

A Journey towards Spiritualism in Elif Shafak's The Forty Rules of Love

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ABSTRACT

The Forty Rules of Love is a novel by Elif Shafak that tells the story of two people who are searching for meaning and fulfillment in their lives. The novel explores a number of themes, including the search for inner peace, the power of love and compassion, the importance of spiritual connection, and the challenges of navigating the complexities of human relationships. Additionally, the novel delves into the nature of faith and the role of religion in people's lives. Overall, the novel is a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition and the ways in which we can find meaning and fulfillment in life. The power of love and compassion is beauty fully explained in the novel. The novel explores the idea that love and compassion are the most powerful forces in the universe, and that they have the ability to transform and heal both individuals and society as a whole. Through the characters of Rumi and Shams, the novel shows how love and compassion can bring people together and help them overcome even the most challenging obstacles.

INTRODUCTION

The Forty Rules of Love is considered to be a portrayal of a wonder of Sufism, as there is a connection that is drawn between two centuries for example thirteenth and twenty first, through a relating portrayal of the change of a prestigious researcher into a spiritualist artist through his improvement of fellowship with a meandering dervish and the relationship of a house spouse with a spiritualist essayist.

Out of the limits of time, space and religion, Shafak figured out how to move ahead with the idea of Spirituality that is of general nature and the way towards it is through love. The connection and fellowship of human race has a common foundation of that widespread Otherworldliness and love is the limiting power whether it is east or west through affection solidarity is achieved. Shafak shows how different procedures converge to depict the creator's vision of the human conditions. In other words, the imaginative decisions of the creator strikingly deciphers and enhances Shafak's topical concerns and highlights humanistic around the world solidarity through the fundamental human fixing—love.

The novel recounts two equal stories that reflect each other across two altogether different societies and seven meditating hundreds of years. Forty year old Ella Rubenstein is a standard troubled house wife with three young children and an untrustworthy husband, yet her life starts to change drastically when she accepts to write a detailed report on the novel, "Sweet Blasphemy", "a historical, mystical novel on the remarkable bond between Rumi, the best poet and the most revered spiritual leader in the history of Islam, and the Shams of Tabriz, an unknown, unconventional dervish full of scandals and surprises".(14)

The search for inner peace and fulfillment is the real aim of life. The main characters, Ella and Rumi, are both struggling to find meaning and purpose in their lives, and they both turn to spirituality and religious teachings in order to find answers. Through their experiences, the novel explores the idea that true fulfillment and happiness can only be found within, and that the search for inner peace is an essential part of the human experience.

It also explores the importance of spiritual connection and the role of religion in people's lives. Rumi and Ella both turn to religious teachings and practices in order to find guidance and direction in their lives and the novel shows how these practices can provide solace and comfort during difficult times. However, the novel also cautions against the dangers of dogmatic thinking and the ways in which religion can be used to divide and oppress people.

As in one of the forty rules it is explained that,

Real filth is the one inside. The rest simply washes off. There is only one type of dirt that cannot be cleansed with pure waters, that is the stain of hatred and bigotry contaminating the soul. You can purify your body through abstinence and fasting, but only love will purify

your heart. Overall, the novel presents a nuanced and thoughtful exploration of the role of spirituality in the human experience.(111)

The novel ultimately suggests that true spirituality is not about following the rules of a particular religion, but about finding a personal and meaningful connection to the divine. In the words of Eckhart Tolle in the *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*,

Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now.

Religion plays a major role in the lives of both Rumi and Ella. Rumi is a devout Sufi Muslim, and he turns to Sufi teachings and practices in order to find guidance and direction in his life. Ella, on the other hand, is an agnostic who is skeptical of organized religion, but she is drawn to the spiritual teachings of Rumi and becomes a student of Sufism. Throughout the novel, Rumi and Ella both struggle with the challenges and complexities of their respective faiths. Rumi must confront the strictures and dogmas of his own religion, while Ella grapples with her doubts and skepticism. In the end, both characters come to realize that true spirituality is not about adhering to the rules and teachings of a particular religion, but about finding a deep and personal connection to the divine.

There are several instances in the novel that suggest true spirituality. For example, Rumi and Shams are able to transcend the limitations of their respective religions and find a deeper, more profound connection to the divine. This is demonstrated in their discussions about the nature of God and their mutual respect for each other's beliefs.

Additionally, Ella's journey to becoming a Sufi and her deepening spiritual connection with Rumi also suggest true spirituality. Despite her initial skepticism and resistance, Ella is able to let go of her doubts and embrace the spiritual teachings of Rumi and Sufism. This is demonstrated in her willingness to participate in Sufi practices, such as whirling and meditation, and in her growing understanding of the nature of the divine.

In the novel, the nature of God is discussed and explored through the interactions between Rumi and Shams. Rumi is a devout Sufi Muslim, and he believes in a God who is all-knowing and all-powerful. However, Shams challenges Rumi's beliefs and encourages him to think outside the box. Shams suggests that God is not a distant and aloof being, but is instead present in the world around us and within us. He encourages Rumi to see God not as an external entity, but as a part of himself and the universe.

Through their discussions and debates, Rumi and Shams come to a deeper understanding of the nature of God. They realize that God is not limited by human concepts and beliefs, and that the true nature of God is beyond human understanding. They also come to understand that the pursuit of spiritual knowledge is a lifelong journey, and that there is always more to learn and discover about the divine.

Religion and spiritualism are intertwined and interdependent. Through the interactions and experiences of the characters, the novel explores the relationship between religion and spiritualism and the ways in which they can complement and enrich each other.

Rumi is a devout Sufi Muslim who follows the teachings of the Sufi mystics and engages in spiritual practices, such as meditation and chanting, in order to connect with the divine. For Rumi, religion is a source of guidance and solace, and it provides him with a framework for understanding the world around him. However, Rumi is also open to new ideas and perspectives, and he is willing to question and challenge the dogmas and beliefs of his religion.

Ella, on the other hand, is skeptical of organized religion and is initially resistant to the teachings of Sufism. However, she is drawn to the spiritual teachings of Rumi and becomes a student of Sufism. Through her journey, Ella comes to understand that spirituality is not about adhering to the rules and beliefs of a particular religion, but about finding a personal and meaningful connection to the divine. She also learns that religion and spiritualism can complement and enrich each other, and that they can provide a valuable framework for understanding and navigating the complexities of the world.

Overall, the novel presents a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the relationship between religion and spiritualism and the ways in which they can enhance and enrich each other. Throughout the novel, Rumi and Ella's journey to spiritual enlightenment is portrayed as a lifelong process that involves a combination of religious teachings and practices, as well as personal exploration and self-discovery. The novel ultimately suggests that true spirituality is not about adhering to the rules and beliefs of a particular religion, but about finding a deep and personal connection to the divine. Spiritualism plays a central role in the lives of the main characters, Rumi and Ella.

Shams of Tabriz plays a pivotal role in the spiritual journey of Rumi. Shams is a Sufi mystic who teaches Rumi the principles and practices of Sufism, and he encourages Rumi to think outside the box and challenge the dogmas and

beliefs of his religion. Through their interactions and discussions, Shams helps Rumi to see the world in a new light and to develop a deeper understanding of the divine.

Shams is also a strong advocate for the power of love and compassion, and he teaches Rumi that these qualities are essential for spiritual growth and enlightenment. He encourages Rumi to let go of his fears and doubts and to embrace love and compassion in all aspects of his life. Through his teachings, Shams helps Rumi to see that true spirituality is not about following the rules and beliefs of a particular religion, but about finding a personal and meaningful connection to the divine.

Overall, the role of Shams of Tabriz in the novel is to guide and mentor Rumi on his spiritual journey. Through his teachings and example, Shams helps Rumi to overcome his fears and doubts and to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of the divine.

In addition to his teachings, Shams also serves as a catalyst for Rumi's spiritual transformation. Through his friendship and guidance, Shams helps Rumi to break free from the constraints of his religion and to see the world in a new light. This is demonstrated in their many discussions and debates, in which Shams challenges Rumi's beliefs and encourages him to think for himself.

Shams's influence on Rumi's spiritual journey is also evident in Rumi's poetry and writings. After meeting Shams, Rumi's poetry becomes more expansive and mystical, reflecting his deepening understanding of the divine. Through his poetry, Rumi is able to share his spiritual insights and experiences with others, helping to inspire and guide others on their own spiritual journeys. The role of Shams of Tabriz in the novel is crucial to Rumi's spiritual development. Through his teachings and guidance, Shams helps Rumi to break free from the limitations of his religion and to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of the divine.

Religion and spiritualism are portrayed as distinct but interconnected concepts. Religion is depicted as a set of rules, beliefs, and practices that are followed by a particular group of people. It provides individuals with a framework for understanding the world and their place in it and it offers guidance and solace in times of need. Spiritualism, on the other hand, is depicted as a more personal and individualized pursuit. It is about finding a connection to the divine and discovering one's own path to spiritual enlightenment. Spiritualism is not tied to any particular religion or set of beliefs, and it allows individuals to explore the mysteries of the universe and the nature of the divine in their own way. Throughout the novel, Rumi and Ella's spiritual journeys illustrate that religion and spiritualism can complement and enrich each other, but that they are ultimately distinct concepts.

As the novel progresses, Rumi and Ella's spiritual journeys become increasingly intertwined, and they both come to a deeper understanding of the nature of the divine. Through their interactions and experiences, the novel explores the relationship between religion and spiritualism and the ways in which they can complement and enrich each other. Despite these challenges, Rumi and Ella are able to persevere and continue on their journeys, eventually reaching a deeper understanding of the divine and the nature of spirituality.

The novelist conveys the message Sufism depends on tolerating difference and pluralism. Shafak accepts that Sufism helps in battling the danger of strict radicalism and illegal intimidation. The novel calls to accept the religion of the God's adoration as opposed to some other opinionated religion.

For a happy life, one should have adoration, resilience and tolerance. Sufism is explained in the novel as an over whelming, breathing and serene one which helps in curing psychological oppression. The tale conveys the message that there is an error among otherworldliness and religion. It endeavours to answer that how eastern culture, Sufism and Orientalist technique are represented in the novel. The novel is loaded up with the pure quintessence of profound love that has taken out contrasts in general public.

Mankind is mistreated by obsession, separation, quarrels and harmful perspectives in light of the strict conflicts, power battles and political contentions in this world. The novel uncovers the idea that in this turbulent world, actually individuals can discover satisfaction and happiness by battling all the chances in their day- to -day existence. Individuals can be incorporated under the top of warmth, love and self revelation. In the words of K.Sherwani, " One of the discoveries is that the novel is loaded up within unadulterated substance of otherworldliness love that has eliminated contrasts in a general public."

Overall, the novel presents a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the role of spiritualism in the human experience. It shows how spiritual practices and beliefs can provide guidance and solace, and how they can help us to connect with the divine and find meaning and fulfillment in our lives.

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