

The Miracle of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon him) Ascension: A Comparative study of the views of Said Nursi and Allama Iqbal

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Abstract

In his yearning for truth Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) reached the highest heavens. This miraculous journey tells that among all the creatures of Allah, humans are the best and the superior creation. The Ascension of Prophet (*Mi'raj*) is a very important topic discussed in '*Risale-I Nur*'. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi pointed out that the profound truth of Ascension (*Mi'raj*) was a supreme miracle of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in the world of the inner dimensions of things. Through this clear wonder, the sainthood of his prophethood was proved. This topic has also been discussed in detail in Allama Muhamma Iqbal's '*Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*' and '*Javed Nama*'. He learns from the miracle of Ascension (*Mi'raj*) of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) that "Heaven" is within the reach of mankind. According to him, return of the Prophet from highest heavens discloses the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The aim of this paper is to compare the views of these two most influential figures of twentieth century Muslim scholarship about the significance of the miracle of Ascension (*Mi'raj*).

Keywords: Ascension, Supreme Miracle, Sainthood. Prophetic Consciousness

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In the beginning of 20th century Muslims not only experienced decline in the material realm of life but also faced intellectual stagnation. Consequently, a class of Muslim scholars found their survival in following the Western trend of logo-centrism. Therefore a tendency to rationally examine all the religious and spiritual matters was developed. Eventually Miracles of Prophet were either denied or interpreted according to such logo-centric affinity. The miracle of Ascension (*Mi'rāj*) was also treated by many modern Muslim scholars with the same leaning. They precluded any possibility of interpreting *Mi'rāj* in “physical” terms. In such scenario Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1878-1960)¹ and Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) drew their attention to the purpose of Ascension. They occupy a unique place in the modern Muslim world. It is interesting to compare their positions regarding the Ascension of Prophet (*isra* or *mi'raj*).

Isra means undertaking of journey at night as the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) did, according to the Holy Quran (سبحان الذي أسرى بعبده ليلا الخ)², from the Holy mosque of Makkah to the Holy mosque of Aqsa (Jerusalem), followed by accession to the Heavens. Quite a large mass of Muslim literature exists on this topic. Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Allam Iqbal are contemporary to each other, “but there is no evidence to suggest that they met or influenced each other.”³ Dr. Jalal has mentioned the issues which are discussed by both scholars including freedom, nationalism, racialism, despotism, Islamic unity, the comparison of philosophy and religion, demerits of Western civilization⁴. On most of the points they have got similar views. Dr. Jalal comments:

Whoever studies the works and views of these two scholars about important social issues will see that although they never met and were not aware of each other’s ideas, they put forward similar views on many subjects. It is really amazing.”⁵

Said Nursi’ view on the miracle of Ascension:

Prophethood is one of the four major themes of Risale I Nur. Said Nursi has discussed different dimensions of this topic on 230 different occasions.⁶ Ascension of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the subject of Thirty First Word which is a chapter of the first part of Risale-I Nur “The Words”. It comprises more than thirty pages. Although Nursi has discussed Ascension

¹Biographies of Said Nursi have referred to several different dates regarding his birth, based on a profound research 1878 is preferred. Ian S. Markham and Suendam Birinci Pirim, *An Introduction to Said Nursi Life, Thought and Writings* (England: Ashgate Publishing limited, 2011), 3.

²Al-Quran, 17:1.

³Dr. Yasien Mohammad, “Predestination and Free Will in the view of Iqbal and Nursi,” in *5th International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi The Qur’anic View of Man, According to the Risale-i Nur* (Istanbul: Sozler, 2000). <http://www.iikv.org/academy/index.php/sympeng/article/view/1003>

⁴Jalal Jalalizade, “A Comparison of the Thought of Bediuzzaman and Muhammad Iqbal,” in *Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi the Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sozler, 1995). <http://www.iikv.org/academy/index.php/sympeng/article/view/908>

⁵Ibid.

⁶Yusuf Muhammad Eid Sil’u “The Wisdom of Prophethood and its Necessity”, *The Pen*, Nov 24, 2012. <http://www.thepenmagazine.net/the-wisdom-of-prophethood-and-its-necessity/>

briefly in other parts of Risale-I Nur too, here he wants to unite all flashes⁷. Nursi mentions Ascension as the supreme miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (PUBH), he states:

“Pre-eternal power, which does not leave ants without a prince or bees without a queen, certainly does not leave mankind without prophets. As the Splitting of the Moon was a miracle of Muhammad (UWBP) for men in the Manifest World, so his Ascension was a supreme miracle before the angels and spirit beings in the World of the Inner Dimensions of Things. Through this clear wonder, the sainthood of his prophethood was proved, and like lightning or the moon, that shining Being scattered light through those inner worlds.”⁸

Said Nursi expounds the Ascension of Prophet particularly to the people of Belief because according to him “The Ascension cannot be proved independently to irreligious atheists who do not accept the pillars of belief, because it cannot be discussed with those who neither know God, nor recognize His Messenger, nor accept the angels, and who deny the existence of the heavens. We shall address the discussion to a believer who, since he considers it unlikely, has misgivings about the Ascension; we shall explain it to him. However, from time to time we shall take into account the atheist who is the position of listener and shall set forth the matter to him.”⁹

Nursi illustrates the truth of Ascension in four principles i.e. Why was the Ascension necessary? What was the reality of the Ascension? What was the wisdom and purpose of the Ascension? And what are the fruits and benefits of the Ascension?¹⁰

Imadudin Khalil describes the methodology of Said Nursi which he adapted while explaining the Ascension in these words:

“In all these Bediuzzaman displays openly his skill at analysis and deduction. He gives numerous examples in order to bring distant truths close in a way appealing to the reader’s power of imagination and to their ears. Similarly, he divides the subject into parts, dealing with them in different sections, asking interesting questions, voicing objections, and answering each in turn. Sometimes he puts it in the form of a debate or conversation, analyzing the question from an intellectual angle down to the finest details.”¹¹

While explaining the necessity of Ascension Said Nursi raises a question. He says as it is

⁷Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Words*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler Nesriyat, 2008), 583.

⁸Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, *The Letters*, Seeds of reality, trans. Sukran Vahide, (Istanbul: Sozler Nesriyat, 2010), 530.

⁹Nursi, *The Words*, 583.

¹⁰Ibid., 585.

¹¹Imaduddin Khalil, “God’s Messenger (pbuh) in The Risale-I Nur,” in *Third International Symposium on Bediuzzaman Said Nursi the Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in the Twentieth Century and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Istanbul: Sozler, 1995). <http://www.iikv.org/academy/index.php/sympeng/article/view/887>

mentioned in Quran that Allah Almighty is *closer to him than his jugular vein*¹² the verse expounds that “However, all the saints are able to converse with Him in their hearts, so why was the Saint, Muhammad (Peace be upon him), successful in holding an inward conversation with God only as a result of a long journey like the Ascension?”¹³

To reply this question he makes the following comparison:

“A man holds up the mirror he is holding to the sun. According to its capacity, the mirror receives light” “If he directs the luminous mirror towards his dark house or his tiny, private garden, which is covered by a roof, he cannot benefit in relation to the sun’s value, but only in accordance with the capacity of the mirror.” “A second man, however, puts down the mirror, faces the sun directly, and sees its majesty and understands its grandeur. Then he climbs a very high mountain, sees the brilliance of the sun’s broad dominion and converses with it in person and without veil. Then he returns and makes large windows in his house and in the roof over his garden, and opens up ways to the sun in the sky, and speaks and converses with the constant light of the actual sun.”¹⁴

After giving the above comparisons, Said Nursi concludes “The First man is a manifestation through a dominical relationship which is extended to the mirror of the heart. The degrees of sainthood, which proceed under the shadow of most of the Names and attributes, arise from this sort.”¹⁵

About second man Nursi says “This display and manifestation is the inner meaning of the Ascension of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), by which his sainthood became the source of his messengership.”¹⁶

Thus he proves “Sainthood proceeds through shadow” “While in messengership there is no shadow, it looks directly to the oneness of the All-Glorious One” “As for the Ascension, since it was the greatest wonder of Muhammad’s sainthood and also its highest degree, it was transformed into the degree of messengership. The inner face of the Ascension was sainthood, it went from creation to Creator. While its apparent face was messengership, it came from Creator to creation. Sainthood is spiritual journeying in the levels close to God; it needs a certain amount of time and many degrees must be traversed. While messengership, whose light is greatest, looks to the mystery of uncovering Divine immediacy, for which the passing instant is sufficient.”¹⁷

Said Nursi explains the second principle ‘reality of the Ascension’ like this: “It consisted of the journeying of the person of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) through the degrees of perfection, by showing that special servant all the works, spheres and levels of Almighty Allah’s

¹²Al- Quran, 16:60.

¹³Nursi, *The Words*, 585.

¹⁴Ibid., 586.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 587.

¹⁷Ibid.

dominicality”¹⁸ To make the sense clear Said Nursi gives the following example:

“A king has different titles in the different spheres and offices of his government. For example, he is Wise Judge in the judiciary, Sovereign in the civil service, Commander-in-Chief in the army, Caliph in the learned establishment, and so on. It is as if the ruler is present and knowing in every sphere through his corporate personality and through his telephone; and sees and is seen in every class through his law, regulation, and representatives; and administers and observes from behind the veil in every level through his command, knowledge, and power; and has a different centre and headquarters in every sphere. Thus, a king such as this may allow a person of his choosing to visit all his different spheres and offices and may show him the imperial dominion and sovereign commands special to each. He may cause him to travel from sphere to sphere and from level to level until he brings him to his presence. There he will entrust him with certain universal and general commands concerning all those spheres and will send him back.”¹⁹

About the third principle which is wisdom and purpose of Ascension, Said Nursi illustrates though wisdom behind ascension is so exalted that it cannot be fully comprehended by human intellect but its existence may be made known through certain indications.²⁰ He elaborates “The Creator of the universe chose an eminent individual to represent all creatures, and took him by means of an Ascension that was like a link from the furthest levels of multiplicity to the source of unity.”²¹ And as always Nursi does, he gives the following example to get the readers more clear about the exalted wisdom.

“There was an illustrious king who had vast treasuries and in those treasuries many varieties of jewels were to be found. The king wished to open an exhibition to reveal to the people the splendour of his sovereignty thus he build a huge and splendid palace. Then, in order to display his perfections to his subjects, he invited them to the banquet and to behold the perfections. He appointed one of them as the highest ranking general, invited him up from the lower levels and mansions to tour sphere after sphere in the levels rising one after the other. Showing him the successive machinery and workshops of his wonderful art and the storehouses for the produce coming from below, he brought him to his own particular sphere and private apartment. There, he honoured him through showing him the blessed person who was the source of all those perfections and taking him into his presence. He informed him of the true nature of the palace and of his own perfections. He appointed him as guide to the other spectators and sent him back.”²²

Said Nursi concludes:

“Thus, the wisdom of the All-Glorious One of Beauty, Who opens the palace of the world as though it was an exhibition in order to see and display His own transcendent beauty and

¹⁸Ibid., 588.

¹⁹Nursi, *The Words*, 588-589.

²⁰Ibid., 598.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 599-600.

perfections, requires that He should inform someone of the meaning of the palace's signs so that they do not remain vain and without benefit for conscious beings on the earth."²³

While describing the Fruits and Benefits of Ascension, Said Nursi mentions "only five out of more than five hundred fruits of ascension", he explains all one by one with examples.

First fruit is "to see with the eyes the truths of the pillars of belief and to behold the angels, Paradise, the hereafter, and even the All-Glorious One." Whereas the second fruit "has brought to jinn and man as a gift the fundamentals of Islam, and first and foremost the prescribed prayers, which constitute those things pleasing to the Sustainer." About third fruit he states "through the Ascension, Prophet (Peace be upon him) saw Paradise with his own eyes and witnessed the eternal manifestations of the All-Glorious and Merciful One's mercy; he understood eternal happiness with absolute and utter certainty and brought as a gift to jinn and men the good news of its existence." Fourth fruit which he mentions is "Just as Prophet (Peace be upon him) himself sampled the fruit of the vision of Divine beauty, so did he bring to jinn and men the gift of this fruit being attainable by all believers." And finally the fifth fruit is "Man's being the precious fruit of the universe and the petted beloved of the Maker of the universe was understood through the Ascension, and he brought this fruit to jinn and men."²⁴

Iqbal's view on the miracle of Ascension:

Dr. Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) was one of the most influential Muslim thinkers of the twentieth century. Iqbal's poetry and philosophy are aimed at humanizing the world. The central theme of his philosophy is the concept of "Khudi" (selfhood). It is the sense of human identity in the individual as well as the society. The Ascension of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) naturally formed a theme of emulation for many Muslim scholars and mystics through the succeeding centuries. It is also Prophet's Ascension (*mi'raj*) that coloured the mind of Dante resulting in the production of one of the world's greatest epics: The Divine Comedy²⁵. Iqbal was equally inspired by the Prophet's Ascension and wrote his immortal book "*Javid Nama*" for the final expression of his doctrine of self-realization. This magnum opus, in eloquent Persian verse, comes within the purview of those works which have been written under the influence of the famous traditions of *Isrā'* and *Mi'rāj*. As S M Zaman elaborates:

"In his own modest way, Iqbal tries to follow and emulate the example of his Master, the Prophet (SAW), when in the celebrated *Javid Namah* he has unfolded the fascinating story of his poetic journey through the heavens, guided by his mentor 'Pir-i-Rumi'. The pseudonym Iqbal uses for himself as the spiritual traveller in this heavenly excursion is *Zinda Rud*, the living stream, which

²³Ibid., 600-601.

²⁴Nursi, *The Words*, 608-610.

²⁵The *Divine Comedy* is written by Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). It is widely considered the preeminent work of Italian literature, and is seen as one of the greatest works of world literature.

conjures up a picture of the yearning soul-- the streamlet running through mountains, plateaus and plains--- in an eternal desire to become one with the ocean.”²⁶

Iqbal also offered some interesting observations, in his address to the Fifth Indian Oriental Conference, held at Lahore in November, 1928, about the impact of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) on the great mind of Dante in following words:

“Professor Bevan has given us valuable historical discussion of the story of the mi’raj. To my mind, however, what is, culturally speaking, more important is the intense appeal that the story has always made to the average Muslim, and the manner in which Muslim thought and imagination have worked on it. It must be something more than a mere religious dogma, for it appealed to the great mind of Dante, and, through Muhyiuddin ibn-ul-Arabi, furnished a model for the sublimest part of the Divine Comedy which symbolizes the culture of mediaeval Europe. The historian may rest satisfied with the conclusion that the Muslim belief in the Prophet’s Ascension finds no justification in the Quran; yet the psychologist who aims at a deeper view of Islamic culture cannot ignore the fact that the outlook given by the Quran to its followers does demand the story as a formative element in the world-picture of Islam. The truth is that it is absolutely necessary to answer all such questions, and mutually to adjust their answers into a systematic whole of thought and emotion. Without this it is impossible to discover the ruling concepts of a given culture, and to appreciate the spirit that permeates it. However, a comprehensive view of the culture of Islam, as an expression of the spiritual life of its followers, is easy of achievement.”²⁷

Dr Muhammad Riaz comments:

“Alighieri Dante’s (d. 1321 A.C.) famous *Divine Comedy* is also written under the impact of Mi’rāj traditions. Professor Asin, whom Iqbal had also seen during his visit to Spain in 1932, has proved at length that Dante was influenced by the *Mi’rāj* traditions through the works of al-Ma’arrī, Ibn ‘Arabī and others.”²⁸

Iqbal’s philosophy is essentially a philosophy of action, and it motivates human beings to strive to actualize their God-given potential to the fullest degree. As for the Ascension of the Holy Prophet, Iqbal not only believes in it but also thinks that it is a proof of the fact that the whole of the universe can be conquered by man. As Iqbal wrote in *Bāl-ī Jibrīl*²⁹

I have learnt this lesson from the ascension of Muhammad,
That heaven itself is within the range of man.

²⁶ S.M. Zaman, “Iqbal and The Fundamentals of Islam,” *Iqbal Review* 36, no.3 (1995): 105-113

²⁷ Muhammad Iqbal, "A Plea for a Deeper Study of Muslim Scientists," *Islamic Culture* 3, no.2 (1929): 210-229

²⁸ Muhammad Riaz, “Glimpses of Iqbal’s Gennius in the Javid Namah,” *Iqbal Review* 18, no.4 (1978), 171-182.

²⁹ Muhammad Iqbal, *Kulliyat-i-Iqbal*, (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 2000), 364.

The greatest lesson of the Prophet's Ascension is the accessibility of the entire cosmos to man. As he wrote the poem *Meeraj* (Ascension) in *Zarb-e-Kaleem*³⁰:

A mote endowed with strong desire for flight
Can reach the Sun and Moon with effort slight.

If chest of partridge fire and zeal emit,
My friends, in fight with hawk it can acquit.

Ascension means to gauge a Muslim's heart,
The Pleiades are the target of his dart.

Iqbal expressed the same feeling in a poem *Shab-e-Meeraj*³¹ (The Night Of The Celestial Ascension) in his book *Bang-e-Dra*:

This call of the evening star is coming from the sky
This is the night before which the dawn prostrates

“For courage, the Arsh-i-Barin is only a pace away”
The Mi'raj's night is saying this to the Muslim

Moreover Iqbal compares Mystic and prophetic types of consciousness in the light of the Ascension of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his fifth lecture entitled ‘The Spirit of Muslim Culture’ in following words:

“Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.” These are the words of a great Muslim saint, ‘Abd al-Quddūs of Gangoh. In the whole range of Sufi literature it will be probably difficult to find words which, in a single sentence, disclose such an acute perception of the psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness. The mystic does not wish to return from the repose of “unitary experience”; and even when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for mankind at large. The prophet's return is creative. He returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals. For the mystic the repose of “unitary experience” is something final; for the prophet it is the awakening, within him, of world-shaking psychological forces, calculated to completely transform the human world. The desire to see his religious experience transformed into a living world-force is supreme in the prophet. Thus his return amounts to a kind of pragmatic test of the value of his religious experience. In its creative act the prophet's will judges both itself and the world of concrete fact in which it endeavours to

³⁰ Ibid., 529.

³¹ Iqbal, *Kulliyat*, 278.

objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history.”³²

The Prophet returns back even after reaching the zenith, so that he may share his experience to the mankind. Iqbal further elaborates the creative nature of the Prophet Muhammad’s spiritual experience in his Presidential Address of 1930 to the 25th Session of the All-India Muslim League at Allahabad in following words:

“The nature of the Prophet's religious experience, as disclosed in the Quran, however, is wholly different. It is not mere experience in the sense of a purely biological event, happening inside the experient and necessitating no reactions on its social environment. It is individual experience creative of a social order. Its immediate outcome is the fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts whose civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational. The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which it has created. The rejection of the one will eventually involve the rejection of the other.”³³

According to Iqbal, Ascension to highest heavens is not sufficient; rather it is merely a necessary landmark in man's larger journey to engage with the human world. This Journey was not only spectacular because of what it meant to the Prophet, but also for what it means for rest of humanity. In this Prophetic achievement, there is a great message. The journey, however, does not end with the Prophet's ascension, it continues with his return to earth. He returns with a renewed sense of purpose to redirect or refashion the forces of collective or social life.

Comparison of the views of Said Nursi and Muhammad Iqbal on the miracle of Ascension

The common point between Nursi and Iqbal is that their whole views and concepts are based upon Quran. Both scholars devoted their whole lives for the transmission of the message of Quran to mankind. For this purpose Iqbal adapted the source of poetry to convey the divine message to humanity whereas Said Nursi adapted the way of tafseer (commentary of Quran) to make the people understand the divine message.

For Iqbal the advice of his father gave him a spark, when Shaykh Nur Muhammad experienced the continuous practice of his young son to recite the Holy Qur’an after the pre-dawn prayer. He advised “Son! Whenever you recite the Qur’an, do so as if it is being revealed to you. By reading the Qur’an like this, it will soon permeate your very being.”³⁴ Consequently “In subsequent decades, the Qur’an would remain a central part of his intellectual and devotional life, shaping his thinking patterns and opening up new vistas for his philosophical and poetic explorations.”³⁵

³² Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1989) 99

³³ Latif Ahmed Sherwani, *Speeches, Writings, and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 1977) 3-26.

³⁴ Dr. Ahmed Afzaal, “Iqbal’s approach to the Quran,” *Muhammad Iqbal A Contemporary* 49, no.4 (2008), http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct08/2.htm#_edn2

³⁵ Ibid.

Likewise an incident occurred in Said Nursi's life which brought him to the commitment for dedicating his whole life for the sake of Quran. Nursi came to know to the views of the British Minister for the Colonies Gladstone, about Quran who said "So long as the Muslims have the Qur'an, we shall be unable to dominate them. We must either take it from them, or make them lose their love of it." ³⁶ Said Nursi was deeply shaken by these words and vowed himself that "I shall prove and demonstrate to the world that the Qur'an is an undying, inextinguishable Sun!". ³⁷ He decided to "make all the sciences and knowledge he had acquired, means to understand the Qur'an and prove its truths, and that "the Qur'an alone should be his aim, the purpose of his learning, and the object of his life;" he should use his knowledge to defend the Qur'an." ³⁸ Hence his whole life till his death is the proof of this oath, which bring forth the magnum opus Risale I Nur.

Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Allama Iqbal both scholars have discussed Ascension as the supreme miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). While discussing ascension both of them give a comparison of sainthood and prophethood since prove the supremacy of prophethood.

Bediuzzaman narrates that sainthood proceeds through shadow whereas messengership does not need any shadow rather it looks directly to All-Glorious one. He takes Ascension as the greatest wonder of Muhammad's sainthood. He proves that the inner face of the Ascension was sainthood but apparent face was messengership. Moreover sainthood has to depend upon certain amount of time as well as numerous degrees and levels to cover the spiritual journey to come close to God. While messengership does not need to cover such degrees and levels for Divine immediacy, one can traverse in an instant.

Iqbal has used the terms mystic and prophetic types of consciousness³⁹, while comparing the sainthood and prophethood. Iqbal proves the supremacy of prophetic type of consciousness in this way that it is Prophet who has experienced the highest level i.e. Ascension and then comes back to the material world for the fulfillment of Divine responsibility, if a mystic had to experience such ascension, he would never wish to come back. In this way Iqbal differentiates the ambition of a mystic and a Prophet.

Moreover on the bases of the difference between the ambition of the two (mystic and prophetic types of conscious), Allama Iqbal further elaborates that the return of prophet is actually the beginning of his mission. This is to create a society in which he could experiment his religious experience. Therefore his ambition is not mere *fana fillah* rather a step forward. He returns back for the practical implementation of his experience, to create a society based upon his creative

³⁶ Sukran Vahide, *Islam in Modern Turkey An Intellectual Biography of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 31.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Sukran Vahide, "Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and the Risale-i Nur," in *Globalization, Ethics and Islam: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi*, ed. Ian Markham and Ibrahim Ozdemir (England: Ashgate, 2005), 9.

³⁹ Iqbal, *The Reconstruction*, 99.

experience. And this is his achievement in real sense. Iqbal proves that it is the Divine purpose behind the event of Ascension to enable the Prophet for creating a social order for humanity.

Said Nursi also discuss the same point in a comprehensive way. Where he explains the ascendancy of messengership upon sainthood he indicates that “The inner face of the Ascension was sainthood, it went from creation to Creator. While its apparent face was messengership, it came from Creator to creation.”⁴⁰ Furthermore Said Nursi associates the “reality of ascension” with the fact that Prophet has been gone through the “degrees of perfection”⁴¹ so that he could be entrusted “with certain universal and general commands”⁴² Therefore Said Nursi also correlates the Divine journey of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to his social responsibility. Rather Said Nursi moves a step forward to Iqbal while describing the wisdom and purpose behind ascension. He describes the position of Muhammad on his divine journey not only as the representative of humanity but also as the representative of all the creatures.⁴³

Both scholars have also discussed the benefits of Ascension. Iqbal states: “Its immediate outcome is the fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts whose civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational. The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which it has created.”⁴⁴ Whereas Nursi narrates numerous fruits and benefits and gives a detailed analysis.

Nursi describes one of the fruits of ascension is “man’s being the most elevated being above all the beings in the universe”⁴⁵ is established. He states it is due to *Mi’rāj* that an insignificant, weak and impotent conscious being is raised to such a highest position just like as “it is said to an ordinary soldier that he has been promoted to the rank of field marshal, how delighted he will be.”⁴⁶ Likewise Iqbal also focused his attention on this aspect of Ascension. However he interprets this aspect of Ascension in a unique way. As it is mentioned earlier that Iqbal’s philosophy motivates mankind to strive to actualize their God-given potential to the fullest degree. Therefore the phenomena Iqbal derived from the event of ascension is that it is a proof of the fact that the whole universe can be conquered by man. He depicts this phenomena in his following verse:

I have learnt this lesson from the ascension of Muhammad,
That heaven itself is within the range of man.⁴⁷

Conclusion

⁴⁰ Nursi, *The Words*, 587.

⁴¹ Ibid., 588.

⁴² Ibid., 589.

⁴³ Ibid., 598.

⁴⁴ Sherwani, *Speeches*, 5.

⁴⁵ Nursi, *The Words*, 610.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Iqbal, *Kulliyat*, 364.

Said Nursi and Iqbal are creative writers of the highest caliber. We find the two Muslim thinkers on the same planes while pondering on the miracle of Ascension (*Mi'rāj*). Both are of the view that the profound truth of Ascension was a supreme miracle of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Said Nursi provides a corollary for sainthood and prophethood of Muhammad (Peace be upon him) in the light of Ascension. Same as Iqbal has used the terms mystic and prophetic types of consciousness, while comparing the sainthood and prophethood. Both learn from the miracle of Ascension that "Heaven" is within the reach of mankind and man is the most elevated being. Finally, both of them are of the view that height and peak of this journey was the return of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) from Creator to creation. The miracle of *Mi'rāj*, therefore, is organically related to the social order.

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