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## Classical Wisdom Meets Digital Da'wah: Reinterpreting Rumi's Ethical Messages for the Millennial Muslim Generation

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### ABSTRACT

The digital transformation of religious communication has created new opportunities and challenges for engaging Muslim millennials with classical Islamic spirituality. This research examines how Jalal al-Din Rumi's ethical teachings—rooted in the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) tradition of Islam and expressed in his major works, *Mathnawi*, *Fihī Ma Fihī*, and *Divan-e Shams*—are reinterpreted and disseminated through contemporary digital platforms. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, this study combines analysis of Rumi's original Persian texts with content analysis of 100 posts from ten prominent Islamic da'wah accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (January–May 2025). The findings reveal that Rumi's messages of divine love (*'ishq*), self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), patience (*ṣabr*), and universal compassion are adapted across a spectrum ranging from explicit Islamic contextualization to universal aesthetic spirituality. Accounts that intentionally frame Rumi's teachings within Islamic theology—integrating Qur'anic verses, hadīth, and Sufi concepts—successfully maintain theological depth while achieving meaningful engagement. However, digital dissemination presents a paradox: the same platforms that enable unprecedented reach also facilitate decontextualization and secularization when Rumi's verses are extracted from their Sufi foundations and presented as motivational soundbites. The study introduces a three-pole spectrum of reinterpretation (Islamic framing, hybrid approaches, universal spirituality) as a heuristic tool for

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analyzing religious transformation in digital spaces. It argues that Rumi’s universalist, love-oriented mysticism—irreducible to either sectarian orthodoxy or secular humanism—offers a distinctive resource for contemporary Islamic ethics, recovering neglected dimensions of Islamic spiritual heritage. The findings provide practical strategies for da’wah practitioners to maintain theological integrity while engaging millennial audiences. This study contributes to discourses on digital religion, ethical pedagogy, and the revival of classical literature in contemporary Islamic da’wah.

**Keywords:** Rumi; Digital Da’wah; Islamic Ethics; Classical Literature; Millennials; Sufism; Social Media Religion

## 1. Introduction

The landscape of Islamic da’wah has undergone a profound transformation over the past two decades, driven primarily by digital technologies and social media platforms. Traditional methods of religious propagation—face-to-face lectures, mosque-based study circles (*halaqāt*), and community engagement—have been increasingly supplemented, and in some contexts supplanted, by digital content on Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok<sup>[1, 2]</sup>. This shift is particularly significant for the millennial generation, characterized by digital nativity, preference for visual content, and religious engagement that blends personal spirituality with online connectivity<sup>[3, 4]</sup>.

The digitalization of da’wah presents both opportunities and challenges. It enables religious messages to reach audiences beyond geographical constraints, yet raises questions about preserving theological depth when classical teachings are adapted for platforms privileging brevity and emotional resonance over doctrinal precision<sup>[5, 6]</sup>. Within this context, the teachings of Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273), the renowned Persian Sufi poet, have experienced a remarkable resurgence among young Muslims navigating digital religious engagement.

Before proceeding, it is important to provide contextual information about the figure known in the West as Rumi. Born in 1207 in Balkh (in present-day Afghanistan), his full name was Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī<sup>[7]</sup>. He is respectfully referred to in Persian-speaking and broader Eastern traditions as Mawlānā (‘our master’) or Mawlawī<sup>[7, 8]</sup>. The appellation ‘Rūmī’ meaning ‘from Rome’ derives from his later residence in Konya (then part of the Sultanate of Rūm, the Eastern Roman Empire), where he lived, taught, and died in 1273<sup>[7, 8]</sup>. Referring to him solely as Rumi, without acknowledging his origins in Balkh, presents an incomplete

picture of his identity and inadvertently attributes him to the place of his death while omitting his birthplace. This study, while using the familiar name Rumi for accessibility, acknowledges this complexity and emphasizes that his ethical teachings emerged from the full trajectory of his life—from his early formation in the eastern Islamic world through his mature years in Anatolia<sup>[9]</sup>.

Rumi’s ethical teachings are preserved in three major works. The *Mathnawi-ye Ma’navi* (“Spiritual Couplets”), approximately 25,000 verses across six books, weaves together theological discourse, ethical instruction, and mystical poetry<sup>[10, 11]</sup>. The *Fihī Ma Fihī* (“In It What Is In It”) collects seventy-two discourses offering prose reflections on love and self-purification<sup>[12]</sup>. The *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, containing over 40,000 verses, represents the ecstatic outpouring following his encounter with Shams al-Din Tabrizi—marking his evolution from jurist (*faqīh*) to mystic transcending sectarian boundaries<sup>[8, 13, 14]</sup>.

Rumi’s ethical framework is best understood within the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimension of Islam—the mystical tradition (*taṣawwuf*) emphasizing inner purification (*tazkiyat al-naḥs*), direct knowledge of the divine (*ma’rifah*), and universal spiritual truths accessible through love and self-reflection<sup>[11, 15]</sup>. This framework differs from, yet remains rooted in, the exoteric (*ẓāhirī*) dimensions of Islamic law. As Schimmel observes, Sufism represents the inward dimension that complements outward observances<sup>[14]</sup>. Rumi was thoroughly trained in Islamic jurisprudence, yet his mature work recovers deeper spiritual dimensions often marginalized in mainstream doctrinal Islam<sup>[7, 16]</sup>.

Central to Rumi’s ethical vision are divine love (*‘ishq*), self-purification, patience (*ṣabr*), and universal compassion recognizing humanity’s common divine origin<sup>[11, 17]</sup>. His famous declaration—“I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Magian, nor Muslim” (*Mathnawi* I, 1–2)—affirms transcen-

dent unity (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) beneath authentic spiritual paths, offering resources for contemporary interfaith engagement<sup>[17]</sup>.

In recent decades, Rumi's poetry has achieved unprecedented global circulation, a phenomenon Irwin terms the "Global Rumi." This resurgence is evident on digital platforms, where his quotations are shared widely, framed as universal wisdom applicable to contemporary life<sup>[18, 19]</sup>. In the Indonesian context, Rumi's popularity among Muslim millennials reflects broader trends integrating traditional values with modern sensibilities<sup>[20]</sup>.

However, digital dissemination presents a paradox. While social media enables his ethical messages to reach millions, platform-mediated adaptation often involves simplification and decontextualization that may compromise spiritual depth<sup>[1, 3]</sup>. When Rumi's verses are extracted from their Sufi context and presented as motivational soundbites, they risk assimilation into what Basak describes as the "secularization and commercialization" of his legacy—detaching teachings from Islamic foundations and reinterpreting them through self-help ideologies<sup>[19]</sup>.

This raises critical questions: Are the moral principles in Rumi's poetry—divine love, self-purification, patience, universal compassion—preserved in their original spiritual depth when circulated on social media? Or are they transformed in ways that dilute their Islamic character? Comparative studies with Sufi figures like Ibn Arabi and Al-Hallaj suggest mystical teachings are particularly vulnerable to reinterpretation when removed from their hermeneutical communities<sup>[21, 22]</sup>.

Despite extensive scholarly attention to Rumi's teachings<sup>[7, 11, 14]</sup> and growing research on digital religion<sup>[1, 2, 5]</sup>, a significant gap remains in understanding how Rumi's ethical messages are reinterpreted within contemporary digital da'wah. Existing studies focus either on Rumi's classical significance or on digital religion in general terms, without systematically examining their intersection. Recent Indonesian scholarship has not specifically addressed Rumi's function in digital da'wah targeting millennial Muslims<sup>[20]</sup>.

This study addresses this gap by investigating the digital reinterpretation of Rumi's ethical teachings and its implications for Muslim millennials. Specifically, it seeks to answer: What ethical principles from Rumi's major works—the *Mathnawi*, *Fihi Ma Fihi*, and *Divan-e Shams*—remain

vital for Islamic spiritual teaching in the digital age? This question requires careful engagement with Rumi's original Persian texts to identify core moral themes that have contemporary relevance<sup>[10, 13]</sup>; How are these ideals adapted and presented across different types of digital da'wah accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube targeting Indonesian Muslim millennials? This question examines the processes of reinterpretation, simplification, and aestheticization that occur when classical teachings are translated into digital formats; and What patterns of reinterpretation emerge across these accounts, and how do they relate to the preservation or loss of Rumi's esoteric (*bāṭinī*) framework? This question addresses the spectrum of approaches—from explicit Islamic contextualization to universal spiritual appropriation—and their implications for maintaining theological integrity.

This study contributes to digital religion discourse by linking classical Islamic ethical traditions—particularly the esoteric, universalist dimensions of Sufism—with contemporary digital da'wah practices. Its novelty lies in three aspects: First, it engages directly with Rumi's original Persian texts through critical editions<sup>[10, 13]</sup>, grounding analysis in authentic sources rather than popular adaptations alone. This textual rigor ensures that comparisons between classical teachings and digital content are methodologically sound; Second, it employs a comparative framework considering Rumi's universalism alongside other Sufi thinkers<sup>[21, 22]</sup>, situating his ethical vision within the broader Islamic mystical tradition and illuminating what is distinctive about his love-centered approach; and Third, it examines the Indonesian context, where digital da'wah is particularly vibrant and where Rumi's popularity among millennials reflects distinctive local appropriations of global Sufi trends<sup>[20]</sup>. This focus reveals how global patterns of secularization intersect with local religious sensibilities.

By analyzing the digital reinterpretation of Rumi's poetry, this research aims to provide a framework for da'wah practitioners, scholars, and media professionals to develop digital strategies that are both engaging and theologically grounded. This study argues that Rumi's universalist, love-oriented mysticism—irreducible to either sectarian orthodoxy or secular humanism—offers a distinctive resource for contemporary Islamic ethics, recovering neglected dimensions of Islamic spiritual heritage for the digital age.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Rumi's Ethical and Spiritual Framework

#### 2.1.1. Rumi's Major Works: Manuscript Tradition and Ethical Content

Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273) produced three major works that form the foundation of his ethical and spiritual legacy. The *Mathnawi-ye Ma'navi* (“Spiritual Couplets”), his magnum opus, comprises approximately 25,000 verses across six books, weaving together theological discourse, ethical instruction, and mystical poetry through narratives and allegories<sup>[10, 11]</sup>. Nicholson's critical edition (1926) remains the standard scholarly reference, while Zarrinkoob's (1970) commentary provides essential insight into the philosophical depth of Rumi's ethical teachings. The *Fihi Ma Fihi* (“In It What Is In It”) collects seventy-two discourses offering prose reflections on love, self-purification, and the spiritual path<sup>[12]</sup>. Recent scholarship by Greeley examines the spirituality of hospitality in this work, demonstrating how Rumi's ethical vision extends beyond individual transformation to encompass social relationships<sup>[23]</sup>. The *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, containing over 40,000 verses, represents the ecstatic outpouring following his encounter with Shams al-Din Tabrizi—marking his evolution from jurist to mystic<sup>[13, 14]</sup>. Rezaei and Gerashi analyze the emotional dimensions of the Divan, demonstrating how Rumi's concept of love functions as both a psychological and an ethical force<sup>[24]</sup>.

#### 2.1.2. The Esoteric Dimension: Rumi's Batini Framework

Rumi's ethical teachings are best understood within the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimension of Islam—the mystical tradition (*taṣawwuf*) emphasizing inner purification (*tazkiyat al-naḥs*), direct knowledge of the divine (*ma'rifah*), and universal spiritual truths accessible through love and self-reflection<sup>[11, 15]</sup>. This framework differs from, yet remains rooted in, the exoteric (*ẓāhirī*) dimensions of Islamic law. As Schimmel observes, Sufism represents the inward dimension that complements outward observances<sup>[14]</sup>. Rumi was thoroughly trained in Islamic jurisprudence, yet his mature work recovers deeper spiritual dimensions often marginalized in mainstream doctrinal Islam<sup>[7]</sup>.

Rumi's universalism—expressed in his famous declaration, “I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Magian, nor Mus-

lim” (*Mathnawi* I, 1–2)—affirms transcendent unity (*wahdat al-wujūd*) beneath authentic spiritual paths<sup>[17]</sup>. This universalist dimension has made Rumi particularly attractive to global audiences, yet it also renders his teachings vulnerable to decontextualization when detached from their Islamic foundations<sup>[19]</sup>. Comparative perspectives enrich understanding of Rumi's distinctive framework: studies of Ibn Arabi and Al-Hallaj reveal commonalities and differences among Sufi approaches to ethics, while direct comparisons between Rumi and Ibn Arabi on the problem of evil further illuminate the distinctive features of their respective perspectives<sup>[21, 22]</sup>.

#### 2.1.3. Core Ethical Themes in Rumi's Poetry

Analysis of Rumi's three major works reveals consistent ethical themes. Divine Love (*'ishq*) is not merely emotion but the ground of ethical existence. Chittick demonstrates that divine love draws the soul toward God and, simultaneously, toward ethical perfection, purifying the ego and enabling genuine compassion<sup>[11, 25]</sup>. Self-Purification (*Tazkiyat al-Nafs*) is central to Islamic ethics generally and to Rumi's teaching specifically. Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din* provides the classical framework, which Rumi develops through poetic imagery depicting the ego (*naḥs*) as “a hidden enemy disguised as a friend” (*Mathnawi* II, 2520–2525), requiring constant vigilance<sup>[11, 26]</sup>. Patience (*Ṣabr*) appears throughout as both a moral virtue and a spiritual practice. Drawing on the Qur'anic concept of *ṣabr*, Rumi presents life's difficulties as opportunities for spiritual growth<sup>[7]</sup>. The reed flute metaphor opening the *Mathnawi* symbolizes how suffering, patiently endured, transforms the human being into an instrument for divine beauty<sup>[10]</sup>. Universal Compassion and Tolerance extend beyond the Muslim community to embrace all humanity. Greeley's (2024) analysis of hospitality in *Fihi Ma Fihi* demonstrates how divine love generates an ethic of radical inclusivity, while Amin argues that universal compassion, rooted in humanity's common divine origin, offers distinctive Islamic resources for interfaith engagement<sup>[17]</sup>.

### 2.2. Digital da'wah and the Millennial Generation

#### 2.2.1. Defining Digital da'wah: Evolution and Characteristics

Digital da'wah refers to the use of digital platforms for Islamic religious communication, education, and

propagation—a significant departure from traditional modes characterized by face-to-face interaction and institutional authority<sup>[1, 3]</sup>. Its evolution spans three phases: the static web phase (websites reproducing traditional authority), the social media phase (participatory platforms challenging established authorities), and the algorithmic phase (platform algorithms shaping content discovery)<sup>[2, 5]</sup>.

Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become significant sites for religious engagement, particularly among younger Muslims. These platforms privilege visual content, brevity, and emotional resonance—characteristics that shape how religious messages are crafted and received<sup>[4, 6]</sup>. In the Indonesian context, digital da'wah has flourished, with numerous accounts attracting large followings and influencing religious discourse among millennials<sup>[27, 28]</sup>.

### 2.2.2. The Millennial Muslim Generation: Spiritual Needs and Digital Habits

Millennials (born 1981–1996) exhibit distinctive characteristics shaping their religious engagement. As digital natives, they navigate online spaces comfortably and often turn to digital platforms as primary information sources<sup>[2]</sup>. Their religious sensibilities tend to be experiential, personalized, and oriented toward practical relevance rather than doctrinal precision<sup>[4]</sup>.

Rumi's teachings hold particular appeal for millennials due to their poetic subtlety, emotional resonance, and perceived relevance to contemporary struggles. Apriani argues that Rumi's emphasis on love and direct experience resonates with millennials seeking alternatives to both traditional religious formalism and secular materialism<sup>[20]</sup>. Kasanova and Rudyanto (2025) demonstrate how Rumi's teachings are being reinterpreted to address contemporary challenges such as mental health, identity crisis, and social fragmentation<sup>[29]</sup>. However, the same characteristics that make Rumi attractive—accessibility, emotional power, universal resonance—can lead to interpretations that detach his teachings from their Islamic foundations when mediated through platforms prioritizing shareability over depth<sup>[19]</sup>.

### 2.2.3. Theoretical Frameworks for Digital Religious Communication

Analyzing digital reinterpretation of Rumi's poetry requires theoretical tools addressing both textual transformation and audience reception. Intertextuality holds that mean-

ing is shaped by interaction with other texts<sup>[30, 31]</sup>. In digital spaces, Rumi's poetry enters dialogue with self-help literature, popular psychology, wellness culture, and visual aesthetics, generating hybrid meanings that may diverge from his original context. Reception Theory provides insight into how audiences actively construct meaning from media content<sup>[32]</sup>. In digital da'wah, followers interpret Rumi through their own cultural frameworks, life experiences, and psychological needs—interpretations that may align with or diverge from his Sufi framework. This audience agency is amplified in digital spaces where users comment, share, and remix content<sup>[5]</sup>. Humanistic da'wah Theory emphasizes approaching religious communication through empathy, understanding, and respect for human dignity—principles resonating deeply with Rumi's approach<sup>[33]</sup>.

### 2.2.4. The Challenge of Secularization in Digital Religious Spaces

Digital dissemination raises concerns about secularization—the process whereby religious content is detached from theological foundations and reinterpreted in non-religious or universalized terms<sup>[1, 3]</sup>. Basak documents the commercialization and secularization of Rumi's legacy, particularly in Western contexts where his poetry is stripped of Islamic references and marketed as universal wisdom<sup>[19]</sup>. In contemporary discourse, Rumi has increasingly been framed as a “cultural icon,” while his Islamic roots are often minimized or overlooked. This pattern is not unique to Rumi; Irwin notes similar dynamics in the global reception of Buddhist teachers like the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh<sup>[18]</sup>.

The challenge for digital da'wah practitioners is balancing accessibility with theological integrity. As Campbell and Bunt argue, digital religion requires strategies to maintain religious authenticity while adapting to platform logics<sup>[1, 3]</sup>. This study examines how Rumi's teachings are negotiated in Indonesian digital da'wah, where global trends intersect with local religious sensibilities<sup>[20, 29]</sup>.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design integrating classical text analysis with digital content anal-

ysis. This approach prioritizes depth of interpretation over numerical measurement, focusing on meaning, context, and how ethical values are constructed and communicated across different media<sup>[34]</sup>. The research design is structured as a comparative textual analysis that traces the trajectory of Rumi’s ethical messages from their classical expression in Persian manuscripts to their reinterpretation in Indonesian-language digital da’wah content, enabling identification of both continuities and transformations in the transmission of Islamic ethical traditions across media contexts.

### 3.2. Data Sources

This study utilizes two primary categories of data: classical Persian texts attributed to Jalal al-Din Rumi, and digital content from social media platforms featuring Rumi’s quotations.

#### 3.2.1. Classical Texts

The classical textual corpus comprises selections from Rumi’s three major works, accessed through authoritative critical editions. From Nicholson’s critical edition of the *Mathnawi* (six volumes, approximately 25,000 verses), we selected 45 passages (approximately 450 verses) based on three criteria: explicit treatment of ethical concepts central to Islamic moral philosophy (divine love, self-purification, patience, compassion); frequent citation in contemporary digital da’wah content; and representation across all six books to ensure coverage of the work’s ethical development<sup>[10]</sup>. From Arberry’s translation of *Fihi Ma Fihi*, we selected discourses 1–10, 15–20, and 35–40 (total 22 discourses) based on their concentration of ethical themes and relevance to contemporary spiritual concerns<sup>[12]</sup>. From Furuzanfar’s critical edition of the *Divan-e Shams* (approximately 40,000 verses), we selected ghazals 1–50 and 100–150 (total 100 ghazals, approximately 1,500 verses) based on their representation of Rumi’s mature ethical vision, their emphasis on love as an ethical force<sup>[13, 24]</sup>, and their frequent appearance in popular compilations. While relying on these critical editions as primary sources, we consulted Barks’ *The Essential Rumi* as a secondary reference to identify which verses circulate most widely and to trace the relationship between popular adaptations and scholarly editions<sup>[35]</sup>.

#### 3.2.2. Digital Content

Digital data were collected from three social media platforms widely used for Islamic religious content in Indonesia: Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Platform selection was based on their popularity among Indonesian millennials<sup>[2]</sup>, their distinctive affordances for religious content, and preliminary observation indicating active circulation of Rumi’s quotations. We identified and selected ten prominent da’wah accounts based on the following inclusion criteria: minimum 5,000 followers, active posting during the study period (January–May 2025), primary focus on Islamic content with regular inclusion of Rumi’s quotations, Indonesian-language or bilingual content targeting Indonesian Muslim audiences, and public accessibility.

The selected accounts are:

- Instagram: @sahabatrumi, @seduhsufi, @suluksalik, @pecisufi, @arahbatin.
- TikTok: @tadarus\_filsafat, @bukurumi, @kalamhati.
- YouTube: Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi, cerminan\_qolbu.

Data collection covered the five-month period from January 1 to May 31, 2025. For each account, we conducted systematic non-participant observation, collecting 100 posts including captions and content formats. All data were documented through screenshots and manual transcription, stored securely with unique identifiers linking each post to its source account and date.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke<sup>[36]</sup>. In the familiarization phase, both classical texts and digital content were read and reviewed multiple times by all researchers, involving close reading of selected passages in Persian (where available) and translation, and review of all collected posts and captions. In the initial coding phase, two researchers independently coded a subset of the data (20 classical passages, 30 digital posts) to identify meaningful units related to ethical themes, using descriptive and interpretive codes such as “divine love expressed,” “patience in suffering,” “self-purification mentioned,” “universal compassion,” “decontextualized quote,” “secular framing,” and “aesthetic presentation.” In the theme searching phase, initial codes were

grouped into potential themes by comparing codes across classical and digital datasets to identify both continuities and transformations in how ethical concepts appear. In the theme reviewing phase, potential themes were reviewed against coded extracts and the entire dataset through iterative discussion among researchers, with themes refined, combined, or discarded as appropriate. In the theme-defining phase, the final set of themes was defined with clear descriptions of scope and significance, producing the thematic framework presented in the Findings section. In the final phase, themes were written up with illustrative examples from both classical texts and digital content.

To enhance methodological rigor, we developed a codebook specifying definitions and inclusion criteria for each code. Two researchers independently coded 20% of the dataset (30 posts, 20 classical passages), achieving 87% inter-coder reliability assessed through percentage agreement. Disagreements were resolved through discussion, and the remaining data were coded by the first author with periodic checks by the second author. Triangulation was employed through data triangulation (comparing findings across classical texts and digital content), investigator triangulation (involvement of multiple researchers), and theoretical triangulation (applying intertextuality, reception theory, and humanistic da'wah theory).

## 4. Results

This section presents findings from the analysis of Rumi's classical texts and digital da'wah content across 10 Indonesian social media accounts (January–May 2025). The presentation is organized according to the three research questions.

### 4.1. Moral Values in Rumi's Poetry

Analysis of Rumi's three major works—*Mathnawi*<sup>[10]</sup>, *Fihi Ma Fihi*<sup>[12]</sup>, and *Divan-e Shams*—reveals four dominant ethical themes<sup>[13]</sup>.

#### 4.1.1. Divine Love ('Ishq)

Love is the central theme in Rumi's ethical vision. In the *Mathnawi*, he describes love as a transformative force: "Love is that fire which, when it blazes, consumes everything except the Beloved"<sup>[10]</sup>. Love functions not merely as emo-

tion but as the ontological ground for moral transformation and the primary means of drawing closer to God<sup>[11]</sup>. The *Divan-e Shams* further emphasizes love's primacy over intellect: "Love is an ocean, intellect a seeking stream; Love is the sun, intellect a mote of dust"<sup>[13]</sup>.

#### 4.1.2. Self-Purification (*Tazkiyat al-Nafs*)

Rumi consistently emphasizes purification of the lower self (*nafs*) as essential for ethical development. He describes the ego as "a hidden enemy disguised as a friend" (*Mathnawi*, II: 2520–2525)<sup>[10]</sup>. This concept, rooted in the broader Islamic tradition of *tazkiyah* (Al-Ghazali, 2004), requires constant vigilance and spiritual discipline to transform the self's orientation from egoistic desires toward divine consciousness.

#### 4.1.3. Patience (*Ṣabr*) and Acceptance of Destiny

Patience appears throughout Rumi's works as both moral virtue and spiritual practice. In *Fihi Ma Fihi*, he states: "Patience is the key to joy. Do not grieve; everything you lose comes round in another form. The apparent loss is but a preparation for a greater gain, if you have patience to await it" (Discourse 35, p. 156)<sup>[12]</sup>. The famous reed flute metaphor opening the *Mathnawi* illustrates how suffering, patiently endured, transforms the human being into an instrument through which divine beauty manifests<sup>[7]</sup>.

#### 4.1.4. Universal Compassion and Tolerance

Rumi's ethical vision extends beyond religious boundaries while remaining grounded in Islamic spirituality. The *Mathnawi* proclaims: "The religion of love is apart from all religions; For lovers, the only religion is God" (III: 4120–4125)<sup>[10]</sup>. The *Divan-e Shams* adds: "Everyone you see is a mirror of yourself" (Ghazal 245)<sup>[13]</sup>, affirming shared humanity as foundation for compassion<sup>[17]</sup>. These four dominant ethical themes are summarized in **Table 1**.

### 4.2. Digital Reinterpretation of Rumi's Teachings

#### 4.2.1. Overview of Digital Content

Analysis examined 100 posts from 10 Indonesian-language da'wah accounts (January–May 2025) The distribution of accounts and sampled posts is presented in **Table 2**.

**Table 1.** Core Ethical Themes in Rumi’s Poetry.

Theme	Key Text (Original)	Ethical Significance
Divine Love	<i>Mathnawi</i> I: 112–115	Love as transformative path to God
Self-Purification	<i>Mathnawi</i> II: 2520–2525	Discipline of ego for spiritual growth
Patience	<i>Fihi Ma Fihi</i> , Disc. 35	Suffering as spiritual preparation
Universal Compassion	<i>Mathnawi</i> III: 4120–4125	Transcendent unity beneath religious diversity

**Table 2.** Digital da’wah Accounts Analyzed by Platform.

Platform	Accounts	Posts
Instagram	@sahabatrumi, @seduhsufi, @suluksalik, @pecisufi, @arahbatin	40
TikTok	@tadarus_filasafat, @bukurumi, @kalamhati, @batuhitam_	35
YouTube	Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi, cerminan_qolbu	25
Total	10 accounts	100

#### 4.2.2. Thematic Patterns in Digital Presentation

Comparison between original texts and digital content reveals consistent transformations across four ethical themes:

- Divine Love → Personal Empowerment

The original concept of love as path to God is frequently reframed as personal healing. @sahabatrumi posted (March 5, 2025): “*Mencintai itu manusiawi. Merasakan sakit adalah manusia. Namun tetap mencintai meski sakit adalah malaikat yang murni.*” (To love is human. To feel pain is human. But to continue loving despite the pain is to be a pure angel). Caption: “*Rumi mengajarkan kita untuk melihat cinta dalam setiap momen.*” The transformative, self-annihilating dimension of *’ishq* is absent, replaced by a romanticized notion of enduring love that focuses on human emotional experience rather than divine transcendence.

- Self-Purification → Emotional Resilience

*Tazkiyat al-nafs* appears as mental health discourse. @pecisufi (February 10, 2025) featured Rumi quotes alongside stress management tips with caption: “*Belajar dari Rumi tentang ketahanan mental*” (Learning from Rumi about mental resilience). The spiritual discipline of ego-conquest is replaced by psychological self-care.

- Patience → Motivational Recovery

Rumi’s patience teachings appear as motivational content. @suluksalik (January 28, 2025) posted: “*Kamu harus meyakinkan hatimu bahwa apapun yang ditetapkan Allah adalah yang paling tepat dan paling bermanfaat bagimu*”

(You must convince your heart that whatever Allah has decreed is the most right and most beneficial for you). Caption: “*Trust the process.*” The Islamic concept of *qadar* (divine decree) is explicitly mentioned in the quote, yet the English caption replaces it with “the process”—a secular substitute that shifts focus from divine will to impersonal fate. This juxtaposition exemplifies the hybridization of meaning in digital da’wah: the original Indonesian text maintains Islamic framing, while the accompanying English caption caters to global audiences but risks secularizing the message.

- Universal Compassion → Inclusive Humanism

Rumi’s universalism appears as undifferentiated inclusivity. @seduhsufi (January 18, 2025) posted: “*Di hadapan Tuhan kita semua sama, kita semua pengemis dan peminta-minta*” (Before God we are all the same, we are all beggars and supplicants). Caption: “*Love without borders.*” The Sufi framework of divine unity beneath religious forms is simplified into secular humanism. The original Indonesian quote maintains the theocentric orientation—human equality is grounded in our shared position *before God*—while the English caption omits this theological foundation, reducing the message to generic humanism.

#### 4.2.3. Spectrum of Reinterpretation across Accounts

Analysis of the ten accounts reveals a clear spectrum in how Rumi’s teachings are presented, ranging from explicit Islamic contextualization to universal aesthetic spirituality.

- Pole 1: Explicit Islamic Framing

Accounts at this end of the spectrum consistently

ground Rumi’s quotes within Islamic theology.

@sahabatrumi (Instagram, 14 K followers) consistently contextualizes Rumi within Islamic framework. Posts integrate Qur’anic verses and hadith. Example (April 10, 2025): Rumi quote with QS. Ali Imran: 31, emphasizing love as path to Allah. Another post (March 12, 2025) features: “*Setiap orang dikalahkan oleh pikirannya, itulah mengapa mereka memiliki begitu banyak sakit hati dan kesedihan*” (Everyone is defeated by their own thoughts, that is why they have so much heartache and sadness). The caption connects this to the concept of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul), emphasizing the importance of controlling one’s thoughts as part of Islamic spiritual discipline.

Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi (YouTube, 41.3 K subscribers) provides in-depth analysis directly engaging original texts. Videos (15–30 min) explain Sufi concepts and correct popular misinterpretations. The channel consistently references Qur’anic verses and classical commentaries, positioning Rumi within Islamic intellectual tradition.

cerminan\_qolbu (YouTube, 6.72 K subscribers) integrates Rumi with Qur’an and hadith in educational format. Example (April 12, 2025): “*Dunia ini hanyalah bayangan, jangan tertipu olehnya. Orang bijak adalah ia yang belajar dari setiap peristiwa, baik manis maupun pahit*” (This world is merely a shadow, do not be deceived by it. The wise person is one who learns from every event, both sweet and bitter). The video contextualizes this teaching within Islamic concepts of *zuhd* (ascetic detachment) and *hikmah* (wisdom), emphasizing that Rumi’s advice aligns with Qur’anic teachings about the temporary nature of worldly life (QS. Al-Hadid: 20).

- Pole 2: Hybrid Approaches

Accounts in the middle spectrum blend Islamic references with contemporary, millennial-friendly language.

@batuhitam\_ (TikTok, 19.4 K followers) uses millen-

nial language while maintaining Islamic references. Example (March 15, 2025): “*When you’re down, Rumi says behind every sadness, Allah has a beautiful plan.*” The casual tone and bilingual approach make Islamic spirituality accessible without sacrificing theological content.

@tadarus\_filasafat (TikTok) presents philosophical approaches to Rumi, often comparing his teachings with broader spiritual concepts while maintaining awareness of his Islamic roots.

@kalamhati (TikTok, 150 K followers) presents poetic spiritual content with subtle Islamic framing. Posts often reference “Nya” (Him), maintaining theocentric orientation while the overall tone is contemplative rather than didactic.

- Pole 3: Universal Aesthetic Spirituality

Accounts at this end present Rumi’s quotes as universal wisdom with minimal or no Islamic contextualization.

@bukurumi (TikTok, 18.1 K followers) curates aesthetic Rumi quotes without explicit Islamic context. Posts feature nature imagery and ambient music; captions use “universe” rather than “Allah.” The Islamic concept of divine providence is replaced by impersonal cosmic force.

@arahbatin (Instagram) focuses on inner spiritual journey with minimal explicit Islamic framing, presenting Rumi’s teachings as universal wisdom applicable to all seekers regardless of religious background.

#### 4.2.4. Summary of Reinterpretation Patterns

The findings above demonstrate that the reinterpretation of Rumi’s teachings in digital da’wah content does not occur in a single uniform pattern. Rather, the selected accounts can be mapped across a continuum ranging from explicit Islamic contextualization, hybrid millennial-friendly framing, to universalized spiritual presentation with minimal theological reference. These comparative patterns are summarized in **Table 3**.

**Table 3.** Spectrum of Digital Reinterpretation of Rumi’s Ethical Themes.

Theme in Rumi	Original Text Reference	Islamic Framing (Pole 1)	Hybrid Approach (Pole 2)	Universal Spirituality (Pole 3)
Divine Love	<i>Mathnawi</i> I: 112–115 <sup>[10, 37]</sup>	@sahabatrumi: Love as path to Allah with Qur’anic verses	@batuhitam_: “Allah has a beautiful plan” in casual language	@bukurumi: Aesthetic quotes with “universe”
Self-Purification	<i>Mathnawi</i> II: 2520–2525 <sup>[10, 37]</sup>	@sahabatrumi: <i>Tazkiyat al-nafs</i> as spiritual discipline	@pecisufi: Mental resilience with Islamic framing	@arahbatin: Inner journey without explicit Islam

Table 3. Cont.

Theme in Rumi	Original Text Reference	Islamic Framing (Pole 1)	Hybrid Approach (Pole 2)	Universal Spirituality (Pole 3)
Patience	<i>Fihi Ma Fihi</i> , Disc. 35 <sup>[12]</sup>	@suluksalik: <i>Qadar</i> with explicit Allah mention	@tadarus_filsafat: Philosophical comparisons	Generic: “Trust the process”
Universal Compassion	<i>Mathnawi</i> III: 4120–4125 <sup>[10, 37]</sup>	@seduhsufi: Equality “di hadapan Tuhan” (before God)	@kalamhati: Poetic references to “Nya”	@seduhsufi caption: “Love without borders” (secularized)

## 5. Discussion

This section interprets the findings presented above, addressing their theoretical implications, practical significance, and contributions to the broader discourse on digital religion and Islamic ethics.

### 5.1. The Paradox of Digital Dissemination: Accessibility vs. Depth

The findings reveal a fundamental paradox in digital da’wah: the same platforms that enable Rumi’s teachings to reach millions of Muslim millennials also facilitate their decontextualization and secularization. As documented in Section 2.2, Rumi’s profound ethical concepts—divine love (*’ishq*), self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), patience (*ṣabr*), and universal compassion—undergo systematic transformation when adapted for social media. Love becomes personal empowerment; spiritual discipline becomes emotional resilience; acceptance of divine decree becomes motivational “trust the process”; universal compassion becomes secular humanism.

This paradox aligns with Bunt’s observation that digital platforms make religious messages more accessible while often compromising their theological depth<sup>[1]</sup>. Campbell’s framework of digital religion helps explain this phenomenon: when religious content migrates to platforms designed for brevity, visual appeal, and algorithmic optimization, it inevitably adapts to these affordances<sup>[3]</sup>. The result, as Evolvi notes, is a hybridization of religious meaning that reflects both tradition and platform logic<sup>[5]</sup>.

However, our findings complicate simplistic narratives of digital secularization. The spectrum of reinterpretation documented in Section 2.3 demonstrates that platform affordances do not determine outcomes. Accounts at Pole 1—such as @sahabatrumi, Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi,

and cerminan\_qolbu—successfully maintain Islamic framing while achieving significant reach through intentional contextualization strategies. These cases suggest that theological depth and digital accessibility are not mutually exclusive when practitioners employ deliberate framing techniques.

### 5.2. Secularization and the Transformation of Rumi’s Legacy

The secularization observed in digital Rumi content reflects broader patterns in the global reception of Sufi teachings. Basak documents how Rumi’s poetry has been commercialized in Western contexts, stripped of Islamic references, and marketed as universal wisdom<sup>[19]</sup>. Rumi is widely celebrated as a “cultural icon,” though this recognition often comes with a diminished emphasis on his Islamic identity. Our findings extend this scholarship by documenting parallel processes in Indonesian digital spaces, where global trends intersect with local religious sensibilities.

The theoretical framework of intertextuality illuminates these transformations<sup>[30, 31]</sup>. When Rumi’s words circulate on social media, they enter into dialogue with multiple texts—self-help literature, popular psychology, wellness culture, and visual aesthetics—that shape their meaning. The juxtaposition observed in @suluksalik’s post, where the Indonesian text maintains explicit Islamic framing (“*apapun yang ditetapkan Allah*”) while the English caption adopts secular language (“*Trust the process*”), exemplifies this hybridized meaning-making. Similarly, @seduhsufi’s post grounds human equality in our shared position “*di hadapan Tuhan*” (before God), yet the accompanying caption “*Love without borders*” omits this theological foundation.

Yet secularization is not inevitable. The persistence of accounts like @sahabatrumi, Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi, and cerminan\_qolbu—which consistently frame Rumi’s teach-

ings within Islamic theology—demonstrates that digital platforms can also serve as spaces for theological preservation and renewal. This suggests that the outcome of digital dissemination depends significantly on the intentional strategies of content creators, not merely on platform affordances.

### 5.3. Recovering Rumi’s Esoteric Framework in Digital Spaces

A key theoretical contribution of this study is its emphasis on Rumi’s esoteric (*bāḥinī*) framework as distinct from both sectarian orthodoxy and secular humanism. As argued in the Introduction and Literature Review, Rumi’s teachings emerge from the inward dimension of Islam—the mystical tradition that emphasizes inner purification, direct experiential knowledge of the divine, and universal spiritual truths accessible through love and self-reflection<sup>[8, 11, 15]</sup>.

This framework challenges both the exoteric reduction of Rumi to conventional Islamic doctrine and the secular reduction of Rumi to universal self-help. The original texts analyzed in Section 1 reveal a third path:

- Love that consumes the ego rather than affirming it (*Mathnawi* I: 112–115)<sup>[10, 37]</sup>.
- Self-purification that transforms the soul rather than managing stress (*Mathnawi* II: 2520–2525)<sup>[10, 37]</sup>.
- Patience that accepts divine decree rather than trusting impersonal process (*Fihi Ma Fihi*, Disc. 35)<sup>[12]</sup>.
- Universal compassion rooted in divine unity rather than secular humanism (*Mathnawi* III: 4120–4125; *Divan-e Shams*, Ghazal 245)<sup>[10, 37]</sup>.

Recovering this esoteric framework in digital spaces requires what Amin terms “hermeneutical hospitality”—the capacity to engage diverse audiences while maintaining theological integrity<sup>[17]</sup>. Accounts like @sahabatrumi, Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi, and cerminan\_qolbu demonstrate this approach: they use Rumi’s poetry as entry points for deeper engagement with Islamic spirituality, rather than reducing his teachings to soundbites. Their content models how digital platforms can serve not merely as distribution channels but as spaces for genuine spiritual education.

The spectrum documented in Section 2.3—from explicit Islamic framing to universal aesthetic spirituality—provides a heuristic for understanding how different accounts

navigate this tension. Accounts at Pole 1 prioritize theological integrity; accounts at Pole 2 experiment with hybrid approaches that may attract broader audiences while retaining Islamic references; accounts at Pole 3 maximize accessibility but risk complete decontextualization.

### 5.4. Practical Implications for Digital da’wah Practitioners

The spectrum of reinterpretation documented in this study suggests several practical strategies for maintaining theological integrity in Rumi-based digital da’wah:

First, contextualize quotes within their Islamic framework. As demonstrated by @sahabatrumi and cerminan\_qolbu, brief explanations linking Rumi’s words to Qur’anic verses or hadith significantly strengthen Islamic framing. A single sentence connecting Rumi’s concept of love to the Qur’anic notion of *mahabbah* can transform how audiences understand a post.

Second, be mindful of bilingual strategies. The contrast between @suluksalik’s Islamic Indonesian text and secularized English caption reveals how bilingual content can create hybrid meanings. Practitioners should ensure that translations maintain theological accuracy, not merely universal appeal, or provide contextualization in both languages.

Third, diversify content formats. YouTube channels like Inspiratif Jalaludin Rumi demonstrate the value of long-form content for conveying depth, while TikTok accounts can maintain Islamic framing when carefully designed with relatable language that still references Allah (as seen in @batuhitam\_’s approach).

Fourth, position intentionally along the spectrum. Rather than assuming all platforms require the same approach, practitioners can strategically position themselves based on their goals:

- Accounts aiming for explicit da’wah (religious propagation) should operate at Pole 1, prioritizing theological integrity.
- Accounts doing pre-da’wah (building interest) might effectively operate at Pole 2, using hybrid approaches that invite deeper engagement.
- Pole 3 represents significant risk of decontextualization and should be approached with caution.

Fifth, recover the esoteric dimension explicitly. Rather

than defending Rumi within narrow orthodoxy or surrendering to secular universalism, practitioners can emphasize his distinctive contribution: a love-centered spirituality that purifies the ego, deepens faith, and opens toward universal compassion without dissolving Islamic identity. This requires moving beyond both defensive postures and uncritical adaptation.

## 6. Conclusions

This study examined the digital reinterpretation of Jalal al-Din Rumi's ethical teachings across Indonesian social media platforms and its implications for Muslim millennials. By integrating classical text analysis of Rumi's major works—*Mathnawi*, *Fihi Ma Fihi*, and *Divan-e Shams*—with content analysis of 100 posts from ten digital da'wah accounts, the research has illuminated both the opportunities and challenges inherent in transmitting classical Islamic ethics through contemporary digital media.

The findings demonstrate that Rumi's ethical framework, rooted in the esoteric (*bāṭinī*) dimension of Islam, offers distinctive resources for addressing the spiritual and moral concerns of millennial Muslims. His teachings on divine love (*'ishq*), self-purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), patience (*ṣabr*), and universal compassion resonate powerfully with young audiences navigating the complexities of digital life. However, the digital dissemination of these teachings presents a fundamental paradox: the same platforms that enable unprecedented reach also facilitate decontextualization and secularization. When Rumi's verses are extracted from their Sufi context and presented as motivational soundbites, they risk being assimilated into universal self-help ideologies that dilute their Islamic character.

Crucially, this study has shown that such secularization is not inevitable. The spectrum of reinterpretation documented across ten accounts—ranging from explicit Islamic framing (Pole 1) through hybrid approaches (Pole 2) to universal aesthetic spirituality (Pole 3)—reveals that platform affordances do not determine outcomes. Accounts that intentionally contextualize Rumi's quotations within Islamic frameworks—integrating Qur'anic verses, hadith, and explanations of Sufi concepts—successfully maintain theological depth while achieving meaningful engagement. This demonstrates that accessibility and authenticity need not be

mutually exclusive when digital da'wah practitioners employ thoughtful contextualization strategies.

The study has advanced a theoretical contribution by distinguishing Rumi's esoteric framework from both sectarian orthodoxy and secular humanism. Rumi's universalist, love-oriented mysticism offers a third path: a spirituality that purifies the ego, deepens faith, and opens toward universal compassion without dissolving Islamic identity. Recovering this framework in digital spaces requires moving beyond both defensive orthodoxy that rejects engagement with modernity and uncritical adaptation that surrenders theological depth for popularity. The three-pole spectrum introduced here provides a heuristic tool for understanding and navigating these tensions.

For digital da'wah practitioners, the implications are clear. Effective engagement with millennial audiences requires: (1) contextualizing Rumi's quotes within their Islamic framework through brief explanations linking them to Qur'anic verses and hadith; (2) being mindful of bilingual strategies to ensure translations maintain theological accuracy; (3) diversifying content formats to convey depth through longer-form content while maintaining Islamic framing in short-form content; (4) positioning intentionally along the spectrum based on whether the goal is explicit da'wah (Pole 1) or pre-da'wah (Pole 2); and (5) recovering the esoteric dimension explicitly, emphasizing Rumi's distinctive contribution as a love-centered spirituality rooted in Islamic tradition.

Future research should address this study's limitations through interviews with content creators to understand their intentional strategies, ethnographic studies examining how followers interpret digital Rumi content, comparative analyses of other Sufi poets in digital spaces, and cross-cultural investigations of Rumi's digital reception across Muslim-majority and Western contexts. Such inquiries would deepen our understanding of how classical religious traditions are being transformed—and can be faithfully transmitted—in an increasingly digital religious landscape.

As digital platforms continue to evolve, the challenge of maintaining theological integrity while engaging younger audiences will only intensify. This study suggests that the path forward lies not in abandoning digital media or in uncritically adapting to its logics, but in developing what might be called "hermeneutical hospitality"—the capacity

to engage diverse audiences with classical teachings in ways that remain faithful to their spiritual depth while communicating in forms accessible to contemporary seekers. Rumi's own approach, which combined profound spiritual insight with poetic accessibility, offers a model for this endeavor. His work reminds us that depth and accessibility, tradition and relevance, need not be opposed. The task for digital da'wah is to recover this integrative vision for the digital age.

### Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. **Limited Textual Coverage.** Despite systematic selection, the passages analyzed represent only a fraction of Rumi's vast corpus (approximately 2,000 verses from over 65,000); future research could expand coverage through computational text analysis.
2. **Reliance on Translations.** While we used authoritative critical editions, our analysis of classical texts relies primarily on English translations (Nicholson, Arberry) rather than direct engagement with Persian originals, partially mitigated by consultation of Persian scholarship<sup>[13, 16]</sup>.
3. **Temporal and Geographical Specificity.** Findings are specific to Indonesian-language digital da'wah during January–May 2025 and may not generalize to other contexts or time periods.
4. **Platform Algorithm Effects.** We did not control for platform algorithms that influence which content users see; our sample reflects publicly visible content rather than personalized user experiences.

### Author Contributions

Conceptualization, B.U. and M.A.; methodology, B.U.; software, B.U.; validation, B.U., M.A., and H.Y.; formal analysis, B.U.; investigation, B.U.; resources, M.A.; data curation, B.U.; writing—original draft preparation, B.U.; writing—review and editing, B.U., M.A., H.Y., and R.A.-A.; visualization, B.U.; supervision, M.A.; project administration, B.U. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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### Informed Consent Statement

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### Data Availability Statement

All digital data was collected from publicly accessible accounts that do not require login or membership for viewing. Following ethical guidelines for internet research (British Psychological Society, 2021), we considered such content to be in the public domain. The research team includes scholars with expertise in Islamic studies, Sufism, and digital media. We acknowledge our positionality as Muslim academics engaged in the study of Islamic ethics and maintain reflexive awareness of how our perspectives influence data interpretation.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### AI Use Statement

During the preparation of this work, the author used AI-assisted tools limited to language support purposes, in-

cluding translation assistance from Indonesian to English, grammar improvement, and sentence structure refinement to enhance clarity and readability. No AI tools were used to generate academic content, ideas, arguments, theoretical frameworks, data analysis, or conclusions—all intellectual contributions, including the interpretation of Rumi’s classical texts and analysis of digital da’wah content, were prepared manually by the author. After using AI tools for language polishing, the author reviewed and edited the entire content thoroughly and takes full responsibility for the accuracy and originality of the published article.

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