CHAPTER V

SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT IN AL-ĞHAZÂLÎ'S

MISHKÂT AL-ANWÂR
(A) A BRIEF LIFE SKETCH OF AL-GHAZĀLI:

Al-Ghazālī needs no introduction to the students of Muslim philosophy. His contribution to the different aspects of Islamics earned him the titles hujjat al-Islām (proof of Islam), Zain al-dīn (ornament of religion). Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was born at Tūs in Persia in 450 A.H. (1058 A.D.). "His father was", to quote al-Subkī, "a pious dervish who did not eat but what he earned with his own hands. He very often visited and sat in the company of the fuqahā. And when he listened to their sermons, he wept and prayed to God to grant him a son who would be a faqīh". "God granted", adds al-Subkī, "the prayer of his father and al-Ghazālī was born who became the most learned of all the fuqahā, and rose to the eminence of becoming the Imam of his age".1 His father died when he was quite young. He and his brother Ahmad were then brought up and educated by a Sūfī friend of their father. Naturally, the piestistic life of his father must have exerted a whole some influence in the mind of child al-Ghazālī. So, it

1. Al-Subkī, Tabaqāt al-Shāfi‘yyah, Vol. IV, p. 102
can be well argued that he had acquaintance with the teachings and tenets of sufīsm, to some extent, from his boyhood.

In a comparatively young age he succeeded to have a comprehensive knowledge of an extensive range of subjects, in particular, theology, fiqh, science, philosophy, apologetics, logic, and mysticism; and became well aware with the system of thought of the leading intellectual and religious movements of his time. He was in turn a canon-lawyer and a scholastic, a philosopher and a sceptic, a mystic and a theologian, a traditionist and a moralist.

Day by day al-Ghazālī's reputation as a scholar spread throughout the Muslim world. And he came in contact with Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥasan ibn Ishaq, known as Nizām al-Mulk, the great vizier of the Saljuk sovereign Malik Shāh, and joined his retinue of canonists and theologians. Nizām al-Mulk was a great patron of scholars; and al-Ghazālī's profound knowledge of Muslim law, theology, and philosophy impressed him so much that he appointed him to the Chair of theology in the Nizāmīyyah Academy at Baghdad in 484/1091. This was from intellectual view point the most honourable post in the then Muslim world and one which had not previously been conferred on any one at so
so early an age.

Al-Ghazālī, as the Professor of the Academy was completely successful; the excellence of his lecture, the depth of his learning, and his lucid style of expressions resulted a large attendance to his classes including the chief savants of the time. He had been looked upon as the greatest theologian of Ash'ariyyah tradition because of his comprehensive knowledge of the different aspects of the Islamics, his eloquence, erudition and dialectical skill. Whatever al-Ghazālī studied, his approach remained critical and reflective. He made an attempt to grasp the doctrines of the different sects prevailing then. It is better to quote some passage from his autobiographical work al-Munqidh min al-Dalāl, to know about his approach in his own words:

... I have scrutinized the creed of every sect, I have tried to lay pure the in most doctrines of every community. All this have I done that I might distinguish between true and false, between sound tradition and heretical innovation. Whenever I meet one of the Bātinīyyah, I like to study his creed; whenever I meet a Zāhirīyyah, I want to know the essentials of his belief. If it is a philosopher, I try to become acquainted with the essence of his philosophy, if a scolastic theologian I busy myself in examining his

theological reasoning if a Sufi, I earn
to fathom the secret of his mysticism;
if an ascetic (muta'abbid), I investigate
the basis of his ascetic practices; if
one of the Zanādiqah or Mu'attilah, I look
I look beneath the surface to discover
the reasons for his bold adoption of such
a creed.3

The most valuable source to determine al-Ghazālī’s
views and assessments with regard to the different
schools of thought around him in his al-Munqidh min
al-Dalāl, in which he divides the various “seekers”
after truth into the four distinct groups: Theologians
(mutakallimūn), Authoritarians (ta’līmiyyah or
Bātiniyyah), Philosophers (Falāsifah) and Mystics
(sufīs)4.

Al-Ghazālī very mildly criticises the stands
of the theologians. He himself had been brought up in
their tradition, and was thoroughly saturated into their
system. It cannot be claimed exactly that he ever
wholly dissociated himself from them. He wrote some
books on the science of theology (‘ilm al-Kalām).5

3. Watt, W. Montgomery, The Faith and Practice of al-
Ghazālī Eng. tr. of al-Ghazālī’s al-Munqidh min
al-Dalāl, and Bidayat al-Hidayah, (London:
4. Ibid., p. 26
5. Eq. Tahafut al-Falāsifah, al-Iqtisād fi al-I’tiqād
Iljam al-‘Awāmm ‘an ‘Ilm al-Kalām and al-Mustazahiri
etc.
From his writings it reveals that he did never cease to be a theologian even after becoming a mystic and his critical view about the doctrines of the philosophers was essentially from the theological standpoint. Al-Ghazālī's dissatisfaction with the theologian was only with their scholastic method. "Its aim" he says "was merely to preserve the creed of orthodoxy and to defend it against the deviations of heretics".6 Hence, no intellectual certainty could be attained through it; he, however, appraised the theologians for, as they successfully preserved orthodoxy, defended the creed received from the prophetic source and rectified heretical innovations. Al-Ghazālī's scepticism or reservation with regard to them was due to their incapability to render a very sound basis for fundamental beliefs of religion either on some philosophical ground or through some sort of first-hand experience.7

Al-Ghazālī was very critical about some of the opinions of the party of taʻlīm or authoritative instruction also known as Isma‘iliyyah and Bātiniyyah, which he regarded as the latter innovations in religion.

He wrote a number of books against their views. Al-Ghazālī's main objection against them was, as he understood, that they renounced reason and held that truth can be attained only by a submissive acceptance of the pronouncements of an infallible Imām. From his criticism of their doctrines it should not be supposed that he had any kind of disregard for the First Imām, ‘Alī, and his descendants, on the contrary in his works, he mentioned their names with great reverence.

Al-Ghazālī in some of his writings made very critical assessment of the doctrines and method of philosophers. But he had a very critical mind which evinces that he was not against the philosophical investigation as such. He had such an intellectual honesty that before getting himself penetrated to the very core of a subject, and grasping its main doctrines, he considered it improper to make any comment on it. The same is the case with philosophy. In his Munqidh al-Ghazālī himself records what an assiduous job he performed for the proper grasping of philosophy. Let us quote:

8. Those al-Ghazālī mentions in his al-Munqidh are:
I realized that to refute a system before understanding it and becoming acquainted with its depth is to act blindly. I therefore set out in all earnestness to acquire a knowledge of philosophy from books, by private study without the help of an instructor. I made progress towards this aim during my hours of free time after teaching in the religious sciences and writing, for at that period I was burdened with the teaching and instruction of three hundred students in Baghdad. By my solitary reading during the hours thus snatched God brought me in less than two years to a complete understanding of the sciences of philosophers. Thereafter I continued to reflect assiduously for nearly a year on what I had assimilated, going over it in my mind again and again and probing its tangled depths, until I comprehended surely and certainly how far it was deceitful and confusing and how far true and a representation of reality. 9

Such a deep study made al-Ghazālī competent to write books like, Miṣyār al-‘ilm fī Fann al-Mantiq (The Touchstone of science in Logic) and Mihakk al-Nazar fī al-Mantiq (The Touchstone of speculation in Logic) on Logic; and the best compendia of Greek philosophy in Arabic, Maqāsid al-Falāsifah - a faithful exposition of Aristotelianism, it came to be known to the Christian scholastics through a Latin translation made as early as 540/1145 by a Spanish philosopher and translator Dominicus Gundisalvus; and also his Tahāfut al-Falāsifah (The

Incoherence of the Philosophers), in which he made a severe attack on the doctrines of the Muslim Peripatetics with a dialectic method.

Al-Ghazālī divided the philosophers into three groups: (1) The materialists (dāhriyyūn) who upheld the view that the world exists eternally, and denied the role of any Creator (2) The naturalists (tabi‘īyyūn), who admitted the existence of a wise Creator or Deity, but rejected the spirituality and immorality of the human soul that ultimately resulted in their disbelief in heaven and hell, resurrection and judgment, and (3) The theists (ilāhīyyūn), e.g. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and his followers in the Muslim Traditions, among whom al-Ghazālī specially named al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. Space would not permit us to elaborate al-Ghazālī's evaluation of the different philosophical sciences deduced from Aristotle in detail. Al-Ghazālī had no considerable reservation about the study of mathematics, logic and natural sciences because their theorems, mostly, do not clash with religious faith. But, according to him, in theology or metaphysics most of the errors of the philosophers emerged. He sorted twenty points which clash with the principles of religion and tried to refute them one by one in his Tahāfūt. Some scholars find some kind of resemblance between al-Ghazālī's criticism of the

application of pure reason on these issues and Kant's and logical positivists' stands on metaphysics.

For the mystics al-Ghazâlî had great regard and we hardly find any critical remark about them throughout his works except against the extravagantly pantheistic utterances or antinomian tendencies of some of the intoxicated sufîs. Actually, sufîsm was not something new to him. Sufîstic influences had all along been working upon his mind right from his early childhood. Al-Ghazâlî made an extensive study of the works of the mystics and concluded that the complete mystic way includes both intellectual belief and practical activity; the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles put by the human self and overcoming its lower part through eradicating vicious morals, so that it may get itself freed from what is not God, and is able to constant remembrance of him. For the teachings of the sufîs, the works al-Ghazâlî consulted, had been referred to in his al-Mungidh. He particularly mentioned Abû Tâlib al-Makkî's Qut al-qutûb and the works of Harîth al-Muhâsîbî, the various anecdotes about al-Junayd, al-Shibîlî and Abû yazîd al-Bistâmî.

12. Ibid., P. 54
Al-Ghazālī realized that the sufīs were essentially the men of (particular) states (arbāb al-ahwāl) rather than men of words (ashāb al-aqwāl). He himself realized the importance of spiritual experiences dhawq—literally 'tasting'), that lead to state of ecstasy and bring about moral changes. The states of sufīs are different from the definitions and dogmas. All this made al-Ghazālī convinced to attest the point that truth revealed through mystic experiences could not be challenged by one who lacked such experiences.

Al-Ghazālī soon began realizing that the means of getting oneself saved from the base desires of the world, and receiving the blessings of God, is the seve­rance of the attachment of the heart to worldly things. Al-Ghazālī during his stay at Nishāpūr became the disciple of Shaykh abū 'Alī al-Fāḍil ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Fārābī al-Tūsī (d. 477/1084), and it was under his guidance that he learnt more about the theory and practice of sufīsm. He even practised rigorous ascetic and sufīstic exercises under the supervision of the Shaykh but could not get the desired rewards. It is his own report that at that time, he could not reach the stage where the mystics begin to receive pure inspiration.

from "high above".\textsuperscript{14}

We have already pointed out that as the Professor of theology in the Nizāmīyyah Academy at Baghdād al-Ghazālī was a complete success. But his own spiritual crisis started at that time. He began to examine the very motive behind his job of teaching and realized, "it was not a pure desire" says al-Ghazālī, "for the things of God, but that the impulse moving me was the desire for an influential position and public recognition. I was for certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank of sand and in imminent danger of hell-fire unless I set about to mend my ways".\textsuperscript{15}

Al-Ghazālī started reflecting on these issues and on a number of occasions resolved to give up teaching and to quit Baghdād, but for some time he postponed that decision. In this way, for about six months he had been suffering from severe mental crisis that started from Rajab 488| July 1095. This crisis resulted in some physical problems for him. His power of speech was ceased and that prevented him to deliver lecture in the class room. And his appetite and digestion were impaired. These problems were, according to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Watt., Op.cit., P. 56
\end{itemize}
al-Ghazālī, the graces of God that made it easy for him to give up the post of professorship. He left Baghdād in Dhu al-qa‘dah 488/ November 1095, ostensibly on pilgrimage to Makkah; actually he went into seclusion to practise the ascetic and religious disciplines of the sūfīs in order to secure certainty for his mind and contentment for his soul. He distributed all the wealth he had retaining except some that he thought would suffice for himself and for the sustenance of his family. After reading for eleven years the life of a wandering dervish he finally returned to his native town, Țūs, in 499/1105. During the period of his wanderings, i.e., from 1095 to 1105 A.D., al-Ghazālī busied himself with most rigorous ascetic discipline and religious exercises; he stayed at Damascus, Jerusalem and Hebron for some years, and performed pilgrimage to Makkah and Madīnah. During this period also al-Ghazālī kept on writing books besides Ihyā' and also resumed teaching from time to time.

On his return to Țūs he was leading a life of retirement and contemplation but very soon he was requested by Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Late Nīzām al-Mulk, to accept the chair of theology in Nizāmiyyah seminary at Nishāpur which he accepted with some hesitation. But he did not

16. Ibid., P. 58.
stay there long and retired once more to his home in Tus and established a madrasah at which he began to teach both theology and tasawwauf. At the instance of the learned and common people of Baghdad, he was once again summoned by the Grand Vazier, al-Sa'Id, to take up the teaching at the Old Nizāmiyyah Academy, but al-Ghazālī chose to remain at Tus. He died there in Jumādā-al-thānī 505 December 1111.

In the history of Muslim philosophy, especially in Sufism, al-Ghazālī's contribution has been highly applauded for his attempt to present the teachings of Sufism in a systematic way, defining its term clearly and with precision. Owing to his great influence Sufism henceforward emerged as an integral — and the most vital-element in Islam. He brought orthodoxy and mysticism into closer contact. Remaining within their own boundaries, the theologians became more respectful towards mystics, so did the mystics, as they became also more cautious not to violate the instructions of orthodoxy. Al-Ghazālī's works are still read and studied with great enthusiasm, more widely than those of any other Muslim writer throughout the length and breadth of the world of Islam, perhaps, because the teachings they consist have the mystical flavour. It is because of this characteristic that their appeal will remain as powerful it is in the future era also.
Al-Ghazâlî, as we have already indicated, in his later phase became a complete mystic and this reflected in his writings of that period. A mystic may have some tenets of faith common e.g. God, man, world, and nature etc., with a theologian and a philosopher, but his approach to them is unlike that of the philosophers and theologians. A philosopher tries to arrive at truth with the application of reason, and thinks it competent to resolve all these issues. A theologian, on the other hand, goes back for their solutions to religious traditions (naqîl). A mystic finds both the methods not fully competent to achieve the truth, hence, he takes recourse in immediate experience or intuition. That is why what he expresses is mainly esoteric in nature. Al-Ghazâlî's Mishkât al-Anwâr, from this point of view, is an extremely interesting work which represents his inner life, the life as a süfî and also his esoteric experiences. It is not possible to give an exact date of this opuscule; but it was written after his autobiographical work al-Munqidh min al-Dalâl. It falls among his latest works. We get hint in this work about his magnum opus Ihyāʾ 'Ulûm al-Dīn. Other works of al-Ghazâlî mentioned by him in this treatise are the Miṣrâr al-İlm.
The object behind writing this treatise is to expound a verse of the Qur'ān a particular tradition. The former is the most thought-provoking 'light-verse' (24:35) and the latter is known as the 'veils-tradition'. The work is very interesting and inspiring to the students of mysticism because what is written in it is not in a plain language, but in a symbolic language. Hence, it requires a careful study. It further demands some prior acquaintance with the Sūfī doctrines and states of mystics for full understanding of it. The most important symbol, rather the sole symbol, used in this treatise is 'light' that has been a very attractive symbol to the mystics of Islam from its advent.

The importance of this work to the students of mysticism may be because no such a work in the earlier Sufi literature, with the full application of 'symbolism of light' is available. Al-Ghazālī is a mystic with strong orthodox background, so, when he says something he says very cautiously so that his utterances may not mislead the common believers. That is why, in many places he upholds the view that the secrets of God should not be divulged to everybody barring those who are established in knowledge.16A

16A. Cf. Al-Qur'ān, 3:6
In the introduction of his *Mishkāt al- Ḥazālī* says:

"Noble hearts seal the mysteries like the tomb"

Or, as one of those who know has said - "To divulge the secret of Godhead is to deny God", Or, as the Prophet(s) said - "There is a knowledge like the form of a hidden thing known to none save those who know God". 17

While al-Ḥazālī wrote the work, *Mishkāt al-Anwar*, perhaps, he had two points in mind, firstly, to divulge the divine secrets and mysteries to the spiritually advanced people, i.e. those who have some acquaintance with the facts and happenings of the Realm supernal; and secondly to keep these secrets beyond the reach of the commoners.

The treatise is divided into three sections. In the first one, which is considerably the longest, al-Ḥazālī takes into consideration the word 'light' itself, and its plural 'lights', in both physical and metaphorical senses.

In the second section some interesting introductory remarks about the whole subject of symbolic language in the Qur'ān and the Traditions, and its interpretation are found. It also includes the results of symbology applicable to the terms of the "light-verse" - the Light, the Niche, the Glass, the Oil, the Tree, the East and the West. In the third section, the exposition of the tradition of 'the seventy thousand veils' is dealt with.

(C) **LIGHT, AND LIGHTS: PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION:** Al-Ghazālī, in the first section of his work *Mishkāt*, elaborates different possible referents of the word 'light' (nūr) and its plural 'lights' (anwār); and starts with a claim that the real Light is God. He is the highest and the ultimate Light. All the other objects which may also be called light or lights have also been referred to in this section.

1. "LIGHT "AS PHYSICAL LIGHT, AS THE EYE, AS THE INTELLIGENCE, AS THE QUR'ĀN:

   Al-Ghazālī maintains that the word 'light' is employed with a three fold signification: The first by the common people, the second by the special type of people and the third by the very special among the special type of people.

   In the first signification the word 'light' refers to a phenomenon (zāhūr). A phenomenon or appearance is a relative term, as a thing necessarily appears to, or is concealed from other than itself, hence, its appearance and non-appearance are both relative. Al-Ghazālī further adds that its appearance and non-appearance are relative to perceptive faculties; and of which sense of sight is supposed to be the most powerful and conspicuous.

In relation to the sense of sight; things fall in three categories: (1) that which is not by itself visible, as dark bodies; (2) that which is by itself visible, but unable to make other things visible, such as, luminaries like the stars and fire before it blazes up; (3) that which is not only itself visible, but also makes other things visible, like the sun, the moon; and fire when it blazes up, and lamps. So the name 'light' can only be applicable to the objects referred to in the third category. As light is an expression for that which "is by itself visible and makes other things visible".

Al-ghazālī has already pointed out that the very essence of light is appearance to a percipient; and that perception demands the existence of two things - light and a seeing eye. For though light is that which appears by itself and causes other things to appear, the eye neither appears nor causes to appear to a blind. Since, eye is an essential or qua', a necessary element for any kind of vision, it may also be named as 'light'. Hence, it is usually said about a weak sighted person that "the light of his eye is weak". Al-ghazālī with a number of illustrations claims that the eye as a kind of light can only be understood by the special type of people, and this is the second signification. 19

19. Ibid., Pr. 46-47.
Al-Ghazālī sees several kinds of defects in the carnal eyes which make its scope and power limited. It cannot see things very near, nor behind a veil. It sees exterior of things only, and not their interior; the parts, not the whole; things finite, not things infinite. It commits a number of malobservations. Moreover, it sees others, not itself. So, there are a number of shortcomings or defects inherent in a physical eye. Al-Ghazālī discusses the possibility as to whether there can be such an "eye" that is free from all these physical defects that may be called light. In human mind there exists an "eye", and that is called by various names, viz. Intelligence, spirit, human soul. Whatever name may be given to it, al-Ghazālī by this simply means that faculty by which the rational man is distinguished from an infant in arms, from the brute beast, and from the lunatic, using the prevalent terminology of his time, al-Ghazālī calls it the "the intelligence" (al-ʿaql), and holds that the intelligence may more properly be called 'light' than the carnal eye, because it transcends so many defects of the latter in its capacity.

Al-Ghazālī shows the superiority of intelligence over eyes in a number of cases. The former does perceive itself as well as others, and it perceives itself as endowed with knowledge, power, etc., whereas the eye does not behold itself. Intelligence has got the capacity to perceive its own knowledge, i.e. it can assess and evaluate its own knowledge, and perceives its knowledge of its own knowledge and so on ad infinitum.

The eye cannot perceive what is behind the veil, but the intelligence moves freely about the Throne, the 3edile, and everything behind the veil of the Heavens, and likewise about the Host Supernal, and the Realm Celestical just as much about its own world. Al-Ghazālī says that the realities of things stand unveiled to the intelligence. Giving a detail account of intelligence's superiority over the eye he maintains that physical eye cannot be treated as an equal with the intelligence in claiming the name of light. The eye is only relatively called light; but in relation to the intelligence it is darkness, hence the intelligence should more properly be called light.

Al-Ghazālī in his magnum opus, *Ihya 'Ulūm al-Dīn* also highlights the importance of intelligence and observes that it can rightly be termed as light. In the Qurʾān, he adds, a number of verses are found where light and darkness symbolize knowledge and ignorance respectively. He deals in detail with the role of intellect in the acquisition of any kind of knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī says that the intelligence of men truly sees things, what it sees is not all on the same plane. Its knowledge is in some cases, so to speak, is "given", that is, present in the intelligence, as in the case of axiomatic truths, e.g. that the same thing cannot be both with and without an origin; or existent and non-existent; or that the same proposition can not be both true and false. And it can grasp from the existence of black, the existence of "colour"; but the converse does not occur itself to the intelligence as necessarily true, for "colour" does not involve "black", nor does "animal" involve "man". There are some other propositions, some necessary, some contingent and some impossible. Other propositions, again, do not find the intelligence invariably with them, when they

recur to it, but have to shake it up, arouse it in order to elicit its spark. Instances of such propositions are the theorems of speculations to apprehend which intelligence has to be aroused by the dialectic (Kalām) of the philosophers (al-hukamā'). Thus, it is when the light of philosophy dawns man sees actually what he had seen before potentially.

With the above discussion the point al-Ghazālī wants to highlight is that the greatest of all philosophies is the word (Kalām) of God in general, and the Qur'ān in particular.

Therefore, al-Ghazālī argues, the verses of the Qur'ān, in relation to the intelligence, have the value of sunlight in relation to the eyesight; it is by this sunlight that the act of seeing is accomplished. And due to that the Qur'ān is more properly called light just as the light of the sun is called light.

The Qur'ān, then al-Ghazālī maintains, is symbolized

23. Mishkāt, P. 52.
by the sun, and the intelligence by the Light of

24
the Eye. Al-Ghazālī refers further to two of the
Qur'ānic verses where the Qur'ān has been termed as
the light and, whose meaning, he says, would be
clarified in the light of the above discussion. The
verses al-Ghazālī quotes are the following:

"Believe, therefore, in God and His Apostle, and
in the Light which have sent down" (64:8)

"There hath come to you a convincing proof
from your Lord; for we have sent unto you
a light (that is) manifest" (4:174).

24. Ibid., pp. 52-53, Cf. H.L.Yafeh, Studies in al-
Ghazālī (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The
2. "LIGHT" IN THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE WORLDS
AND GOD THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ALL GRADES OF LIGHT:

Al-Ghazālī, as a corollary to the previous discussion, puts forward that there exist two kinds of eye, an external - which is one of our perceptual faculties - and an internal; the former belongs to the phenomenal world, the world of sense perception, and the latter, i.e., internal vision, belongs to the Realm Celestial, the world that transcends the reach of the perceptual faculties. This also suggests that each of these eyes should have its own sun. Physical eyes see things in the light of the sun of the External world. Internal vision takes place in the "sun of the Realm celestial", viz., the Qur'ān and the other inspired books of God. Al-Ghazālī's division of worlds in as internal and external is substantiated in his epistemology, in which he distinguishes between outward knowledge (ʿilm al-zāhir) and inward knowledge (ʿilm al-bāṭīn). The former is concerned with the material world (ʿālam al-mulk) and the latter with the Invisible world (ʿālam al-malakūt). Before al-Ghazālī such a division of worlds in connection with epistemology is found in Abū Tāliʿū al-Makkī's Qūt al-Qulūb.26

25. Ibid., P. 53.
The Invisible world is superior, according to al-Ghazālī, to the world of matter. For this reason this is named as the world of Supernal (العالم العليوي) or the world of Spirits (العالم الروحي) or the world of Light (العالم النوري) and the World of Matter and of darkness is called العالم المادي والزنادي. Al-Ghazālī makes it clear that by the World Supernal he does not mean the world of the (seven) Heavens though they are "above" in respect of the world of our sense-perception. These heavens are equally present to human apprehension and that of the lower animals. But the World Supernal is not open to every individual. Only a selected number of people among mankind can reach the stage which is the highest world (العالم الأعلى) and the rest are consigned back to the lowest of the lows (السابلين). The cases of the angels are different as they, according to al-Ghazālī, are part of the World of the Realm Celestial, floating ever in the Presence of Transcendence, from where they gaze down upon the world of inferior beings. Al-Ghazālī is of the opinion that the prophetic traditions, "God created the creation in darkness, then sent an effusion of His light upon it" and "God hath angels, who know the works of men better than they know them themselves", refer to the same thing, discussed above.

27. Mishkāt, P. 54.
28. Ibid., P. 54.
About the prophets, al-Ghazālī says that when they reach the realm celestial, they succeed to attain the utmost goal that results in their acquaintance with the everything of the Invisible world; and he who is in the Realm celestial is with God and has the keys of the Unseen ( māfātih al-Ghayb ). By this al-Ghazālī means that the cause of existing things descend into the world of sense; for the world of sense is one of the effects of yonder of cause, resulting from it just as the shadow results from a body, or as fruit from that which fractuates, or as the effect from a cause. The key to this knowledge of the effect is sought and found in the cause. Linking the world of sense with the Realm Celestial al-Ghazālī says that the former is a type of the effects or consequences.

We have already come across al-Ghazālī's contention that what sees itself and also others deserves more properly the name 'light', while that which adds to these two acts the act of making the others visible still more properly deserves the name of light than that which has no effect whatever beyond itself. This is the light which is worthy of the name "Lamp Illuminat" ( Sirāj ām munīrā ) as its light is effused upon the others. This is the special attributes of the
transcendental prophetic spirit (\textit{al-rūh al-gudsiyy al-nubawīyy}) because through it the created world is effused with the hidden knowledge. In the Qur'ān at one place (33:46) God has called the Prophet Muḥammad(s) by the name "Lump illuminant". All the other Prophets are lamps (\textit{surūj}), and so are the learned (\textit{al-*Ulāmi*}), but the difference with regard to their power of illumination between them is incalculable. The possible reason why al-Ghazālī names the transcendal prophetic spirit as "Lamp illuminant", which is in the Qur'ān exclusively used for the Prophet Muḥammad(s), will be explained later. The reason of regarding all the other prophets as well as the learned as the lamps is perhaps because of their possession of Divine light in such a quantity that through which they see themselves, i.e., can assess and evaluate their inner conditions, as well as the others, and also can bring to the realm of light those who are in darkness. The prophets and the learned are the people who can render correct information about the Creator and creation by revealing the real nature of God, and they can save people from the darkness of polytheism. There is a prophetic tradition: "There is no acute darkness than the darkness of polytheism". Thus, they are the persons who after receiving light, i.e. the light of guidance, from the transcendental world spread it among the people.

Al-Ghazālī holds that all the Terrestrial Lamps are originally lit from the Light supernal alone, and are ranked according to the order in which they themselves are kindled, one from the other. And that which is the nearest to the fountain-head of the light will be most deserving to bear the name light, for he is the highest in order and rank. Al-Ghazālī gives an illustration to make explicit the analogy of the graded order of light in the world of sense. One sees the light of moon entering into a house through the window, falling on a mirror fixed upon a wall, which in its turn reflects that light on another well, whence it in turn reflects on the floor, so that the floor becomes illuminated therefrom. The light upon the floor is owed to that upon the wall, and the light on the wall to that in the mirror, and the light in the mirror to that from the moon, and the light in the moon to that from the sun, for it is the sun that radiates its light upon the moon. The lights mentioned here are graded one above the other; each one possesses a certain rank and a proper degree which it never passes beyond. A man of insight, al-Ghazālī says, can grasp the order and rank of the Realm celestial. One who is nearest to the Ultimate Light holds the highest rank. The same is the case with the angels. With all
these Al-Ghazālī purports to say that there are
innumerable grades and ranks of men. One who is
more attached or nearer to God, the Ultimate Light,
is blessed with a higher rank. 30

Al-Ghazālī, like many other Sūfīs, regards God
as the Ultimate or Only Light; all the other lights
are borrowed and therefore dependent upon Him. To
elucidate this point Al-Ghazālī cites a number of
examples. 31 God gives light to the created beings, i.e.
the life, and also sustains them. Light is summed up
in its ability of 'appearing' and 'manifesting', and
there are a number of gradations of it. According to
the view of Al-Ghazālī, there is no darkness so intense
than the darkness of non-being ( Al-šādām ). For, he
argues, a dark thing is called dark because it is unable
to appear to any one's vision, it never comes to exist
for sight, though it does exist in itself. But what has
no existence for other nor for itself is certainly at
the extreme limit of all darkness. In contrast to
nothingness, i.e. darkness, being is light. The Real
Being is God the most High, so the Real Light is God
32 Himself. Here another point may also be added, i.e.,

30. Ibid., PP. 56-57.
31. Ibid., PP. 57-58.
32. Ibid., P. 58.
God is the Ultimate Guide of mankind. He guides people through the prophets, and the learneds of the religion. Divine guidance has been symbolically expressed as "light" at many places in the Qur'ān in the Traditions, and in the writings of many mystics of Islam.

3. "ULTIMATE LIGHT", GOD, APPREHENDED BY MYSTICS

The ultimate aim of ṣūfīsm, as Ma`rūf al-Kārkhī defines it, is the "apprehension of divine realities", ṣūfīs with their perpetual striving to know the realities, which are veiled to the ordinary people, reach such a state that every mystery of the heavens and the earth becomes clear to them. Al-Ghazālī explaining this point says that the gnostics (al-`ārifūn) at the end of their spiritual journey reach such a level of vision that they see nothing existent save God alone.

Referring to the Qur'ānic verse* "everything perisheth except His Aspect (wajh) (28:88), he maintains that gnostics realize that everything except God does not only perish at a particular moment, but it is by its nature a perishable thing. For everything other than God is, when considered in and by itself, pure not-being; and if considered from the
"aspect" (wajh) that existence issues from the prime Reality (al-awwal al-haqq), it is regarded as existing, but not in itself, solely from the "aspect" which accompanies Him who gives it existence. The Divine aspect of a being is therefore the sole thing in existence. About the gnostics al-Ghazālī says that they are the people who need not await to grasp this point till the Last Day Judgment when there will be a Divine Proclamation: "To whom is the power this day? To God: the One, the Not-to-be-withstood" (al-Qur'an 40:16). Thus, al-Ghazālī points out the fact that a gnostic understands and apprehends the Divine secrets according to which in reality there is only one existent, one Being - the one Real (al-haqq). Al-Ghazālī's view about gnosis ('irfān) is broadly similar to that of al-Muhāsibī, who says about the gnostics, as al-Junayad reported to hear from him:

"They are those are worthy to apprehend the nature of Divine Unity, to understand that all is God and all is

33. Ibid., P. 59.
Al-Ghazālī, elucidating the advanced state of the gnostics, says that they step by step reach the state where they see the presence of one in the plurality. They are drowned in the absolute Unitude, and then their intelligences are of no use; nothing remains to them save God. Sometimes due to their over intoxication of Divine Wine of love, to their vision disappears their own intelligence also, so that some of them exclaims, "I am the one Real" (أنا الحق) and another pronounces "Glory be to Me! How great is my glory" (سيما لمنعم شافية) and another "Within this robe is nothing but God" (ما في الجبة إلا الله).

These are the words of the passionate lovers when they are in the state of intoxication and ecstasy. According

34. Margaret Smith, An Early Mystic of Baghdad, (London: The Sheldon Press, 1935), P. 226. We may also quote to Shahāb al-Dīn ‘Umar Suhrawardī’s view about the gnosis of God in this connection. He says that the gnosis of God signifies: "The recognising of the nature and the qualities of God in the form of detailed circumstances, of accidents, of calamities; after that it shall have become known that He is the True Existence and the Absolute Agent" Shahāb al-Dīn ‘Umar. Suhrawardī ʿAwārif al-Maʿārif, Eng. tr. by H.W. Clarke (Delhi: Taj Company, 1984), P. 98.

35. Al-Ḥallāj.

36. Abū Yazīd al-Bīṣṭāmī.
to al-Ghazālī, these mystic experiences should not be disclosed to others and must be kept secret. When the state of drunkenness is cured and they return again under the sway of intelligence, which is God's balance-scale upon the earth, they realize the real difference between the Creator and themselves, and know that they had not been in a state of actual identity with Divine Being but only something resembling or giving an illusion of Identity. In a certain state the Lover thinks that he is not separate from the Beloved, and at the height of his passion he utters:

\[\text{أنا صاحب وحى وحى صاحب وحى أنا} \]

"I am He Whom I love and He Whom I love is I"

Al-Ghazālī explains the cause of such happening with two examples: a man who has not seen a mirror in his life, when confronted suddenly by a mirror, looks into it and thinks that the form which he sees in the mirror is the form of the mirror itself, and "identical"

37. Mishkāt, P. 61.
with it, another might see wine in a glass, and think that wine is just the stain of the glass. This state prevails when one passes through the state of extinction \(_{\text{fana}} \) , of which the next state is extinction of extinction \(_{\text{fana al-fana}} \). At this stage the soul becomes extinct to itself, extinct to its own extinction; it becomes unconscious of itself and unconscious of its own unconsciousness. This state is termed, in the language of metaphor, "identity" \(_{\text{ittiḥād}} \), and in the language of reality unification \(_{\text{tawḥīd}} \). \(^{38}\)

The purpose of al-Ghazālī's elaboration of the state of gnosis is to bring to focus the point that the mystics are the persons who at a certain stage become capable of transcending the phenomenal veil which prevents most of the people to apprehend the Ultimate Light, the Real Existent, and grasp God as the only Light, only existence and that all other lights or existents, for they possess no status of reality in front of Him.

4. GOD'S RELATION TO OTHER "LIGHTS"

Throughout the first section of Mīkhāṭ, al-Ghazālī attempts to show that God's light is the Real Light or He Himself is the Light of the heavens and the earth, and

\(^{38}\) Loc.cit.
all other lights whether they are of the phenomenal world or of the spiritual world are "borrowed" lights and possess no independent status. God bestowed upon man two faculties the 'sight' i.e., the senses, and the 'insight' i.e. intelligence. With the employment of the 'sight' man can see all the visible lights and objects, and with the employment of insight man succeeds to infer the presence of God in everything, and due to the latter man has been regarded as God's vice-gerent (Khalīfa) on the earth. There is another type of men known as the gnostics of God (ṣārifūn) to whom God discloses His secrets, and in their spiritual journey, they reach such a state they see what is referred to in the following Qur'ānic verse:

"Whither so ever they turn themselves there is the Face (wajh) of God" (2:115). They are the privileged people who have entered into the Kingdom of one and Onliness. In the midst of plurality or diversity they see the Unity. So, the heaven and the earth, the relation between the Creator and the creation is manifest to their vision what others can only infer from God's works with the employment of their intelligencies. Everything appears in human sight

40. Mishkāt, P. 62.
with the help light i.e. the phenomenal light, so everything manifests to man's insight by means of God; for he is with everything every moment by Him does everything appear. Al-Ghazālī maintains that this is merely an analogy, in reality no light, no sub, can be analogous to God. For we can conceive the disappearance of the sun, and as assuming a veil in order that shadow may appear, while the Divine light which is the cause of all that appear and all that is existent, cannot be conceived as disappearing. According to al-Ghazālī, nature remains same and invariable to human sight because of the unity of its Creator. Al-Ghazālī elaborating the cause of the hiddeness of God's Light says:

"For the most manifest way to the knowledge of things is by their contraries; the thing that possesses no contrary and no opposite, its features being always exactly alike when you are looking at it, will very likely elude your notice altogether. In this case its obscureness results from its very obviousness. Then glory to Him who hides Himself from His own creation by His utter manifestness, and is veiled from their gaze through the very effulgence of His own light". 43

42. Ibid., P. 67.
43. Ibid., PP. 67-68.

In the previous chapter we have quoted some couplets from Rumi's Mathnawi where he uses almost the same language quoted above to refer to the hiddenness of God. What he says in a poetic form, perhaps, is borrowed from al-Ghazālī's Mishkat, Supra, P. 180
Al-Ghazālī says that this secret is not understandable for most of the people. Only a selected number of people can grasp the mysteries behind this. Al-Ghazālī closes the first section of Mishkāt saying: "To every science its own people; and each of them finds easy that for which he has been created apt."44

(D) THE SCIENCE OF SYMBOLISM AND THE LIGHT-VERSE

In the second part of Mishkāt al-Anwār al-Ghazālī introduces the science of symbolism elaborating the symbols and things symbolized, their mutual relationship and correspondence, and the way or method of interpreting symbols with certain illustrations. And then he explains the "five" grades of human soul. All these are, in actuality, the prolegomena to the exposition of the famous "Light-verse" of the Qur'ān, i.e. the symbols used in it Niche, Lamp, Glass, Tree, Oil and Fire.

44. Ibid., P. 68; Mishkāt al-Anwār (Arabic) ed. by Abū al-'Alā' Afifi, Cairo, 1964, P. 53
1. THE OUTWARD AND THE INWARD IN SYMBOLISM: TYPE AND ANTI-TYPE

Symbols used in religion and metaphysics are, of course like symbols of other disciplines, taken from the outward objects but the realities they refer to transcend the purview of space-time. Following the same method, when al-Ghazālī talks about the symbols, his only aim is to climb the realities, and, therefore, the ideas represented by them are of primary importance and the symbols themselves — the different terms — are secondary matter. Al-Ghazālī’s division of the world is well-known to the students of Muslim philosophy. The two worlds, spiritual (ruhānīyy) and material (jismānīyy), according to al-Ghazālī, may be called by different names from different viewpoints, but what they refer to are ultimately same; and those who want to proceed towards realities, the multiplicity of terms will not be puzzling to them.45

Al-Ghazālī relates the two worlds, and maintains that the sensual world, which is visible to human perception, is a point of ascending to the Invisible world (‘ālam al-ghayb), it is so called because it is invisible to the majority of human beings. It is possible to reach 

45. Mishkāt, P. 69.
upward; i.e. the world above, otherwise, human progress to the Presence Dominical (hadrah al-rabūbiyyah) and to attain the nearness to God, unless his feet are firmly settled at the very centre of the Fold of Divine Holiness (hāzirah al-guds). By the World of the "Divine Holiness" al-Ghazālī means the world that transcends the apprehension of senses and imagination. This is the world where if one succeeds to enter does not come out, nor can the stranger an enter into it. The human spirit endowed with the manifestation of this transcendence may be called "the Holy Valley" (al-wādī al-Muqaddas). Again this Fold (al-hāzirah) comprises lesser folds, some of which penetrate more deeply than the others into the ideas of Divine Holiness. By the term 'Fold', al-Ghazālī means all the gradations of lesser ones, and by it he wants to elaborate that arising from the visible world man reaches the world supernal, which may be termed as Pilgrim's progress to the "Straight way" (al-sīrat al-mustaqīm) that is also named in the Qur'ān as "the Faith" (al-dīn) and "the Mansions of Right Guidance" (manāzil al-hādī). Thus al-Ghazālī holds that both the worlds are interlinked or interconnected, and that one thing in this world may symbolize several things in the world of Realm supernal and vice versa.

46. Ibid., P. 70-
47. Loc.cit.
48. Ibid., PP. 70-71.
Al-Ghazālī's purpose here is not the classification of worlds, but implicitly he wants to refer to the different spiritual stages and grades of men showing how a man proceeds step by step towards God in his spiritual journey. He says that angels are the light substances of the World Supernal and various lights are effused upon the various mortal spirits from them. On this ground angels are called lords (arbāb), while God is Lord of lords (rabb al-arbāb). These lords, i.e., angels have different grades according to their possession of lights. Their visible symbols in the visible world may be the Sun, the moon and the stars. Al-Ghazālī referring to a pilgrim's rise to above world, says that the first stage of his journey may be corresponding to that of a star. He cites an example of this symbolism from the story of Abraham in the Qur'an, in which Abraham's rise from nature-worship to absolute monotheism has been depicted. Seeing a star, having no prior idea of God, Abraham thinks it is his Lord because it possesses such a light that the entire world beneath is illuminated through it. Then he proceeds a step further; he becomes aware of the light of the moon, and observes star disappears in its light. At this stage he considers the moon to be his Lord. Beholding the

49. 6: 75-79.
matchless light of the sun and the disappearance of the moon he becomes convinced that the sun, being the strongest light, would be his Lord. But the setting of the sun makes him wholly disillusioned about the imperfection of all these luminaries, and he concludes that the Creator of all these luminaries should be the true God. And then he utters:

"For me, I have set my face, firmly and truly, towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, and never shall I give partners to God".

It is thus that Abraham was elevated to his belief in uncompromising monotheism. The point of al-Ghazālī's citing this story in Mishkāt, as we have already indicated, is symbolic. With this he wants to explain to the spiritual progress of a man and the stages he passes through to

50. 'Abdullāh Yūsuf ʿAlī is of the opinion that from this story of Abraham in the Qurʾān one should not suppose that he literally worshipped stars or heavenly bodies. This is an allegory which shows the stages of Abraham's spiritual development. Yūsuf ʿAlī, Eng. tr. of the Holy Qurʾān, P. 309, note: 898

51. Mishkāt, PP. 71-72.
achieve the nearness of God, the gnosis of God etc. About God's relation to other things, al-Ghazâlî is of the view that God transcends all relations with the created beings. It has been explicitly indicated, he quotes, in the following verse of the Qur'ân:

"Say: He is God, the One and Only, God the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteith not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him ( S. 112 )"

Al-Ghazâlî maintains that the symbols and things symbolized are internally linked with each other. So, it is not easy to interpret any symbol from its outward appearance. In his view an exhaustive study of symbols, their interpretations, and also their enumerations is not possible. Al-Ghazâlî gives the accounts of some symbols as specimens, and then says that the spirit of a prophet is typified by a "lighted lamp", lit by means of Inspiration. In support of this view he quotes the verse of the Qur'ân:

We
have inspired thee with spirit from our command" (42:52). After this he proceeds to explain the symbol whose referent is the source that is kindled by "fire". Some people derive their knowledge from the prophets and live by a merely traditional acceptance (taqlīd) of what they are told, while others are guided by a gift of insight. The former, who blindly accept without investigation, may be symbolized by a fire brand, or a torch or a meteor; while the man of spiritual experience, who possesses something in some sort common with the prophets, is accordingly symbolized by the "warming of fire", for a man is not warmed by hearing about fire but by being close to it. Here al-Ghazālī wants to show a close link between the prophetic knowledge — the revelation from God — and the mystic experience (dhawq). The former is called wahy that comes through the mediation of an angel to a prophet and the latter is called Kashf (intuition) or Ilḥām (inspiration) which comes directly to a mystic's heart when it gets itself freed from all kinds of worldly

53. Ibid., PP. 74 - 75.
engagements.

Al-Ghazālī also asserts that a true mystic detaches himself from this world and has no interest in the rewards of the world to come. The symbol of this attitude, according to him, will be "doffing of his two sandals" by a pilgrim to Makkah, when he changes his worldly garments for the pilgrim's robe and faces towards the holy Ka'bah. Such type of attitude is very common to the ṣūfīs. They are interested in God, and not in this world or the world to come. Evidence of this attitude may be found also in the early mystics of Islam. Rabī'a al-ʿAdawīyyah, a famous Muslim woman mystic of the second century A.H., used to express this desire, an example of which may be seen in her following supplication:

O God, if I worship thee for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise, but if I worship Thee for thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty."56

54. This is one of the important aspects of al-Ghazālī's epistemology which I have elaborated with sufficient references to different works of al-Ghazālī in my M.Phil. dissertation entitled, "A Critical Study of al-Ghazālī's Epistemology", Department of Philosophy, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India, for which I was awarded the M.Phil degree in 1987, PP. 73-81.

55. Mishkāt, P. 75.

Al-Ghazālī does not deny the literal aspect of the story about Moses in the Qur'ān when he was asked by God to put off his shoes from his feet, but he says that the Divine command, "ما خَلِيلُ لَكُمْ " put off thy shoes" (20:12), has also a spiritual side. According to Al-Ghazālī Moses understood from this command, the doffing of the two worlds, and obeyed the command literally by putting off his two sandals, and spiritually by putting off the two worlds. Al-Ghazālī is in favour of such an approach which covers both the outward and inward aspects of religion, and in his view, he who joins the two together is perfect. Al-Ghazālī quotes a tradition of the Prophet(s) in this connection:

الْقُرْآنُ لَدَى الْعَالَمِينَ وَمُلَكِ (الْعَالَمِينَ)

"The Qur'ān has an outward and an inward, an ending and a beginning".

Coming back to the interpretation of "the putting off the shoes", al-Ghazālī says that the outward word awakens one to the inward signification, the putting off of the two worlds. The outward symbol is a real thing and its application to inward aspect is a real truth. Those who have grasped this are the souls who have attained the degree of the Transparent Glass (al-zujājah). The

imagination, which supplies, so to speak, the material from which the symbol is formed, is hard and gross; and it conceals secrets, that is why, it works as a veil between a man and the unseen lights. But, al-Ghazālī says, once cleansed and polished, it serves like a transparent glass; and no longer keeps out the light, but on the contrary becomes a light-conductor, not only that, it also saves that light from being put out by the gusts of wind. The gross lower world of imagination becomes to prophets of God like transparent glass and "a niche for lights", filtering clear the divine secrets; a stepping stone to the World Supernal. By this al-Ghazālī intends to highlight the point that the visible symbol is real, and that behind it lies a mystery. In a similar way he proceeds to expound the different symbols in the "light-verse", which was what inspired him to write the treatise, Mishkāt al-Anwār.

Al-Ghazālī says that a prophet due to his highly illuminated spirit may see things and happenings of the Invisible World which may appear to others in dream. In this context he refers to the Prophet(s) saying: "I saw ʾAbd al-Rahmān bin ʾAwf enter Paradise crowling".

59. Ibid., P. 79.
Al-Ghazālī says that the Prophet(s) saw ʿAbd al-Rahmān in this posture with his own eyes, not in a dream while asleep. His point is that the only effect of sleep in this and similar vision is to suppress the control of the senses over the soul, which is the inward Divine Light (al-nūr al-bātin al-Ilāhī), because senses preoccupy the soul with the affairs of the sensual world and turn man's face away from the world of the Invisible and of the Realm Supernal. The suppression of senses may result in the clarification, and prevailing of some of the lights prophetical, inasmuch as that the senses lose their control over a person. But a prophet does not sleep for coming out the grip of his senses. What he sees in waking others see in sleep. According to al-Ghazālī, both kinds of vision need interpretation. The proportion borne by dreams to the other characteristics of prophethood is as one to forty-six, while that borne by waking vision has a greater ratio - as one to three. According to him, the prophetic characteristics fall into three categories, and of these three one is waking vision.

60. Ibid., PP. 79-80.
2. FIVE GRADES OF HUMAN SOUL

Al-Ghazālī accepts gradation of human spirits and maintains that a clear idea of this will be helpful in the exposition of the symbolism employed in the "Light-verse". The first of these is the sensory spirit (al-ruḥ al-hassās). This receives information gathered by the senses; for it is the root and origin of the animal spirit (al-ruḥ al-haywāniyy), and constitutes the differentia of the animal genus. It is seen in the infant at breast.

The second is the imaginative spirit (al-ruḥ al-khayāliyy). This is the recorder of the information gathered by the senses. It keeps that information arranged properly and ready to hand so that it may be supplied to the intelligential spirit, when the information is called for. It is not possessed by an infant at the beginning of his evolution. This is why, an infant wants to get hold of a thing when he sees it, whereas he forgets it when it is out of his sight. No conflict of desire emerges in his soul until he becomes little elder when he begins to cry to have it, because at that stage the image of that thing remains with him, preserved in his imagination. It is
found in some animals but not in all animals. The moth, for example, does not possess this faculty, it is desirous to go to the sunlight, and thinks the flame as a window to the sunlight, it hurries on the flame, and injures itself. Yet it flies on into the dark, and comes back again, time after time. Had it possessed the memory spirit (al-rūh al-hāfiz), which retains the sensation of pain that is conveyed by the tactile sense, it would not have returned to the flame after once being hurt by it. On the contrary, the dog that has been beaten once runs away whenever it sees the stick again.

The third is the intelligential spirit (al-rūh al-‘aqliyy). This apprehends ideas beyond the reach of sense and imagination. This is the distinctive faculty of human being. It is not found in lower animals. The objects of its apprehension are axioms of necessary and universal application. As al-Ghazālī has pointed out in the first section of his Mishkāt, the light of intelligence is superior to that of the eye. The fourth one is the discursive spirit (al-rūh al-fikriyy) which takes the data provided to it by reason and combines them, arranges them as premises, and deduces from them the true conclusions.

62. Ibid., P. 81.
The fifth faculty is the transcendental prophetic spirit (al-rūh al-qudsiyy, al-nubawiyy) is the faculty bestowed upon prophets and some saints (awliyā). To this the unseen tables and statutes of the Law are revealed from the other world along with several sciences of the Realms Celestial and Terrestrial, pre-eminently related to the science of theology, the science of Deity, which the intellectual and discursive spirit cannot compass. It is this that is alluded to, according al-Ghazālī, in the Qur'ān in the verse:

And thus we have inspired thee with a spirit from Our command, thou didst not know what is the Book, nor what is Faith, but we have made that spirit a light wherewith we guide whom we will of our vassals. And thou, verily, dost guide into a straight way. (42:52).

63. Ibid., P. 82.
Al-Ghazālī maintains that it is not impossible that beyond reason there should be a further plane, on which such things may appear which do not appear on the plane of intelligence, just as it is possible that intelligence itself to be a plane above the discriminating faculty and senses. According to al-Ghazālī, saints have been bestowed upon with a specially large portion of prophetic spirit. Al-Ghazālī places the mystic experience above the empirical scientific knowledge.

All the above five human spirits, in the view of al-Ghazālī, are lights because through their agency every existing thing is manifest, including the objects of sense and imagination. Although it is true that the lower animals also perceive the said objects, mankind possesses a different, more refined and higher kind of spirit than other species. These have been endowed to man for a different, higher, and nobler end. In the case of the lower animals they are created as the instruments for acquiring food, and for subjecting them to mankind. But in mankind they are created to serve as an instrument to chase a noble and through the of the present world; to arrive at the fundamentals of

64. Ibid., P. 83.
the religious knowledge (al-ma'arif al-din'iyyah).

Al-Ghazālī’s point is that a man may perceive things of the visible world through his perceptual faculties, apprehend through his intelligence universal and absolute ideas and acquire immediate knowledge of the Ultimate truth through the higher spirits.

3. THE EXPOSITION OF THE SYMBOLISM OF THE "LIGHT-VERSE"

The exposition of the symbolism of the "Light-verse" is one of the two motives of al-Ghazālī’s writing the book, Mishkāt al-Anwār. In order to translate its symbolism al-Ghazālī performs an assiduous job; he explains and interprets many symbols used in the Qur'ān so that the real implications of its symbols may be divulged. Al-Ghazālī is of the view that there is a parallelism between these five classes of spirit and the five fold division of light-symbols, i.e., Niche, Glass, Lamp, Tree and Oil.

65. Ibid., P. 84; For a detailed account of al-Ghazalī's conception of the different faculties or spirits of human soul, the third volume of al-Ghazālī's magnum opus, Ihyā'Ulūm al-Dīn, may be referred to where he devotes a whole chapter to elaborate his conception of human soul, its different attributes and aspects and also its secrets and, its role in human knowledge, both exoteric and esoteric. Vol. iii Eng. tr. pp. 1-52.
1. Al-Ghazālī starts with the sensory spirit and says that its light comes through different organs, the eyes, ears nostrils etc. According to him, the most appropriate symbol for this in the world of experience, is the Niche (mishkāt) the place for a lamp in a wall. Al-Ghazālī perhaps finds some type of similitude of this spirit with the Niche because the light seen in the Niche, which it reflects throughout the room also comes to it through other means i.e. through the glass.

2. Al-Ghazālī sees three peculiarities in the imaginative spirit: first, it is of the stuff from this gross lower world for its objects, have definite and limited size, and this shapes and dimensions are definitely determined by the distances in relation to its subject; moreover, one among the characteristics of a gross substance, whereof corporeal attributes are predicated, is to be opaque to the light of intelligence, which transcends these categories of direction, quantity and distance. Secondly, if that substance is cleansed, refined, disciplined, and controlled, it attains a correspondence with and a similarity to the ideas of the intelligence; thirdly, the imagination at first is needed to control the intelligential knowledge, so that
knowledge be not disturbed, unsettled, and dissipated; and thus get out of hand. The images that the imagination supplies hold together the knowledge supplied by the intellect. In the phenomenal world, al-Ghazālī maintains, the only object in which all these three peculiar characteristics are found, in relation to physical light, is "Glass". For glass is also originally an opaque substance, but is being cleansed and refined till it becomes transparent to the light of a lamp, which it certainly transmits unaltered. The glass also protects the light from gusts of wind or violent jerking. So, according to al-Ghazālī, there is nothing to symbolize the imagination more appropriately than the glass.

3. With the help of the intelligent spirit the cognizance of Divine ideas takes place. Al-Ghazālī, in the first part of Mishkāt, shows the superiority of the intellect over the perceptual faculties. Because it can transcend the limitations of sense perception. It may be compared with lamp as it helps to understand the affairs of the Invisible World.

66. Ibid., PP. 84-85.
4. The distinctive feature of the discursive spirit is that, as al-Ghazālī has already indicated, it begins with one proposition, then it branches out into two, which in turn become four and so on, this process of logical division continues until it gives to numerous conclusions. Finally, it leads to conclusions which in their turn become the producer of like conclusions, these latter also continue to produce further conclusions in the same manner. This reality in the world of sense-perception is projected in al-Ghazālī's interpretation by the "Tree" that leads us to a further stages that is the fruit of discursive reason. It will naturally not be symbolized by trees like quince, apple, pomegranate, nor by any other tree whatsoever, except the "Olive. The quintessence of the fruit of the Olive is its oil by which lamps are fuelled, and the speciality of this, as against all other oils, is that it enhances the radiance. A tree possessing many fruits is named as blessed; and which bears absolutely infinite number of fruits should rightly be called a blessed tree (Shajarah mubārakah).

Lastly, if the ramifications of those pure intellectual propositions do not admit of relation to direction and distance, the antitypical tree may rightly be said to be "الشجاره العربية" "neither of the East nor of the West".
5. The transcendental prophetic spirit is also possessed by saints subject to their soul's luminosity and clearness. For the thought spirit (al-rūḥ al-mufakkrāh) is divided into that which is in need of instruction, advice and help from other, if the process of the acquisition of knowledge is to be continued; while a portion of it is so pure that, since it is self-luminous, it needs no supply from outside. Al-Ghazālī says that this point is symbolically made by the Qur'ānic words:

"Whose oil is well nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it"; for, he clarifies the point, there are saints whose light is so bright that it is "well nigh" independent of that which prophets supply. In the same way, there are prophets whose light is "well-nigh" independent of that which angels supply.

What al-Ghazālī says about the light of some saints may be understood as that though saints are to have acquaintance and also to follow the Laws revealed to the prophets, there is some knowledge, e.g. gnosis of God, that they acquire independently, i.e. directly from God; and with this, in a sense, they become self-luminous.

67. Ibid., P. 86
Al-Ghazālī's view about the prophets also falls in the same line. Revelation (wahy) comes to a prophet through the mediation of an angel but there are prophets who get illumination directly from God despite of the revelation. Al-Ghazālī maintains that there is a certain type of knowledge possessed by prophets that lie even beyond the reach of angels. In support of this contention, al-Ghazālī refers to the story of Adam and angels in the Qur'ān, saying that Adam succeeded to tell the names, whereas the angels failed to do that. 69

Al-Ghazālī, summing up his study of the symbolism of the "Light-verse", writes that the lights of human spirits are graded in various ranks in whose acquisition of knowledge sense comes first that provides the foundation and preparing ground for the Imagination; the role of the Intelligence and Discursive Reason comes to the fore thereafter. All this al-Ghazālī says, explains why the Glass is the protector of the Lamp's immanence, and the Niche is the place for the Glass. At the end Ghazālī says that existence of a graded succession of lights.

68. For a detailed account of knowledge of prophets and saints independent of revelation we may again refer to our M.Phil. dissertation, pp. 76-80.

explains the words of the Qur'an

"Light upon Light". By the "existence of graded succession of lights" al-Ghazālī most probably means a graded succession of knowledge in a man. A man being a descendant of Adam possesses the same form or image as was possessed by Adam. And Adam, according to a prophetic Tradition, was created in the image or form of the Merciful one. Al-Ghazālī interprets this Tradition as that 'God, out of His grace and mercy, gave to Adam a summary 'image' or 'form', embracing every genus and species in the whole world insomuch that it was as if Adam were all that was in the world, or were the summarized copy (microcosm) of the world.

He further says that without being blessed with Divine mercy or grace no son of Adam is able to know his sovereign Lord; for "إِذْ قَدْ خَلَقَ ابْنَاً لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّهُ لْنُفَسِّهٍ..." "Only he who knows himself knows his Lord". So a man is a microcosm - a type or form of macrocosm. In the light of the above discussion one may understand what does al-Ghazālī intend to say by the words 'light upon light'. For a better understanding of this phrase a passage

70. Mishkāt, P. 86
71. According to some other report the Tradition is:

72. Mishkāt, P. 76
73. Loc. Cit.
from al-Ghazālī's *Ihya* may be quoted here:

When the treader in the path of religion heard about this knowledge, he knew of his defects and was enraged at his passions and his mental fire broke out. Before this the light of his heart was dimly burning, even though it did not touch the fire. When knowledge was puffed up in his heart, his oil was enkindled. Then light upon light came to him. 75

4. **EPILOGUE**

Al-Ghazālī in the end of the second part of his *Mishkāt* says that the symbolism that he tries to expose in this section holds good only for the hearts of the true believers, or for prophets and saints, but not for the hearts of the unbelievers; because 'light' stands for right guidance alone. A man who has turned from the path of guidance is in falsehood; hence in darkness; rather, al-Ghazālī maintains, he is darker than darkness. Darkness in itself is neutral; it leads one neither one way nor the other; the intelligences of the unbelievers, their perceptions, understandings, are perverse, and they misguide each other mutually in their going astray. They

76. *Mishkāt*, p. 87.
are like men, whom the Qur'an describes that:

"in some fathomless sea, overwhelmed by billow topped by billow topped by cloud; darkness on darkness piled" (24:40).

Al-Ghazālī says this fathomless sea is the world, this world of mortal dangers, of evil chances, and of blinding trouble. The first 'billow' is the wave of lust that arouses in man the bestial nature which allures him to sensual pleasures and the satisfaction of worldly desires. They take rood and luxariate like cattle, and Hell will be their place of entertainment.

The second "billow" is the wave of ferocious attributes which lead the soul to wrath, enmity, hatred, prejudice, envy, boastfulness, ostentation, pride etc. These vices symbolize darkness, because wrath is the demon's intelligence, it may also be regarded as the uppermost billow (al-mawj al-a'ālā), anger is mostly stronger even than lust; when wrath emerges in a man it diverts the soul from lust and makes it oblivious of enjoyment, lust not even for a moment can stand up at the height of anger. Out of anger a man may commit many sins in a short period.
Finally "the cloud" (al-sahāb) means vicious beliefs (al-iʿtiqādāt al-Knablīthah), and corrupt imaginings (al-Khayālāt al-fāsidah) which become veils keeping away the unbelievers from the true faith, from knowledge of the Real (maʿrifat al-haqq) and from the illumination of the sunlight of the Qurʾān and human intelligence in the way as the cloud veils the shining of sunlight. These things, all of them being darknesses, may be called "darkness on darkness piled". It is due to these veils of darkness that the Divine message does not reach them; and they also fail to apprehend the miraculous quality of the Prophet(s), whereas a little reflection suffices to understand this. Al-Ghazālī is of the view that the following Qurʾānic verse refers to such persons:

"When a man putteth forth his hand, he can well-nigh it not."
(24:40)

Al-Ghazālī concludes that if all these lights have, as he has elaborated very clearly, their source and origin in the Great Primary (al-awwal) and the Real (al-haqq), every one professing unity (muwahḥid) may well believe that

"For any to whom God giveth not light, there is no light"
(24:40). 77

77. Ibid., P. 88.
Al-Ghazālī, in order to be more explicit, also interprets the "Darkness-verse" (24:40) of the Qur'ān in the end of this chapter, perhaps, to show its contrast to the "Light-verse" (24:35). Both the verses, in the Qur'ān have come in the same sūrah. Al-Ghazālī wants to clarify that the 'Light-verse' is a symbolic descriptions of rightly guided man, his different grades of knowledge and stages of development; on the other hand the 'Darkness-verse' symbolizes the ignorance of an unbeliever, his veiling phenomena and his final settlement in waywardness.
The exposition of the symbolism of the seventy thousand veils

Al-Ghazālī in the third and last section of his 
*Mishkāt* explains the following Tradition:

"God hath seventy thousand veils of Light and darkness: Were He to withdraw their curtain, then would the splendours of His Aspect surely consume everyone who apprehended Him with his sight". 78

In the light of the above Tradition, throughout the whole chapter 79 al-Ghazālī's attempt is to give the

78. Some read "seventy veils" some "seven hundred" but in another Tradition that we have quoted in the third Chapter referring to Gabriel also reads as "seventy thousand veils", *supra*, p. 70

79. In the Arabic text ed. by Abū al-ʿAlāʾ ʿAfīfī, Cairo, 1964 the third chapter ( al-fasal al-thalith ) of *Mishkāt al-Anwar* is simply the "Veils - Section", the same is case with its Bengali, Persian and Urdu translations whereas in Gairdner's English translation, Part III begins four pages earlier that includes the exposition of the symbolism of 'Light-verse' and Epilogue: the darkness-verse. We shall follow the chapterization found in the Arabic text. W.M. Watt in an article "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*?", published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of 1949, pp. 5-22, raises serious doubt about the authenticity of the third chapter, i.e., detailed interpretation of the Tradition about the Seventy ( or seventy thousand) veils, which for convenience he calls as the "veils-section", and after a long discussion comes to the conclusion that this part of al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt* is spurious. The heart of the difficulties, Watt says, is the apparent contradiction between many statements in the "veils-section" and al-Ghazālī's general position. Watt quotes a passage from this controversial section where the discussion is about the first group of those veiled by pure light, "have searched out and understood the true
description of different categories of people from whom God is veiled. God is in, by, and for Himself Glorious. Al-Ghazālī's argument here is that God being the Glorious must be veiled from the rest of the creation. We already

meaning of the Divine attributes, and have grasped that when the Divine attributes are named, Speech, Will Power, Knowledge and the rest, it is not according to our human mode of nomenclature; this has led them to avoid denoting Him by these attributes altogether, and to denote Him simply by a reference (bi'l-idāfah) to His creation (makhlūqat)"P.6, Mishkāt,P.95. In this passage, Watt thinks, the attributes of God have been denied. Another point of objection about the 'Veils-section' is that al-Ghazālī has not clearly mentioned about it in the preface of Mishkāt. Watt also maintains that this portion is incompatible with the rest of the Mishkāt. Afīfī in the introduction to the Arabic text of Mishkāt (PP.27-28) maintains that Prof. Watt's points do not conclusively justify his claim that the last portion of Mishkāt is not al-Ghazālī's. This portion is not spurious because here al-Ghazālī has not denied/ denounced is the way of attributing them to God. He does not deny that God is knower (al-imān), Powerful (qādir) Willer ( mArid), Speaker (mutakallim) and so on. What he denies is that these attributes be applied to God in the same way as they are applied to other being. He does not deny that God is Light, but what he denies is that this is to be applied to the sun, the moon, the stars. When al-Ghazālī talks about the transcendence of God, his motive is not merely to deny any partnership with God, but also to affirm Divine oneness. What Watt could not realize, 'Afīfī says, is that al-Ghazālī wants to resolve the problems of the attributes of God on Sufiistic ground after a detail study of scholaristics (mutakallimun) and philosophers (falasifah) view on this issue. 'Afīfī says that al-Ghazālī himself mentions in the preface of the Mishkāt that this book consists of three chapters. If the last one's authenticity is denied and the early two are accepted then where is the third chapter? The third chapter (veils-section), 'Afīfī says, is found in the manuscript of Mishkāt al-Anwar of Shahīd 'All in 509 A.H., four years after the death of al-Ghazālī. What is more, 'Afīfī argues, Ibn Tūfayl also quoted some long paragraph of this chapter in his treatise Hayy ibn Yaqzān without raising any doubt in its authenticity. 'Afīfī concludes that all these points he has mentioned conclusively prove that the third chapter (veils-section) is an authentic part of al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt and Watt's view in this regard is unacceptable.
have come across what al-Ghazālī says about the hiddenness of God in the first part of his *Mishkāt*. We may say that God is hidden from the creation by seventy thousand veils of Light and darkness and different categories of people can see beyond a few veils according to their knowledge or piety.

The distinctive feature of al-Ghazālī's theosophy is that it at a time covers both exoteric and esoteric aspects. Here, in its exoteric sense, God's hiddenness is due to all pervasiveness of His light, which remains unperceived by most of the people. In the esoteric sense, God's hiddenness means God is hidden and veiled from the spiritual or inner apprehension of man. Al-Ghazālī makes three broad divisions of men according to their veils - the veils of pure darkness, darkness mixed with light, and pure light. There are very numerous subdivisions of these three which are innumerable. Al-Ghazālī maintains that the number of veils mentioned in the Tradition in this connection is, perhaps, to refer to the indefinite numbers.

80. Supra, P. 247
1. **THOSE VEILED BY PURE DARKNESS:**

The first division of the above mentioned three broad divisions comprises those who are veiled by pure darkness (mahd. al-zulmah). The atheists fall in this group, who do not believe in God and the Day of Judgment. Since they are not the believers in the world hereafter, they are after this world only. They fall into various subdivisions.

Firstly, there are those who desire to discover the cause of this world, and regards the "nature" as its cause. According to al-Ghazālī, nature is an attribute which inheres in material substances, and is immanent in them. But it in itself is a dark thing because it has no knowledge; nor perception and self-consciousness nor consciousness, nor light is perceived by it through the medium of physical light. Naturalists are considered by al-Ghazālī to be veiled by pure darkness, perhaps, because of their inability to see the real cause of the world, i.e., God. They being the naturalists are also, therefore, materialists in the ontological sense. Beyond the material substances which are the components of nature, they fail to apprehend the role of any Supernatural Power which brought the universe into being.

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Secondly, there is a group of people who are preoccupied with their self and do not think about the world and the cause of its creation. The ultimate end to them is the fulfilment of the lusts of their selves. The life they lead is that of the beasts roaming free in a jungle. The veil that protects the penetration of Divine light in them is the veil of self-centred ego or darkness of lust. Al-Ghazālī maintains that slavery to self-impulse or self-love is the most acute darkness. He quotes a Qur'ānic verse referring to these people:

"Has thou seen the man who makes self impulse his God"? (25:43)

The following Tradition of the Prophet(s) also attests al-Ghazālī's view on the above issue:

"Self-impulse is the most hatable of the gods worshipped instead of God". The people of this group may be further subdivided. One class among them thinks that chief end of this world is to satisfy one's wants, lusts, and animal instincts, whether connected with sex, or food, or drink, or other urges. They, therefore, are according to al-Ghazālī, the creatures of pleasure;
pleasure is for them everything and their god, no darkness can be more intense than self-love. Such men, al-Ghazālī says, should be placed in the lowest category of human beings as they are veiled by darkness unadul-83 terated. According to another class, man's chief end is conquest and domination, so, they find satisfaction in the taking of prisoners, and killing people; such a ferocious passion to dominate others is found, according to al-Ghazālī, among the nomadic Arabs (al-arab), some of the kurds and many other fools among men. Their veil is the dark veil of attributes of ferocity, because they are subjected to these urges. The chief end to a third class is to become rich by owning a vast property. In their consideration wealth is an instrument through which man can meet his every desire. Their concern is, therefore, hoarding and multiplication of riches—the multiplication of property, real estate, personal estate, thoroughbreds, flocks, herds, fields and valuable things. Their aim is always here and there, are not ever ready to spend some part of the wealth they earn for their own comfort. The Prophetic Tradition "Poor wretch, the slave of money! Poor wretch, the slave of gold," refers, al-84 Ghazālī holds, to this type of people. Their allurment

83. Ibid., pp. 89-90
84. Ibid., p. 90.
of wealth is regarded by al-Ghazālī as a veil, as it keeps them isolated from all noble ends of human life. What al-Ghazālī says about these people seems to be in conformity with the spirit of Islam with regard to wealth. Islam's stand on this issue is very clear, it discourages rather hates the hoarding of wealth by a few people, exploiting the poor or denying the others' right to them. Al-Ghazālī's description of this moral vice in Kimyā-e-Sādat also indicates what a great evil he considers hoarding and miserliness.

According to al-Ghazālī, those persons are also veiled by pure darkness who run after their personal reputations and suppose that supreme felicity lies making one's name known in the society, in the enhancement of the number of followers and influence over others. He places them with the people veiled by pure darkness, due to their constant involvement in publicising their names they become forgetful of God.

There are innumerable types of men who are veiled by pure darkness; al-Ghazālī elaborated the characteristics of some of them. Pure darkness symbolizes a number of things, e.g. atheism, self indulgence, greed for wealth, miserliness, eagerness for reputations and a number of base and lower characteristics due to which the Divine light does not enter into human souls.

85. Ibid., PP.90-91
2. THOSE VEILED BY MIXED LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Al-Ghazālī introduces the concept of light mixed with darkness, and places veiled by it in the second grade. They are in a higher rank as compared to the men of the first grade. As their veil is mixed with light and darkness, they are capable of arriving at right faith. Al-Ghazālī maintains that this group consists of three main kinds: firstly, those whose darkness has its origin in the Senses; secondly, those whose darkness lies in imagination; thirdly, those whose Intelligence is darkened by false logic.

First, there are some people in whom the role of senses is dominant, yet they are different from the people of the first grade. As they are not totally involved in the self-absorption which is the characteristics of all who fall in the first broad group, they deify something outside the self, and have some yearning for the knowledge of Creator. According to al-Ghazālī, the first grade of these consists of the idol-worshippers (‘abdah al-awthān), and the last grade consists of the dualists (al-thañwiyyah): between these two there many grades.

The first, the idolaters, are aware that they have a deity whom they must prefer to their dark selves.
It is also their belief that their deity is mightier than any thing else. But they are veiled by the senses in such a way that they fail to transcend the World of sense. They make images and figures with precious minerals, Gold, silver, gems etc. and worship these as their gods. Such persons are veiled by Divine Majesty and Beauty, two attributes of God and His light. As they are blocked by the senses, they ascribe these Divine attributes to the sense-perceived bodies. And the world of sense-perception is, which al-Ghazālī discussed in the first section of Mishkāt, darkness in relation to the World Supernal.

The remotest Turkish tribes have been placed by al-Ghazālī in the second class who do not have any organized community, and no definite religious faith. They believe that they have a deity, and that that deity is some particularly beautiful object. When they see something or being of exceptional beauty, such as a man or a tree, or a horse, they worship it and call it their God. These people are veiled by the light of Beauty mixed with the darkness of the senses. Their stage is a step higher than the Idol-worshippers, as they have, to some extent, penetrated into the Realm of Light in their quest for truth. Hence, they worship the beauty
in the absolute - not in the individual - and the
beauty they worship is of Nature's handiwork and not
of their own making.

The third class consists according to al-Ghazālī
of the fire worshippers, for they think their deity must
be in its essence Light, glorious in the express image
and majestic in Himself terrible in His presence, intolerant to approach and yet it must be likewise perceptible.
For the imperceptible, in their opinion, is meaningless.
They find in Fire all these attributes. Such people
are veiled by the light of Dominion and Glory, both of
which are, indeed, amongst the attributes of the Lights
of God.

The fourth class is of the view that fire cannot
be regarded as divinity, for it is under human control
for its kindling and quenching. In their view that thing
can only hold the status of Divinity which is not under
human control, only that which possesses the attributes
of Dominion and Glory and has the capacity to keep human
being under its absolute sway, and moreover is very high
and lofty. Astrology as the science gets hold of this
folk, who attribute to each star its special influence.

86. Ibid., P. 92.
Some worship Cynosura and others Jupiter, and others some other heavenly body. These people are then veiled by Light, the Light of Sublime, the Luminious, the Potent, which are also three forms of the Light of God.

The fifth class of the people also hold the idea of the fourth group, but maintain that among the light-giving substances the greatest status is held by the sun, so they worship the sun. Such type of people are veiled by the Light of Greatness, in addition to the former lights but their vision is still blended with the darkness of the senses.

The sixth class of the kind of the second group advances a step higher and holds that the Sun has no monopoly of light, other bodies are also possessors of lights. So, such a being can only be regarded as deity who has no partner in luminosity. Hence, they worship the Absolute Light which is the source and root of all other lights, and think that it is the Lord of the whole universe, and that all good things are attributable to it. They also see the presence of evils in the world, and are not ready to link them with their deity. Having faith in a deity devoid of evil, they conceive a struggle
between him and the Darkness, and these two are called, according to al-Ghazālī, Yazdān and Ahrīman. This faith is held by the sect of the Dualists viz., the zoroastrians.

So far al-Ghazālī's attempt was to give a brief account of the different classes that fall in the first division of the second group and not to give an exhaustive list of all the numerous classes belonging to this. With this al-Ghazālī tries to show how the senses act in the form of veils preventing the penetration of pure Divine light, the Light of faith in one and Only God. Al-Ghazālī in the first part of Mishkāt gives more weightage to human intelligence than to the perceptual faculties, and says that intelligence can more properly be called 'light' in comparison to the senses. In the above classes a little bit employment of the faculty of intelligence is seen, yet it has remained under the sway of senses. And that is why, the people of all the classes of this division cannot get rid of the veil of darkness.

The Second grade consists of those veiled by some light mixed with the darkness of the Imagination. Al-Ghazālī places them a rank higher than those in the First grade whose light is mixed with the darkness of the senses. They have got out of the sway of the

87. Ibid., P. 94.
senses as they assert the existence of something beyond the senses, but are unable to exceed the purview of the imagination and so worship a Being who is imagined as actually sitting on a throne. Al-Ghazālī places the corporealis or anthropomorphizts (al-mujassamah) in the lowest grade of these, and all the various Karāmiyyah. The highest in degree, according to him, are those who do not relate any corporeality to God an all His accidentia, except one - "direction", and that direction is upwards, for, they argue, as al-Ghāzālī reports, that which is not referable to any direction, and cannot be characterized as either within or without the world, does not exist at all, since it cannot be imagined by the imagination. According to al-Ghazālī, these people fail to apprehend that the very first degree of intelligibilia (ma'qūlāt) takes man clean beyond all reference whatsoever to direction and dimension.88 So, due to the veil of imagination the true nature of Divinity remains unknown to them.

The people of third category are veiled by Divine Light, mixed with the darkness of false syllogisms of the intelligence (muqāyisāt 'aqliyyah fāsidah), and their object of worship is such a deity that "Hears, Sees, and has knowledge, Power, Will, Life", and transcends all 88. Ibid., P. 94.
directions, including the direction upwards. Their conception is, as al-Ghazālī says that all these attributes are relative. Some of them conclude that God's "Speech is with sounds and letters like that of a man, while others, who are more advanced amongst them, say that it is like the thought-speech of men, both "soundless and letterless". But when they are asked to show that "hearing, sight, life", etc. are really in God, they fall back on what is essentially anthropomorphism, though it has been repudiated by them formally. Their problem is the problem of attribution of God and they fail to understand what the attribution of these ideas to God really signifies.

These people are, in the opinion of al-Ghazālī, veiled by several of the divine Lights, mixed with the false syllogisms of the intelligence. All the various classes of second division are veiled by mixed light and darkness. Though all of them have been placed by al-Ghazālī in one broad group, they have considerable differences among them regarding their faith, and the status, they possess in the eye of religion.

89. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
3. THOSE VEILED BY PURE LIGHT

The third division consists of those who are veiled by pure light (mahd al-anwar) and they, according to al-Ghazālī, fall into several classes. His main purpose is not here to enumerate all of them. He divides this group into three classes, so that one may have a general idea of the characteristics of this group. As for the first class, al-Ghazālī says that they are the people who, with their research, have deduced the true meaning of the Divine Attributes, and have grasped that the names of these attributes such as Speech, Will, Power, Knowledge, and the rest, are not symmetrical with the human mode of nomenclature. This also led them to avoid denoting Him with these attributes altogether, but to denote Him simply with reference to His creation. As it is seen in the story of Moses and Pharaoh, when the latter asked about the Lord of the universe, Moses replied "The Lord, whose Holiness transcends even the ideas of these attributes, He, the Mover and controller of the Heavens". Al-Ghazālī places them in the first group of those who are veiled by pure light perhaps because they with the employment of their intelligence have succeeded to arrive at some true conclusions about God. Yet they are veiled because all the Divine mysteries, i.e., the

90. Ibid., p.95; Cf. al-Qur'an 26: 23-24.
facts and realities, have yet not been disclosed to them.

Those who fall in the second class of this group possess, as al-Ghazālī maintains, a more higher status in their grasp of the realities of the World Supernal than the first one. It appears to them that the Heavens are a plurality, and that another being moves each of the Heavens, called an angel; these are many in number. And their relation to the other Lights Divine is as the relation of the stars to all other visible lights. These people then realize that these Heavens are enveloped by another, by whose motion all the rest revolve once in twenty-four hours, and that finally the Lord is He who communicates motion to this outermost sphere, which encloses all the rest, on that ground they conclude that plurality must be denied of Him. The possible cause of al-Ghazālī's placement of this class to a stage higher than the former is that they have a better realization of God's administration throughout the heavens and the earth than the first group. They, the first group, understood that God is the Mover and the Orderer of the Heavens and the earth, but it is not clear to them how God does move and keep in order the

91. Loc.cit.
heavens and the earth which, as we have seen, has
been divulged to the second group. So, better
knowledge about God's administrations throughout the
heavens and the earth is revealed to them.

The third group among these people veiled by
light occupies a higher rank than the second. They
believe that the direct communication of motion to the
celestial bodies must be an act of service to the Lord
of the Universe, an act of worship and obedience to Him,
rendered by one of His servants, an angel, whose relation
to the pure Light Divine (al-anwar al-ilahiyyah) is
in the relation of Moon to the other visible lights.
And they asserted that the Lord is the Obeyed-One of
this (angelic) Movement, and that the Almighty must
be considered the universal Movement indirectly and by
way of command only, but not directly by way of act. 92
Those who belong to this class possess the highest rank
in al-Ghazali's hierarchy of the classes veiled by the
pure light, perhaps because they have succeeded to
acquire the knowledge of the Divine command, and how it
is carried out by other agent and how it is related to
God the ultimate Light. As many mysteries are yet

92. Mishkat al-Anwar (Arabic) ed. by ‘Afifi, P. 74

Cf. Mishkat Eng. tr. 96.
unrevealed to them, they are still to be considered in veil. But they are not veiled by pure darkness as seen in the first division, nor are they veiled by mixed light and darkness - the feature of the second division; they are veiled by lights without admixture of darkness.

4. THE ATTAINERS

Al-Ghazālī at the end of his Mishkāt says that the Attainers (al-wāsilūn) comprise a fourth grade, to whom in turn it has become clear that this Obeyed-One (al-muṭāf), if identified with God, would have been given attributives negative of His pure Unity (al-wahdā-niyyah al-mahdah) and perfection (al-Kamāl al-bālīgh). Al-Ghazālī does not intend to disclose more on this issue, for he says that on account of a mystery it is not in the scope of this book to reveal.

Al-Ghazālī says that the Attainers also understand that the relation of this 'Obeyed-One' to The Real Existence is like the relation of the Sun to the Essential

93. Mishkāt, P. 96
94. Loc.cit; Mishkāt (Arabic), P. 74
Light'; and so, they turn their faces from him
who moves the heavens and him who issued the command
(amara) for their moving, and attained unto an Existent
who transcends all that is comprehensible by human
sight or human Insight. Al-Ghazālī further adds that
they found It transcendent of and separate from

95. Mishkāt Eng. tr. P. 96, Mishkāt (Arabic), P. 74

"نسبه هذا المطلع نسبةٌ التُّهْسِي بُ في الابْنَار" 

The 'Obeyed-One'- al-Mutā' of al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt
has still remained mysterious. There have been long
discussions and controversies over this issue
available. And it is not possible to say what it
actually refers to as al-Ghazālī himself has kept
it mysterious. Ibn Rushd, al-Ghazālī's arch critic,
accuses al-Ghazālī as he sees an identity between
his al-Mutā' and al-Ma'ālul al-Awwal, the First caused,
in the emanational scheme of the neo-Platonizing
philosophers of Islam, with al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā at
their head. (Ibn Rushd, al-Kashf 'an Manāhlī al-Adlā,
ed., Muller, P. 21). Ibn Tufail also refers to this
problem without giving his interpretation in Hayy ibn
Yaqẓān - PP. 13-15. M. Louis Massignon, the famous,
French Orientalist, identifies al-Mutā' with the Qutb
("Axis") or some other Supreme Adept. (Massignon,
The Passion of al-Hallāj, Eng. tr. from French by Herbert
R.A. Nicholson in his the Idea of Personality in Sufism,
PP. 44-47 takes up the problem of al-Mutā' and says
that it cannot be the Qutb, the head of Sūfī hierarchy
because the Šīfī Qutb doctrine was probably derived
from the Ismā'īlī ʿImām doctrine, which al-Ghazālī
always opposed and rejected. In this matter, according
to the opinion of Nicholson, al-Ghazālī was in accord
with the later mystical speculations, and that the
Mutā' represents the archetypal Spirit of Muhammad,
the Heavenly Man created in the image of God
and regarded as a cosmic power on whom depends the
order and preservation of the universe. Nicholson
Contd.
every characterization. What he wants to say by adding this qualification is that the attainers at that stage succeed to realize the Greatness of God who is beyond the reach of human sight and insight.

alludes to a Qur'anic verse, 17:87, the spirit (al-rūḥ) belongs to the amr of God, and also refers to Jīlī, who says that one of the names of the Divine Spirit, the Spirit of which Muhammad is the perfect manifestation, Amr Allāh i.e. the "Command" of God, the Logos. Nicholson says that al-Ghazālī may have borrowed the ṭūṭā from a Qur'anic Text 3:29, of great importance for the development Muhammedan Logos doctrine—"say: if ye love Allāh and the Apostle". Nicholson argues that the word Muṭā is the participle of the same verb of which atī is the imperative. The Divine order to obey Muhammad, according to Nicholson, implies that, for every good Muslim Muhammad is al-Muṭā "the Obeyed One". W.H.T. Gairdner in an article "Al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt al-Anwar and Ghazālī Problem", Der Islam (1914) pp. 121-153 and also in the Introduction to his translation of al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt very elaborately discusses the problem of al-Muṭā. Gairdner maintains that the al-Muṭā is the spirit of God. The transcendental spirit of prophecy, the Divine word of command; he is not a Qūtb or any Adept, he is not Muhammad nor the archetypal spirit of Muhammad. ʿAflī in the "Introduction" of Mishkāt (Arabic) pp 2-24 says that al-Muṭā in reality is the Divine command (al-amr al-ilāhiy). He says that it is not an angel among the angels, nor the First Intelligence (al-aql al-awwal), which is a neo-Platonist concept. ʿAflī says that according to al-Ghazālī al-ṭūṭā possesses a quality that is contrary to pure oneness (al-wahdāniyyah al-mahdādah) because the Divine command is the source of many things in the existence; and pure oneness cannot be more than one. He says that al-Ghazālī's concept of al-Muṭā may be an extension of the Ashā'irīyyah view of Divine word (al-Kalām Allāh). ʿAflī does not agree with the interpretation of Nicholson, who sees the possible identity of al-Muṭā with the reality of Muḥammed(s) (al-haqīqah al-muhammadīyyah) or

Contd.
They, al-Ghazālī says, are also divided into several classes. According to one class the content of the perceptible is consumed away—consumed, obliterated and annihilated; still the soul itself remains contemplating the absolute Beauty and Holiness, and contemplating itself in its beauty, which is bestowed upon it due to its attainment to the Presence Divine (al-ḥādirah al-ilāhiyyah). In them, then, the seen objects are obliterated, but not the seer—the seeing soul.

The spirit of Muḥammad (al-ruḥ al-Muḥammadī). He says that the verses Nicholson quoted in support of his contention are actually come to the Qur'ān in the religious sense not in the philosophical sense. Affī concludes that by al-Muṭaʿ al-Ghazālī simply means the Divine command. We think problem of al-Muṭaʿ of al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt cannot be oversimplified. We have already said that al-Ghazālī himself kept it mysterious. So, nothing can be said about it with accuracy.

96. Mishkāt (Arabic) P. 75
Some surpass this stage, among whom are the Few of the Few; whom the splendours of the countenance sublime consume, and the majesty of Divine Glory (sultan al-ajlāl); so that they themselves are blotted out and annihilated. Then, al-Ghazālī says, there is no space left for self contemplation, because, at that stage, they have no longer anything to do with the self: "Nothing remains any more save the one, the Real", and the import of the Divine word, "all perishes save His countenance", becomes the experience of the soul at this stage. Al-Ghazālī in the first chapter of the Mishkāt has made reference to this class of attainers, and explained in what sense they termed this as the state of "Identity" (ittihād) and how they conceived the same. This stage is achieved when

97. Loc.cit.

98. Mishkāt, Eng. tr. PP. 59-61. This the state of the passionate lovers of God. Being drunk with the Divine Love, they do not see the presence of anything, not even themselves. Man's love for God has been highly esteemed by al-Ghazālī in his other works also. He devoted a whole chapter of Ḥyā'ā (Eng.tr.Vol.IV, PP.297-388) on the love and attachment of God which is one of the largest chapters of it. About love he says: '... know O dear readers that love of God is the last stage and the highest in rank. There is no higher stage after acquisition of love of God. Before it, there are stages of repentance, patience and renunciation. These are preliminaries to love"(P.297). Degrees of love, determine individuals' nearness to God. The same is the case with Ma'rifat. There is no limit in the sea of Contd.
man's love for God reaches the peak. In this stage, metaphorically, lover and Beloved become one; Veils or curtains which keep Him in accessible or unapproachable, are stripped off.

Some of the attainers of the ultimate degree of nearness to God, al-Ghazālī says do not, in their upward progress (taraqqī) and Ascent (‘urūj), climb step by step neither does their ascension cost them any length of time; but with their first flight they attain to the knowledge of the Holiness (ma‘rifah al-quds), and that "His Transcendent" sovereignty transcends everything. What they overcome at the very first stage, the rest overcome that at the very last. The onset of God's epiphany comes upon them with one rush, so that all that is apprehensible by the sense of Sight or by the insight of Intelligence is by "The splendours of His countenance utterly consumed". It may be that the first was the way of the Friend (al-Khalīl), i.e. Abraham, while the latter was the way of the Beloved (al-Habīb), i.e.
Mohammad, (peace of God be upon him). Al-Ghazâlî says that God alone knows the mysteries of their progress and of their stations on the way of Light.

From al-Ghazâlî's reference to the Prophet Abraham and the Prophet Muhammad (peace of God be upon them) in relation to the Divine knowledge, it becomes evident that in his theosophy prophets possess higher rank, in their knowledge of God and nearness to Him, much higher than that a mystic or saint of the highest order. While al-Ghazâlî referred to Abraham's ascension to Divine knowledge, he had, most probably, the following verse of the Qur'ân in mind:

So also did We show Abraham the power and the laws of the heavens and the earth, that he might have certitude (6:75).

What he says about the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad(s) is perhaps with reference to Mi'râj. Al-Ghazâlî in the above passage avoided to pass any judgment about the spiritual progress and the stations on the way of Light with regards Abraham and Muhammad(s). But in some other
passages of the *Mishkāt*, al-Ghazālī, to some extent, explicitly shows the superiority of the Prophet(s) over all other prophets. In the first chapter of this treatise, the Quranic phrase *siraj: munīra*\textsuperscript{101} (Lamp Illuminant), is applied to the Prophet(s) as well as to the Transcendental Prophetic spirit, from which the inspirations of the prophets come, whereas he considers all the prophets and the learneds to be *suruj* (lamps). Al-Ghazālī, while asking the blessings of God for the Prophet(s) in the preface of the *Mishkāt*, regards him\textsuperscript{102} (the Prophet) as the Light of Lights.

In his *Kīmyā-ye Sa'ādat*, while discussing the different miraculous powers of the souls and their acquisition of "knowledge from the high" (*ilm-e ladunī*), al-Ghazālī also shows that the Prophet(s) holds a position at the peak, over and above all the prophets and saints, because he received this knowledge from God in its entirety. He also says that while God intended to disclose the news of his prophethood to all human beings, He

\textsuperscript{101} 33:46, in the Qur'an it is used for the Prophet(s)
\textsuperscript{102} *Mishkāt* Eng. tr. P. 55, *Mishkāt* (Arabic ), P. 44
\textsuperscript{103} *Mishkāt* (Arabic ), P. 35
bestowed some of its smell upon all the human souls, so that they might follow his footstep, and thereby become happy.

Al-Ghazālī's concluding remark about the veils is that if all the stations and the account of the veiled classes, he has given, are fully classified and the veils of the pilgrims of this path (al-Sālikīn) are fully determined the number of classes is งเวณต้ thousand. If one looks carefully, he claims, he will see no one falls outside these divisions. At the end Al-Ghazālī explains the difficulty of plunging into Divine mysteries and discovery of lights supernal which are veiled.

104. Kimyā-ye Sa'ādat (Persian), N.P. Mujtabā Muhammad 'Ali, 1277 A.H. P. 16

105. Mishkāt, PP. 97-98
From the study of this mystical opuscule, 
Mishkāt al-Anwār, the first point we learn is that 
God is the Ultimate Light, nothing is light in front 
of Him; He is the only existence, only Truth in the 
Real sense. He also shows how He is veiled from human 
sight and insight. We see in this work the best expo­ 
sition of the symbolism of the light-verse of the Qur'ān, 
and the 'veils - Tradition '. It is basically a book 
of mysticism, dealing with different stages and stations 
of the seekers of God. But side by side it deals with 
the problems of epistemology with reference to different 
Sources, categories and degrees of human knowledge. Some 
Cosmological issues are also discussed in this book.

Mishkāt had a great impact on the writings of the 
later mystics of Islam, particularly those which dealt 
with the problem of Light and darkness. We see its 
influence on Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl, Ibn 'Arabī, Rūmī and 
Khwājah Mīr Dard. What they say about the problem of 
light in their works is either explicitly or implicitly 
found in the Mishkāt. Some apparent inconsistencies 
found in this work are, perhaps, due to the nature of 
the problems dealt with, and its style also.