

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

[The Nur-i-Muhammad](#)

Prophet Muhammad (sal) as the Manifestation of the Pre-Eternal Light

Dinner blessing: Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm. Thank You, Allah, for the orange.

Thank you Allah for the joys, the efforts, for all the kindness, efforts, and sacrifices people make for one another, for our family, and for one another in this community.

We ask Allah for special blessings upon Fareeda's brother-in-law, Jerry, who is transitioning, hopefully peacefully, *inshā'a-Llāh*. We ask You for strength for his family. We thank You for the healing energy You send to us in our community. As we enter the summer, we ask You, Allah, to create peace in the hearts of the people here and inspiration. Let us not forget our purpose in giving of ourselves to make others' lives better, to remember who we are and what the foundation of our life is. Amin.

Suhbat: Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm. Every time we have *dhikr* aloud, we recite Nur-i-Muhammad (sal). So I'd like to talk about the Nur-i-Muhammad. I think certainly you know, it was reported, that Muslims say, "*Lā ilāha illa-Llāh*" to accept Islam. But many people perhaps get confused about the Nur-i-Muhammad. We have to keep our mind in the right place to understand that there are relative levels of purity and refinement in this world, in the human beings in this room, things that are shown and said, and things that are thought and unsaid. I don't want to go into that, because I don't want to ruin my evening. Then sometimes, what should be unsaid crosses the barrier into what's spoken.

It's very important, indeed critical, to understand in Islam the role of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) as Nur-i-Muhammad, or the concept and principle of the Muhammadiyya light. It's confusing to many people who think about it. There's a

kind of mystical veil over this concept. I would say that very few understand the reality of the Nur-i-Muhammad, and even of those who understand it on some level, very few of them understand the mystical dynamic of it. Literally, it means the Light of Muhammad as the prophetic light, the first light, or the initiating light, the *kalam qadim*. The references to it and the focus on it began about 300 years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) by people like Tustari and Hallaj. It was made much more clear by Shaykh al Akbar, Ibn Araby.

If we try to understand it, we will understand better the Prophet (sal) in Islam, and the revelation in general that comes through Islam. If we begin to understand its meaning, we can begin to understand why the Prophet Muhammad (sal) is the last of the prophets, and the bridge between all the previous traditions. Also it will mean that we will understand better why there are differences in understandings between Muslims themselves. So we have to look at it in a pretty broad way, and to understand the essential meaning as well as the intellectual meaning. We have to begin with at least the knowledge that the Essence/*Dhat* of Allah Swt is really impossible to know by logical proof or defining it.

It says in Qur'an, "**There is nothing like Him.**" It also says in Surah al-Imran, "**Allah cautions you about Himself.**" There are things that are not knowable. I'm sure each one of us has had moments in our lives that we are not sure about something. No matter what proofs, demonstration, metaphors, or examples are put forward, we still are not sure. So we can't treat religion or Islam or Sufism in a way that says, "If we don't understand it totally, we can't really practice it." If that was the truth, you wouldn't go out of your house. You wouldn't make one decision. When Allah Swt wanted to create the world, He began it by certain limitations of His Own Knowledge of His Own Self. Through His Intention and Will, *Irada*, He brought

it about. **“Our only word to a thing when We desire it is to say, ‘*kun faya kun*, be and it became.’”**

The first expression of this divine word was the creation or manifesting of the *tajalliyat-e-bāri ta’la*, the lucent manifestation of Allah, which is referred to as the ‘*kalama qadim*,’ the ‘ancient word,’ the first word, the first Divine Name, the unique *dhat* / essence, which was an emanation of pure, previously uncreated light. Allah says in Qur’an, **“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth.”** This Light / *Nur* of Allah was in a sense the expression, the expiration, the breathing out. This breath of Allah Swt – *nafas* – the first exhalation was of light. I’m not going to go through it with you, but if you want to take the Big Bang theory and deal with this, you can. I think you will find very few astronomers who will not say that we are not dealing in light. We measure distance by speed of light.

This Light of Allah / Nur-i-Allah, which was the breath of Allah Swt, is called *Nafs al Rahman*, the Breath of the All Merciful. This light has a characteristic to it, a foundational principle. I spoke a few weeks ago on the first Name of Allah. We say *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Raḥmāni-r-Raḥīm* – in the name of mercy and compassion. This breath was the inception of what we know as existence. It was the first expression of Allah Swt. It contained the totality of the universe in its potentiality, in all of its forms, and in all of His names and characteristics, just like the Big Bang. This exhalation is an expression of Allah Swt. When you express something, you state it. “I don’t like that expression on your face,” you are saying something visually. We say, “Take that expression off your face.” It has two qualities: one that is articulated, and one that is manifest in some kind of a visual form.

This Divine emanation coming from the All Merciful begins the expression of creation and any other and all other planes of creation. It is dynamic, and it is the

animating power that gives light and sustenance, and sustains every form, every reality, and every manifestation, every construct, animate or inanimate, every stone, every rock, every mineral, every living thing, and every aggregation of living things, every galaxy and every universe. All of this has many dimensions to it, a treasure house of potentialities and possibilities. In the famous *hadith*, ***“I was a hidden treasure and loved to be known, so I created man,”*** there are the precious gems within the name of *ar-Rahīm*, the Merciful. Since Allah in His Mercy gives existence to everything, everything that we can possibly understand about Allah Swt, everything that we can know about what is “other” than Allah, looking at the *dhahir* and the *batin*, the *‘ālam al-khalq* versus the *‘ālam al-amr*, the most basic Divine Name, and the first lucent manifestation, was *ar-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm*.

The latter one, *ar-rahīm*, being the mercy, is the core or the essence. It is out of the Mercy of Allah that this creation takes place and we live. It’s reflected in the root of the word *rahīm*, which is of course, *rahm*, the womb. All creation comes from the womb. It was indeed the womb of all other names, each one having its unique characteristics. Just like a child has its own unique characteristics but is made up of the exact same DNA and genetic coding that every other human being has. Each has its own unique essence, its own unique life and existence. Allah says, **“My Mercy encompasses everything.”** Nothing is without name, essence, or uniqueness. When the Prophet Adam (as) tells the names of things, it’s as if it’s pulling all that coding apart and showing the angels what it was made up of.

The whole universe is brought forth with the only purpose of manifesting the characteristics, qualities, power, blessings, and meanings of these Names. The whole purpose of that is that there is nothing, therefore, that doesn’t reflect its Creator or worship its Creator. Everything is in a dynamic state – molecular if you will, atomic if you like – of worshiping Allah Swt. That is to say, everything is

reflecting in some way, manifesting in some way, or expressing in some way its Creator, without which it could not be. "Be, and it became." The natural state of everything, therefore, is to some degree to worship Allah. "**I only created jinn and men to worship Me.**" That's the whole point.

How do you worship Allah Swt in the *'ālam al khalq*, the form? By standing, praying, serving, sacrificing, helping, healing. Whatever your task is, if you don't know it is worship, the question arises: is it? If it reflects the mercy and compassion of Allah Swt, at some level it must be, no matter what name you call it, what religion you call it, or what form you do it in. Understand that the first emanation was in semper eternity. 'Semper' means what in Latin? Always. In the always-eternity, and some like to say pre-eternal, was something that came before creation which was this light from the core of the Divine Presence, which we call by the name, Nur-i-Muhammadiyya, or the Light of Muhammad. The Muhammadan reality is the *al tajalliyya ghaibi*, the lucent manifestation of the unseen.

This is the first emanation of light of all prophecy, out of which every prophet before the Prophet Muhammad (sal) and after, has a portion of. 'After' meaning that he's the last of the prophets and messengers. We know there were 124,000 prophets, and every community has its prophet. Every mystic, every *wali*, every one of the *awliya-Llāh*, spiritual guides, from wherever they come, north, south, east, west, no matter what their religion is, no matter what sect of their religion, whatever degree of illumination they have comes from that initial light. Each one has a unique aspect of that light. Or, each one has its own Divine reality or name, characteristic from this semper-always/eternal/never-ending fount of light. This light is referred to in the Injeel.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. And in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. Everything that was made was made by the Word, and the Word was the light of man, and lights every man who comes into this world.
(John 1:1)

That light is referred to by Shaykh al Akhbar, reflecting on 'recollection,' one of the principles of the Naqshbandi line, when he talks about returning to the fountain of all being. He says, "*Then I was enveloped by the Divine Lights until all of me became light, and a robe of honor was bestowed upon me, the likes of which I have never seen.*" The essential mystical realities of Al Qur'an come from two *surahs*. One comes from this month with the Isra Miraj, and the light verse from Surah an-Nur. If you want to understand this Muhammad (sal), who was he, who is he, and the essence of Islam, we have to turn to the teacher and early Sufic mystic Baghdadi Tustari. He says,

The essence of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) is an aspect of the pre-creative column of light. God most High, when he wished to create Muhammad (sal), manifested some of His light. When it attained the veil of majesty, it bowed down in prayer before Allah. Allah created from that portion of prayer a great column like a glass of light as both his interior and exterior. In it is the 'ain, the very being/ essence/ source/ eye of Muhammad (sal). He stood in service before the Lord of the two worlds for 1,000 thousand years (a million years) with a disposition and attitude of faith, the beholding of faith, the unveiling of certitude, and the witness of the Lord.

Muhammad is considered the perfect manifestation of this pre-eternal light, which is the first cause of creation and the perfect glorification of Allah's essence, because he is the perfect servant, having stood for a million years, expressed as one thousand thousand (*'alf 'alf*) years in service to this light, glorifying the light. This is the light represented with the candle in *sema*. The light you can turn on and off, but it is always there. It is the light from which you can light endless candles. The very essence of this prophecy lies in this eternal light of which the very essence of the Prophet Muhammad (sal) comes. But this light is not just for prophets. It's the essence of Allah, just like the rays of the sun are no different from the rays of the sun itself. They borrow from the essence, or they borrow from the reality of the existence of the sun.

In that same way, all mysticism is a return to the treasure of the name, *al-Rahīm*, which is the being of light, and which is the first name, and which is the descriptive statement... All of the *'āyāt* of Qur'an come out of *Bismi-Llāhi-r-Rahmāni-r-Rahīm*, which is the manifest name of the Prophet Muhammad's (sal) light: Nur-i-Muhammad. Most teachers, most scholars agree that the most famous and the most important verse about light is the one we find in Qur'an, Surah 24:35. You find the essence of this Nur-i-Muhammad and the central pillar of the mysticism of Islam.

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The light is like the light of a lamp in a niche. The lamp is enclosed in a cover of glass. The glass is like a glistening star kindled from the oil of a blessed tree, an olive, not of the east nor of the west. Its oil glows forth nearly without the touch of fire. Light on light, Allah guides through His light whomsoever He wills. Allah strikes symbols for humankind. Allah in all things is most knowing.

The Qur'an affirms the role of the Nur-i-Muhammad in Surah 6 'āyat 125. When the Prophet (sal) was asked about the meaning of the term, "the dilation," in the Most High Utterance, he said (reads in Arabic), ***"For whomever Allah wishes to guide, He expands (or dilates) his breast for Islam. And whom He wishes to lead astray, He makes his breast tight and constricted."*** Imam al Ghazali quotes one of the *hadiths* supporting this point. The Prophet (sal) said, ***"It is a light which Allah casts into the heart. When someone said, "And what is the sign of it?" he replied, "Withdrawal from the mansion of delusion, and turning to the mansion of immortality."*** Again, the Prophet (sal) said, ***"Allah most High created man in darkness, and then sprinkled on them some of His Light."*** The *surah* of light gives us one of the beautiful metaphors in Qur'an of the essence of the Nur-i-Muhammad, a line by line reading of it. One of our *shaykhs* revealed,

The special beauty and subtlety of spiritual revelation in Islam: Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. Allah is Light, and has created everything out of light, not only the light we perceive in the physical world, but the light we perceive spiritually, which supports the creation itself.

We call it "enlightenment," that "aha!" moment we have all had. When this light starts shining upon the regions of the heart, the lamp of the heart gets lit. The light has a special effect. When it is lit, there are certain parts of the heart which provide a spiritual desire to return to Allah, *sayr-i-Llah*. Lighting these little fires or lights in the heart are sort of like LED lights, lights like the lamp in a niche. This light has been placed in the heart of everyone. Just like the light placed in a lamp and covered by glass, only needs the touch of a match or electricity to turn it on. In this case we say it needs the touch of the *awliya-Llāh* or some *wali* or some *shaykh* or the Prophet (sal) to awaken in us. The lamp is enclosed in a cover of glass. The glass is like a

glistening star, a light within the heart which shines like a star in the middle of the night illuminating the darkness.

In the Injil, Jesus says, *“Let thine eye be single, and thy body shall be filled with light.”* In yogic teachings, you look to the third eye, the *agna chakra*, and in that you look to the star of light. In Islam, we look to light up all of our *latā’if*, subtle organs of perception. When you light the light, the light goes out in all directions. **Where-so-ever you turn, there you see the countenance of Allah** – not just the manifestations of Allah, not just the things Allah created on one level. But on a much deeper level, you see the light that it illumines. You see the result of that light. Do you understand? This is another meaning of **“Wheresoever you look, there you see the countenance of Allah.”** The countenance of Allah, if it is the Nur-i-Muhammad, then you are seeing the manifestation of that Muhammadiyya light. You have the Divine Presence that Allah has created, and He has imbued it with this light, which He has called his Nur-i-Muhammad.

Just like the darkness is dispelled by light, so too in the heart, when the heart becomes illumined, [doubts are overcome]. *“Doubts and uncertainties are to be expected; these I will overcome once I understand why they exist.”* We say this in Naqshbandi recitations. Once the light goes on in the heart, you understand what you didn’t understand before; and perhaps you feel a little ashamed that you didn’t understand it before. Or, “My God, how could I not understand this??” And sometimes I think people don’t want to understand, because they don’t want to give up their sureness of not understanding, or doubting, or challenging, or the misery of not knowing. What do we call it in Reintegrative Therapy? Sweet misery. When this first light comes, the light is kindled from the oil of a blessed tree.

It shines within the deepest recesses of the heart with such purity that it unleashes the lightning of divine discoveries, and this lightning will generate the thunderclouds of meaning from an olive not of the east nor of the west.

In this olive exists the oil, which we know is a very special oil, from a nutritional point of view. It is the carrier of the light. When that light it lit, then you begin to see. You discover or uncover, and because the light is so pure, its oil glows without hardly the touch of fire. Nothing can compare to that Divine light, which defies being understood rationally, intellectually, and can only be experienced. When our *rūh* calls out to return, it has to follow the light back to its source. The one who points / *isharat* to that source, is Muhammad (sal), the Nur-i-Muhammadiyya.

It is as if that which is all light extends the hand into our heart and soul to illumine us. We are attracted back to the source of that light which is that semper-eternal Reality, Allah, the first light, the Divine Essence, the Nur-i-Muhammadiyya. This is the symbol. Allah has sent prophets as signs, as symbols to tell us about that and give us the inspiration or faith, to point out a direction, to speak with knowledge, with experience, and with certitude, and to ultimately guide us as our guarantors to our return to our original place. As we say, **“Unto Him we are returning.”** Allah in all things is most knowing. The Wisdom of Allah Swt is beyond comprehension or apprehension. The only path is to learn the way of submitting to the Will of Allah, because it is returning to that initial state of submission from which we came. We had to biologically grow as physical human beings from a state of total submission to one of independence, to one of choosing submission. The last one very few people choose, including the people in this room.

The Prophet (sal) says it in this way: **“Allah Most High created men in darkness and then sprinkled on them some of His Light.”** In Allah’s perfect knowledge and

wisdom, periodically He creates *awliya-Llāh*, saints, from that same light who are living *'āyāt* (living signs) of that light, that glory, that praise, and that truth in this world. Each one of those *awliya-Llāh* has a duty first to come into awareness of the Nuri Nur / the Light of Lights. They are like filters of that light, filtering out different frequencies of light, spectrums of light so that each one of those prophets or *awliya-Llāh* gets showered with the frequency of light that they need in order to resonate with the totality of the light. When asked who these *shuyukh* are, who is a true *shaykh*, Jelaluddin Rumi said, "*The perfect shaykh is the absolute light of Allah.*" *Inshā'a-Llāh*, one day we meet those people. I have met a few, and so have some of you. You have met Hazrat at least.

This meeting or returning is symbolized in the Isra Miraj of this month of Rajab where the Prophet (sal) goes through all the seven heavens, and meets all the *ambiyā*. Even though there is no specific reference to light in that story, each saint speaks of it in some way, of enlightenment or the light of Allah Swt. The foundation of that Isra Miraj lies in the fact that the light is returning, albeit temporarily, to its source: *sayr-i-Llah, sayr-fī-Llah, sayr-ma'-Llah*. Maybe tomorrow I'll talk about the Night Journey. But think about it as the light of Allah Swt returning, and that each one of us has that light in us, and the light is inclined back toward its Source. Each one of us has that journey to make.

We still haven't proven to some of you the efficacy of the Prophet Muhammad (sal), I know. I can read your minds – I can, you know. Did I tell you the story of the young people who came to visit? They were sitting in my office and we were talking about different things. A couple of times she said to me, "You're reading my mind! My husband and I were just having this conversation on the trip down here." Or, "Last week, this was the subject we were talking about." That usually means they will run away as far and as fast as they can. I said, "I'm not reading your minds." She said,

“Then how do you know?” I said, “I’m reading your heart.” It’s in your heart that is the light of God. *Asalaamu aliekum.*