CHAPTER I

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(A) SYMBOLISM: A GENERAL DISCUSSION

Symbolism, i.e. the practice or art of using symbols, is a most common characteristic of religious language. But the area of using symbol is not confined to religion only. It is also visible in science, art, poetry etc. Under the influence of mathematics and symbolic logic, a notion has arisen which endeavours to confine symbolism to scientific and exact concepts only. That would be an incomplete interpretation of symbolism. In Webster's New International Dictionary of English Language, 'symbol' is defined as that which stands for something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental but intentional resemblance, especially a visible sign of something invisible, as an idea, equality or totality. The word

1. Cassirer rightly observes that a notion of a general theory of symbolism should be broad one if it is to be adequate. He says: 'The philosophy of symbols and symbolic forms is not, as some suppose, concerned
'symbol' emerged to Western languages from the Greek word sumbolon, meaning a token, insignia or means of identification by which parties to contracts, allies, guest and host, and other kinds of partners could identify each other. On the basis of this original sense, which directs to a coherent greater whole identified through its parts, the word has come to represent the general phenomenon of metonymy found widely in all cultures; the use of a signal to mean something and yet to mean something not apparent to the uninitiated.²

Symbolism has been employed in different disciplines, hence it is difficult to find out the common and uniform characteristics of symbols used in various areas. Nevertheless attempts have been made to give a comprehensive account of them. Any datum may be

primarily and exclusively, with scientific and exact concepts, but with all directions of the symbolising function in its attempt to grasp and understand the world. It is necessary to study this function, not only in the realm of scientific concepts but in the non-scientific realms of poetry, art and religion, etc."


considered to be a symbol if it means something or operates as a sign that would include conspicuous features of nature, monuments, written or spoken words, small images or familiar objects easily duplicated or distributed. Any of these is a symbol provided it directs expectation or interest to something other than itself. Symbolism is, then, the study of the part played in human affairs, by all these signs and symbols, especially their influence on thought.  

Sometimes symbols are identified with signs, but this attempt will diminish the actual distinction between signs and symbols. Paul Tillich, one of the outstanding and most influential philosophical theologians of contemporary period, has pointed out one characteristic common in signs and symbols; they point beyond themselves to something else. But he opposes any attempt of calling signs as symbols. The red sign at the street corners points to the officer to stop the

movements of cars at certain intervals. Red light and stopping of cars are not essentially inter-related but are conventions associated with each other. Tillich observes the distinction between signs and symbols by pointing out that the former do not participate in the reality of that to which they point, while the latter do. Therefore, signs can be replaced for reasons of expediency or convention, while symbols cannot. Symbol participates in that to which it points: the flag participates in the power and dignity of the nation for which it stands. Therefore, it cannot be replaced except after a historic debacle that changes the reality of the nation which it symbolizes. An attack on the flag is treated as an attack on the whole nation. 5

The level of reality which is not easily accessible is being opened, to a large extent, with the application of a symbol. It not only opens up dimensions and elements of reality which otherwise would remain unapproachable but also unlocks dimensions and elements of our souls which correspond to the dimensions and elements of reality.

5. Ibid., PP. 136-37.
We have already referred to the view of some thinkers that signs and symbols are to be distinguished, otherwise the concept of symbolism will bear no meaning. The naturalistic theory of symbolism tends to identify signs with symbols and even certain kinds of substitutional signs have gradually come to be called symbols. In actuality, they are not genuine symbols; they are merely operational signs, in which no intuitive relation to the object for which they stand remains. Cassirer maintains that in all genuine symbolic relations some form of likeness is to be found. There may be, rather would be, different kinds of likeness in different symbolic relations; in the moral symbol there is one type of likeness, in the scientific another, in the religious still another, but all symbolic relations imply some type of likeness.

The relation of 'symbolizing' is different from the relation of "imitating" or "copying". This is even pointed out by Stebbing. Symbols plainly stand for what they symbolize. But an intuitive element must be present in any genuinely symbolic relation.

7. Loc. cit.
Kant sees a kind of similarity existing between the symbol and the thing symbolized, but it is not the similarity as in the case of picture. The "sense" of the symbol is not "the common form of representation", as it is seen in the case of the sense of the pictures but a similarity in the way of reflecting on the two things”; a common rule of operation. A significant aspect is also that a symbol is always a presentation, though indirect, of concept, were the conceptual element not present, there would be no judgment and, therefore, no knowledge.

Sometimes language is evaluated as merely a system of signs and symbols of reality. Thus, the philosophy of language passes inevitably into the philosophy of symbolism. According to some primitive and naive views of language, the word is never identical with the thing, the relation is, therefore, in some sense and to some degree symbolic. But this does not mean that every word of our language is a symbolic in its truest sense. If so, the distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic language would be useless. In order to understand any genuine symbol an interpretation of it is needed and this should be done in a non-symbolic language.

A symbol possesses both a symptom - hiding and truth proclaiming dimensions - an esoteric or "closing" function as well as an exoteric or "disclosing" one. Whatever "symbol" says, its expression is at the same time "veiling" and "revealing". In becoming clear and even sensible to us some characteristics of the objects for which it stands remain veiled. The revealing feature of a symbol is known with the employment of an interpretation which discloses what is condensed in it.

(B) CLASSIFICATION OF SYMBOLS:

An important problem of the principle of symbolism would be an attempt of a preliminary and tentative classification of symbols. H. Flanders Dunbar in his study of medieval symbolism has classified symbols into three types: (a) extrinsic or arbitrary symbols; (b) intrinsic or descriptive symbols; (c) insight symbols.

The first class includes many symbols of art and science. The origin of such symbols are varied and have nothing to do with their function. They are merely substitutional signs, by means of which the object is attended without attending to the "meaning". Their function is primarily operational whether they are used in science or any other domain of action and discourse.

The intrinsic symbol is in some way "internal to the things symbolized". The symbols of religion and arts chiefly fall in this group. The symbols of moral qualities, for example of the lion for courage, are intrinsic and descriptive in that, while the symbol is not identical with the thing symbolized, there is partial agreement of such a character as to make analogous predication possible. Symbols of this type has been in Kant's mind in giving the description of symbols. Such a symbol represents, not by virtue of a common form of representation in the sense of delineation, but by virtue of a common "rule of reflection" as Kant phrases it.
Finally we may deal with the characteristic of "insight" symbols which are always intrinsic, that is, in some way and to some degree, internal to the thing symbolized, but they proceed towards the depth. They do not merely represent, through partial coincidence, characters and relations; they are, or at least are supposed to be, vehicle or medium of insight. It is the characteristic of intrinsic and insight symbols that images or ideas are taken from narrower relations and used as expressions for more universal and ideal relations, which because of their pervasiveness and ideality, cannot be directly expressed. But while the function of intrinsic symbols is merely representative, the insight symbols make us to grasp the deep meaning. This type of symbol does not merely describe and make more concrete, through images drawn from the data of sense, an object known (conceptually) - as does merely descriptive symbol - but is given importance as a gateway into something beyond.  

We have elaborated in brief a general theory of symbolism, including the nature of symbols. But the mode of interpretation of symbols used in different fields varies to a large extent. Cassirer termed this as philosophy of symbolic forms. This term entails that there are different forms or types of symbols which, while all belonging to one general field of symbolism, yet have different functions or uses and different ways of representing reality. In other words, there are different functions in the universes of discourse, the religious the scientific and the poetic, and these universes have different symbolic forms. It is necessary to understand the notion of different symbolic forms in order to interpret the application of symbols properly.

(C) SCIENTIFIC SYMBOLS:

The problem of symbolism is a basic problem of today's science. It is said that the language of science is wholly symbolic, which seems to be an extreme view. Both symbolic and non-symbolic languages are utilized in science. Diversified opinions come into vogue about the characteristic of scientific symbols. Some hold that scientific symbols are purely
arbitrary and conventional. Others hold that they are partly intrinsic in character. The solution of this controversy depends on a further question as to what the notion of science shall include. If science be identified with the mathematico-physical, and all propositions, in so far as they are to become scientific and verifiable, must be reduced to those, then there is no scope of any insight symbols in science, perhaps not even of intrinsic ones. If, on the other hand, science broadens its outlook and includes the sciences of life and mind in its scope then the notion of scientific symbols would be different, because the "languages" of these sciences are not reducible to either to "physical" or mathematical language, and then intrinsic, and probably insight symbols, may also be part of the structure of their languages. In other words science would disclose a "double symbolism", the function of its symbols being both to operate and to understand.

The necessity of employing the conception of double symbolism is apparent in the realm of science. In science symbol is often used as identical with substitutional signs, and 'sign' and 'symbol' are often used interchangeably. We speak of plus and minus
signs, but we also speak of these signs as symbols of process of addition and subtraction. But in science even another meaning of symbol exists. When scientific concepts such as atom and likewise are called symbols, they are never thought of as merely substitutional signs, and merely conventional. An intuitive element is always present in such symbols.\(^{14}\) This is even more patent in the sciences of life and mind. The notion of "natural reflection" in biology is essentially considered to be a symbolic concept in the genuine sense of the word. Taken from the sphere of voluntary selection, in the artificial breeding of animals, it is transferred analogically to the natural non-voluntary sphere.\(^{15}\) The notion of selection is moulded, but it retains its meaning only in so long as the original "intuitive" element is retained. That is why, the language of these sciences can never be reduced to a "physical language".

So, symbols of biological sciences will differ in their nature from those of mathematical and physical sciences. It is true that especially the mathematical or physical sciences became conscious of the symbolic

\(^{14}\) Ibid., P. 410.
\(^{15}\) Loc. cit.
character of their fundamental concepts and developed the notion of symbolism as a scientific principle most clearly. This has been pointed out by Whitehead as he says that the algebra exemplifies more fundamental types of symbolism.\textsuperscript{16} It is also true that the main concern of mathematics is to symbolize things.\textsuperscript{17} Even then, in the light of previous discussion, we cannot claim that the practice of using symbol is restricted to mathematics or mathematical physics or chemistry alone; if we do so, it will lead to a narrow outlook about scientific symbolism. Thus, it has became clear that a moderate approach to scientific symbolism would be appropriate to accommodate both the symbols of mathematical and physical sciences, and the sciences of life and mind.


When we compare scientific symbols with poetic and religious symbols their would be some substantial differences among them. The purpose of scientific symbol is not to evoke feelings but to analyze and describe entities; not allusiveness but definiteness and exactness. Despite all the differences some common features may be traced in scientific symbols that bring them closer to the poetic and religious symbols - at least in case of interpretation. As said above, symbols of all realms need interpretation and scientific symbols are also in need of it, otherwise their implication would remain unknown. This view seems to be adhered by N. Bohr, as he says, "in the last analysis we are compelled to express our thoughts in a word painting which we use in unanalyzed fashion".

Like science, poetry has also got its own realm of symbolism, and it is essential to briefly study the principle of poetic symbolism. It is held that language has two uses, the evocative and indicative, it evokes feeling or emotion and indicates objects. Poetic language, as it is usually held, is the development of the former, while scientific language a development of the latter. Hence the primary function of poetic language is evocative. The vis poetica lies first of all in the power of language to evoke feeling. But it evokes much more than feeling, namely, intuitive meanings as distinguished from emotive. Poetic language, in the first instance, exploits intuitive meanings, it also evokes emotion. But it does much more than this. It calls our attention to a living but not in plain language.

It is the general view that all expression involves re-presentation in some form and to some degree, the language of poetry is also representative and descriptive. The poetic symbol is a form of this representation. A poet is a person for whom visual sights and sounds and emotional experiences refer

symbolically to words. Thus, a poet's use of a symbol is not merely purported to evoke emotion and feeling, it simultaneously represents visible facts which he perceives as well as some invisible objects which he apprehends through his insight.

The relation of poetic symbols with metaphor is also important. The general law of language development is from copy to analogy (metaphor) and from metaphor to symbol. All symbolic sentences may also be considered to be metaphorical sentences. If we notice sentences like, all flesh is grass, man is a reed but he is a thinking reed, we will see that the predicates grass and read, are applied analogically to the subjects flesh and man, on the basis of certain similarities, namely, the perishableness of the grass and the frailness of the reed. All poetic symbols are, then, metaphors and arise out of metaphor. But a symbol is more than a metaphor. The metaphor becomes a symbol when by means of it we embody an ideal content not otherwise expressible. The difference between a mere metaphor and metaphor that becomes a symbol is delineated by Urban on the ground that we often speak metaphorically and figuratively when we do not speak symbolically. In the former case, we use

metaphor to illustrate ideas or assertions which are expressible wholly in abstract or non-figurative terms. The metaphor is a symbol when it alone expresses or embodies our ideal meaning.  

There is some distinction between metaphor and simile. The difference lying between the two is that in case of simile we say one thing is like another. Metaphor has been defined as similitude reduced to a single word, or as a word expressly similar without the signs of comparison. To say that a man is like a lion is a simile while to say that he is a fox is a metaphor. The "is" expresses a certain identity of intuition and idea, and the development of this constitutes the symbol. So, a symbol can never be termed as a mere simile, although it ensues from similarity or likeness; the intellectual development of similitude is allegory. An identity of intuition and is a is always implied in the symbol, but not complete identity, for to be be a symbol it must contain both truth and fiction.

23. Ibia., P. 471.
Whether poetic expressions bear some truth is a matter of controversy among different literary critics. There is a view that poetry says nothing about reality for it does not bear any truth. It merely evokes feeling and communicates emotion. According to this view, a poet is neither talking nonsense nor making an assertion which must be accepted as true or false. The poet uses language, L.S. Stebbing holds, not mainly to express statements that are true or false; but to express what is neither true nor false. The question of truth and falsity does not arise in the poetic expression. Prof. Urban's stand, on the other hand, is that all forms of poetry make sufficiently definite assertions, not only about feelings but also about the human beings that have them and about the life of these human beings. They also make assertions about nature and the cosmos. He adds that every creative act of a poet is concerned with truth and falsity. If the hearer is enjoying the poet's utterances without any reference to their truth or falsity, he is not enjoying the poet's meaning but something else. If,

on the other hand, he really understands the poet, that understanding involves communication of meaning in which the question of truth and falsity is relevant.\textsuperscript{27} When a poet says that "Life stains the white radiance of eternity", it is true that he is saying nothing literally, for the life to which the words "stains the white radiance of eternity" are applied does not physically exist. The assertion, thus, lacks literal significance. If it has got any significance, that would be of another kind, namely, symbolic. When a poet expresses something symbolically the type of symbols he uses falls in the group of insight symbols. Insight symbol, as we have found, does not merely describe, through images drawn from sense, an object otherwise known (conceptually), but finds its importance as a gateway into a "spiritual" world. This spiritual world is precisely the world of his own construction which determines the nature of its appreciation. Images from the narrower world of sensuous intuition are taken, not merely to picture, but to give us insight into and to enable us to intuit a non-sensuous world of value relations.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., P. 480.
SYMBOLISM IN RELIGION:

We have given an account of the principle of symbolism, pointing out the difference between scientific and poetic symbols. The present study is concerned with a specific religious symbol that occupies an important place in different religious scriptures and mystical writings. Before dealing with this specific issue it would be pertinent to discuss the nature of religious language and the problem of religious symbols.

I. THE NATURE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE:

What is the nature of religious language? Is it symbolic or literal? These questions are often raised. We shall see that religious language has both the literal and symbolic aspects. Any careful attempt to understand religious language or its cognitivity leads inevitably to the following question: whether it is to be taken literally, whether it is to be regarded as univocal, or whether, instead, it is to be understood according to some other mode of interpretation. Indeed, the answer to the question of whether religious sentences can be said to be capable of truth or falsity is often contingent on one's answer to the question of
the "literalness" of religious language.²⁸ Paul Tillich's view on the nature of religious language is considered to be the most influential and philosophically stimulating, for it is relevant to contemporary era. His position, in brief, is that the language of faith is a symbolic language and that "everything religion has to say about God.... has a symbolic character."²⁹ So much has Tillich committed to a symbolic view of religious language that he feels that the very meaning of "God" is "completely missed" and that faith becomes idolatrous if one takes religious language literally. Moreover, he insists on the distinction between symbolic and non-symbolic expressions on the ground that if we are not able to make understandable to our contemporaries that we speak symbolically when we use such (religious) language, they will rightly turn from us, as from people who live still in absurdities and superstitions.³¹

³⁰ Loc. cit.
We cannot fully agree with Tillich's position that religious language is absolutely symbolic; it has also a non-symbolic aspect which will be discussed later. It is undeniable that most of the scriptures cannot be discerned if we try to understand them literally. In support of this we may quote a passage from the Olu Treatment:

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace, a forth the mountains & the hills before you break/into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 32

( Isaiah 55:12)

Even the strongest advocate of the literal approach to the Bible would not expect anybody to believe that the granite mountains will literally break forth in song and trees will clap their hands when the Messianic age arrives, and not even the writer of this passage really had this sense in his mind.

Such statements are not uncommon in other scriptures also. Let us consider a passage from the Buddhist scripture that describes the events that took

place when the Buddha-to be, was conceived in his mother's womb:

... The instant the Future Buddha was conceived in the womb of his mother, all the ten thousand worlds suddenly quaked, quivered and shook. And thirty-two Prognostics appeared, as follows: an immeasurable light spread through ten thousand worlds; the blind received their sight, as if from desire to his glory; the deaf received their hearing, the dumb talked... wild animals lost their timidity; diseases ceased from among men... a mild, cool breeze began to blow, very refreshing to men; rain fell out of season, water burst forth from the earth and flowed in streams; ..... the ground became covered everywhere with lotuses of the five different colors;... in the sky were produced others, called hanging lotuses; a shower of flowers fell all about; celestial music was heard to play in the sky; and the whole ten thousand worlds became one mass of garlands of the utmost possible magnificence.... 33

This passage also cannot be understood literally. Did it really happen that the whole earth became paradise of music, cool winds, flowers and peace? If the gods made the earth so beautiful for one day, why not everyday thereafter?

In actuality what we have in both the sets of examples is a large mixture of convictional language, the assertion by symbolic means of the overwhelming importance of the transpiring event as it appears to the believer, i.e. Jew and Buddhist.

So many statements are found in the Katha Upanishad in which it is maintained that the nature of Ultimate Reality cannot be expressed in language, for it is "beyond understanding" and "beyond reason". "Subtler than the subtlest is this Self, and beyond all logic... The awakening which thou has known does not come through the intellect". The above Upanishadic utterances suggest the limitations of human expression in connection with the nature of the ultimate, the problem of the ineffability of divine nature. But what they want to convey can only be grasped symbolically. Because their literal meaning will not give any positive information about the subject.

Many books of Christian creeds, for instance, more specially the Nicene, contain linguistic modes which are clearly figurative and poetic and in interpretation are viewed as symbolic. God as the "father"


cannot be explained literally. Dionysius (fifth century A.D.) is believed to be an associate of St. Paul, who realized the difficulties of the applicability of words to the Supreme Being. He tries to solve this problem in his book *Divine Names*, and he deserves attention for being one of the earliest, if not the first, among the philosophers to discuss the problem of linguistic analysis as applied to religious language. The general tenor of his theory is that God in Himself transcends all predicates, even "One" or "good" or "love" they do not describe Him but the attributes we predicate to Him are really predicates of merely His manifestations or "emanations" which we apply to Him symbolically. 36

In the Qur'ān a good number of verses are found whose meanings can only be apprehended symbolically. For example, the meaning of the Qur'ānic verse "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth", 37 can hardly be understood literally. Its meaning lies in assuming the real meaning of the word "Throne" (Kursi)

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Here the word "Throne" stands for, as it is interpreted by 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali - seat, power and knowledge, symbol of authority.  

Al-Ghazālī, in his book Jawahir-al-qur'ān, refers to different words whose proper meanings can be understood symbolically. The words like Divine finger, pen, hand, right hand, face and form cannot have the corporeal referents. Their real meaning can be known when they are interpreted spiritually.  

In the same book al-Ghazālī says:

"In short, know that everything which you are likely to understand is presented to you by the Qur'ān in such a way that if you sleep you were studying the protected Tablet (al-Lawn al-mahfūz) with your soul, it would be related to you through a suitable symbol which needs interpretation".  

We can sum up that the language of the scriptures is, to a large extent, symbolic; and the symbols used there, are to be properly interpreted in order to comprehend their real spirit. But this does not in anyway imply that the entire scriptural language is symbolic. If we look into the language of the scriptures,

40. Ibid., P. 52.
it will incontrovertibly appear that it has a non-symbolic, i.e. literal, aspect also. In every religious scripture many expressions are found which are easily intelligible without being interpreted. They contain different pieces of advices which urge the followers of the respective religion to be honest and dutiful in their daily lives. In the Qur'an the duties towards parents, wife, children, relatives, neighbours etc. have been clearly mentioned. The Qur'an itself repeatedly claims that it is a clear and intelligible book of guidance. So, the literal aspect of the Qur'anic language cannot be ignored; and the same is the case with other scriptures also.

Hence it may be concluded that the language of the scripture, i.e. religious language has both symbolic and non-symbolic, i.e. literal, aspects and in order to be understood the real meaning symbols are to be properly discerned and interpreted in non-symbolic language.
2. THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS.

We have already seen that symbol plays a very important role in the religious expression. In most cases it would not be possible to decipher the meaning of a religious utterance if we are not properly acquainted with the meaning of the symbols used in it. In all religions, whether primitive or developed, there exist particular systems of symbols. In the maintenance and strengthening of man's relations with the realm of the sacred or holy - the transcendent, spiritual being - such systems play a crucial role.

A follower of religion intends to acquire some information regarding the supreme being whom he worships. But the object of his worship transcends the phenomenal realm where he lives. How can then this gap be bridged? It is said that "the symbol is, in effect, the mediator, between the present and the invisible. It is the representation of the holy in conventional and standardized forms." The reason for the transformation of religious conception into symbols lies, as Tillican observes, in the character of the

ultimate transcends the realm of finite reality infinitely. Therefore, no finite reality can express it directly and properly.

In our discussion about the poetic symbols we have seen that a poet deals with both man and nature. What he observes in nature is something unique which a scientist misses to perceive. The mathematical symbol is, as we have seen, substitutional sign. The symbol used in natural sciences, in the view of Hoffding, seeks, also to shed light upon more complex relations of existence by means of figures representing the more simple and intuitible facts. Even in the case more complex, the referent is always phenomenal. A poetic symbol expresses some aspect of nature but its referent is different from that of the scientist. Some sort of aesthetic insight works in the act of symbolization. A symbol in religious language is contrived on the basis of a special kind of insight that may have some likeness of the poetic symbol, yet, as it is claimed by Prof. Urban, a religionist catches something which both the poet and the scientist miss, and that something

it renders in its unique language and in its special symbolic form. Though both poetry and religion have some internal identity, they differ in their relations to life. Like religion, poetry also may intervene in life and it constantly does so. But the intervention of religion has a unique character.

The religious symbol shares, of course, in the general character of all symbols. Images are taken from the narrower and more intuitible relation and used as expressions for more universal and ideal relations, which, because of their pervasiveness and ideality, cannot be directly expressed. There is a fundamental difference between religious and poetic experience which affects vitally both the function and the interpretation of the religious symbol.

Morin finds the difference, in the first instance, in the religions of intuition from which the symbol is taken. These he describes as "the great fundamental relations of nature and human life which are expressed in words such as light and darkness, power and weakness, life and death, spirit and matter, good and evil. In his view the material for symbol-

44. Urban, op.cit., P. 578.
making is drawn from such intuitions. According to Prof. Urban, there is no doubt a relative difference between religious symbols and those of ordinary poetry and science; and it is indeed by means of these fundamental oppositions and contrasts that the deepest insights of religion are expressed, but this distinction of material does not go to the heart of the difference. This is to be found rather in the objects or referents of the symbols. The basic point where the religious symbol differs from every other type of symbol is that for which it stands always transcends the intuitive and the perceptible. To some extent, the same point has been highlighted by Tillich while discussing what distinguishes the religious from the non-religious symbol. He says:

The religious symbol has a special character in that it points to the ultimate level or being, to ultimate reality, to being in-itself, to meaning itself. That which is the ground of being is the object to which the religious symbol points. It points to that which is of ultimate concern for us, to that which is infinitely meaningful and unconditionally valid. Religious experience is the experience of that which concerns us ultimately. The control of this experience is expressed in religious symbols. 47

45. Hoffding, op.cit., p. 201.
From epistemological point, a religious symbol is used as an attempt to transcend the phenomena, to throw some light on noumena, or reality in whole. Hence it is in principle metaphysical in character. In making distinction between religious and metaphysical symbols, again, one may be benifited from the analysis of Hoffding. Hoffding holds that the symbolism of religion "considered epistemologically and not psychologically" differs from the metaphysical symbol only in that its figures are more concrete, richer in colour, and more tinged with emotion. However, although the religious symbol psychologically is more akin to poetry, in its essence it is metaphysical.

48. F.H. Bradley, in his Appearance and Reality, understands by metaphysics "an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles or ultimate truths, or again the effort to comprehend the universe, not simply piecemeal or by fragments, but somehow as a whole" (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., NewYork: The Macmillan Co. 1925), P. 1.

It may also be said that a religious symbol in its intermediary function has aspects of epistemology (theory of knowledge) and ontology (theory of being). As a means of knowledge, it operates in a characteristically dialectical process of unveiling and revealing truths. It fulfills an interpretative function in the process of apprehending and comprehending religious experience. In doing so the word or symbol—with its meaning, contextual use, relationship to other types of religious expression, and interpretative connection with the various forms of sign, picture, gesture, and sound—plays an important part in the process of symbolic perception and reflection.50

In the application of religious symbol, the concept of analogy is important. The symbol functions in this way, because it has an analogous cognitional as well as existential relationship to that which it signifies. It has also a referential character. It refers to the reality of the sacred or holy that is somewhat and somehow present. A symbol being the indicator of the sacred or the holy, a certain distance.

exists between it and its referent, and therefore, it can not be claimed that the two are identical.\textsuperscript{51}

Urban seems to subscribe to this view when he says "our symbols are merely a ladder by which we reach the infinite, to be kicked away as false in the blinding light or the direct vision, they are still a ladder".\textsuperscript{52}

(F) \textbf{SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT IN RELIGION:}

It is now clear that what great importance a symbol has in religion and it will not be an exaggerated claim if it is said that without understanding the proper meanings of religious symbols the aims and the objectives of religious expression, to a large extent, will remain unfulfilled. The word "light" has a wide-spread use in different religious scriptures and mystical literature. If it is translated literally it will not divulge anything, because it is used almost everywhere as a symbol. We find its use as a symbol in different religions. Sometime it stands for God Himself, and sometimes as knowledge, guidance, good etc.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., PP. 901-2.
As the main theme of the thesis is "Symbolism of light in Sufism with special reference to al-Ghazâlî's \textit{Mishkât al-Anwar}", we are chiefly concerned with the symbol of "Light" as used in different Sufi writings in general and in al-Ghazâlî's mystical opuscule \textit{Mishkât al-Anwar} in particular. The importance of such a study may not be overestimated. But at least it can be said that such a study has been overdue in order to understand and interpret the spirit of Islam and Sufism. A good many researches have been done on different aspects of Sufism, but the present problem, so far our knowledge goes, remains untouched. Not only that, if we look into the problem in broader perspective, we will realize that no systematic study has yet been accomplished on "symbolism of light" in other religions and mysticisms also. A humble attempt will be made in this thesis to study "light" as a symbol in different religions which will help us to have a comparative view of various religions. Later on we shall concentrate on the symbolism of light in Islam with particular reference to the Qur'ân and Sunnah, the two main sources of Islamic teachings. After this study only we shall be able to embark upon the "symbolism of light" in Sufism and Ghazâlî's mystical philosophy.