat, "compassion is very broad. A person who feels compassion for his child extends his compassion to all children, even to all living creatures" (Nursî, 2015c: 32). Maternal compassion is indeed a beautiful example of this, namely based on the intense compassion a mother feels for her own child that allows her to develop a general feeling of mercy towards all children, even all living beings (Duran & Sülükçüler, 2017). Compassion does not withhold the heart to a single beloved; on the contrary, it allows the heart to show widespread mercy towards all creatures.

A person with compassion is a manifestation of Allah SWT's name Rahîm, as he showers mercy upon his surroundings (Eren, 2013). Love, on the other hand, is an act of showing exceptional affection for a single beloved; the lover sees nothing but the beloved and is willing to sacrifice everything, if necessary (Arslan, 2013). Love, in this context, is an individual's feeling and can sometimes even turn into selfish passion, whereas, compassion is completely self-sacrificing, unconditional and pure. Nursî argues that compassion is superior to love, whereby he said, "compassion is pure, it does not seek reciprocity; it is pure and unconditional. Love, on the other hand, demands payment and reciprocity" (Nursî, 2015c: 32). Even the tears shed by a lover for his beloved contain a hidden expectation of interest; however, compassion flows purely from mercy and the pain of being unable to alleviate the suffering of the other (Nursî, 2015c).

Nursî's profession of compassion is also evident in practical ethics. A heart that feels compassion for people, and indeed for all living beings, has no room for feelings such as hatred, resentment or selfishness. The lack of compassion and empathy, seen as one of the causes of social disintegration in the modern era, is addressed through compassion in Nursî's teachings. He always advises his students and interlocutors to spread their wings of compassion and to feel the suffering of others as their own. He even considers "being happy with the happiness of others and feeling sad for their misery" to be a high moral principle that demonstrates the contribution of compassion to social peace. During Nursî's lifetime, compassion-based brotherhood was a powerful antidote for problems, such as the weakening sense of brotherhood that held the nation together as well as the rise of racism and personal interests. In reference to compassion being one of the purest emotions that bind people together, the brotherhood emphasised that the Qur'anic verse, "The believers are but brothers" (Qur'an, 49:10), is most effectively reinforced in practice through compassion and mercy. In Nursî's mystical path, compassion acts as a mortar that prevents the walls of selfishness and discrimination from rising in society, thereby strengthening the fortress of brotherhood.

Reflection: Reading the Book of the Universe and the Path to Reaching the Truths of Faith:-

According to Yeğin (2008), reflection refers to a sense of deep thinking and contemplation. In Islamic tradition, reflection is an attitude of worship that is repeatedly encouraged by the al-Qur'an, as in "Do you not reflect?" (Qur'an, 7:184; 6:50; 23:68; 32:4) This admonition invites believers to contemplate on themselves and the universe. Said Nursî also regarded reflection as one of the most important principles in his spiritual path and consistently encouraged it in his literary works. He aimed for a deep and reflective faith rather than a superficial, imitative one, thus he adopted the famous hadith, "An hour of reflection is better than a year of supererogatory worship" (Gazzâlî, 2002: 395).

In Nursî's view, reflection is the act of reading the entire universe as a great book, beginning with one's own nature. Since every entity and every event is a manifestation of Allah SWT's names and attributes, the person strives to discern the signs of unity in objects and events (Sari, 2017). Deeply reflecting on everything from one's own body to the stars and from atoms to galaxies, reveals to humanity the power, knowledge and wisdom of the Creator. Nursî stated that the knowledge of Allah SWT, known as 'marifetullah', can be attained through reflection; since the manifestation of Allah SWT's name Hakîm can only be reached by reflecting on the book of the universe.

Reflection occupies a special place in the Risale-i Nur collection. The Ayetü'l-Kübrâ treatise provides an example of systematic reflection, which begins with an individual's profound journey of reflection across the universe, and shows how humans can see evidence of Allah SWT's unity in everything. Nursî stated that reflection plays a decisive role in the transition from imitation faith to investigative faith, while a superficial faith that is not supported by rational and spiritual evidence can be easily destabilised by doubt, and investigative faith strengthened by reflection can withstand a multitude of doubts (Nursi, 2012a, 2015e). Therefore, one of the fundamental goals of Risale-i Nur is to guide its readers to a desired level of faith through reflection (ilmel-yakin, aynel-yakin, hakkal-yakin levels) (Eren, 2019). Nursî's main objective was to explain the truths of faith in a way that everyone can understand, and he tried to achieve this through his writings (Nursi, 2015d). His method allows the mind, heart and soul to synchronise, since reflection is not just a mental activity but a comprehensive process of understanding that also involves the heart and soul. Thus, reflection becomes one of the most important means of advancing the efforts of grasping knowledge about Allah SWT (marifetullah) and perfecting one's faith.

Scepticism towards religious beliefs had become widespread during Said Nursî's lifetime due to movements such as positivism and materialism (Mardin, 1989). He responded to this situation by introducing a Qur'anic method of proof based on reflection. According to him, in comparison to the path of theologians based on reason and logic or the path of Sufis based on discovery and pleasure, the Qur'anic method of explanation offers a much more comprehensive and powerful path (Nursi, 2015c). Nursî's emphasis on reflection directly follows this Qur'anic method. His treatises transform the universe into an object of reflection in the light of the verses, and invites the reader to a lesson on knowledge leading to Allah SWT based on each existing thing in the universe. Nursî's understanding of Sufism, in this context, is not only a path focused on remembrance and contemplation, but also a 'path of truth' focused on knowledge and reflection. While in most Sufi orders it is ideal for the disciple to withdraw from worldly affairs for a certain period of time (halvet or inziva) and engage in zikr, however, the essence of Nursî's model is to contemplate on the universe while remaining in the world and achieving spiritual elevation in society (Prayogo et al., 2024). This allows people of all levels, including those with modern education, to experience a form of spirituality where knowledge and religion are reconciled, and reason and emotion walk together.

Therefore, it can be concluded that impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection are the main principles of Said Nursî's Sufi and moral reform movement. These four principles are the fundamental principles and goals that he presented as 'the most suitable path for the people of this age, based on the al-Qur'an' (Arslan, 2013). Nursî stated that, thanks to these principles, the truths of faith that were previously attained through countless hardship, can now be reached through a shorter and safer path (Nursi, 2015f). In particular, impotence and poverty play a key role in a subject's attainment of the consciousness and virtues of servitude, such as trust and submission, while compassion and reflection are elements that educate the heart and mind, thus, elevating humanity's morality and consolidating faith.

Discussion:-

Said Nursî's understanding of Sufism, centred on impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection, provides a comprehensive framework for individual spiritual development and the resolution of numerous moral and social problems experienced in the modern world (Kahveci, 2015). Nursî invites people to 'rediscover themselves in accordance with their nature', reminding them that they are social beings and that they need to strengthen their connection with others and their Creator (Nursi, 2015f; Nursi, 2022). Considering the negative effects of narcissism, humanism, pragmatism and hedonism on individuals and society, Nursî's Sufi model acts as an antidote to these ideas (Nursi, 2015c).

Narcissism refers to a person who has excessive love for oneself and evaluates everything around his own ego. This attitude brings with it selfishness, arrogance and a lack of empathy, which accelerates social disintegration (Sayın, 2023). Conversely, Nursî's principle of impotence instils humility by creating awareness in people about their impotence, flaws and limitations. Sufism generally rejects the idea of self-love and advocates that true love should

be directed towards the Creator (Kuşeyrî, 1991). Hence, the egocentric perspective is broken, and a humble attitude towards Allah SWT and other people takes precedence. Indeed, in Nursî's model, impotence serves as an antidote to narcissistic tendencies, as it disciplines human pride and self-centredness. According to Nursî, the therapy for pride and arrogance is to live in a state of constant impotence and poverty; as a person becomes aware of his own helplessness, he does belittle others, but instead extends his wings of compassion and love towards them (Nursî, 2015c).

Humanism and secular human-centred ideologies elevate human reason and ego, while relegating religious and transcendent values to the background. Consequently, individuals may experience a spiritual void and lack of meaning in their everyday lives; whereby they become prisoners of their own conscience on the path they embarked upon with the claim of 'liberation' (Sayın, 2023). Nursî's teachings constantly emphasise that the greatest duty of a human being is *ubudiyet* (servitude) (Nursî, 2003). This approach provides a believe based on *ihlâs* and *tevhid* against the selfish and self-centred perception of life imposed by humanism. In his treatise on sincerity, Nursî says, "Your deeds should be for the sake of Allah" (Nursî, 2003, p. 160), and advises people to do everything for the sake of Allah SWT and not to put themselves on centre stage, which is the opposite of the humanist understanding. The principles of sincerity and brotherhood enable people to sincerely connect with one another and form cooperations, rather than serving their own interests (Nursî, 2003, 2015c). Nursî's principles of poverty and reflection also make important contributions to overcoming individual alienation and the crisis of meaning seen in modern society. Poverty fills the existential void by connecting humans to divine power, while reflection allows humans to view the universe through the window of meaning and find their place in life within the divine order of the universe. This approach allows individuals to see themselves as a valuable and meaningful part of a whole, not just a 'citizen of the world' but also a member of the circle of faith.

Pragmatism and utilitarianism encourage humans to focus on success and self-interest. Even moral values can sometimes be compromised for the sake of self-interest and the notion that 'what works is right' weakens social solidarity (Sayın, 2023). In Nursî's Sufi model, the principle of compassion, in particular, challenges the narrow self-interest of pragmatism since compassion encourages selflessness, kindness, sacrifice and empathy. The ethical underpinnings of *ihsan* (doing good) and *isâr* (preferring others over oneself) hold an important place in Nursî's principles (Nursî, 2003). Ardent believers of *Risale-i Nur* learn to put the welfare of their fellow believers before their own interests, which, unlike pragmatism, instils a principled understanding of kindness and altruism (Nursî, 2003). The moral decay and disintegration that modern society is exposed to is largely due to self-interest. Nursî's teachings encourage sincere and selfless unity through several concepts, such as sincerity, loyalty and solidarity. Ultimately, as individuals of high moral character tend to mature, the moral decay that hinders social justice can be prevented.

The hedonism movement drives people to pursue the satisfaction of their pleasures and sensual desires. This perspective centres on the self, thus making the transient pleasures of this world the ultimate goal of life (Sayın, 2023). However, in Nursî's Sufi model, the prevailing idea is that worldly life is fleeting and short-lived, while the true goal is eternal happiness and divine satisfaction. Reflection and gratitude are the antidote to hedonism. Even while encouraging the enjoyment of worldly legitimate pleasures, within the bounds of what is religiously lawful, Nursî draws attention to their transience and emphasises that true pleasure and enjoyment lie in faith, knowledge and remembrance of Allah SWT (Nursî, 2015f).

Furthermore, the cycle of dissatisfaction and constant desire for more brought about by hedonism is broken by Nursî's teachings of contentment and patience. The individual learns to say 'no' to the endless desires of the self as well as realises that there is no 'good' or 'blessing' accruing from forbidden pleasures, and that true peace is found in a contented heart. In classical Sufism texts, the pursuit of worldly pleasures is condemned as contrary to the goal of self-discipline and the elevation of the soul. Nursî also emphasised in his literary works that people who indulge in debauchery, while in a state of 'heedlessness and misguidance', suffer pain and torment from what they perceive as pleasures, and that true peace lies within the circle of faith (Nursî, 2015f). In this regard, Nursî's principles of life aim to construct a model that portrays a spiritually satisfied, contented and grateful human being in contrast to the dead-ends of modern hedonism.

Said Nursî's understanding of Sufism ultimately offers a comprehensive ethical transformation project at the individual and social levels. The spiritual training he formulated, centred on impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection principles, contributes to the establishment of social peace and justice by bringing about individual moral

reform. Nursî's Sufi model addresses the individualism and moral decay caused by philosophical movements, such as narcissism, humanism, pragmatism and hedonism, by transforming them into a social framework. A society composed of individuals who are at peace with themselves, humble and devoted to Allah SWT, as well as compassionate and self-sacrificing towards their fellow human beings, will undoubtedly be more peaceful and just. Nursî's Sufi model outlines a framework for contemporary Muslim societies that is consistent with human nature, promotes social peace and revives spiritual values. The greatest advantage of this framework is that it is a universal and timeless moral model based on the fundamental principles of the al-Qur'an. Even without the discipline of a Sufi order (tariqah), individuals can adopt and apply these four principles to their daily life under the guidance of Nursî's literary works and teachings.

Conclusion:-

Said Nursî's understanding of Sufism, based on the impotence, poverty, reflection and contemplation concepts, has shown that Sufism can be practised in the modern era as an effective spiritual education system without being tied to a Sufi order. Nursî, in response to the needs of his time, had presented a new path inspired by the al-Qur'an which he refers to as the 'time of truth' (Nursi, 2015f). This path is based on the principle of knowing oneself and knowing Allah SWT, whereby one recognises one's impotence and poverty, takes refuge in Allah SWT's power and mercy, treats creatures with compassion and turns to the Creator with sincerity, acknowledges the universe through self-reflection and elevates one's faith to the level of certainty. Hence, humans undergo a moral transformation that rebuilds themselves and society. Although Nursî's model of tasawuf does not follow some of the forms and methods of classical orders, it is essentially aimed at achieving the goals of 'marifetullah' and 'high moral standards', which are the objectives of tasawuf (Erin, 2023). He iterated that, 'the ultimate goal of the order is to know Allah and attain the truths of faith' (Nursi, 2015c, 493). In order to achieve this goal, Nursî chose to strengthen faith through Risale-i Nur, as a method appropriate at his time. The results showed that this spiritual model, which was formulated around Nursî's literary works, had strengthened the faith of thousands of people, elevated their moral values, and turned them into useful members of society (Kaygusuz, 2021).

Modern Muslim societies continue to face similar challenges, such as spiritual crises, moral decay as well as the search for identity and meaning. In this context, Said Nursî's understanding of tasawuf, presented as an ethical framework, still retains its relevance and guiding quality. His approach successfully presents Sufism's emotional training and moral construction in a manner appropriate to the level of understanding of that time, centring on the immutable truth of Islam. He has proven that individuals equipped with the truths of the al-Qur'an can be raised even without the classical tekke environment and the sheikh-disciple relationship. These individuals not only think about their own salvation, but feel responsible towards society and act with feelings of brotherhood and compassion.

Therefore, it can be concluded that Said Nursî's understanding of tasawuf, based on the principles of impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection, offers a moral framework that is applicable to contemporary societies. This framework aims to ensure social peace and solidarity while improving the individual's spiritual world. In Nursî's words, people who possess 'faithful virtue' will refrain from dominating and oppressing others by disciplining their own selfish desires, while contributing to the construction of a civilisation based on service, justice and mercy in society (Nursi, 2003). Such an understanding is an important reference point when trying to achieve the high moral standards that today's Islamic societies need. The Risale-i Nur Collection, which Said Nursî left as his legacy, and his moral teachings, promise humanity a life horizon in which, "The friends of Allah are free from fear and sorrow" (Qur'an 10:62) even in today's world. The next step is to increase field studies that integrate the principles of impotence, poverty, compassion and reflection, which are the core elements of Nursî's tasawuf model, into curricula, institutional ethics and public policies, as concrete modules.

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