

# Spiritual But Not Religious: A Sufi Perspective

In recent years, many surveys have found evidence of a gradual decline in religious affiliation in the U.S. This trend is coupled with the rise of a new spiritual movement called 'Spiritual But Not Religious' (SBNR). Nearly one-in-five American adults consider themselves spiritual but not religious. There is also strong evidence that commitment to organized religion is declining in all developed societies.

SBNR adherents argue that organized religion has lost its spiritual and moral relevance; the alternative is a hybrid solution where each individual would shop around for spiritual teaching and guidance, without committing to any particular faith.

Interestingly, there was a spiritual movement with similar persuasions in the early Islamic period that led to Sufism. Sufis, such as Rumi, had issues with the official and traditional Islam preached in mosques. Ordinary religion could not satisfy their spiritual aspirations. However, rather than abandoning religion altogether, they found a way to be spiritual and religious at the same.

This lecture will contrast the modern day 'Spiritual But Not Religious' movement with Islamic Sufism. It will explore how Sufis such as Rumi differentiated their spiritual system from ordinary religion.