CHAPTER IV

SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT IN ŞÜFİSM
Symbolism plays a very important role in divulging the teachings of Sufism. A Sufi, in most cases, makes use of symbols to convey his views and spiritual experiences to others mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, it is a common view of the Sufis that what a Sufi grasps or perceives is beyond the reach of an ordinary believer. An ordinary believer is not inquisitive to know the secrets of the Creator and creation, the heaven and the earth, the ultimate aims and objective of life. He is satisfied, if he can successfully discharge the duties imposed on him by the religion, whereas a Sufi is not convinced with merely performing these duties. His aim is to know the Creator Whom he worships and to develop an inner relation with Him so that all the secrets of the heavens and the earth may reveal to him. An ordinary believer being indifferent to the vocabulary of the Sufis, does fall short to grasp the message of Sufism. So, it is preferred that the teachings of it are to be expressed symbolically. Because if these are communicated literally they may create confusion among the ordinary believers that may ultimately misguide them. Secondly, human language has been developed to communicate the happenings of the phenomenal world, but
what ṣūfīs talk about are the matters of the spiritual world. So literal and exact expression of it, in most cases, is not possible. Due to this a ṣūfī takes help of symbols to communicate his experience and understanding indirectly. In this way an intricate system of symbols has been revolved to express different ideas and experiences in ṣūfīsm.

The term 'light' has a good number of uses as a symbol, as we have already discussed in the third chapter with reference to the two main sources of Islamic theosophy, i.e., the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. Ṣūfīsm being concerned with the esoteric aspect of Islam, has naturally made use of the word 'light' as a symbol. Abundant references of the symbolism of light are found in the writings, sayings and poetries of almost all the ṣūfīs. The limited space would not permit us to discuss all of them. Hence we have selected some of the chief representatives of ṣūfīsm in whose writings this symbol plays a very dominant role.

Before entering into discussion on about a particular ṣūfī in connection with his use of the symbol 'light', it would be pertinent to refer to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib's uses of 'light' as a symbol in his sermons because he is, to almost all the ṣūfīs, the ʿImām al-Awliyā (leader of the saints). A good number of his sayings, sermons and
letters are recorded in the Nahj al-Balāghah. We shall quote some of his utterances from this book which is undisputably the first record of Muslim thinkers' views that were instrumental in the development of sufī doctrines as well as many philosophical notions later found in Islamic philosophy.

(A) SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT IN "NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH"

Some references of the symbol of 'light' are found in Nahj al-Balāghah. In one sermon 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib puts much stress on the fear of God and compares it with a number good things, light is one of them.

"Certainly fear of Allah is the medicine of your hearts, sight for the blindness of your spirits, cure for the ailments of your bodies, rectifier for the evils of your Chests, purifier for the pollution of your minds, light for the darkness of your eyes..."¹

The words, 'light', 'darkness' and 'eyes' are used symbolically. They do not refer to phenomenal light, darkness and physical eyes. The eyes mean the insight, the faculty of supra-sensual perception. Those who do not bother for God and are indifferent to his commands, for them those inner faculties are veiled or blocked, and are

devoid of the grace of the spiritual insight. Fear of God is that light which removes the veils of darkness and opens and illuminates the spiritual faculty of human beings that leads to the understanding and realization of Divine affairs.

In Se·mon 85, the characteristics of the most beloved person to God have been elaborated. According to Imām ʿAlī he is such a person that his “inner side is (submerged in) grief and outer side is covered with fear. The lamp of guidance is burning in his heart. He has provided entertainment for the day that is to befall him. He regards what is distant to be near to himself and takes the hard to be light”\(^2\). What spiritual exercises he performs to attain light is also mentioned. "He has put off the clothes of desires and got rid of worries except one worry peculiar to him"\(^3\). What is this 'light' which can only acquired by the beloved man of God and for which he aspires so passionately? This is perhaps the acquisition of good attributes, moulding oneself after the image of Prophet(s), creating Godly character in himself. Such a person is a model to the society. Every act of his is illuminating. His is the perfect personality which attracts people towards him and guides them to proper direction.

---

\(^2\) Ibid., P. 237.

\(^3\) Loc. cit.
Thus, his total personality serves as a guiding light to others.

The darkness that engulfed the world before the advent of the Prophet(s) is described in the sermon, 194: "Allah deputed the Prophet(s), when no sign of guidance existed, no minaret was giving light and no passage was clear". "No minaret was giving light" seems to symbolize a number of things. It means there was not a single person or book or institution or religion that could guide people to light i.e., the proper direction. There was no Divine book from which a person could benefit and get illumination so that he may successfully discern what is truth and reality, because all the revealed books by then lost their divine characters because of distortions and aberrations.

In a verse of the Qur'an the Prophet(s) is termed as light who appears to eradicate the pale of darkness from the world. Such reference is also found in Nahj al-Balagah: "He (the Prophet) is the leader of all who exercise fear (of Allāh) and light for those who seek guidance. He is a lamp/flame is burning, a meteor whose light is shining and a flint whose spark is bright. His

4. Ibid., P. 412.
conduct is upright, his behaviour is guiding, his speech is decisive and his decision is just.\(^5\) Every act of the Prophet(s) is light in itself. If any one comes in contact with his blessed personality or follows him, is led to right direction. His acts, deeds, sayings are shining perpetually and illuminating others. Hence, here light symbolizes all these characteristics of the Prophet(s) which lead man into true path, the chosen path of God.

In Sermon 89, a man is advised to seek light from the Qur'ān. "... Be confined to those of His (God's) attributes which Qur'ān has described and seek light from the effulgence of its guidance".\(^6\) The Qur'ān was revealed to the Prophet(s) with the aim to guide mankind to the right direction. This is the manifested book of guidance possessing the solutions of the problems of human life. "To seek light" means to follow the Divine instructions. 'Light' sometimes symbolizes guidance. The Qur'ān is the Book of guidance. Therefore, those who seek guidance should look into it, follow it, obey its instructions and assimilate its teaching in their lives.

---

6. Ibid., P. 242.
In Nahj al-Balāghah, God, his Prophet(s), the imāms of his family (ahl al-Bayt) and the saints (Awliyā) are occasionally referred to symbolically as the light of the heavens and the earth. The Shi‘ī doctrine of imāmah is based on the belief that the earth can never be left without an imām, the light which grades:

But this earth will never be without such persons who will prove universality of truth as disclosed by the Lord, they may be well known persons, openly and fearlessly declaring the things revealed to them; or they may, under fear of harm, injury or death, hide themselves from the public gaze and may carry on their missions privately so that the reasons proving the reality of truth as preached by religion and as demonstrated by His apostles may not totally disappear. How many are they and where could they be find? I swear by God that they are in number, but their worth and their ranks before God are very high. Through them the Lord preserves His Teachings so that they, while departing, may hand over these truths to persons like themselves. The knowledge which they have acquired has made them see the realities and visualize the truth, and has instilled into them the spirit of faith and trust. The duties which were decreed as hard and unsufferable by ease loving and easy going people are considered easy and bearable by them. They feel happy in the company and association of things which frighten the ignorant and uneducated. They live in this world like everybody else but their souls soar the heights of Heavenly eminence. They are delegates of God on this earth and they invite people towards Him.

7. Ibid., P. 290.
The Sufi notions of shaykh, qutb, abdal etc. may be considered to be derived from the Shi'I concept of imāmah that was for the first time introduced in Imām 'Alī's sermons and utterances. This establishes an intimate relationship between Sufism and Shi'Ism. Sufism in the Sunni Islamic world accepts 'All as the chief heir of the Prophet's esoteric knowledge. S. Hossein Nasr's view may be quoted here:

"... Those elements of Islamic esotericism which from the Shi'ite point of view are considered as particularly Shi'ite, appear as representing Islamic esotericism as such in the Sunni world. No better instance of this can be found than the person of 'All ibn Abi ălib. Shi'ism may be called the Islam of 'Alī, who in Shi'ism is both the 'spiritual' and 'temporal' authority after the Prophet. In Sunnism also nearly all Sufi orders reach back to him and he is the spiritual authority par excellence after the Prophet. The famous hadith 'I am the city of knowledge and 'All is its gate', which is a direct reference to the role of 'Ali in Islamic esotericism, is accepted by Shi'ah and Sunni alike, but the 'spiritual vice-gerency' (Khilafah rūhāniyyah) of (Ali appears to Sufism within the Sunni world not as something specifically Shi'ite but as being directly connected with Islamic esotericism in itself. 8

In fact just as in Sufism each master is in contact with the pole (qūṭb) of his age, in Shi'ism all spiritual functions in every age are inwardly connected with the Imam. The idgā of the Imam as the pole of the Universe and the concept of the qūṭb in Sufism are nearly identical, as asserted so clearly by Sayyid Haydar Amuli when he says, 'The Qūṭb and the Imam are two expressions possessing the same meaning and referring to the same person. The doctrine of the universal or perfect man (al-insān al-Kāmil) as expounded by Ibn 'Arabī is very similar to the Shi'ite doctrine of the Qūṭb and the Imam, as is the doctrine of the Mahdī developed by later Sūfī masters. All these doctrines refer essentially and ultimately to the same esoteric reality, the haqīqat al-muḥammadiyyah, as present in both Shi'ism and Sufism. And in this case as far as the formulation of this doctrine is concerned there may have been direct Shi'ite influences upon later Sūfī formulations.

The doctrine of Muḥammadan light (al-nūr al-Muḥammadī) is also common in Shi'ism and Sūfī philosophies with regard to purification of the heart and soul from sins and absorption of Divine Light. Again Ḥossein Naṣr may be quoted here:

Another doctrine that is shared in somewhat different forms by Shi'ites and Sufis is that of the 'Muḥammadan light' (al-nūr al-muḥammadi) and the initiatic chain(Silsilah). Shi'ism believes that there is a 'Primordial Light' passed from one Prophet to another and after the Prophet of Islam to the Imams. This light protects the prophets and Imāms from sin, making them inerrant (maṣūm), and bestows upon them the knowledge of divine

9. Ibid., P. 96.
mysteries. In order to gain this knowledge man must become attached to this light through the Imām who, following the Prophet, acts as man's intermediary with God in the quest for divine knowledge. In the same way, in Sufism, in order to gain access to the methods which alone make spiritual realisation possible, man must become attached to an initiatory chain or Silsila which goes back to the Prophet and through which a barakah flows from the source of revelation to the being of the initiate. The chain is thus based on a continuity of spiritual presence that much resembles the 'Muḥammadan light' of Shiʿism. In fact later Sufis themselves also speak of the 'Muḥammadan light'. In the early period, especially in teachings of Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the Shiʿite doctrine of the 'Muḥammadan light' and the Sufi doctrine of the spiritual chain meet, and as in other cases have their source in the same esoteric teachings of Islam. 10

All this indicates the importance of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his teachings in Sūfī traditions. Al-Tustarī, Ibn ʿArabī and most of the Sūfīs have been under his direct influence intellectually as well as seekers of his esotericism spiritually.

10. Ibid., PP. 96-97.
(E) SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT IN SAHL AL-TUSTARĪ

We have referred to the Tafsīr of the Qur'ān of Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) in connection with our study of symbolism of Light in the Qur'ān. He is one of those early ṣūfīs who enriched the ṣūfī literature with their writings. Light has appeared as a symbol in the sayings of the earliest ṣūfīs, it has been used in the Qur'ān, the Ḥadīth and the sermons of ʿAlī ibn-Abī Ṭālib. From 100 A.H. the references to a prophetic doctrine of ṣūr are found, and gradually a more general metaphysics of light, i.e. the doctrine that God is essentially light, the prime light, and as such the source of all being, all life and knowledge, was developed. But the doctrine of light was dialectically expounded by Sahl al-Tustarī.¹¹

God, the transcendent mystery and immanent secret of human existence, is stressed by Tustarī as totally one. This oneness, metaphorically expressed by the symbol light (ṣūr), is both all-exclusive and all-inclusive. It essentially negates all partnership in Divine reality, all association with created, phenomenal worldly beings. But it includes the pre-existence

of man as the articulation of Divine light in the form of light particles, comprehends the phenomenal existence of man in the form of divine decree (hukm), and encompasses the post-existence of man in the permanence of man's communion with the transcendent.

The secrets of creation, the divine mystery and the primordial events antecedent to the creation of man have been depicted by Tustarī with the symbolism of light. He has chosen 'light' as a proper symbol to refer to both the inaccessibility and manifestation of God. He is conceived of as light which issues forth its radiance and articulates itself as the primordial light of Muhammad(s). This emanation of Divine light constitutes Muhammad(s) in his light nature. The source of our study of Tustarī about his symbolism of light is his Tafsir al-Qur'ān. His doctrine of light to a large extent is linked to the Qur'ānic verses 7: 157, 11:172, 11:40, 24:35, 26:193, 33:7, 53:13-18, 73:1, 86: 1-3, 89:1, 93:1-11, 94: 1-8.

Tustarī develops his theory of the Light of Muhammad(s) from the Qur'ān. Although the clear exposition of this is not found in his interpretation of the famous light verse of the Qur'ān (24:35), it has an intrinsic connection with its terminology and imagery.
In the development of the theory of Muhammad's light nature (nūr Muhammadī), he uses the Qur'ānic phrase, "the likeness of His light "God, in His absolute oneness and transcendence, is the inaccessible mystery of divine light which yet articulates itself in the pre-existential manifestation of "the likeness of the light of Muhammad (nūr Muhammadī peace of God be upon him)." The pre-existential origin of nūr Muhammadī(s) is depicted by Tustarī in the primordial adoration in the presence of God which takes the shape of a transparent column (‘amūd) of Divine light and constitutes Muhammad(s) as the primal articulation of God. Tustarī explains this in his interpretation of the Surah al-‘Ā‘rāf in the terminology of the light verse:

When God willed to create Muhammad (peace of God be upon him), He made appear a light from His light (azhara min nūrihi nūran). When it reached the veil of the Majesty (ḥijāb al-ʿazamah) it bowed in prostration before God. God created from its prostration (Sajdah) a mighty column (‘amūd) like crystal glass (zujāj) of light which is outwardly (zāhir) and inwardly (bātin) translucent.12

12. Tustarī, Tafsīr, P. 103.
13. Ibid., P. 62.
Makki and Dailamī has quoted the parallel passages: (cont’d.)
The crystal-like column of Divine light represents Muhammad(s) as the first creation in pre-existence and it is that luminous totality of the universe which incorporates the heavenly spheres and exalts the archetypes of created beings.

The Quranic verses 53:13-18 have got an unique interpretation in Tustarī's Tafsīr, which refers to the Prophet's vision of God as a reference to his primordial adoration, when, was absorbed in permanent contemplation of God during an immemorial aeon of time.

"Indeed, he saw Him another time (53:13),

When God willed to create Muhammad, He made appear a light from His light and disseminated it. It spread in the entire kingdom (of pre-existence, mamlakh) when it reached the Majesty, it bowed in prostration. God created from its prostration a mighty of dense light (nūr kathīf) like crystal glass (zūjājah) that is as thick as the seven heavens and outwardly and inwardly translucent.


That is to say in the beginning (ibtidā') when God created him (Muhammad) as a light in the column of light (ʿamūd al-nūr) before the beginning of creation by a million years. He stood before in worship (ubūdiyyah) with the dispositions of faith (tablīʿ al-līmān) and was unveiled the mystery (mukashafat al-ghayb) by the Mystery Itself (al-Ghāybi) at the Lote Tree of the Boundary (53:14) that is the tree (Shajarah) at which the knowledge of every one comes to an end. 14

'When there covered the Lote Tree that which covered' (53:16) that is to say the Lote Tree (sidrah) consists of the light of Muhammad (peace of God be upon him) during his worship (ʿibādah) in the likeness of golden moths (farāsh min dhahab) which the Transcendent (al-Haqq) sets in motion towards him from the marvels of His secrets (badā-iʿ asrārīhī). (God efforts) all this in order to make him increase in firmness (thabāt) because of that which would come to him from the sources of advent (mawārid).

'His eye swerved not, nor swept astray' (53:17), he did not incline to the evidences of his self (Shawāhid-nafsihi), nor to their contemplation (mushāhādah), but was totally (absorbed) in contemplation of his Lord (Rabb), witnessing the attributes (Sifāt) which overpowered him, causing the firmness in that place'\textsuperscript{15}.

Indeed, he saw some of the greatest signs of his Lord (53:18) namely those attributes which become manifest through this (āyāt). Though he saw them, he did not slip (his mind) from his witnessed object (Mashhūd) and did not withdraw from the vicinity (mujāwarah) of his worshipped Object (Ma'bud). He continuously increased in love (maḥabbah), desire (Shawq) and strength. God bestowed upon him the strength of bearing the splendour (tajallī) and supreme lights (anwār aleyṣā'īmah). This was a preferment (tafdīl) in his favour over the other prophets. Do you not see that Mūsā was stunned at the splendour, yet twice as much the Prophet (peace of God be upon him) pierced it in his contemplation, by the face to face encounter with the sight (bāsār) of his heart (qalb). He was unmoved because of the strength of his state

\textsuperscript{15} Loc. cit.
(hāl), the loftiness of his stage (maqām) and his rank (darajah)."16

With these interpretations Tustarī refers to a number of distinctive features of the Prophet(s) that evince the qualitative difference between him and other prophets. All the prophets were sent to play only one role, to guide man to the right path, the chosen path of God. But Prophet Muhammad(s) has had to play double roles. The whole cosmos is beholden to him for its illumination and shape. Light of Muhammad(s) symbolizes among other things such an entity which is exalted by the grace of God, and yet cause of the rise and elevation of the whole universe. So this aspect of the Prophet(s) is, as it is projected by Tustarī, a cosmological problem, as his role is evident throughout the cosmos. Tustarī's notion of the universal and cosmological feature of the Prophet(s) may get support from some of the Qur'ānic verses whose meaning will be more clear if they are interpreted in that fashion. Let us quote a verse in this connection.

"We have sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures" (21:107)

16. Ibid., pp. 145-46
The above verse clearly suggests that the role of the Prophet(s) is not merely confined to human guidance like other prophets. He is a grace and blessing for the whole existence. Every creation is benefited from him. The other aspect of the Prophet(s) is that he is the last of the Prophets (caliph). He has accomplished the mission started from Adam to guide man to the path of God. His position in this aspect also is unique from the other Prophets because all the divine messages brought by the other Prophets were declared, in the light of the Qur'ān, abrogated after the advent of him.

Tustarī locates the origin of human race in the light of Muḥammad(s). Adam and the offspring of Adam were created from this light. Muḥammad(s), in his pre-existential form, was created of Divine light. According to Tustarī, 'God created Adam from the light of Muḥammad (peace of God be upon him) which resulted from the primordial adoration of the Prophet(s) before a million years of the creation of Adam. In another passage of the Tafsīr, Tustarī upholds the view that He (God) created Adam (peace be on him) from the clay of Divine might (ṯīn al-īzzah) with the mediation the light of Muḥammad (peace of God be upon him).

17. Ibid., P. 62.
18. Ibid., P. 15.
Tustarī's doctrine of the light of Muhammad is not merely confined to the formation of Adam and human races, but the whole universe participates in this emanation of light: "The light of the Prophets (nūr al-anbiyā) (peace be on them) is from his (Muḥammad's) light, and the light of the heavenly dominion (al-malakūt) is from his light, and the light of this world (dunyā) and of the world to come is from his light".19 When the pre-existential and the temporal universe as well as the prophetical and spiritual prototypes had completed the emanation of light ultimately from Muḥammad's light, Muḥammad(s) was shaped in body (jasad), in his terrestrial form, from the clay of Adam (tin ʿadam).20 This clay of Adam inturn had been formed from the column of light in which Muḥammad(s) had served his lord in pre-existence.21

In Tustarī's doctrine of light, Divine light seems to appear as an integral part of the universe. That has at least been suggested when he sees its presence among the four elements of things; to him, the root-elements of the things (usul. al-āshyā) are four, the light of

19. Ibid., P. 72.
20. Ibid., P. 62.
According to Tustari, reflection of Divine light to the heart of Muḥammad(s) (qalb Muḥammad) transforms it as the receptacle of it (Divine light). Tustari's view on this problem has been exposed in his interpretation of the surah, 94.

Tustari explains the verse (الْمُقَرَّبَاتُ ﻟِاﻟْمُوْلَدِينَ ۚ ﻪِ نَ أَنْ أَهْلَـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِـِ~

Those whom God willeth to guide, — He openeth their breast to Islam (6:125). Then He enhances the degrees (manāzil) in addition to (this light) and so the lights (anwār) in proportion to the infusion of the Divine gifts (mawāhib).

Tustarī interprets the verses 94: 1-7 mystically and upholds that the widened breast of Muḥammad(s) is the treasure mine of divine realities, because in addition to the light of Islam, which he has received in his capacity as a Prophet, it includes Divinely infused insights that constitute the richness of his heart. The root of this richness is the firm resignation of Muḥammad's heart to God from Whom he directly receives, in Whom he abides, with whom his name is linked up. The inner structure of the spiritual reality of Muḥammad(s) is composed of two selves; the spiritual self with intellect and discernment of heart, and the natural self, the abide of inner drives and instinctive motions of human nature. Muḥammad(s) is supposed to be inspired by his Lord to return to his original state, the state of his primordial vision of God. That state he holds a million years before the beginning of creation (bada' al-Khalq), which has made him capable to get an upper hand to the natural self even in this world. The Prophet(s) possesses a special state and status before God, as Tustarī refers a saying of the Prophet(s).

اِنِّيْ لَمَعَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ الْمُلْسَّمُ الْمُسْتَجِبَةُ (الْمَلِكِ) اِنِّيْ لَمَعَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ الْمُلْسَّمُ الْمُسْتَجِبَةُ (الْمَلِكِ)

"I possess a moment with God and no other does encompass me". 24

The heart of the Prophet(s), strengthened by Divine knowledge and saturated with the love of God, becomes the well spring of illuminations of the hearts of men and a treasure mine of the revelation of God to mankind. Tustarī focuses this point in connection with the interpretation of the Qur'ānic verses 11:40, 89:1, 7:157 and 26:193. In his interpretation of the Qur'ānic term "boiling oven" ( tannūr ) 11:40, Tustarī describes Muḥammad's(s) heart as the well spring of Divine knowledge. The boiling oven from which break forth the overwhelming water of deluge is deciphered by Tustarī as the sign of the punishment of God and contrasted with Muḥammad's(s) heart, from which breaks forth the light flood of knowledge, a sign of the Mercy of God for men of faith; Tustarī says: "It was the oven of the stone; it was Adam's oven and fell to Noah's share. God made the waters that burst forth from it a sign of His punishment ( *adḥāb ), and He made the well-springs ( Yanbu 'Uyun ), that gush forth from the heart of Muḥammad ( peace of God be upon him ) with the lights of knowledge ( anwār al-ʿulūm ) a mercy ( rahmah ) for His people ( Ummah )." 25 Tustarī traces the hidden meaning of the invocation of day break ( fajr ) at the beginning of sūrah, 89 that, to him, refers to

25. Ibid., P. 72.
the heart of Muhammad(s) from which breaks forth the lights of the spiritual realities. Tustarī says:

"The day-break is Muhammad (peace of God be upon him), from whom the lights break forth, the lights of faith (anwār al-imān), the lights of obedience (anwār al-taāt) and the lights of the two worlds (anwār al-kawānīn)."

Dailamī in his 'Atf al-Alīf, notes Tustarī's notion of the heart of Muhammad(s) as the font of spiritual attainment, and refers to Tustarī's idea of Divine light and says by way of comment:

According to this (Tustarī's) statement the love (mahabbah) of every mystic lover (muḥīb) is bound to come from that mine (maṣdīn) which is heart of Muhammad. For his heart is the mine of the precious substance (jawhar) which is the mystical union (ta'wīhid) of those who experience God's unification (Muwahhidīn). It is the font (malriz) of the intuitive knowledge of God (ma'rifah) of the gnostics ('arifīn) and the well-spring (manba') of the saturation of the hearts (shurb al-gulūb) of the lovers of God (Muḥībīn).

Tustarī, in the introduction of his Tafsīr, regards the heart of Muhammad(s) as the treasure mine and his breast (sadr) as light. The jewel of Muhammad's heart sparkles in its pristine light, radiates and spreads its light in the whole breast. It receives, its pristine light from the Divine substance and thus holds

26. Ibid., P. 183.
27. Dailamī, 'Atf al-Alīf, P.34; Bowering, op.cit., P.162.
the treasure of the light of the Divine oneness. This Divine Oneness, which at the same time refers to the transcendental Divine unicity as well as the Divine unification of mystic man, proceeds through the stages of the total, living reality of Muhammad(s). 28.

In Tustari's mystical philosophy the heart of Muhammad(s) has many roles to play. It has been termed as the mine of Divine light. Divine light symbolizes a number of things, e.g. gnosis of God, knowledge, spirituals and Divine mercy etc. The heart of Muhammad(s) is a reservoir which spreads the light of God to the hearts of those who maintain contact with it.

From the above discussion it has become evident that Tustari is one of the earliest sufis in whose tafsir a very systematic use of the symbol light is found. The symbol 'light', in his theosophy, first of all stands for God, suggests His oneness and uniqueness; and then refers to the primordial light of Muhammad(s) which is the emanation of Divine light. It also refers to the light that spreads from the light of Muhammad(s) and was achieved from the Prophet's primordial adoration of God, and that caused the whole creation. The Prophet's heart is also

regarded as the light which initiates the mystics in God's faith and causes the illumination of a mystic. It may be said that Tustarī made a remarkable contribution to the systematic development of symbolism of light in Islamic mysticism.
Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā ibn Habash ibn Amīrak al-Suhrawardī (d.587/1191), popularly known as al-Maqṭūl and Shaykh al-İshraq, equipped with the study of Islamic and non-Islamic philosophies and mysticisms propounded a theory of light known as ishrāq (illuminationism). His illuminationist (İshrāqî) theosophy synthesizes the writings of al-Hallāj and al-Ghazālī, whose Mishkât al-Anwār had a direct bearing upon his philosophy. \(^{29}\) Muslim Peripatetic philosophy, \(^{30}\) especially that of Ibn Sīnā has also been included in

29. On the symbolism of light in al-Ghazālī's, Mishkât al-Anwār We will devote our fifth chapter.

30. Ibn Sīnā is more known to both East and West for his contribution to Muslim Peripatetic philosophy, but still there is another aspect of his many-sided genius to be studied. Toward the end of his life he wrote a book entitled Mantiq al-Mashriqiyyīn (The logic of the Orientals) which is the opening section of a more general work. In it he says that his well known Peripatetic philosophical works, namely the Shifā and Nijāt, possess exoteric thought written for the common people and then proposes "Oriental Philosophy" which he considers to be for the elite and which, in fact, he calls "the science of the elite". Unfortunately the rest of the work is lost, so no direct indication can be made as to what Ibn Sīnā had in mind after this startling introduction. From a glance at his later works it will be clarified that these differ in nature from his Peripatetic writings. In this group we can name,
his theosophy of Ishraq. Though he is critical about some of the aspects of this philosophy, he considers it to be a necessary basis for understanding the doctrines of Ishraq. Suhrawardi, in moulding his doctrine, has also sought help from the pre-Islamic sources, such as, pythagoreanism and neo-Platonism, as well as from Hermeticism that had existed in Alexandria and had been later preserved and propagated in the Near East by the Sabaens of Harran, who regarded the Hermetic corpus as their sacred scripture. In addition to these Greek and

in addition to the Logic of the Orientals, the last three chapters of the Isharat Wa’l-Tanbihat, his last work, where he has presented the cardinal doctrines of sufism, his Risalat fi’al-Ishq, where he employs the technical sufI terminology, and finally three visionary recitals, Hayy ibn Yagzan, Risalat al-Tair and Salamân wa Absâl. From a study of these works some of the distinctive characteristics of his esoteric philosophy are revealed. Especially in the visionary recitals, the Orient in it a symbolic meaning appears as the world of light or pure forms as the Occident symbolizes the world of shadows and matter. The soul of man is caught as a prisoner in the darkness of matter and has to get itself freed in order to return to the world of lights from which the soul of man originally descended. A comprehensive study on this issue has been made by H. Corbin, in his Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, which includes the translation of the recitals, Hayy Ibn Yagzan, Risalat al-Tair and Salamân wa Absâl, the second part of this book also includes a translation of the Persian commentary of the Recital of Hayy ibn Yagzan, English tr. from the French by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

Mediterranean sources, Suhrawardī relied his theosophy on the wisdom of the ancient Persians whose doctrine he sought to revive and whose sages, to him, are the direct inheritors of wisdom as it was revealed to the Prophet Idris or Umnhūkh, the Hebrew Enoch, whom the Muslim authors identified with Hermes. He relied on Zoroastrianism, especially in his use of the symbolism of light and darkness. But Suhrawardī made it clear that he was not, in any way, a dualist and did not intend to follow the esoteric teachings of the Zoroastrians. Rather, he did categorize himself with a group of Persian wise men who were the believers in the 'unity of Divine Principle' and who formed a hidden tradition in the Zoroastrian community. He writes about them:

There was among the ancient Persians a community of men who were guides towards the truth and were guided by Him in Right Path, ancient sages are not like those who are called the Magi. It is their high and illuminated wisdom, that to which the spiritual experiences of Plato and his predecessors are also witness, that we have again brought to life in our book called Hikmat al-Ishraq. 32

His reliance on so many traditions, however, should not be taken as his philosophy being some kind eclecticism. Suhrawardī, rather, considered himself to be a reunifier of what he calls al-hikmat al-laduniyyah, or Divine

---

wisdom, and al-hikmat al-^atigab, or ancient wisdom.

To him, wisdom is universal and perennial, which existed in various forms among the ancient Hindus, Persians, Babylonians and Egyptians, and among the Greeks up to Aristotle. Suhrawardi regarded Aristotle as not the beginning but rather the end of philosophy among the Greeks, for his termination of this tradition of wisdom by limiting it to its rationalistic aspect. There are controversies among the Muslim historians and philosophers about the nature and type of knowledge called Ishraq.

Although before the composition of this work, composed several summary treatises on Aristolean philosophy, this book differs from them and has a method peculiar to itself. All of its material has not been assembled by thought and reasoning; rather, intellectual intuition, contemplation and ascetic practices have played a large role in it. Since our sayings have not come by means of rational demonstration but by inner vision and contemplation, they cannot be destroyed by the doubts and temptations of the skeptics. Whoever is a


traveller on the road to Truth is my companion and aid in this path. The procedure of the master of philosophy and imam of wisdom, the Divine Plato, was the same, and the sages who preceded Plato in Time like Hermes, the father of philosophy, followed the same path. Since the sages of the past, because of the ignorance of the masses, expressed their sayings in secret symbols, the refutations which have been made against them have concerned the exterior of these sayings not their real intentions. And the Ishraqi wisdom, whose foundation and basis are two principles of light and darkness as established by the Persian sages like Jamasp, the Farhadshur and Buzarjumihr, is among these hidden, secret symbols.34

From the above passage it becomes evident that to Suhrawardi, Ishraqi wisdom is based on both discursive reasoning or thought and intellectual intuition. Here more stress has been given to inner vision and contemplation whose findings are more tenable than those of rational demonstration. That is why Suhrawardi owes more to the sufi tradition than the Muslim Peripatetic philosophy.

35. The early mystics of Islam were more concerned with the purification of the self that can be acquired through the cleansing of the senses and through bodily discipline. Gradually the second stage i.e., the concept of illumination emerges. Al-Muhâsibî (d. 857 A.D.) who pioneered with his disciples in this path ways of purgation, was one of the first to declare that as purification brings freedom from the attachment of this world, the sufi might expect to arrive at the stage of illumination and thence the unitive life in God. Ibn Masarah of Cordova (d. 931 A.D.) is credited with the founding of illuminative or Ishraqi school. Cf. Margaret Smith, Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East (London: 1931) PP. 79 and 129.
1. ONTOLOGY AND SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT

Suhrawardī maintains that the ultimate principle of all existence is the Primal Absolute Light whose essential nature consists in the perpetual illumination. Nothing is more visible than light, and visibility does not stand in need of any definition. In Suhrawardī's ontology 'symbolism of light' is so dominating that to him all of reality is nothing but light which possesses various degrees of intensity. All the things are made evident by it, and thus should be defined with reference to it.

By this Suhrawardī intends to say that light being the actual reality, the thing more close to it has got the higher status in the hierarchy of the different essential objects. But his notion of light as the reality of the world should not be, in any way, confused with the doctrine of hylomorphism or materialism, according to which the world is created out of matter; and light being in its phenomenal senses a material object. There is a possibility to confuse Suhrawardī's ontology with this doctrine. It needs not be clarified that when

Suhrawardi talks about light he talks symbolically.

To him, Pure Light, which he calls Light of lights (nír al-anwār), is the Divine Essence; and its light is blinding because of its luminosity and intensity. The origin of all existence is the Supreme light whose illumination is pervaded throughout the universe. Let us quote here Suhrawardi's own words:

The essence of the First Absolute Light, God gives constant illumination, whereby it is manifested and it brings all things into existence, giving life to them by its rays. Everything in the world is deprived from the light of His Essence and all beauty and perfection are the gift of His bounty, and to attain fully to this illumination is salvation.38

If everything in this world is derived from the light of God's essence, it means that every object, even that one which we call dark, possesses some kind of light due to which it exists. So, there are different categories of light and darkness. It is also to be clarified when an object will be regarded as light and when one will be

called dark. This may only be done according to the capacity of an object's approach to the Supreme Light and its capacity to receive Divine illumination. Darkness means absence of light. An object is dark because it obstructs the penetration of light into it. The light, of course, is to be distinguished from that one which symbolizes the Divine Essence of creation.

Objects are considered to be light in two senses:

That which is self subsistent is called incorporeal light (nūr mujarrad). It has no forms and never becomes the attribute of anything other than itself (substance). Various forms of light e.g., partly conscious, conscious or self conscious, proceed from it, and they differ from one another in the amount of lustre, which is determined by their comparative nearness or distance from the ultimate source of their being. Consciousness, or self-knowledge is the very essence of incorporeal light. The light that depends on other than itself is called accidental light (nūr faradī). It possesses a form, and is capable of becoming an attribute to something other than itself (e.g. the light of the stars, or the visibility of other bodies). The accidental light that may more properly be called sensual light is a distant reflection of the incorporeal light.

poreal light, which, because of its remoteness, has lost the intensity, or substance-character of its origin. The relation between accidental and the incorporeal light is that of cause and effect. The effect, however, is not quite distinct from the cause, it is a transformation or a weaker form of the supposed cause itself. Anything other than the incorporeal light cannot be the cause of accidental light; since the latter being merely contingent and consequently capable of being negativated, can be taken away from a body without affecting its character. But we cannot conceive the disillumination of an incorporeal light.

Darkness similarly, may be either self-subsistent and is called obscurity (ghasaq), or it may depend on something other than itself, in which case it is called form (hai'ah). 41

According to Suhrawardi beings may also be divided according to their degree of comprehension and awareness. A being is either aware of itself or oblivious of itself. If aware, it subsists by itself, as in the case of Supreme light, or God, the angels, the human soul, and the archetypes (a'yan) or it depends on something other than itself for becoming aware of itself, like stars and fire.

40. Ibid., P. 102.
Similarly, if a being is conscious of itself, either it subsists by itself and becomes obscure, such as all natural bodies, or it subsists by other than itself, such as colours and smells. In this way the various stages of universal hierarchy of being are distinguishable from each other. The ultimate criterion of such a differentiation is the degree of light each possesses, which is also identified with knowledge and awareness, therefore, comes forth from the Supreme Light - without their being a "substantial" or "material" continuity between the two. Nevertheless, the light of light has its vice-gerent and direct symbol in every domain; for example, the sun in the sky, fire among the elements, and within human soul the lordly light (al-nūr al-
al-isfahbadī), so that His signs are manifested everywhere and all things demonstrate His Presence.42

2. ANGELS AS LIGHT

In Suhrawardī's doctrine of Ishraq, angelology holds a central position. It concerns itself with the vast hierarchy of lights or angelic substances standing between this world of shadows and the Supreme Light.

42. Ibid., P. 70.
Suhrāwardī has fallen back on the Mazdean angelology in order to elaborate the various angelic lights. He also uses the traditional Islamic terminology derived from the Qur'ān in connection with his interpretation of the various angelic lights.

The angelic hierarchy is depicted by Suhrāwardī in terms of two orders, the longitudinal (tūlī) and the latitudinal (‘ardī). The archangels are standing at the head of the longitudinal order, the highest of whom is called both Bahman and the Greatest light (nūr al-ā‘zam), or the Most Proximate Light (nūr al-aqrab).

The supreme archangel brings an other archangel into being. It is the recipient of illumination both from the supreme archangel as well as from the Light of lights. This illumination is transmitted in turn to the next line till the vertical or longitudinal order, each member of which is called victorious light (nūr al-qāhir), is completed. This order is also called the world of mothers (ummahāt) since, all things in the universe are generated from it and its members are such that each archangel has the command or domination (qahr) over what is below of it, and the one below has the love (mahabbah) for the one above. Each light of this hierarchy acts as a link, or purgatory (barzakh).
between the two lights of its above and below. It acts as a veil that simultaneously hides and reveals the light of the higher order—hiding in the sense that it is not transmitted in its full depth and revealing in that it allows a certain degree of effusion and irradia­tion to pass through it to permit the next lower member of the hierarchy to come into being. From the masculine aspect of this supreme hierarchy that is, the aspect of its dominion and contemplation—there emerges the latitudinal aspect of the angelic order which corresponds to the world of archetypes, or "Platonic ideas". The members of this order do not generate each other—as in the longitudinal order. Rather, they subsist side by side with each other. Everything in this visible universe is a theurgy, or 'icon', of one of these archetypes, containing its particular angelic influence. For this reason these archetypes have been called by Suhrawardī, the masters of the species (arbāb al-anwā'), or masters of the theurgies (arbāb al-tilism), because each holds the domination over a particular species for which it has been deputed as the celestial archetype. Here, Suhrawardī employs the Mazdean symbols to refer to the archetypes of various species. For example, the archetype of water

he calls Khurdād, that of minerals, Shahriwar, and that of plants Murdād. A respective latitudinal angel is thus empowered, to dominate the theurgy of each of these things. 44

In this way Suhrawardī makes an attempt to identify, the Platonic ideas with the separate power of Ahūrāmazdā in zoroastrianism.

The angelic orders presented thus far still lie above the phenomenal cosmos. To Suhrawardī, the fixed stars come into being from the feminine aspect of the longitudinal order of archangels, which is their aspect of love and receptivity of illumination and irradiation. And through these fixed stars come into being the other astronomical heavens. These visible heavens may thus be regarded as 'materialization' of the angelic substances. They may in fact be considered to be the crystalization of that aspect of archangels which is 'non-being' or 'privation' or separation from the Light of light, which alone can be conceived Absolutely real without any privation whatsoever.

To act as its vicegerent and reign over the species directly, the latitudinal angelic order gives rise to an intermediary angelic order. The members of this intermediate order are called regent light (al-anwār al-mudābbarah), sometime lordly lights (al-anwār al-isfahbādiyah), this latter name is used specially for those who govern human soul.

In the case of man, a "lordly light" exists at the centre of each soul and govern each man's activities. Gabriel is considered to be the angel for the whole human species, the archetypes of humanity (rabb al-naw' al-insānī) whom Suhrawardī identifies with the Holy Spirit and the spirit of Muhammad(s) and therefore also with the function of revelation, Gabriel being the supreme revealer of all knowledge.45

In addition to this guardian angel for the whole of human species, every man has his own angel residing in the angelic world. Suhrawardī is of the opinion that each soul had a previous existence in the angelic domain before descending to the realm of the body. Due to the entrance of soul into a body, it has been divided into two parts, one remaining in heaven and the other

45. Ibid., P. 73.
descending into the case or "fort" of the body, which is searching for the other half. And it will not be content until it has become united with its angelic half and has regained its celestial abode.  

In Suhrawardi's cosmology, angels play a very significant role. Suhrawardi makes distinction among the angels according to the degree of light they possess. The light they possess is depicted symbolically, hence cannot be identified with phenomenal light. Nevertheless, Suhrawardi shows participation of the angels in human affairs and their role in the visible cosmos. But he has made it clear that in front of the Light of Lights, God, they do not possess any substantial entity.

3. LIGHT AS SYMBOL OF MYSTICAL STATES

We have already pointed out in this chapter that Suhrawardi owes more to sufism than Muslim Perepateitic philosophy in moulding his doctrine of Ishraq. He devotes the last section of his Hikmat al-Ishraq to different mystical aspects, i.e. the question of spiritual union and soul's state after death. Suhrawardi

46. Ibid., PP. 73-74.
47. Supra, P. 138.
indicates the soul's way of becoming disengaged from the material bonds while still in the body. Light as a symbol is so dominant in his theosophy that all the different stages and stations of the soul have also been elaborated with the help of 'symbolism of light'.

The point he wants to highlight is that every man, so to say, every soul, no matter whatever degree of perfection it possesses, should seek the Supreme light at every moment of his life - even if he himself is unaware of the real objective of his search. Joy and felicity result from being illuminated by the heavenly light; Suhrawardi proceeds a step further claiming that one cannot grasp what joy and felicity really are, if he is not illuminated by the victorious lights. Worldly pleasure, and joys are no more than reflections of the joy of illumination and gnosis.

According to Suhrawardi, the status of the soul after death will be determined on the ground of the degree of purity and knowledge it acquires in its terrestrial life. And, accordingly, human beings are divided into three classes; those who have achieved some measure

of purity in this life (ṣu′ādā'); those whose souls have been darkened by evil and ignorance (ashqiyā'); and finally those who have already attained sanctity and illumination in this world, i.e. the sages and philosophers (muta'allihūn). The souls belong to the first group being righteous in the general sense of religion and they will get all the felicities and joys that are the archetypal forms of the terrestrial ones. The second group will be in "suspended" and hanging forms. The last group which is that of the gnostics and saints, after leaving the body, will ascend to the stage that is even above the angelic world and will enjoy the beatitude or proximity to the Supreme Light". It has already been discussed that the object which is more closed to the Supreme light, God, enjoys more honour in Suhrawardī's theosophy. A soul of a saint after being disengaged from its worldly cage will reach the stage above of the angelic world and, therefore, will be recipient of more Divine Light, hence according to Ishraqī doctrine, will be more honourable and dignified. Suhrawardī thus indirectly refers to the possibility that a human soul may be possessor of more light as well as more honour and dignity than the angels as a result of attaining sanctification and illumination in this world.

Suhrawardi maintains that, to a mystic, the most delightful of things are the flashes of Divine Light. Its nature is such that "dazzling light suddenly comes and soon disappears". It is He who shows you the lighting". These flashes do not come continuously, sometimes they are intercepted. When ascetic exercise increases lighting comes more often, until a stage is reached where whatever a man looks into, he sees some of the states of the next world. These dazzling lights may be successive to a mystic. Suhrawardi has not clearly exposed what these lights symbolize. To expound the state when such lights come to a mystic's soul, Suhrawardi cites a Prophetic tradition: "Verily, for your Lord there are blasts of His mercy in the days of your time, provided you expose yourselves there unto". Since Suhrawardi quotes the tradition of the Prophet(s) in interpreting the lights that come to the soul of a mystic and as in the tradition they are termed as mercy of God, these lights seem to signify the mercies of God. But mercy of God is a common gift to every human being, then in what sense it may be a special gift of God for a mystic? The answer


of this question may be that like the degrees of light, God's mercy also has different degrees. The mercy referred to in the above tradition is the special mercy of God for His chosen few servants.

Suhrawardi maintains that when the lights of the secret reach the utmost extremity and do not pass away quickly and remain for a long time, that state is called "Tranquillity". This stage is the most desired state for a mystic. He refers two verses of the Qur'an possessing the word "tranquillity:

\[
\text{And God sent down His tranquillity (48:26)}
\]

"It is He Who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers, that they may add faith to their faith (48:4)"

Suhrawardi says that he who attains tranquillity and acquires knowledge of unknown things, his penetration of mind becomes perfect. Here again he quotes a Prophetic tradition "Fear a believers' penetration of mind, for he perceives with the light of God".  

52. Ibid., P. 35.
In this tradition the word "Light of God" is an attribute which is possessed by a believer who is, as it may be inferred from Suhrawardî's exposition of the problem, in the state of tranquillity. Suhrawardî has clarified the point that tranquillity is a state that represents a long time stay of Divine Light in a mystic's soul. Here 'light' represents knowledge of unknown things, knowledge about the secret of human mind, different degrees of the mercy of God, Divine gnosis etc.

In the end it can be said that 'symbolism of light' serves as the most crucial tool in the elaboration of Suhrawardî's theosophy of Ishráq. In using this symbol he surpasses all the Muslim mystics. With the symbol 'light' he expresses, necessary and contingent, being and non-being, substance and accidents, cause and effect, thought and sensation, body and soul, and different mystical states etc. To him, the Light of Lights, the Supreme and Real Light is God. While God's is the necessary existence, those of all others are contingent. Some of Suhrawardî's opponents condemn Suhrawardî for reviving Persian dualism in the garb of the symbolism of 'light and darkness' in his theosophy of Ishráq. According to some others he has borrowed from the neo-Platonic doctrine of emanation. But we can justifiably say that it would be unjust to identify his doctrine with some
non-muslim system of thought. He studied all the systems of philosophy and tried to absorb their best elements in his philosophy. He has taken much from Persian mysticism which he considers to be the philosophy of unity. Nevertheless he criticises the later Zoroastrians who propounded the philosophy of dualism, whom he called infidels. Of course, he was influenced by the philosophy Plato and neo-Platonists, in any way, it cannot be said that he merely borrowed from others and had no original philosophy of his own. The most important sources of his theosophy that the orientalists so far ignored are the Qur'an, the Hadith and the writings of the Sufis before him. We have already dealt with the symbolism of light in the Qur'an and the Hadith, and found abundant references of "Light". According to a verse God is the Creator of 'light and darkness' (6:1). Before Suhrawardi we come across a number of sufis who have used the symbol 'light'. It is well established that Suhrawardi has been very much influenced by Sahl al-Tustari and al-Ghazali. Lastly it can be said that Suhrawardi was benefited from his study of Islamic and non-Islamic sources in developing his system of thought, but the philosophy he profounded is a highly original contribution to Muslim philosophy.
In the previous section we have dealt with the theosophy of Shaikh al-Ishraq (al-Suhrawardi Maqtul) with a particular reference to symbolism of light. Here our attempt will be to find out whether the symbol 'light' has any place in the mystical philosophy of Shaikh al-Akbār (The Greatest Teacher), the title Muhyī al-Dīn ʿArabī (560/1165 – 638/1240) earned for his paramount contribution to Sufi literature. Space would not permit us to have a glimpse at the whole system of his thought for which he got the highest reputation in the Sufi circles, and was/ also severely criticized by some of the very orthodox intellectuals of Islam, which was done, perhaps, due to their unfamiliarity with the style of writing Ibn ʿArabī had and the highest mystical experience he did receive.

1. METAPHYSICAL ASPECT OF SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT

Ibn ʿArabī is a defender of wahdat al-wujūd (unity of existence), and upholds that the world and everything in it emanated from God - they are the manifestations of God. So in reality there is one existence that is, the existence of God. Since God is the root of
everything, He is Light, par excellence. And so all His creatures, men and beasts, ideas, trees, and microbes, are manifestations of Light. Ibn 'Arabi, like other sufis, sees God as the real light and the whole creation is the manifestation of that Light. And that has been reflected in the following passage of his Fusūs al-Hikam:

Know that reality so called non-divine, meaning the world, belongs to God like the shadow to the person. The world then shadow of God; that is, really, the manner in which the one (al-wujud) attributes itself to the world, for the shadow exists incontestably in the sensible order, on condition, however, that there is something on which this shadow can project itself, so that if one could remove all support from the shadow it would no longer sensibly be existent, but only intelligible; that is to say it would be potentially contained in the person on which it depends. The place of manifestation of this Divine shadow that one calls the world in permanent essences (ayān) of possibilities (mumkināt); it is on them the shadow projects itself. The shadow is known according as to where the Divine Being projects (His shadow) on these permanent essence of possibilities, and it is by the Divine Name, the Light, (an-nūr) that the perception of the shadow takes place. The shadow that projects itself on the immutable essences of possibilities is in the 'image' of unknown Mystery; dost thou not see that

shadows stretch towards the dark, which indicates the unfathomable character which belongs to them according to a certain correspondence between the shadow and the person projects it? Even if the person is white, his shadow is such (as I have just said). Does those not see the mountains far away from the spectator appear darker to him, merely because of their distance, and in spite of their own colour? or, that the sky appear blue? All this is the effect of distance on non-luminous bodies. In the same way the essences of possibilities are not luminous, since they are non-existent, they are unchangeable, but they are not qualified by the being or by existence; for the being is light.55

Ibn 'Arabi sees the universe (Kawn) as a tree, the root of whose light is from the seed "Be" (۶). He tries to elaborate the different possible implications of these two letters in his book, Shajarat al-Kawn, since the creation started with God's command Kun. When God first laboured around this tree at the root of the seed Kun, He drew forth a choice portion of its constituent elements, which He churned till it became buttery. Then He purified this by putting it through a filter of purity to remove any filthiness it had.

Then He plunged it into the ocean of Mercy till the blessedness there of was shared by all its parts. Then from it He created the light of Prophet Muhammad(s). This He embellished with the light from the highest court till it shone and mounted up. Then He made that light the source of every light. So the first of them to be composed through the last of them to become manifest, is to be their leader at the resurrection, the one to announce them their happiness, and the one who will crown them with beautiful crowns.⁵⁷

In Ibn ‘Arabi’s philosophy, the concept of nur Muhammad (Light of Muhammad) is so pre-dominant that he sees its role throughout the cosmos. This is the first created light which illuminates everything in the universe. Before Ibn ‘Arabi, a number of sufis are found to uphold the doctrine of the light of Muhammad. In this chapter we have already dealt with the theosophy of sahl Tustari and seen with how much significance its role has been depicted throughout the cosmos. There are some

⁵⁷. Ibid., 74, the reference is to the prophetic lights. Prophet Muhammad(s) was the last of the prophet-series to appear manifestly before men, with the message of God, but his light was composed before any of other prophetic lights, or any other light in the universe, and was indeed the source of them.

⁵⁸. Loc.cit.
traditions, very popular among the sufis, which may be responsible for the development of the doctrine of the pre-existential light of Muhammad(s). According to the eminent sufi, the manifestation of the Real Unity (Ahadiyyah) is the Reality of Muhammad (Haqīqat-e-Muhammadī), which is also called "wahldiyyah", all the rest of the ranks of the existents are manifestation of the Reality of Muhammad. Furthermore, the Reality of Muhammad is also called the First Intellect (al-'Aql al-Awwal) which is the supreme spirit. The following


The cause of calling the Plane of Wafidat or First Epiphany as the 'Reality of Muhammad'—has been elaborated by Mir Valiuddin. It is plausibly found that in all the essences of the created beings the relation of the Absolute Ego (and its existence, knowledge, Light observance) is uniform but there is the difference of the manifestation of absoluteness (itqā). The manifestation is more in the essences of man than it is in the essences of other things. So, it is said that man is the manifestation of Essences, all the things are the manifestation of Names. Now among human individuals the essences of the Prophet Muhammad(s) is the Perfect Manifestation, consequently he is pre-eminent among all the prophets, and is the last of the Prophets. It means that the manifestation of the Absolute Ego and His aptitudes here is perfect. For the same reason the Divine Being (which is another name for Wahdat) is said of as the Reality of the essence of Muhammad(s) and thus the other name given to Wahdat is the 'Reality of Muhammad'. Mir Valiuddin puts much stress on the point that Dhat(Essence) of Muhammad(s) and the Reality of Muhammad(s) are totally two different realities. The Dhat of Muhammad is the 'Known' and the Reality of Muhammad, the 'Knower': to regard these two as one is, as the Known, and the 'abd.
traditions may be cited in support of the doctrine held by the sufis:

"The first thing which God created was intellect".

"The first thing which God created was my light".

"The first thing which God created was my spirit".

Ibn 'Arabi sees the role of the Light of Muhammad in the creation of Adam and the light shining forth after his creation, on his forehead was also the same light, the angels approached and gave greeting to that light. Adam, however, could not see it, he showed earnest desire to see that light which Ibn 'Arabi records in the following words:

as the Lord (ma'bud) and the Lord as the 'abd. It is, necessary that as it were, regarding the possible as the Necessary and the Necessary the possible. This is clearly blasphemy (kufr). He warns not to suppose the Dhat of Muhammad(s) as the Dhat of God Almighty. The plane of wahdat or Reality of Muhammad is termed as the "Light of Muhammad". This could also be explained as was the Reality of Muhammad interpreted. Since the idea of Muhammad is entirely perfect, so perfect Light (which is a hypostasis of the Absolute Ego) manifests itself in it and things are created by this perfect light only. Therefore, it is said that from the Light of Muhammad(s) all things were created. PP. 93-94.

"O Lord, I should love to look upon the lights of my child Muhammad—upon whom be Allah's blessing and peace—so please convey it to one of my members that I may see it". So Allah conveyed it to the forefinger of his right hand, where he looked at it gleaming on his forefinger, which he then raised and said: "I testify that there no deity save Allah, and that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah". It is for this reason that the forefinger is called musabbiha. 61

Ibn 'Arabi throughout his works upholds the view that the Light of the Prophet(s) was the first creation of God. From the above passage, where reference is made to Adam's recital of Kalima Shahada, it becomes evident that the universal Prophethood belongs to Prophet Muhammad(s) and all other Prophets were to testify his Prophethood. The Prophet's uniqueness among the Prophets, and also to the rest of the creation has been specified by Ibn 'Arabi in the following paragraph of his Fusus al-Hikam:

61. Ibid., P. 125, Sabbaha means to glorify God., i.e. to utter the holy phrases of glorification. To utter the Shahada—the simplest Muslim credo, the recital of which is essential to become a Muslim—with raised forefinger is to glorify God, and so the forefinger may be called "the glorifier".

(The essence) his wisdom is singularity (or 'incomparability'), because he was the individual who was the most perfect of human species. It is for that, the creative act (al-amr) started with him and ended with him; for on the one hand he was 'prophet', when Adam was still 'between water and clay' and on the other, he was in his terrestrial existence, the 'Seal' (Khātām) of all prophets.

In another passage of the same book he considers Muhammad(s) to be the first symbol of his Lord, he had received the 'universal words' which were the contents of the names God taught to Adam. It is now clear that

---

63. The Prophetic Tradition:

\[\text{كن كنت بياقوت مره بين الماء والطين}
\]

'I was then Prophet when Adam was still between water and clay'.

64. Ibn 'Arabī, Fusūs, Eng. tr. by Culme-Seymour, P.116.
66. 'Arabī, Fusūs, PP.116-17. Afifi has devoted the whole second chapter of his work, Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn-ibnul 'Arabī (Cambridge: The University Press, 1939) PP.66-101, on Ibn 'Arabī's doctrine of the Logos. In page 72, he saysthat Ibn 'Arabī' in his Fusūs has called each prophet a 'logos' but not the Logos—the latter term being preserved for the "Head" of the hierarchy i.e. Muhammad(s). He also points out that every Prophet possesses word (Kalimah) but the 'universal words' — 'Universal Logos'— is the sole possession of Muhammad(s). Afifi differentiates, in the light of Ibn 'Arabī's view on this issue, between Muhammad(s)(the spirit and Reality of Muhammad), and the rests of the Prophets and the saints as somewhat similar to that between a whole and its parts. Ibn 'Arabī alludes to the Quranic verse: 18:109, Say: If ocean were ink (where with to write out) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord. Fusūs, Eng. tr. P. 73. Afifi has given a list of eighteen terms Ibn 'Arabī uses to designate what one may call a Mohammedan Logos, (P.66) and tried to detect the possible cause of Ibn
Ibn Arabi's symbolism of the Light of Muhammad(s) possesses a metaphysical aspect, it is not merely a guiding principle of spiritual upliftment what a sūfī generally thinks. But it is the first thing that God created. In al-Hallaj (d.309/922) we also see such a view. He maintains that "Muhammad's existence was even prior to non-existence and his name was prior to that of the 'Pen'. He was known before substances and accidents, and before the realities of 'before' and 'after' (i.e. as relations). He comes from a 'tribe' which is neither eastern nor western". Al-Hallaj also maintains

'Aribi's using such a bewilderingly large collection of terms for one thing; and according to him it is two fold. In the first place, it is due to the fact that, Ibn 'Arabi derived his material from divergent sources, preserving, so far as possible, the terminology of each source. Here he is using terms borrowed from the Sufis, Scholastic theologians, neo-Platonists, the Qur'an and so on. Secondly, his pantheism enables him to use the name of any thing for one Reality which is the ultimate ground of all things. 'Afifi, commenting on this Logos doctrine says that, to his knowledge, Ibn 'Arabi was the first Muslim to put forth a synthetic and systematic theory, or rather a group of theories, derived from different sources and brought into one unity which one might reasonably call the first Muslim Logos-doctrine. Not only he was the first to expound such a doctrine, but "I believe" 'Afifi says, "he was also the last to produce a Logos-doctrine of any importance. All those who came after him simply reproduced his ideas in some form or another". According to 'Afifi, what Jilli devoted after Ibn 'Arabi a special aspect of logos-doctrine, namely the theory of Insan al-Kamīl (The Perfect Man) is substantially Ibn 'Arabi's theory (PP. 85-87).

that Muhammad(s) is the undying light which is forever kindling the hearts of the sūfīs. All prophets and saints derive their light from the light Muhammad alone. His light is more brilliant and more 'eternal' (agdam) than that of the Pen. 68

The view put forth by Al-Hallāj, Ibn 'Arabī and other sūfīs about Nūr Muhammadi may get its justification from a tradition of the Prophet(s) which Mir Valiuddin quotes from ʿAbdal-Razzāq, who has quoted the authority from Jabir bin-'Abd Allāh who states that once the Prophet himself said:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ فِي الْأَشْيَاءِ نُورَ شَبَابٍ مِّن نُورَ نُورٍ مُّحَيِّلٍ نِّعَمَّ
النورُ وَرَبٌّ لِّلْقَرْدَةِ حُبَّ يُبَارَ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ نَعْمَةَ لَحْيَةً لِّوَلَّدَ وَلاَ لَا دَمِلَ وَلاَ لَجَنَّةٍ
وَلَلْجَنَّةِ وَلَلْحَيَاةِ وَلَلْقَلْبِ وَلَلْكُلُُّ وَلَلْكَفَّارَ وَلَلْمَلْكِ وَلَلْأَمَسْحٍ وَلَلْقَدْر
وَلَلْجَنَّةِ وَلَلْجَانِ نَمَلاْرَا وَلَلْلَّهِ إِنَّ لَحْيَةَ نُورٍ مَّنْ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ
بَارِعَةً اِجْزَاءً فَغَلِّي مِّنْ الْبَيْنِ الْأَوَّلِ الْقَلَمُ مِّنَ الرَّمَيِّ اللُّهُ مِّنْ
الْمَلَائِكَةِ أَوْلِيَاءِ الْنُّورِ بِرَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ مُسْتَفْدَثِيَّ مَنْ خَلَقَ الْعَالَمَ مِنْ
"نِعْمَةٍ"".

Before the creation of things God created the light of your Prophet from His Light. Then He let that Light revolves by His Power where He wished. At that time there was neither the Table, nor the Pen, nor Heaven, nor Hell, nor angel, nor sky, nor the earth, nor the Sun, nor the Moon, nor Jinn. When God intended to create the world, He divided the light into four parts. From the first He created the Pen, from the second, the Table, from the third, the Throne. He then divided the fourth part into further parts.

Ibn 'Arabi, never deviates from his notions of the Light of Muhammad and always sticks to the principle of the superiority and nobility of it among other creations and that has been delineated in the end of his opus cule, Shajarat al-Kawn, while asking the blessing and peace of God for the Prophet(s):

"Allāhumma: send blessings and peace upon that noblest of all Thou has created, our Master and our Lord, Muḥammad, the sea of Thy Light, the mine full of Thy secrets, the tongue of Thy demonstration, the leader from Thy presence, the bridegroom of Thy kingdom, the embroiderer of Thy property, the treasure-store of Thy mercy, the way of Thy law, the lamp of Thy garden, the fountainof Thy truth. He is the one who had the enjoyment of seeing Thee, the eye of the eyes of Thy creation, the one who has been lit from the light of Thy brightness. Give him such blessing that thereby my knots may be unloosed, my griefs assuaged, my desires fulfilled, my wishes met. May he be a blessing as enduring as Thou art, as continuous as Thou art, established in Thy essence, a blessing such as will be satisfying to Thee and well-pleasing to him, and whereby Thou will be well pleased with us, O Lord of mankind".70

70. Ibn 'Arabi, Shajarat. Eng. tr. Studia Islamica
God and evil right and wrong, truth and falsehood, have been referred to by Ibn ʿArabī through the symbols of light and darkness. He quotes a prophetic tradition: "Allah created His creatures in darkness and then sprinkled His light upon them, so whomsoever that light lit upon is guided, but whomsoever that light missed He misled and led astray". It has already been pointed out that Ibn ʿArabī, like other Muslims, believes that the creation started with the word Kun. He maintains that the whole universe has two constituent elements derived from two parts of Kun. They are darkness and light. The court of angels comes into existence from the element of light, so that from them comes good. Ibn ʿArabī quotes the Qur'ānic verse "they disobey not Allah in what He had commanded them" (66:6). The court of Satans is from the element of darkness, so that from them evil comes. According to Ibn ʿArabī, the clay of Adam and his descendants was made of both light and darkness, so both the elements of good and evil are there. If the essence of light prevails over a man's darkness, he is given preference to the angel and ascends to the celestial realm, but if the essence of his darkness prevails over his light, then he gives preference to the Satan. This way Ibn ʿArabī refers to the

72. Ibid., PP. 74-75.
73. Ibid., P. 75.
existence of light and darkness to be the source of
good and evil, truth and falsehood, right and wrong.
Light and darkness, in their origin, are not separate
entities. They are the two phases of the creative
principle Kun.

2. EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND MYSTICAL ASPECTS OF
SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT

Ibn 'Arabi says that the first step in the
acquisition of ordinary knowledge is a sensory perception.
The principle or reality that enables the senses to
perceive an object is, according to him, the apprehending
light. Here the "Light" ( al-Nur ) symbolizes the
apprehending reality without which nothing can apprehend
or be apprehend. That Light forms the essence of the
senses. The impressions received by the senses are
instantly transferred to the heart which, in turn, passes
them on to the intellect. The intellect, located in the
brain, does recognise these impressions for what they
are, namely the sense-perceptions, and then transfers
them to the imagination. From there they finally reach
the understanding ( mufakkarah ), which analyses and
tabulates them. The perceptions are retained by the
faculty closest to the heart, namely memory. Now all

74. Ibn 'Arabi, Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah, Vol. III
different ways through which perceptions are being gathered or organised have their origin in light. For their rational character, both mental faculties and sensory perceptions are beholden to that light. Ibn 'Arabî identifies this light with rational soul. We think and feel, hear and see, form images and memorize, by means of various faculties and senses. In their essence all these are light. In brief, light according to Ibn 'Arabî is everything through which apprehension takes place. Not only that, but everything that is 'apprehended' must have a special link with the apprehending light which is God. In other words, God is all that apprehends and all that is apprehended. Ibn 'Arabî sees a distinction between the intellect ( al-*aql ) and the rational soul ( al-rûh ) and between reflective thinking and immediate intuition. But this difference cannot be regarded as ultimate. The difference must be, if there is any, in the distinct ways in which this light manifests itself. While in case of mystical intuition the apprehending light is entirely free, it is comparatively limited in case of reflective thinking.

---

78. *Loc.cit.*
Ibn 'Arabî holds that esoteric knowledge is innate and that of the intellect is acquired. It belongs to the Divine effulgence (al-fayd al-Ilâhî) which illuminates the very being of all creatures. It manifests itself in man under certain mystical conditions, e.g. perfect passivity of mind. Ibn 'Arabî says that the esoteric knowledge manifests itself in the form of light which floods every part of the heart of a sufi when he achieves a required degree of spiritual purification. Discipline helps to remove the "veils" which pertain to the animal soul, and which prevent the heart from reflecting its eternal knowledge and perfections. We get a further elaboration of this notion of the innateness of esoteric knowledge, in his Shajarat:

Then in the upper world, the world of the skies, Allah set the sun to be a lamp to give light to the people of the earth (Ibn 'Arabî alludes to the Qur'ânic verses 71:15/16), and likewise. He has set the spirit (ruh), in the body thereby, so that when it departs at death the body is darkened, just as the earth is darkened when the sun disappears.80

It is implied in the above passage that the spirit which is the cause of the light of the body is not a material object and its light does not in any way refer to phenomenal light. Hence, it is innate or inborn. It comes to a human body at the times of its creation. It becomes veiled or covered due to its attachment to the phenomenal world. Ibn 'Arabi says that esoteric knowledge is revealed to the human heart in the form of light. We have already seen that the spirit is a light and esoteric knowledge reflects in the human soul in the form of light. From this it can be inferred that esoteric knowledge is the assimilation of two lights.

We have already discussed that all apprehension takes place due to the apprehending light that ultimately refers to God's Light, which has been reflected or manifested in different forms of light. This point is very clearly indicated in the following passage of this magnum opus, Futuhat:

If it were not for the Light nothing at all could be apprehended by the mind or the senses or the imaginations and the name given to the light varies with the faculties, which we also call by different names. According to the common folk, the name is given to the mind, and
among the gnostics, to the light of perception; when you apprehend what is audible, you call the light which apprehends, hearing, and when you apprehend what is visible, you call it the light of seeing. Light involves a relationship, for apprehending what is apparent. Every one who perceives must have some relationship to the light, by which he is made able to perceive, and everything which is perceived has a relationship with God, who is Light, that is, which perceives and all which is perceived. 81

Ibn 'Arabī intends to say that every faculty of perception is called light, since it plays role in the acquisition of knowledge and awareness of something. But all these faculties owe their abilities to acquire knowledge to God who is the ultimate Light and source of all Lights. So, He may be called the Real Light.

We have already referred to the point that Ibn 'Arabī considers the world to be a shadow of God. And He is, in His relation to a particular shadow, small or large and more or less pure, like the light in respect of a filter coloured glass, which tints the light to its own colour, whereas it is itself colourless. In the same way, Ibn 'Arabī says one cannot see the Divine light; and there lies the symbol of the reality with regard to God.

81. This passage of the Futūhāt is quoted from Smith's Readings from the Mystics of Islam, P. 98.
If one says after seeing it (God's light) that 'it is a green light', it is because the filter is green, he may be right according his visual experience; but one with the application of his reason says that it is not green, it has no colour in itself, he has spoken the truth. 82 By this Ibn 'Arabī, makes it clear that the true nature of Divine light cannot be perceived with the sensual faculties. What is perceived in the world is the shadow of that Light that is the Real. With the application of the faculty of reason this much can be said that the light we perceive in the world is not the true picture of Divine Light.

Ibn 'Arabī says that the light which projects itself through the shadow is nothing other than the filter and it is luminous by its transparency. Hence-forth he talks about the man who realized God; the form of God will manifest itself in him more directly than it manifests itself to others. For among men there is some one for whom God is his hearing, his sight, his faculties, his organs, according to the words of God (Hadīth e-Qudsī); Despite of the determination of the shadow that subsists since sensual faculties are with him, he reaches to the state, about which the Prophet(s) gives

82. Ibn 'Arabī, Fusūs, Eng. tr. PP. 64-65.
good tidings from God: I will be his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees etc. other servants of God are not like him; the servant in question has a more immediate relation towards the Being of God than others have. So, according to Ibn 'Arabi, the Truth can only be revealed to a mystic's heart. Staying in the phenomenal world he, due to the purification of his heart and sincere attachment to God, transcends the filter of the shadow and knows the Real - the Pure Light. In this way Ibn 'Arabi suggests a way of acquiring the true knowledge of God, i.e., the possession of the true Light.

It is now evident that in Ibn 'Arabi's philosophy 'light' as a symbol occupies an important place. God is to him the Real Light. All the other lights are His manifestations. Before the creation of anything only His Light was existent. The first manifestation of God's Light is the Light of Muhammad(s) through which all other lights have come into existence. In case of epistemology Ibn 'Arabi regards God as the ultimate apprehending light, due to whom all perceptions, speculations, ratiocinations and mystical intuitions are possible.

83. Ibid., P. 65.
Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273) has long been accepted by the scholars of Sufism as the greatest mystic poet of Islam, and, according to the view of A.J. Arberry, "it can well be argued that he is the Supreme mystical poet of all mankind". The work due to which his name has been placed at the peak of the mystical poets of the world is his Mathnawī-e Ma'īnawi. What Rūmī says, in this work and in another illustrious work of his Diwan-i-Shams Tabrīzī can be mostly understood in a symbolic way. Very frequently he uses symbols to convey his view which, in many cases, create confusion to understand what he exactly wants to say. Here we shall try to interpret his use of the word 'light' which has been proved to be a very attractive symbol to the sufis, and mystics of all religions.

1. **LIGHT AS A SYMBOL OF GOD**

   According to Rūmī, God is the Ultimate and Absolute Light. Because of Him everything has come into existence and He is the cause of the appearances in both the celestial and phenomenal worlds. This point has been
presented symbolically in different places of Mathnawī. It is reflected in the following couplets:

Rūmī himself explains his stand when he talks about the light of God. According to him, it does not refer to phenomenal light because it is not like God. There is no likeness between God and the creations. Whenever the term 'light' is used it is figurative and a matter of comparison — the expression is symbolic and nothing more. Let us quote a passage from his discourse, Fīh māfīh, in this connection.

All that I say is a comparison, it is not likeness. Comparison is one thing, and likeness is another. God most High has likened His Light to a lamp for the sake of comparison. God's light is not contained in phenomenal being and space; how then should it be contained in a glass or a lamp? Yet when you seek after it you find it in the heart; not as being a receptacle wherein that Light resides, but that you find that Light radiating from that place. In the same way you discover your image in the mirror; yet your image is not in the mirror, only when you look in the mirror you see yourself.

Rūmī in the verses in the first volume of Mathnawī, 1121-35 calls attention to the uniqueness and hidden character of God's light. He first starts with the phenomenal light and says that due it all the colours can be seen. At night all the colours, red, green and russet disappear from our sight. So it has become evident that colours appear due to light. The apparent light is the light of the sun and stars, and the hidden light is the reflection of the Supreme Light. The light of sight is due to the light of the heart and that is illuminated by the light of God. All the hidden things are exposed to light by their opposites. Since God has none, He remains invisible eternally to the mortal eyes:
این بروزات، زنده‌الزمان،
زنده‌الزمان خود نوردست
با زنده‌الزمان نوردست
شب‌نامه‌ی نوریدی ریغ را
پیست نوری است می‌پرینه
شکوفه‌ی به آن آمریت
بسی نما‌ها با صدای به‌پریاسود
که نظر بریز لود آمل‌ه‌به‌بر
بسی به‌نورملان نمی‌توان
زنده‌الزمان نوری‌ستان دردید
الزامی‌البصاری‌الزاویه‌که
So, God's light cannot be taken literally, it is symbolic. Hence, it is unlike any other light. The concealment of God's light from the sight of man is presented by Nur al-Dīn Jāmī in the following way:

"O fairest rose, with rosebud mouth; I sighed
"Why, like coquettes, thy face for ever hide?"
He smiled, "Unlike the beauties of the earth, E\n\n\nWhen veiled I still may be desired".
Thy face uncovered would be all too bright
Without a veil none could endure the sight;
What eye is strong enough to gaze upon
The dazzling splendour of the fount of light?
When the sun's banner blazes in the sky,
Its Light gives pain by its intensity;
But when 'tis tempered by veil of cloud
That light is soft and pleasant to the eye."

The hiddenness has also come into reference in Muḥmūd Shabistārī's famous mystical work The Secret Garden (Gulshan-e Rāz):

No counterpart; how then perceive it? How?
Behold that fool who seeks the shining sun
By the dim taper's light amid the waste!
Were the bright sun no change of place to know,
His light in kind would ever be the same.
No man would know this or any light
Be this or other, kernel this, or shell,
God's glory doth the universe fulfil,
Within that light is God from view concealed.

---

Rūmī, in his discourse, refers to the discourse of Sayid Burhān al-Dīn that quotes the passage from sanā`ī referring to the real sun which can be understood with one’s application of intellect:

"The sun casts light on things, and in the light of the sun it is possible to see. The purpose of the light of the sun is to show things up. After all, this sun in heaven shows things which are of no use. That is the real sun, which shows things up that are of use. The sun in heaven is derivative and metaphorical; that sun is the true sun. Do you also according to the degree of your partial intellects, yearn after this sun and seek the light of knowledge, that you behold something other than sensibilia, and that your knowledge may ever increase."87

So again, Rūmī makes it clear that the light of God is the real light, but it is metaphorical, hence, transcends the phenomenal world.

Rūmī says that God's light is same, it comes from the celestial world. If one can fix his sight upon that Light, i.e. properly contemplates about Him, he will be delivered from all kinds of dualism. All the controversies about religion are due to the lack of understanding of the real Divine message. Elaborating this issue in the following verses of his Mathnawī, Rūmī maintains that if every one possesses a lighted candle that is the real notion about God, there would be no contradictions:

---

The lamps are different, but the light is the same it comes from Beyond.

If thou keep looking at the lamp, thou art lost; for thence arises the appearance of number and plurality. Fix thy gaze upon the Light, and thou art delivered from the dualism in herent in the finite body.

O thou, who art the Kernal of Existence, the disagreement between Moslem, Zoroastrian and Jews depends on the stand point. Some Hindus brought an elephant, which they exhibited in a dark shed. As seeing it with the eye was impossible, every one felt it with palm of his hand. The hand of one fell on its trunk: he said, "This animal is like a water pipe". Another touched its ear; to him the creature seemed like a fan. Another handled its leg and described the elephant as having the shape of a pillar. Another stroked its back. "Truly, said he, this elephant resembles a throne". Had each of them held a lighted candle, there would have been no contradiction in their words. 88

88. Mathnawi, iii, 1255-59, 1261-65, 68 Eng. tr. taken from Nicholson's Rumi Poet and Mystic (London: George Allen
What Rūmī wants to say through the above verses is that since God is one, there would be only one religion, i.e. one proper way to reach to Him, to realize Him. This stand of Rūmī is testified by the following verse of the Qur'ān:

إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَتَّجُهُ إِلَىَّ مَّـا رَأَىَ مِنَ الْأُمَّةِ - 19

The Religion before God is Islam (3:19).

There is also a tradition of the Prophet(s) in which he says that every child is born with natural religion (Dīn al-Fitrah), it is his parents who convert him into Christianity, Judaism, or Magian faith.

Rūmī, in one of his verses, points out another aspect of mystical vision: "Fix thy gaze upon the Light and thou art delivered from the dualism inherent in the finite body". That means if one absorbs himself to the contemplation of God, he would see God's presence in him and the sensation of his own existence would be wiped out; and then there would be only one sensation in him, the sensation of the presence of God.

and Unwin Ltd., Second impression, "1956", P. 166.
At another place in his *Mathnawi* Rūmī refers to the Divine Light which is reflected over the human spirits, but selected number of people can fathom its presence:

Beyond the stars are stars in which there is no combust nor sinister aspect, stars moving in the other Heavens, not the seven heavens known to all, Stars immanent in the radiance of the Light of God neither joined to each other nor separate, Whose hath his fortune from these stars, his soul drives off and consumes the unbelievers, God sprinkled His Light over all spirits, but the blest held up their skirts to receive it; And, having gained that largesse of light, they turn their faces away from all but God. That which is of the sea is going to the sea: it is going the place whence it came - From the mountain swift-rushing torrent, and from our body the soul whose motion is inspired by love. 89

---

In the above verses Rūmī's intention is to refer to the fortunate people who are the recipients of the spiritual illumination from God. Arrangement of physical world is said to be influenced by the planets, the fortune of the elect comes from spiritual luminaries shining perpetually in the heaven of the Divine Essence. Names of these stars are metaphors of the Attributes of God which determine every phase of a mystic's life. In so far as they are diverse in their effects they are not inseparable; but from a higher point of view they inhere in the undifferentiated Essence and are identical with it and with each other.  

Having received blessings, mercy and divine gnosis, the elect succeeds to cut himself off from everything except God. Every "part" seeks its "whole". The soul of a mystic is very eager to return to its original abode, i.e. God Whom he loves more than anything, and from Whose Light or out of Whose grace he has come into being.

The Hadīth: "God has seventy thousand ( Rūmī mentions seven hundred ) veils of light: were He to withdraw their curtain, then would the splendours of His Face surely consume every one who apprehended Him with sight". Here Rūmī, by these veils of light of God, intends to refer to various degrees of maintship;  

91. Mathnawi, ii, 821-23.
We have already discussed the concept of ānār in detail particularly in the theosophy of Sahl Tustarī and Ibn ʿArabī, and also pointed out that the concept was found even before Tustari. ʿRūmī in several places of his Mathnawī touches on this concept. In Mathnawī (ii, 909-10) he says:

Rūmī says that he (Muḥammad) is pure light fashioned by God from fire, that is, from the Majesty of His Essence. It was from that Light that Adam gained his knowledge of God. Rūmī here perhaps wants

92. According to Nicholson, in verse 909, ʿNār means the Majesty (Jalāl) of the Divine Essence; nur saf i.e. the spiritual Light of Muḥammad = universal Reason (The Logos), the first thing to be created. This is the Light by which all Prophets, beginning with Adam, and all Muslims saints are inspired.
The concept of the primordial existence of 
Muḥammad(s) has also come into reference to other
verses of Rūmī's Mathnawī:

Hence Mustafā (Muḥammad) said "Adam and the (other)
Prophets are (following) behind me under my banner". For this reason that master of (all) sorts of knowledge has uttered the allegorical saying, "we are the last and the foremost".

(That is to say), "If in appearance I am born of Adam, in reality I am the forefather of (every) forefather. Since the worship of the angels (rendered) to him for my sake, and he ascended to the Seventh Heaven on my account. Therefore, in reality the father (Adam) was born of me, therefore in reality the tree was born of fruit". The thought (idea), which is first, comes last into actuality, in particular the thought that is eternal. 95

to say that in the Prophet(s) the eternal word of God was revealed. He is the mirror of God. He is the direct reflection of eternal knowledge of God, the very first thing that God created. Not only, phenomenal world, but also its hidden ground, the nuanenal world, derive their life from Muhammad(s). His light not only participates in bringing into existence the entire creation but also sustains and governs all things, high and low, in both worlds. 93

The reference to what may be called the Doctrine of Logos is found in the following couplet of Rūmī:

We are the shadow of God. We are from the light of Mustafa (Muhammad), we are a precious pearl dropped in the oyster shell. 94

(Dīwān)

R.A. Nicholson: The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rūmī
E.D. with tr. and commentaries, Vol. VII (London: Luzac & Co. 1937), PP. 270-71; Cf. idem, Studies in Islamic, Mysticism (Cambridge, 1921) PP. 87, 103; id
The Idea of Personality in Sufism (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, India reprint, 1976), PP. 58 sec
K. Khosla, the Sufism of Rūmī (Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset, Elements Book Ltd., 1987), P. 33.

94. This translation is quoted from Khosla, Op.cit. P. 34.
Rūmī also considers the Prophet(s) to be the Qutb or the Axis on which all the spheres of existence revolve. He was not only the cause of creation, but also its object in the sense that in Him and through him alone God sees Himself, with His Names and Attributes. Rūmī alludes in the following verses of Mathnawi 11,970-74 to the Ḥadīth-i-qudsi referring to the Prophet(s) as the final cause of creation:

"but for thee I would not have created the heavens";

Alluding to the tradition Rūmī intends to say that God said to Muhammad(s) that he was the core of the heavens, which were created but for thee. Nicholson explains the cause of using the term Khwājah-i Lawlāk; ( Lord of Lawlāk ) were it not for Muhammad ( the Perfect Man ), the object of creation would not have been realised, since God would not have been known

to Himself in and through the Perfect Man by whom all attributes are made manifest". 97

Before Rūmī the mystic poet Sana'ī (d.c.1131) also refers to the supremacy and precedence of the Prophet(s) overall other Prophets, as he says in his Diwān.

"Adam became visible from Ahmad" 98

That is why, according to Sana'ī, everything is obedient to the Prophet(s).

"I asked the wind: Why do you serve Solomon?"
It said: "Because Ahmad's name is engraved on his seal". 99

Symbolism of the Light of Muhammad(s) finds a more vivid expression in the poetry of Ṭūṭār, as he, in the introduction of his Mantiq al-Tayr, depicts how it prostrated before the Creator and remained busy in endless aeon with a full cycle of ritual prayer before the whole cosmos came into existence from it:

97. Nicholson, the Mathnawi, Vol.vii, commentary on Book i.,ii, PP.275-76.---Nicholson says that Wilson reads the Sāri, but to him the reading Sirū (as it is found in the oldest Manuscripts) is required by the content: the Reality (haqīqah) or spirit (rūh) of Muhammad(s) is the Sīrū, i.e. rational principle immanent in the cosmos.


From his light are Throne and Footstool, Cheurubim as well as spiritual powers and the holy ones. This world and the next dependent upon him, And the world is cheerful through the light of his essence. 100

So before Rūmī a number of poets are found who elaborated the doctrine of the light of Muhammad, and this tradition has continued in different languages, and still finds its exponents in the mystical works of the poets of Islam.

3. LIGHT AS A SYMBOL OF MYSTICAL STATES

Rūmī uses 'light' to symbolize different states of the mystics. We have seen its application to God Himself. What He pours to the hearts of the mystics, His grace, His manifestation, all are symbolized by the term 'light'. It has also been applied to the Prophet(s). According to Rūmī, the Qutb holds the highest position of Sufī hierarchy and dominates the visible and invisible world. The distinction between a saint and the Qutb is made according to their possession of light. In the following two verses (Mathnawi ii, 819-20), Rūmī says the saint that is lesser than him is his lamp and one still lesser is the lamp-niche, which receives light from the lamp:

100. Ibid., P. 193.
What Rūmī wants to say is that the relation of the saint sub-merged in the mystical union with the Light of God to Reason, whether universal or particular, is the same as that of Muhammad(s) to Gabriel, who was unable to share with the Prophet(s) in the ultimate realisation of Unity. The saint of the class next in order to the Qutb receives illumination directly from him. This 'lamp' perhaps, as Nicholson conceives its probable implication, is one of the three or four Awatād. The saint of the third class derives illumination from immediately above him, as the lamp-niche from the lamp.

101. It is supported by some Ḥadīth that at the night of Mīfraq when the Prophet(s) was about to enter into the presence of God, he said to Gabriel, who had been his guide thus far "O my brother, why thou fallen behind me?" and that Gabriel replied, "Were I to come one finger-tip nearer, surely I should be consumed" Cf. Nicholson, the Mathnawī, Vol. vii, commentary on Mathnawī book 1, p. 86.

102. Nicholson, the Mathnawī, Vol., p. 267, idem, Studies in Islamic Mysticism, p. 194, Seq; the descriptions given by the Sufi writers in this point are not uniform, they have given different accounts of arrangement of spiritual hierarchy, and the number of saints belonging to each grade.
Rūmī the mystic, sees his Beloved's (God's) light everywhere. This is the greatest grace to him. In the following verses he says that he would not have the sense of before and after if his Friend's light would not have been in his front and behind. His light is in his right and left, up and down; and it is like a pillory on his head and shoulder:

Here "light" not merely symbolizes the graces and kindness of God which is a common Divine gift to every man. The term Yār (beloved) suggests that 'light's referent is love which surrounds a lover. In that condition what remains to a lover is the Beloved and His love. And it is the Love or the Beloved which takes its place in the heart of a mystic and then it is everything to him:

"O Love that does not fit in the sky from bulkiness How is it that you fit in my veiled heart? You leapt into the house of the heart and closed the door from inside. My niche, my glass and my Light upon Light". 103

103. Rūmī, Diwan 1460/15432-33, quoted from Schimmel, As through a Veil, P. 131.
Rumi suggests the means of acquiring that light in the following verses:

He says that the mirror, i.e. the heart, which has become clean from rust and dirtiness is dazzling with the light of the Sun of God.

So, (first) the rust should be removed from the face, i.e. the mirror of the heart, and then this light will be achieved. Rumi prescribes the way of becoming competent to receive that Light in a different language also:

Since thou canst not bear the unveiled Light, drink the Word of Wisdom, for its light is veiled,

To the end that thou mayst become able to receive the Light, and behold without veils that which now is hidden.


According to Nicholson, drink the Word of Wisdom means by devoting oneself to one's Shaykh and absorbing spiritual truth in the form of words, the disciple is gradually prepared for entrance, if God wills, into the illuminative and contemplative life.
Rūmī, like other Sufis, puts much stress on the remembrance (dhikr) of God. "For the remembrance of Him", he says "is strength and feathers and wings to the bird of the spirit. If that objective is fully achieved, that is Light upon Light (نور على نور). By the remembrance of God, little by little the inward heart becomes illuminated and your detachment from the world is realised". Here Rūmī emphasises the importance of dhikr in a man's life. It is the soap that cleanses the heart from all kinds of worldly attachment and makes it capable of receiving Divine reflection on it. Here by 'light upon Light', he means the combination of two things, elimination of every worldly attachment from the heart through the remembrance of God and receiving Divine illumination. Love of God is Divine illumination and the greatest gift from God to a mystic. That has come into reference in many places of Rūmī's Mathnawī. When a mystic achieves perfection he thinks himself to be the possessor of Divine light and sometimes he forgets his own existence. This mystical state has very beautifully been expressed in the following verses of Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār:

106. There is a Prophetic tradition that dhikr is the soap which cleanses the human heart from all kinds of sin.
I am the secret even of secrets, life even of life; am not a body.
I do not exist friend, exist not I,
I am a ray of uncontaminated light that has penetrated a clod of earth:
But how can the blind catch its glimpse?
I am the source of all light: Neither am the lamp, nor the wick, nor the oil beneath. 107

Rūmī maintains in one of his discourses that the love of God is the greatest wealth for human being. It is like a tree whose roots are fixed in the spiritual garden, and its branches and boughs and fruits have become suspended in another place, and its fruits have scattered - that in the end those fruits should be carried back into that garden, for there its roots are. If that is achieved both are in the garden, that is 'Light upon Light!'. 108

It reveals from the study of Rūmī that 'light' has been a very significant symbol both in his Mathnawī and other writings. He uses the symbol 'light' for God by Whom everything is created and is being sustained.

107. Translated by Mir Valiuddin, LOVE OF GOD (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1968 ), P. 202
108. Rūmī, Discourses, Eng. tr. Discourse - 56,P.216
He, like other sufis, e.g. Tustarī al-Ḥallāj and Ibn ʿArabī etc., considers nūr Muḥammadī, the Light of Muḥammad(s), to be the first creation of God and also the cause of creation. Rūmī symbolizes different states of the journey of the sufis by 'light' and makes the distinction among the saints according to their capacity to possess light. One distinctive feature of his writing is that he employs meticulously the symbols used in the light verse of the Qur'ān (24:35), e.g. Lamp, niche, oil, glass, 'Light upon Light' with reference to the different mystical states.
Khwājah Mīr Dard of Delhi (1721 - 1785), an Indian mystic and poet of eighteenth century, being a disciple of Naqshbandiyyah order was naturally inclined towards the philosophy of Waḥadat al- Shuhūd (apparentism) but his sincere approach to the doctrine of Wahdat al-rujūd enabled him to grasp its real spirit and made him convinced that in reality there is no substantial difference between the two doctrines.109 The term 'light' is employed as an important symbol in the philosophy of Dard.

Dard prefers to use the word 'light' (nūr) in place of existence (rujūd) because in the Qur'ān, in some places, the word 'light' (nūr) is used for God (الله) “God is the Light of the heavens and the earth”. Dard puts forward argument in support of his stand saying that the word existent(mawjūd) is not among the names of God (Asmā Allah) found in the Qur'ān and the Hadīth. Hence, it would be accurate, according to Islamic point of view, to use the word 'light' (nūr) for God instead of existence (rujūd). According

to the Muhammadian-e Khālis, to whom Dard himself belongs, the word light (nūr) has both deri-
110 vative and original uses. The definition of both 'light' and 'existence' is the same; each of them, according to definition, appears by itself and is mani-
111 fest in other things. The opposite of light is dark­
ness; since the opposite of non-existence is existence, the non-existence is called darkness, and accordingly the non-existences are darkness. The oft repeated Qur'ānic verse 'God leads from the depths of darkness to light' means, as Dard interprets it, God leads the non-existents or possible guiddities from non-existence to existence. To lead to light does not mean that God brings non-existents into existence but it means that He brings them towards existence. Dard maintains that darkness has two meanings: one is the essential meaning of non-existence that is pure non-existence and this is the opposite of that Existence which is the abode of all existent things; and the second meaning is that it is a shadow which is the opposite of real existence.

111. Loc.cit.
This existence and the shadow non-existence are the original imports. Existence at the stage of shadow non-existence is called existence of existents and non-existence of non-existents. Quiddities and figures are called, in Muḥammadiyyah terminology, inevitable consequences of names (muqtadiyyāt al-asma) and the archetyped ideas (aʿyān-e thābitah) that are known as the inevitable consequences of Divine Names. 112

Dard interprets the Qurʾanic verse 'God is the light of the heavens and the earth' in his peculiar way and maintains that True Light (nur-e haqq) means the Absolute Existence (wujūd-e-muṭlaq) which encompasses the whole things. In appearance this is relative light (nur-e Idāfī), cause of the creation and exhibition. In the same way in reality there is only one Real light (nur-e haqīqī) which is the cause of the appearance of the whole creations. This is the meaning of absolute which manifests itself in the whole determined grades of being according to their capacity and credibility. 113

112. Ibid., PP.107-108

Dard interprets the Qur'anic verse, 24:35, as that the term 'light'- the parable of this light - refers to existence and knowledge. Niche (mishkāt) stands for grades of intellects and incorporeal beings (mujarradāt). Lamp (mīsbaḥ) means the incorporeal souls which are separate from one another. These intellects and souls are universal in their essence but with their bodies are comprehended as particulars. It means that the senses are the tools of souls through which knowledge of particulars are acquired. Likewise, souls are the tools of intellects for the knowledge of particulars which is acquired by means of the senses. Glass refers to various grades of heavens which are material existences. Dazzling star (Kawkab Durri) refers to the grades of stars which are lighted by Divine illumination. Transparency and corporeal light are found in the heavenly bodies. The blessed tree stands for the whole universe which contains all the sublimities and earthly matters. Since stars belong to heavens, they are sublimities in respect of their individualities. The attribute of the blessed tree refers to its many benefits and various appearances. The tree has been allegorically called olive, for it symbolizes the spreading over of the bounties of God. The dissociation with the East and the West means the Universe in its own competence is collective, and due to its universality
and collectiveness is neither eastern nor western, rather the cardinal points belong to it, which contain both the East and the West. The denial of the touch of the fire means the negation of Gods' association with possible truths, because possibilities are not associated with His existence. Likewise, it appears that fire is an associate of light and in illumination it seems to be lighted by itself, but its illumination is due to light; and due to its delicate shape it receives luminousness. Light is light, fire is fire. In the same way, apparently it seems that the creations are existent, but their existences are due to the existence of God (Wujūd-e haqq).  

Dard maintains that the light (al-Nur) is the name of the existence of God (Ism-e wujūd-e haqq), in the sense of its appearance by itself, and creativity of beings. So it annexes the heavens and the earth, whereas heavens and the earth refer to the whole universe. In the following verses Dard elaborates the point that the sun and moon are not the possessors of real light:

Which sun and moon illuminate
the heavens and the earth?
A different sun is the light of the
heavens and the earth.
In the realm of creation where exist darkness; If God is the light of the heavens and the earth.

Dard says that the word 'light' symbolizes a number of things. In connection with the interpretation of the light verse, he maintains that here light has three degrees or grades. Existence is light, knowledge is light and light is also light. When light descends it is called knowledge. When knowledge descends it is called existence. Light in its purity is supreme, encompassing the entire realm of being. Knowledge and light are related to the individual existences ( afrād-e wujūd ). All the lights, illuminations, and radiations, refer to the unitary command of God ( Kun ). God is the only essential Light that is itself light and is also cause of all illumination. Likewise, knowledge and the universe, known and existence, and cause (mūjid) and effect ( mawjūd ), represent three different categories of the unitary command, but in terms of human understanding they are different. 116

Every particle of the universe is illuminated by the solitary sun of existence. Dard, focussing his discussion on mystical experience, says that when a small particle achieves nearness to the sun, it realizes that the sun is present in everything, and then he says 'everything is from Him' (hameh az ūst). Proceeding a step further, he contemplates the presence of that light in himself and claims, "I am the sun" (ana al-shams) or "everything is He (hameh ūst).

Both the conditions of the adept are intermediary stations. The real station is that where one has the consciousness of one's createdness and servitude. Only that much relation he has with the absolute existence which the appearance of light has bestowed upon him light of existence and made him illuminated - he is the manifestation, splendour and shadow of that appearance. So, it cannot be said he is absolutely a separate entity. On the other hand the claim of identity is also heresy. 117

LIGHT OF MUHAMMAD

The doctrine of the light of Muhammad has occupies an important place in Dard's theory of being. He refers to the view of those who maintain that the first emanation (Ṣādir-e awwal) is the first intellect because

logically it entails that there should emanate only one from one. Apparently agreeing with this view he holds that from God only one creative act, which is the First Effect (ما لعل اولواَل) or First Intellect, has come into appearance. This First Intellect produced the Second Intellect and the First Heaven (فالک اول). Consequently in a descending order all the other intellects and heavens have come into existence in their turn. Their relation with one another is that of cause and effect. Şûfîs maintain that the First Emanation is the reality of Muḥammad (حیقۃ اولاَل), because God, before creation of all beings has brought into existence the reality of His beloved (حیب). This is the first Determination (تایین اول). All the other creations in respect of their different positions have been created from it. Dard refers to the following two Ḥadîth in support of his contention that the Reality of Muḥammad or the First Intellect is the First Emanation:

Dard maintains that according to the Ḥadîth First Intellect and the light of Muḥammad are not different from each other but rather they are identical. So the First Intellect is the Light of Muḥammad(s). 118

118. Ilm al-Kitāb, PP. 379-77.
This light of Muhammad(s) is the cause of the appearance of the whole creation:

Dard calls it the grade of the Name of God and grade of the perfect manifestation. From this he infers that this grade should be considered to be the grade of universal whole (jami'- Kulliyah), because this is the manifestation of the universal name (ism-e-jami') and the first appearance of the universal name should be the grade of universal. All the necessary names (asma'-e wajibiyah) are included in the name of God (Ism Allāh). In the same way, the entire scheme of appearances of names is derived from the reality of Muhammad(s). Without the mediation of the Prophet Muhammad(s) nothing can come into existence, nor can any one get emancipation on the day of Judgment.

Dard believes that the reality of Muhammad(s) is the first manifestation in the world of manifestations. According to him, in sufī terminology the first descent is called grade of singleness (wahdat). This grade is the intermediary between the grade of Absolute oneness.

(aḥadiyyat-e mujarradah), which is not manifest, which is not manifest, and the grade of unitariness (wāhidīyyat), which is the second descent. Dard gives the following order of descents:

The first descent is the grade of singleness or the reality of Muḥammad. The second descent is the grade of unitariness. The third descent is the world of spirits (ʿālam-e arwāh), the fourth descent is the world of form (ʿālam-e-mithāl), the fifth descent is the visible world (ʿālam-e-Shahādāt). Man in its descent is considered to be a world -in-itself and it is called the intermediary world or macrocism (ʿālam al-asghar).

The reality of Muḥammad(s) comprehends the whole descents and the grades of being and is a mediator in between the possible existences and the necessary existence of God.

In the terminology of the Muḥammedan school, which was founded by Dard's father, Khwājah Nāsir 'Andalīb, reality of Muḥammad(s) is called the First Light (nūr-e awwal). Dard seeks support in favour of this stand from the Hadīth (اول من خلف الله لو ركى) "What God first

created was my (Muhammad) light”. This grade of
the universality of being is called the drift (muqtadā)
of the name of God (Ism Allāh), which is the
assembly of all the names. God is, according to this
school, the Lord of Muhammad(s) and the Prophet(s) is
the subject (marbūb) of this blessed name. 121

From the foregoing discussion it is divulged
that “symbolism of light” has a very important place in
Dard’s system of thought. Light in its truest sense
stands for real existence—True light (nūr-e haqq) is Absolute Existence (wujūd-e-mutlaq). All other
lights, i.e., existences have come into being from that
light. Dard like other sufīs, e.g., Tustarl, Ibn
‘Arabī and Rūmī, upholds the doctrine of the light of
Muḥammad(s).

In this chapter we have dealt with some prominent
sufīs, starting from the views of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭalib,
who is regarded by the sufīs as their leader—Imām
al-Awliyā. Then we elaborated the symbolism of light
in the doctrines of Sahl Tustarl, Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl,
Ibn ‘Arabī, Rūmī and Khwājah Mīr Dard. 121 From this

account it is evident that the primary referent of the symbol 'light' is God, though it has a number of other referents too. The concept of the Light of Muhammad also holds a very prominent place in most of sufī doctrines. Different mystic states and metaphysical aspects also derive their meaning from the word light.