



Original article

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas in Selected Sayings of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya: A Cognitive Semantic Study

Mokhalad Naji Kamil

Department of English, College of Arts, University of Thi-Qar, An Nasiriyah, Iraq

ABSTRACT

In the present paper, I will analyze conceptual metaphors and image schemas in seven chosen sayings in Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya through the concept of cognitive semantics and especially the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1987). The research has answers to the question below: How do the conceptual metaphors and image schemas arrange abstract spiritual ideas in these supplications? The metaphors discovered in the analysis include GUIDANCE IS A PATH, SIN IS A BURDEN, and KNOWLEDGE/FAITH IS LIGHT, and recurring image schema (PATH, CONTAINER, FORCE) to help the readers to identify abstract spiritual notions like divine orientation and moral struggle with the help of tangible and embodied experience. These findings suggest that these tendencies do not merely transform abstract concepts like mercy and repentance into real experience but also into personal and familiar experience. The study testifies the fact that Al-Sahifa employs a sophisticated cognitive system that integrates spirituality and morality that are employed to conceptualize the literature of Islamic devotions and demonstrates universal cognitive processes organizing the abstract thinking with assistance of metaphors.

*Correspondence author:
Mokhalad.Naji@utq.edu.iq

Received: 12 January 2026
Accepted: 27 March 2026
Published: 01 May 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol22.Iss2.1562>



1812-0512 /© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Wasit Journal for Humanities Sciences, Wasit University. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Cite:

Kamil, M. N. (2026). Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas in Selected Sayings of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya: A Cognitive Semantic Study. Wasit Journal for Human Sciences, 22(2). <https://doi.org/10.31185/wjfh.Vol22.Iss2.1562>

Keywords: Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Metaphors, Image Schemas, and Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya.

الاستعارات المفاهيمية ونماذج الصور في مختارات من أقوال الصحيفة السجادية: دراسة في الدلالات المعرفية

م.د. مخلد ناجي كامل

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية كلية الآداب، جامعة ذي قار، العراق

المستخلص

تبحث هذه الورقة في الاستعارات المفاهيمية ومخططات الصور في أقوال مختارة من الصحيفة السجادية، وذلك باستخدام إطار علم الدلالة المعرفي، وبخاصة نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية (CMT) لجورج لايفوف ومارك جونسون (1980، 1987). تقدم الدراسة إجابات عن السؤال التالي: كيف تنظم الاستعارات المفاهيمية ومخططات الصور المفاهيم الروحية المجردة في هذه الأدعية؟ ويجد التحليل استعارات مثل (الهداية هي الطريق)، و(الذنب هو الحمل الثقيل)، و(المعرفة/الإيمان هو النور)، إلى جانب مخططات صور متكررة (الطريق، والوعاء، والقوة)، مما يمكن القراء من تمييز المفاهيم الروحية المجردة مثل التوجيه الإلهي والصراع الأخلاقي من خلال الخبرة الجسدية الملموسة. تشير النتائج إلى أن هذه الأنماط لا تحوّل الأفكار المجردة مثل الرحمة والتوبة إلى مجرد تجربة حسية فحسب، بل تحوّلها أيضًا إلى تجارب شخصية ومرتبطة بالواقع. يثبت البحث حقيقة أن الصحيفة السجادية تستخدم آلية معرفية متقدمة تدمج الروحانية والأخلاق، وهي آلية تستخدم لفهم أدب العبادات الإسلامية، مما يُظهر عمليات معرفية عالمية من خلال تنظيم التفكير المجرد بمساعدة الاستعارات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغويات المعرفية، الاستعارات المفاهيمية، نماذج الصور، الصحيفة السجادية.

1-Introduction

Language is not just a means of communication, but it is also a strong thinking instrument where abstract spiritual experiences are projected and rendered intelligible. Metaphors in Islamic devotional literature are major elements in describing the complicated theological, ethical, and emotional conditions that go beyond the immediate sense perception. Among the most striking representatives of such discourse is the collection of supplications of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (Zayn al- 'Abidin), who is called Al-Sajjad, and holds a significant place in the spirituality of Islam and religious books of the Arabic language.

In the context of Cognitive Semantics, metaphor can be perceived as not simply a rhetorical ornament but as a basic process in which people think. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) demonstrates that abstract concepts are organized and interpreted in a systematic manner to be based on more concrete domains, which rely on bodily and experiential reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Image schemas, recurrent patterns of dynamic embodied experience, including PATH, CONTAINER, SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, and BALANCE, which form the basis of meaning construction and conceptual organization are closely related to conceptual metaphors (Johnson, 1987 & Lakoff, 1987).

The mental method works best when applied to religious texts because these texts use spatial and physical movement patterns to explain their metaphysical concepts of divine proximity and guidance as well as sin and repentance and spiritual development. The directions are commonly represented as a way, isolation to God as distance or darkness, and Godly mercy as enclosure, light, or food in Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya. These metaphorical patterns do not come out of thin air, but rather these patterns are indicative of deeply rooted cognitive patterns that inform the understanding of spiritual reality on the part of the believer. The rich metaphorical elements of Al-Şahīfa al- Sajjadiyya attract scholarly research because its theological and ethical and rhetorical aspects receive more attention. The cognitive semantic perspective of Al-Şahīfa al- Sajjadiyya research has been conducted only to a small extent. This paper aims to cover this gap by analyzing conceptual metaphors and image schemas in the chosen sayings of Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya. Using theoretical instruments of Cognitive Semantics, the present study will seek to discover not only how abstract spiritual meanings are systematically based on embodied experience, but also how these cognitive patterns can be used to produce the persuasive, emotive, and didactic effects of the text.

Finally, The importance of this work is that there are systematic conceptual frameworks of Islamic devotional language that are uncovered using cognitive semantics and hence presented in a way that enhances a more profound insight into the ways that spiritual meaning is instantiated and internalized. Although the theological and rhetorical sides of Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya have been examined in the existing scholarship, the gap in the cognitive analysis of the metaphorical mechanism is substantial. This paper fills this gap by posing the following question: How do conceptual metaphors and image schemas model abstract spiritual concepts in seven selected sayings in the text? The research was based on a qualitative, descriptive-analytical design that relies on Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980, 1987).

2-Theoretical framework

2-1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Metaphor was originally considered a rhetorical aspect by traditional studies. The modern researchers link metaphor to cognition, and thus the whole cognitive process of metaphor is focused on. The inquiry into metaphor is done through the lens of cognitive linguistics. The discipline of cognitive linguistics claims the area of mainstream generative grammar and takes in psychology and cognitive science. It is human cognition that creates, employs, and disseminates language. Cognitive linguistics is a research paradigm, embracing various cognitive language theories (Peng, 2023, p. 46).

Cognitive metaphor is also significant in religious and spiritual speech since abstract concepts such as faith, morality, and divinity are frequently represented by metaphors created on the basis of real-life situations. Besides the fact that these metaphors bring the abstract idea down to the level of the real or even tunable, They serve as a transition between a concept that is harder to determine and one that is easier for the human mind to grasp. (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010).

Lakoff asserts that language serves as the base for metaphorical expressions which connect different cognitive fields through shared features and mapping relationships between those fields. The process enables people to understand abstract concepts through metaphorical representation of time status role and goals. The mapping of concepts between different domains through metaphor serves as

a fundamental component of natural language semantic systems because literary metaphor research extends beyond common metaphor studies. (Lakoff, 1980).

Conceptual metaphors are placed within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Lakoff and Johnson identify different types of metaphors depending on their cognitive functions. In this study, we will be looking at non-structural or image metaphors as when, for example, we evaluate a concept by assigning a positive or negative value to it—GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN”; Appearing very frequently in the political and religious discourses analyzed are the images of ‘LIGHT IS UP’ representing socialism and ‘DARK IS DOWN’ representing neoliberalism (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

2-2 Ontological Metaphors

Ontological metaphors are conceptual metaphors that involve understanding and conceptualizing of abstract concepts or phenomena that are based on our initial involvement in life with simple, tangible objects. These metaphors include transference of properties in one domain to another destination domain, which has a higher degree of complexity than the originating domain (Veremchuk, 2022, p. 177)

The ontological metaphors presented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) may be listed as follows:

1. Container metaphors

Container metaphors are metaphors that pertain to ontology, wherein a certain concept is depicted as possessing both an internal and external aspect and the capacity to contain something else. Essentially, container metaphors are metaphors that perceive something as a container with a directional orientation that encompasses both an inner and outer dimension. Moreover, events, actions, activities, and states are also perceived as containers, for instance, encountering trouble, participating in a race, and deriving satisfaction from engaging in a certain activity. To illustrate, consider the following example:

1. I put a lot of energy into washing the windows.

2. Entity and substance metaphors, on the other hand, are also ontological metaphors wherein an abstraction is portrayed in the form of a concrete physical object.

According to this definition people create metaphors when they use their personal experiences to create links between actual objects and their understanding of events and emotions and actions and ideas. By perceiving something as a substance, individuals can refer to it. Consider the following example:

Time is money.

3. Personification is an ontological metaphor that entails representing an object or abstraction as a human being. Example: His religion tells him he cannot drink wine.

2-3 Image Schemas

Johnson attributes the development of the concept of schema to Immanuel Kant, who proposed the concept of schema as the relationship between percepts and concepts. To Kant, schemas are imaginative structures and imagination is the mental faculty, which mediates all judgment, and therefore, imagination is the mental faculty that combines various modes of representation (sensory percepts, images, concepts, etc.) into concepts. Kantian schema A Kantian schema is a pattern of the mind common to people, and which cannot be reduced to conceptual and propositional terms. The idea of schema is that of rationality without rules (Johnson, 1987, P.161). As an example, Kant says that empirical conception of a plate is identical to the pure geometrical conception of a circle, in so far as

the roundness that is cogitated in the former is intuited in the latter. This example then allows Kant to assert schemas as representations that do not have empirical content but must on one side be intellectual, meaning on the other sensuous. The schemas, in turn, are predetermined templates overlaid on perceptions and conceptions in order to make meaning representations.

Johnson (1987, P. 126) lists the most important image schemas as follows (rendered according to convention in small capitals): CONTAINER; BALANCE; COMPULSION; BLOCKAGE; COUNTERFORCE; RESTRAINT REMOVAL; ENABLEMENT; ATTRACTION; MASS-COUNT; PATH; LINK; CENTER-PERIPHERY; CYCLE; NEAR-FAR; SCALE; PART-WHOLE; MERGING; SPLITTING; FULLEEMPTY; MATCHING; SUPERIMPOSITION; ITERATION; CONTACT; PROCESS; SURFACE; OBJECT; COLLECTION.

Lakoff (1987) explains some of the image schemas, such as the UP-DOWN and FRONT-BACK schemas that allow providing a solid argument that abstract thinking has two basic processes: (a) a bodily-experience-based reasoning, and (b) a metaphorical projection between concrete and abstract domains. Similarly, according to Johnson (Lakoff,1987), human experience is organized at a pre-conceptual level into image schemas, and image-schematic concepts are then present before the conceptualization of images. He also asserts that image schema derived into abstract domains with metaphors retain their original logic and are not arbitrary, but driven by common structures in everyday bodily experience. A typical example of the Al-Sahifa Al-Sajjadiyya is the metaphor DIVINE GUIDANCE IS LIGHT since in the supplicatory phrases they relate the guidance of God to light. Since traditionally good was seen to be synonymous with light and up (GOOD IS UP), divine guidance is sanctified as beneficial and uplifting: it carries the supplicant to spiritual deliberation and moral elevation in the discourse of Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidin.

3-Methodology

This work takes a qualitative, cognitive-semantic method to examine conceptual metaphors and image schema in chosen saying of Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya. Based on the CMT of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1987), the study takes metaphor as a cognitive process and not as a rhetorical tool anymore. In this regard, abstract spiritual, ethical and theological ideas are conceived as being systematically organized in the embodied human experience.

- **Corpus Selection**

The corpus consists of seven samples of supplications drawn from Al-Sajjādiyya. These prayers were selected due to:

- 1-Occurrence of metaphorical phrases —passages in which there is an explicit metaphorical language referring to spiritual, moral and cognitive experiences.
- 2-Conceptual richness —passages that specifically explain abstract ideas like divine direction, sin, forgiveness, knowledge, and spiritual satisfaction.

3- Existence of such image schemata as PATH, CONTAINER, FORCE, UP-DOWN, and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL, which are explicitly utilized into the sayings of the Imams.

4-In addition to that, to select English excerpts, the research uses the valuable book *Al Ṣaḥīfat al-Kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Islam)*, (Transl. & Introd. by William Chittick) London, Muḥammadi.

4- Analysis and Discussion

- **Guidance as a Path**

In the prayer “*Smooth my ways To Thy good pleasure, and make my works good in all my states*” وَسَهِّلْ إِلَى بُلُوغِ رِضَاكَ سُبُلِي، وَحَسِّنْ فِي جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِي عَمَلِي

It is clear that Imam stresses the spiritual path and Godly guidance. The use of the term *paths* means that the lifestyles of the believer, the development of the spirit, the ethical and moral behaviour are all components of the process of the spiritual development which is constantly guided towards the pleasure of God. The plea of *smoothing my ways* brings in a metaphor which is concerned with effort in which divine assistance is perceived as clearing the ways and restrictions that prevent one to be moral and spiritual. Meanwhile, the request *make my works good in all my states* further develops this metaphorical structure by mentioning not just the right direction in the path, but also the quality, stability, and righteousness of actions in all the extremes of the life situation.

The prayer " Smooth my ways as to thy good pleasing, and make my works good in my all my conditions) is made by a series of interacting image schemes. The schema SOURCE-PATH-GOAL is the key element and the current state of the believer is the implicit SOURCE, my paths (سُبُلِي) are the PATH, and Your good pleasure (رِضَاكَ) the GOAL. The numerous ways are referred to in plural thus referring to spiritual roads of reaching divine acceptance. FORCE schema operates with verb Smooth (وسهل) that suggests the presence of certain intervention of God to avoid the obstacles and reduce resistance on the path. Finally, the CONTAINER schema is also present in all of my states (فِي جَمِيعِ) (أَحْوَالِي) that encompass the totality of human experience in the perspective of spiritual struggle and that the path to divine pleasure is not only instances of devotion, but everything in life. It also illustrates the principle of the core of Islamic spirituality the way of God is not only a spiritual practice that is practiced but also a change, which is internally experienced.

Table1*Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of a Path*

Element	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description
Paths (سُبُلِي)	Life / moral striving is a journey	PATH	Represents multiple ways of life, stages of spiritual growth, and ethical/moral conduct; the believer as traveler navigating toward divine approval.
Smooth (وَسَهْلٌ)	Divine assistance makes obstacles easy	OBSTACLE SMOOTHING	Spiritual difficulties or moral challenges conceptualized as rough terrain; God's help removes friction, facilitating progress
Reach Your good pleasure (بُلُوغِ رِضَاكَ)	Spiritual success / divine approval is a destination	GOAL CONTAINER	God's pleasure as the endpoint of the journey; moral and spiritual attainment conceptualized as arriving at a target
Make my works good in all my states (وَحْسِنِ فِي جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِي عَمَلِي)	Actions are integral to the journey	PATH QUALITY	Ensures ethical integrity across all circumstances; connects outward action with inner moral and spiritual states

- **Journey Out of Distress in Supplication**

In the prayer, Imam Zain al Abidin pleads with God when one is facing difficult situations, using vivid metaphoric imagery to conceptualize the believer's spiritual and moral struggle. The supplication states:

“O You by Whom the knots of difficulties are undone, And O You by Whom the extremes of hardships are removed, And O You from Whom a way to relief is sought.” يَا مَنْ تَحُلُّ بِهِ عُقْدُ الْمَكَارِهِ، وَيَا مَنْ يُفْتَأُ بِهِ حَدُّ الشَّدَائِدِ، وَيَا مَنْ يُلْتَمَسُ مِنْهُ الْمَخْرَجُ إِلَى رَوْحِ الْفَرَجِ،

In this saying, difficulties are metaphorically depicted as *knots*, which stand for complicated and restricting challenges in life. These knots not only point to the suffering being of a more abstract

nature but also to the believers' need for the divine to help them get rid of the knots and make matters right. In the same way, hardships are shown as very strong forces acting on the saint, who stands for the entire emotional, psychological, and spiritual pain that a person goes through; the severity of the trial is underlined, while the divine help's changing power is also pointed out.

Moreover, this prayer consists of various overlapping image schemas, which then theorize divine intervention in surmounting the challenges in life. The CONTAINER schema works based on "knots of difficulties (عُقْدُ الْمَكَارِهِ) the problems are sealed and tied in knots, which need outside help to be loosened. The FORCE schema is conspicuous in two respects; in one case with "undone" (تُحْلَلُ) meaning the exertion of a counter-force to loosen constraints; and in the other with "extremes of hardships are removed" (يُفْتَأُ بِهِ حَدُّ الشَّدَائِدِ)، where hardship is conceptualized as a blade (or sharp object) whose edge needs to be blunted or broken with the help of the divine power. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema can be found in a way to relief is sought (الْمَخْرَجَ إِلَى رَوْحِ الْفَرَجِ)، where way out (الْمَخْرَجَ) is an exit path out of confinement, relief (الْفَرَجَ) is the desired destination, and God is the SOURCE where this pathway shall be given. Combined, these schemas depict God as the supreme agent that unleashes limitations, defuses danger, and provides means of escaping sufferings to salvation.

Table2

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Distress

Element / Phrase	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description / Function
Knots of difficulties	Hardship is a tangle or obstacle	KNOT OBSTACLE	/ Life's challenges are constraining and complex; divine intervention untangles them
Extremes of hardships	Hardship is a pressing force	FORCE PRESSURE	/ Trials are heavy, intense, or overwhelming; emphasizes emotional/spiritual strain
Way to relief	Relief / guidance is a path or route	PATH JOURNEY	/ Spiritual and moral liberation conceptualized as movement toward a goal; God provides the route
By Whom... are undone / removed / sought	God as enabling agent	AGENT ENABLEMENT	/ God acts to relieve hardship and guide the believer; emphasizes dependence on divine aid

- **Paths Toward Divine Love and Communion**

“granted their requests, accomplished their wishes through Your bounty, filled their minds with Your love, and quenched their thirst with Your pure drink. Through You have they reached the pleasure of whispered prayer to You, and in You have they achieved their furthest goals”

وَأَنْجَحْتَ لَهُمُ الْمَطْلِبَ، وَمَلَأْتَ لَهُمُ ضَمَائِرَهُمْ مِنْ حُبِّكَ وَقَضَيْتَ لَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ الْمَأْرَبَ .

وَرَوَيْتَهُمْ مِنْ صَافِي شَرِبِكَ فَبِكَ إِلَى لَذِيذِ مُنَاجَاتِكَ وَصَلُّوا، وَمِنْكَ أَقْصَى مَقَاصِدِهِمْ حَصَلُوا

Imam, through this prayer, employs divine giving and satisfaction, he can use these metaphors in order to express to the reader the spiritual desire of a believer towards God. He talks of the generosity of God as a lifting force by the words, *granted their requests, and accomplished their wishes by your bounty*, and so by accentuating the reliance of man upon the mercy of God in the material and spiritual expectations of fulfilling his desires, makes them feel themselves to rely directly upon his mercy or mercy. The cognitive metaphor "*God's favor is nourishment or supply*" is the one that closely relates here, as it depicts moral and religious needs in terms of physical provision.

He elaborates this metaphor of thirst and pure drink to convey how the soul feels satisfied of the love of God: "*filled their minds with Your love, filled their thirst with Your pure drink*". Thirst is the desire of God and love is the life-giving, life-nourishing decision, according to which the idea of the spiritual fulfillment is the physical nourishment. And, after all, this imagery is founded on our physical experience and makes the abstract conditions of being, to desire, complete, and love, simple to comprehend on the part of our minds and to experience on the part of our hearts.

The prayer establishes a complicated interrelationship among the various image schemas that explain the way believers relate with God. Another schema that stands out is the CONTAINER schema in "*filled their minds*" (مَلَأَتْ لَهُمْ ضَمَائِرَهُمْ) whereby hearts or inner selves have been depicted as containers that can be filled with divine love implying emotional and spiritual saturation. The CONTAINER schema is also in effect in *quenched their thirst* (رَوَيْتَهُمْ), which depicts the believer as having the effect of a vessel that must also undergo the blessings of God to continue existing. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema organizes the following *You have they reached the pleasure of whispered prayer* (فَبِكَ ((إِلَى لَذِيذِ مُنَاجَاتِكَ وَصَلُّوا)), in which God is the SOURCE that makes movement possible and the PATH that believers follow towards the GOAL of intimate communion. The line "*out of You have they attained their highest goals*" (وَمِنْكَ أَقْصَى مَقَاصِدِهِمْ حَصَلُوا) refers to God as the origin against whom all the aspirations are directed and in which they will be satisfied. The SCALE schema can be found in the "*furthest goals*" (أَقْصَى مَقَاصِدِهِمْ) that is spiritual accomplishment as attainment to the highest level by axis of attainment of a vertical or horizontal nature. The divine bounty is both the vessel of fulfillment and the way that gives the fulfillment.

Table3

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Divine Love and Communion

Element / Phrase	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description / Function
Granted their requests / accomplished their wishes through Your bounty	Divine favor is provision / supply	ENABLEMENT / SOURCE	God as the source of fulfillment; human aspirations are attained through divine generosity

Filled their minds with Your love	Spiritual love is nourishment / fullness	CONTAINER / FILLING	/ Minds and hearts are conceptualized as containers; God's love fills and satisfies inner desire
Quenched their thirst with Your pure drink	Spiritual longing is thirst; God's love is a drink	THIRST / NUTRITION	/ Embodied experience of thirst and drinking maps to spiritual longing and satisfaction
Through You have they reached the pleasure of whispered prayer	Prayer fulfillment is reaching a goal	PATH / DESTINATION	/ Spiritual effort and devotion as journey; divine aid ensures attainment of spiritual objectives
In You have they achieved their furthest goals	Spiritual and moral achievement is union with God	GOAL / CONTAINER	/ God is both medium and endpoint; ultimate fulfillment occurs in divine intimacy

- **The Container Schema and Sin**

In the supplication, *“My God, offenses have clothed me in the garment of my lowliness, separation from You has wrapped me in the clothing of my misery! My dreadful crimes have deadened my heart,”*

إلهي ألبستني الخطايا ثوب مذلتني، وجللتني التباعد منك لباس مسكنتني، وأمات قلبي عظيم جنايتي،

Imam Zain al-Abidin illustrates sin and separation with God in a complex metaphorical framework whose concept is the self as a vessel. The heart or inner self in this schema is imagined as a closed region which can be occupied, covered or contained by moral and spiritual conditions. Sin is not, then, merely an action which a man performs externally, but rather it inhabits and forms the inner world of the believer.

In this container system, the sins are depicted in the form of clothing that encloses the supplicant implying that the sins attach and cover the individual. This picture emphasizes the internalization of sins into a reality which is to be perceived, felt, and characterized, and not to be some separated actions. Such so-called “garments” obstruct spiritual perception, reduce the consciousness of God, and constantly torment the conscience. This implies that the state is continuous, not merely a momentary slip. Similarly, separation from God is described as the donning of rags of grief. This implies that the alienation from the divine is in every way and has invaded the totality of the person. The metaphor is further developed by the phrase *“My dreadful crimes have deadened my heart,”* which presents sin as a physical agent controlling the moral conscience, numbing the conscience and the non-sinful and even the sinful areas of one's life to God and his guidance and morality. In a conceptual way, the CONTAINER schema multiplies the ideas of guilt, moral laziness, and spiritual separation, by direct

mapping onto people's feelings—the feeling of being heavy, wrapped or covered—thus making the inner symptoms of sin very real and emotionally connected.

The CONTAINER schema operates through "deadened my heart" (أَمَاتَ قَلْبِي) which proves that people experience death because they stopped feeling spiritual life. The prayer uses the SURFACE/COVERING schema through its two metaphors, which describe people as being "clothed" and "wrapped." Sins are visualized as garments that envelop the necessary being of the believer in "in offences have clothed me in the garment of my lowliness" (أَلْبَسْتَنِي الْخَطَايَا تَوْبَ مَذَلَّتِي). The COVERING schema of separating in the phrase "separation from You has wrapped me in the clothing of my misery" (جَلَلَنِي التَّبَاعُدُ مِنْكَ لِإِسَابِ مَسْكَئَتِي) describes the mode of spiritual distance that embraces the believer in the garment of wretchedness. "Separation from You" (التَّبَاعُدُ مِنْكَ) is a concept with an underlying NEAR-FAR schema, and it is a concept that views the relationship with God as a space, where sin causes distance and obedience proximity. The schemas reveal the way the sin operates in terms of discrete acts, which generate a covering of total encompassment that changes the identity of the sinner (lowliness), condition (misery), and inner vitality (deadened heart), and the distance to God in space becomes the reference point of the interpretation of the alienation of the self.

Table4

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Sin

Element / Phrase	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description / Function
Offenses have clothed me in the garment of my lowliness	Sin is a covering that envelops the self	CONTAINER / CLOTHING	Sin internalizes moral failure; envelops the self and obscures spiritual clarity
Separation from You has wrapped me in the clothing of my misery	Estrangement from God is a suffocating covering	CONTAINER / CLOTHING	Spiritual alienation fills the self, creating moral and emotional burden
My dreadful crimes have deadened my heart	Sin affects the interior of the self	CONTAINER / DEPLETION	Moral and emotional sensitivity is dulled; sin occupies and constrains the heart, hindering spiritual responsiveness

- **Forgiveness is cleansing.**

The conceptualization of forgiveness in Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya is repeated, and in this case, the concept is addressed to the area of physical cleansing, and sin is considered a type of impurity that sticks to the soul and needs to be removed. This metaphor is based on physical experience of human beings: as the dirt can stain the body and make it uncomfortable, so sin can be taken as a definition of dirt that can break the spiritual harmony and moral uprightness.

Imam Zayn Al-Abidin is linguistically using the verbs and phrases of washing, purification, removal and erasing which initiate a SOURCE- Path-GOAL structure where the supplicant is in a state of defilement and aims at purity through the mercy of God. Examples of which include: in the supplication:

“Grant me success in works by which You may wash the dirt of errors from me”

وَوَفَّقْنِي مِنَ الْأَعْمَالِ مَا تُغْسِلُ بِهِ دَنَسَ الْخَطَايَا عَنِّي،

The metaphor is powerfully enacted. The petitioner requests Godly assistance (waffiqnī) in carrying out actions that act as the means by which sin, which is depicted as the dirt of errors, can be cleared. This brings out the point that forgiveness does not involve just a simple pardon but a process whereby the human will and the grace of God come together to cleanse the soul through spiritual cleansing.

The CONTAINER schema is demonstrated by the word "wash" (تَغْسِلُ) which depicts the usability of a cleansing agent (righteous works) to clean a surface area of dirty elements on it. The washing metaphor links to the schema of CONTAINER because of the way it shows how a stained surface is cleaned using water or liquid by surrounding and penetrating. The REMOVAL schema is found in from me (عَنِّي), which means the partitioning and removal of impurities of the essential self of a believer. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema describes the whole petition in the form of God who acts as the SOURCE of enablement that the petitioner seeks in the form of Grant me success and righteous works are the PATH in which to do cleansing and elimination of the dirt of sin is the final goal. The schemas present sin as surface contamination, which people can eliminate through righteous actions that God empowers, which shows that people need both divine grace and their own efforts to achieve spiritual purification.

Table5

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Forgiveness

Element	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description / Function
Grant me success (وَفَّقْنِي)	DIVINE ASSISTANCE IS ENABLEMENT	SOURCE-PATH-GOAL	God functions as the SOURCE of spiritual empowerment
Works (الْأَعْمَالِ)	RIGHTEOUS DEEDS ARE CLEANSING AGENTS	PATH / INSTRUMENT	Righteous works serve as the instrumental PATH or means through which spiritual purification is achieved.
Works (الْأَعْمَالِ)	RIGHTEOUS DEEDS ARE CLEANSING AGENTS	PATH / INSTRUMENT	Righteous works serve as the instrumental PATH or means through which spiritual purification is achieved.

- **Knowledge / Faith**

The metaphor of knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness, common ways of conceptualizing knowledge and faith in Al-Sahīya al-Sajjadiyya. This metaphor refers to embodied visual experience: like light allows eyes to see and locate themselves in the physical world, knowledge and faith enlighten the mind and heart and help the believer to follow the moral and spiritual way. On the other hand, ignorance, uncertainty, and moral confusion are the ones that are felt as darkness hindering understanding and moral action.

This theoretical schematic scheme is given expression in the supplication:

“And grant me a light by which I may walk among people and be guided through the darkness, and by which I may be enlightened out of doubt and uncertainties.”

وَهَبْ لِي نُورًا أَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ، وَأَهْتَدِي بِهِ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ، وَأَسْتَضِيءُ بِهِ مِنَ الشُّكِّ وَالشُّبُهَاتِ

Here, nūr (light) is the channel of the epistemic and moral guidance. It helps the supplicant to lead a clear and upright social and spiritual life. Lack of knowledge and ethical ambiguity of darkness (dhulumāt) and doubt (shakk wa shubuhāt) are coded in the form of metaphor and therefore characterizes the cognitive and emotive quandaries that occur when the mind and soul are not enlightened.

The CONTAINER schema is in full blast with the *"out of doubt and uncertainties"* (مِنَ الشُّكِّ وَالشُّبُهَاتِ) in which doubt is taken to be a dark, closed space to which a person seeks to get out. The preposition out of (مِنَ) is a sign that things move out of this enclosing box towards freedom. The whole passage is based on the LIGHT-DARK schema in which light (نُورًا) symbolizes knowledge, guidance, and divine presence and darkness (الظُّلُمَاتِ) and doubt (الشُّكِّ) symbolize ignorance, confusion, and obscurity of the spirit. In SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema, the believer is represented as a traveler navigating through the social world, where light is the PATH that allows movement and the INSTRUMENT that facilitates safe traveling in the social world, which is light. The schema of FORCE works by the process of enlightened (استضيء) meaning that light actively enters and illuminates the obscurity of the uncertainty. The schematic of CONTAINER also operates in the opposite form of through the darkness (فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ) the darkness is transformed into a medium of wrapping around which one has to travel. These schemas taken together represent divine light as a protective guide amid the outward darkness and as a light that dissipates internal confusion and allows one to navigate the spiritual realm of all the conditions of life with confidence.

Table6

Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Knowledge

Element	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Description / Function
Light (نُورًا)	KNOWLEDGE / FAITH / GUIDANCE IS LIGHT	LIGHT-DARK / SOURCE	Light represents divine knowledge, guidance, and spiritual presence; it functions as the SOURCE of illumination.
Walk among people (أَمْشِي فِي النَّاسِ)	LIFE IS A JOURNEY / SOCIAL NAVIGATION IS MOVEMENT	SOURCE-PATH-GOAL / PATH	Positions the believer as a traveler moving through the social world; light serves as both the PATH enabling movement and the INSTRUMENT ensuring safe navigation through human relationships and social responsibilities.
Through the darkness (فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ)	IGNORANCE / DIFFICULTY IS DARKNESS	CONTAINER / LIGHT-DARK	Darkness is conceptualized as an enveloping medium or CONTAINER through which one must pass.
Out of doubt and uncertainties (مِنَ الشَّكِّ وَالشُّبُهَاتِ)	DOUBT IS A DARK CONTAINER	CONTAINER / SOURCE-PATH-GOAL	Doubt and uncertainties are conceptualized as a dark, enclosed space from which one seeks exit; the preposition "out of" (مِنَ) indicates movement from inside this confining container toward liberation and clarity.
Enlightened (أَسْتَضِيءُ)	COGNITIVE ILLUMINATION IS LIGHT PENETRATION	FORCE / CONTAINER	Implies that light actively penetrates and dispels the darkness of uncertainty.

- **UP-DOWN Schema and Moral Hierarchy**

“raise me not a single degree before the people without lowering me its like in myself, And bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure!”

وَلَا تَرْفَعْنِي فِي النَّاسِ دَرَجَةً إِلَّا حَطَّطْتَنِي عِنْدَ نَفْسِي مِثْلَهَا، وَلَا تُحَدِّثْ لِي عِزًّا ظَاهِرًا إِلَّا أَحَدِّثْتْ لِي ذِلَّةً بَاطِنَةً عِنْدَ نَفْسِي بِقَدْرِهَا

Imam Zain al-Abidin (PBUH) uses the UP–DOWN schema in the supplication to explain an intricate moral and ethical principle in which the external social condition (UP) is associated with internal moral humility (DOWN).

The initial section, which is, *“raise me not a single degree above the people without lowering me its like in myself,”* is another statement that expresses the moral principle that temporal promotion shall not enrich the soul with spiritual elevation. By tracing social prestige to an upward motion, the supplicant will mentally picture external status in spatial terms, but demand that any external promotion should be accompanied by inner subjugation to remind them that moral value and spiritual virtue have no relation to social recognition.

The second part, *“bring about no outward exaltation for me without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure”* introduces this is the mutual dependence of appearance and reality, arrogance, pomp and corruption of the spirit when the external refinement is not supported by internal moral correction.

UP-DOWN schema prevails throughout the text, and "raise me" (تَرْفَعْنِي) and "degree" (دَرَجَةً) are symbols of upward movement and high social position, and the words of "lowering me" (خَطَّطْتَنِي) are symbols of downward movement and inner humility. The SCALE schema is working by a single degree (دَرَجَةً) and by the same measure (مِثْلَهَا / بِقَدْرِهَا) and by means of which a proportional relationship between outward elevation and inward abasement is determined: every measure of upward social movement has to be accompanied by a corresponding measure of inner humility. The CONTAINER schema appears twice in the phrase in myself (عِنْدَ نَفْسٍ) in which the self is a container or a closed space in which the true spiritual state is situated and which is not seen by others. The basic oppositional between the exterior look and the interior reality is established by the IN-OUT schema through establishing an opposition of outward exaltation (عِزًّا ظَاهِرًا) and inward abasement (ذِلَّةً بَاطِنَةً). The BALANCE schema is at the heart of the petition, which requires the balance between the status of the people and the humility, and the lack thereof, of the individual; any deviation towards pride will have to be counterbalanced by equal inward humiliation. It is an implicit model with "raise" and lower verbs with the underlying idea of divine power as the power that causes the believer to move up or down the vertical scale. The combination of these schemas describes true spirituality as needing a rigid adjustment regarding social perceptions and individual modesty, where personal value should not be determined by the external status but personal self-knowledge and awareness in front of God.

Table7*Conceptual Metaphors and Image Schemas of Up–Down Schema*

Phrase / Element	Conceptual Metaphor	Image Schema	Cognitive / Ethical Function
“Raise me not a single degree before the people”	Prestige / worldly status is UP	UPWARD MOVEMENT	Visualizes social hierarchy; prevents pride or status-seeking
... “...without lowering me its like in myself”	Inward humility balances outward elevation	DOWNWARD / INWARD MOVEMENT	Ensures moral self-regulation alongside social elevation
“...bring about no outward exaltation for me”	Outward glory is UP	UPWARD / OUTWARD	Prevents reliance on social admiration; discourages ostentation
“...without an inward abasement in myself to the same measure”	Inward humility is DOWN	DOWNWARD / INWARD	Internal moral posture must match external honor; proportional moral balance
Combined Principle “Raise me not...without lowering me...; bring about no outward exaltation...without an inward abasement...”	Moral and spiritual elevation requires dual alignment	UP–DOWN / DUAL-AXIS	Constructs a moral hierarchy where outward status is always balanced by inward humility

5- Conclusion

As noted in this paper, the role of conceptual metaphors and image schemas in the specific sayings of Al-Sahafa al-Sajjadiyya, relying heavily upon the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) formulated by Lakoff and Johnson, has been discussed, and the metaphorical phraseology of the prayers of Imam Zayn al-Sajjadiyya has been demonstrated to engage in using concrete and relatable terms with the help of specific metaphors, to conceptualize divine direction, moral struggle, and spiritual growth, as in the analysis has shown that these conceptual metaphors are structured by recurring patterns of thought (or image schemas: PATH, CONTAINER, UP-DOWN, FORCE and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL) which help to make sense of bodily experience, movement, spatial orientation, and

containment, through associates of the concepts such as divine mercy, sin, repentance, humility, and closeness to God, more concrete instead of abstract. Finally, this cognitive-semantic discussion proves that language of Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya is a densely connected complex in which cognition and spirituality and morality are intertwined not only to enhance the interpretation of the work of Islamic devotion to God but also in the concept of universal human mental processes in organizing and responding to abstract experience through metaphor.

Reference

- Gibbs, R. W., Jr., Beitel, D. A., Harrington, M., & Sanders, P. E. (1994). 'Taking a stand on the meanings of stand: Bodily experience as motivation for polysemy. *Journal of Semantics*, 11(3), 231–251.
- Islam) (W. Ibn al-Ḥusayn, 'A. Z. al-Ā. (1988). *Al Ṣahīfat al-Kāmilat al-Sajjādiyya (Psalms of Chittick, Trans.)*. Muḥammadi Trust.
- Johnson, M. (1987). *The body in the mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason*. University of Chicago Press.
- Kamil, M. N. (2025). The metaphorical dimensions of "Sha'ra" (inner garment) in Nahj al-Balaghah: A cognitive linguistic approach. *Journal of College of Education*, 58(2), 509–526. <https://doi.org/10.31185/eduj.Vol58.Iss2.4195>
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A practical introduction* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire, and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Maya, B. G. (2017). Ontological metaphor in Adele's selected song lyrics. *Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature*, 6(2), 75–84.
- Peng, Y. (2023). Conceptual metaphor analysis of The Great Gatsby. *Journal of Education and Educational Research*, 3(2), 46–49.
- Rhodes, R., & Lawler, J. (1981). *A theory of image-schematic semantics* [Unpublished manuscript]. (Cited in Lakoff, 1987)
- Talmy, L. (1985). Force dynamics in language and thought. In W. H. Eilfort, P. Kroeber, & K. L. Peterson (Eds.), *Papers from the parasession on causatives and agentivity* (pp. 293–337). Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Veremchuk, E. (2022). Ontological metaphors for moral concepts in the Bible: Introduction. *Acta Neophilologica*, 55(1–2), 177–191.