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How Kindness Multiplies in Modern Times

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Abstract

Society 5.0 was triggered in Japan that describes the 5th generation of society trends in world history which is all about creating new services, values and ways of life. The vision of Society 5.0 includes enhancing the relationship between technology and society as well as the technology-based relationship between individuals and society. This review paper uses a critical analysis method to analyse a Risale-I Nur treatise namely the Damascus Sermon to highlight the importance of kindness as a crucial value in this modern day of Society 5.0. Kindness is considered as virtue. It is the integral part of ethics and identify as genuine and deep concern for others, which strongly relates with the theme and vision of Society 5.0 that empowers each other with the help of technology and develop moral intelligence. The main findings of the analysis is about the term “*kindness multiplies*” which is one of spiritual remedies that was explained by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in his famous sermon in Damascus, Syria back in 1911. In the sermon, Nursi appointed severe spiritual sickness that spreads among us and made a clear analysis that give benefits in general hence elaborated how kindness multiplies and grows. Despite its intention and size, not one kindness is ever wasted. It multiplies and grows later in time whether one realized it or not. The analysis discover the concept of “*kindness multiplies*” and further elaborated how the virtue of kindness is that it multiplies towards goodness and enable society to grow towards solidarity which are essential towards peace and harmony in the society hence proposed further analysis of the treatise to discuss the rest of the remedy for modern times.

Keyword: Kindness, Kindness Multiplies, Spiritual Values, Said Nursi, Society 5.0.

Introduction

We may be used to hearing about the Industrial Revolution 4.0 but rarely do we hear about Society 5.0. What is meant by Society 5.0? Some questions may be playing in our minds if this 5.0 Society is similar to Civil Society or Civil Society that was once popularized as a civilized society in developing, living and meaning life? According to the Malay dictionary of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the definition of civil (*madani* in Malay) is advanced society in terms of thought, spirituality and materiality. Similarly, Society 5.0 was triggered in Japan that describes the 5th generation of society trends in world history based on chronology starting from the hunting society (Society 1.0), agricultural society or agrarian society (Society 2.0), industrial society or industrial society (Society 3.0), information society or information society (Society 4.0).

Meanwhile, Society 5.0 is about creating new services, values and ways of life. As defined by Deguchi et al. (2020), the vision of Society 5.0 including to better enhance the relationship between technology and society as well as the technology-based relationship between individuals and society. More specifically, Society 5.0 is a society that can dominate life in the virtual and physical realms. If Society 4.0 is only able to access information or various forms of information in cyberspace but Society 5.0 can analyze that information using Artificial Intelligent (AI), and the results are returned to humans in real space in various forms which surpasses human ability (Deguchi et al., 2020). As a result, this process will provide new value to industries and societies that were previously impossible for humans to do. Therefore, it is necessary to create a preparation for our growing society to face the speed and rapid change brought by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0). Previously, our focus was only on Industrial Revolution 4.0 or more precisely focused on that technology. However, how do we prepare society to face this current of change? In fact, the success of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 and Society 5.0 must go hand in hand so that the development achieved is comprehensive, that is, so that we can build and develop a sustainable environment for the whole society.

As we discuss about Society 5.0, it revolves around ethical society and how modernity had enabled us to grow and becomes better. This is how kindness is a crucial value; it is considered as virtue and integral part of ethics (Malti, 2020). Malti also added how kindness is identify as genuine and deep concern for others, which strongly relates with the theme and vision of Society 5.0 that empowers each other with the help of technology and develop moral intelligence. This is highlighted by Ronggo et al (2021) regarding how moral intelligence begins with knowledge, (which are available easily nowadays) then to feelings or attitudes and later grows into action or behaviors. Ronggo also emphasized how paradigm shift towards goodness not only requires transfer of knowledge, but it also requires transfer of values. Hence, in the spirit of discussing values and eternalizing goodness, this paper will discuss the main findings of the analysis regarding “kindness multiplies”, how the value of kindness multiplies especially during modern days and how the accumulations can grow towards goodness. This review paper uses a critical analysis method that analysed one of the Risale-I Nur treatise namely the Damascus Sermon to highlight the definition, the importance of kindness, how it multiplies and how it even multiplies further in modern times.

Kindness Multiplies: Definition from The Damascus Sermon

Kindness multiplies is one of spiritual remedies that was explained by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in his famous sermon in Damascus, Syria back in 1911. Said Nursi (1876-1960) was a profound Kurdish Sunni Muslim thinker and revivalist, whose teachings and ideology are still being followed today in modern Turkey (Mohammad, 2020). In the early 20th century, Said Nursi

was also a central figure in the contemporary Nurculuk movement, a faith-based movement among religious group that includes Muslim ideologies and his significant approach was in dealing with hatred where Said Nursi had greatly influenced variation of non-violent movements during the Ottoman era until Turkish democracy (Ziaulhaq & Sen, 2021). Said Nursi was given the title “Bediuzzaman” meaning “Wonder of the Age” due to his ability to master both traditional religious knowledge and modern science at a very young age and he remains a leading figure in Turkey to this day (Jaafar, 2021). This include his magnum opus collection of analysis Risale-I Nur Collection that has been translated across the globe and still being studied as thematic Quran interpretation.

One of his significant work is the notable sermon he delivered at Umayyad Mosque called *The Damascus Sermon* (Nursi, 2012), also known in Malay language as *Khutbah Syamiah* (Nursi, 2016). The values retrieved from the sermon had influenced the production of a moral society as Nursi constantly emphasizes the importance of knowledge for perfecting actions, how man acquires value through belief by manifesting the Divine Names, how belief affords man strength and makes mankind a true human (Mohammad, 2020). In the sermon, Nursi (2012) appointed severe spiritual sickness that spreads among us, mainly focused among Muslim, however Nursi made a clear point and analysis that give benefits in general. The identified “sicknesses” that is causing the decline of the Muslim world are 1) despair and hopelessness; 2) the death of truthfulness; 3) love of enmity; 4) not knowing the luminous bonds that bind believers to one another; 5) despotism and 6) restricting endeavour for personal benefits (Keskin, 2021; Nursi, 2012). The prescribed spiritual remedies for each sickness are: hope to cure hopelessness, enthusiasm to fight against despair, honesty against deceit, love cures hate, kindness multiplies that bind believers and solidarity cures hostility and oppression (Nawawi, et al. 2020). Nursi (2014) explained and elaborated how kindness multiplies and grows; despite its intention and size. Not one kindness is ever wasted, it multiplies and grows later in time whether one realized it or not. These spiritual values by Nursi (2012) emerged from thorough analysis of the Damascus Sermon and interpreted as remedies for spiritual illness spreading amongst humanity to help anticipate the future for education and modern days development (Din, 2021). Akhmetova (2021) also added how Nursi believed that a faith-based approach in facing diversity and conflict is essential to establish a safe and balanced environment since initially, Turkey’s disease was weakness in religion and now regain its health by strengthening its faith commitment.

Despite Nursi’s elaboration focused in context of *hikmah* (wisdom) from the religious perspective, he insisted the solution to the Muslim world’s problems to be in “saving and strengthening religious belief” which encourage Muslims to embrace Islam not only as religion but way of life (Nawawi & Din, 2021). This definitely relates towards today’s modern society that uses fast internet, advanced technologies and up-to-date gadgets where information spreads easily and easier, news travels faster, facts and trends constantly updated by days, hours and minute, if not perform under moral obligation, society will not able to co-exist peacefully in diversity (Cicek, 2020). Including the usage of social interactions on various crowded social media platform, how general information that mixed with influential personal preferences are shared every second and the multiplication effects are able to be observed.

Hysa et al (2021) mentioned how modern society nowadays function from various recommendation, comments, suggestions, and critics they found online unlike previous generations who occasionally uses blogs, microblogs, rating portals, and various travel forums. Now, YouTube has becoming sources for reviews, Twitter easily made one paragraph

of tweet that recommend places to eat easily shareable throughout nations and Instagram or TikTok has created tons of trends for video-sharing on tips and hacks for various niches. These social media platform has tremendously changing communication basis including influencing and marketing (Hysa et al., 2021). These simple examples alone are easily understood how an act of kindness (that share tips or information) or ugliness (that share bad trends or ugly habits) can multiplies; by sharing, following and copied.

Kindness Multiplies Towards Goodness

Nursi (2016) explained the value of multiple goodness and kindness is where every good deed done, even small or seemingly insignificant, still has a multiple effect. Kindness that multiplied is also defined as a virtue that are able to multiply into thousands like a luminous chain; from one small good deed, to another good deed and so on. The example presented by Nursi in his sermon is for the Arab authorities, as a big power, big influence and the higher authority should set an example to be emulated by other authorities with powers. Nursi (2016) also warned those who claimed no harmed; despite not causing any affliction, the lazyness in doing goodness, carelessness and idleness to do good is a danger within itself and such is an absolute despotic. Nursi even further explained how any good deed that is not ignited, the effect will take place in the future. This is because when one is claiming unable to do anything beneficial to others, such excuses are causing harm to be done which will be multiplied instead of the goodness. Furthermore, by putting no efforts towards doing good and not getting into the action towards goodness through Islamic unity, with true Islamic brotherhood, the goodness that is not done is equivalent to having done much damage and injustice; because the good deed done surely brings benefits towards others and continuously beneficial (Nursi, 2012).

Adnan et al (2021) highlighted several issues regarding today's modern social trends that revolves around technology such as the ability of one person to influence specific circles towards particular activity or involving in particular issue, which can carry positive or negative vibes. eventually lead towards social dilemma. This is the multiple effects of good deeds as well as bad deeds; both can be infectious and multiplied. Another concern regarding modern society is the tendency to be materialistic and judging appearances which is initial influenced unconsciously and in time, they are reflected in daily behaviour (Kasim et al., 2020). Issues mentioned can easily resolved with action and guidance from Islam that promotes peace and harmony for both. Huda et al (2020) had recently discussed how religious awareness has the distinction of influencing the ways in thinking, act and ritualise as religious awareness increases community cohesion involving a certain way of thinking leading towards a particular morality hence provoking a certain attitude. It is safe to conclude that modernity had cause various trends and potential influence, causing multiply effects and shaping the behaviour, critical thinking and moral values.

Bakti et al (2017) pointed out that good deeds is part of communication values and Nursi highlighted vertical *taqwa* (piety) is in believing God, the prophets, the angels, the Holy Quran, the fate, the hereafter and establishing prayers while horizontal *taqwa* is caring for others, having commitment and patience, forgiving, controlling one's emotions, realizing and avoiding previous mistakes as well as persistence to excel. This can be further explain through an example from Husin who stated that when an individual's heart has been nurtured with goodness, then the light given by ones spiritual or the individual's conscience will multiply; where the eyes not only see what is on the surface, but reads what is implied, the ear not only hears the sound, but is able to hear the voice within and in turn portrays feelings into empathy

and wisdom (Husin, 2017). Nursi (2012) also added how kindness and goodness done sincerely will not only benefits to the one performing it, but also favourable towards millions of other people. Just like in one of the Quran reminder in *Surah al-'Asr* (The Time) which Allah reminded us how human are all at loss except for those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and recommend one another to perform all kinds of good deeds, and recommend one another to patience (Ajmal, 2021), this truly means that no good deeds shall be wasted and one who do righteous deed will not be at loss.

Kindness Grows into Solidarity

In the midst of Society 5.0 that grows and living with technology, where technology is not separate but rather an integral aspect of current generation (Ajmal, 2021), it is undeniable that a person is connected and always supported by others, whether ones aware of it or not. Rojas et al (2021) mentioned from an organizational point of view, Society 5.0 is all about creating new ways to provide for an individualistic system where companies, universities, and governments are independent yet strive towards collaborative operational concept that is boosted by current societal interconnectivity. For example, a person using a food application to order food; this connects the restaurant organization to the deliveryman, and later arrange by the app (which was coded, systemized and created by another organization) hence showing how individualistic system work together for individual demand. This also shows that by using advanced technologies and advanced products to connect people and things, we are also sharing all kinds of knowledge and information in creating new social and business chains and values in society (Hysa et al., 2021). During this process, kindness that comes off from making the ordering process becoming easy is multiplied from the app distributor, marketer, internet provider, food seller, the deliverer and finally receiver.

Nursi (2012) explained how sacred bond is created from a single kindness, especially for Muslim to work with one another, bound and connected to one another through solidarity and assisting one another morally and materially, if necessary. Nursi also added how we should be proud of the goodness done from others as if they are done by our own families or tribe and feel the same guilt if one does harm or crime. This concern not only will ignite us to do more good deeds, it also motivates to remind each other and prevent the harms from happening. It is also our naturally human need for a sense of brotherhood (Gaffar, 2021). Nursi (2012) further added how Islamic society at this time is portrays in the form of a factory that containing various machines where each of us made up for components of the machines; should any of us fall behind or entangled with another, the machines will unable to function. Therefore, for Islamic unity and solidarity in general to begins and ignite, it is crucial to keep our eyes on the work, instead of focusing on one another's personal faults and forgive each other. Nursi also believed Muslim identity should always be based on Islam and maintained through education (both in general or spiritual) hence this was one of the main challenges (Akhmetova, 2021).

Concluding the explanation, Nursi (2012) summarized how one is not a fully human if one's endeavour is only limited to oneself. This is because by nature, mankind are meant to be civilized and socialize. Example given by Nursi is the food we eat; how many hands involved in the making of simple bread including today's modern application that includes so many other people involved. As well as the clothes we wear; just how many factories and people involved in getting them in the right size, promoted and deliver to us. These simple example simply show that human is bound to need one another, therefore causing us to be grateful and thankful that our need is met through other people's kindness and goodness meanwhile

those who are selfish has abandoned humanity and becomes like an iniquitous animal (Nursi, 2012).

Conclusion

All in all, it is easy to understand that kindness is essential in social interactions, communications and many other aspect however it is also a divine knowledge to understand how each act of kindness led to another and continuously benefits the doer and the receiver. As elaborated, kindness indeed multiplies into goodness, even greatly multiplies with the use of technology that constantly updating and allowing shareability of almost anything. With that capability, kindness that grows with the right education as well as proper guidance, it can grows into solidarity and enhance Society 5.0 that is developing right now. As for the other valuable spiritual remedies found in The Damascus Sermon such as hope to cure hopelessness, enthusiasm to fight against despair, honesty against deceit, love cures hate and solidarity through togetherness (or *musyawarah* meaning to discuss together) that cures hostility and oppression, these treasured prescription are essential not only as preached by Nursi back in 1911, but also a vital spiritual boost that significantly relatable in today's modern society.

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