CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we may briefly sum up the findings of our study. It has appeared that symbols occupy very significant place in religious language, and they are to be properly interpreted, or translated into non-symbolic language, for discerning their real meanings. It has also been evident that 'light' emerges as the most noteworthy symbol in the great religions of the world, and has a number of referents. The striking point is that in all the religions the primary referent of the symbol 'light' is God. He has been regarded as the 'Light of lights', the Ultimate or Real light. When the term 'light' is symbolically applied to God, it refers to a number of distinctive attributes, e.g. Creator and Sustainer of the world, the Real Existence, the Real Truth. The rest of the creation is dependent upon Him for its existence.

When the symbol 'light' is used for something other than God it refers to knowledge, truth, right conduct, good deeds, intellect, Divine guidance and
spiritual illumination, whereas 'darkness' as opposed to 'light' symbolizes all the base things, including ignorance, vice, waywardness, worldliness, evil, lust etc. In some religions the founders are considered to be not only the bearers of light but also the light in themselves e.g. Buddha, Christ and Muḥammad(s). 'Light' also continued to be the most common and pertinent symbol in the mystical literature of both the oriental and occidental religions.

In many verses of the Qur'ān, the use of the word 'light' (nūr) occurs repeatedly, most often, in symbolic sense. In order to make the various meanings of 'light' intelligible these verses have to be translated into non-symbolic language, replaced by their referents that are different according to the context of the verse. In the Qur'ān too, among the many referents of the symbol 'light' one or rather the primary referent is Allah, Who is the Ultimate light, source of all lights. Other referents are the Prophet(s), the Qur'ān, the other revealed books, God's guidance, knowledge, and beatific vision. In some of the verses, the symbol "light" also signifies gnosis of God and the Love of God. In Traditions (of the Prophet) too, light signifies
to the same things, some of which we have quoted in this thesis. The Qur'an and the Tradition address in the same symbolic language.

From our study of the symbolism of light in the Qur'an and Hadith, it has become evident that the source of this symbolism in Sufism does not lie outside Islam, though, of course, there are similarities between the symbolic use of light in Sufism and mystical literature of other religions. It has been the general claim of the Sufis from the very early period that the inspiration they received in the development of their doctrines came to them from their contemplation on the inner meanings of the Qur'an, and the life and sayings of the Prophet(s). Hence the symbolism of light in Sufism owes its origin to the Qur'an, and the Traditions of the Prophet(s) which contain the word 'light' (nūr), signifying many realities. 'Light' in the sayings and sermons of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib also occupies an important place as a symbol that was instrumental in moulding Sufi philosophy and language.

Though references to the symbol 'light' are found in the works and sayings of the early Sufis, but it assumes the particular form of a metaphysical
and mystical doctrine of light for the first time in Ṣūfīsm of Sahl al-Tustarlī. In his theosophy 'light' primarily stands for God, refers to His oneness and uniqueness. He also developed the doctrine of the light of Muḥammad (nūr Muḥammadī)(s) to be the originator of the world of creation.

The credit goes to al-Ghazālī for the further development of the doctrine of light philosophically. His Mishkāt al-Anwār may be considered to be the most comprehensive work on the symbolism of light, as it covers mystical, metaphysical and epistemological implications of it. This work itself has become a classic in Islamic literature mainly for its interpretation of the famous "Light-verse" of the Qur'ān, which requires profound reflection and contemplation to be interpreted properly. This work also contains the interpretation of the "Veils-Tradition"—referring to God's hiddenness behind a series of veils from human sight and insight. The impact of the Mishkāt on the post-Ghazalian mystics of Islam is not of minor significance.
Sunrawardī, Shaikh al-Ishraq, successfully combined both the Islamic and non-Islamic doctrines of the "light" in a much more philosophized and spiritualized form than all his predecessors in Islam. His primary aim is to make it explicit that the One and the Unique light is Divine Light, which is in its essence the Absolute or non-relative Light, while always the word 'light' whenever applied to any created thing is in a relative sense. His intention is not to revive the Persian dualism, as he is blamed by some of his antagonists both in the orient and occident. He upholds, as we have expounded in our study, a monistic system of thought, based upon Islamic tawhīd.

In the views of Ibn 'Arabī, Rūmi, and Mīr Dard also the symbol 'light' primarily stands for God, the only absolute Existence, Truth and Reality. The doctrine of the light of Muhammad(s) (haqiqat-e-Muhammadī or Nūr Muhammadī) holds a very significant place in their systems of thought. "Light" as a symbol in all these philosophies refers to the different states and stages of mysticism and also the sūfī hierarchy. Ibn 'Arabī treats God as the Apprehending Light in Whom or through
Him all kinds of human knowledge are acquired. Rūmī in many of his verses and discourses makes use of the symbols occurring in the "light-verse" to refer to the different states of mystics.

Love and gnosis of God are among the many referents of the symbol 'light' used by the mystics. Gnosis can only be achieved when one keeps oneself purifies from all kinds evil deeds, leads a pious life and directs one's heart towards God.

Finally, it can be said that the symbol 'light' as it is used in the Qur'an, the Hadīth, the sufī literature, and also in the scriptures of other religions, falls among the symbols signifying insight and knowledge of God, particularly being categorised as an 'insight symbol'. It has no phenomenal referents but is used as a vehicle or medium of attaining mystic knowledge. Through it more universal and ideal relations have been referred to that cannot be expressed in non-symbolic, simple language because the symbol 'light' refers to the pervasiveness, ideality, and non-phenomenal character of spiritual journey as well as transcendental
Reality. Ghazālī is the foremost mystic thinker among Muslim philosophers who analysed and elaborated a coherent and consistent doctrine on the basis of his interpretation of the "Light-verse" in Mishkāt, which serves as a key to understand his views on religious knowledge, mystic experience, Divine guidance, prophethood, and God in His transcendence and immanence in relation to the world and its beings.