BRILL

Journey in Sufism: Literal or Metaphorical?

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Abstract

Journey (*safar*) is strongly relevant to Sufism and mysticism. It has been considered as a paradigm for the various stages of spiritual transition. The problem addressed in this study concerns different uses of the word for analysis of the process of its conversion into a mystical term, and the criticism of this process. Sufis used the term journey in its literal meaning because of its important role in achieving mystical goals, utilizing it as a metaphor for death, life and the transition of one's states influenced by religious sources. Journey as a metaphor for transition of one's states was considered literal by the method of the "metaphysicalization" of sensual concepts. This new literal use of journey came to be employed as a paradigm to order the process of the mystical path. As such, the method of the metaphysicalization of sensual concepts needs linguistic arguments, as it cannot be applied to all words.

Keywords

1   **Introduction**

The word 'journey' (*safar*) comes up frequently in ethical and mystical sourc-
es in the Islamic tradition. Journey in its basic and literal use, means transfer
from one place to another. Journey not only was used literally In Sufism, but
also used metaphorically to describe death, the transient nature of the life,
and changes of one's states. The metaphorical use of the journey for changes
of one's states help Sufis to solve one of the important problems of the mys-
tical path, namely various stages of mystical transition. The concept of 'the
four journeys' (*al-asfar al-arba'a*) that was introduced in the school of Ibn
al-'Arabī ordered different opinions concerning this problem. Is the journey
literal or metaphorical in the four journeys? The hypothesis of this inquiry is
that al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) considered the metaphorical use as a literal (tran-
scendental reality) through the method of the metaphysicalization of sensual
concepts. Here, we analyze the method of the metaphysicalization of sensual
concepts while examining different uses of the concept of journey and its his-
torical development in Sufism from the fourth/tenth century to the eighth/
fourteenth century. Finally, we look at the criticism of this method.

2   **Research Background**

We cannot find any independent Western sources that have studied journey in
Sufism, while some independent Persian studies have been carried out signify-
ing the importance of journey in Sufism. Fāṭima Ṭāhirī in her doctoral thesis
has discussed the relevance of journey in Sufi texts till the seventh century.[1]
In that research, the etiquette and goals of the outward and inward journey
pertaining to various aspects of mystical wayfaring, such as its conditions,
mannerisms, stations and intentions, are discussed. Muḥammadī Afshār in
his article has mentioned some of the opinions of the Sufis regarding jour-
ney with its various forms, goals and intentions.[2] Similarly, Moḥsinī Nīya in
his book *Safar dar taṣawwuf va 'irfān*,[3] has explored the amount of Sufi ter-
minology related to the notion of journey and has discussed the etiquette of
mystical wayfaring according to various Sufi masters such as Abū Saʿīd b. Abī

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1   Fāṭima Ṭāhirī, "Analysis of *safar* in Mystical Texts until the Seventh Century" (PhD diss.,
    Isfahan University, 1382 sh./2003).
2   Hūshang Muḥammadī Afshār, "Safar dar mūtūn nathr fārsī," *Pazhūhish Zabān wa Adabīyat
    Fārsī* 14 (1388 sh./2009): 27–50.
3   Nāṣir Muḥsinī Nīyā and Akram ʿAlī Bakhshī, *Safar dar taṣawwuf wa 'irfān* (Qum: Intishārāt-i
    Āyat-i Ishrāq, 1392 sh./2013).

l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273). In all of the afore-mentioned research, the evolution of the concept of journey from literal to metaphorical, and then from metaphorical to a transcendental reality, has not been addressed. To analyze this particular aspect, there is a need to assess the development of the term's literal and metaphorical usage over the years leading up to the time of Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240).

3   Literal Usage

In the first place, journey literally means travel from one place to another. Journey is translated here from 'safar', and its opposite is 'ḥaḍar', derived from the word 'safara'. It has several meanings in the Arabic lexicon such as daylight, to clean, to take something away from another,[4] to light up the day, unveil a face, scatter clouds by the wind, or become manifest.[5] Similarly, *safar* unveils the faces of travelers and their characters, revealing matters that are hidden.[6] The word *safar* in its literal meaning is considered equivocal in its most general sense.[7] We do not intend to argue that this equivocality stems from different categories (equivocal in its most particular sense), or that it is a result of an improvisation or transmission from one meaning to another. Rather, we intend to focus on two meanings of journey, namely 'to pass' and 'to disclose' something.

Journey can be observed and experienced by all human beings. This experience has different dimensions. A journey, especially in the premodern era, had a lot of hardships. Dangers of a journey included insecurity, being robbed, losing one's way and wandering. In any journey, past or present, travelers need to travel successfully through stages, one after the other. The second stage cannot be reached without crossing the first. Every journey has a beginning and an ending point, and brings some presents with it for the traveler.

Sufism has been influenced by Islamic culture, verses of the Qur'an and the Hadith from its beginning. Such influence can be seen in early ethical and mystical texts in which the concept of journey is used. Therefore, before proceeding to a discussion regarding the concept of journey in Sufi sources, we must briefly examine the concept of journey as mentioned in the Qur'an.

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4   Khalil ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Farāḥīdī, *al-ʿAyn*, 8 vols. (Qum: Dār al-Hijra, 1409/1988), 7:246.

5   Majd al-Din Muḥammad Ibn. Yaʿqūb al-Firūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: al-Risāla, 1426/2005), 408.

6   Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 16 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1375/1956), 4:367–8.

7   Equivocality has two uses in logic: literal and paradoxical, and both can be considered contrary to univocality, metaphor, transmission and improvisation.

3.1   *Journey in the Qur'an*

In some of the Qur'anic verses, it has clearly been advised to travel in order to take lessons from those who had sinned and denied the verses of Allāh (Q 3:137, 6:11, 27:69) and indicate the possibility of resurrection by emphasis on God's power to primitive creation (Q 29:20). Some of these Qur'anic verses implicitly encouraged humans to travel so as to awaken the heart (Q 12:109, 22:46). In several verses, journey is considered as a means of making a living (Q 73:20). The journey in the Qur'an is also related to migration in order to save one's faith (Q 4:97). Moreover, the necessity of make the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) for Muslims, informs us of another significant aspect of travelling in Islam (Q 3:97).[8] Sufis have considered these various aspects of journey. Indeed, this is the first use of the word journey in Sufism.

3.2   *Journey in Sufism*

The journey and its dimensions mentioned have been important for Sufis. Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 380/990 or 384/994) considered it to be one of the ten pillars of *taṣawwuf*,[9] and Sufis typically understood the notion of journey in relation to two aspects: 1) the purposes of the journey; and, 2) the benefits obtained from the process itself. According to the Sufis, a journey can only be made with purposes such as to take part in a holy war (*jihād*), making the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), to address relationships with relatives, or to meet a Sufi shaykh.[10] They traveled widely for the sake of study and they collected the sayings of the great Sufis.[11] Sufi seekers travelled extensively in order to find their guide.[12]

In addition to the purposes of making a journey, the process of the journey itself was important. Wayfarers cannot reach the benefits of a journey without travelling. Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996) analyzed the meaning of journey in terms of indicating the effect of the process of the journey itself on purifying one's soul, which is the foundation of ethics and *taṣawwuf*. He believed that the literal meaning of the word *safar* is 'transfer from one place to another,' because it discloses the traveler's concealed ethical characters and his

8   For more information, see Maryam Ṣādiqī, "Siyr wa safar az manẓar āyāt wa riwāyāt" (MA thesis, Qum University, 1385 sh./2006).

9   Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Kalābādhī, *al-Taʿarruf li-madhhab al–taṣawwuf* (Cairo: al-Saʿāda, 1933), 61.

10   Abū Naṣr al-Sirāj al-Ṭūsī, *al-Lumaʿ fī l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson (Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1914), 190.

11   Laury Silvers, *A Soaring Minaret: Abū Bakr al-Wasiti and the Rise of Baghdadī Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 19.

12   Rizā, Ārāsti, *Rumi the Persian the Sufi* (London and New York, Rutlage, 2008): 124.

true nature and qualities.[13] One's soul may appear to be serene and have noble traits such as resignation (*tawwakul*), consent (*riḍā*) and submission (*taslīm*) in the presence of those who are close to him. However, once confronted with the hardships of travel and being homesick, negative aspects of his soul are inevitably revealed.[14] In ethics and *taṣawwuf*, awareness of concealed layers of the soul acts as a guide for its purification and correction.

The process of the journey not only provides occasions for self-awareness but also offers a fitting opportunity for the purification of the soul. Mustamlī Bukhārī (d. 431/1040), mentioned the travels of the prophets to highlight the importance of travelling and its positive effects on chastening of the soul. He considered the travels from the descent of the First Prophet (Adam) to the ascent of the Last Prophets (Muḥammad) as some evidence.[15] Similarly, al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) believed that purification of one's moral evil needs inattention to the spirit of lasciviousness (*nafs al-ammāra*), and the journey can weaken it.[16]

The Sufis recommended that wayfarers choose the Qur'an, angels and God as their companions in order to benefit mystically and ethically from the journey.[17] To take a lesson is another important benefit of the journey. It is a sermon personified for the soul to observe those who disobeyed the divine command and were punished, or to witness those who believed in God and received the divine blessings so as to obey it.[18] The other benefit of the journey is to be cut off from anything except God. This kind of benefit relates the journey to the religious notion of emigration (*hijra*), with leaving one place for another disconnecting the soul of the wayfarer from creatures and connecting it instead to God.[19]

The etiquette of the journey is carefully considered in mystical life. In several early writings on ethics and *taṣawwuf*, much focus is given to the proper etiquette of journeying. Such etiquette included travelling for the pleasure of God and not for one's own desires and passions, cleanliness, preserving the

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13   Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmilat al-maḥbūb*, ed. Bāsil ʿUyūn al-Sūd. 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1417/1996), 2:191.

14   Sirāj al-Ṭūsī, *al-Lumaʿ*, 171.

15   Ismāʿil Mustamlī Bukhārī, *Sharh al-taʿarruf li-madhhab al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Muḥammad Ruwshan, 5 vols. (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 1363sh/1996), 3:1180.

16   Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālat al-qushayriyya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Halīm Maḥmūd and Maḥmūd b. al-Sharīf (Qum: Bīdār, 1374 sh./1995), 133.

17   Abu Saʿd ʿAbd al-Malik b. Muḥammad al-Kharkūshī, *Tahdhīb al-asrār fī uṣūl al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Imam Sayyid Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut: Dār al Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1427/2006), 241.

18   Bukhārī, *Sharḥ al-taʿarruf*, 3:1176.

19   Ibid., 3:1177.

Sunna of the Prophet, respecting locals, behaving well with other wayfarers, helping out fellow travelers, and not abusing others.[20]

In comparison to other journeys, in Sufism the pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) is very important. It is said that whoever went to Shiblī (d. 334/946) and repented, Shiblī would say to him: "'go on a pilgrimage and then return in order to company us.' Shiblī and his friends would then see him off without any provisions, and if someone objected that he would die, Shiblī would say that such would not happen, because if he is truly repenting because he wants my company he is an idol worshipper, and a monotheist sinner is better than a reformed idol worshipper; thus his goal is God and if he dies on the way, he dies in the way of truth [God] and if he returns, such an arduous journey will correct his soul in a manner that I would not be able to do even over the course of a decade."[21]

4   Metaphorical Use

Metaphor is based on simile[22] and means using another meaning of a word which is different from its literal meaning.[23] Metaphor is essentially understanding and experiencing something in terms of another thing. Our ordinary conceptual system, through which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.[24] Considering various aspects of a journey in its literal sense, led to the metaphorical use of the journey, and became prevalent in Sufi circles. Sufis used the journey as metaphor for death, the vicissitudes of life, and changes in one's states. On the former in particular, Sufis were well aware that death was considered a journey in religious teachings. Death, according to them, is a departure from this world to the next. It is a long and difficult journey and full of vicissitudes.[25] The exact time of this journey is unknown, and it is possible that any moment the bell tolls and one has to embark on this journey, which is full of perils.[26] As such, everyone should always be ready. Just as before embarking on any journey one has to prepare and equip oneself with

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20   Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAli Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (Tehran: Ṭahūrī, 1375 sh./1996), 449–50.

21   Bukhārī, *Sharh al-Taʿarruf*, 3:109.

22   ʿAbd al-Qāhir Jurjānī, *Asrār al-Balāgha*, trans. Jalīl Tajlīl (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1374 sh./1995), 30.

23   Ibid., 17.

24   Gorge Lukoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3–5.

25   Abu Nuʿaym Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ wa-ṭabaqāt al-aṣfīyāʾ*, ed. Muḥammad Riżā Shafiʿī Kadkanī, 11 vols. (Cairo: Dar Umm al-Qurā li-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr, n.d.), 6:168.

26   Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 71.

all required provisions, the Sufis invited others to prepare and plan for this journey over anything else.[27] Considering death as a journey and emphasizing the severity of this journey, and being unaware of the exact time of its commencement, regardless of its nearness, became a foundation stone for moral and ethical preaching. Virtue was emphasized as an essential provision for this journey.[28]

While expanding the metaphorical use of journey to include all changes and transitions in one's life, as in the literal sense of journey in which the traveler moves from one place to another, in its metaphorical use the traveler moves from one time to another. In this sense, a person starts his journey from the time of his birth.[29] The nights and days are various stages of this journey.[30] The passing of nights and days draws the traveler closer to the end. This journey, which lasts for a few days, offers an opportunity to send provisions to the last station (the Hereafter).[31] The investment of this journey is time, whereas the carnal, sensual passions are lurking to rob this capital away from man to make him deprived of any profit of this journey, which is the vision of God.[32] Sufis considered this life as a journey due to the fact it has an end like every journey, and a wayfarer should not be busy with the charms of the way but rather should think about his goal, that is to say the final station of the Hereafter. Such an approach to life takes the wayfarer away from the love for this world which is one of the biggest obstacles in the ratification of the ethical vices from the soul, and the attainment of virtue.

The metaphorical use of the journey to signify the transient nature of man, who shifts from one time to another, has been applied in a more specific sense as a metaphor for the transition of one's cognitive, mental, mystical and moral states. As Hujwīrī (d. 469/1072) recommended that a mendicant, who travels from one place to another for the sake of God, must also travel from the desires of his own soul.[33] Furthermore, one Sufi, Abū ʿUthmān, had been said to have remarked that if someone is a traveler, he must also travel from his own

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27   Khwāja ʿAbdullāḥ-i Anṣārī, *Munājāt-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamaṣiyān (Kerman: Intishārāt-i Khadamāt-i Farhangī-i Kirmān, 1382 sh./2003–4), 8.

28   Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, 2:310.

29   Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī, *Kayfyya al-sulūk ilā rabb al-ʿālamīn*, ed. ʿĀṣim Ibrāhim al-Kiyālī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1428/2007), 12.

30   Abū Zakarīyā Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh al-Rāzī, *Jawāhir al-taṣawwuf*, ed. Saʿīd Harūn ʿĀshūr (Cairo: Maktabat al-Ādāb, 1423/2002), 150.

31   Iṣbahānī, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, 7:345.

32   Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Ihya ʿulūm al-dīn*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥim b. Ḥusayn ʿIrāqi, 16 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 4:4.

33   Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, 451.

sensual desires.[34] The use of journey as a metaphor for the transition of one's states was the foundation for subsequently employing it as a technical term in ethical and mystical sources. This use is strongly relevant to the main core of ethics and Sufism which reflects changes in one's manners, spiritual states and beliefs. The metaphorical sense of journey is closely linked to the notion of completion (*istakmāl*), which is a gradual process and one of the key concepts in this domain.

5   Terminological Use: Metaphorical or Literal

The word journey gradually lost its metaphorical aspect of connoting the transition of one's states, and became literal. The process of this conversion can be explained as the metaphysicalization of sensory concepts as follows.

5.1   *Metaphysicalization of Sensory Concepts*

Whether it be Muʿtazili or Shīʿi *kalām*, or Islamic peripatetic philosophy, a much discussed problem in rational theology concerns the attributes of God, such as that of hearer or speaker, which may appear as a contradiction between anthropomorphism and his utter incomparability. Hearing, in its immediate literal meaning necessitates a physical ear, and the same goes for speaking where several physical features such as mouth, teeth and tongue are required. However, God is far above the need for such physical and material things. Moreover, it is mentioned in the Qur'an that God is the light of the heavens and the earth. If the light means corporeal light, we cannot describe God as light in that sense. For this reason some early Qur'anic commentators described the light as the guide of people in the heavens and the earth,[35] or that which adorns them.[36]

Philosophers and rational theologians attempted to solve this problem through the method of metaphysicalization. First, they analyzed the sense of such words and distinguished between core and crust; immaterial aspects are designated as the core while material aspects are considered to be the crust. For instance, they considered the aforementioned light as the core through the meaning of something that is manifested itself and makes other things

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34   Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ṣūfīyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1424/2003), 395.

35   Muqātil b. Sulaymān, *Tafsir Muqātil b. Sulaymān*, 5 vols. (Beirut: Dar Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1423/2002), 3:199.

36   Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Tustarī, *Tafsir al-Tustarī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, n.d.), 111.

manifest. They referred to material and sensory aspects of visible light as the crust. Therefore, any material and physical thing was abstracted from the core and became metaphysical. Later, the core that conveyed a generic unified common meaning was considered as divisor (*maqsam*). For instance, they classified light into material and immaterial types.[37] Finally, they proclaimed that the real meaning of any word or concept is its immaterial use by comparing these two types. We name it a transcendental reality in order to keep this meaning distinct from the first literal meaning of the word.

According to this research, it was Mustamlī Bukhārī who for the first time classified the notion of journey into two types: outward journey and inward journey. We name it a transcendental reality of the journey.[38] A comprehensive common meaning as a divisor is logically essential for the classification of journey into outward and inward. This comprehensive common meaning is obtained by abstracting the literal meaning of a journey from place to place, or any material and physical thing.

This process of the metaphysicalization of sensory concepts also occurred in relation to the notion of journey in Sufism. The first step was to separate the core meaning from its crust. The core meaning of journey is passing from one thing to another without considering material aspects. The crust is travelling from one place to another. The second step is to adopt the core of the concept as a comprehensive common meaning and then consider it as a divisor for various types of journey: outward journey and the relocation from one place to another, and the inward journey and the transition between various states, including cognitive-mental or mystical-ethical states. Therefore, the use of word journey in two types, whether outward or inward, became literal. As we have already mentioned, the inward journey is the transcendental reality of journey itself.

Mustamlī Bukhārī emphasized the necessity of outward journey for the purification of soul, as well as emphasizing the necessity of the inward journey. In his opinion inward journey means reflection and contemplation. The length of this journey spans from pre-eternity to post-eternity, because the wayfarer sometimes reflects on beginning of his journey and sometimes reflects on the end.[39] As a traveler passes various stages in the outward journey, the Sufi passes various stages by his endeavor.[40] The outward journey is limited by space

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37 Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Majmūʿa muṣannafāt Shaykh Ishrāq*, ed. Henry Corbin, Sayyid Ḥusayn Naṣr, and Najaf Qulī Ḥabībī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Institute of Cultural Studies and Research, 1375 sh./1996), 4:90.

38 Bukhārī, *Sharh al-taʿarruf*, 1:161.

39 Ibid., 1:162.

40 Ibid., 1:192.

and time, but the inward journey is not, thus the Sufi can travel all the world at a glance.[41] Bukhārī believed that Sufis travel so much because their interiors undergo transition. In his opinion, for those who are not Sufis their inward states depend on their outward states, and when their outward is calm, their inward becomes serene too. However, for Sufis the converse is true: their inward is principal and their outward states become dependent on their inward selves.[42]

After Bukhārī, Qushayrī also pointed out two types of journey. A journey with the body that is a transfer from place to place, and a journey with the heart that is evolution from one quality to another. He considered those who travel with their hearts to be much less numerous than those who travel with their bodies. He used the terminology of earthly and heavenly journeys so as to distinguish between these two kinds of journeys.[43] Qushayrī considered the end of journey to be the attainment of God, achieved through seekers surmounting their own selves.[44]

In his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, Abu Hāmid al-Ghazālī sees journey as a turning point that transposes the notion of journey from its metaphorical to transcendental reality. He assembled findings of the early Sufis, depicting a generic definition of the concept of journey for the first time. This concept was comprehensive and devoid of the material and physical aspects that had been assumed by both Bukhārī and Qushayrī. Ghazālī defined it as follows, "journey is a means of the liberation from which man intends to escape from or a means of achieving thing sought by him."[45] This definition is not limited by material aspects and is beyond all mental, sensory and material considerations. It encompasses both outward and inward journeys. According to Ghazālī, a journey is a means to achieve a goal and has instrumental value. He introduced two goals in his definition. One goal is to liberate someone from a painful and harsh situation which is unsuitable for his wellbeing and is incompatible with his happiness and prosperity. The other goal is to reach what is desirable, namely a state which is delightful and gentle and is in harmony with his wellbeing and brings happiness and good fortune. This definition is not only linked to the concept of emigration in the Qur'an but also is related to the concept of deliverance. Because deliverance is departing from an undesirable situation

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41   Ibid., 3:1095.

42   Ibid., 3:1180.

43   Qushayrī, *al-Risāla*, 411.

44   Ibid., 154.

45   Ghazālī, *Ihya ʿulūm al-dīn*, 6:94.

to a desirable one, it serves as one of the key concepts in religion as John Hick defines religion as salvation and deliverance.[46]

Ghazālī's definition has been considered by many Sufis in later centuries. Muḥammad Riżā Qumshah'ī regarded journey as a departure from one's home or a movement towards one's goals by passing various stages.[47] Sayyid Jalāl al-Din Ashtīyanī defined journey as a movement from one's place to reach one's goals.[48]

Ghazālī, after offering a comprehensive definition of journey, classified it into two types. One is the physical journey from one's home or homeland to the wilderness, and the other is the journey of the heart, or spiritual, inward one, that goes from the lowest of the low to the angelic world of souls. According to him the inward journey is nobler than the outward journey because the worst flaw is that someone, while having the capacity to reach higher realms, becomes complacent regarding the lower levels. Although such a person has the potential to reach the higher levels, he does not intend to develop it. Hence he is considered to be a person who does not have such potential.[49] He differentiated between those who travel from one place to another and those who travel by way of the heart. He considered this difference as similar to two pilgrims, one who makes the ḥajj and returns, while the other stays home and the Kaʿba revolves around him and reveals its secrets.[50] The human being has been endowed with the potential to connect with the infinite and the capacity to travel into various worlds of being. This journey is accessible through the heart and it is the honor of the human person.

The inward journey was considered as an actualized reality through the method of the metaphysicalization of sensory concepts. It is the outward journey that becomes allegorical, whereas attention to God is the reality of the journey or the transcendental reality of the journey. The transcendental reality of the journey is important in the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī. It provided a foundation for the concept of 'the four journeys' (*al-asfār al-arbʿa*). This concept came to be considered a paradigm organizing the various stages of the mystical path.

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46   John H. Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 3.

47   Muḥammad Riżā Qumshah'ī, *Majmūʿa āthār ṣahbā*, ed. Ḥāmid Nāmī Iṣfahānī and Khalil Bahrāmī Qaṣrchī (Isfahan: Circle of Research, 1378 sh./1999), 209.

48   Sayyid Jalāl al-Din Ashtīyanī, *Sharh muqaddima Qayṣarī* (Qum: Būstān Kitāb Qum, 1380 sh./2001), 664.

49   Ghazālī, *Ihya ʿulūm al-dīn*, 6:94.

50   Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Kīmīyā-yi saʿāda*, ed. Ḥusayn Khadīvjam, 2 vols. (Tehran: Markaz-i Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1383 sh./2004), 1:456.

5.2 *The Four Journeys in the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī*

Ibn al-ʿArabī defines a journey as an attention to God,[51] and indeed this is the very transcendental reality of the journey. He believed that man is travelling towards the Real (*al-ḥaqq*)[52] and that each moment of individual human existence is a way station on the path of returning to God.[53] As such, he interpreted the proximity of man toward God, upon which stands the entire structure of *taṣawwuf*, through his analysis of the transcendental reality of the journey.[54] According to him, the ultimate aim of every traveler is God, regardless of the fact that one journeys away from God, or away from himself, or journeys in the cosmos, or travels in the divine names.[55] The divine names, in fact, serve as stations for travelers,[56] and the end of the journey is perplexity.[57]

Ibn al-ʿArabī, who discerned no fewer than sixteen journeys mentioned in the Qurʾan, used the concept of multiple journeys as a model for the spiritual life.[58] He classified journey into three main types. This triple classification included a journal away from the Real, a journey towards the Real, and a journey in the Real. He warned that these journeys, like any other, are full of perils, and that travelling with the divine protects the wayfarer.[59] This triple classification was not only applied to mystical journeys, but also encompassed all sorts of travels, whether towards the Real, in the Real, or from the Real. Ibn al-ʿArabī based using multiple journeys as a paradigm for spiritual and mystical transition when he explained different types of travelers.

According to him, there are three kinds of travelers away from the Real. Firstly, those who have been rejected, such as Satan and all sorts of polytheists, those who are not rejected but are disgraced, and the sinners who depart in shame. Secondly, there are the chosen ones such as prophets who have been sent down from his presence toward his creation. Thirdly, there are saints who have returned to the physical world to direct and govern after witnessing the divine realities. Travelers towards God are also of three types. Firstly, there are

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51   Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya*, ed. ʿUthmān Yaḥya, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1994), 2:38.

52   Ibid., 3:211.

53   William C. Chitick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principals of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), xxxii.

54   Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkīyya*, 3:211.

55   Ibid., 7:125.

56   Ibid., 9:171.

57   Ian Almond, *Sufism and Deconstruction: A Comparative study of Derrida and Ibn ʿArabī* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 44.

58   John Renard, *Historical Dictionary of Sufism* (Oxford: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 2005), 131.

59   Ibn ʿArabī, *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, introduction by ʿAbd al-Rahmān al Marʿashī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Ihyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1423/2002), 2:3.

pagans. These are blind ones who are unable to see him. Secondly, there are those who consider him above anything that is not befitting, and proclaim God to be more aware of what he has revealed in the book. Such people are not blocked by his veil but they encounter his wrath. Thirdly, there are those who are protected and chaste, and are not touched by fear and grief. Travelers in him are of two types. Firstly, those whose minds travel in him such as philosophers and those who are similar to them. Secondly, there are those who travel in him with their entire selves such as prophets, messengers and friends of God.[60]

When the Sufis follow the long path back to their beloved (God), they pass through numerous 'states' and acquire the 'stations' that are the soul's virtues, character traits, and perfections. These states and stations have been described in detail in many Sufi works.[61] Ibn al-ʿArabī's expositions on journey prepared the ground for commentators to introduce the concept of the four journeys as a paradigm for these stages. ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291) in his commentary on *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, introduced the concept of the four Journeys (*al-asfār al-arbaʿa*) for the first time. He described each of them succinctly. They are as follows: journey towards God, journey in God, journey with God towards his creature, and journey with existents towards existence.[62] Other commentators on the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī's, in particular Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350)[63] reinforced the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī by expounding upon the mystical and spiritual transition within the mold of the four journeys,[64] which according to the latter are as follows:[65] 1) from his creation to the Real; 2) in the Real with the Real; 3) from the Real to his creation with the Real; and, 4) to his creation with the Real.[66]

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60   Ibid., 6–7.

61   William C. Chittick, *Sufism: A Beginner's Guide* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 115–16.

62   ʿAfif al-Din Sulaymān Tilimsānī, *Sharḥ manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, 2 vols. (Qum: Bidār, 1371 sh./1992), 2:381–2.

63   His statement regarding the four journeys became very prevalent among Sufis.

64   After Qayṣarī, there are various discussions of the four journeys. See the works of Muḥammad Riżā Qumshahʾī (*Majmūʿa āthār ṣahbā*, 209–11), Mahdī Mudarris Āshtiyānī (*Taʿlīqa bar sharḥ manẓūma Sabzāwārī* [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh, 1988], 30–2), Imām Khumaynī (*Miṣbāḥ al-hidāya ilā al-khilāfa wa-l-wilāya* [Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ, 1983], 88–9).

65   For his explanation of each journey see Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Rasāʾil-i Qayṣarī*, ed. Muḥammad Riżā Qumshahʾī (Tehran: Muʾassasa-yi Pizhūhishī Ḥikmat va Falsafa-yi Īrān, 1381 sh./2003), 30, and idem., *Sharh fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Sharikat-i Intishārāt-i ʿIlmī va Farhangī, 1383 sh./2004), 10, 114, 118–19, 423, 531.

66   Dawūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharh al-Qayṣarī ʿalā ṭāʾiyya Ibn Fāriḍ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1425/2004), 60.

6   Historical Development of the Uses of the Journey in the Sufism

Based on the foregoing discussion, the development of the various uses of the notion of journey in *taṣawwuf* can be organized as follows.

1.   A literal usage of the term in which travel from one place to another is primary (before the fifth/eleventh century).
2.   A metaphorical usage of the term as a metaphor for death, transitions in this life, and changes in one's spiritual states (before the fifth/eleventh century).
3.   As a generic concept divisible into two types, outward journey (literal usage) and inward journey (reflection and contemplation) (Mustamlī Bukhārī, in the fifth/eleventh century).
4.   As a generic concept divisible into two types, terrestrial (literal usage) and celestial (evolving from one quality to another) (Qushayrī, in the fifth/eleventh century).
5.   A unified definition free from the limitations and conditions of just an outward journey such that the outward, or physical, journey and spiritual, or inward journey, both occur by way of the heart (Ghazālī, in the sixth/twelfth century).
6.   A further developed concept concerning the existential transformation of man from the lowest of the low to the angelic world in terms of the journey by heart, including further gradations concerning the inward and celestial journey (Ghazālī, in the sixth/twelfth century).
7.   The formulation of a Sufi paradigm of journey in the sense of existential transformation (Ibn al-ʿArabī, in the seventh/thirteenth century).
8.   An assertion of the existential reality of journey through the existential transformation of the wayfarer (the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the seventh/thirteenth century).
9.   The organization of the existential transformation of the wayfarer by way of the paradigm of the four journeys (Ibn al-ʿArabī' commentators from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards).

7   Criticism of Metaphysicalization

It can be asserted that the metaphysicalization of journey is a hypothesis that has not been justified. This assertion faces the following problems two main problems: 1) the assertion is based on linguistic assumptions and entails a

linguistic argument; and, 2) if the process of metaphysicalization is accepted, it should be applied to any word and its meaning. However, that is impossible.

8   Conclusion

Journey is very important in Sufism, and given that journey plays a role in achieving the mystical goal in terms of its purpose and process, Sufis have used the literal meaning of journey as transfer from one place to another. Journey has also been used as a metaphor for death and the passing of life to reveal hidden aspects of the wayfarer's soul to himself, which can be effective in purifying his it. The metaphorical use of the journey for the passing the life in a more specific sense had been applied to indicate transitions in one's cognitive, ethical or mystical states. This metaphorical use became a transcendental reality by way of the process of the metaphysicalization of sensual concepts. In this process, the core of meaning of journey, passing from one place to another, was separated from the crust, passing from one thing to another, by abstracting all material and physical aspect of the journey. Therefore, this core of meaning was divided into two types, outward and inward journeys, and both types were considered to be literal rather than metaphorical. The metaphorical meaning became literal and was considered to be a transcendental reality. This transcendental reality became a paradigm for existential transitions during the process of wayfaring on the mystical path. By way of criticism, it can be asserted that the process of metaphysicalization is based on linguistic assumptions which necessitate linguistic arguments and that, moreover, such a process has its own limitations in that it cannot be applied to all words.