

EXPLORING LINGUISTIC FEATURES AND SPIRITUAL THEMES IN THE TRANSLATED POETRY OF KHAWAJA GHULAM FARID

Jahangeer Noor,

PhD Scholar, Department of English Linguistics, the Islamia University of Bahawalpur,
Pakistan. Email: jahangeernoor745@gmail.com

Dr. Shahid Nawaz,

Assistant Professor, Department of English Linguistics, the Islamia University of
Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: shahidnawaz@iub.edu.pk (Corresponding Author)

Abstract

This study examines the interplay between linguistic features and spiritual themes in the translated poetry of Khawaja Ghulam Farid, with a particular focus on the symbolic representation of Rohi. The research examines how Farid's poetic language transforms the physical landscape of the Cholistan Desert into a spiritually charged metaphor that conveys longing, suffering, self-annihilation, and mystical union. The study highlights how abstract Sufi experiences are articulated through concrete imagery and stylistic choices. The study is theoretically grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which provides a cognitive lens for understanding how Rohi functions as a source domain for conceptualizing key Sufi ideas, such as divine love, separation, patience, the annihilation of the self, and union with the Divine. Employing a qualitative research design, the study incorporates thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with Saraiki scholars from Southern Punjab. The data were systematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, supported by coding and theme development through qualitative analysis software. The findings reveal that Rohi operates not merely as a poetic setting but as a cognitively structured and spiritually resonant metaphor, embedded in linguistic expression. Even in translation, the symbolic depth of Farid's poetry is largely preserved, enabling the transmission of profound spiritual meanings across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The study contributes to stylistics, Sufi literary studies, and translation research by demonstrating how language, metaphor, and spirituality intersect to produce a universally meaningful yet culturally grounded poetic discourse.

Keywords: Khawaja Ghulam Farid, Rohi, metaphor, Sufi poetry, divine love, conceptual metaphor theory, thematic analysis, Saraiki Kafi

Introduction

The poetry of Khawaja Ghulam Farid represents a profound fusion of mystical experience and cultural identity, deeply rooted in the landscape of the Cholistan Desert, commonly known as *Rohi*. Within his poetic universe, this desert is not merely a geographical entity; rather, it emerges as a powerful symbolic space through which complex spiritual realities are expressed. Farid's verse draws extensively on the imagery of *Rohi*, transforming its vastness, solitude, and harshness into metaphors that articulate the seeker's journey toward divine union. Long before Khawaja Ghulam Farid, South Asian Sufi literature thrived with devotional, lyrical verse rooted in divine love and mystic longing (Amjad et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). Socially, rural Indus communities revered saints and embraced Sufism's inclusive, cross-caste harmony (Ma et al., 2024, 2025). Culturally, oral traditions, khanqah teachings, and riverine spiritual heritage shaped everyday life (Ramzan et al., 2020, 2023, 2025). Psychologically, people nurtured deep introspection and spiritual yearning for transcendence of worldly ties (Nawaz et al., 2020, 2021).

In the broader tradition of Sufi literature, natural landscapes frequently serve as metaphoric representations of inner spiritual states. Farid's work stands out for its ability to intertwine the physical and the metaphysical, presenting *Rohi* simultaneously as a lived environment and a symbolic terrain of longing, endurance, and transcendence. Through carefully crafted linguistic choices, he encodes themes such as divine love, separation, self-annihilation, and eventual union with the Divine. These themes are not expressed abstractly; instead, they are grounded in vivid imagery and metaphorical structures that make the ineffable experience of spirituality accessible to readers and listeners alike.

This study seeks to explore the linguistic dimensions of Farid's poetry, with a particular focus on how the metaphor of *Rohi* is constructed and interpreted in English translations. By examining the relationship between language, metaphor, and meaning, the research aims to uncover how spiritual concepts are encoded in poetic form and how effectively they are conveyed across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In doing so, it offers insights into the enduring relevance of Farid's poetry and its capacity to resonate with diverse audiences while remaining firmly anchored in its cultural and spiritual origins.

Literature Review

Previous studies explored mystic themes of divine love, metaphor, and mysticism in Sufi poetry, organizing a strong theoretical basis for exploring the works of Khawaja Ghulam Farid (Hussain et al., 2022; Saeed et al., 2021; Langah, 2017). Saeed et al. (2024) found that the deviant collocations of metaphor and imagery used by the poet are quite prevalent and significant features of his poetry. Bibi and Rashid (2024) explored insights into the Khawja's life and works and found the timeless relevance of Hazrat Khwaja Ghulam Farid's message. They found that his contributions to justice, kindness, and love provide an enduring blueprint for fostering peace and unity in an increasingly fragmented world.

Schimmel (1975) and Nasr (2007) found that divine love constitutes the core of Sufi idea, representing a transformative religious desire that directs the seeker in the direction of union with the Divine via self-annihilation and internal purification. This concept has also been metaphorically articulated by Sufi figures, like Jalal al-Din Rumi and Ibn Arabi. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) contend that metaphors are not merely stylistic devices but fundamental to human thought, allowing abstract spiritual realities to be understood via concrete imagery. Chittick (1989) and Lewis (2000) explored epistemological and pedagogical capabilities of metaphor in Sufi poetry, where pictures consisting of the sweetheart and the beloved, wine, and adventure facilitate each expression and transmission of mystical understanding.

Furthermore, latest research have focused at the symbolic significance of *Rohi* (the Cholistan wasteland) in Farid's poetry, interpreting it as a powerful metaphor for divine love and religious longing; as an instance, Qaiser (2011) and subsequent researchers argue that *Rohi* represents no longer only a bodily panorama however additionally a metaphysical area embodying the tiers of *fana* (annihilation) and *baqa* (subsistence in God), reflecting the ambiguity of separation and union critical to Sufi metaphysics. Moreover, comparative analyses situate Farid alongside Muhammad Iqbal, demonstrating how Farid's contemplative mysticism and use of regional language and imagery contrast with Iqbal's extra highbrow and reformist technique, but each converge on the remaining goal of knowing the self through divine attention (Qaiser, 2012). Overall, the past research found that Farid's poetry integrates linguistic, cultural, and metaphysical dimensions, but there is a want for targeted research on how such symbolic and religious factors, especially the metaphor of *Rohi*, are linguistically represented and transformed in English translations. Keeping in the above research gap, this study explores linguistic aspects through which Khwaja Farid presents the sacred theme of *Rohi* in his poetry.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the rich spiritual and cultural depth of Khawaja Ghulam Farid's Saraiki poetry, its English translations often struggle to fully capture the intricate relationship between linguistic expression and mystical meaning, particularly in representing *Rohi* as a metaphor for divine love. While previous studies have acknowledged the thematic significance of *Rohi* in Farid's work, limited attention has been given to the specific linguistic techniques employed in English translations. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis of how these translations preserve or reshape the spiritual themes central to Sufi poetry, such as self-annihilation, 'Ishq-e-Haqiqi' (divine love), and the seeker's journey toward union with the Divine. Therefore, this study has been conducted to bridge this gap by critically examining the linguistic features and

interpretive strategies used in English translations of Farid’s poetry to evaluate how successfully they represent *Rohi* as a metaphor for divine love and convey its underlying spiritual essence.

Research Questions

1. What linguistic techniques are used in the English translations of Farid’s poetry to depict *Rohi* as a metaphor for divine love?
2. How does *Rohi*, as a metaphor of divine love, reflect the spiritual themes central to Sufi poetry?

Research Methodology

Data Collection

This study aims to discover how *Rohi* serves as a metaphor of divine love in the English translations of Khawaja Ghulam Farid's poetry. This study employed conceptual metaphor principle (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and interpretive thematic evaluation. *Rohi* is visible as a multifaceted cultural and religious symbol, necessitating translation techniques that hold its mystical intensity, emotional resonance, and cultural identity, in keeping with interpretive subject matter analysis of interviews with the experts. The researcher singled out ten experts of Farid’s poetry who have published extensively on the style, philosophy and themes. Metaphor extension, semantic deviation, evaluative lexis, and paratextual mediation are many of the interpretive, symbolic, and context-sensitive linguistic strategies that translators and scholars pick over literal substitution. In the with Conceptual Metaphor idea (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), these strategies assure that the translations hold *Rohi*'s metaphorical feature and display how concrete imagery, mainly, the desolate tract panorama can linguistically shape abstract Sufi reports like divine love, suffering, and religious transformation.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis Method by Braun and Clarke

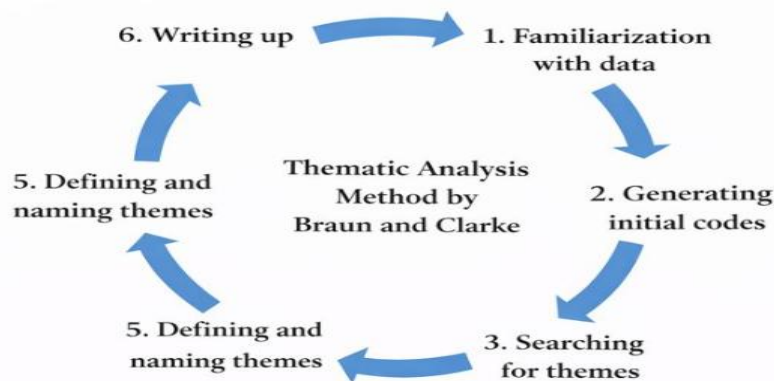


Figure 1 Thematic analysis method by Braun and Clarke

The figure shows the six-phase Thematic Analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke, which provides a systematic and iterative approach to qualitative data analysis (Wilson, 2025). In order to comprehend how *Rohi* is linguistically built as a metaphor of divine love, this study used interpretive theme analysis to methodically analyze the English translations of Khawaja Ghulam Farid's poetry. To guarantee analytical rigor and consistency, the analysis adhered to a methodical thematic procedure, as shown in the figure one.

Furthermore, NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to do the coding and theme creation process in order to ensure methodical organization and rigor (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021). The data were loaded into NVivo, where preliminary codes were created inductively, following familiarization with the data by repeated reading of the translated texts and interview transcripts. Recurring linguistic patterns, metaphorical expressions, and semantic elements

associated with the idea of *Rohi* as a metaphor of divine love were captured by these codes. In order to guarantee internal coherence and different themes, linked codes were then grouped into possible themes inside NVivo. These themes were then examined, improved, and verified. Based on their conceptual significance and frequency throughout the dataset, the themes were identified and nominated which offer organized process for managing raw data into clearly structured themes. Then, they were evaluated and presented in text form for analysis. The codes and themes, generated from the Nvivo software are presented in annexure.

In order to fully comprehend *Rohi*-related lexical choices, figurative phrases, and symbolic references, the researcher read and selected translated poems in the first step of data familiarization. The researcher was able to find recurrent semantic patterns and metaphorical representations in the text for immersion. Initial coding was done in the second phase, words, phrases, and clauses were methodically categorized. Metaphors, personification, imagery, evaluative adjectives, and lexical repetition were among the linguistic characteristics that were emphasized.

Third stage comprised the theme development. During this phase similar codes were grouped in more comprehensive themes. These themes included yearning for union, spiritual anguish, holy space, and devotional intimacy, indicating deeper meanings connected to divine love. At this point, the researcher went beyond literal interpretations to analyze how linguistic features affect *Rohi*'s spiritual symbolism. Lastly, the themes were examined in connection to the study objectives and the larger mystical and Sufi framework of Farid's poetry during the interpretation and meaning-making stage. The results showed that *Rohi* is linguistically changed into a metaphorical landscape of heavenly love and spiritual longing rather than just being portrayed as a physical desert. The researcher was able to show how language serves as a medium for expressing transcendental experience by using this interpretive approach to link textual patterns with underlying spiritual meanings.

Thematic analysis helps researcher to look deeper into meanings behind themes (Braun et al., 2023; Bonhomme et al., 2020). The analysis of the data from Research Question 1 indicates that in order to depict *Rohi* as a metaphor of divine love, the English translation of Khawaja Ghulam Farid's poetry uses a variety of interpretive, symbolic, and context dependent linguistic strategies. Translators and academics view *Rohi* as a multidimensional cultural and spiritual sign, necessitating methods that maintain its mystical depth, emotional resonance, and cultural identity rather than using direct lexical substitution. The analysis reveals that how language strategies support *Rohi*'s metaphorical function at the lexical, semantic, stylistic, and paratextual levels. In the following, the findings are presented in line with research questions.

Results

RQ. 1 What linguistic techniques are used in the English translations of Farid's poetry to depict *Rohi* as a metaphor for divine love?

1. *Rohi* as a Metaphor

The consistent use of *Rohi* as a metaphor culturally loaded and symbolically dense phrase is a key finding of this analysis. Participants emphasized that *Rohi*'s spiritual memory and symbolic power cannot be sufficiently captured by a single English counterpart, like "desert." As one of the participants asserted;

Rohi should be presented as a cultural sign rather than a simple lexical item... Translating it merely as 'desert' segregates its cultural association. (Participant-1)

Therefore, in order to maintain the term's multiple meanings, translators and researchers use pragmatic and metaphoric translations. Translators enable *Rohi* to serve as a figurative place connected to heavenly longing, perseverance, and spiritual trial by keeping it in transliterated form or placing it within the poetic discourse. With this approach, *Rohi* is considered as a conceptual metaphor rather than a referential noun, with geographical barrenness serving as a

metaphor for interior emptiness and preparedness for divine contact. The results indicate that in order to preserve *Rohi's* function as a symbolic landscape of divine love, translators avoid literal meaning and prefer symbolic and metaphoric meaning.

2. Interpretive Reading of Sufi Language

Interpretive reading, which is based on Sufi philosophy and cultural immersion, is another well-known language strategy. Participants of the study state that Sufi cosmology, which meanings are experiential rather than referential, is the foundation of Farid's poetry lexicon, which is highly metaphorical. Therefore, in order to decode and re-encode spiritual connotations in English, translators rely on allegorical reading and cultural contextualization. As one of the participants state;

To understand Farid's poetry, requires immersion in Sufi metaphysics and familiarization with Saraiki socio-cultural life. (Participant-4)

Rohi can be shown as a spiritual passage rather than a geographical location according to this interpretive method. Translators rebuild *Rohi* linguistically as a metaphor of the seekers' relationship with the Divine by referencing Sufi ideas like longing, separation, annihilation of the ego, and divine presence. The analysis reveals that the metaphorical aspect of *Rohi* runs the risk of being lost in translation in the absence of such interpretive mediation.

3. Figurative Language as Spiritual Mediation

The results also show that personification, simile, metaphor, and other stylistic devices are important linguistic strategies for translating spiritual work into English. Participants emphasized how readers can emotionally connect with Farid's spiritual vision by using real images to make abstract mystical experiences understandable.

These devices like, personification, imagery, simile, and metaphor enable translator to comprehend abstract spiritual and mystic message of the poet. (Participant-3)

Rohi is transformed into a living being that represents hardship, endurance, and heavenly closeness through the use of metaphorical language. Instead of portraying divine love as an abstract theological idea, this method allows translators to embody it linguistically in sensory and emotional dimensions. The results imply that figurative language serves as a bridge between the expressive boundaries of the target language and the indescribable quality of divine love.

4. Sound Devices and Emotional Resonance

The results show that sound mechanisms including rhythm, repetition, and meditative pace are used to increase emotional resonance even when participants consistently valued meaning. To maintain the reflective tone of Farid's poetry, translators employ rhythmic approximation rather than attempting to mechanically duplicate the original rhyme patterns. As P5 asserted;

The goal is not formal imitation but emotional resonance. (Participant-5)

This method illustrates a language technique where sound serves as a helpful aesthetic element, enhancing the sentimental ambiance connected to divine love. Translators contribute to the devout and reflective nature of *Rohi* as a symbolic location of spiritual encounter by preserving repetition and rhythmic harmony.

5. Finding a Balance between Poetic Effect and Literal Accuracy

The preference for a negotiated translation style, which carefully balances poetic effect with literal correctness, is an important discovery. Participants argued that form must be guided by message, rejecting both excessive poetic freedom and rigorous literalism. In terms of language, this leads to the usage of dynamic equivalency, in which translators give priority to spiritual impact over grammatical correspondence.

When we translate mystic poetry, negotiated balance, where meaning makes form, is the most responsible approach. (Participant-2)

This compromised approach guarantees that Rohi is still understandable to English readers while maintaining its symbolic power as a location of heavenly love. The results show that interpretive responsibility, not formal limits, guides translation decisions, preserving the metaphor's spiritual potency.

6. Symbolic Translation of Mystical Vocabulary

Symbolic and contextual translation methods play a major role in translating mystical and Sufi terms related to Rohi. Participants highlighted that mystical concepts are not fixed semantic units but rather serve as experiential markers in Farid's poetry. In order to portray divine love as a transformational experience, translators steer clear of strict definitions and instead employ contextual paraphrase and symbolic representation.

The terms used in mystic poetry function as experiential markers rather than fixed definitions. Therefore, symbolic understanding is essential. (Participant-6)

By using this method, Rohi is able to stay integrated within the Ishq-e-Haqiqi discourse, in which love represents devotion, spiritual annihilation, and unity with the Divine. This method maintains the original poetry's conceptual depth and emotional intensity linguistically.

7. Cultural Mediation and Para-textual Assistance

The employment of paratextual devices, such as glosses, translator's notes, and footnotes, is another significant linguistic strategy. These components were seen by participants as crucial instruments for cultural mediation, especially for readers who are not familiar with Sufi symbolism and Saraiki culture. As one of the participants of the study asserts;

Footnotes allow the translator to preserve the integrity of the original text. (Participant-7)

While translating mystic poetry, Para-textual explanations enable translators to preserve *Rohi* and its culture in its original form. This translation strategy strengthens the translator's function as a cultural mediator by ensuring that the metaphor of divine love is preserved without being oversimplified. Nisar (2025) also found that in translation, cultural awareness and Para-textual translation or explanation is essential in mystic poetry.

8. Communicating Layered Meaning

The results show that the communication/submission of layered meanings, rather than interpretation, is the main difficulty in translating Rohi. To communicate spiritual depth across linguistic and cultural barriers, a variety of linguistic strategies are required, including lexical retention, metaphorical extension, dynamic equivalency, and paratextual support. As one teacher explained;

The primary challenge lies not in interpretation but in transmission. (Participant-8)

By using these techniques, translators are able to portray Rohi as a multifaceted metaphor that captures mystical unity, spiritual struggle, and heavenly longing.

9. Contextual Translation

Overall, the results show that the best translation technique for portraying Rohi as a symbol of divine love is dynamic equivalency plus cultural contextualization. In order to respect Farid's spiritual perspective and lyrical meaning, linguistic strategies are chosen as part of an integrated, context-sensitive approach. Translating mystic poetry according to the context helps reader or translator to understand it in better ways;

Dynamic equivalence combined with cultural contextualization works best. (Participant-9)

Context-based approach in translation enables reader and researcher to have in-depth understanding about mystic poetry. Wilson (2024) also emphasizes on contextual translation rather than literal meaning.

The results show that translators employ a complex network of linguistic strategies to portray Rohi as a metaphor of divine love in response to research question 1. These strategies include lexical retention, metaphorical expansion, interpretive reading, figurative language, rhythmic approximation, symbolic translation, and paratextual support. Together, these strategies

guarantee that Rohi becomes a spiritually charged representation of the seeker's quest for the Divine in English, transcending geographical meaning.

Table 1 RQ 1 codes, themes and quotes

Sr.no	Interview Questions	Codes	Themes	Participants 'quotes
1	How do you perceive the translation of the word <i>Rohi</i> and its metaphorical meanings?	Cultural term; Symbolic landscape; Lexical preservation	Rohi as a Cultural Metaphor	"Rohi should be presented as a cultural sign rather than a simple lexical item... Translating it merely as 'desert' segregates its cultural association."
2	What strategies can be used to understand specific terms in Farid's poetry?	Sufi metaphysics; Cultural immersion; Allegorical reading	Interpretive Reading of Sufi Language	"To understand Farid's poetry, requires immersion in Sufi metaphysics and familiarization with Saraiki socio-cultural life."
3	How do metaphors, similes, and personification present spirituality in English?	Figurative language; Emotional embodiment; Tangible spirituality	Figurative Language as Spiritual Mediation	These devices like, personification, imagery, simile, and metaphor enable translator to comprehend abstract spiritual and mystic message of the poet"
4	How do you employ rhyme, rhythm, or sound devices in translation?	Rhythm approximation; Emotional resonance; Meditative tone	Sound as Emotional Resonance	"The goal is not formal imitation but emotional resonance."
5	Do you prefer literal accuracy or poetic effect?	Balanced translation; Meaning over form; Negotiated equivalence	Negotiated Translation Approach	"When we translate mystic poetry, negotiated balance, where meaning makes form, is the most responsible approach."
6	How do you translate Sufi or mystical vocabulary?	Symbolic translation; Contextual meaning; Experiential language	Symbolic Translation of Mystical Lexicon	"The terms used in mystic poetry function as experiential markers rather than fixed definitions. Therefore, symbolic understanding/translation is essential"
7	Do you use footnotes or glosses?	Paratextual explanation; Cultural mediation	Paratextual Support in Translation	"Footnotes allow the translator to preserve the integrity of the original text."

8	What challenges arise in translating Rohi?	Layered meanings; Cultural distance; Interpretive mediation	Communication of Layered Meaning	“The primary challenge lies not in interpretation but in transmission.”
9	Which translation techniques are most effective?	Dynamic equivalence; Cultural contextualization	Context-based Translation Strategy	“Dynamic equivalence combined with cultural contextualization works best.”

R.Q. 2 How does Rohi, as a metaphor of divine love, reflect the spiritual themes central to Sufi poetry?

1. Fundamental Sufi Spiritual Ideas reflected through Rohi-The Desert

One of the most notable themes is that Rohi embodies fundamental Sufi spiritual ideas, especially Fana (eradication of the ego), Wahdat-ul-Wujood (unity of being), and Ishq-e-Haqiqi (divine love). As one of the interviewee asserts;

The unity of existence, divine love... and the destruction of ego are dominant themes. (Participant-9)

The predominant spiritual force at work in Farid's poetry, according to participants, is divine love, with Rohi acting as the metaphorical setting in which this divine love takes place. Farid places divine love in the hard but spiritually nourishing landscape of Rohi, turning the desert into a place of mystical awakening, rather than presenting it as abstract doctrine. In line with the analysis of the interviews, Rohi exemplifies the Sufi concept of unity, which holds that an obvious detachment from the outside world develops association with the Divine.

Rohi becomes the place where the ego vanishes and the seeker feels spiritual humility and surrender, as one participant pointed out. This represents a fundamental Sufi idea that achieving heavenly contact requires patience, fortitude, and deprivation rather than wealth or comfort. Therefore, Rohi represents the removal of material attachments required for spiritual development.

2. Rohi as an Inner Spiritual Space

Rohi represents an inner spiritual land where the seeker of divine love becomes unconscious of worldly attachments. (Participant-4)

The above quote from participant 4 indicates Rohi is an inner spiritual landscape rather than an external geographical thing. Participants consistently described Rohi as a metaphorical space within the human soul, where spiritual purification, self-negation, and divine awareness take place. Linguistically and symbolically, Rohi represents detachment from material life and immersion in divine presence. The metaphor of Rohi allows Farid to portray the seeker–Divine relationship as an inward journey marked by solitude, silence, and reflection. Participants emphasized that in Sufi thought, physical distance from society often corresponds to spiritual closeness to God. Rohi, with its vast emptiness and isolation, thus mirrors the internal state of the seeker who withdraws from worldly distractions to focus entirely on divine love. This inner-spatial interpretation of Rohi aligns with broader Sufi traditions in which landscapes, such as deserts, mountains, and wilderness, which serve as metaphors for spiritual states. However, the findings indicate that Farid’s use of Rohi is particularly intimate and experiential, rooted in the emotional and cultural memory of the Saraiki desert rather than abstract symbolism.

3. Rohi as the Sufi Path

Patience, spiritual enlightenment, and struggle of *Rohi* is a metaphorical representation of the Sufi path (Tariqah), which is marked by struggle (mujahida), patience (sabr), and ultimate spiritual enlighten (marifat), is another important discovery. As a participant asserts;

The agonies of desert life trains a divine lover for spiritual discipline. (Participant-5)

Participants compared the spiritual struggles of a seeker on the road of divine love to the physical hardships of desert living. The geographical and environmental harshness of *Rohi*, its heat, desolation, and unpredictable nature, stands in for the challenges of spiritual discipline. Spiritual progression necessitates patience, sacrifice, and constant devotion, just as surviving in the desert requires tenacity and fortitude. Participants emphasized that Farid purposefully uses *Rohi* as a metaphor to demonstrate how difficult it is to achieve spiritual enlightenment and how endurance and hardship are necessary. *Rohi* also represents openness and grandeur, signifying spiritual illumination and infinite infinity. The infinite horizons of the desert reflect the infinite nature of the Divine, implying that spiritual knowledge grows limitlessly once the seeker transcends the ego. *Rohi* thus captures the dual character of the Sufi path by both symbolizing adversity and transcendence.

4. Comparative Sufi Imagery and Localized Mystical Geography

The results also show that *Rohi* is a specific mystical geography that sets Farid's poetry apart from other Sufi traditions while still being consistent with universal mystical symbolism. As a participant states;

Farid's Rohi is deeply localized... its symbolism develops from lived experience. (Participant-6)

Although wilderness and desert imagery are frequently found in Sufi literature, participants noted that Farid's *Rohi* is firmly rooted in lived experience, local culture, and linguistic memory. *Rohi* is shown as a familiar, inhabited, and emotionally charged place, in contrast to abstract deserts in Persian or Arabic Sufi poetry. Participants highlighted how Farid's close relationship with *Rohi* allows him to saturate the terrain with spiritual significance derived from oral traditions, folk culture, and daily life. By rooting spiritual experience in concrete reality, this localization strengthens rather than diminishes the message's universality. The results imply that *Rohi* is a prime example of how local imagery may effectively convey universal Sufi concepts, supporting the notion that mysticism is profoundly influenced by society rather than existing independently of it. Thus, through familiar landscapes, Farid's poetry creates a bridge between the local and the global, making heavenly love accessible.

5. Translation and Spiritual Themes

The effect of translation on the portrayal of spiritual elements connected to *Rohi* is a significant component of RQ2. The participants warned that if cultural and spiritual aspects are overlooked, translation may either universalize Farid's mystical message or reduce it to inexplicable images. As one of the participants claim;

If a translator is not familiar with cultural aspects of the mystic poetry, then the spiritual depth cannot be achieved. (Participant-9)

The results show that the metaphor of *Rohi* runs the risk of being misunderstood as simple desert imagery in the absence of cultural awareness, which would lessen its spiritual depth. Participants stressed the need for translators to acknowledge *Rohi* as a spiritual symbol influenced by lived experience, local history, and Sufi metaphysics. If this is not done, complex spiritual meanings, especially those pertaining to inner development, ego annihilation, and divine love are lost. As a result, translation becomes more than just a language process; it becomes a crucial location where spiritual meaning is either maintained or weakened. This highlights the need for culturally sensitive translation techniques in order to maintain *Rohi*'s function as a symbol of divine love.

6. The Linguistic and Cultural Development of Rohi

The findings of the study clearly demonstrate how language and culture influenced the Rohi metaphor. Participants noted that oral traditions, desert life, and Saraiki folk culture have a big impact on how people see and interact with Rohi. Khawja Farid's poetry increases Rohi's metaphorical depth by using idioms, proverbs, and everyday terms relating to survival in the desert. One of the participants argues;

Native idioms, folklore, sayings, and desert life make up the emotional meaning of Rohi. (Participant-5)

Familiarity with the culture of the Rohi enables a reader to convey the universal spiritual truths hidden in the mystical poetry of Khwaja Ghulam Farid. This familiarity also serves as an emotional symbolic love that resonates deeply with the local audience. As a participant argues; *If a translator is not familiar with cultural aspects of the mystic poetry and does not understand local idiomatic then he cannot translate the core spiritual meaning of the kalam.* (Participant-4)

The findings show that Khawaja Ghulam Farid uses Rohi as a comprehensive spiritual metaphor to express the main ideas of Sufi poetry. Rohi serves as both a localized mystical geography and an inner spiritual territory. It reflects divine love, unity of being, dissolution of ego, spiritual struggle, patience, and spiritual radiance.

Native idioms, folklore, sayings, and desert life make up the emotional meaning of Rohi. (Participant-6)

Farid is able to present global spirituality in regional language and culture by using the metaphor of Rohi to transform abstract Sufi notions into real experience. The results also show that Rohi's spiritual value is profoundly influenced by linguistic expression and cultural memory, making it a potent and timeless emblem of the seeker's path to the Divine.

Table. RQ2, Codes and Themes

Sr. No	Interview Questions	Codes	Themes	Participants' Quotes
1	Which Sufi spiritual themes are most prominent?	Divine love; Unity of being; Ego annihilation	Primary Sufi Spiritual Themes	"The unity of existence, divine love... and the destruction of ego are dominant themes."
2	How does Rohi symbolize the seeker-Divine relationship?	Inner landscape; Detachment; Divine proximity	Rohi as Internal spiritual land	"Rohi represents an inner spiritual land where the seeker of divine love becomes unconscious of worldly attachments."
3	How does Rohi reflect the spiritual journey?	Struggle; Patience; Illumination	Rohi as the Sufi Path	"The agonies of desert life trains a divine lover for spiritual discipline."
4	How does Rohi compare with wilderness imagery in other Sufi traditions?	Localization; Lived experience; Unique symbolism	Localized Mystical Geography	"Farid's Rohi is deeply localized... its symbolism develops from lived experience."
5	How does translation affect spiritual themes?	Universalization; Exoticization risk	Translation and Spiritual Representation	"If a translator is not familiar with cultural aspects of the mystic poetry, then the spiritual depth cannot be achieved."

6	How do culture and language shape Rohi?	Folk culture; Oral tradition; Desert life	Cultural Grounding of Mysticis	“native idioms, folklore, sayings, and desert life make up the emotional meaning of Rohi.”
---	---	---	--------------------------------	--

Findings and Conclusion

The application of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory demonstrates Rohi as a cognitive metaphor of divine love. The previous studies have also found Rohi as divine place for spiritual lover (Qureshi, 2000; Hussain et al., 2022). Although previous research recognizes Rohi as a "place of union" and a "valley of love," it does not completely understand how this metaphor functions cognitively.

This research fills this gap by highlighting how Rohi serves as a source domain for the systematic structuring and understanding of abstract Sufi experiences, including *ishq-e-haqiqi*, *fanā*, *sabr*, *firaq*, and *wasl*. This theoretical analysis enables the researcher to go beyond descriptive symbolism and provide an account of the language encoding and cognitive processing of spiritual meaning. Furthermore, the current research opposes the interpretation that reduce Farid to the status as a "poet of Rohi." This study further shows that universality in Farid's poetry is achieved through deep localization rather than abstraction, supporting Qureshi's (2000) claim that Farid articulates universal principles. The study demonstrates that Farid's Saraiki-specific imagery, pastoral life, desert ecology, folk traditions, and oral discourse. It serves as the very medium through which universal Sufi themes are communicated by utilizing Sharifian's (2017) Cultural Linguistics framework and Halliday's (1978) concept of meaning as socially constructed. This result supports Eco's (2003) theory of translation as negotiation rather than equivalency, departing from previous presumptions that cultural specificity restricts translatability.

The findings indicate that the poetry of Khawaja Farid is replete with linguistic artistry marked by metaphor of divine love, Fana, Baqa, Sepertaion and Union. The work underscores that Sufi poetry remains a living discourse which illuminates human manifestation and spirituality.

References

- Ahmad, N., Akram, H., & Ranra, B. (2022). In quest of Language and National Identity: A Case of Urdu language in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, 3(2), 48-66.
- Amjad, M., Hussain, R., & Akram, H. (2021). Structural and functional taxonomies of lexical bundles: an overview. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 5(4), 358-367.
- BiBi, S., & Rashid, M. (2024). حضرت خواجہ غلام فرید کی علمی خدمات کا تحقیقی جائزہ: A Research Analysis of Khwaka Ghulam Fareed's Knowledge Inheritance. *Ulūm al-Sunnah*, 2(02), 241-249.
- Bonhomme et al., (2020).
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., Davey, L., & Jenkinson, E. (2023). Doing reflexive thematic analysis. In *Supporting research in counselling and psychotherapy: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research* (pp. 19-38). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Chittick, W. C. (1989). *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabi's metaphysics of imagination*. SUNY Press.
- Elliott-Mainwaring, H. (2021). Exploring using NVivo software to facilitate inductive coding for thematic narrative synthesis. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 29(11), 628-632.

- Hussain, R., Khan, M. Z., Zahid, M. S., & ul Islam, R. (2022). Desert, Dervish & Deviation: Linguistic Aspects in Khawaja Ghulam Farid's Poetry. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 42(1), 45-60.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). The metaphorical structure of the human conceptual system. *Cognitive science*, 4(2), 195-208.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). The metaphorical structure of the human conceptual system. *Cognitive science*, 4(2), 195-208.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Langah, N. T. (2020). *Poetry as resistance: Islam and ethnicity in postcolonial Pakistan*. Routledge India.
- Langah, N. T. (2020). *Poetry as resistance: Islam and ethnicity in postcolonial Pakistan*. Routledge India.
- Li, S., & Akram, H. (2023). Do emotional regulation behaviors matter in EFL teachers' professional development?: A process model approach. *Porta Linguarum: revista internacional de didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras*, (9), 273-291.
- Li, S., & Akram, H. (2024). Navigating Pronoun-Antecedent Challenges: A Study of ESL Academic Writing Errors. *SAGE Open*, 14(4), 21582440241296607.
- Ma, D., Akram, H., & Chen, I. H. (2024). Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: A Cross-Cultural Examination of Students' Behavioral Intentions and Attitudes. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 25(3), 134-157.
- Ma, D., Akram, H., & Li, S. (2025). Assessing the role of physical activity in shaping students' academic motivation: the mediating role of mental health. *BMC Public Health*.
- Nasr, S. H. (1987). *Knowledge and the sacred*. SUNY Press.
- Nasr, S. H. (2013). *Islamic spirituality: Foundations*. Routledge.
- Nawaz, S., Aqeel, M., & Ramzan, M. (2021). Listening Comprehension Problems, Corresponding Factors and Strategies for Better or Enhanced Listening Skill. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 5(2), 729-737.
- Nawaz, S., Ramzan, M., Khan, M. A., Rehman, W., & Tanoli, Z. A. (2020). A study on Urdu speakers' use of English stress patterns: Phonological variation from native speakers. *Elementary Education Online*, 19(4), 6215-6235.
- Qaiser, S. (2011). *Understanding Diwan-i-Farid: Translation and explanations*
- Ramzan, M., Akram, H., & kynat Javaid, Z. (2025). Challenges and Psychological Influences in Teaching English as a Medium of Instruction in Pakistani Institutions. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(1), 370-379.
- Ramzan, M., Awan, H. J., Ramzan, M., & Maharvi, H. (2020). Comparative Pragmatic Study of Print media discourse in Baluchistan newspapers headlines. *Al-Burz*, 12(1), 30-44.
- Ramzan, M., Azmat, Z., Khan, M. A., & un Nisa, Z. (2023). Subject-Verb Agreement Errors in ESL Students' Academic Writing: A Surface Taxonomy Approach. In *Linguistic Forum-A Journal of Linguistics*, 5(2), 16-21.
- Saeed, M., Naeem, M., & Yousaf, U. (2021). Sufism in the Digital Age: A study of Fareed's Poetry. *International Research Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 183- 191.
- Saeed, O., Wyne, S. R., & Jamil, R. (2024). Binary Opposition as an Element of Structural Semiotics for Expression of Spiritual Unity in Selected Kafis's of Khwaja Ghulam Farid. *VFAST Transactions on Islamic Research*, 12(1), 102-109.
- Schimmel, A. (1975). *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Wilson, J. (2025). Interpretive description and reflexive thematic analysis: Exploring conceptual coherence and methodological integrity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10497323251378303.