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## Trajectory of Self-Discovery in the characters: A Critical study of Rumi's vision in The Forty Rules of Love

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the unfolding journey of self-discovery in the characters from Elif Shafak's work, The Forty Rules of Love, illuminating how the spiritual teachings of Jalaluddin Rumi shape their transformations. Framing self-discovery as both a process and a realization, the research explores the inner dimensions where seekers encounter the divine. Drawing on Rumi's perspective on spiritualism, the study reveals how characters experience perceptual shifts and personal growth through heightened self-awareness. It identifies key forms and elements of spiritual self-discovery embedded in the text, offering a nuanced literary analysis of mystical transformation. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of Eastern spiritual traditions and provide a foundation for future scholarship on mysticism, literary spirituality, and Rumi-inspired narratives.*

**Keywords:** Self-discovery, Rumi's Spiritual vision, Elif Shafak, The Forty Rules of Love.

### Introduction

Renowned for her literary contribution to contemporary fiction, Shafak is one of Turkey's most celebrated female authors, translating her works into over twenty languages. Her semi-fictional novel presents two interwoven narratives separated by centuries yet unified by spiritual inquiry, illuminating the transformative principles of Sufism conveyed by Shams of Tabriz. At the heart of this narrative is the metamorphosis of Rumi—from a conventional scholar to an enlightened Sufi—guided by Shams's spiritual philosophy rooted in divine love. Through these forty rules, the novel embodies Rumi's teachings on introspection, unity, and transcendence, framing spiritual self-awareness as a central theme.

Shafak also represents Islamic fiction in the literature around the world. Islamic fiction, far from being secularized or dissociated from spiritual ethos, actively reflects the highest ideals of Islamic belief and practice. In modern English literature, the emergence of Islamic mystical fiction provides both moral perspective and existential clarity. The present study investigates how *The Forty Rules of Love* articulates spiritual self-awareness—not merely as a psychological construct but as a transformative lens through which characters perceive themselves as conscious entities beyond their fleeting thoughts (Duval & Wicklund, 1972).

This expanded consciousness, inherent in spiritual self-awareness, reorients individuals towards collective unity and metaphysical purpose. It facilitates recognition of the interconnectedness of all beings and the divine source from which they emanate. As the spiritual core of Islam, Sufism advocates the discovery of one's authentic self as the pathway to divine union. The Islamic tradition encourages spiritual refinement through dhikr (remembrance), prayer, and contemplative action. Man, regarded in Islamic philosophy as a theomorphic being, possesses intellect and volition—tools essential for discernment, submission to the divine will, and conscious engagement with the Absolute. Thus, speech, ritual, and sacred invocation form the mediums through which one's inner self communes with the divine.

*The Forty Rules of Love* serves as a literary conduit through which Shafak conveys Rumi's message: the elevation of perception through spiritual introspection. Initially bound by worldly conventions, the characters experience a gradual reformation that expands their moral clarity and spiritual depth. Through Rumi's mystical framework, the novel becomes a guide for navigating modern existential dilemmas, shedding light on the hidden self-obscured by ignorance and social conditioning. This research critically explores the trajectory of self-discovery as envisioned by Rumi and manifested through the characters in Elif Shafak's novel *The Forty Rules of Love*.

### **Background to the study**

Elif Shafak was born on October 25, 1971, in Strasbourg. Her parents separated when she was young, and she spent her formative years through adulthood with her mother and grandmother. She holds a degree in Political Science and has published a total of nineteen books, twelve of which are novels. As a best-selling author, her works have been translated into approximately 50 to 55 languages worldwide. She currently serves as Vice President of the Royal Society of Literature. During childhood, Shafak was introverted and found solace in writing. She began journaling long before imagining she would become such an acclaimed author. She views books and diaries as steadfast companions that neither lie, judge, nor abandon. Writing and reading are not only her passions but also her sanctuary.

Her notable works include *The Architect's Apprentice*, *Three Daughters of Eve*, *The Island of Missing Trees*, *Honor*, *Black Milk: On Writing, Motherhood and the Harem Within*, *The Gaze*, *The Forty Rules of Love*, *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World*, *The Saint of Incipient Insanities* (her first novel written in English), and *The Bastard of Istanbul* (her second English-language novel), among others.

*The Forty Rules of Love* narrates two intertwined tales spanning seven centuries and distinct cultures. Central to the story are the forty spiritual principles of Sufism as taught by Shams of Tabriz. The novel explores how Shams transformed Rumi's life—from a traditional scholar into a devoted Sufi—through the power of love. Shams is portrayed as a wandering dervish who cannot stay in one place for long, continually journeying from town to town.

The novel juxtaposes two narratives: one set in contemporary times, and the other rooted in the spiritual and historical landscape of Sufism. The modern storyline follows Ella Rubinstein, a forty-year-old housewife living in Northampton. Discontented and yearning for passion, she silently endures her husband David's infidelity while raising their three children—Jeannette and twins Orli and Avi.

Ella's emotional transformation begins when she encounters Aziz Zahara's writings. Through their connection, she confronts personal dilemmas, finds guidance, and gradually falls in love with Aziz. The novel suggests that love and faith can liberate individuals from fear and anxiety, ultimately

allowing them to live with courage and authenticity. The present investigates the selected novel using Rumi's Sufi lens to map out the journey of self-discovery in the characters of the novel.

### **Rumi's Themes of Spiritualism**

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, a thirteenth-century Persian poet, Islamic dervish, and Sufi mystic, is widely regarded as one of the greatest spiritual thinkers and poetic intellects ever. Born in 1207 AD into a family of theologians, Rumi adeptly transformed ordinary experiences into vivid metaphors for profound spiritual truths. His poetry, deeply embedded in spiritual reflection, has gained immense popularity, especially among Persian speakers in Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. Numerous poems by this revered figure have been translated into various languages, expanding his global impact (Biography of Mevlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi Rumi, 2016).

His seminal work, *The Masnavi*, consists of parables nested within narrative layers, often delivered through compelling stories and subtle humor. Rumi uses these emotionally resonant vignettes to draw spiritual and ethical conclusions. Each tale serves not merely as entertainment but as a conduit for unveiling his mystical teachings and cultivating deeper introspection and elevated moral aspiration in his readers.

Rumi's framework for spiritual self-awareness is based on key thematic principles. These themes promote the transcendence of the physical self, guiding individuals toward awakening and the realisation of their true identity in unity with the Divine. When human cognition rises to higher levels, previously insurmountable challenges become solvable. By actualising one's spiritual potential, a person naturally avoids harmful pursuits and realigns their life with inner harmony—leading to a spiritually fulfilled life that benefits the wider human community.

#### **1. Union with God**

In Sufi tradition, attaining one's primal state as the Universal Man culminates in "union with God" (*al-wisal bil-haqq*), a key outcome of the spiritual journey. Often described as arduous and transformative, this path is delineated through stages grounded in the Shahadah. The negation—"There is no deity but God"—is interpreted to mean that no other reality exists apart from the Divine. Thus, the concept of *fana*, or self-annihilation, seeks to dissolve the illusion of personal existence.

Upon relinquishing the false self, one may enter *baqa*, or "subsistence in God," a state in which the individual's true identity merges with Divine reality. Rumi encapsulates this experience through the prophetic teaching to "die before you die." As he writes: "What do you want to know? If you're sincere, choose death and remove the curtain of your own existence—you'll see it." This refers not to physical death but to an internal transformation—an unraveling of ego and a rebirth into spiritual clarity (VI, 73839 as cited in Chittick, 2005).

Personal traits like joy and sadness are rooted in the ego and obscure spiritual vision. Rumi asserts that reliance on fleeting emotions such as grief and laughter prevents proper comprehension. In contrast, eternal and unconditional love is likened to a garden ever lush and blooming, independent of seasons (I, 1791–94).

#### **2. Love**

Rumi views love as a divine attribute, describing it as a purifying fire that erodes the layers of ego, "burning the qualities of self, hair by hair" (III, 1922). Love becomes the transformative force through which knowledge is realized and divine attachment is achieved, enabling transcendence of the ego. According to Rumi, the state of union with God involves removing all barriers to Divine

Reality. In union, only God remains; limitations dissolve into what he terms “negative reality,” which points to the illusion of worldly existence (Chittick, 2005).

Many religious scholars have interpreted this union as complete extinction—akin to “a drop of water in the sea”—symbolizing the relinquishment of the self in favor of Divine fullness. While this may appear as emptiness and loss, Rumi and other mystical traditions posit that such union is the pinnacle of abundance. The world is but a shadow compared to God’s brilliance. Framing this truth in negation is necessary because only the Divine constitutes absolute reality (Chittick, 2005).

### **3. The Nafs (Ego and the Veil of Illusion)**

Rumi frequently revisits the concept that the ego—or what he terms the “carnal self”—acts as a veil obscuring our true nature. In Islamic theology, polytheism (belief in multiple deities) is considered a major transgression. The negation within the *Shahadah*, “There is no god,” (naji), implies the nonexistence of all realities other than God. Sufism builds upon this foundation by asserting that believing in the existence of anything independent of God constitutes *shirk*—association—which the *Shahadah* fundamentally rejects.

True monotheists (*muwahhid*) recognize that all existence is contingent upon God, with God as the singular source of reality. Conversely, a polytheist (*mushrik*) operates under the illusion of autonomous existence, a misperception rooted in the ego. Until one is freed from the ego's limitations, one falsely perceives worldly phenomena as independently real (Chittick, 2005).

The spiritual remedy for such illusion is the “death of the self”—a transformative dissolution brought about by love. This love reflects the gnosis that reveals God as the sole reality. According to Sufism, one essential implication of hell is continued separation from God; both in this world and the next, the human being remains estranged from Divine presence so long as they cling to the transient constructs of ego and worldly attachments (Chittick, 2005).

### **4. Knowledge and Method**

For Rumi, the heart transcends its biological function; it is the locus of spiritual realization. While anatomists regard it as a mechanical organ that sustains life, Rumi sees the heart as the highest channel of divine understanding (Chittick, 2005). He often refers to a well-known divine saying: “Neither My earth nor My heavens contain Me, but I am contained in the heart of My faithful servant.” (Hadith-e-Qudsi)

To Rumi, grasping the spiritual essence of the heart is equivalent to decoding the nature of God. This understanding can only be achieved by shedding the limiting constructs of relativity, as God is Absolute—formless, infinite, and beyond spatial or temporal dimensions. In the Sufi context, knowing God requires complete spiritual identification with Him, abandoning the material aspects of self that create separation. While such metaphysical insight may appear blasphemous to the rational mind—suggesting one must “become” God—in Sufism it signifies transcending the ego and harmonizing with the Divine essence (Chittick, 2005). This involves stepping beyond the boundaries of physical existence to engage with the eternal, dimensionless truth.

Rumi reflects this in *The Masnavi*: “The (right) thought is that which opens a way; the (right) way is that on which a spiritual king advances.” Here, the “right way” is not one of material escape, but a conscious submission to the reality of God’s absolute power. Sufism places great emphasis on sustaining truth in its purest form—untainted by selfish agendas or worldly distractions (Chittick, 2005).

### **Spiritual Self-Awareness and Reflective Consciousness**

Self-awareness, broadly defined, involves one's deliberate recognition of internal states and interpersonal dynamics (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999; Trudeau & Reich, 1995). Reflection and introspection are key pathways to this awareness. Though perfect self-knowledge may be elusive, self-awareness exists across a continuum of depth and clarity.

Through self-restraint and critical self-reflection, individuals assess the appropriateness of their decisions relative to personal goals. This awareness impacts how individuals evaluate outcomes: when success seems likely, they often attribute it to their efforts; when uncertainty prevails, they may ascribe results to external influences (Silvia & Duval, 2001). While environmental factors affect progress, individuals remain agents in their achievements and failures.

Moreover, people possess the ability to modify their beliefs when necessary (Dana, Lalwani, & Duval, 1997). If performance fails to align with expectations, the standards are adjusted to justify the outcome—mainly when one focuses more on the standards than the self. Spiritual self-discovery, thus, involves seeing oneself not merely as an individual, but as part of an interconnected whole. Recognizing a shared origin for all existence encourages the expansion of conscious awareness. This heightened spiritual perception fosters humility, interdependence, and reverence for the Divine unity that connects all beings.

#### **Analysis of the characters using Rumi's Vision**

Shafak's characters embark on a profound spiritual journey, which catalyzes significant personal transformation. As they navigate their inner landscapes, they shed the layers of societal expectations and self-doubt. This journey of self-discovery reveals their true identities and deepens their understanding of love and interconnectedness. Through the influence of Rumi's teachings, these characters learn that self-awareness is a continuous process, leading to enlightenment and a more profound connection with the divine. Ultimately, their experiences illustrate that embracing this path is essential for realizing one's authentic self and finding meaning in life.

#### **1. Ella**

Ella was a housewife, graduated with a Degree in English literature. She did not hold a job after college but was an avid reader. Her routine centred around being a good mother, wife, dog walker, and housekeeper. On her 40th birthday, she began working at a literary agency in Boston. She was resentful of her daughter's decision to marry a boy of her choice for love. Because she does not believe in love and is not ready to accept a man from a different background for her daughter. Being in love was not meant for Ella at all. Because she did not know the feelings of love and was deprived of love. But without it, she was not calm and confident. Instead, she was confused about her life after realizing from her daughter that she did not want to be an unhappily married woman like her mother. She started thinking about herself, why is she against love? And she could not understand the reason for her sadness.

Ella was not too interested in dealing with such a subject of mysticism and the thirteenth times. Encouraged by the organization, she started reading it. "Love is only a sweet feeling, quickly come and go". She told her daughter. But the introductory note of the novel contradicted this. And she was curious and nervous about it. "Love hits everybody, including those who shun love...even those who use the word "romantic" as a sign of disapproval". Considering love as less important and ordinary, she argues with Scott that she should not marry her daughter. Because, according to Ella love is nothing, and not enough to marry each other. She also started thinking big about her husband's affairs, that something is wrong and that her husband is cheating on her. But she

always forgave him, knowing she did not know her true self, about what she wanted to do. He never expressed that she felt bad about it. She becomes sad and bored with her dull routine in her life. And then she returned to the character of Shams Tabriz. She wanted to find the reason for her loneliness while having an extended, loving family. And why her mind is stuck in dark thoughts. After reading the life of Shams and Aziz Zahra's blog page, she started comparing her life with theirs. And in her consciousness, she felt she was an unhappy housewife who did not do anything different activities. And she also became the reason for her daughter's anger. She wrote to the author of the novel that she disagrees that love is the essence of life. She also does not want her daughter to marry for love. They can meet and talk about it, she wrote to the author.

Aziz was a spiritual person. He understood that when we do not accept what nature brings to us, we get caught up in problems. We want to solve all problems in our own way, but we get stuck in our minds' wrong thoughts and beliefs, which do not let us move forward. Then he tried to explain to Ella the importance of submission. Aziz replied to her by saying that he had prayed for the resolution of matters between her and her daughter. Moreover, love is the water of life. Aziz tells her that submission is not a weakness, and we cannot change it. Submission is like accepting nature and things beyond our control; we should try our best to solve things, and happily leave the rest to nature. Nature is playing its part, and we must play our part. These thoughts prevent us from many conflicts and pressures in life. By giving metaphorical examples from life. He makes her understand the importance of love.

Time was passing and the same lonely and boring routine continued. She knew that her husband flirted with other women. To overcome the sad thoughts, she spends her time cooking, which makes her happy and fulfilled. This also stopped the confusion in his mind. It was just like she had only one goal in life. That was to cook. She dwells on thoughts of her husband's constant cheating and then slowly decides to leave it all. Jeannette, who was angry with her mother, reconciled with her. And Ella followed Aziz's advice to surrender between the two opposites.

Furthermore, things were settled between them. She again left a message to thank him for his prayers and to tell him about the settled things. So, their conversation continues. Ella would often ask him about her questions and Aziz would give answers in the light of spirituality.

Aziz was the one who was detailing his travels and experiences with Ella. He loved to travel. Contrary to Ella's thinking, he believed that whether we travel or stick to one place, death will come in time. Being fearless and having strong faith is also a sign of spirituality. These spiritual thoughts inspired Ella. The qualities of a spiritual personality were attracting him. A spiritual person who has a specific purpose in life. One who travels and has different experiences in life without the fear of death.

Rule. "For new experiences to come to light, old ones must wither away".

Like Shams, he also believes in sacrificing something to create something new. Sacrifice of the physical self to know the Pure Self. Ella found his messages interesting. Now she began to think deeply about him. She was under the influence of spiritual thoughts. Now, she wanted to discover herself. Earlier, to overcome her loneliness, she kept herself busy cooking different dishes, but one day she forgot the habit of making breakfast for her family. It means that her life was changing now. She was learning something new, the most important and highest in life.

Ella became sad on her 40th birthday. Once, she made a list of goals to achieve before she turned 40. Most of these goals were met except for love. She also shared her sadness with Aziz on turning 40. And once again, Aziz settled the matter by giving her a spiritual answer. He explained to her

that forty is a significant and influential figure in Sufism. And this is the phase of life where many new avenues open up in one's life. This answer cleared up another of her confusions. It is just like the spiritual thought that a believer lives only in the present moment. He does not worry about the past or the future.

Now, Ella looks at her past. She was a decent girl from the beginning. She never smoked and did not make friends with boys, even the neighbours taught their children to be like Ella. But now she is not satisfied with her life. Now she began to search for love and prayed to Allah to give her love or to make her so reckless and so hard that she could not feel the lack of love. Because she realized the lack of love in her life. And love is the central pillar of Sufism. And it is love that makes man important, that introduces the mystery of the universe.

Ella began to like solitude. Now she was experiencing change and charm in her life. Now she stopped passing judgment on others. She stopped running after her children and they came closer to her. She calmed down and her children shared more with her. And things were going smoothly. She had learned that she did not have to stress about things that were not in her control. She began to see herself as a transformed, wiser, calm and sensible self. She also stopped feigning ignorance of her husband's affair and suspected that her life was not real.

The apparent change was that she started reading Rumi's poetry every night after finishing the novel. Seeing the picture of Aziz, she was curious if there is any connection between Aziz's resemblance to Shams Tabriz and why he has an oriental name when he is Scottish? And what is Sufi? With all these questions, she became interested in Aziz's personality and their conversation continued.

Finally, Ella writes a letter to Aziz and admits that their correspondence has dramatically changed her. Now he has started seeing and observing things from different angles. He loves Aziz too. She admits that Aziz is different from everyone around her and he sees everything in a different light and forces others to change everything and observe something new. She is captivated by his words and admits she loves the man behind those words.

## **2. Aziz**

When he lost his wife, who was his love. He could not bear this suffering and sought solace and sympathy in the wrong places, befriending the wrong people. He wasted all his money, he developed an addiction, and he even tried to commit suicide. He lost his job, friends and family. However,, he had purity in his heart, so he decided to change himself and God created the connection. He got a job as a photographer. The task was to visit the holy cities of Islam for photography. However, according to the law of Saudi Arabia, non-Muslims are not allowed and he was not going there alone. His boss told him to go to the local Sufi brothers. Thus, his life is changed by the influence of Sufism.

Aziz had a lively personality, no worries about his adventures and less about his appearance or traveling the world. But Ella was the opposite in personality. He does not hate anyone or anything, and he welcomes and likes to share his food with different people. He was not afraid of the future. It is like a believer that he will be grateful no matter the circumstances. Aziz had made close friends across six continents and met people who treated him like family. In Eastern Europe, he became the father of two orphans. Like Shams, Aziz had spent his life traveling, studying, teaching and searching for God everywhere and in everything. Even he knew that he had cancer and could only live for six months. But he was not afflicted with grief, but lived his life in peace. Because he now

knew his purpose. He established a Sufi foundation in Amsterdam with worldwide connections. And then he wrote a novel, which he had always wanted to write, "Sweet blasphemy."

### 3. Shams

A Sufi remains harmless to others; the same was true with Shams. He told his first rule to the innkeeper, who had harsh words for the Sufis. For him, there was sorrow everywhere. He thought that Sufis was traveling to find something different, but Shams told him that he was looking for God. Furthermore, his love for God was so great that he could not hear anything bad about God. Then he explained that if we are filled with love, we will treat all human beings with love and eventually love God. Although God loves us, with the love of humanity, we will be in a higher spiritual state to feel God's love and vice versa. Without love within us, hatred, fear, and blame will take their place.

He was far-sighted from childhood. But none even his parents, could understand him and tried to teach him to behave normally. But he left that place and travelled from place to place. He met and spent time with followers of all religions, castes, races, creeds and statuses. He wandered in forests, deserts and different places. He learned some basic rules during his travels, called *The Forty Rules of Love*. Which were as universal as natural laws, learned from life. He realized that this was the purpose of his life, which he had fulfilled. Now he is not afraid of death, but he wants to share this knowledge with his mate as a legacy. So now he was looking for a spiritual companion and decided to go to Baghdad after hearing the voice of his guardian angel.

Rule 1: "How we see God, is a direct reflection of how we see ourselves" (Shafak, 2010). Self-awareness is important because when one purifies oneself, they will know God. And how will it all happen? From the heart, with love. By controlling one from the heart because one's heart is the path to truth.

Rule 2: "The path to the truth is a labor of the heart, not of the head. Make your heart your primary guide, not your mind" (Shafak, 2010). After reaching Baghdad, he reached the dervish lodge of Baba Zaman. His appearance shows he does not care what society thinks of him if he is less attractive. Number of charms, hooded cloak with woollen robe. He does not worry about what people will think about him. He introduced that he was searching for God. A judge was sitting there with his men. He said there is no need to travel worldwide to find God. Shams's reasoning was to realize that one will lose interest in God when one gets so engrossed in worldly comforts and conveniences, in expensive clothes.

'Because although it is a fact that He cannot be found by seeking, only those who seek can find Him' (Shafak, 2010). Here, we can analyze the intentions of Sufis and non-Sufis. Both of them claim to be close to God. However, how to believe and understand God is different for both of them.

Shams also stated that the key to building a strong community is the spirituality of its citizens; otherwise, there will be destruction. Non-Sufis often claim not to worry about anything other than Sharia. If one is following Sharia, then everything is fine. But what Shams tells us about Shariat is that it is like a candle that shows the way from one place to another in darkness. But, if we forget where we are going and focus only on the candle instead of the path, it will not help.

Shams explained that there are four levels of meaning in the Quran.

- 1- Outer meaning - The majority of people and scholars can understand it.
- 2- Batini meaning - Sufis can understand.
- 3- Inner of the inner meaning - Saints can understand.
- 4- Indescribable (deep) meaning - Prophets and people closest to God can understand.



The scholar was annoyed (as most people do) at how the Sufi had more knowledge than the scholar. He threatened him with "sheer blasphemy". That you are on the verge of utter blasphemy. Shams told us while narrating the story of Moses and the shepherd: "That do not judge the way other people connect to God". Shams explained: "To each his way and his prayer. God does not take us at our word. He looks deep into our hearts. It is not the ceremonies or rituals that make a difference, but whether our hearts are sufficiently pure or not" (Shafak, 2010).

The master advised him to stay with us, and his work would be done on time. Shams stayed with him for nine months. Meanwhile, Baba Zaman saw him very determined to find his mate. And Shams believed that Baba Zaman would play a role in helping him find his soulmate. Shams was a keen observer of nature and sometimes read old books to satisfy his intellect. He dared to take risks and do not like to do ordinary things. He was not fond of luxury, security and happiness; he did not like flattery.

Seeing Baba Zaman, Shams guessed that the letter was related to him. One day, he called for a meeting and discussed the matter with all the dervishes. The danger associated with this work was also mentioned. Shams agreed because that was the only reason he came there. But the master told him to wait for spring. He waited for three months. From this waiting period, he learned the rule to never lose hope, no matter the circumstances. Allah will solve every problem and always be grateful. A Sufi is grateful for everything because he knows that it is all planned by Allah. Allah is the best planner. If we compare this situation with our daily life, we learned how to overcome the difficulties in every person's life. Sometimes we become impatient and create problems for ourselves and the people around us. While hoping for a good end, this act of patience makes a man strong and brave, so we will not stop fighting for ourselves. We will do our best and patiently accept what is written for us.

After spring, he was ordered to wait for the following autumn and this time, he knew the importance of patience. And after the winter, he was allowed to meet his soul mate. He knew that fighting ourselves would seem very difficult, but we will make way for our new self when we endure it. So, he endured every difficulty in his way, and this was one of his principles. He was ready to fulfil his divine love, no matter what the consequences for it would be.

No matter what part of the world you are in, what culture, race or religion you are surrounded by, if you travel within yourself and know your inner self, you have travelled the whole world. Yes, you will live your true identity. You will never be afraid of the place where you really are; your inner self will keep you alive and inform you who you are. Love is the emotion that creates harmony in everything; it changes our view of the world and ultimately changes who we are. Love can remove many distractions because love is the way to reach God. As he entered the city, he met different people. They also admitted that Shams' retreat was quite different from other people's. Shams met them on the way and taught them principles; for example, the first character was the farmer who said. No one apologizes to him even if they are at fault, except Shams.

The element of sacrifice is for the carnal self. Sacrificing the carnal self to reach the pure self. Difficulties should also be accepted with love. Only then can man reach his ultimate destination. And he who knows himself will be harmless to others because he would have destroyed his carnal self, which is the root of every evil deed. He would be the bearer of love in the universe. Moreover, that is self-awareness — attributes of the beloved master. One of the characteristics of the spiritual personality is his confidence, because when Rumi met Shams for the first time, he saw his confidence. Religious extremists instill fear in people by focusing only on hell as punishment and

heaven as reward. They should preach to fight their ego and preach God's love. They will interpret the Qur'an with a mind full of fear. Instead, they should search for the essence of the Qur'an.

A Sufi loves Allah only because he loves Him without fear of hell and desire for reward. We can feel God's presence or absence in the present moment through love. They say, why wait for hell or paradise in the hereafter when we can experience the same in the present moment. Shams sets up a trial for Rumi and orders him to bring wine from the tavern. Because till then, he used to hear his praises from everyone. He was not familiar with the feelings of hearing bad things about him. Because in this condition, people feel sad and broken, this broken heart holds gems. And a person like Rumi, who has everything, power, fame, authority and gold, was taking these challenges only for his inner journey towards spiritual awakening. Moreover, this was his trial. God wants us to be modest but when we make worldly possessions our Qibla, we will not be able to recognize God. Therefore, spirituality refutes the prevalent concept of lust for wealth in society.

#### **4. Rumi**

It was the thirteenth century, all in chaos due to the Crusader invasion of Byzantium and the resulting division. The Byzantines tried to regain their lost ground. Everyone was fighting and no one knew what was going to happen next. Rumi stood up for love, and spoke of universal spirituality to connect people regardless of their background. His agenda was to wage jihad against one's ego and self. Just as many people wage external jihad against the infidels. Those who do not believe in love will not appreciate this idea. So Shams and Rumi's relationship was not understood by many people and people misunderstood them. And they separated after three years of companionship but remain alive till today.

Rumi considered himself a blessed and proud man, endowed with fame, knowledge, and the education of the best teachers. He believed God had given him the duty to preach and help people distinguish right and wrong. He also taught in the seminary, which had many students. Even delivering the sermon every Friday in the mosque, he was still anxious that something was missing in his life. Also, nature refers to his soulmate in dreams. He was deprived of spiritual love.

When he encountered his companion, Rumi recognized him. Shams trained him and meditated with him for 40 days. Moreover, imparted his knowledge to him.

Rumi describes the journey to consciousness in seven stages.

##### **1- Depraved Nafs**

In this stage, the soul gets caught up in worldly pursuits and the person blames others.

##### **2- Accusing Nafs**

In this stage, awareness is attained, the journey towards inner purification begins, and man begins to blame himself.

##### **3- Inspired Nafs**

In this stage, man surrenders and wanders in the valley of knowledge. He learns patience, perseverance, wisdom and humanity.

This step is a trap for more steps; the man will stop here... or go further.

##### **4- Serene Nafs**

This stage is the valley of wisdom. Man will have a higher level of consciousness, generosity, gratitude, and contentment.

##### **5- Pleased Nafs**

This stage is the valley of unity; in this stage, a person will be content no matter the circumstances. Worldly matters will not matter to him.

6- Lantern to humanity

This phase is like the rays of energy; the person will start teaching like a true master. He will have healing powers. It will make a big difference in the lives of others. He will serve God by serving others.

7- Insan e Kamil

This stage is the pure stage of the self. Not much is known about it.

These stages are not easy to follow or linear. Going on the first step from a higher state will always be a danger.

Rumi now knows the secret of life and is aware of himself and has turned into a poet. Allah is his beloved. Allah is present in all universes. Therefore, the entire universe is within us. Shams told him that now he had a chanting heart instead of a preaching mind. He wants to help him in helping others and complement them. He made him feel how to love all creatures like beggars, drunkards, thieves, prostitutes and gamblers. Told him that it was a tough test and only a few could clear it. What ordinary people were, Rumi did not know before. And he was always surrounded by admirers and led a safe life.

He said to consider the universe as a whole with all its differences and contradictions. One day you will be recognized as the voice of love through your poetry. Shams, who was his spiritual companion, worked for his spiritual transformation. He stayed with him for forty days in his house, where he practiced spiritual meditation and Shams taught him the secrets of spirituality. He told her about the life of ordinary people; He asked him to sacrifice everything that stood between him and his Lord; And taking care of your image only in Allah's eyes, not in people's eyes.

Rumi became sad in the absence of Shams, now he understood that everything Shams did was for his perfection. And in God's scheme, there is no such thing as coincidence. Everything is planned. And this is what we are taught in the Quran. "Surely We will show Our way to those who struggle in Our way" (Shafak, 2010). Everyone knows that Shams used to criticize the sheikhs, but no one knows how much he could exegesis. He was well versed in many sciences like alchemy, astrology, theology, philosophy and logic. But he did not reveal it to ignorant eyes. He was an expert in Islamic jurisprudence but worked like a fakir.

He let us share our food with a prostitute. Opened the door of our house for her. He forced me to beg outside the mosque. His whole purpose was to see this aspect of life and the universe. To complete oneself, to fully know God. It created a distance between me and my fans and the elite class. He wanted me to know the life of ordinary people. Because wealth, fame and rank, even religion should not be an obstacle in the way of God.

His admirers dwindled; his reputation ruined. And this was his trial and test. These trials led him to learn the value of madness, loneliness, helplessness, ridicule, isolation and ultimately heartbreak. Now he was ready to risk everything to see Shams' face again. This condition made him a poet. He had never thought highly of poets before.

Rumi was always a loving man. He embraced people of all religions. He was kind to people of all religions. And after Shams, the scope of their love extended to prostitutes, drunkards and beggars. Rumi was never the same after the death of Shams. He distributed all his gold among different people. To lose a loved one is to lose yourself. He felt a sense of fana and annihilation. These feelings destroy a person's ego and drive out the dervish-self.

In the absence of Shams his pain increased and turned into grief. Gradually, he went through stages of silence and solitude. He spends forty days in chalah, reviewing and memorizing the forty

rules. He found Shams in his mind. He realized that grief turns you into another "you." A third eye opens in the heart when he closes his eyes to the world. The eye of love sees very clearly and sharply. Now, you can see your beloved everywhere, which could not be found anywhere before.

### **5. Desert Rose**

The character of Rose Harlot represents those who have lost the proper path for some reason but have a good heart. And they are eager to rebuild their relationship with God. But, how harshly do people treat them, As if they have a guarantee that they are very close to God. Why do they judge people like God? While this is only the work of Allah. People make life difficult for others.

All this is because they are not fully aware of themselves and their physical self deludes them. But God does not see us from outside. Shams admonished her and said, "Repent, but the common people want to take away the right of repentance from people." As was the case of "Desert Rose". Desert Rose reached a brothel after many tragedies in her life. Her parents died. Moreover, her only brother also died. She was alone in the world. On her way to his aunt's house, she encounters robbers. And then, the chief of the brothel took her with him. She was a girl who loved flowers. She possessed a pure heart, and Shams realized the inner and pure self of the "Desert Rose" as she created a beautiful garden of roses. She also came to hear Maulana Rumi but was disappointed by what people did to her and those who are less interested in listening to the sermon but more interested in getting women out.

After his mother, Shams loved and respected her. She spent the rest of her life in trouble. She was not happy with her past. But Shams advised her to forget the past and live now. In this way, Shams understands human preferences and behaviour. She left that place and came to Rumi's house. She decided to devote his life to God. Shams welcomed. This world and worldly status are temporary. Just an illusion. We must follow the right path and remain light and empty like zero and we should not be engrossed in worldly affairs. The main thing is to know the inner journey and inner state.

### **6. Character of Aladdin**

Aladdin angered his father with his behaviour in his first meeting with Shams Tabriz. Shams also felt jealousy and resentment in his heart. The character of Aladdin shows that one who listens to the carnal self will destroy himself in hatred and evil deeds, even if he is the offspring of someone close to God. He could not understand the spiritual connection between his father and Shams. Began to fuel hatred in his heart. By blaming Shams, he also hurt his father and then he realized his bad behaviour in front of his father. But he was not ready to fight his ego, which had dire consequences.

### **7. Character of the Killer**

From here we can analyse the life of a sinner, how their wrongdoings make them worthless. What is the reason for cruelty and or a lack of love for others? We can see how they follow their ego and how their ego destroys them. First, they become psychologically disturbed. Their guilt burdens them with their wrongdoings.

'But I carry with me the traces of all the men I have killed. I wear them around my neck like invisible necklaces, feeling their presence against my tight, heavy flesh. (Shafak, 2010). He, under the name "Jackal Head", was working with a brothel patron in Konya. Some people hire him for murder. At first hearing the name of the dervish, his inner self warns him to refuse to kill the innocent. But his false self also agreed to kill a religious person for money. However, he later admits that it was his biggest mistake when he saw the results (Shafak, 2010).

### **8. Character of Hassan Beggar**

The character of "Hasan" shows the outwardly miserable appearance of his personality which is why no one wanted to come near him or even see his face. He had to cover his face before going to public places. No one ever spoke to him. He had made his sorrow his identity. He also forgot his name because he had never heard anyone call him by his name.

But Shams Tabriz would approach, greet, and talk to him. Shams gifted him a mirror and said to him, "Just remember, who you are, does not depend on appearance because God sees us from within. Shams reminded him, "You Have God Within You" (Shafak, 2010). And this is what happens to a man, when he loses his hope and forgets his self. In our troubles, we are always restless and blame God. We get caught up in our own suffering. What spirituality has taught us is to love even suffering. And go beyond the boundaries of love and suffering. And feel the eternity of love no matter what the situation. Thus spirituality changes everything and "self" is its most important factor." (Shafak, 2010).

### **9. Kimya**

A Sufi once prophesied that Kimia is not an ordinary child, we should send her for education. And she can become a good scholar. So her father took her to Rumi's house for her education. She proved that even girls can be good at learning Quran.

It was this girl, who tried to understand Shams when everyone was against him. She loved Shams. They got married. They often discuss Quranic topics together. They were not living together. Kimia tried to get her husband's attention. When Shams rejects being together outright, Kimia feels broken and falls ill. Then she understood God's love, kindness and God's compassion. When she went to Shams's room for the last time, after ten days, she drowned in the river of pure nothingness. She felt that she was flowing in a stream of pure awareness. Then, she could understand the feelings of reading the Quran deeply. A drop in infinity.

### **10. Master (Baba Zaman)**

In the winter, Ustad Burhanuddin wrote a letter to Baba Zaman to inform him about the personality and spiritual status of one of his disciples, Jalaluddin Rumi. Rumi was very talented and resourceful. And everyone has taken him as a role model. But something was missing in his life. He is looking for his soulmate. I wrote you a letter saying he had a dream about your lodge. And I believe you can solve the mystery by finding his mate in your lodge. He knows everything except "love". He prepared Shams with a test of patience.

Shams was there for that purpose, but Baba Zaman had a vision. He guides people to become Sufis with various trials. He also watched Shams, making him wait so long to meet his soulmate. And that is why Shams learned the principle of patience.

### **11. Character of Novice**

His duty was to serve the lodge; this was his spiritual training, even though he did not like to work much. But he always obeyed the cook's orders. He saw Shams' personality and thought he was a different person. He became curious to know more about Shams. In this curiosity, he came to know about Shams' extraordinary abilities when talking to Baba Zaman. The ability to interpret dreams and the purpose of coming to Baghdad is that he is looking for his spiritual partner and wants to transfer all his knowledge. He had been a wandering dervish for 40 years. He was an expert in the ways of nature.

Rule 3: "You can study God through everything and every person in this universe because God is not confined in a mosque, synagogue or church" (Shafak, 2010).

Everyone warned him that becoming a dervish is not an easy task. But he wanted to be, so he came to the lodge. But, he found his job very difficult, working under the cook. He did not like the trial period of becoming a dervish. He could have left the place long ago but stayed there only to see Shams Tabriz. He was impressed by the personality of Shams, who does not fear anyone and everyone respects him.

He wanted to be like that. Now we can analyse that he was not ready to endure any hardship for his cause. Because he didn't love his goal enough. He was only influenced by the worldly possession of pride. If he had liked to be a dervish and had known the real purpose of becoming a dervish, he would not have left the place, no matter how much trouble he had to face, but he did. He was impressed by Shams Tabriz's personality and decided to go with him because it was his nature to escape from hard work. He was not used to sacrifice. He cares a lot about what people think of me and he looks for the approval of others. What stops others from achieving a goal is that they don't know how to make sacrifices in life. Worldly comforts, such as money, fame, luxury or physical luxuries are dear to people, they must be renounced to travel on a path, the path of the Sufis. The inner path. That was the difference.

## **12. Character of Suleman**

People also forget that a sinner is also human, they are so devoid of love that they do not want to forgive a sinner and do not hesitate to kill them. God does not teach us this behaviour in the Quran. Even if they are sinners, file a case against them in court, teach them with love and kindness so that they can change themselves. But do not be rude to them.

Most of the problems in the world are caused by bad behaviour.

Two security guards beat him badly and made him stay in the streets on a bitterly cold night. But Shams treated him kindly, bandaged his wounds and told him the guard had wronged him. They have no right to misbehave with anyone. This is the difference between the Sufi and those who obey themselves. Suleman always hated the rudeness of others. But he was relieved to be treated well by the shams. He felt God within himself through the advice of Shams. The God who loves him. It was his introspection. That is, to love God is to love humanity.

## **13. Zealout**

Represents the characters in our society who think Sufis are bad. And considers them "blasphemer", that there is no need to learn more about spirituality, and that what the Sufis say is wrong. Zealout was treating Shams and Rumi with hatred. He does not even bother to greet him or respond to the greeting. He was worried about Rumi's lenient attitude towards minorities. He even considered Shams as Satan. This Sheikh Yasin was not an uneducated and immoral man but was devoid of love and unable to see what Shams could see. And was spreading hatred.

But did Islam really teach us this way? Didn't Islam teach us to think about the universe? Such people distort society with their hate speech. If these people preach love, many problems will be solved. Often, these are the people who refuse to listen to others, saying that they know everything about Sharia. But in reality, they create mischief in society, have opinions about others but do not want to listen to others. We can see the truth here. Shams and he discussed the concept of Satan. He argues that Satan comes in many ways and leads us astray. But Shams argued that it is not always Satan who misleads us, but our nafs and we should train ourselves to become pure. And what comes out of a person's attitude and behaviour is what is inside him. Therefore, we need a sincere self-examination. Otherwise, we will indulge in wrongdoing and blame Satan.

## **Conclusion**

We learn to stop judging others without reason or knowing the truth. If we analyse these, we will see that these are the same points or issues that ordinary people are affected by. We should stop making a mess in the lives of others by spreading rumours or hate. So, it is not our duty to judge and ruin others' lives. This is only Allah's work, and we should make life easier for others. We always focus on finding faults in others, not knowing how we are inside. If we try to keep ourselves pure, we will focus less on the faults of others. Shams added that the Sufi's focus is "consciousness". They create a different delight in the verses of the Qur'an. There is more to a seeker than principles, God's love.

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