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## The Importance of the Value of Civilisational Dialogue According to Said Nursi's Thinking towards Malaysia

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### Abstract

This article explores the importance of the value of civilizational dialogue according to Said Nursi's thinking towards Malaysia. Said Nursi, a prominent Islamic scholar and thinker, emphasized the principles of unity, compassion, and dialogue between civilizations. The article discusses Nursi's pillars of civilizational dialogue, including understanding, tolerance, respect, and patience. It also highlights the problems in implementing civilizational dialogue, such as cultural differences, power imbalances, historical grievances, and political interests. Additionally, the article discusses Nursi's approach for promoting mutual respect, encouraging a two-way conversation, fostering a sense of community, and encouraging empathy. The significance of Nursi's ideas for Malaysia is explored, considering the country's diverse cultural and religious landscape. The article concludes by addressing the main factors of the issue of racial unity in Malaysia and highlighting the prevalence of prejudiced attitudes among the community.

**Keywords:** Said Nursi, Civilizational Dialogue, Unity, Malaysia

### Introduction

Said Nursi was a prominent Islamic scholar and thinker of the 20th century who left a lasting impact on Islamic thought and spirituality. Born in Turkey in 1877, Nursi was a prolific writer and author, whose works emphasized the importance of faith, knowledge, and social responsibility in Islam. Nursi's ideas on religious education, social justice, and interfaith dialogue continue to influence Muslims around the world today.

Throughout his life, Nursi authored numerous books and treatises on Islam and Islamic philosophy, including his magnum opus, the "Risale-i Nur." This extensive work is comprised of thousands of pages, covering topics ranging from theology and spirituality to ethics and politics. Nursi's writings emphasized the importance of faith and virtue, and his call to

revitalize Islamic education and values set the tone for a new generation of Muslim scholars and leaders.

In addition to his intellectual contributions, Nursi was also a social activist who worked tirelessly to promote social justice and interfaith dialogue. He was a staunch opponent of violence and extremism, often working with members of other religions to promote peace and harmony. Nursi's ideas on interfaith dialogue and peaceful coexistence continue to inspire Muslims and non-Muslims alike to build bridges across cultures and religions (Rahman, 2018). Overall, Said Nursi's impact on Islamic thought and society cannot be understated, and his ideas continue to resonate with Muslims around the world today (Rahman, 2018; Gozler, 2013; Bozdemir, 2015).

### **The Pillars of Civilizational Dialogue from Said Nursi's Thought**

Nursi (1877-1960) was a prominent Islamic scholar and the founder of the Nur movement. His thought is based on the principles of unity, compassion, and dialogue between civilizations. Nursi viewed dialogue as a way of promoting communication, understanding, and cooperation between different cultures and religions.

According to Nursi, the pillars of civilizational dialogue are based on the following principles

- i. Understanding: Understanding is the key to civilizational dialogue. It is essential to understand each other's beliefs, practices, and customs. Nursi believed that mutual understanding can only be achieved through dialogue.
- ii. Tolerance: Tolerance is vital in civilizational dialogue. Nursi believed that people should be tolerant of each other's views and opinions. Tolerance is essential for promoting peace and harmony between civilizations.
- iii. Respect: Respect is an essential pillar of civilizational dialogue. It is essential to respect each other's beliefs, practices, and customs. Nursi believed that mutual respect can only be achieved through dialogue.
- iv. Patience: Patience is essential in civilizational dialogue. Nursi believed that people should be patient in their interactions with each other. Patience is critical for building trust and fostering understanding between civilizations (Nursi, 2003; Nurani, 2021).

### **The Problems in Implementing the Civilisational Dialogue**

The concept of a "Civilizational Dialogue" refers to a process of constructive interaction and exchange between different civilizations or cultures, aimed at promoting mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. While the idea of such a dialogue has been widely discussed and debated, there are several challenges and obstacles that can hinder its implementation. Here are some of the main problems:

- i. Cultural differences: One of the most significant challenges in implementing a Civilizational Dialogue is the diversity of cultures and values across civilizations. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and even clashes. Moreover, some cultural practices and beliefs may be incompatible with the values and norms of other civilizations, making it difficult to find common ground for dialogue (Kochler, 2013).
- ii. Power imbalances: Another obstacle to Civilizational Dialogue is the existence of power imbalances between different civilizations. Some civilizations may be dominant

- in terms of economic, political, or military power, which can create an asymmetry in the dialogue process. This can lead to the marginalization or silencing of weaker civilizations, undermining the goal of mutual respect and equal partnership (Mathur, 2020).
- iii. Historical grievances: Historical conflicts and grievances between civilizations can also pose a challenge to Civilizational Dialogue. Past injustices, such as colonization, imperialism, or genocide, can create resentment, mistrust, and even hostility, making it difficult to engage in constructive dialogue. Moreover, some civilizations may have different interpretations of history, leading to conflicting narratives and perspectives (Rossi, 2020).
  - iv. Political interests: Finally, the pursuit of political interests and agendas can also hinder Civilizational Dialogue. Some governments or groups may use dialogue as a tool for propaganda or to advance their own interests, rather than promoting genuine dialogue and understanding. Moreover, political tensions or conflicts between civilizations can spill over into the dialogue process, making it difficult to maintain a constructive and respectful dialogue (Aleshkovski et al., 2020).

However, here are some of the common problems faced in implementing a civilisational dialogue

The concept of civilisational dialogue has been gaining recognition over the past few decades, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected, and the need to understand and respect the diversity of cultures and beliefs becomes more urgent. However, the actual implementation of this dialogue has been challenging, and a number of obstacles have prevented its successful adoption.

One major obstacle to the implementation of the civilisational dialogue is the prevalence of ideological and religious extremism, which often creates a hostile environment for any kind of constructive dialogue. The rise of violent extremist groups, such as ISIS, and the increasing polarization between different religious and political groups, has made it difficult for individuals to engage in intercultural dialogue without fear of persecution or violence.

Another significant challenge in implementing the civilisational dialogue is the persistence of cultural and historical biases. Prejudices, stereotypes, and misunderstandings about different cultures and religions continue to exist, perpetuating a cultural divide that makes it difficult to initiate any meaningful dialogue. Furthermore, cultural differences can lead to a lack of understanding and trust, which is often compounded by political and economic power imbalances.

A third challenge is the lack of resources and institutional support for civilisational dialogue initiatives. Many governments and institutions have yet to prioritize the importance of intercultural dialogue, and resources are typically scarce for those who wish to promote dialogue and understanding. As a result, there is often a lack of infrastructure to facilitate constructive dialogue, as well as a lack of training and education for individuals and organizations seeking to participate.

Finally, a fourth challenge is the lack of commitment to civilisational dialogue on the part of individuals and communities. While many people recognize the importance of intercultural

dialogue, there may be a lack of motivation or willingness to engage in it. Without a genuine desire to learn from and understand others, progress towards a more peaceful and tolerant world may be slow and limited.

Despite these challenges, there are a growing number of individuals and organizations dedicated to promoting the civilisational dialogue, and there have been some concrete successes in recent years. For example, the historic meeting between Pope Francis and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in March 2021, the Peace Agreement between Israel and the UAE, and the increasing use of social media and technology to connect individuals from different cultures and backgrounds. There is hope that these efforts, along with increased support and resources, will pave the way for a brighter future of understanding, respect, and dialogue among civilizations.

### **The Advantages of Said Nursi's View on The Dialogue of Civilizations**

Said Nursi's view on the dialogue between civilizations emphasizes mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. Some of the advantages of this approach include

- i. Promoting peaceful coexistence: By focusing on commonalities and seeking to understand differences, Said Nursi's approach to dialogue can help reduce tensions and promote peaceful coexistence between diverse cultures.
- ii. Encouraging learning and development: Through dialogue, individuals and communities can learn from each other and gain new perspectives, which can spur personal and social development.
- iii. Building bridges of trust and empathy: Dialogue can also create opportunities for building relationships based on mutual trust and empathy, which can help break down barriers and create a sense of shared humanity.
- iv. Respecting diversity: Nursi emphasizes the importance of respecting diversity and recognizing that different cultures have valuable contributions to make. This approach can help counter stereotypes and promote appreciation for different ways of life.
- v. Fostering collaboration: By working together, individuals and communities can often achieve more than they could alone. Nursi's approach seeks to promote collaboration and cooperation between diverse cultures for the betterment of all.
- vi. Promoting mutual respect: Said Nursi's approach promotes mutual respect and understanding between people from different cultures and religions, which can help to reduce conflict and foster peaceful co-existence.
- vii. Encouraging a two-way conversation: Said Nursi's approach to dialogue is not just about one side listening to the other, but also about encouraging a two-way conversation. This can lead to more fruitful and productive discussions, where both sides can learn from each other.
- viii. Fostering a sense of community: By promoting intercultural and interfaith dialogue, Said Nursi's approach can help to foster a sense of community between people from different backgrounds. This can create a more inclusive and cohesive society.
- ix. Encouraging empathy: By encouraging people to understand each other's perspectives, Said Nursi's approach can help to promote empathy and compassion towards people from different cultures and religions.

Overall, Said Nursi's view on the dialogue between civilizations emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and respect between people from different backgrounds. This

approach can help to promote peace and harmony across nations and foster a more inclusive and cohesive society.

### **Said Nursi's Approach for Promoting Mutual Respect**

Said Nursi, an Islamic scholar and thinker, argued for the importance of mutual respect in promoting peaceful coexistence between different groups. He believed that respect for diversity and acceptance of differences is an important aspect of Islamic teachings, and can be applied to promote understanding and cooperation between people of different faiths and cultures.

One of Nursi's key approaches for promoting mutual respect was through dialogue and education. He emphasized the need for open and honest communication between different groups, where each party can learn from the other and build bridges of understanding. He also believed that education played a crucial role in promoting respect and tolerance, as it helps people understand different perspectives and cultures.

In his work, Nursi emphasized the importance of positive human values, such as compassion, empathy, and kindness, as a means of promoting mutual respect. He believed that by fostering these qualities within individuals, society could promote a culture of respect and tolerance.

Nursi's approach to promoting mutual respect is rooted in Islamic values and teachings, but it also incorporates elements of modern thought and humanism. His ideas have influenced many Muslim scholars and activists who are working towards promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding (Nursi, 2010).

Said Nursi emphasized the importance of mutual respect and understanding between different faiths and ideologies. His approach for promoting mutual respect can be summarized as follows

- i. Acknowledgement of diversity: Nursi recognized the diversity of human cultures and faiths and believed that this diversity was a source of strength.
- ii. Empathy and compassion: Nursi believed in the importance of empathy and compassion towards others, regardless of their faith or background. He taught that one should strive to understand others' perspectives and treat them with kindness and respect.
- iii. Dialogue and engagement: Nursi believed that dialogue and engagement between different faiths and ideologies were essential for promoting mutual respect. He encouraged open and respectful discussion, where people could learn from one another and find common ground.
- iv. Common values: Nursi stressed the importance of identifying and emphasizing common values shared by all humans, such as justice, peace, and compassion. He believed that these shared values could provide a basis for mutual respect and understanding (Nursi, 2008).

### **Said Nursi's Approach for Encouraging A Two-Way Conversation**

Said Nursi believed in encouraging a two-way conversation by fostering an open and respectful dialogue between individuals with differing perspectives. His approach for enabling

such conversations was based on certain principles such as humility, patience, and mutual understanding. Nursi emphasized the importance of listening actively to the other person's point of view and showing empathy towards their concerns.

According to Nursi, the key to promoting a successful conversation is to create a comfortable and non-threatening environment. He suggested that individuals should avoid criticizing or demeaning others' beliefs and instead focus on finding common ground. Nursi believed that dialogue should be a two-way process in which both parties actively participate in the conversation and listen to each other's point of view.

Nursi's emphasis on encouraging a two-way conversation is evident in his work, particularly in his *Risale-i Nur* collection of writings. In his writings, Nursi often engaged in interfaith dialogue, emphasizing the importance of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect between different religious communities.

Overall, Said Nursi's approach for promoting a two-way conversation was based on the principles of mutual understanding, patience, empathy, and respect. His teachings provide valuable insights into how individuals can engage in productive conversations, even when they hold different beliefs or perspectives, by fostering an environment of openness and understanding.

### **Said Nursi's Approach for Fostering A Sense of Community**

Said Nursi believed in fostering a sense of community through education and spiritual development. He believed that education was the key to developing a strong and cohesive community. Nursi emphasized the importance of transmitting religious and moral values to young people, through the teaching of scripture and the Quran. Nursi also believed that spiritual development was necessary to create a sense of unity within the community. He urged his followers to engage in regular prayer and meditation, and to cultivate a deep understanding of God's will.

Nursi's approach to community-building is reflected in his writings, especially in his famous work, *The Risale-i Nur Collection*. In this collection, Nursi emphasizes the importance of education and the development of moral values for creating a strong and cohesive community. He says, "The most important endeavor of our time is to educate people about the existence, unity, and attributes of God."

Nursi also believed that community-building required a sense of responsibility and accountability on the part of each individual. He wrote, "Every person is responsible for their own actions and is accountable to God for them. However, we are also responsible for the welfare of the community. We must work together to create a just and peaceful society" (Nursi, 2008).

Overall, Nursi's approach to community-building emphasizes the importance of education, spiritual development, and personal responsibility. These values are essential for fostering a sense of community and creating a just and peaceful society.

### **Said Nursi's Approach for Encouraging Empathy**

Said Nursi, a prominent Turkish scholar, emphasized the importance of empathy as a means to promote peaceful coexistence and understanding among different communities. His approach for encouraging empathy involves several key principles, as outlined below.

1. Developing a sense of compassion: According to Nursi, compassion is the essence of empathy. He believed that individuals should cultivate a sense of compassion towards others by empathizing with their pain and suffering. Nursi argued that such a sense of compassion can lead individuals to become more altruistic and empathetic towards others.
2. Promoting education: Nursi stressed the importance of education in promoting empathy. He believed that education should focus not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the development of character. By teaching empathy and compassion to children at an early age, Nursi believed that individuals could learn to be more understanding and tolerant towards others.
3. Encouraging dialogue: Nursi emphasized the need for open dialogue between individuals of different faiths and cultures. Through such dialogue, Nursi believed that individuals could learn to understand and appreciate the perspectives and beliefs of others.
4. Practicing humility: Finally, Nursi argued that practicing humility can foster empathy. By recognizing one's own limitations and weaknesses, an individual can become more empathetic towards others and develop a greater appreciation for their struggles and challenges (Nursi, 2007; Kudsi-Zadeh, 2005).

### **The Important of Nursi's Idea for Malaysia**

The idea of dialogue between civilizations in Said Nursi thought is important for Malaysia due to its diverse cultural and religious landscape. Nursi emphasizes the importance of dialogue and understanding between different communities and cultures, and he believed that through respectful and peaceful communication, individuals could overcome their differences and work towards a common goal. In Malaysia, where there are various ethnic and religious groups, the promotion of dialogue between civilizations can help to build bridges of understanding and foster a sense of unity among its people. Additionally, the idea of dialogue aligns with Malaysia's national philosophy of Rukun Negara, which emphasizes the importance of unity and harmony among its citizens (The Official Portal of the Malaysian Government, n.d.).

Furthermore, Nursi's emphasis on tolerance and respect for different beliefs and cultures can help to counter extremist ideologies and promote peaceful coexistence among Malaysia's diverse population (Nursi, 2007; Abu-Rabi, 2012).

Civil society in Malaysia has a number of basic needs that must be addressed in order to promote stability, prosperity, and peace. One of these needs is the promotion of dialogue between civilizations, which is essential for fostering understanding and cooperation among different cultures and communities. Dialogue between civilizations can help to reduce tensions and conflict, and can create opportunities for shared learning and mutual respect. By promoting dialogue and understanding, civil society can help to build a more harmonious and inclusive society that is better able to address the challenges of the 21st century (<https://unchronicle.un.org>).



In Malaysia, the value of dialogue between civilizations is particularly important given the country's diverse ethnic and religious makeup. Malaysia is home to a range of different communities, including Malay Muslims, Chinese Buddhists, and Indian Hindus, among others. These communities have different histories, cultures, and values, and this can create tensions and misunderstandings. By promoting dialogue between civilizations, civil society can help to break down these barriers and create a more cohesive and inclusive society (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org>).

There are many ways in which civil society in Malaysia can promote dialogue between civilizations. One approach is through educational programs and initiatives that bring together students from different communities and promote intercultural exchange. Another approach is through the promotion of cultural events and activities that celebrate diversity and encourage understanding. Additionally, civil society can play an important role in advocating for policies and initiatives that promote social harmony and inclusivity (<https://www.thestar.com.my>).

### **The Main Factors of The Issue of Racial Unity in Malaysia**

The main factors of the issue of racial unity in Malaysia are

- i. **Historical Legacy:** Malaysia inherited a racial segregation system from its colonial past, which created disparities and tensions among different ethnic groups such as Malays, Chinese and Indians.
- ii. **Ethnic and Religious Diversity:** Malaysia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country with a diverse cultural heritage. The lack of understanding and respect for each other's beliefs and cultures can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts.
- iii. **Economic Disparities:** Malaysia is marked by significant economic disparities between different ethnic groups. The Malay population is often considered the poorest while the Chinese population is the wealthiest.
- iv. **Political Fragmentation:** The political system in Malaysia has largely been divided along ethnic lines, causing political fragmentation rather than integration among the different groups.
- v. **Educational Divide:** The national education system in Malaysia is segregated, with different ethnic groups attending different types of schools. This has resulted in different values, beliefs and cultures, which can cause misunderstanding and conflicts.
- vi. **Discrimination and Prejudice:** Discrimination and prejudice against certain ethnic groups are still prevalent in Malaysia. This can lead to negative stereotypes, tensions and even conflicts.
- vii. **Lack of Leadership:** The lack of strong and committed leadership to promote unity and national identity is a significant barrier to achieving racial unity in Malaysia.

Overall, achieving racial unity in Malaysia is a complex and challenging issue that requires a multifaceted approach that addresses economic, political, social and cultural barriers.

### **Prejudiced Attitudes among The Community in Malaysia**

One of the main reasons for Malay prejudice against non-Malays is the dominance of Malays in politics and the economy since the country's independence in 1957. The Malaysian government implemented affirmative action policies in favor of Malays, such as the New

Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, which aimed to address economic inequalities between Malay and non-Malay communities. However, the implementation of these policies has created tension and resentment among non-Malays, who perceive it as preferential treatment for Malays.

Another factor contributing to Malay prejudice against non-Malays is cultural and religious differences. Malaysia is predominantly Muslim, and Malays are considered the indigenous Muslim community. Non-Malays, especially Chinese and Indians, practice different religions and have distinct cultural practices, which sometimes clash with Malay traditions. This cultural and religious divide can lead to misunderstandings and intolerance.

Historical events have also played a significant role in shaping Malay prejudice towards non-Malays. During British colonial rule, the colonial administration favored Chinese and Indian immigrants in the economy, which angered the Malay community. The 1969 race riots, which occurred between Malays and Chinese, further exacerbated ethnic tensions and reinforced the Malay sense of victimhood.

the issue of Malay prejudice against non-Malays in Malaysia is complex and multifaceted. It stems from Malaysia's historical, social, and political context, as well as cultural and religious differences. More needs to be done to promote inter-ethnic understanding and tolerance in Malaysia to create a more harmonious and inclusive society.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, practicing the value of dialogue between civilizations in Malaysia is crucial in promoting mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect among different cultures and religions. By engaging in constructive dialogue, Malaysians can celebrate their diversity and build cohesion and unity within their society. This can lead to the development of a more inclusive and harmonious nation that embraces its cultural heritage while appreciating and respecting others. Therefore, encouraging dialogue between civilizations should be an ongoing effort by all Malaysians to foster a peaceful living together.

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