

## The Light Of Muhammad: Discussion Muslim Scholars In Malay Archipelago

Mohd Syukri Yeoh Bin Abdullah , Achyar Zein , Amani Ali Elmetwaly

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Nur Muhammad (the Light of Muhammad) was a term which had been discussed by the Sufis since the third Hijri and had become the most important debate among them, especially regarding its role as a focal point in cosmology. The Sufis did not bear any thoughts or teachings which were inaccurate, misleading or came beyond the truth of Islam. In fact, they were inspired by Allah who bestowed them wahbiyah (the gift) as what had been experienced by the Prophets in generations by means of iqtida or suhba. This is similar to what had been written in al-Qur'an (2: 282):

“...and be careful of (your duty) to Allah, Allah will teach you, and Allah knows all things.”

Similar to the Hadith from Rasulullah PBUH quoted by al-Shawkani (considered a weak hadith due to its sanad (chain)) (al-Fawa'id al-Maj'mu'ah, Kitab al-Fadail, Bab fi Fadl al-'Ilm, No. Hadith 43):

“Whoever practices what is known by him, Allah will give him the knowledge of what is unknown by him.”

Saidina Ali bin Abi Thalib had mentioned in one of the hadiths recorded by al-Bukhari (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar, Chapter of Fakak al-Asir fih 'an Abi Musa 'an al-Nabiyy, No. Hadith 3047, as well as other Hadiths with different articulations: 111, 1870, 3172, 3179, 6755, 6903, 6915 and 7300.)

“Abu Juhaifah said: I had spoken to 'Ali, “Are you acquiring any revelation other than what is inside Kitabullah?” He replied, “For the sake of the Dzat (essence) who grew the seeds and created every life forms, I know none other than what had been sent down regarding al-Qur'an and what is contained inside it,” I asked, “What is contained inside the pages?” He replied, “The matters of diyat (penalty), liberation of captives and a Muslim not killed for murdering a disbeliever”.

Imam Ibn 'Arabi (558-638H/ 1164-1420C) was the first Sufi to bring the Sufi experience to be analyzed in details which had led him from the spiritual arena (mawakid and ahwal) to the logics of knowledge and theory. He managed to create several new terms in the realm of Sufi tariqa from the result of new understanding model which had completely developed since the last six centuries. Imam Ibn 'Arabi had been regarded as the archive (Qutub) of Sufi tariqa language and its terms.

The establishment of Caliph 'Abbasiyah kingdom (132H/759C) marked the golden age of Islamic civilization especially during the ruling of Harun al-Rashid (193H/809C) and his prince, Ma'mun who built Bayt al-Hikmah (the House of Wisdom) (218H / 833C), until the city of Baghdad was renowned as the center of the world in knowledge. Bayt al-Hikmah had produced numbers of excellent scholars, such as Abu Yusuf al-Kindi, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, al-Jahiz and

others. Despite this knowledge excellence, there happened to be a serious political intervention as the result of the war as well as internal and external conflicts during that time. The political conflicts tend to turn the Sufi away from the politicians, orientate themselves to the understanding of knowledge and practices as well as to preserve their own heritage. As the result, several knowledge of ma'rifat was created such as spiritual (al-nafs) al-Haris al-Muhasibi (170-243H), fana and mi'raj from Imam Abu Yazid al-Bistami (188-261H); fana and maqamat from Imam Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd al-Baghdadi (221-297H) and mahabbah, tawhid and marhalah of cosmological living by Imam al-Husayn bin Mansur al-Hallaj (244-309H/858-922C). The richness in the knowledge of ma'rifat within the Sufis had brought the learning institution of Sufi tariqa to its golden era, while preserving the unity of the Muslim society and adapting to several conditions through the discipline of knowledge possessed by the shaykhs which was applied to the learning institution. However, the beginning of the fourth Hijriyah century marked the downfall of these Sufi tariqa schools as there were ties between the fiqh institutions with the political institutions which led to the death of al-Husayn bin Mansur al-Hallaj in 309H/922C. He failed to convince the society regarding the spiritual knowledge in much simpler term to fit the logic of sharia. He was later accused of being zindiq(liar) and was sentenced to death.

### **Understanding of Nur Muhammad**

'Nur Muhammad' was the Sufi understandings from the spiritual point of view which was gifted by Allah to them. The term consisted of two words, 'Nur' (the light) and 'Muhammad' collectively mean 'the Light of Muhammad'.

### **Nur**

'Nur', or the illuminating light was believed by the Sufi as one of the Name of Allah, and was originated from two principles: the principles of creation and the principle of idrak (cognition). 'Nur' also formed the wasilah(connection) for both principles. At this point, Ibn 'Arabi had suggested that the understanding of 'Nur' as:

1. The Principle of Creation, or bodily existence (nur al-wujud)
2. The Principle of Idrak, or the logic of the events on earth (nur al-shuhud)

Therefore, the 'Nur' which illuminated the whole mawjuddat(universe) was the origin of 'wujud'and 'shuhud'.

### **The Nur of the Principle of Creation and the Existence of Creation (Nur al-Wujud)**

Ibn 'Arabi (n.d., 412) had mentioned: Allah took the human out of the nothingness (عدم) into the existence (وجود), therefore the human was the 'nur' by His permission to walk in His path, and then the human was shifted away from the nur to the darkness of hirah (uncertainty). If the 'nur' was absent, surely 'zat mumkinat' will never be seen. Rasulullah PBUH had said in his prayer, which was recorded by Ibn 'Abbas (Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Da'awat, Chapter of al-Du'a idha Intabaha min al-Layl, No. Hadith: 6316, as well as in Sahih Muslim, Kitab Salaat al-Musafirin wa Qasriha, Chapter of al-Du'a fi Salat al-Layl wa Qiyamih, Hadith no: 181, 187, 189; Sunan Abu Dawud, Kitab al-Salah, Chapter of fi Salat al-Layl, Hadith No. 1348, 1349; Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Da'awat, Chapter of Mimma Yaqulu idha Qama min al-Layl ila al-Salah, Hadith No: 3419):

"Oh Allah! Present the light in my heart, in my vision, in my hearings...until the Prophet prayed:  
make me the light".

And the Prophet himself indeed the 'nur', however he had requested to witness the 'nur' with his senses (Ibn 'Arabi, n.d.: 292). Therefore if a person had intended to purify his soul with dhikr such as reciting the Qur'an, the 'nur' will come to him as the result of his act. And Allah is the source of the 'nur' which illuminate the world, known as 'nur al-wujud' (Ibn 'Arabi, n.d.: 241).

### **Principle of Idrak**

Idrak means to know the perfection of a thing from every angles, which is to be able to imagine the physical of the thing without evaluating it neither positively nor negatively. Ibn 'Arabi mentioned: Idrak happened with the name of Allah 'النور', and the reflection of 'Nur' will be shown upon him in an unrecognizable form. There was a Hadith mentioned by Prophet Muhammad PBUH, however, according to al-Nawawi, was ambiguous. Instead, he suggested the opinion from Ibn al-Sam'ani in which several Muslim scholars thought it was uttered by Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz while Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (n.d.:289) opinioned that it was uttered by Yahya bin Muadh al-Razi:

“Whoever knew about himself therefore he will know about his God.” Allah had mentioned in the Qur'an (41: 53):

“We will present to them Our verses to the universe and to their soul until it was clear to them that it is true.”

He knows that He was al-Haq (the Truth). Therefore every wise person, Muslim and the truth will go out with his territorialities which had been granted by Allah from the darkness (cluelessness) to the light of shuhud, until he witnessed the thing initially did not exist before his eyes (Ibn Arabi, n.d.: 14). It can be understood from here that a person was not a devotee unless his heart was illuminated by Allah with 'Nur' of iman (faith), in which if he was unable to see the iman, therefore all the revelation revealed to him were useless. With 'Nur' as the principle of Wujud(exist) and idrak, every Wujud or goodness was the reality of 'Nur', as the initial was Allah as the opposite of the Nothingness ('adam), the Badness and darkness (zulmah) which was the origin of the universe.

Imam Ibn 'Arabi (n.d.:486, 130, 250) mentioned “Wujud is Nur, and Nothingness is the Darkness, and the Badness is the Nothingness. A human was in the condition of Wujud means a human was in Goodness, and if a human is ill means he will recover as Asal will recover it. Thus the attributes of Nur, as it came for the sole purpose to reveal anything that will come to him. Therefore those things can never be understood (idrak) unless by yourself, which was zil(the Illusion) and not Darkness. Ruh (the Soul) is the Nur, and the universe is the Darkness. Therefore how can the Nur and Darkness produces lights and shadows? We answered: Everything comes from Allah (Nur) who took the nature out of the Darkness.

A human, according to Imam Ibn 'Arabi had received a specific nobility, as he was the illustration of two level of degrees: Ilahiyyah(Spiritual) and Kawniyah(Cosmos). Therefore, both were gathered into the zats (Divine attributes), which was the Nur and the Darkness or he was the combined Nur. Therefore Tajalli had granted the knowledge to the human with what he had witnessed, not the knowledge which informed him about Allah was the one who make him exist. Then after the human was created with the Nur, he turned to the left where he saw the Nothingness, then he verified that, indeed he was born from it (the Nothingness) like a shadow formed from a thing in which a light was directed to it. Then he asked: “Who is it?” The Nur answered from the right, “This is you, because if you are the Nur surely the shadow will not have its form, and I am Nur (the Exist). I was the one responsible in removing the shadow, while your

Nur which was on your side while you are facing Me. Therefore you know that you are not Me, since I am the Nur not the shadow, your Nur was combined due to your imkanan attribute. If you are relying upon Me, I will accept you. If you are relying upon the Nothingness, it will accept you, and therefore you will be between the Exist and the Nothingness.” (Ibn ‘Arabi, n.d.: 304).

Imam Ibn ‘Arabi had concluded two things from the effect of the Name of Allah ‘النور’ which would assist in his understanding of the existence attribute of God. The Absolute Existence is one which break into several numbers in the mind of a mukmin (a devoted Muslim) as such the Nur which was One and contain no colours would form various colours in a colourful mirror. According to him in one of his manuscript (Ibn ‘Arabi, n.d., vol 4: 29) as well as (Ibn ‘Arabi, n.d.,vol 1: 102):

- i. The image of Nur and the shadow: There were no Nur which entered into (or being under) another Nur unless the Nur upon the portrait of the creature. Behold the power of the Name of “النور”. The creature was the Darkness (Nothingness), and could not bear the Nur, since the Nur will engulf the Darkness. The Darkness could not behold the Nur, and there was none other than the Absolute Nur. The same goes with the zat(attributes) of a Mukmin, it did not illuminate the light, because it was not Exist, despite of being real / thubut (shadow) with no attributes of Existing, because the Existing is the Nur, and the shadow did not have the property of Nur.
- ii. The Image of Nur and Mirror: If the God (Allah) was connected with a certain form of image, be it in various sizes of pureness, it was analogous to the Nur which was related to its barrier for a person who was looking into the mirror, as he will see something coloured that suits the colour reflected to the mirror, in the first place contain no colour at all.

Ibn ‘Arabi used the term ‘Nur’ (plural: Anwar) in the context of Tajalli Ma’rifat which suit with the name ‘النور’ from the principle of Idrak that al-Anwar could also mean ‘Haqaiq’ (realities). He mentioned the following in his manuscript: “Be informed that tajalli for the Sufi was the ‘hidden’ lights which were revealed in the heart (qalbu), and tajalli was positioned on their distinct levels:

- i. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Ma’ani’ or the realities of “meaning” which was clean from substances such as ma’rifat and secrets.
- ii. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Anwar’ or the realities of lights.
- iii. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Ruh’ or the realities of the soul, which was the archangels.
- iv. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Riyah’ or the realities of wind
- v. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Tabi’ah’ or the realities of nature
- vi. Some related to ‘Anwar al-Asma’ or the realities of names and others.
- vii.

## **Muhammad**

‘Muhammad’ is a human name which was never given to any other humankind before the birth of Rasulullah PBUH. In the Sufi’s point of view, the name was taken from the word ‘الحمد’ which mean the praise is only to Allah as God for the whole universe, and the name Muhammad would mean the most praised, at which all the praises and the goodness of the universe was meant for him, as Muhammad was the messenger of Allah for the whole universe. Allah had mentioned in the Qur’an in Chapter:

- a. al-Fatihah (1:2):

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

b. al-Anbiya (21: 107)

And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds. c. al-A'raf (7: 156):

...and My mercy encompasses all things.

The term 'Nur' was combined with 'Muhammad' to form 'Nur Muhammad' or the Light of Muhammad. This had led to the question of "why Muhammad?" The answer for this question will unveil the spiritual universe to everyone who intended to understand this term. According to the Sufis, the term was based on a Hadith by Jabir bin 'Abd Allah who asked regarding the first thing created by Allah.

Jabir asked: O Rasulullah PBUH, by the name of your father and my mother, tell me the first thing created by Allah before the rests. The Prophet PBUH replied: O Jabir, indeed Allah has created the Nur of your Prophet and the Nur of Himself before he created the rests.

The Hadith had been mentioned by al-Qastallani (2004: 71-72) in Musannaf 'Abd al-Razzaq and had also been mentioned by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (1998: 36), al-'Ajluni in Kashf al-Khafa (Hadith number 827) and many other scholars in their manuscripts. However, some Muslim academicians could not find it in the manuscript of Musannaf. Among them were al-Imam al-Suyuti (1982: 323-325) who thought that the Hadith did not have a clear chain (sanad). Shaykh 'Abd Allah al-Siddiq al-Ghumari (n.d) supported the opinion and thought that the reference to 'Abd al-Razzaq was a mistake, not only in the manuscript of Musannaf, but also in all of his works, where this hadith was not found. The statement was also agreed by al-Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Khalidi (Salih Ahmad al-Shami in al-Qastallani, 2004: 72).

Even though the Hadith created a great debate between the Muslim scholars as the status of the Hadith was unclear, however, there were several scholars who were convinced regarding the existence of Nur Muhammad. These include al-Busiri (n.d), al-Imam al-Bajuri (al-Busiri, n.d.), Khalid al-Azrahi (n.d.), al- Barzanji (2008), Nawawi al-Bantani (n.d.), 'Abd al-Rahim al-Qadi (n.d.), Shaykh Yusuf bin Ismail al- Nabhani (1997: 10), Shaykh Yahya bin Abu Bakr al-Amiri (n.d.: 15), 'Abd al-Hayy al-Laknawi (1984: 42) and many more.

From Abu Hurairah, he quoted: The companion asked: O Rasulullah! When it was declared regarding you appointed as a prophet? The Prophet PBUH replied: When Adam was still between his soul and body.

A human was created with the purpose of knowing his Creator, Allah. From the Sufi's point of view, the process of creation (wujud) and introduction (shuhud) were also known as tajalli, and the origin of tajalli was Nur. Allah had mentioned in the Qur'an (51:56) as following:

And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me.

Al-Imam Mujahid stated that to serve Him was to know Him. This has been supported by al-Tha'labi who mentioned that it was impossible a God can be worshipped until a person can get to know him and agree with His Oneness (al-Qurtubi, 2006, 506-508). Besides, the most beautiful creation was the human. According to the Qur'an (95: 4),

Certainly We created man in the best make.

In Sahih al-Bukhari (Kitab al-Manaqib, no. 3552), Sunan al-Tirmidhi (Kita al-Manaqib, no. 3636) and several other collection of Hadiths, there were a Hadith which tell the following:

From Abu Ishaq, he quoted: al-Bara bin 'Azib was asked: "Does the face of Rasulullah PBUH

represents the sword?" He answered: "No, the Prophet's look is like a moon."

Similar with the Hadith (al-Ilal al-Waridah, Min Hadith Qatadah bin Du'amah 'an Anas, Hadith no: 2570 and various other Hadiths)

From Anas bin Malik, he said: Allah had never sent a messenger unless the one with a beautiful voice and looks, and indeed your Prophet (PBUH) had the most beautiful looks and voices among other prophets.

There were other has been said by the Companions as well as Muslim scholars in the books of shama'il, manaqib and others. Among all human on earth, it was of no doubt that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was the most devoted person and the best in knowing Allah as had been mentioned in the Qur'an. The Prophet PBUH had replied to the Companions, who intended to do their deeds to Allah excessively; he mentioned the following (Sahih Bukhari, Chapter of Qawl al-Nabi (s.a.w.) Ana A'lamukum billah, Hadith no: 20):

Indeed the one who are the most devoted and best in knowing Allah is me.

Based on the reason, Rasulullah PBUH had been entitled as the best among all creations (خير البرية), the leader of the mankind (سيد بني آدم), and the head of all Prophets (المرسلين) (سيد النبياء). In addition, in the hereafter, the Prophet will be the chieftain in opening all the doors of heavens and possesses the 'Syafa'at Agung'. According to Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, the forms, properties and the acts (Fi'il) of Allah was Qadim and if He created a thing it will always be perfect. Therefore, the perfection in the creation exist and the introduction to Allah (shuhud) of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH happened long before the time.

From here, the Sufis were believed that the origin of every wujud and shuhud was the Divine Light, and the absolute light were the Dzat and the Divine Attributes. Whereas the mazhar and the perfect illusions of wujud and shuhud belong to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. This mean the Prophet PBUH was the reason for the creation of the wujud and shuhud, and therefore for every creation which was as perfect was called Nur Muhammad or the Truth of Muhammadiyyah or Insan Kamil, or the perfect Mankind.

However, Nur Muhammad was a term used in the knowledge discipline of Sufi tariqa of the Sunnis. According to this group, the term did gave no real interpretation other than a metaphor or majaz, or the knowledge of Allah (al-'Ajam, 1999: 1000).

### **Nur Muhammad in History**

Nur Muhammad was an extraordinary and the noblest human ever created. Allah had granted him with the highest nobility since the day he was born till the end of his life. His life was filled with the lights and miracles, and he was not just an ordinary human being, instead he was the light above all lights.

As had been mentioned by Shaykh Yusuf bin Ismail al-Nabhani (1997: 10-20) in the manuscript of al- Anwar al-Muhammadiyyah, the understandings of Nur Muhammad consisted of on two sides. The first side was as the first creation ever created (nur al-wujud), and every other things were created from it. The second side was the reality of Nubuwwah (nur al-shuhud) where Allah has placed it to the Prophet Adam and it was transferred to Siti Hawa (Eve) then to their prince, the Prophet of Shith and continued the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

According to Saidatina A'isyah RA as she recorded from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (al-Mu'jam al- Awsat, Hadith no. 6285; al-Bayhaqi, 1988: 176; al-'Asqalani, 1995: 72 and a few other Hadiths):

Gabriel (the Archangel) had come to me and said: "I had gone back and forth from the East to the West of the Earth but I had never found a person with the highest nobility other than Muhammad and no other noblest descendants other than the descendants of Bani Hashim"

According to Sahih Bukhari (the manuscript of Kitab al-Manaqib, Chapter of Sifat al-Nabi s.a.w, Hadith no. 3557) and a few other Hadiths, as mentioned by Abu Hurairah RA recorded from the Prophet Muhammad PBUH:

I was sent down during the greatest generation, from the generation of the Prophet Adam to the generation I am living presently.

In Sahih Muslim (the manuscript of Kitab al-Fadhail, Chapter of Fadl Nasab al-Nabi wa Taslim al-Hajar 'alayh qabl al-Nubuwwah, Hadith no. 2276) and several other Hadiths had mentioned that according to Wathilah bin al-Asqa', "I heard Rasulullah PBUH said:

Indeed Allah had chosen Kinanah, the son of Ismail, Quraish from Kinanah, Bani Hashim from Quraish and me from Bani Hashim.

In the history of jahiliyyah, Nur Muhammad had been predicted as the sign of the appearance of the Prophet for the end of the world. A people from Christian and Jewish religion was aware about the prophecy and had been told in an event where a Jewish woman whom saw the Light from the face of Abdullah, the father to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH as well as another similar event which happened to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH with a Christian priest when he was still young. Al-Bayhaqi (1988: 102-

106) had mentioned from Muhammad Ibn Ishaq, it was a story when 'Abd Muttalib was with 'Abdullah, there were a woman from Bani Asad bin 'Abd al-'Uzza named Libbarah, where she was beside the Ka'bah during that time had asked him: "Where are you going, Abdullah?" in which he replied, "To my father." "The woman asked again, "Would you like me to give it to you so you will be with me now?" He replied "I am with my father now and I do not wish to be separated with him, what else to do things forbidden by him." Later, his father brought him to meet the family of Wahb bin 'Abd Manaf and married his daughter, Aminah who was the best descendants of the Quraish during that time. One day, he (Abdullah) had met with the woman (Libbarah) again in which she said to him: "The Light that I saw from you on the day that we met has gone that I did not wish to be with you anymore." Similar story had been mentioned by Ibn 'Abbas, however involved a woman from Bani Khath'am (al-Bayhaqi 1988: 107- 108).

Iryad bin Sariah RA as mentioned as he recorded from Rasulullah PBUH (al-Bayhaqi 1988: 80-81; al- Mustadrak, Kitab Tawarikh al-Mutaqaddimin min al-Anbiya wa al-Mursalin, Chapter of Dhikr Akhbar Sayyid al-Mursalin wa Khatam al-Nabiyyin, Hadith no: 4174 – 4175 and several other hadiths) the following:

I am the slave of Allah and the last Prophet of all the Prophets, while the Prophet Adam was still buried under the ground, I will tell all of you regarding all these: Indeed I am the prayer of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), the good news of Prophet Isa (Jesus), and the dream of my mother of what seen as well as the mothers of all the Prophets.

Indeed the mother of Rasulullah had seen light illuminating while carrying the Prophet Muhammad PBUH inside her womb, as had been portrayed by the uncle of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, al-'Abbas RA in a poem (al-Nabhani 1997: 18):

When you was born, the earth was illuminated with lights, as well as the horizon with your lights. And we were in the shining lights, and the road signs were burned in fire.

Moreover, the usage of the term Nur Muhammad had started before the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was appointed as the Prophet, as mentioned in the poetry recited by Waraqah bin Nawfal, the cousin of Siti Khadijah with the hope that he was able to see Muhammad PBUH be appointed as a prophet and how he will be able to defeat the disbelievers from the Quraisy tribe as well as spreading the lights to the world (Ibn Hashim, 1975: 176-177)

Indeed the Prophet Muhammad PBUH will become the leader among us, and defeat whoever standing before his way. And he will illuminate his light across the state, shining every creatures on earth.

Every stories had told the similar regarding the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, from the story of him when he was born, during his lifetime until he was appointed as a prophet. All the stories had mentioned that the Prophet's life was filled with the lights of dignity as mentioned in the books of shama'il, manaqib and mawlid of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.

### **Nur Muhammad in Several Knowledge Discipline**

Nur Muhammad had been mentioned by Muslim scholars in several knowledge disciplines such as the following:

#### **1. Tafsir (exegesis)Ulema**

The term Nur which also mean Muhammad PBUH had been mentioned in several interpreted scriptures.

Allah had mentioned in the Qur'an (5:15) as following:

...indeed, there has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah.

According to several other tafsir, one of the meaning of Nur (نور) was the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. According to Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari (2001: 263-264), Allah had mentioned to the People of the Book: "There had come to you O the People of Torah and Bible, the 'Light from Allah' ", which was the Light of Muhammad which brought the truthiness, the religion of Islam and which destroyed the shirks. He was the Nur for everyone seeking the light, he told the truth in which one of them was to fight against the Jews and what had they hidden from the Book of Allah. 'And the Book of clarity' was the Qur'an, which contained the explanation regarding the things that opposed the tauhid (Oneness of Allah), halal and haram as well as the sharia in religion.

Imam Fakhr al-Razi (1981: 193-194) had defined the term Nur as 'Muhammad', besides 'Islam' and 'al- Qur'an' in one of his tafsir collection. It was defined as such since Nur was absolutely clear and real, and with its light the eye could see clearly the physical of a thing, similar to the spiritual light which could create basirah (spiritual vision) which could grasp the logical of a thing. This was also mentioned in Tafsir al-Qurtubi (2006, 383: 386), Ruh al-Ma'ani (al-Imam al-Alusi, n.d.: 97) and other manuscripts.

In another verse, the term Nur Muhammad was understood as signs by the Sufis, as mentioned in the

Qur'an (24: 35):

Allah is the (giver of) light (to) the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, (and) the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not-- light upon light-- Allah guides to His light

whom He pleases, and Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is Cognizant of all things.

Several Companions such as Sa'id bin Jubayr and Ka'ab al-Ahbar interpreted that Nur as **نُورٌ** referring to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Furthermore, when the word (مشكاة) was mentioned, several scholars said "This was the likeness of Allah to represent the heart of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (al-Tabari, 2001: 298-299, 301).

According to Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz, the meaning of 'Mishkah' was the soul of Muhammad, and 'Zujajah (the glass) was the heart of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Similarly, Imam 'Abd Allah Sahl also had the same opinion as he mentioned that the word (مثل نور) was meant to represent the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (al-Sulami, n.d.: 45). The same was also mentioned in the tafsir of Ruh al-Ma'ani (10/243, where it mentioned that 'Nurihi' meant His messenger, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (al-Alusi, n.d.: 169-173).

## 2. Hadith Ulema

Hadith ulema had a difference in opinion regarding the matter of early creations. Ibn Hajar al-Haithami (1998: 36), Yusuf al-Nabhani (1997: 10), Ibn 'Arabi (n.d.), 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (203: 59), 'Abd al-Aziz al-Dabbagh (2007), Muhammad al-Kattani (n.d.) with his book **الحديث المتواتر** several other ulema opinioned that Nur Muhammad was the first creation of Allah. Meanwhile, Imam al-Suyuti (1982: 323-325), al-Harawi (2007), 'Abd Allah al-Ghumari (n.d) and others believed that the Hadith from Jabir could not be accepted as its authenticity was questionable and had been declared as a weak(da'if) by al-Hafiz al-'Iraqi (1995).

This controversial issue had been going on until today, however, to believe in one of the two opinions would not cause any harm as both opinions came from highly trusted ulema. Besides, all of the ulema had agreed that the Prophet Muhammad had been appointed as a prophet even before Adam was created. Therefore, how the Prophet Muhammad PBUH could obtain the title although he was yet existed. The main question here was the creation of Nur before the existence of others, which was the absolute creation and the other creations were created from that Nur. This was recorded in Hadith from Jabir. Therefore, it can be concluded from here:

1. Allah had created Nur Muhammad or the Truth of Muhammad PBUH as the origin of every creation. This Hadith had been verified by numbers of ulema, and supported by other authentic Hadiths. However, the question regarding how everything was created remained as the secret of the All-Knowing, as the main discussion was regarding Nur Muhammad, not the physical or the soul of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH.
2. Later, Allah created the soul of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH before it was appointed as the prophet upon the souls of other prophets and long before the creation of the Prophet Adam AS.
3. Then Allah created the physique of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH inside the womb of his mother, Aminah binti Wahab when Allah had wanted to give life to the soul of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and when the time had come for him to be the messenger of Allah for the people.

Logically, this creation process seemed possible and realistic. This was due to Allah had created the Nur to become the essence for other creations. Similar to how the Prophet Adam AS was created from a ball of mud, then was shaped to form a figure, as well as the sky which was formed from the smoke. Nur was created to become the main ingredient of all creations.

There were several stories which were related to some lifeless forms which can connect

spiritually with the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, such as the rocks, mountain or tress which performed the dhikr and was heard by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. As an example, there was a time where a tree had asked a permission from Allah to greet the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Another example was a story of a palm tree expressed its sadness as it will be separated with the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. This showed that Nur Muhammad was the soul for every creations.

Here were several Hadiths which mentioned regarding the early creation of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, such as the following:

1. In the book of al-Mawahib al-Laduniyah (al-Qastallani, 2004: 72-75), there were arguments of the Hadith from Jabir regarding al-Qalam, whether it was the next creation after Nur Muhammad. Al-Hafiz Abu Ya'la al-Hamadani mentioned that "The truth" was 'Arasy was created before the Qalam, as had been stated in an authentic Hadith from the Prophet Muhamamd PBUH as recorded by 'Abd Allah bin 'Amru (Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Qadr, in Chapter of Hujjaj Adam wa Musa AS, Hadith no. 2653) and several other hadiths:Allah had predetermined the destiny of his creations long before he created the earth and the sky with difference of fifty thousand years, meanwhile the 'Arasy of Allah was above the water.

This Hadith had clearly mentioned regarding the predestination occurred after the creation of the 'Arasy, in the same time the Qalam was created during the predestination. This was supported by an authentic Hadith from Rasulullah as recorded by 'Ubadah bin al-Samit (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Kitab al-Qadr, Hadith No: 2155) as well as several other Hadith collections:The first creation of Allah was Qalam, then Allah instructed "Write," in which it replied "O the Almighty, what would I write?" Allah answered "Write the destiny of every creation from the absolute beginning to its end."

This was also supported by another Hadith from Abi Ruzayn al-'Aqili (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, in Chapter of Bab wa Min Surah Hud, no. 3109) as well as other Hadith collection:

Rasulullah had mentioned:And 'Arasy was created above the water (which had been previously created).

Al-Suddi which has several Hadith chains had mentioned that Allah had not created anything before He created the water, hence it can be concluded that the earliest creations before Qalam was the Nur, water and Arasy. In the book entitled Ahkam by Ibn al-Qattan, as recorded by Ibn Marzuq from 'Ali bin Husayn from his father, which was retrieved from his grandfather that the Prophet Muhammad had mentioned the following:I have been the light when I was in His hand before Adam was created for four hundred thousand years.

2. The Hadith recorded by al-Imam al-Tirmidhi (Sunan al-Tirmidhi, Hadith no: 3609) as well as several other Hadiths:Recorded from Abu Hurairah, he said: the Companions asked: "O Rasulullah, when you was appointed as a prophet?" in which he replied "Before Adam was created."

Rasulullah PBUH mentioned the following (al-Bayhaqi, 1988: 80-81) : I am the slave of Allah and the last Prophet of all the Prophets, while the Prophet Adam was still in the form of mud.

This showed that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH had been predestined as a prophet before the creation of Adam, as how a person destiny had been predetermined before he was created inside his mother's womb.

3. Rasulullah PBUH said (Abu Nu'aym, 1986: 42) the following:I am the first prophet ever

created, and the last as His messenger.

There were numbers of other Hadith which mentioned similar stories. Therefore, it can be understood that the appointment as a prophet was a properties of a prophet and should have its maswuf(attributes). Physically, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was appointed as a prophet forty years after he was born, in contrast, it had occurred before anything was even created. As had been known by man, Allah created the soul before the physique, and He appointed the prophet when he was still in this form. It was His secret, and only known by a few people who was given the light by Allah to see. Therefore, both of the opinions are subjective and choosing to believe any between those opinions would cause no harm to the believer.

The believers believed that Rasulullah was the earliest creation, and every creations was a part of Nur Muhammad. Nur does not literally mean visible light which can be seen by the naked eyes, but a likeness such as seeing the water as the source of life. Physicists would have a deeper view where he will see the electrons flowing within a matter and the nucleus was vibrating and rotating. If he explain these to a fool, he will be called a liar. Similar with the medicine specialist with his theory of human body. The likeness explained how the Sufis viewed the Nur Muhammad which illuminating world like a water which flowed freely in the stream.

### **Arguments of Nur Muhammad in Malay Archipelago**

The understanding of Nur Muhammad was associated with the ingression of Islam to Malay Archipelago. Historians suggested that Islam was introduced directly to the Malay Archipelago during the first Hijri by the traders from the Arab Peninsula, and the first to receive those traders was Aceh. Records had shown that the Sufis played an important role in the Islamization process in Malay Archipelago.

The first Islamic kingdom was Peurlak in 225 Hijri. During that time, the Islamic civilization was at its Golden Era in Baghdad, as Baghdad had succeeded in several fields of knowledge such as Islamic knowledge, philosophy and science. Despite the achievements, it failed to abut the negative influences from taking over the positive developments. This caused several ulema and Sufis to redirect themselves to the religion knowledge and practices as well as to stay away from the power and politics which had always been used as tools for several scholars to gain wealth and influences. After the killing of al-Hallaj, the Sufis were faced with provocations from the scholars as they were accused of using the religion to gain influences and power.

Ibn 'Arabi was one of the Sufis who upheld Sufi tariqa in balancing his life between spiritual and reality, in fact he had previously completed the arguments of dhawq (senses) by introducing several new terms in the tariqa. He was also being oppressed as well as the other Sufis, until the emergence of the next generations such as Imam al-Sha'rani, 'Abd al-Krim al-Jili and 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (2003).

Similar things had occurred in Malay Archipelago, from the case of Siti Jenar in Java to the case of Shaykh Nuruddin al-Raniri and the followers of Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri, all were caused by the abuse of power and influences, which was dreaded by the Sufis. This was also catalyzed by the colonization of the Western Orientalists as well as intrusions of Jewish theosophists. This knowledge in Nur Muhammad had worn out slowly from the society and the generation was left with those with a weak understanding in the knowledge, including the aristocrats, the royal institutions and their ulema.

During the early centuries of Islam entrainment to Malay Archipelago, several manuscripts had been brought in as well such as al-Futuhat al-Makkiyah (n.d.), Shajarat al-Kawn (Ibn 'Arabi,

1985), *Fusus al- Hikam* (n.d.), *Daqaiq al-Akhbar fi Dhikr al-Jannat wa al-Nar* by 'Abd al-Rahim al-Qadi (n.d.), *al-Anwar al-*

*Muhammadiyah min al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah* by Yusuf bin Ismail al-Nabhani (1997), *al-Insan al- Kamil* by al-Jili (1975) and *Bahr al-Lahut* by Shaykh Abdullah 'Arif (n.d.). In addition, a group of ulema known as Wali Songo had written regarding the understanding of Nur Muhammad in Java literature language such as *Wirid Hidayat Jati* (Ronggo Warsito, 2005), *Serat Chintini* (Sumahatmaka, 1981) and *Serat Niti Mani* (Jawi Kandha, 1908).

Later, during the era of Islamic Kingdom ruling, ulema of Malay Archipelago had recorded their own manuscript as well as teaching and translating regarding the content of the manuscripts itself. Examples of the written manuscripts are *al-Muntahi* (Coded Or. 7291 (III), Library University of Leiden) and *Syair- Syair Hamzah Fansuri* (MS Jak. Mal. No. 83. X, Jakarta) by Shaykh Hamzah Fansuri, *Nūr al-Daqāiq fi Kashf Asrār al-Haqāiq* (MS1314, H) by Shaykh Shamsuddin al-Sumaterani, *Bad' Khalq al-Samawat wa al-Ard* (1894) and *Ma'ul al-Hayah wa bada Mamat*, (without code) by Shaykh Nuruddin al-Raniri, *Sharh al- Mawahib al-Mustarsalah* (40/NKT/YPAH/92), *Shams al-Ma'rifah* (MSS 2378A) and *Daqa'iq al-Hurūf* (MS1314, N) by Shaykh Abdul Rauf, *Sir al-salikin*. (n.d.) by Shaykh Abdul Shamad al-Falimbani, *Durr al- Nafis* by Muhammad Nafis al-Banjari (2013), *Manhal al-Safi* by Daud Fathani (1373H).

There were also manuscripts which had been translated into Malay language, such as *al-Kawkab al-Durri fi al-Nur al-Muhammadi* by Syaikh Muhammad bin Isma'il Daud al-Fatani (1904), *Madarij al-Su'ud* by Nawawi al Bantani (n.d.), *Sirr al-Asrar* by Syaikh Abdul Qadir al-Jailany (1994), *Sabil al-Iddikar wa al-l'tibar* by Imam al-Haddad (1998) and the manuscripts of *Kasyf al-Ghaybiyah* by Zain al-'Abidin al-Fatani (n.d.). Nur Muhammad had later spread by assimilation in the building of civilization of the society in Malay Archipelago. This had raised critics by people who doubted regarding the civilisation.

Several modern researchers suggested that Nur Muhammad was originated from Shi'ah cult especially the Isma'ilyyah which was taken from Grecian philosophy and Zoroastrian teachings. The opinion was made by Fazlur Rahman (1979: 174, Mahayuddin Hj Yahya (1987: 16-17), Abdul Fatah Haron Ibrahim (2003: 258-261) and several other researchers. According to Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1963: 3- 4), most of the times, these kind of opinions was taken from the western orientalist such as R. A. Nicholson, E. G. Browne, John Spencer Trimingham, Massingon and other researchers who made their research about Islam from secular point of view. They intended to separate the society of Malay Archipelago from the knowledge discipline of tariqa which had been the basis in building their spiritual strength and identity.

Unfortunately, these opinions had spread widely into the society in Malay Archipelago, especially Malaysia which can still be observed today. As the result, there existed several suggestions that Nur Muhammad should be banned as well as the manuscripts which mentioned about it. This includes the manuscripts of *Mawlid al-Barzanji* (2008), *Burdah al-Busiri* (n.d.) and *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (n.d.). Until today, the controversy regarding Nur Muhammad in Malay Archipelago had been regarded as an issue which was always been raised in the critics towards Sufi tariqa similar to other understandings initiated by the Sufis such as *wahdat al-wujud*.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion, Nur Muhammad was an understanding which had been shown clearly by

revelation and had been agreed by ulema. Despite several technical issues regarding the written evidences, there were other Hadiths which can complement to prove that Nur Muhammad was the earliest creation of Allah and the source of all creations. It was the most suitable honour for the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, the leader of the prophets and creations.

The controversy started due to the misunderstanding regarding the understandings of Nur Muhammad. To really understand the meaning of Nur Muhammad, a person needs to have a very high focus as well as a strong spiritual strength which could help in appreciating it under the guidance of a murshid. Confusion and misunderstanding would occur if a person only studied the matter on the surface without digging deeper into the knowledge. However, for the current society who were unable to fully grasp the knowledge, it is adequate for them to acknowledge and believe that the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was the most beloved by Allah and was granted the highest degree of honour by Allah.

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