

## Impact of Persian Sufi Thoughts on D. H. Lawrence's Writing

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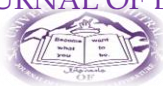
### Abstract

In this paper we have argued that Lawrence's interest in what is ancient wisdom brings him in direct or indirect contact with Sufi metaphysics. This outlook on the world brings him closer to a Sufi universe in two ways. Firstly, Lawrence portrays romantic relationships in a mystical language, he presents the sensuous relationships as sacred activities through which the characters aspire to self-discovery. Lawrence's portrayal of romantic love corresponds with higher concept of love in Sufi literature. Secondly, this paper takes a closer look to some of Lawrence's spiritual works including his Study of Thomas Hardy to compare his sustained argument regarding spiritualism and transcendental motifs in comparison with Sufi cosmology. Moreover, the following discussion also includes a detailed engagement with Lawrence's correspondence and biographical information of the time when Lawrence was writing his essays and novels which contain transcendental motifs. His correspondents and biographical information suggest he had some direct exposure with Sufi literature in translation.

**Keywords:** mysticism, divinity, holistic vision, physical and spiritual connection, cosmology, transcendental, metaphysics, ontology

### Introduction

D. H. Lawrence (1885 – 1930) is one of most influential novelists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Leavis, 1955), emphasising upon theme of the relationship between man and woman in his writings. However, he gives a sacral meaning to such relationship in the sense that instead of dealing with human relationship with ordinary language and perceptions, he resorts to a metaphysical tone in his presentation giving an ontological meaning to his characters' interest in human relationship. This extraordinary manner of presentation of romantic human relationships is not entirely a new thing or not necessarily a foreign influence in English literature. We can notice such literary trends in the Romantic Movement and later in the



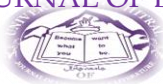
Victorian literature. From William Blake to Thomas Hardy one can observe such metaphysical and ontological concern regarding romantic human relationships.

Many writers have noted mystical portrayal of human relationships in Lawrence, for instance, Zangenehpour (2000) describes Lawrence's world of fiction as 'more or less esoteric, non-theological, and mystical religion' (p.1). Zangenehpour concludes that Lawrence was informed, fascinated, and influenced by the ancient Persian religions and Sufism.

Moreover, it is also true that during early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Lawrence was writing, Persian Sufi literature and other mystical writings from the east were becoming increasingly available to English reader. From William Jones' (1746–1794) translation of oriental literature in the late eighteenth century to Edward FitzGerald's (1809–1883) famous verse translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubáiyát* which was one of treasure cherished by both the Romantic and Victorian writers. In the following paragraphs we have explored metaphysical theme and transcendental motifs in Lawrence's writings in comparison to Sufi literature. In addition to that we have suggested the possible connections which might have brought Lawrence's attention to Sufi writings.

### **Literature Review**

The critical writings on Lawrence's work has been categorized into three periods (Beynon, 1997). The early period of his criticism consists of the reviews of his books during his lifetime, in which most of the critics although recognised his artistic genius, his novels were challenged on the moral grounds to the extent that his later novels were either rejected by the publishers or banned in England after publication. The second category of the criticism consists of biographies and psychoanalytical studies of his work during the 1930s after his death. Literary critics of this period were either his detractors or supporter; however, critics of either category seemed to be obsessed with the autobiographical studies of his work. It may be said that it was too early to assess and establish his literary worth. However, this early response to Lawrence's art indicates to some very important aspect of his beliefs and concept about life. For most of the critics it was hard to assign a place to Lawrence's art in the sense that he was making experiment with artistic form which would have been sufficient to consider him as a modernist writer, however, the difficulty was that his subject matters and beliefs were pretty close to Romantic traditions. This confusion among the early critics divided the opinion on

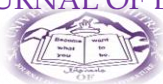


Lawrence's art and provoked much detractive criticism from many influential critics of English literature. Beside new form and characterization in his novels his treatment to the natural world and imaginative wanderings beyond the world of sense perception made him a highly imaginative artist and place him in the romantic traditions of transcendentalists and pantheists like Whitman and Wordsworth.

Moreover, the most significant criticism on Lawrence's work comes with the emergence of New Criticism during the 1950s and 1960s (Beynon, 1997). Importantly, two influential literary critics of English literature T. S. Eliot (1934) and F. R. Leavis (1955; 1976) took Lawrence's fictions seriously. Later critics, however, found Eliot's critical opinion simplistic. Later critics appreciated that his spiritual insight distinguishes Lawrence's art from the bulk of the modernist artistic creation of the first quarter of twentieth century, such as Joyce, and Pound and Woolf. What annoyed the religious moralists like Eliot the most was not his non-religious or heretic attitude but his deeply religious sensibility on a different level. Mark Spilka quotes Eliot as saying, "the point is that Lawrence started life wholly free from any restriction of tradition or institution, that he had no guidance except the Inner Light, the most untrustworthy and deceitful guide that ever offered itself to wandering humanity" (1963, p. 2).

Unlike early critics' rejection of Lawrence's work on moral and religious basis, many later critics of Lawrence find him as a deeply religious writer. Mark Kinkead-Weekes (2001) refers to Lawrence's description of himself as 'A passionately religious man' and describes religion as the true yardstick to measure Lawrence worth. Kinkead-Weekes admits his inability to understand Lawrence's ideological and religious beliefs. However, he recognises certain spiritual resonance in Lawrence's work. He considers Lawrence's rebellious attitude towards orthodox religion is a sign of the failure of the conventional religious institution to fulfil his spiritual quest for a 'personal loving and omnipotent deity'. According to Kinkead-Weekes Lawrence wanted to experience the 'Holy Spirit', which was not possible by the conventional religious means. Kinkead-Weekes traces Lawrence's religious beliefs into Biblical traditions alone and fails to locate Lawrence's mystical tendencies in any mystical traditions though he recognises the existences of such insights in Lawrence's works.

One of the most important critics of Lawrence's work regarding mystical approach to Lawrence is Frederick Carter. Carter (1932) believes that the depth and penetrative nature of



Lawrence's fiction come from his mysticism. He calls Lawrence's inner experimentation of his characters as the Lawrence's mystical journey towards God.

There are critics who consider Lawrence's spiritual insights and his religious symbolism as evident of either his misrepresentation of Christian ideals (Pittock, 1990) or revitalizing Christian myths (Jones, 1995). Likewise, critics like Nanett Norris (2015) traces Lawrence's religious symbols to medieval 'Alchemist'. However, on the other hand, Deborah E. Brassard (1984) studies Lawrence's poetry with the view of Western and Eastern mysticism. She finds the concept of the unity of God is an important theme in many of Lawrence's poetry.

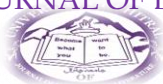
### Research Methodology

This paper has adopted a textual and contextual method. The evidence for the argument are collected through literary analysis of the given literary writings of the authors. The contextual evidence are collected from historical and biographical sources.

### Discussion

Two aspects of Lawrence's writings such as his *Study of Thomas Hardy* are important with its relation to Sufism where we think a parallel can be rewarding and support the argument of this paper that Lawrence's possible encounter with Sufi literature might have been reflected in his writings. One is the use of symbolism and other is his metaphysical vision. In his symbolism and vision Lawrence, like Sufis, seems to have a peculiar understanding of religious aspiration and spiritual truth. Lawrence does not like what he calls 'ghastly sentimentalism' in religion, he says even in school when the teacher narrated the story of Jesus, he did not feel sorry for Jesus as expected from a good Christian, however, he says "Yet the wonder of it penetrated very deep in me" (1979, p. 36). So, he is intrigued by the wonder of being, of Jesus himself not the pain and suffering of Jesus for the preservation and salvation of the humanity and neither in his sayings to follow a singular right path, he is not interested at all in the self-righteous religious preaching in the name of Jesus.

He elaborates his religious and metaphysical commitments in the beginning of *Study of Thomas Hardy* where he though acknowledges the materialist aspect of human history by referring to first man's struggle to feed and preserve his offspring. However, he notes that "the history of mankind is not altogether the history of an effort at self-preservation which has at length become over-blown and extravagant" (Lawrence, 1985, p.7). Real being for Lawrence

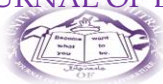


is in the 'escape away into flame' of the 'eternal phoenix' and he notes, "the flame was all the story and all triumph" (Lawrence, 1985, p.8). The actual life is in the 'red outburst at the top of the poppy', which is the finest form of being not worried for its preservation and happy to die because life comes out of its ashes. This idea of the life's eternal sense of being in its relation to cosmos is a Sufi ontological quest which Lawrence must be aware of before writing his Hardy essays which we have argued later in this paper. There seems to exist a sense of physical touch in Lawrence's call for a spiritual urgency and in his understanding of religious truth, in Lawrence's writing, as we can see in the flowering of poppy and the flame of life in his essay, body and mind work together in a spiritually charged environment – which is the dark substance of being, for obtaining a true enlightenment. The spiritual energy which can guide us to full knowledge and in a state of awareness does not come from thoughts and ideas, it resides in our body and through this energy we can connect to a larger cosmic existence of which we are only a part and until that connection is not made our understanding shall remain superficial.

Likewise, the stories and parables of Sufi traditions narrate an unending saga of soul and body, love, and relationship as well as more importantly the theme of being physically and spiritually alive and dead. Rumi's *The Mathnawi* begins with the story of reed-flute and its physical detachment from its 'osier bed'. But it survives in its 'plaintive notes' whenever touched by the lips of a lover. What Lawrence tries to explain in his metaphors of poppy and phoenix that Rumi lays out this theme of body and soul more eloquently in the onset of *The Mathnawi*. For instance, he mentions.

Body is not veiled from soul, neither / soul from body, / Yet no man hath ever seen a soul. / This plaint of the flute is fire, not mere air. / Let him who lacks this fire be / accounted dead! / 'Tis the fire of love that inspires the flute, / 'Tis the ferment of love that possesses the wine. / The flute is the confidant of all unhappy lovers; / Yea, its strains lay bare my inmost secrets (Rumi, 1979, p.1).

As compared with Lawrence, Rumi's symbols are exhaustive and one leading to other. For instance, in the story of reed-flute Rumi expounds his concept of body and soul and the transporting effect of love. He says further in the story after establishing that it is the physical



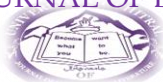
detachment of the reed-flute which makes its melody so sweet and effective to the air of other lovers who want to be united with their beloved,

Hail to thee, then, O love, sweet madness! / Thou who healest all our infirmities! / Who art the physician of our pride and self-conceit! / Who art our Plato and our Galen! / Love exalts our earthly bodies to heaven, / And makes the very hills to dance with joy! / O lover, 'twas love that gave life to Mount Sinai, / When "it quaked, and Moses fell down in a swoon." / Did my Beloved only touch me with his lips, I too, like the flute, would burst out in melody [...] The Beloved is all in all, the lover only veils Him; / The Beloved is all that lives, the lover a dead thing (Rumi, 1979, pp. 1-2).

Here we can see how Rumi and Lawrence adopt a similar metaphoric style in their articulation of similar metaphysical argument. The 'Beloved' here is the physical form of being, life's finest moment like the reed-flute and like Lawrence's red of the poppy. In another place Rumi expresses the same idea in simpler way, he notes, "Seemingly the bough is the cause of the fruit, / But really the bough exists because of the fruit" (1979, p. 128). Life is worth living for its substance, for its finest moment and for the sake of something greater. It is the 'touch' of the 'beloved lips' which can bring a true sense of being in Rumi and for Rumi it is also a religious experience, revelation to Moses was an act of love. While reading the above quoted lines from *The Mathnawi*, one cannot fail to notice the confusion of Sufi Symbolism here, which is a constant feature of Sufi poetry. The reason for such use of symbolic language seems to be that the idea is too big, and the imaginative flight is too wide to put it in simpler terms. Rumi takes a natural object and gives it the qualities of life in its most concrete form such as the physical detachment of reed-flute from its base and then the pain of this separation and then another physical touch of a lover's lip bring it into life of another form – the melodious notes. Whether it is the Mount Sinai or the poet himself, the physical touch of beloved is enough to bring them into life. This bringing together a natural object, the concept of love, touch of beloved and revelation of God into one symbolic system may suggest many things including unity of being, however, one thing it has in common with Lawrence, is the quality of life. One cannot ignore the palpable substance of life dancing around us when reading this poetry.

Lawrence like Rumi in his essay on Thomas Hardy tells the story of his heart, calling for the individual to come out of his dull routine, leave his moral virtues behind, throw away

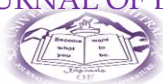




the conceit of his social responsibility and his future worries and thereby live the present and become one's own star. For Lawrence, the greater responsibility of any individual is one's soul and body. One should not live like a cabbage, for instance, in his story of cabbage and a soldier in the Second World War he gives the example of the conceit of self-preservation and moral courage, neither perpetuating a rotten existence nor throwing oneself to death in the fire of war give the real taste of true being. Society may not need our moral courage as much as our own inner self, our body and soul may need our attention. Lawrence once says to Frieda's daughter that, "Don't throw yourself away; you might want yourself later on" (1979, p. 245). He says to the women of suffrage movement that, it is not the parliament and right to vote which give you a better life, true living is not possible through collective decision of a society, it is an individual action. Act of life is a palpable burst of an individual flame like flowering of the poppy and like imagery bird phoenix's bursting into flame. It is not an idea of the collective wisdom to be discussed in the parliament and lay down into law. In Rumi's words, "The world is full of gold-diggers, / but yourself is where gold is mined. / The Prophet said, 'men are as mines' ; / the self is a mine of silver and gold, / and filled with precious gems" (1979, p. 215).

Furthermore, Lawrence tries to establish a holistic cosmology in which the known and sensible fragment of the cosmos is a part of or a manifestation of a higher unknown realm of being. For Lawrence it is so obvious that we have some unknown or at least immeasurable force in us which make us create unimaginable patterns. Sometimes we jump on new high in our creativity and in our amusements without any expectation and without knowing how. As noted by Robert Montgomery that, "Lawrence wanted to lead us into deeper levels of awareness, to move towards the cosmic, towards, in other words, the religious dimension [...]" (1994, p.2).

Most critics agree that Lawrence looks back to find clues to see the world in different lights as an artist. He despises the idea of rationalizing the phenomenon of existence. What Lawrence despises in modern rational thinking are certain attitudes which curtail human imagination and personal experience of the divine. Two such attitudes and perceptions he attacks sharply in his writings are the self-assertive will and the 'conceit of knowledge' derived from rational and scientific theories of the post-Renaissance world and the moral judgement of doctrinal faith. Regarding purely rationalist attitudes towards knowledge he describes the

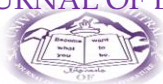


scientific culture of the Victorian era as a 'huge and rather ghastly glare of human understanding'. Instead of strong rational and self-assertive will of the modern man, he insists on a 'new germ' to revive our understanding of the divine that could save us, a new form of 'God-knowledge, or Life-knowledge' considering modern civilization at the end of the 'great road that Jesus and Francis and Whitman walked'.

The influence of Sufi thought and literature on the Transcendentalist writers like Emerson, whom Lawrence read as a young man and who impressed him immensely, is well documented by researchers such as John D. Yohannan (1977) in his *Persian Poetry in England and America: A 200 – Year History*. Moreover, across the spectrum of European Romanticism which Lawrence relates to for his intuitive and spontaneous art and for his holistic approach to life, the Sufi mode of perception has no doubt played a major role. The historical and literary links which brought the Medieval Persian Sufi literary treasures into modern Europe are too obvious to ignore. Lawrence's reading of the German Romantics from Hölderlin to Goethe, his admiration for Carlyle and Emerson and his close literary connection to the English Romantics make it plausible that like all others who wrote in this tradition, Sufi cosmology played a major role in shaping his ideas and the literary mode he wants to set. Lawrence's search for his own canvas on which to paint his thoughts goes back to his school days. In Jessie Chambers' accounts Lawrence read all the modern English authors and most of the Russian and French classics. Chambers records, "He read, of course, all the modern English authors" (1980, p.121).

Chambers also reports that Lawrence was reading Bishop Berkeley and after listing the major nineteenth century texts of Western literature and philosophy Lawrence read she observes that, "In all his reading he seemed to be groping for something that he could lay hold of as a guiding principle in his own life [...] he seemed to consider all his philosophical reading from the angle of his own personal need" (1980, p.113). Chambers' observations suggest that Lawrence was looking for something other than a conventional religious belief system and morality as well as an alternative to the materialistic and rationalistic understanding of the world. His quest for religious conversion probably brought him in contact with the mystical literature of the Persian Sufi poets. In his writings he laments the 'crude sentimentality' in his early works and wants to refine his writing by refining his soul through a religious conversion (Lawrence, 1979, p.49).

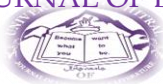




Apart from his ideas and contacts that give evidence of Sufi thought, there are other concrete instances of Lawrence's encounter with Sufi literature. Khayyam's Sufi poetry is the only non-Western literary text mentioned by Chambers in Lawrence's reading list. By Lawrence's time Sufi poetry had become a necessary addition to the list of the reading public. In Lawrence's home Persian and other Middle Eastern literature was available. Chambers notes the existence of Richard Garnett's twenty-volume *Anthology of International Library of Famous Literature* at Lawrence's home. Garnett's anthology contains many extracts of Sufi poetry from Rumi to Sa'ad and Hafiz.

One of Lawrence's uncles by marriage, Fritz Krenkow, was an orientalist who translated many Arabic texts into German. Boulton regards Krenkow as a major influence in Lawrence's intellectual life, he observes that Krenkow's 'largely intellectual influence was reinforced by his wife's interest in Lawrence as a painter' and that Krenkow's "dedication to scholarship and his intellectual energy could not fail to have their impact on the young Lawrence" (Lawrence, 1979, pp. 7-8). Evidently, Lawrence writes from his uncle's house in 1908, "My friends here are books – nothing but books [...] Uncle is always working away at his Arabi, and I sit reading French, wishing I could tackle Spanish and Italian, of which there are such a lot of delightful books here"(p. 8). According to Boulton, Krenkow, a German national, in his spare time worked as an editor and translator of Arabic texts. He further describes Krenkow's achievements, "From 1907 he published frequently in the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society and other learned journals, mainly German; his edition of the poems of Tufail Ibn'Auf al-Ghanavi and At Tirimmah Ibn ttakim At-Ta'yi was ready in 1906" (Lawrence, 1979, p.8). Later in life he travels to India and becomes professor of Islamic Studies at the famous Muslim University of Aligarh.

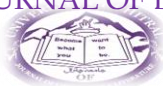
During his Cornwall years in 1916 and 1917, one of Lawrence's neighbours was Meredith Starr. Starr was a British occultist and poet and the writer of *The Occult Review*, an illustrated monthly journal containing articles and correspondence by many notable occultists of the day, including Aleister Crowley, Arthur Edward Waite, W.L. Wilmshurst, Franz Hartmann, Florence Farr, and Herbert Stanley Redgrove. He later brings Meher Baba, a famous Indian spiritual teacher of Iranian descent, to Europe. Meher Baba began a lifelong spiritual quest after meeting a Sufi saint when he was nineteen years old. Starr organises a play called



'East and West' which Lawrence mentions watching in August 1917. In a letter to Esther Andrews, Lawrence talks about this 'concert in St. Ives called East and West composed by Starr' and describes scene one, "Then came scene I, Leila and Majnoon – the Persian Romeo and Juliet" (Lawrence, 1979, p. 151). The story of Leila Majnun is one of the favourite metaphors of love in the Sufi literature.

Lawrence's early reading of Blake and Omar Khayyam's mystical poetry and the metaphysical writings of Emerson and Carlyle which he read and discussed during his college years with Jesse Chambers set him off on a spiritual journey. Chambers records how Lawrence gives her 'the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*' and she gives him 'Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*'. She also remembers that during 1906 Lawrence "read and liked Emerson's essays and became wildly enthusiastic over Thoreau's *Walden* [...] Then we came to Carlyle [...] we read also *Heroes and Hero Worship* and *Sartor Resartus*" (1980, pp.101-2). The Sufistic themes Lawrence later tries to develop in his writings such as religious conversion, liberty of soul, listening to one's heart, experiencing the divine in real terms and unison with a cosmic truth are present in these early readings. Lawrence's metaphysical maturity comes very early in his life. Evidently, the dream of sudden conversion into religious truth did not materialize but Lawrence's writings show a tremendous shift in mood, imagery, and use of symbols after his second novel *Sons and Lovers*.

Lawrence's later novels such as *The Rainbow* and particularly *Women in Love* seem to be on a different plan. Both the novels are a departure from the conventional form and texture of novel writing. The departure was so complete that it shocked English readers with its dark metaphysical clouds and its new interpretation of Biblical themes. Lawrence's work caused equal repercussions from both rationalists like Bertrand Russell as well as Victorian moralists and the conventionally religious public. Lawrence was aware of his departure, and he knew he was alone. He consistently tried to find other people like him but most of them disappointed him. Lawrence shows his apprehension regarding the publication of his novel *Women in Love* in a letter to Amy Lowell dated 30 August 1917, "Nobody will publish my novel *Women in Love* – my best bit of work. The publishers say, 'it is too strong for an English public'. Poor darling English public, when will it go in for a little spiritual athletics" (Lawrence, 1979, p. 153)? Lawrence is not only aware of the alienation of the general public from his work, but he

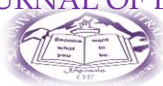


also knows the reasons why his novel won't be digested easily by the English public, the spiritual journey Lawrence suggests English people must take before they were to be able to appreciate his novel.

Meeting people like Hueffer, Russell, Murry and Forster must have increased Lawrence's knowledge of oriental mysticism including Sufism. All these people were aware of the oriental literature that had reached Europe from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries. Forster visits Egypt and India later in 1924 writes his famous novel *A Passage to India* in which he uses oriental mystical themes and images, however, in very mechanical and artificial way. Hueffer's influence on Lawrence's career as a literary writer cannot be exaggerated. Not only does Hueffer launched Lawrence's career as a writer, he also provided him with much needed connections to the wider world of literature.

The relation between Lawrence and Hueffer's *English Review* is worth mentioning here. Boulton notes that, Hueffer "established a link between Lawrence and the Review [that] was to persist until 1923" (1979, p.13). According to Boulton some thirty-five issues of the *Review* included Lawrence's work. One significant fact about *The English Review*, for Lawrence's possible reading of Sufi literature, is that it was financially supported by the greatest Persian scholar outside Iran, the Cambridge professor Edward Granville Browne. Boulton notes that when the magazine was failing financially, Professor Browne supported it 'who had himself written for the Review'. Lawrence must have read some of Professor Browne's writings and other oriental works whose publication in the *Review* Professor Browne thought important and for which it should remain in print. Browne is one of the most celebrated Persian scholars, his name is still well respected in Iran and there is a statue of him in Tehran to honour his work for Persian literature.

Another connection noted by Chambers is Lawrence's meeting of A. R. Orage in 1909. Orage was the editor of *The New Age* which Lawrence read regularly for a time. Orage was a disciple of Georgei Ivanovitch Gurdjieff who claimed to have visited Turkey, Central Asia and India and have learned esoteric and occult knowledge there. Gurdjieff later set up the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in France where Lawrence's close friend Katharine Mansfield died in 1923. Although Lawrence did not approve of Gurdjieff's occult practices he might have come across some Sufi texts and ideas usually used by occultists through his



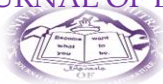
connection with Orage's magazine and the writing of Gurdjieff and perhaps another of Gurdjieff's disciples P. D. Ouspensky.

Moreover, Lawrence's interest in the Theosophical Society of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Annie Besant may have introduced him to many Sufi ideas. Although critical of Blavatsky's rhetoric about one humanity, one religion and her cheap spiritualism, Lawrence, shared the views of the theosophical society and other such promoters of intuitive knowledge. William York Tindal (1939) regards oriental interest of theosophists and people like Emerson, Thoreau and Yeats as a major influences on Lawrence's writings.

As mentioned earlier Emerson and Thoreau's interests included among other things Persian Sufi thought and literature. Lawrence's 'private religion' and ontological position does conform to some oriental metaphysical traditions such as Sufistic thought. However, he does not take Blavatsky's views quite as uncritically as Tindall suggests. Blavatsky, like Whitman, champions a collective humanity and ignores the individual, which as a spiritual realist Lawrence reject. For Lawrence it is the other way round, it is the microcosm which contains the macrocosm and not the macrocosm of the universe which should absorb and negate the microcosm of the individual life. He says, "one is not a little individual living a little individual life, but that one is in oneself the whole of mankind" (Lawrence, 1979, p. 302). As Whelan observes in relation to Lawrence's implicit theory of human relationships, 'Neither the Theosophists nor the Greeks have much affinity with Lawrence in this respect, but in Carpenter and [...] in the Cabbalistic mysticism of the married state we find metaphysical systems which exalt human relationships to the mystical plane without detaching them from the physical, and are thus much closer to Lawrence's own view" (Whelan, 1988, p. 107).

### Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to establish Lawrence's links to Sufi literature in terms of concepts such as sacral treatment of love and cosmic vision. As mentioned above there are many occasions where Lawrence may have come across Sufi literature. Apart from the fact that Lawrence writes in an environment where Sufi literature is widely available and appreciated in literary circles of his time, there are also evidences of the presence of Sufi literature at his own home and at the library of his uncle where he spends some time. However,

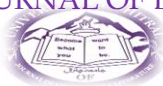


the above discussion does not confine itself to the availability of Sufi literature to Lawrence; it also notes parallel Sufi theme and concepts in Lawrence's early spiritual writings.

Significantly, Lawrence's rejection of materialistic and mechanical approach to life and his use of religious symbolism in his writings such as Thomas Hardy essay, *The Crown* and *The Reality of Peace* bring him very close to Sufi cosmology. Arguably, Lawrence uses spiritual themes and symbolism in his above-mentioned essays and in his more important literary writings such as *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, in which Lawrence explore mystical ideas to advocate for cultural emancipation which later critics like Terry Eagleton called 'Coupling'.

However, what Lawrence suggests in his vision of being as a palpable display of life in the flowering of poppy and in his letter to Garnett mentioned earlier is not exactly what literary theorists like Terry Eagleton (2012) and others term as equal to cultural theories of body, love making and the sexual emancipation we witness in the 1960s and 1970s. Lawrence envisions the freedom of soul and body from inside; he wants physical display of life in its moment of triumph, this is different from advocating sexual freedom as many critics suggest about Lawrence's cultural impact. It may include such a thing as sexual freedom but what Lawrence suggests is greater than this. As we saw in his letter to Garnett where he explains his objection to scared body theory of Christianity and the moral space of a character to grow, he notes, "Somehow – that which is physic – non-human, in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element – which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme is what I object to" (Lawrence, 1997, p.77). Lawrence clearly does not mean sexual object here when he says 'physic' or animalistic desire by 'non-human'. Lawrence refers to orthodox and conventional Christian humanity that is evidently part of modern post-Renaissance humanism. Lawrence clearly wants a total departure from this conventional moral scheme of things and from Christian and post-Renaissance human element.

Comparable aspect with Sufi cosmology is that Lawrence appreciates the wonder of being. As we noted in his desire for a 'sudden spiritual conversion' in the letter to Minister and in his fascination to St. Paul's quick awareness to the spiritual reality of divine being, Lawrence wants to be free for his moment of bewilderment. Lawrence seems to agree with Rumi when he says, "Sell your cleverness and buy bewilderment; / cleverness is mere opinion,



bewilderment intuition” (Rumi, 1979, p.136). Lawrence despises the conceit of rational judgement in modern man, as we saw in his letter to Russell and he equally despises the conceit of humanism promoted by some well-meaning mystic and spiritual writers as we noted in his critique of Whitman. He underscores the importance of the celebration of individual life which is the bases of the spiritual growth and fulfilment of being.

Given the tradition and impact of Sufistic thought one can justifiably argue that Lawrence writes in an overall atmosphere where Sufi texts and ideas are available. The scale of translation and publication of Sufi texts into English and other European languages was enormous and widespread by Lawrence's time. Lawrence is necessarily aware of this vast literature which surrounds him not only in the form of original translations but also through other Western writers he reads. Especially given that Lawrence writes in a particular Western tradition, a highly imaginative literary mood, one can easily identify Sufi links. Lawrence writes in a literary tradition in which art and philosophical speculation are interlinked. This mood of writing links Lawrence's art with the Romantics and Medieval Sufi conventions for which the work of art is a revelation of truth.

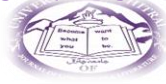
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