

The Metaphor of “Pilgrimage” in the Mystical Poetry of Ḥāfiẓ, Shabistārī, and Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī: Interpretation, Implications, and Criticism

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Submitted: 2023.12.22 | Accepted: 2024.03.05



Abstract

This study explores the metaphorical use of “pilgrimage,” or *zīyārat*, in Persian mystical poetry, particularly in the works of Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, Maḥmūd Shabistārī, and Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī. The poets transcend the term’s traditional religious implications, imbuing it with a profound spiritual resonance. Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī employs the metaphor of pilgrimage in association with the “tavern” and “wine house,” using “wine” as a symbol of divine love and knowledge, thus revealing a spiritual journey surpassing literal religious adherence. The paper further delves into the usage of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey towards the divine shrine: the human “heart.” Shabistārī and Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī’s works conceptualize the heart as an object of pilgrimage, reflecting humans’ inherent sacredness and divinity. This interpretation expands the notion of pilgrimage beyond a physical journey to a metaphysical quest for self-understanding and compassion. Moreover, the research identifies metaphoric language’s dual role in Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī’s work: a protective strategy and a criticism of formalistic religious practice. The use of metaphor serves not as a rejection of religion but as a nuanced challenge to rigid religious interpretations. Remarkably, the metaphorical interpretation of pilgrimage extends beyond the confines of literature and has integrated into Iranian vernacular, adopting a new meaning to imply “visiting individuals.” The humans’ divine nature underpins this linguistic transformation; thus, visiting someone is interpreted as a spiritual journey to their heart. Nevertheless, potential criticisms arise from these interpretations. While poetically compelling, they may offer an overly romanticized view of the spiritual journey and may not resonate with all due to cultural, religious, or personal constraints. The paper provides insight into the transformative power of language in Persian mystical poetry, emphasizing the metaphorical use of pilgrimage despite potential limitations and criticisms. It demonstrates poetry’s ability to push boundaries, provoke thought, and invite deeper spiritual exploration.

Keywords: Persian mystical poetry, pilgrimage, spiritual intoxication, heart, Divine love and knowledge

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1. Introduction

Exploring the metaphorical interpretation of “pilgrimage” in Persian mystical poetry requires understanding its multifarious essence within Islamic tradition. Ashraf (2008, 256-258) elucidates the pilgrimage to Ka’ba, namely Hajj, a synthesis of external rituals and internal spiritual transformation. The actions of the Hajj—such as circumambulation, animal sacrifice, and drinking water from the sanctified Zamzam well—embody the ritualistic aspects of the pilgrimage. However, these outward manifestations of devotion merely represent the surface of the pilgrimage experience. Pilgrimage also constitutes a spiritual transformation that complements these external rites. This internal process entails surrendering to God, a metaphoric sacrifice of one’s self, or *nafs*, and the transcendence of the self. Ashraf (2008, 255-256) elucidates that the “sacrifice” in pilgrimage epitomizes ultimate surrender to God, encapsulated in Prophet Abraham’s readiness to offer his dearest son Ismael. It embodies the spiritual transcendence of the self, symbolizing the pilgrim’s conscious devotion to divine veneration. It signifies the removal of disbelief’s veil and the fulfillment of their divine covenant. The climax of this inner journey is direct communion with the Divine—an awareness of the divine presence, leading to divine union. Thus, the true essence of a pilgrimage in Islam is balancing its tangible rituals and spiritual transformations.

The mystical poets like Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d. circa 1320 CE),¹ Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī (d. 1389 CE), and Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī (d. circa 1702 CE) adeptly transcend the traditional perception of “pilgrimage” and redefine it as a “metaphysical journey” towards spiritual introspection, intoxication, selflessness, compassion, and enlightenment.

Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistārī was a renowned Persian Sufi born in 1288 CE in Shabistar, Iran. He spent his formative years in Tabriz, where he developed his intellectual interests. Shabistārī is best known for his masterpiece, *The Rose Garden of Mystery*, or *Gulshan-i Rāz*, which is a poetic response to philosophical and mystical questions posed by Amīr Sayyid Husseini Hirawī—a Khurāsānī mystic.² This work draws heavily on the ideas of Ibn ‘Arabī, Rūmī, and ‘Aṭṭār, exploring the spiritual journey and the struggle of the self toward divine union. Despite its literary acclaim, Shabistārī’s work invites a deeper exploration of its philosophical and mystical dimensions. He passed away circa 1320 in Shabistar, leaving behind a legacy that combines Islamic metaphysics with Persian poetic eloquence.

Born around 1326 CE in Shiraz, Iran, Khāwjih Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Shīrāzī, known as Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, emerged as a renowned Persian poet acclaimed for his mastery of ghazals. He earned the epithet *lisān al-Ghayb*, or the “language of the Hidden,” due to his profound mystical poetry. Ḥāfiẓ’s influence permeated through subsequent Persian poetry and resonated within Western literary spheres. His extensive learning in religious and literary sciences and dedication to memorizing the Quran earned him the title *Ḥāfiẓ*, the “memorizer of the Quran.” His poetry,

marked by a unique blend of Persian culture, Islamic theology, philosophy, and mysticism, was often critical of hypocrisy and superficial religious practices. He died in 1389 CE in Shiraz, where his tomb, *Ḥāfiẓiye*, stands as a revered pilgrimage site for poetry enthusiasts.

Mīrzā Muḥammad ‘Alī, known as Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī, was a renowned Iranian poet who lived during the Safavid era. Born circa 1621 CE in either Isfahan or Tabriz—though his family was undoubtedly from Tabriz—he is widely celebrated for his extensive output of poetry. His verses showcase his exceptional artistic skills. Apart from Persian, he also composed poetry in Azerbaijani Turkish, demonstrating his proficiency in different languages. As a young man, Ṣā’ib embarked on a journey to India, where he became a favorite of Shāh Jahān’s court. He later traveled to Kashmīr before returning to Iran. For his exceptional poetic talent, Shāh Abbās II honored him with the title of *Malik al-shu‘arā*, or “King of Poets.” Ṣā’ib spent his later years in Iṣfahān, where he attracted artists and intellectuals to his residence. He passed away in Iṣfahān around 1702 CE, leaving behind a legacy celebrated for its prolific and profound contributions to Persian poetry. His tomb in Iṣfahān is a testament to his enduring influence.

Pilgrimage is typically perceived in its ritualistic context, but recognizing its mystical dimensions enhances our comprehension of this pivotal concept in Islam and its impact on human lives. This study explores the metaphorical use of “pilgrimage,” or *ziyārat*, in Persian mystical poetry, particularly in the works of Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, Maḥmūd Shabistarī, and Ṣā’ib Tabrīzī. It examines the mystical underpinnings of pilgrimage in the poets’ works, analyzing its metaphorical usage and critiquing the potential limitations of this metaphorical interpretation. This brief study invites further research into mystical symbolism in Persian poetry.

This paper’s thesis posits that the three poets expand the concept of pilgrimage beyond its conventional religious connotations, infusing it with deep spiritual significance. Pilgrimage is a spiritual quest beyond mere religious observance, positioning the heart as the center of innate sanctity and divinity. This expanded interpretation transforms the pilgrimage from a physical expedition into an introspective, metaphorical journey towards self-awareness, compassion, self-transcendence, and oneness with the Divine. Moreover, the reimagined notion of pilgrimage transcends literary boundaries, having socio-cultural implications in Muslim communities such as Iran.

This paper aims to provide a structured analysis of the metaphor of pilgrimage in the works of three Persian poets, mainly using an “intracultural” lens. While acknowledging the value of the “intercultural” approach, which often depends heavily on Western texts, it is crucial to root the interpretation of Persian poetry in its native intellectual milieu. The methodology is twofold: the first part, “horizontal interpretation,” elucidates the poems’ terms, verses, and references to the Quran and hadith. The second part, “vertical interpretation,” delves into the profound

meanings of principal concepts. This is achieved by integrating findings from the horizontal analysis with the broader narrative in the Islamic tradition.

In what follows, the paper first delves into the symbolic quest for divine love and knowledge in Persian mystical poetry. It then examines the portrayal of the heart as a sacred shrine for inner pilgrimage. Subsequently, it explores the socio-cultural implications of these spiritual concepts. Finally, it offers a comprehensive evaluation of the metaphorical use of pilgrimage, encapsulating its spiritual and cultural significance.

2. Pilgrimage

2.1. Quest for the Divine Love-Knowledge

In Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī's poetry—for example, in ghazal 131—pilgrimage, or *zīyārat*, is often associated with the “tavern” or “wine house”—*maykada* in Farsi—where “wine” signifies divine “love” and “knowledge,” adding a layer of mystic symbolism. In Persian mystical literature, the metaphor of wine symbolizes the transformative power of divine love, leading to spiritual awakening and enlightenment. This divine wine, distinct from earthly intoxicants, liberates the heart, enlightens the individual, and bestows divine secrets, guiding the seeker toward true awareness. Equating wine with love, it is suggested that only through intoxication by divine love can one achieve true knowledge and self-transcendence. This journey of love is marked by intense devotion, self-transcendence, and ultimate union with the Divine, echoing the broader theme of seeking perfection, which aligns the seeker closer to the divine realm.

For Ḥāfiẓ (1941, ghazal 131), the “tavern of love” symbolizes the “spiritual intoxication,” a destination unveiling the true essence of the “rituals of piety” through divine love. In other words, the spiritual pilgrimage is a quest that uncovers the essence of piety through love. It differs from the literal sense of a “sacred site visit,” figuratively signifying a “spiritual journey” of transformation and enlightenment.

که خاک می‌کده عشق را زیارت کرد

ثوابِ روزه و حج قبول آن کس برد

The reward for fasting and accepted Hajj is his,
Who has made a pilgrimage to the dust of the tavern of love.
(Ḥāfiẓ 1941, Ghazal 131:2)³

What is “spiritual intoxication”? In examining the theme of spiritual intoxication as presented in Ḥāfiẓ's poetry, Mullā Muḥsin Fayẓ Kāshānī's (d. 1091/1681 H/CE) nuanced perspective is illuminating—for a detailed analysis of spiritual intoxication, see Rahbari Ghazani and Davoodi Kahaki's (2024) research. Fayẓ Kāshānī's (2002, ghazal 744:1-5) *Divan* is a foundational text for understanding the

equilibrium between rational thought and mystical insight on the path to divine unity. This ghazal articulates the progression towards a state of divine “knowledge” or “gnosis” (*irfān*) and a deeper intimacy with the Divine.

The spiritual odyssey, as depicted by Fayz Kāshānī (2002, *Divan*, ghazal 744:1-5; ghazal 122:2), commences with the seeker engaging in deep reflection, eventually confronting the limitations of rationality. This realization propels the seeker into a continuous and focused contemplation of God, leading to a profound sense of awe or bewilderment (*ḥayrat*), marking a critical transition point. In other words, the spiritual journey is characterized by stages that include acknowledging the limits of reason, engaging in perpetual divine contemplation, and the fusion of rational and mystical thought, which nurtures *muḥabbat*—an initial stage of divine love. Upon cultivating this love, the seeker experiences divine “attraction,” or *jadhba*, a deeper level of divine love, drawing them closer to God and leading to self-transcendence, or becoming “sign-less,” as a prerequisite for unity with the Divine.

Let us define *jadhba* more precisely. *Jadhba* transcends mere thought, manifesting as a profound feeling of divine euphoria, marked by purity and a sense of cleansing, akin to the transformation of a muddy glass into clarity. This experience is characterized by an intense focus and a meditative serenity, drawing the seeker nearer to God, often accompanied by a weakening of the senses, reminiscent of awakening from sleep. *Wajd*, or “ecstasy,” is identified as a vital precursor to divine attraction, with each instance signifying a specific manifestation of this deeper pull. Yasrebi (1989, 233) elucidates that *wajd* represents a transformative spiritual state, momentarily lifting the veils of self to allow the Divine’s light to illuminate the heart, albeit briefly.

Fayz Kāshānī’s poetry intertwines divine attraction with the theme of self-transcendence and the quest for the Divine Friend. He posits attraction as a “guiding force” emanating from the Friend’s grace, emphasizing the necessity of self-transcendence for traversing the path towards the Divine. This process, initiated by *muḥabbat* and propelled by *jadhba*, culminates in a liberating transcendence beyond the ego, facilitating a union with the Real (Fayz Kāshānī 2002, G.122:1-2; G.744:1-10).

Through this detailed exploration, one gains invaluable insights into the spiritual dimensions that clarify Ḥāfiẓ’s poetry. Kāshānī’s perspective on the interplay between rationality, mystical contemplation, divine love, and the transformative journey towards self-transcendence and divine union enriches the understanding of spiritual intoxication within the poetic tradition.

In summary, Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī’s portrayal of pilgrimage as a symbolic journey to the tavern of love in his poetry underscores a spiritual quest triggered by divine love and knowledge. This spiritual intoxication signifies a transformative path toward enlightenment and unity with the Divine, where the seeker experiences profound self-transcendence through the intoxicating power of love.

Transitioning to another poem from Ḥāfiẓ (1941, Ghazal 132), a similar pilgrimage use surfaces. It refers metaphorically to visiting the “wine house,” or *maykhāna*. This pilgrimage figuratively signifies a spiritual journey of “purification” and “intoxicating enlightenment.” This theme is evident in verse:

بَابِ رُوشَنِ مِی عَارِفِی طَهَارَتِ کَرْدِ
عَلَى الصَّبَاحِ کِه مِیخَانِه رَا زِیَارَتِ کَرْدِ

In the luminous waters of wine, the gnostic his purity asserts,
At the break of dawn, his pilgrimage to the wine house diverts.
(Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī 1941, ghazal 132:1)

In this poem, the gnostic, or *‘arif*, cleanses himself with the “bright water of wine,” meaning that he purifies himself through illuminating love and knowledge. This verse highlights the transformative nature of the spiritual pilgrimage, underscoring the metaphorical depth of the pilgrimage in Ḥāfiẓ’s spiritual universe.

In Islamic mystical poetry, symbolic and metaphorical language, as exemplified by Ḥāfiẓ, is significant in navigating the socio-cultural realities of the mystics’ era. Analyzing ghazals 131 and 132 by Ḥāfiẓ reveals his tendency to challenge the orthodox interpretation of religious practices. Ḥāfiẓ contrasts with those who adhere strictly to the outward forms of religious rituals without understanding their spiritual significance. He suggests that true piety and the essence of rituals like fasting and Hajj can be achieved through spiritual intoxication and self-transcendence, core mystical experiences that allow for unity with the Divine. This approach allows Ḥāfiẓ to safely express profound mystical truths within the constraints of his era. Ḥāfiẓ’s criticism, however, is not rooted in outright defiance of religion but works against the rigid interpretations of religious scholars of his time. Notably, symbolic language served as a shield, allowing Ḥāfiẓ and other poets to express the spiritual realities they perceived in metaphoric guise. Because of the dominant power of the jurisprudent scholars—and considering their general guard against mysticism—mystics resorted to metaphoric and symbolic language to traverse the dangerous path of mystical discourse, which, when expressed openly, brought doom to mystics like Manṣūr Ḥallāj.

Delving deeper into the role of metaphors in Persian mystical poetry, Akbari’s 2023 paper thoroughly explores their pivotal role in Islamic metaphysics, demonstrating how effectively they articulate and convey complex spiritual and philosophical notions. Akbari (2023, 79-80) sheds light on the strategic employment of metaphorical language by Muslim philosophers such as Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) and Suhrawardī, who utilized metaphors, allegories, and symbols to communicate profound metaphysical ideas. These philosophers acknowledged the limitations of straightforward language in capturing spiritual and metaphysical complexities, opting instead for the nuanced and evocative power of metaphors to connect abstract truths with human understanding.

Metaphors are depicted not merely as embellishments in Islamic metaphysical writings but as fundamental tools for investigation and teaching, making esoteric concepts more accessible. Works featuring symbolic narratives, like Ibn Sīnā's *Risāla al-Ṭayr*, employ characters' journeys as metaphors for the soul's pursuit of knowledge and divine connection, showcasing the journey towards enlightenment and unity with the Absolute.

Akbari also points out that metaphors in Islamic philosophy go beyond educational uses, reflecting a profound grasp of human cognition and the capacity of symbolic language to inspire introspection, emotional engagement, and spiritual insight. Metaphors act as conduits to transcendental truths, encouraging readers to actively interpret and engage with the texts on a personal exploratory journey.

Moreover, the paper articulates the lasting relevance of metaphors and allegories in Islamic metaphysics for offering new insights into contemporary spiritual and philosophical debates. Akbari's examination of specific metaphorical stories highlights their ability to address enduring questions of human existence, identity, and the search for meaning, underscoring their universal appeal and applicability.

Nevertheless, while acknowledging metaphoric language's critical and protective role, one should not ignore its potential limitations. For example, the romanticized spiritual journey presented in Ḥāfiẓ's use of pilgrimage may risk undermining the physical pilgrimage's role in the tradition. Additionally, the heavy reliance on the wine metaphor could alienate those unable to connect with this symbol due to cultural, religious, or personal constraints.

In conclusion, Ḥāfiẓ's use of metaphors, such as the pilgrimage, provides a nuanced layer to his poetry, reflecting the socio-cultural realities of his time while challenging dogmatic religious practices. However, while deeply meaningful and artistically compelling, this metaphoric language carries potential criticisms and limitations that must be considered.

2.2. Quest for the Divine Shrine: Heart⁴

Pilgrimage can also be applied to humans due to their divine nature. This interpretation marks humans as sacred entities, rendering them worthy of pilgrimage. The basis for this perspective is fundamentally anchored in Quranic teachings, especially verse (38:72),⁵ wherein God says to have imparted His Spirit into humans. As per Islamic tradition, this divine Act is the foundation for humans' sanctity.

Tracing the roots of this usage of pilgrimage, a prophetic hadith emerges, where God proclaims: “Neither the Heavens nor the Earth can contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant can contain Me” (Kulaynī 2020, 128, ḥ. 17). This assertion underscores the immense capacity of the human being's heart to embrace and

embody the divine Presence, implying the heart's spiritual importance, which qualifies it as a destination for an inner pilgrimage.

The human heart is central to Sufism. In *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, Ibn 'Arabī (1999, V1, Book II, Chapter 3) highlights the heart's pivotal role in acquiring knowledge. He suggests that knowledge is the heart's perception of an entity, which correlates with the entity's inherent essence. Through this framework, he posits that knowledge naturally requires the heart's engagement with entities, positioning the heart as the perceiver and the entity as the perceived. This concept enriches our comprehension of the heart's significance in Sufism, portraying it as a central point for knowledge's reception and dissemination. In Islamic mysticism or Sufism, the heart is often called the "intellective soul" or "rational soul," as a crucial intermediary between the spirit and the soul. It is in the heart that divine revelations are manifested, and knowledge is discerned—a dual function in which the heart assimilates knowledge from the spirit and relays it to the soul, underscoring the heart's essential role in facilitating the flow of knowledge (Lāhijī 2016, 46).

The essence of pilgrimage in Persian mystical poetry embodies a journey far beyond the physical traverses to sacred sites. This spiritual voyage emphasizes an inner pilgrimage to the heart, highlighting a quest for profound internal reflection and enlightenment. This understanding of pilgrimage transcends the tangible, manifesting a metaphysical expedition toward self-awareness and divine wisdom.

Shabistarī's *Marātib al-Ārifīn* offers a poignant illustration of this spiritual odyssey. In his work, the heart symbolizes Ka'ba, a sacred destination for those seeking closeness to the Divine. This notion of the heart as a pilgrimage site surpasses the physical act of visiting holy places, proposing that the true essence of pilgrimage lies in the exploration and purification of one's heart. Shabistarī's poetry thus reflects a foundational aspect of Islamic mysticism, where the journey towards God is inward, leading to union with the Divine.

Shabistarī eloquently captures the dual nature of pilgrimage—physical and spiritual—paralleling the physical Ka'ba in Mecca with the "Ka'ba of the heart," each representing different facets of the spiritual quest. The emphasis on the heart's Ka'ba as surpassing the physical signifies the immense value placed on inner purity and spiritual awakening and the compassionate attitude toward others. It suggests that the ultimate pilgrimage is that of the heart—both in oneself and other human beings—urging seekers to embark on this journey with as much, if not more, fervor as the physical pilgrimage to Mecca. Through this, Shabistarī elevates the concept of an inner pilgrimage and invites the faithful to consider the human heart as a core in their quest for divine closeness.

یک کعبه صورت است و یک کعبه دل

کافزون ز هزار کعبه آمد یک دل

Upon the sacred path, two Ka'bas found,

در راه خدا دو کعبه آمد حاصل

تا بتوانی زیارت دلها کن

One of earthly form, one of heart's profound.

Visit hearts while strength in thee remains,
For one heart's worth a thousand Ka'bas gains.
(Shabistarī 1993, 399)

Similarly, Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī's (2023) ghazal 6336 presents a profound reinterpretation of pilgrimage, shifting the focus from a physical journey to a quest aimed at nurturing and healing people in need's hearts. This perspective regards the heart as a sacred shrine that embodies the divine within humans. Through this lens, the pilgrimage is transformed into a journey toward compassion and comfort, suggesting that true devotion is in tending to the emotional and spiritual needs of oneself and others.

Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī challenges conventional notions of worship and pilgrimage that prioritize physical acts of devotion, such as the maintenance and decoration of the (physical) Ka'ba. He argues that such emphasis might overlook the essence of spirituality, which lies in compassion, empathy, and the alleviation of suffering. By questioning the value of adorning a physical structure while ignoring the pain of a "broken heart," Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī advocates for a broader understanding of religious duty that encompasses care for the human spirit as a form of service to God. This reevaluation of spiritual priorities calls for a shift in perspective, where kindness, understanding, and compassion are a form of worship.

The poet's message resonates with the core principles of Islamic mysticism, which often emphasizes the importance of assisting people as a pathway to divine closeness. By highlighting the heart's significance as a site of divine encounter, Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī enriches the concept of pilgrimage, making it an interpersonal and universally accessible journey. His ghazal encourages believers to recognize the sacredness in each other and to heal the hearts to draw closer to the Divine.

چه گل در آب به تعمیر کعبه می گیری؟ خراب گشته دلی را برو عمارت کن

Why mix clay with water for the Ka'ba's repair?
Go, mend a heart that's shattered, lay your craft there.
(Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī 2023, 6336:3)

This interpretation of pilgrimage as a spiritual quest for compassion centered in the heart opens an innovative path for religious and mystical exploration. However, this interpretation, while poetically compelling, may not resonate with all followers of the faith who place significant value on the physical act of pilgrimage, seeing it as a concrete manifestation of their devotion.

Exploring the cultural applications of this concept, a pattern surfaces in Iranian society and some other Muslim countries, where pilgrimage also denotes "visiting people." This socio-cultural practice seems to have roots in considering the heart as an object of pilgrimage. Thus, visiting someone, being in their presence, and

sharing a communal space is seen as a journey to their heart—a personal and intimate pilgrimage. This expanded notion of pilgrimage embodies a deep spiritual connotation and establishes a profound human connection. Importantly, this pilgrimage acknowledges the divine within the human, the sacred within the mundane, and the spiritual journey within everyday interaction—a daily pilgrimage.

3. Evaluation and Conclusion

Investigating the metaphorical use of pilgrimage in Persian mystical poetry yields insights into Islamic mysticism's poetic and spiritual realms. It is intriguing to note the parallels drawn between the Islamic ritual of Hajj and the metaphorical pilgrimage employed in the works of poets such as Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, Shabistarī, and Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī. Their metaphoric language is an innovative medium to navigate and criticize their time's socio-cultural and religious dimensions, particularly challenging the dogmatic religious interpretations that risk curtailing the human being's transcendental journey to divine communion.

Ḥāfiẓ's innovative association of pilgrimage with symbols of intoxication, like the tavern and wine house, can be construed as an extension of the physical pilgrimage. In this case, the wine symbolizes divine love and knowledge, indicating the spiritual transformation that can be achieved through the pilgrimage rites. Likewise, the notion of the heart as an object of pilgrimage, as conceptualized by Shabistarī and Ṣā'ib Tabrīzī, also resonates with the Islamic mystical interpretation of Hajj. Circumambulating the Ka'ba, as Ashraf put it (2008, 251-254), mirrors a cosmic dance with celestial beings, leading to a mystical union with the Divine that transcends the physical. Such a perspective introduces another dimension to the concept of pilgrimage, where circumambulating the heart is also a path to divine union. It is crucial to remember that while the rites of Hajj carry profound spiritual significance, their transformative impact hinges on the pilgrim's conscious understanding of their deeper meanings (Ashraf 2008, 254).

Notably, the metaphorical interpretation of pilgrimage in Persian poetry can risk presenting an overly romanticized view of the spiritual journey, which may obscure the tangible struggles intrinsic to achieving spiritual enlightenment. Additionally, while poetically compelling, the heavy reliance on the wine metaphor could alienate certain readers who cannot connect with this symbol due to cultural, religious, or personal constraints.

In conclusion, this exploration underscores the intricate relationship between language, religion, and socio-cultural realities, as embodied in the symbolic language of Persian mystical poetry. The metaphorical usage of pilgrimage, while providing a rich and nuanced layer to these poems, also poses an interpretative challenge. This tension reinforces the importance of a balanced understanding that

acknowledges metaphoric language's poetic ingenuity and potential limitations in representing the spiritual journey.

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Notes

1. The exact year of Shaykh Maḥmūd Shabistari's passing is a subject of scholarly debate. It is frequently proposed that he passed away in 720 Hijri (1320 CE). However, alternate historical accounts suggest that he may have lived until 740 Hijri (1339 CE).

2. Contemporary critical works examining the topics Shabistari addresses are as follows. Rahbari Ghazani (2023) elucidates the obstacles encountered in the spiritual journey. Additionally, Rahbari Ghazani and Topaloğlu's research (2023) illuminates his interpretation of *tafakkur*'s dual significance, distinguishing between mystical contemplation and rational reflection. Rahbari Ghazani and Uysal (2023) delve into Shabistari's perspective on the "self."

3. The author has translated all the poems quoted in this paper from Farsi to English. For brevity, "own translation" is omitted from citations.

4. The title "Quest for the Divine Shrine: Heart" is carefully chosen to encapsulate the core argument of this paper. The preposition "for" signifies a search or pursuit, which, in this context, refers to the metaphorical journey towards understanding and healing of the human heart, considered a "divine shrine" in Persian poetry. This contrasts with the preposition "to," suggesting a more physical journey toward a destination. The choice of "for" over "to" emphasizes this quest's introspective, metaphorical, and spiritual nature, aligning more closely with the themes and interpretations explored within this paper. This purpose was also considered in the previous title (2.1).

5. The Quranic (38:71-73) passage is as follows: "(Remember) when thy Lord said unto the angels, 'Behold! I am creating a human being from clay. When I have proportioned him and *breathed into him of My Spirit*, fall down before him prostrating.' Then the angels prostrated, all of them together" (Nasr's translation, 2015, *emphasis added*).