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## *An Analysis of ‘Rumi Phenomenon’: A Critique on Foreign English Writers*

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### **Abstract**

This document provides a detailed analysis of the ‘Rumi Phenomenon’ and how it is utilized for the spiritual consumption in modern society. We can see in all these New Sufism books and interpretations that Islam is so far away in this New Age Movement. Even this can be seen that some mention Sufism without referring to a specific master or order of Sufism. ‘New Sufism’ is only concerned with what they can extract from the poems in the form of general spirituality, independent of its roots. On the contrary, the scholarly approach deals with the fact that Rumi became a mantle of spirituality after the 6 centuries of extraordinary Islamic spiritual wealth. Such scholarly approach paves our way to the realization that Rumi took examples and guidance from Quran and Hadith to understand the Quranic stories like Ibn e Arabi who tells stories about Prophets, Their lives and wisdom. Rumi’s verse is enjoyed and devoured as a ‘product



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of spirituality' to calm one's self, to relax and to overcome the chaos of life through listening to certain couplets. The concept is used in yoga houses, boutiques, and stores. In the comprehensive list of desires of humans, religion is a striking instrument.

**Keywords:** Rumi phenomenon, Spiritual consumption, Sufism, Spirituality

## **1. Introduction**

'Rumi Phenomenon': a religious phenomenon that was followed by the posthumous success of a thirteenth century mystic and Sufi poet known as Muhammad Jalal-ad-Din of Persia, became the sole attention of the world after 1994 and was known as Rumi. This phenomenon had its religious roots but soon stemmed out to be an elusive spiritual movement in the whole world. Famous writers like Elif Shafak with their book 'Forty rules of love', are the sole contributors to the spread of this phenomenon among the spirituality seekers of the world.

Rumi's best-known work is the 'Mathnawi'. The six-volume poem holds a distinguished place within the rich tradition of Persian Sufi literature. Many commentators have regarded it as the greatest mystical poem in world literature. It contains approximately 27,000 lines, each consisting of a couplet with an internal rhyme Rumi's other major work is 'Diwan e Kabir', named in honor of Shams. The *divan* contains 90 ghazels, 35000 Persian couplets.

The world had always craved for peace of mind after dealing with the chaos, so they have always adored the romanticized versions of seclusion and peace such as 'monks of Himalayas'. Rumi was a Sufi poet and Saint of Persia, whose whole life and his companionship with Shams of Tabriz was an example of fulfillment and enlightenment within the common human life (Shafak, 2010).

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

Rumi's work and life are taken out of the Muslim tradition and changed into an elusive spiritual moment which is known as 'New Sufism' (EL-Zein, 2000; James, 2019) besides as Johnson (2020) asserts about Rumi," though often considered as a poet, mystic, and religious figure, is rarely discussed with an eye towards his title, "our teacher." Pakistan is a country where religion and spirituality is the basic groundwork of the lives of people. There is a desire to reach enlightenment and spiritual ascension regardless of the chaos of daily social obligations. The confusion that has not been made clear among the Pakistani youth is that if the Rumi's work is 'used' as the 'New Sufism' to treat overthinking and depression and sell the products and self-help books, and if these foreign writers in general tend to 'respect' or 'play' with the religious traditions of the world.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study will focus on the study of the Rumi phenomenon and how its glorified concept is affecting the minds of the youth. As 'New Sufism' is deepening its roots among the Pakistani population and whenever a new reader takes advice to start reading, the first book suggested is 'Forty Rules of Love' by Elif Shafak. In their decontextualization and writer's oversimplification of Rumi's life and work for the sake of an international audience, the concept appears to lose its religious grasp and tends to be succumbed to the New Sufism. The study is to make clear that if this concept strips the Rumi's work from religious concepts or it provides a new meaning to the understanding of mysticism.

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To analyze difference between Muslim Scholars and New Sufism regarding concept of Emptiness and Fulfillment while keeping Pakistani youth under the microscope.
2. To analyze the Rumi's work as spiritual consumption by Foreign English Writers to sell treat depression and sell products.
3. To analyze how Rumi's life and work is stripped out of Muslim Sufi tradition and transformed into and elusive spiritual movement termed as 'New Sufism'.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the influence of Rumi's Phenomenon depicted by foreign writers?
2. Is this oversimplification of Rumi's life and work and creating a form of cultural kinship, is proving to be fulfilling or is it just spiritual consumption?
3. How this 'New Sufism' has been helped to Pakistani youth to battle emptiness and attain fulfillment?

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

Since 1994 the American literary market and after the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, Pakistani literary market has been taken by storm by Rumi Phenomenon. In this case it is not possible to analyze each text regarding Rumi Phenomenon for the objectives of this study. For this purpose, the study would be done through analysing and interpreting the interviews of students who have read books regarding Rumi Phenomenon and through the Elif Shafak's 2010 novel, The Forty Rules of Love, as one of the best known and considered to be the most remarkable contributions to the Rumi phenomenon.

## **2. Literature Review**

Sufism has an immense value among the population of Pakistan. The place full of mosques and shrines of Sufis and saints, this land is called as the valley of spirituality by many scholars. In the pursuit of God and mere tranquility, saints have spent their lives understanding the working of universe and to commune with God (Snyader, 2009). Rumi has a vast admiration among the youth of Pakistan. When it comes to the depiction of Rumi as the greatest Sufi the world has seen, foreign writers lack the proper admiration or the sense of attachment to this figure of history and so the result of their writings may have somewhat of a negative influence on the Pakistani youth. Foreign practices and the way of their social understanding is different than that of Pakistanis and this gap exploited through books on Sufis and mystics create a whole confusion among the youth of Pakistan. In their de-contextualization and writers' oversimplification of Rumi's life and work for the sake of an international audience, the concept appears to lose its religious grasp and tends to be succumbed to the New Sufism (Furlanetto, 2013; Voll, 2008). This phenomenon had its religious roots but soon stemmed out to be an elusive spiritual movement in the whole world. Famous writers like Elif Shafak with their book 'Forty rules of love', are the sole contributors to the spread of this phenomenon among the spirituality seekers of the world (EL-Zein, 2000). Authors call the spiritual phenomenon as the Rumi phenomenon. For the last decades, many works of Rumi and other famous Muslim writers have been published. Rumi was born in 1207 in Persia and died in 1273. Rumi escaped the invasion of the tartars in Balkh. He and his family escaped to rum. Over there, Rumi acquired the title al Rumi. His father was in the learning community there and upon his death Rumi took his position as shaykh (Mojaddedi, 2002).

Previously, researchers have focused on the reasons behind the attraction of Rumi's work in the American public. Sufism is not only a tradition, but it has become a spiritual movement in today's world. He says that Rumi's thoughts are like new physics according to which whatever a person sees is an illusion (Dallal, 1998). To find the ultimate reality a person should go beyond every bond. Another reason is the concept of a dancing universe given by Rumi as Rumi believed that music and dance are the sources to access God; Hence, the dance symbolizes a search for the loved ones (Altintas, 2010). In this dance, a person twirls around in circles, kills his ego, listen to the music, and focus on his beloved within himself. One can get all the answers if he focuses on himself (Tajadod, 2008; Borges & Cox, 2016). The researcher says that Rumi believed that silence is something that is embraced by people who realize what reality is. Similarly, Groff and Smoker (1996) mention "If a man sings of God and hears of Him, and lets love of God sprout within him, All his sorrows shall vanish, And in his mind, God will bestow abiding peace." –Sikhism' (p. 57).

Rumi did not write poetry; however, after meeting Tabrizi, he started writing poetry and was very good at it. Rumi had a great spiritual friendship with Shams. Shams considered Rumi as his spiritual Master or Hierarch 'Pir o Murshid', who would show him the path. His most read and major work is 'Mathnawi'. It has been regarded best in its originality and sophistication. One of the researchers Chopra (2008) worked on the interpretation of Rumi's works. Chopra (2008) said that they are not mere words but are moods. The translations are a new creation which can still retain its original roots. 'The illuminated Rumi' was a translation of his works. One of the remarkable things is that it has pictures and illustration with the text. The pictures make the text more appealing and striking. (Furlanetto, 2013). "The fruit of my life is no more than three words—I was raw, I was cooked, I was burned" (Tabrezi, 2004). The quotation is a reference to the longing of Rumi for Shams. Some sources doubt that if Shams was a real person. Before the arrival of Shams, Rumi was a scholar, philosopher, and a religious entity, but soon the arrival of Shams transformed him into a Sufi, mystic, and a famous poet. Rumi turned into a Sufi at the age of forty, which is considered as the mature age of spirituality. His works were the base of Persian, Urdu, and Turkish literature. Soon, western society got a hold of his work's spirituality and universality and then came a wave of writers who were seen to be working on his 'Mathnawi' and other works. This started into a phenomenon, which we are calling today as 'Rumi Phenomena'.

This article is a critique on all those foreign English writers, who have provided the readers with a description of Mevlana Rumi and Shams Tabrizi, in a manner that it oversimplified their texts to turn it into an amusing light spirituality. This phenomenon can be described with the term 'New Sufism'. According to this, people all around the world, especially western society are deprived of inner peace due to the hustle and bustle of the western society. In that case, they seek peace from every new spiritual product that they can find. Yoga, from India, is becoming popular in all the western countries due to the slogan that it provides you with inner tranquility. A new product was launched in the form of the books where spirituality was seen to be sold in the form of self-help books and offering inner peace by relating it to the Sufis. The over contextualization and oversimplification of the concepts have limped the original essence of Rumi's works (Homrighausen, 2018). All we can see today is the same quotes being used when two lovers separate after a week's relationship. Rumi is quoted while talking about futile efforts of the day. The aesthetics of God and transcendence is neglected because such foreign English writers have overly simplified the whole genre of mysticism and Sufism into a young couple's book who seek true love while being sluggish and lazy.

The spiritual consumption can be seen which can be defined as that these books are just being sold to attain several audiences. Books such as 'Rumi's Daughter' (Maufroy, 2005), and 'Forty Rules of Love' (Shafak, 2010) be globally loved books which introduce the whole concept of Rumi. For new readers, these books provide a sense of aesthetics to their senses and they begin to relate it with themselves. While these books are a simply and oversimplification of the hundreds of years of knowledge and the aesthetics. Rumi's Mathnawi is a greater version of defining the mysticism and Sufism within poetry. The true essence of 'Mathnawi' cannot be seen in any of the books. Only some quotations and lines from the original texts can be seen in these books but truly they lack the true essence of the books.

In the modern world, American singer and song writer, Madonna also used the English renditions of Rumi's words in her songs and performances. The question that is asked today is why Rumi is most famous, why not Hafiz, another Persian poet? The answer to this is that the universality of Rumi's work is prevalent in the literary society of the world. People have been falling over the concepts of divine love and mysticism of Rumi for ages. Rumi is a quite an influencer in the Islamic countries of the world because they seem to opt the true essence of Rumi's works in the context of religion and spirituality. They see his works as a reference to the God and the divine love. Rumi has laid greater emphasis on the concepts of Love, Unity and Ecstasy, as the central message. Equally, Rumi's intention that the Mathnawi should be used as a training manual, and the formal design of the poem (Khan, 2017). In Islam, we can see mystics like Hallaj as mentioned in (Grace, 2011), who have presented the idea of Pantheism in Islam to which, Wordsworth later followed. As Hallaj said and Haque (2014) quotes:

“Me and him are one,  
We are two souls dwelling in one body.  
If thou seest I,  
Thou seest him.  
If thou seest him,  
Thou seest us both.” (p. 50)

Such concepts can be seen in the mysticism and Sufism, but Rumi talks not of religion but only his love and longing for the divinity. To return to the place where souls go and exist together. He talks of the metaphysical transcendence to the world of peace and serenity (Golkhosravi, 20014). It is also evident in the literature available that how

the oversimplified texts are just offering the peace for a day or a month. It helps you catch a break from the hustle and bustle of the city life.

This article comprises of the critique on how these books and the Rumi Phenomena are affecting the mentality of the people. On the other hand, it is also a good thing because people usually do not have time to look for the spirituality so they can learn to relax and know about the spiritual movements and the history through these books (Egri, 1997). For instance, 'Forty Rules of Love' provides a person with a keen interest in learning more about the spirituality and Sufism. There are always two sides to a coin and in this case, this 'New Sufism' is also proving to be helpful in such times of godlessness and a turmoil of inner spiritual values. There are so many books on the spirituality and Sufism which people can relate to their life and solve some of their inner demons. In this modern age, where everything is based on materialism and a race against time to attain power, a little touch of religion, spirituality, peace, serenity, and calmness is a little oasis in the scorching heat of the desert of this world.

While going through all these sorts of ideas related to the concept of spirituality and mysticisms, this research article will explore that how the foreign English writers are affecting the mentality of the world in modern era. The influence can be negative and can be taken in a positive aspect. Through the microscope of deep research, we will analyze the words of some foreign English writers and critically evaluate their writings related to this Rumi Phenomena (Sherwani, 2020; Azadibougar, 2015). The effect of these writing on the readers can be observed to be positive and negative or deceiving. A concept of spiritual consumption can be seen to be prevalent in the modern society where spirituality is utilized to sell products, trainings, and books. In this consumerist society, everything is on sale and everything can be bought, so we will observe this sale to be positive or negative. The depiction of a Muslim scholar belonging to an Islamic state and his representation by foreign English writers in the other parts of the world, can appear to be a great influence but we will observe that how this oversimplification and over contextualization is influencing the minds of the society. To conclude, this article will provide an analysis of the Rumi Phenomenon as depicted by foreign English writers.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research is based on the qualitative and type of research and the research's nature is interpretive. After reading works of foreign English writers such as Elif Shafak and William. Chittick, researcher has attained several themes for this research. Moreover, this research is based on the analysis of Rumi phenomenon and how foreign English

writers choose to play with it. Furthermore, the issue of 'New Sufism' is highlighted in the work.

### **3.2 Delimitations**

A contextual analysis is utilized to collect the data from novel 'Forty Rules of Love' written by Elif Shafak. Several parts of the novel are extracted to critically analyze the Rumi Phenomenon and its effects. A comprehensive conclusion is derived after a thorough analysis and interpretation. The secondary data is collected through the already published work in the field. This article is written through only one perspective, which is 'Sociocultural Perspective Theory' by a Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978).

### **3.3 Theoretical Framework**

The theory that will be applied to this research is the Sociocultural Perspective Theory by a Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978). The Sociocultural Perspective analyzes the human behavior and personality development by examining the group of which they are the members. The theory studies the relation and interaction between development of people and the culture that they are living in. Mainly we have Pakistani youth under the microscope of study, so the Pakistani culture is observed. The sociocultural perspective theory helped us analyze that how Pakistani youth responds to the wide phenomena of Rumi and how these foreign English writers prove to affect them to sell their books. According to this theory, learning and teaching are a social rather than cognitive process. People learn from what is present in their culture and what is being consumed by the intellect of the people surrounding the individual. Sufism and mysticism are a great entity within the religious atmosphere of the country. In this age of modernism when everyone looks for peace and serenity after a day spent in burdensome daily obligations. Foreign English writers write their novels and add some mystic touch to it to make them more captivating, religiously. These books succeed in capturing the heart or fail to do so, this is what we will analyze through the sociocultural perspective theory that how a book, when introduced to a society, effects their overall perception regarding Sufism. For instance, 'Forty Rules of Love' was published in 2010, but it created a great impact on the society. Through this theory we will observe the Rumi Phenomena within this book and relate it to the society of Pakistan and see that how it is affecting the common thinking.

This theory will help us analyze that how Pakistani youth think and fathom the New Sufism regarding emptiness and attaining peace and fulfillment. While discussing the Rumi Phenomena, we come across the term 'New Sufism' and how it is creates a difference in the understanding of the mainstream Sufism from the history. Nowadays, pseudo-Sufism is creating a great change through self-help books and folly

motivational speakers who preach peace and tranquility but originally, it is all spiritual consumption using the placebo method. In the same way, books regarding 'Rumi Phenomena' are so prevalent in the book's shops and society that each of them offers you the world of mysticism and secrets to attain God and peace, but they are only sold for the sake of money and fame. There is no secret behind their success, other than the fact that how humanity is in dire need of serenity and is willing to attain it in any form. Let it be drugs, alcohol, Sufism, yoga, or anything with a banner saying 'peace'. Through this theory, and observing through the text, we see that how this 'New Sufism' has helped or exploited the general thinking of the youth in Pakistan. A straightforward approach is taken to observe the perception of people through the blogs of youth, texts of novels, and other works in the same field. Sociocultural perspective theory allows us to observe the common Pakistani culture and the popular genre of Sufi books that are widely available in Pakistani market. We will be able to interpret that how these books are affecting the mindsets of people.

#### **4. Data Analysis**

The data is analyzed through the Sociocultural Perspective theory to critically analyze the Rumi Phenomena depicted in works of Foreign English Writers such as Elif Shafak. There is a great difference between 'Sufism' and 'New Sufism' that is prevalent now in the society under the banner that says 'peace'. This research will analyze the 'Rumi Phenomena' and critically analyze the work of Foreign English Writers to look for the traces of Spiritual Consumption within the Pakistani culture.

#### **4.1 Analysis and Discussion**

Through the contextual analysis, this document will critically analyze the work of foreign English writers such as Elif Shafak of Turkey. The term 'New Sufism' would be explained to highlight the spiritual consumption that is prevalent in the society. Furthermore, it will be discussed that how Rumi Phenomena have oversimplified and over contextualize that it has lost its true meaning.

#### **4.2 Rumi Phenomenon**

This work deals with the effect of Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi on the youth. This whole document tackles with how the whole Sufi Tradition is stripped down from the mantle of Islam and now is oversimplified into a spiritual movement which we will refer to as 'New Sufism'. Rumi Phenomenon is the fame of all the Rumi works which led writers to write extensively using the stories and words of Rumi in their writings. The reason was because people were so sick of their monotonous daily routines that eventually they lost themselves in their routine and lives. They wanted a dash of spirituality to reconnect to the universe and earth for peace and serenity. When Europe discovered

Rumi and his works, their impact on the human mind and peace offering, they extensively started using that Rumi words and works in their own writings so that they receive a wider acknowledgment from the world. This led to the foundation of 'Rumi Phenomenon'.

Rumi's major works include, 'Diwan Shamsi' and 'Al Diwan Al Kabir' which consist of couplets going up to 40,000. The most famous work is 'Mathnawi' that consists of twenty-six thousand couplets. He is the greatest poet in the history by myriads of people due to his works. Due to the sophistication of the doctrines, 'Mathnawi' is quite difficult to interpret.

Rumi is quoted and sang in every part of the European world. As Pakistan is moving towards the westernization, then this is also prevalent in Pakistani society as well. The extraordinary development of interest in this topic is the reason that the translation of Rumi exists in the form of two types/ one is academic translation, and the other is nonacademic translation, this I will refer to as 'New Sufism'.

### **4.3 Academic Translations**

Academic translation by Rumi started with Hammer. In 1838 he published a mixture of his poetry. The German diplomat, Georg Rosen translated a part of the Mathnawi in 1849. Then two British scholar Sir James Redhouse (1881) and H. Winfield (1887) as mentioned in Karimnia, Ebrahimzade, and Jafari, (2012) translated other parts of the Mathnawi. They were followed by Nicholson in 1898 translated some poems from the Diwan and in 1950 published his Rumi, Poet and Mystic. Nicholson also translated the Mathnawi into English and commented upon it in eight volumes. Arberry translated *Fihī mafihī* (1961) and gave it the title of *The Discourses*. The book was seen by many commentators as an essential complement for the understanding of Rumi's major work, the Mathnawi. Arberry, following his teacher, Nicholson translated a first selection of 200 poems from the Diwan of Rumi in 1968. After that he translated 200 poems which were not published until after his death in 1979. Annemarie Schimmel published her book *Triumphal Sun* in which she studies Rumi's imagery and theology in 1979. In 1983 William Chittick published the *Sufi Path of love: spiritual teachings of Rumi* containing poems translated into English for the first time from both the Diwan and the Mathnawi. In 1991 Schimmel published a selection of verses focusing on the theme of love in a booklet entitled *look! This is love!* She published another book in 1992 on Rumi entitled *I am Wind; you are Fire* devoted specifically to the life and work of Mawalana. W. Theakston, Jr. translated the *Discourses of Rumi* from Persian under the attractive title, *Signs of the Unseen* in 1994.

#### **4.4 New Sufism**

This is related to the second approach of the Rumi Phenomenon. There is an extensive reason behind calling it as 'New Sufism'. This is because that Islam is foundation of Sufism. we can see in all these New Sufism books and interpretations that Islam is so far away in this New Age Movement. Even this can be seen that some mention Sufism without referring to a specific master or order of Sufism. Robert Bly handed over an Arberry Translation of Rumi to Coleman Barks and said that "These poems must be freed from their cages" (Arberry, 1961), referring to the oversimplification over contextualization of the Rumi's works.

Deepak Chopra collaborated with Fereydoun Kia, in 1988, and wrote an interpretation of Rumi's poem which were based on the theme of Love. Chopra wrote, 'the poems are not direct translations, but 'moods' that we have captured as certain phrases radiated from the original Farsi, giving life to a new creation but retaining the essence of its source.'" (Chopra, 1998)

Since the previous decade, there has been a rise in using Rumi's poetry in music. Myriads of music, songs, and symphonies have seen to be created from the words In Diwan e Kabir and Mathnawi. The extraordinary interpretation of Rumi and translation of his works, creating music and symphonies out of the words of Diwan, dancing on those symphonies is kind of bewildering. Islamic countries always had an attraction towards the Sufism and Mewlana Rumi, but other non-Islamic countries are a surprise. The popularity of Rumi and his works in American can be explained that Americans consider it to be a part of a program of attaining spirituality. This program consists of four points and those are:

- Love
- Universe of Sufi
- Illusion versus Reality
- Emptying thy self and silence (El-Zein, 2000)

The new Sufi movement does not focus on anything that is Muslim. This whole movement started in America and we can compare it like that this extraordinary sudden interest in Rumi occurs at the exact parallel time when American News and Media were busy expressing the misconception about Islam and Islamophobia. Writers like Coleman Barks are interpreting Rumi while they themselves do not know how to read or speak Persian language. When such mistranslations and general ideas gathered from the majestic Rumi are presented to the people, they fathom something totally opposite to what Rumi meant with the poems. The culture that a book is introduced within, gathers the same thought and perspective and when the same social group

suggests a book like 'Forty Rules of Love' to an individual, he or she thinks that the only solution to a boring marriage is to leave your kids and husband behind and run away with a man who travels the world and imitates Rumi. Concepts like Love, abandoning, emptying thyself and illusion versus reality are mistreated by the foreign writers and introduced to the people who barely know about Sufism and are only looking for the tag of spiritually elevated in their lives after a boring weekly routine. This is how sociocultural perspective help us analyze the whole concept of intellectual and spiritual consumption within a culture and how it effects the mindset of an individual.

#### **4.4.1 Love**

The idea of elaborated by Rumi is the kind of Divine and Pure. As soon as we begin to comprehend the New Sufism and its interpretations, we come across the conventional meaning of love which states the human affiliation with other mortal things or materialistic things. Rumi, on the other hand explained the love and its source, which is divinity. Rumi explains love through the picture of Hajj:

“By the time intellect has deliberated and reflected,

Love has flown to the seventh heaven.

By the time intellect has found a camel for the

Hajj, love has circled the Kaaba.” (Rumi, Diwan Kabir, 1270)

Contrary to the scholarly explanation, Rumi's love is based on Islam and its values, but as soon as we dig deep in the works of Harvey and Barks, the notion of love is not to be found in Islamic tradition. Such scholars of 'New Sufism' stress on the point that Rumi always mentioned the name of his beloved 'Shams' at the end of his 'ghazals' which can be explained that his own personality became one with that of Shams. But the point to be noted here is that they do not mention this that the humanly love can transform into the divine love.

#### **4.4.2 The dancing universe**

Furthermore, the point that is a part of the spiritual program of the 'New Sufism' scholars is 'the dancing universe'. The whole universe is whirling in an endless circle and sets everything in the motion. There is a sense of ecstasy related to the Sufism, even Rumi is known to have written his poems in a state of ecstasy. Rumi learned from Shams and was indulged in the Mawlawi dance of dervishes, which roots form desire to look for beloved through synching with the endless whirling of universe. Today, 'New Sufism', has introduced quatrains of the Rumi in music, songs, symphonies, and dances which are nothing but a show, devoid of any Islamic context.

Modern day spirituality is nothing close to any religion. The consumption of alcohol, drugs and products that take you in the state of ecstasy and you feel relaxed is nothing but a sham by these so-called Gurus' who are eating off the majestic concept of Rumi's Spirituality.

#### **4.4.3 Illusion versus Reality**

Moreover, the point that attracts the New Sufism scholars is the deception of appearances. This brings Physics to Sufism which gives a whole new level of Quantum physics and String theory, pun intended. This 'New Physics' states that the physical world is impossible to observe. You never know what you are looking at because appearances are a sham, and there can be all sorts of possible realities to a concept, object, or a person. This brings me to a spiritual Urdu 'kalam', which says, 'sab maya hai'.

Rumi's works bring readers to struggle to achieve the ultimate reality by going again and again through the Islamic notions. For instance, Rumi explains the truth in the line that says, "there is no God but God's:

“As much as the banner of the world dances,  
Your eyes see a banner, but your spirit recognizes wind.  
He who also knows the incapacity of wind  
Considers everything except the presence of but God as no God.  
all things perish, except His face: since you are not in his face, seek not to exist:  
all things perish no longer applies to him who  
in annihilated in Our Face,  
For he is in but God, he has passed beyond no God; whoever is in but has not  
been annihilated.” (Rumi, Mathnawi, 1273)

The Islamic part of Rumi's explanation of Reality and Illusion is not perceived by the movement of New Sufism. Instead, it is completely related to the Zen view of Reality and Illusion. For instance, Harvey generalizes how the depiction of universe and its roots in the invisible world is a concept which is both similar in Rumi and Zen. Rumi says:

“Light the incense!  
You have to burn to be fragrant

To scent the while house

You have to burn to the ground.” (Rumi, Diwan Kabir, 1270)

This is compared to the Basho’s:

“When the house is burnt down

You own a better view of the rising moon.” (EL-Zein, 2015)

#### **4.4.4 Silence, Emptiness and Self-Realization**

Silence prevails, when a person come across the concept that everything is an illusion or a deception. A person who is failing at his job, couldn’t make friends or is betrayed by many, someone who is betrayed by a loved one and no longer perceives or accepts the notion of love, tend to go towards silence. This is the point where New Sufism preachers come in and offer them a new form of spirituality that will help them utilize their silence to grow strong and similar hoaxes. Rumi says:

“Become silent and go by way of silence towards nonexistence,

And when you become nonexistent, you will be all praise and laud!” (Rumi, Diwan Kabir, 1270)

New Sufism tend to ignore the true essence of silence and just advises the readers to render in silence and focus on yourself and plan to make a strong comeback. As we see in the Elif Shafak’s book ‘The forty Rules of Love’, we come across the personality of Ella, who is an unhappy housewife, whose husband is cheating on her, the children do not listen to her and she is a victim of a monotonous routine. Her sudden affiliation with a writer who is disguised as the imitation of Rumi and he shows her the way, through emails, that love can be found even in the darkness. She tends to be silent and leaves her husband and kids and home and travels a journey of spirituality through finding that writer and then loving him. The whole Islamic essence is absent from, her actions and how she leaves her husband and kids to attain religious spirituality while doing everything that is against the religion. In conclusion, the pseudo-Sufis and their New Sufism has stripped Rumi of its traditional Islamic values to create something new, which might be helpful to some, but is totally devoid of essence of its source. (El-Zein, 2000)

### **5. Discussion**

According to Sociocultural perspective theory, when aforementioned information is fed to a culture, then the social group of the people develop a similar thought regarding a subject. For instance, when asked from the lot of university students, that what they

think is the best book available to learn about Sufism. All of them recommended 'Forty Rules of Love' by Elif Shafak. This is the effect of a culture and society on the individual. He is bound by the thoughts of these foreign writers to look for the interpretation of Rumi and relate it with the conventional interpretations. Rumi said, "I am one of those who give their head for the beloved". From this sentence, the conventional interpretation is that of conventional love, in which a guy gives his life for the love of fair maiden. Contrary to that, Rumi meant it as in the remembrance of Hussain (A.S), who literally gave their head for the divine love of God and their beliefs.

## **6. Conclusion**

Through parallel study between 'New Sufism' and Scholarly ideas, it has been observed that New-Sufism Scholars like Barks and Harvey have created titles for the poems through their own perceptions but, Rumi had no titles. This creates a Vagueness and uncertainty among the readers while understanding and establishing their own critical views about poems. Secondly, its s already stated myriads of times that 'New Sufism' is not at all in synchronization with the Islamic notions which strips Rumi from its religious essence. 'New Sufism' is only concerned with what they can extract from the poems in the form of general spirituality, independent of its roots. On the contrary, the scholarly approach deals with the fact that Rumi became a mantle of spirituality after the 6 centuries of extraordinary Islamic spiritual wealth. Such scholarly approach paves our way to the realization that Rumi took examples and guidance form Quran and Hadith to understand the Quranic stories like Ibn e Arabi who tells stories about prophets, their life and wisdom. Arberry says:

Before everything, Rumi was a learned theologian after the firmest pattern of medieval Islam, very familiar with the Quran and its exegesis, the traditional sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the sacred law and its erudite exposition. (Arberry, 1961)

Allusions to Quranic sayings is found in ever text of Rumi and it amazes the readers but for a non-Muslim who barely recognize the real text that is Quran, would also be unable to completely comprehend Rumi too. The fact is necessary to mention that Sayyad Hussain Nasr states that some 6000 verses of Rumi's Diwan and Mathnawi are Persian translation of Quranic verses.

This brings us to wonder that how the religion of Rumi and his culture fell into such oversimplification and over contextualization, that it is general and lewd form is being sold as books, products and programs that promises to offer you peace and spirituality. The four-point program is an example of this atrocity towards the source of Rumi.

This Rumi Phenomenon had turned into a fashion and when this lasts long is a question for the future. 'New Sufism' is a concept devoid of the Islamic and Traditional Rumi concept of Spirituality. Rumi's verse is enjoyed and devoured as a 'product of spirituality' to calm one's self, to relax and to overcome the chaos of life through listening to certain couplets. The concept is used in yoga houses, boutiques, and stores. In the comprehensive list of desires of humans, religion is a striking instrument.

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