

Sufism and Mysticism in “The Forty Rules of love” and “The Flea Palace” by Elif Shafak

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Abstract

Existence of humanity is directly linked with human body, mind and soul and also intermingled with spirituality. Within this, spirituality manifests in two primary forms: Mysticism and Sufism. These themes have been prominent in literature since its inception. Elif Shafak emerges as a significant author whose works are profoundly influenced by Sufi and mystical phenomena in novels. The aim of this study is to explore the representations of Mysticism and Sufism in Shafak's selected novels as "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace," by employing a qualitative content analysis approach. The framework adopted for this study was exploratory. The primary data sources include the texts of the novels, while secondary sources encompass existing research and an integrated theoretical framework regarding Mysticism and Sufism. Findings of the study reveal that both novels are rich in mysticism and Sufism concepts such as transcendence, divine love, mystical experiences, and the integration of philosophical and religious knowledge, inner transformation, unity of being, connection with something higher than being and spiritual guidance toward the quest for truth. It is concluded that the narratives effectively encapsulate the core tenets of Mysticism and Sufism by employing many literary techniques, highlighting their significance in contemporary literature.

Keywords: Mysticism, Sufism, Divine Love, Spiritual Guidance, Transcendence

1. Introduction

Elif Shafak's literary oeuvre is deeply infused with themes of Sufism and mysticism, reflecting her unique cultural heritage and profound understanding of spiritual dimensions. Shafak is a celebrated Turkish-British novelist, recognized for her award-winning works, including her masterpieces “Forty Rules of Love” and “The Flea Palace”. Her narratives resonate globally (Shafak & Meridian, 2003; Shafak, 2016). In her acclaimed novels, “Forty Rules of Love” and “The Flea Palace”, Shafak intricately weaves elements of spiritualism and mysticism. Sufism, the inner mystical dimension of Islam, is portrayed as a path to profound self-understanding and divine connection (Mehdi et al., 2021; Hussein, 2022). Sufis regard the pursuit of divine reality as a fundamental human right, emphasizing the unique spiritual journey that transcends conventional scientific reasoning (Pasquino, 2014). Shafak articulates the universal human experience of seeking a connection with the divine, which fosters spiritualism and mysticism (Arroisi, 2022). Forty Rules of Love presents a dual narrative: the contemporary tale of Ella Rubenstein, a disillusioned woman who finds solace in the fictional work of Aziz Zahra, and the historical relationship between Rumi and Shams of Tabriz. Through this juxtaposition, Shafak explores themes of mysticism and sufism (Acarli, 2011; Tariq & Abdi, 2023). In The Flea Palace, Shafak navigates the intersection of Orthodox Christianity and Islam within a shared society, emphasizing the inclusive nature of Sufism and mysticism across religious boundaries (Laschinger, 2020). She posits that while different religions may invoke various names for the divine, they all converge on the belief in a singular God. (Dumper, 2019; Ionescu, 2020). Through her masterful storytelling, Elif Shafak not only illuminates the depths of Sufi thought but also invites readers to engage with the profound spiritual connections that unite humanity across cultural and religious divides.

1.1. Rational of the study

The intricate relationship between Sufism and Mysticism is explored by analyzing the thematic elements of spiritual connection such as transcendence, love, unity of being and spiritual guide. The research seeks to illuminate how Shafak's both narratives bridge cultural and religious divides. This study also investigated the role of Sufi principles and their relevance in contemporary society, contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of mysticism in shaping human experience and identity. Through this lens, current study highlights writer's unique ability to weave complex spiritual themes into her storytelling, enriching the discourse on literature and spirituality.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the predominant elements of Sufism in Elif Shafak's novels, with the aim of understanding how these elements contribute to the portrayal of contemporary life and societal issues within her narratives.
2. To investigate the manifestations of Islamic culture and traditional practices in Elif Shafak's novels, focusing on how these elements shape the identities and experiences of the characters, thereby reflecting broader cultural themes.
3. To examine the specific components of mysticism present in "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace," and to analyze how these components interact to influence the thematic structure and narrative development of both works.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research focuses on the mystical and spiritual approach that eradicates the peak level of mysticism depicts from the novels "Forty rules of love" and "The Flea Place". This study examined all the elements of Sufism that all the human beings have love for God and divine approach that one can lead to the level of knowledge of divinity and motivation for attaining spiritual thoughts and beliefs. This study discusses that the entire human have faith on God and religion whether it can be any religion, so this faith put them to the self -recognition with the motivation of love of divine and presence of God. Hence, all the secrets of all over the world where ever the person is revealed to them by the presence of God that indicates to spiritualism and mysticism, doesn't what the religion is but what matters is the existence of God and purity, religious approach, divinity in thoughts and deeds and all other elements to achieve spiritualism sets the journey to God and religion in "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace".

2. Literature Review

The Spirit or Soul serves as the essential flame within humans, illuminating their existence and essence. It is no surprise that throughout history and across cultures, spiritual leaders, sages, saints, and seekers have sought to unravel the mysteries of life (Singh, 2005). Spirituality itself is complex and multifaceted, encompassing various interpretations and meanings that can be challenging to grasp. Individuals may connect spirituality with practices like prayer and meditation, or concepts such as life purpose, well-being, and a relationship with a higher power that is all-knowing and all-powerful. These elements represent different aspects of the sacred such as Mysticism and Sufism. Mysticism according to Kripal (2017) is "an attempt to express a direct consciousness of the presence of God" and mysticism is the word that reflects a specific type of consciousness in which the mystic feels himself directly in contact with the absolute authority. The mystic can be regarded as a man with extraordinary power to work in his own field that can transcend the limits of the self, travel on spiritual path and still maintains his own identity as a man (Harmless, 2008). The mystic's human identity and his efforts for union remain unchanged. His

overall condition can be compared to iron which is kept on fire. It takes fire and begins glowing but its identity as iron is not lost. The mystic burns with the fire of love but his existence as a human being remains unchanged. Mysticism also have religious context as in Islam it is Sufism. Sufism defined as mystical approach of Islam or strictness or self-denial which permits and supports the people to get nearer to God by involving and having strong trust on God and it gives closeness to God (Knysh, 2019). It is an implementation of life to find God. Sufism is an old-style borderline in Islamic history which focuses on faithfulness, loyalty, dedication, observation, instruction, training, research and creative thoughts for self-assessment (Ridgeon, 2015). The primary concept of Sufism is to get the knowledge of truth and reality and for that purpose spiritual person have to follow the rules and regulations given by God to attain Sufi approach and mysticism (Nizomi & Al-Khorazmi, 2022). Both of the practices have different aspects and school of thoughts and the people who want spiritual paths must search the reality of being human and to search God (Allah) (Dhillon, 2011). So, it is obvious to say that Sufism and mysticism are two different branches or components of spiritualism (Akman, 2008). On the other sides, mysticism is a religious belief that there are some hidden meanings in life and there are some supernatural elements that are controlling over the nature and that have access over the human beings which is the highlighted element (Cook, 2014). On the other side Sufism is practice to get closer to God and search the self-denial and being restricted to the sins and bad deeds as we are talking about Sufism and mystic school of thoughts so it contributes a lot in the literature as well.

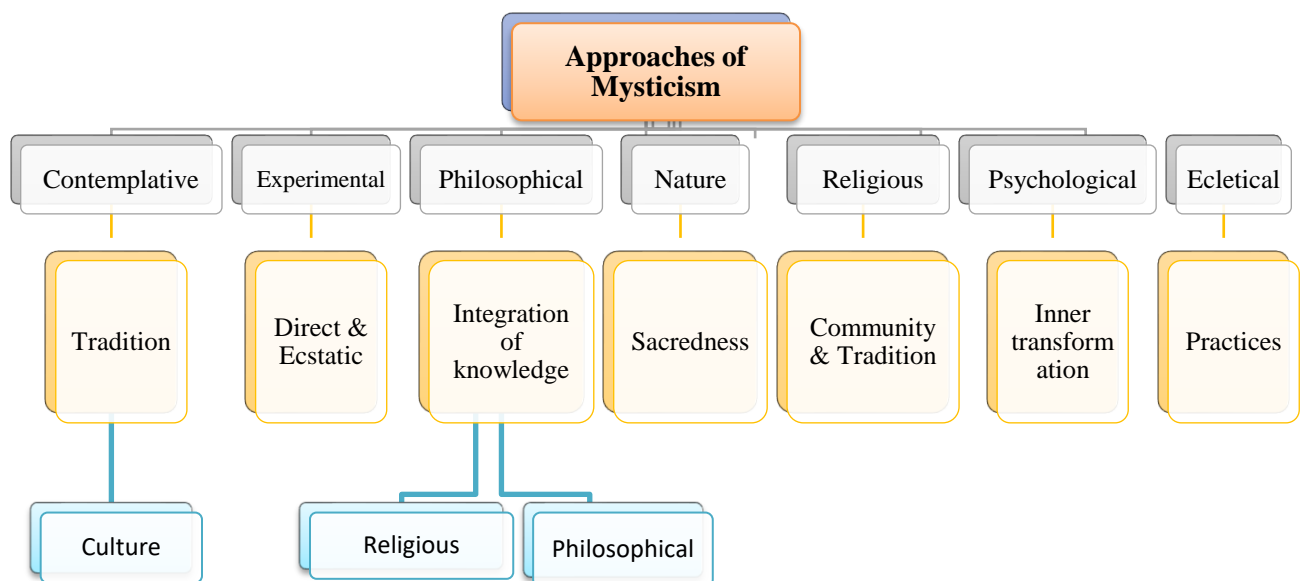


Figure 1 Approaches of Mysticism

One of the foundational principles of mysticism is the belief in the fundamental unity of all existence with the divine or ultimate reality. Mystics often seek to transcend the illusion of

separateness and experience oneness with God, the universe, or the source of all being (Mir-Kasimove, 2013). Mystics recognize that the apparent dualities of life (self/other, sacred/profane, material/spiritual) are ultimately illusory. The goal is to experience a state of unity where these distinctions dissolve. Mysticism emphasizes personal, direct experiences of the divine rather than relying solely on external doctrines, texts, or rituals. This principle prioritizes subjective spiritual experiences as a valid source of knowledge (Shimizu, 2013). It often report transformative experiences such as visions, ecstatic states, or profound and deep insights that provide them with a deeper understanding of reality and a truth. A central tenet of mysticism is the idea that spiritual practice leads to profound inner transformation. This transformation often involves the purification of the self, transcending the ego, and cultivating virtues (Tietjen, 2017). It practices often include methods for purifying the heart and mind, such as meditation, contemplation, and ethical living, to prepare oneself for deeper spiritual experiences. Love is a core principle in many mystical traditions. Mystics often emphasize the importance of love as a transformative force that connects individuals to the divine and to one another. Many mystics describe their experiences of the divine in terms of love, viewing it as the ultimate reality that underlies all existence. This love inspires compassion for others and a desire to serve humanity. Mysticism is often viewed as a journey or process of spiritual development rather than a destination. This principle reflects the idea that spiritual growth unfolds over time through various stages. Many mystical traditions outline specific stages of spiritual development, such as the purgative (cleansing), illuminative (insight), and unitive (union with the divine) stages. Mystics often seek to integrate spiritual knowledge with everyday life. This principle emphasizes the need to embody spiritual insights in practical ways, affecting how one interacts with the world. While mysticism often emphasizes personal experience, many traditions recognize the importance of community and shared practices. This principle underscores the value of learning from others and participating in communal spiritual activities. Many mystics benefit from the guidance of spiritual teachers or mentors who can provide insights and support on the mystical path.

The impact of mysticism and Sufism on literature is profound and multifaceted, influencing both the thematic depth and stylistic elements of literary works across cultures and centuries (Sadiq, 2022). Sufism, with its emphasis on the inner journey toward divine love and unity, has inspired countless poets, writers, and thinkers to explore themes of transcendence, spiritual awakening, and the quest for meaning (Choudry, 2001). The mystical tradition encourages a departure from conventional narratives, inviting readers to engage with the ineffable and the sublime (Karimi, 2024). Moreover, the principles of Sufism, such as love, compassion, and the pursuit of truth, have permeated various literary genres, providing a framework for exploring the complexities of human existence and the search for spiritual fulfillment. In contemporary literature, authors like Elif Shafak have integrated Sufi themes into their narratives, bridging the gap between ancient wisdom and modern existential questions (Hussein, 2022). This integration not only enriches the literary landscape but also fosters a greater understanding of mystical traditions, encouraging readers to explore their own spiritual journeys. Ultimately, the impact of mysticism and Sufism on literature serves as a testament to the enduring power of spiritual exploration and the transformative nature of the written word.

Moustafa (2022) conducted a thematic analysis of Elif Shafak's English novel "The Forty Rules of Love" to elucidate the concept of Sufism, particularly focusing on its pragmatic dimensions as expressed through Sufi language in Shafak's narrative. It is concluded that the Sufi

language is imbued with specific pragmatic aspects that effectively convey philosophical ideas, particularly through the lens of implicature. Furthermore, the findings indicated that the chosen texts not only reflect Sufi thoughts but also engage with broader themes and symbolisms inherent in Sufi literature.

In their study, Mehdi et al. (2022) highlight a growing global interest in mysticism, particularly within Western contexts, positing that this trend is reflected in contemporary literary production. Notably, Shafak draws inspiration from the teachings of the eminent Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose philosophies of love, peace, and spiritual wisdom resonate throughout her narratives. In her 2009 novel, “The Forty Rules of Love”, Shafak intricately weaves Sufi concepts into the fabric of the story, illustrating how these teachings advocate for universal love and understanding, transcending divisions of ethnicity, religion, and race. The novel not only reflects Shafak's personal engagement with Sufism but also serves as a commentary on the potential for spiritual wisdom to foster hope and connection among humanity. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to elucidate the ways in which Shafak's incorporation of Sufi teachings enriches her storytelling and enhances the thematic depth of her work.

Elif Shafak's novel “The Forty Rules of Love” studied by Berrezoug (2022) provided a nuanced exploration of the profound relationship between Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, the Dervish who serves as Rumi's guide into the world of Sufism. The study specifically aimed to investigate the Sufi reconciliation between Aristotelian virtue ethics and situationism through an examination of character dynamics. The study revealed that while many characters in the novel perceive one another through the lens of trait theory—focusing on fixed personality attributes—Shams introduces a transformative perspective that transcends this binary approach. The study posits that Shams embodies a Sufi philosophy that advocates for an all-encompassing message of love and tolerance, thus offering an alternative to rigid character assessments. The conclusion drawn from study emphasized the significance of Shams' teachings in illustrating a harmonious balance between virtue ethics and situationism. By fostering an environment where love and compassion are paramount, Shafak's narrative challenges conventional notions of character analysis and highlights the potential for personal growth and transformation through Sufi principles. It also contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of literature, ethics, and psychology, particularly in the context of Shafak's work.

In their recent study, Tariq and Abdi (2023) also delved into the themes of spiritual love and Sufi love within Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*, providing a nuanced understanding of the mystical philosophy that underpins the narrative. The study revealed that key components of spiritual love include the mirror, a fearless and pure heart, compassion, the soul, spiritual insight, universal and timeless knowledge, patience, and silence. It provided significant insights into the ways in which Shafak articulates the complexities of love through a Sufi lens, emphasizing the transformative power of spiritual understanding.

In their study, Naeem et al. (2024) undertook a comprehensive analysis of the Islamic philosophy of Sufism as it is articulated in Elif Shafak's “The Forty Rules of Love”. This research delves into the narrative and characterization within the novel, examining how Sufi philosophies are interwoven with the overarching theme of love. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the authors employ both textual and content analysis to dissect Shafak's arguments, progressing from micro-level elements such as dialogue and speech to macro-level thematic explorations. The findings of the study revealed that Shafak effectively incorporates and presents the Islamic philosophy of

Sufism through her characters and their developmental arcs. The study highlighted that how the novelist articulates the representation of love within the framework of Islam, particularly through the teachings of Sufism.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Current study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing content analysis as the primary method for examining the themes of Sufism and mysticism. This approach allows for a nuanced exploration of the texts, revealing underlying themes, symbols, and character dynamics (Vimal & Subramani, 2017) related to Sufi and mysticism principles. The content analysis framework consists of several key components. The content for analysis includes the texts of "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace," focusing on specific themes, character interactions, and narrative elements that illustrate Sufi thought and mysticism. The units of analysis encompass thematic units, such as love, spiritual awakening, unity, and the nature of reality; character interactions that exemplify mystical experiences or Sufi teachings; and symbolic elements that convey Sufi concepts and enhance the narrative. The data collection process involves analyzing the complete texts of both novels, identifying key texts that highlight Sufi and mystical principles for closer examination. Additionally, relevant scholarly articles, critiques, and books on Sufism, mysticism, and Elif Shafak's literary contributions gathered to provide contextual background and support the analysis. The analysis employ thematic coding to categorize the identified themes, with codes developed based on preliminary readings of the texts and existing literature on Sufism and mysticism. Characters analysis based on their embodiment of Sufi ideals, mapping each character's journey against the identified themes to explore how their experiences align with or challenge Sufi principles. Analysis techniques included as close reading to examine selected passages in detail, focusing on the language, imagery, and structure used by Shafak to convey Sufi themes. Thematic analysis identified and interprets major themes across novel, synthesizing findings from the coding process and drawing connections between the texts. Contextual analysis also undertook to consider the cultural and historical contexts surrounding Sufism and mysticism; and its representation in literature, enriching the interpretation of Shafak's work. To enhance the reliability of the findings, triangulation employed by comparing insights gained from the primary texts with those from secondary sources, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the themes.

3.2 Framework of Analysis

Table 1 Framework of Analysis

Framework of Analysis			
Spirituality	Components of Spirituality	Elements	Sub Elements
	Mysticism		Transcendence
Integration of knowledge			Religious knowledge
			Philosophical knowledge
Divine Experience			Illumination
Sufism		Inner Transformation	Self-Purification
		Unity of God	Annihilation
		Divine love	Mystical experience

		Spiritual Guide	-
		Sema	-

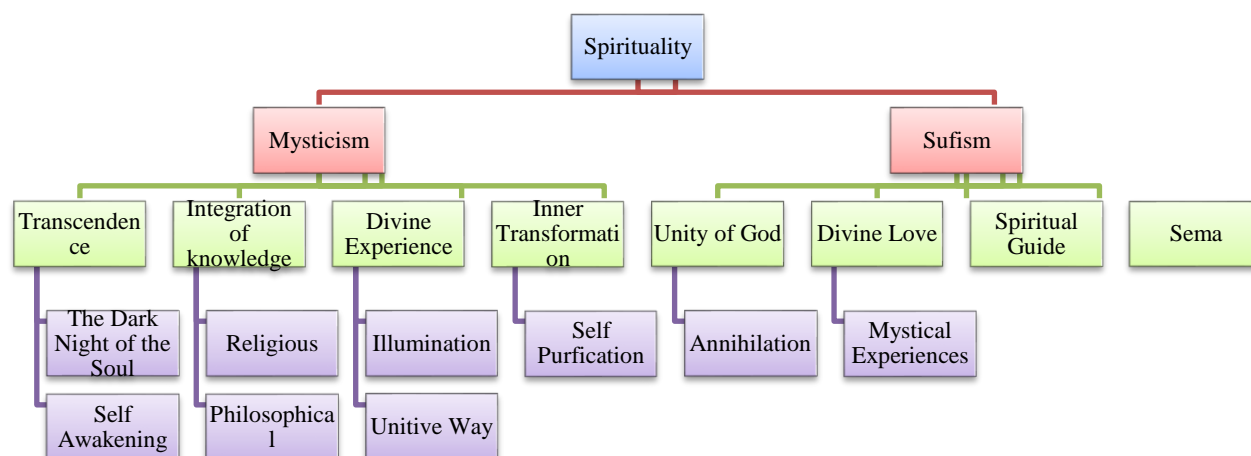


Figure 2 Framework of Analysis

Data shown in table 2 provides a structured overview of the key components and elements related to spirituality, specifically focusing on mysticism and Sufism. It categorizes various aspects of spiritual experience and understanding into distinct components and sub-elements. Spirituality is the overarching theme that encompasses both mysticism and Sufism, representing the pursuit of deeper understanding, connection, and transformation.

4. Findings and Discussions

The findings and discussion of the characters in "The Forty Rules of Love" (T1) and "The Flea Palace" (T2) reveal a profound exploration of Sufi and mystical themes, showcasing diverse pathways toward transcendence and self-awakening. In T1, Ella Rubinstein's journey illustrates spiritual growth through her engagement with Rumi's poetry and Shams' teachings. Her transformation from societal constraints to a deeper understanding of divine love exemplifies Sufi ideals of self-purification and illumination. Conversely, characters like Aziz represent the struggle against complacency and the consequences of resisting spiritual exploration, serving as a foil to Ella's awakening. A study by Thundil (2024) showed that character of Ella and Rubinstein explored love, self-purification and inner transformation. Further, he described four stages of Sufism such as *Shariat*, *Tariqat*, *Haqiqat* and *Mairifat* that also showed in the case of Ella as current study explored. In T2, characters such as Mussa, Meryam, and Sidar navigate their quests for knowledge and connection with the divine, emphasizing the interplay between emotional depth and intellectual inquiry. The contrasting dynamics between Cemal and Celal further illustrate the dual paths within the Sufi tradition, where emotional vulnerability and philosophical rigor coexist

for true enlightenment. This highlights the multifaceted nature of the journey toward spiritual fulfillment, revealing that love, knowledge, and personal exploration are essential components in the quest for unity with the divine. A study by Laschinger (2022), the plot structure and did a detailed analysis of Characters in the Flea Palace. He explored that whirls of faith and love are common theme of Elif Shafak's novel that also explored and analyzed in this study. Elif Shafak intricately weaves themes of transcendence and self-awakening into the characters' journeys in both texts. Ella's navigation of her mundane life and societal pressures leads her to transformative insights through Rumi's poetry and Shams' teachings. The narratives emphasize that the pursuit of transcendence is vital for spiritual fulfillment, often marked by personal struggles and revelations. As Berrezoug (2023) described the transformation and transcendence of Ella and Rumi through the teaching of Shamas. Although Rumi have direct influence while Ella have indirect influence through Aziz. The integration of religious and philosophical knowledge plays a crucial role in shaping the characters' understanding of existence, with Rumi's poetry serving as a bridge between the mystical and philosophical realms. Naeem et al. (2024) conducted a study on "The Forty Rules of Love" and found that Elif Shafak was able to incorporate and present the Islamic philosophy of Sufism through the characters and their progression through these philosophies. Thus, the novelist had managed to address the ways in which love is represented by the religion Islam and how it was presented through the teaching of Sufism. The authors had also discussed the way through which Sufism has been able to conquer and influence Elif's writing. It also covers historical account of 13th century Sufi, Rumi and Shams of Tabriz and provides a feminist perspective of the ways in which concepts of mystical and mundane get interlinked as finding of the current study explored. In T2, characters like Su and Hygiene Tijen strive to transcend societal constraints, while Fired Nature Son finds unity with the universe through his connection to nature. Madam Auntie's journey reflects her desire to break free from rigid expectations, leading her to embrace a more spiritual existence. The diverse backgrounds of the Flea Palace residents illustrate the complexity of human experience, merging traditional beliefs with modern existential inquiries. Both texts utilize distinct historical and social environments to explore themes of mysticism and Sufism. T1 juxtaposes the contemporary narrative of Ella with the historical tale of Rumi and Shams, highlighting the timeless pursuit of spiritual connection and love. The contrasting physical environments—Ella's sterile suburban life versus the vibrant landscapes of Konya—underscore the isolation and yearning for deeper connections that characterize modern life. Conversely, T2 reflects contemporary Istanbul's complexities, with the Flea Palace serving as a microcosm of the city's struggles and resilience. The analysis reveals intricate explorations of identity, morality, and conflict within both texts. Ella's journey of self-discovery parallels Rumi's spiritual evolution, both grappling with personal desires against societal expectations as Dayek (2016) study depicted. In T2, residents face generational divides and cultural conflicts, confronting their pasts and societal pressures, which reveal the complexities of human relationships and the quest for fulfillment in a rapidly changing environment. Moreover, both narratives emphasize the significance of personal agency amidst fate, societal constraints, and cultural expectations. The exploration of love, spirituality, and the quest for meaning invites readers to reflect on the nature of human experience, authenticity, and the transformative power of self-acceptance amidst chaos. Symbolically, T1 encapsulates the transformative power of love in its various forms, while T2 symbolizes the complexity of human existence through its multicultural living space, emphasizing richness found in diversity (Dayek, 2016). Both texts utilize physical locations and objects as symbols to deepen

the exploration of mysticism and Sufism. Significant places in T1, like Konya and the garden, represent spiritual growth, while locations in T2, such as the rooftop and market, reflect the vibrancy of life. Character development in both stories embodies key Sufi principles, illustrating the interconnectedness of human experiences and the cyclical nature of spiritual growth. Ultimately, both texts explore profound religious themes, particularly love as a pathway to divinity, the significance of patience, and the unity of being. Love is depicted as essential for true existence and spiritual fulfillment in T1, with Ella's journey illustrating how love can heal past traumas (Mehdi et al., 2021). Mehdi et al. (2021) conducted a study on Sufism and explored and found the elements of divine love and spiritual journey in the novel "Forty Rules of Love". In T2, love manifests in a communal context, emphasizing genuine connections that lead to spiritual awakening. The theme of unity of being suggests interconnectedness through the divine, with characters' interactions revealing shared struggles and triumphs.

5. Justification of Research Questions

5.2.1 What are the predominant elements of Sufism in Elif Shafak's novels, and how do these elements contribute to the representation of contemporary life within her narratives?

Elif Shafak's novels are rich in Sufi themes, making them a compelling subject for academic exploration. The predominant elements of Sufism—such as the transformative power of love, the quest for spiritual enlightenment, the significance of community, and the interplay between personal and divine relationships—are intricately woven into her narratives. Sufism, with its emphasis on love, acceptance, and the search for truth, offers profound insights into the complexities of modern existence. In an era marked by globalization, cultural conflicts, and existential dilemmas, Shafak's incorporation of Sufi elements serves as a bridge connecting timeless spiritual wisdom with contemporary issues. For instance, Hussein (2022) found that Shafak's novels create a unique state of spiritual brilliance and psychological comfort, while also raising questions about different types of knowledge—knowledge that arises from foresight and sensation rather than mere physical facts. This study will illuminate how these themes manifest in her characters' lives, thereby underscoring the relevance of Sufi thought in navigating today's challenges. Shafak's narratives often explore themes of identity and belonging, which are central to both Sufi philosophy and contemporary life. The characters grapple with their cultural, spiritual, and personal identities, reflecting the multifaceted nature of human experience. The current study aligns with findings from Thundil (2024), who examined the characters in "The Forty Rules of Love," particularly focusing on Aziz and Ella. This study will investigate how Sufi principles guide characters toward self-discovery and acceptance, providing a framework for understanding their struggles in a rapidly changing society. Additionally, Sufi teachings in Shafak's novels offer insights into how characters navigate personal crises and societal expectations. This study will examine how love, as a transformative force, empowers characters to confront their challenges, thereby highlighting the enduring relevance of spiritual exploration in contemporary contexts. In conclusion, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how the predominant elements of Sufism in Elif Shafak's novels enrich the representation of contemporary life. By analyzing the interplay between Sufi themes and modern existential dilemmas, the research will reveal the profound impact of Shafak's narratives on readers' perceptions of love, identity, and community in an increasingly complex world.

5.2.2 In what ways do Islamic culture and traditional practices manifest in Elif Shafak's novels, and how do they inform the characters' identities and experiences?

The research question is vital for understanding the intricate relationship between cultural context and individual identity in Shafak's work. Shafak's narratives often explore the complexities of Islamic culture, portraying it not merely as a backdrop but as a dynamic force, that shapes her characters' lives and choices. By examining the manifestations of Islamic culture and traditional practices in her novels, this study aims to uncover how these elements influence characters' identities, beliefs, and interactions with others. Islamic culture encompasses a rich tapestry of traditions, values, and social norms that can significantly impact personal and communal identities as indicated by study of Naeem et al. (2024) by analyzing the Forty Rules of love. He explored the Islamic philosophy of Sufism and concluded that Elif Shafak was able to incorporate and present the Islamic philosophy of Sufism through the characters and their progression through these philosophies. Shafak's characters frequently navigate the tensions between modernity and tradition, reflecting the broader societal challenges faced by individuals in contemporary Muslim contexts (Naeem et al., 2024). This exploration is particularly relevant in a globalized world where cultural identity is often contested and redefined. Furthermore, Shafak's nuanced portrayal of Islamic practices—ranging from rituals to moral teachings—provides insight into how these traditions inform characters' worldviews and personal journeys as depicted in a study conducted by Berrezoug (2023) as teaching of Shams to Rumi and offers a new alternative to character analysis that achieves a happy medium between virtue ethics and situations through a Sufi all-embracing message of love and patience. The study highlights how the integration of Islamic cultural elements fosters a deeper understanding of the characters' struggles, aspirations, and relationships. By doing so, it contribute to the discourse on the representation of Islamic culture in literature, emphasizing its relevance in shaping contemporary identities and experiences. Ultimately, this research question serves to illuminate the profound ways in which Islamic culture and traditional practices are interwoven into the fabric of Shafak's narratives as well as within literature, enriching our understanding of her characters and the broader themes of identity, selflessness, belonging, and cultural continuity in a rapidly changing global world or global village.

5.2.3 What specific components of mysticism are explored in Elif Shafak's "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace," and how do these components interact to shape the thematic structure of both works?

The study of mysticism in Elif Shafak's "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace" is essential for understanding the profound spiritual and thematic dimensions of her narratives. It seeks to uncover the intricate layers of mysticism that permeate these texts, providing insights into how they inform character development and narrative progression. Mysticism, particularly within the context of Sufism, emphasizes the pursuit of personal experience and direct connection with the divine. In "The Forty Rules of Love," Shafak intricately weaves Sufi principles—such as love, unity, and the transformative power of spiritual practice—into the lives of her characters, illustrating how these elements guide their journeys toward self-discovery and enlightenment. Similarly, "The Flea Palace" explores themes of interconnectedness and the search for meaning within the chaos of urban life, reflecting a mystical understanding of existence that transcends the mundane. By examining the specific components of mysticism in both novels, this study aims to

highlight how these elements interact to create a rich thematic tapestry. The interplay between love, spirituality, and human experience in Shafak's narratives not only deepens the reader's engagement with the characters but also invites reflection on broader existential questions. A study by Daekh (2016) also found the symbols of mysticism by applying narrative technique on Elif Shafak novels. Furthermore, this exploration contributes to the academic discourse on contemporary literature's engagement with mysticism, particularly in the context of Islamic thought. Understanding how Shafak integrates mystical concepts into her storytelling illuminate the relevance of these themes in addressing modern dilemmas of identity, belonging, and spiritual fulfillment. Ultimately, it reveals how the components of mysticism in "The Forty Rules of Love" and "The Flea Palace" not only shape the thematic structure of both works but also resonate with readers' own quests for meaning and connection in a complex world.

6. Conclusion

It reveals a rich tapestry of Sufi and mystical themes that resonate deeply with contemporary life and societal issues. Both texts underscore the multifaceted nature of spiritual journeys, illustrating how love, knowledge, and personal exploration serve as essential components in the quest for unity with the divine. In T1, Ella Rubinstein's transformative journey exemplifies key Sufi ideals such as self-purification and illumination as she navigates societal constraints and discovers deeper truths through Rumi's poetry and Shams' teachings. The contrast with characters like Aziz emphasizes the struggle against complacency, reinforcing the importance of spiritual exploration. T2 presents a diverse array of characters, such as Mussa, Meryam, and Sidar, who navigate their quests for knowledge and divine connection amid contemporary societal challenges. The dynamics between Cemal and Celal illustrate the coexistence of emotional vulnerability and philosophical inquiry as dual paths within the Sufi tradition. Both narratives utilize distinct historical and social contexts to explore Sufi themes, with T1 juxtaposing Ella's modern suburban life against the rich historical backdrop of Rumi and Shams in 13th-century Konya. This contrast underscores the timeless nature of spiritual connection, while T2 reflects the complexities of contemporary Istanbul, serving as a microcosm for broader societal struggles and resilience. The exploration of identity, morality, and conflict is central to both texts, revealing how characters grapple with personal desires and societal expectations. This invites readers to reflect on authenticity and the transformative power of self-acceptance in chaotic environments. Symbolically, both texts utilize significant physical locations to deepen the exploration of mysticism and Sufism. In T1, places like Konya and the garden represent spiritual growth, while T2's rooftop and market reflect the vibrancy of life and community. This interconnectedness of human experiences and the cyclical nature of spiritual growth are vital themes that resonate throughout both works. Ultimately, the findings affirm the importance of love as a pathway to divinity, patience, and the unity of being. The characters' journeys illustrate how love can heal past traumas and foster genuine connections, reinforcing the notion that spiritual enlightenment is both a personal and communal experience. Through her narratives, Elif Shafak effectively highlights the manifestations of Islamic culture and traditional practices, shaping the identities and experiences of her characters while reflecting broader cultural themes.

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