
A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Anglo-American Studies

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Abstract

In the last few decades, there is an increasingly interest in reading Rumi’s Sufis poems and in learning about Sufism in the American society. Elif Shafak’s *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010) is about Ella, a typical white American character at the age of forty she converts to Sufism after she has learned about this mystical religion from Aziz a Scottish who turned a Sufist writer. So, this work attempts to trace the impact of Sufism on the American society through the analysis of *The Forty Rules of Love*. Also, a part of this book is historical where the writer fluctuates between the 13th and 21st centuries events. This allows us to investigate the divergences and convergences between those two centuries trying to bridge the gap between the West and the East. It can be said that despite the fact that Elif is a Turkish writer, she aims to find a meeting point between the two radically different poles of the dichotomy East/West.

Key Words:

Sufism, impact, Sufist literature, America, Elif Shafak, Shams, Rumi, Ella, Aziz, 13th century, 21st century, forty, rules, love, East vs. West.
Résumé

Au cours des dernières décennies, il y a un intérêt qui a grandi de plus en plus en lisant Soufis poèmes de Rumi et en apprendre davantage sur le soufisme dans la société américaine. Soufi Mon Amour d’Elif Shafak (2010) concernant Ella, un personnage américain à l'âge de quarante ans, elle se transforme en Soufisme après qu'elle a appris sur cette religion mystique de Aziz un écossais qui a transformé un écrivain soufiste, ce recherche tente de retracer l'impact du soufisme sur la société américaine à travers l'analyse du Sufi Mon Amour. une partie de ce livre est historique où l'auteur oscille entre la 13e et 21e siècles, les événements ce nous permet d'enquêter sur les divergences et convergences entre ces deux siècles d'essayer de combler le fossé entre l'Occident et l'Orient. On peut dire que, malgré le fait que Elif est une écrivaine turque, elle a tenté de trouver un point entre les deux pôles radicalement différentes de la dichotomie Est / Ouest de la réunion.
ملخص

أخذت قراءة قصائد الصوفية لجلال الدين الرومي وكذلك البحث عنها في المجتمع الأمريكي أبعاد كبيرة. أليف شفق في قواعد العشق ألاربعون (2010) التي تدور حول أليا، شخصية أمريكية في سن الأربعين تعنق الصوفية بعد أن اكتشفت عن طريق عزيز الاسكتلندي الذي تحول إلى كاتب صوفي. لذا، فإن هذا البحث يسعى لتتبع أثر الصوفية على المجتمع الأمريكي من خلال تحليل قواعد العشق ألاربعون. كذلك جزء من هذا الكتاب تاريخي حيث يقلب الكاتب بين أحداث القرنين ال13 وال21. هذا يسمح لنا للتحقيق في الخلافات والتقارب بين تلك الحقبتين محاولة لردم الهوة بين الغرب والشرق. ويمكن القول أنه على الرغم من حقيقة أن أليف كاتبة تركية، إلا أنها تهدف إلى إيجاد نقطة التقاء بين قطبين مختلفين جذريا في الانقسام بين الشرق وغرب.
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General Introduction

Despite anticipations of widespread secularism, Sufism is establishing itself as an alternative religion in Western societies. Recently, some Americans left their religion and converted themselves to Sufism as an escape from their materialistic spirituality and empty society. Although it is considered as a part of Islam, it is also known as a name without reality and a reality without a name. This has given it a universal dimension if not as a belief; it would be as literature, music and principles. Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the widely read poets all over the world.

The Sufist literature is a genre that is worth studying. Many writings are conducted about Sufism in the west and more precisely in the United States of America. Elif Shafak is a Turkish writer who lives in USA; Most of her works are celebrated for their treatment of the subjects of mysticism and Sufism. With an Islamic and Turkish background, along with her familiarity with Western mode of thought, she becomes the right kind of person to explore Sufism in a language understood by the West and especially in the United State of America.

In her novel *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010), Ella, the main character is an American woman who is influenced by Sufism and its principles. She learned them from a Sufist writer called Aziz. Eventually, Ella converts to Sufism. This decision creates a kind of conflict between Ella and her family. So, this work will study the influence of Sufism on the west through Elif Shafak’s novel *The Forty Rules of Love* (2010) showing how Sufism travelled from the East to the West.

Understanding the history of Sufism implies reading about one of its preeminent figures Rumi. Elena Furlanetto, a researcher of Turkish American, literature. Explains:
The myth of Rumi has travelled from the East to the West Rumi’s sensational impact on the Anglophone market problematical discourses that insist on marginalizing Turkey’s cultural relevance in the Western world relegating it to the peripheries by emphasizing the notion of Europe’s and America’s Christian roots, The recent American fascination with Rumi target of a most controversial reception at home. (02).

It can be said that Sufism emerged in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century but with a small vague of conversion, but gradually it becomes in huge numbers as we can see in the novel of Elif Shafak.

As it is implied by the title, this research will deal with the effect of Sufism on the American society as the example of Ella. We will tend to use a historical approach to shed light on how Sufism emerged through dervishes to become universal. In the novel which is set in the 21st Century, however; there is an omnipresent reference to the 13th Century. This leads us to compare between the two centuries the 13th and the 21st, which are similar in many aspects. Also a psychoanalytical approach seems to be appropriate because we will trace the psychological forces that led Ella to convert; it will investigate the impact of love, a primordial element of Sufism on Ella psyche.

To achieve the aims and the perspectives outlined before, this work will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter entitled: *Sufism from Emergence to Universality*. It will shed light on the historical background surrounding the emergence of Sufism, in the world, its appearance, stages and beliefs. The second section of this chapter sets a context behind the emergence of Sufism in USA. It will display how this religion started and how it is implemented in the American society. The second chapter entitled: The *Impact of Sufism on the American Society: Ella’s Case*. It will investigate how Sufism influences Ella. While the
third chapter entitled: *Where the West Meets the East* will tend to show the analogy between two stories the first happened in the 13th century performed by Rumi and Shams of Tabriz while the second performed in the 21st century by Ella and Aziz Zahara.

To conclude, it can be said that Elif tries implicitly to bridge the huge gap between the East and the West through the use of Sufism, first as a universal religion, second as a religion of peace and love.
**Chapter One: Sufism from Emergence to Universality**

This chapter will deal with Sufism as a mystic religion, its history, principles, practice, orders and universality. Generally, Sufism is a Muslim movement in which its followers lookup to find divine truth and love through direct contacts with God. It arose from Islam in the 8th-9th century; however, it is not only related to religion. It has other meanings and definitions that differ, and it would be difficult to get with other expression that is more precise, because these definitions had taken different forms during the last 1200 years.

**I- The History of Sufism**

Sufism created a kind of problematic for the Scholars to trace back its history; especially, after it has become a universal phenomenon. Consequently, different groups of Sufists emerged and each group celebrates and obliges its followers to obey a variety of orders and practices within this mystical religion.

Sufism has some beliefs that really have to do with Islam while other things are not compatible with it. Sufism is not only a religious practice but also a cultural manifestation. It has a rich culture consisting of music, dance and literature. In fact literature represents an important element of the Sufist culture as Renard explains:

Sufism, a term derived from the woolen garments of early ascetics, may not be the most exact expression to cover the mystical movements within Islam, and These phenomena took many forms since the 1,200 or so years it has already existed, Under this heading come many different orders, established at Many different times and in many different places, by many different Spiritual directors, It is rich with cultural Wealth of art, music, dance, and literature (10).
It can be said that what makes Sufism a broad term is its end with “ism”, an indication of a philosophy or an ideology. Also, its complexity is related to mysticism with 'the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven». It is so mystic that Chittick defines it as: “It is known as a name with a reality; but it used to be as a reality without a name” (07). Also, Lings describes it as “with it the whole material state into the higher states of being. As to the soul, it has to wait until the death of the body until then, though immortal, it is imprisoned in the world of mortality” (12). Khanam provides another definition: “Sufism is the name given to mysticism in Islam. The term Sufism embraces the philosophy and practices which aim at direct communion between God and man, and those who practice Sufism are called Sufis” (7).

In fact, not only does the definition of Sufism create a kind of controversy, it is also its derivation that the scholars cannot agree. For it is not mentioned in the Quran or the books of hadith, nor does it figure in the standard Arab dictionaries that were compiled as late as the 8th century A.D, here we suggest three stories about its terminology Scholars differed as to the derivation of the term Sufi. According to Qushayri: the word Sufi was used as a generic term to describe individuals adopting a particular religious attitude based on austerity and spirituality, and came into usage only at the beginning of the 9th century(213).

The next generation that received religious education directly from the Sahaba were called Tabiin (the followers), while the title Tabiin Tabiin (followers of the followers of the companions), was the title given to those who had received religious training from the Tabiin. According to Nizami:

Those who devoted their lives to religious studies and religious devotion after the times of the Tabii were called Zahid the pious and Abid the servant (of Allah), It is only in relation to the succeeding generations that one comes across the term Sufi,
According to Jamil, who quotes earlier sources, the first spiritualist to be given the title of Sufi was Shaykh Abu Hashim Kufi (776).

First the meaning and origin of the term Sufi is made up of three Arabic letters: s- w- f (ص. و. ف), but there is much scholarly dispute over it. Another view is that the word Sufi is derived from the Arabic word Saf, which means line or row, referring here to those early Muslim who lived at the same time with of the Prophet peace be upon him who stood in the first row during prayer.

While the second story is about Suffa, the verandah or porch of the Prophet’s mosque in Medina, The traditions say that a number of the companions of The Prophet who had no home stayed in this verandah. They spent their time in worship, in learning by heart the verses of the Qur’an and memorizing the words of the Prophet. Since the porch of the mosque had virtually become their home, they came to be called Asahabi Suffa or ‘People of the Porch’ as Khanam defines it:

Let us examine the etymological meaning and origin of the term Sufi. It is made up of three Arabic letters: s- w- f, but there is much scholarly dispute surrounding it. One view is that the word Sufi is derived from the Arabic word Saf, which means line or row, referring here to those early Muslim contemporaries of the Prophet who stood in the first row during prayer, having reached the mosque well in time. Others contend that the word is derived from the word Suffa, the verandah or porch of the Prophet’s mosque in Medina. The traditions say that a number of the companions of the Prophet who had no home stayed in this verandah. They spent their time in worship, in learning by heart the verses of the Qur’an and memorizing the words of the Prophet. They disengaged themselves from worldly activities (8).
As we know some refer to it as the line or row while the second group defines as the ‘People of the Porch’. However, the majority of the scholars are of the opinion that the word Sufi comes in which is the word Suf or wool.

According to Ousmane The word Suf, or wool as defined in the dictionary of the history of ideas is the English rendering of the Arabic word Tasawwuf, which derives from Suf, meaning: “Tasawwuf in early Islamic history alludes to the state of mind of individuals who used to wear an undyed, white woolen article of clothing as an indication of renunciation of common belonging. The unpleasant material symbolized intentional neediness and renunciation of the world with every one of its delights”.

To summarize, Sufism derived either from the Arabic word Saf which is the row and they refer to the ones they sit in the first row during the prayer while others refer to it by the word Suffa, they mean the people of the porch, At last the third group which their story is more persuasive in which they claim that the word Suf or the wool is the sign of the clothes worn by poor people.

The complexity of Sufism in not only related to its origins or meanings, but also to its history and geography of emergence. It has passed through many stages and steps to become famous and universal. Since its history is associated with the history of Islam. The latter plays a huge role in understanding this mystic religion.

After the death of Mohamed (PBUH) the prophet of Islam, two groups of scholars emerged. The first group is attracted by the Ilm-e-Safina or the knowledge of Quran. This tends to attract the scholars of Quran and hadith who called themselves Ulama (sing.Aalim). The other group consists of experts in the knowledge of the heart or what they called Ilm-e-Sina. As Khanam explains:
The way of the Sufis was regarded by the early Muslims as the way of Truth and Salvation. They zealously guarded piety, gave up all objects of worldly Attraction for God’s sake, renounced pleasure, wealth and power, abandoned Society and led a secluded life devoted to the service of God. These were the fundamental principles of Sufism that prevailed among the companions and Muslims of the early times (21).

To start with Hassan al Basri is a figure of the early Sufist Movement that was portrayed by devotion and trepidation of God. He was conceived in Medina and lived in Basra. When he was excessively youthful, he was the devotee of Ali canister Abi Talib. Hassan turned into Ali’s supporter on account of some incredible profound experience. Hassan al Basri was a remarkable researcher of his time and the creator of Tafsir, shockingly it didn't survive. Just some parts of his sermons and Risala. As Hanif clarifies:

…a number of other Sufi order that Hasan Al Basri has initiated by Ali was one the scholar of hadith and he had associated with some of the companions of the prophet Peace Be Upon Him, he was acquired by a knowledge of Sufism he met Ali after the assignation of Usman at Basra (49).

At that point, The Khurasani School developed amid the same time frame as the Baghdadi School, with its most eminent ”Ulama” being the understudies of Ibrahim al-Adhamand Shaqiq al-Balkhisuch as Bishr AlHatim Al-Asamm (al-asamm, signifying ”the hard of hearing” known as Hatem the Deaf) Ibn KarramYahya Ibn Muadh al-Razi , al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi (and Abu Hamdun al-Qassar). As Malik states:

The Islamic notion of asceticism (Zuhd) is alien both to Suhrawardi and to the Shah nama, which reflects a pristine pre-Islamic mysticism. Following Zarrinkub, who based himself on Richard Hartmann’s theories about the Persian origins of
Sufism, Drowruziyan asserts that Khurasan is the cradle of Sufism, with Suhrawardi identified as the key master in the Khurassani tradition of Bayazid (59).

After the Khurassani school in Baghdad the Damascene-Egyptian School developed and got to be spot of creation of Ulama and a few ideas like generosity (fatwa) and rebuff (Mulamati including Dhul-Nun al-Misri al-Darani) and Abu'l Hassan Ahmad Bin Abi al-Huwari. Likewise, in the 9th century, a gathering of Sufists known by the name of the Mulamati2 would develop in Nishapur.

These thoughts would later form into inferring magnanimity (Ithar) and compensation (Tadhiya), and to never make hurt, never cry, to offer generously, to abandon gloriousness and refinement of the self or the feeling of self, a champion amongst the most prominent Ulama amongst the Mulamati3 fuse Abu Hamdun al-Qassar and Abu Hafs al-Haddad. What most perceived the discussion of the Mulamati from the discussion of other Sufism was the thought they committed to the negative a portion of Sufist thoughts and implications. Certainly, the Mulamati does not discuss acts, nor recognitions these shows yet rather, scolds acts and lays issue upon themselves and these exhibits, on the reason that there can't be yet some sort of normal overlooked them as Abu Hanieh describes it:

Also, in the 3rd century AH (9th century AD), a group of Sufism in Nishapur, these Sufists followed a creed based on two concept magnanimity (fatwa) and censure (Mulamati). The concept of Mulamati their tradition signifies self restraint and control, self-criticism and reprimand, and self-culpability in any negligence in obedience and submission. Fatwa signifies attaining virtues such as magnanimity, courage, chivalry and generosity (48).
From the third century AH onwards, the ways and techniques scanned for by the Sufis would bring the judgment and inconvenience of Muslim real advocates (Fuqaha) and theologians (Mutakalimeen) upon its fans. Without a doubt, the circles of weakening vibe and resistance against the Sufist would keep creating in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, and this would perform the explanation behind blaming Sufism for Takfir, inciting the abuse and even execution of Sufism, for example, as a result of al-Hallaj. As AbuHanieh clears up:

By the end of the 2nd century AH, Sufism would witness an intrinsic transformation from asceticism (Zuhd) to a form of religiosity based on love (Hub), self-annihilation (Fana) and gnosis (Ma’rifa) with the contributions of Abu Yazid al-Bustami and his doctrine of Fana and of al-Junayd) and his theory on Tawhid, in addition to Dhul-Nun al-Misri and his paradigm on Ma’rifa and al-Hallaj and his experience with Hulul (incarnations). Consequently, from the 3rd century AH onwards, the paths and approaches sought by this would bring the curse and wrath of Muslim jurists (Fuqaha) and theologians (Mutakalimeen) upon its followers. Indeed, the circles of hostility and antagonism against The Sufists would continue to grow in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, and would reach the point of accusing Sufism of Takfir, leading to the persecution and even execution of Sufism, such as in the case of al-Hallaj (43–44).

Consequently, he would endure hardships on account of the Mutazila amid the Caliphates of al-Ma'moun, al-Mu'tasem and al-Wathiq. In the interim, the oppression of the Sufist because of Hanbal's devotees (Hanabila) would finish in an episode known as the trial of "Ghulam al-khalil" in which just about Sufism, among them Sheik of the Sect, al-Junayd, were sentenced to death yet later discharged. As Ernst expressed:
From the third century AH onwards, the ways and methodologies searched for by the Sufis would bring the judgment and resentment of Muslim legitimate guides (Fuqaha) and theologians (Mutakalimeen) upon its fans. Certainly, the circles of undermining vibe and resistance against the Sufist would continue developing in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, and this would accomplish the motivation behind pointing the finger at Sufism for Takfir, provoking the misuse and even execution of Sufism, for instance, by virtue of al-Hallaj (130-131).

The common contention over the dualism of the shari'a(Islamic law) versus "the (inner) Truth" would outline the reason of the advancing disagreement between the Sufism and the Muslim law pros (Fuqaha), According to the Sufism, the lawful researchers (Fuqaha) were directing their respect for the surface, or clear criticalness of the law, without exploring the profundities of its internal significance; in light of the fact that, for the Sufism , the shari'a was isolated into two controls: First: the craft of the Dhaher(or, the plainly obvious; the outside [in centrality and form] of the shari'a, which considers acts and customs related to the external sorts of affection, for instance, appeal, fasting and the hajj(pilgrimage), and likewise social contracts and trades, for instance, marriage, partition, bargains, and so forth.

This science, for the Sufism, is known as the investigation of Fiqh (or statute), which is addressed by the legitimate counselors (Fuqaha) and "Ahl Altya" (religious forces who issue (Fatwas). Then, the second prepare was that of the inside (or batin) science, and selective data of the religion, related to acts "put together by hearts" or, the examination of the Sufism. For Sufism, in this second educate, Sufism is the examination of truths and its family (Ahl) are the specialists of truths and of understanding (Fhm), The
last said, the law masters, are Ahl al-Dhafer (the all inclusive community of the external, the apparent) and scientists of appearances or that which is at first look. This Sufist perspective on the two various approaches to manage the religion was guaranteed by Ruwaym al-Baghdadi, the Sufists are arranged before the (Divine) Truths and Realities. Additionally, all of mankind view themselves as mindful to the appearances of the law, while the Sufism see themselves as dependable to reality of dedication and to everlasting genuineness as Ross depicts: "after the changing from the Nizari religious truing to recovery of reclamation they discussed the exposure that expected to exhibit reality and along these lines expected to discard Islamic law pictures of exoteric without covering it" (81).

Sufism would go into its brilliant age in the third and fourth hundreds of years AH, amid which an incredible number of Sufist messages and works developed, all recognized by their theoretical development and their methodological way to deal with Sufism, for example, "kitab al-luma'" Book of Lights by Abu Nasr al-Sarraj al-Tusi, and the book Qut Al-QulubThe Food of the Hearts by Abu Talib al-Makki.

In the fourth and 5th centuries AH, Sufist messages and works built up that grabbed force and realness amongst the more standard, Sunni madhab or rule, for instance, "kitab al-ta'aarruf li-madhhab ahl al-tassawuf by Abu Bakr al-Kalabadi and al-risaalatu al-qushayr'i 'ilim al-tassawuf The Qushayri Epistle on Sufism known as The Qushayri Risala, Moreover, the person of al-Ghazali and his book, Ihya ulumad-clamor significantly influenced showing Sufism inside the structure of Sunni Islam. As Glover clears up:

Sufism making the most of its brilliant age from the eleventh to the thirteenth century saw by the powerful vocations of al-Ghazzali, Abd al-Qadir al Gilani,
Ibn Al-Arabi, and Jalaluddin Rumi. However, even as this brilliant age achieved its peak, the indications of rot and decay started to show up with the promotion of Sufism through the systemic association of the Sufi requests. Here lays the second presumption that with the extension of Sufism outside of its underlying moderately contract limits and into the overall population came a relating weakening of Sufi convictions and practices. The rest of Sufi history, which constitutes something of a dull age starting here of perspective, is to a great extent negative. The Sufi requests organized a religion of holy people, the scholarly legacy of the prior Sufis was never coordinated by their successors, and fakes acting like Sufi pastors came to order the otherworldly loyalty of masses of uninformed supporters (16).

Sufism and its associations have fallen on difficult times now and again amid this long history, particularly the 18th and nineteenth hundreds of years, when they were liable to the anxieties of Western expansionism; But Sufism has likewise demonstrated amazingly strong. Amid the Soviet period, Sufism was a main consideration in the survival of Islam in the alleged Five Stands the previous southern Soviet republics of Central Asia, for example, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan like what Ansari clarifies:

Indeed, even in situations which are moderately unfriendly to Islam and its establishments, for example, Central Asia under both Tsarist and Soviet tenet, Sufis have made due as the fundamental sustainers of Islam to a great extent as a consequence of their capacity to adjust to the changed circumstances in which they get themselves (179).

In later times, even the not exactly ardent Saddam Hussein developed associations with the pioneers of essential Sufi gatherings in Iraq, for example, the Qadiriya request, this proposes just that Hussein was enthusiastic to exploit their impact with portions of
the populace, not that he shared their religious perspectives.) Today in the United States,
one of the smash hit writers in English (interpretation) is Jalaluddin Rumi, the first
Whirling Dervish and maybe the most observed Sufi of all. As Bouassria clarifies:

   Numerous Sufi requests are dynamic agitators in Iraq. Shia Sufis served in
   conspicuous political posts, and delighted in numerous benefits and powers
   amid Saddam Hussein's administration. While it's been accounted for that Sufis
   got to be dynamic guerillas against the assemblage strengths and the Iraqi
   states after the mistreatment of Saddam Hussein (168).

   As should be obvious in the past component that Sufism contains numerous
   perplexing components from its history to its importance, other complex Sufist
   component is the practices that make this spiritualist religion.

   To begin with Sufism take think progressively an about the holy time and place so
   their Ritual supplications and occasions are like the Muslim ones. For instance, the five
   every day supplications, the heavenly month of Ramadan, and other major occasions, (for
   example, the Feast of the Sacrifice, which celebrates the penance of the Patriarch
   Abraham) are a piece of the Sufi consecrated date-book and day by day schedule.

   For the spot in which the Sufist do their practices a Zawiya is a Sufi cabin, a
   building otherwise called Khanqah 4among Persian-speaking Sufis, and a Tekke in the
   Turkish-talking world. As Van Bruinessen illuminates:

   Custom practice crosswise over spot and time wherever individuals draw on the
   Sufi legacy: the requirement for a personal relationship of warmth and trust between an
   otherworldly guide (Shaykh, Murshid, Pir, and so on.) and a seeker (Murid, Muhib, and
   so forth.), and the unavoidable blooming of obligations of solidarity among kindred
seekers under the direction of a specific expert. These relations require, and ordinarily discover, a meeting place that gives a physical locus to the institution of those relations (33).

Second, Sufism is a path that seeks to reunite the soul of the believer with God, to see beyond the Unrealities of the world and to perceive the Ultimate Reality, between the believer and God's face; the universe is something that obscures the image of God a Hijab (veil) that was put in place by the fall of Adam. The Sufi spends life seeking to remove that veil and behold God, from whom being separated is akin to being separated from a lover according to Öztürk “Sufism came to make the believer knows as the Murid had an experienced spiritual rebirth and he would no longer regard this world, they have to believe that human soul consciously and unconsciously, seeks to be reunited with God its make “(23).

Third, their ceremonies contain what they called Dhikr which is a devotional repetition of the names of God, which may also include supplications or prayers culled from the Quran or glossary. While anyone may perform Dhikr privately, it may be performed in groups, ceremonially. Dhikr in group sessions are usually spoken aloud, and may be led by the Shaykh who "feeds" lines to the disciples to let them know which incantation to say at a given time, thus the recitation of God's name and the testification of faith serve as further remembrances of the goal toward which all spiritual practice is directed as calcified by Rahimi: “the ritual of Dhikr, consisting of practices of meditation and trance through silence and/or chant, music, and dance performed by the Sufi orders” (211).

Forth the goal of living properly a life, according to Sufism, is to behold the Truth, the ultimate Reality, which liberates humans from ignorance. Attaining knowledge of Truth is not something reserved only for the afterlife, but is a goal Sufist seek to accomplish while they are alive. In this sense, salvation, if by salvation we mean reconciling one's soul with God, is something Sufis seek through the acquisition of knowledge (Ma’rifa). This clarified by De Bruijn:
At this elevated stage of self-denial, the common standard of moral and religious behavior has become irrelevant, distinction between good and bad or belief and unbelief are not binding any more on the lover they refer to values tinged by expectations of reward and salvation that are concerned with the lover’s interests, and therefore point to aim other than unconditional surrender to beloved severing will (72).

Beside salvation in Islam, Sufis believe life is only a part of the soul journey, and after death it will be another life that consists of either Paradise or Hell all people should pass the Day of Judgment. For practitioners of Sufism, the purpose of life is to cultivate the kind of relationship with God that draws them close to God, in order that they may experience the presence of the Divine while they are alive as well as once they die, according to Adonis:” for the Sufis existence is not an external subject that can be understood using external tools such as reason and logic so they prefer the cognitive tool like looking to the sun with naked eyes in other word knowledge comes from knowing something from within “(1).

As any other religion the Sufis movement classed into four orders named according the founder of that order the first one is The Chishti order expresses the name of Chishti, a town in Khurasan, stand hundred kilometers east of Herat. The founder of the order is an immigrant Syrian who settled in Khurasan, Khawaja Abu Ishaq Shami this man when his father died he let him a garden to work in the get what is useful for his everyday life One day while he was working, someone came to his garden, Amajzub (ecstatic) named Ibrahim Qanduzi came into the garden. The young Khawaja was polite and well-mannered. So he did offer to the dervish a seat under a shady tree but also brought him a bunch of grapes to eat. The dervish did know the spiritual potential of this boy standing in front of him. He took some sesame Seeds out of his bag, chewed them and put them in Muinuddin’s mouth.
Once Muinuddin ate the seeds, a spiritual connection was established, and Muinuddin’s latent spirituality was awakened. This experience had such an impact on him that he sold all of his properties and distributes all his money among the poor and people who are in need. He left his home and began to wander from place to place in search of knowledge. For many years he lived in Balkh, Samarqand and Bukhara, studying the Qur’an, hadith, Fiqh and theology. From there he travelled to Harwan, a suburb of Nishapur, where he met Shaykh Usman Harwani, a Sufi who became his spiritual mentor as described by Curtis:

Chishti refers to a form of Sufism in which participants use Qawwali, a traditional form of Sufi music from the Indian subcontinent, in their religious rituals. By using music, Chishti Sufis are able to gain a tool for “moving the heart” to a more refined and ecstatic state. The Chishti, also known as the Chishtiyia, use Qawwals in a way to memorialize their spiritual lineage, which remains today an important part of Chishti religious practices. The Chishti Order was founded by Khawaja Abu Ishaq Chishti during the 10th century in what is present-day Iran. The lineage of Chishti leaders stayed in Persia until Khawaja Mu’inuddin Chishti (1142–1236), one of the most renowned saints in the order’s history, brought the order to India (114).

The second order which is called The Qadri Order is named after Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077-1166), who is a famous Islamic spiritual figure. For the first fifty after his death there is no such organization of his name but his good way of teaching he has a strong impact to get many followers in his life time and later they took his methodology as model of teaching. Others they see him as saint with miracles also he has the quality of being perfect because of his amazing way of being persuasive and motivate people to be more spiritual avoiding materialistic things. As Adamec clarifies:
Qadiri (A Sufi order named after Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Gailani (al-Jilani, 1088–1166), an ascetic preacher acclaimed as the most popular saint in the Islamic world. His tomb in Baghdad is a place of pilgrimage, maintained by the Naqib, custodian of the shrine, who is his descendant and the hereditary head of the Qadiri Sufi fraternity. Sayyid Hasan Gailani, younger brother of the Naqib al-Ashraf of Baghdad, came to Afghanistan in 1905 and established himself there. Upon the death of his brother, he was asked to return to Baghdad, but he stayed in Afghanistan. He was succeeded in Afghanistan by Sayyid Ali Gailani, who was succeeded by Sayyid Ahmad Gailani, who is also the head of the National Islamic Front of mujahedin forces. The Qadiri order is strong among the Ghilzai and Wardakis in southern Afghanistan (314-315).

While the third one named The Suhrawardi order named after Shaykh (1097-1168) though it was his nephew and disciple Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi (1145-1234), who laid the true foundations of the order; The order was orders only to the Indian subcontinent by his able disciples, Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya, who founded a Khanqah (Hospice) in Multan, Shaykh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, who settled in Bengal, and Qadi Hamiduddin Nagauri who settled in Delhi. The Suhrawardi Silsila went on to become one of the most popular on the subcontinent, next only to the Chishtiyya, though the continuous history of the Silsila can be traced only through the Khalifas of Shaykh Bahauddin Zakariyya.

Abu’lNajib ‘Abd al Kahir bin ‘Abd Allah al Bakri (1097-1168) was a sunni mystic who flourished in the 12th century, He was born in Suhraward in the Jibal region. As a young man he came to Baghdad and studied the hadith, Fiqh and Arabic grammar and literature at the famous Nizamiyamadrasa. According to Meri:
For the Suhrawardi the physical world is very much related to the spiritual world, and in order for Sufis to perfect their spirituality their physical customs must reflect their internal condition. Most South Asian Suhrawardi masters connected Adab as way to obey the law completely because it was a manifestation of divine order. Some suggested that in the process of creating a perfect harmonious society, it required an intensely structured model. Adab was a critical element in this ideal world because all the minute details of an individual’s behavior could be controlled. However, Suhraward believed that they were practicing more than spiritual purity, but in the larger scheme, Suhrawardi Sufis were attempting to reunite with the divine, and this required them to uphold Islamic law. One needed to be prepared to carry out this extraordinary responsibility by having one’s thoughts and actions planned for every moment (775).

While the fourth one is named the Naqshbandi Order Khawaja Bahauddin Naqshband (1317-1389), the founder of the Naqshbandi order, was born at Kushk-i-Hinduwan, a village near Bukharain Central Asia. Later, in his honor, the village came to be known as Kushk-i-Arifan, the title Naqsh and that he used literally means a ‘painter’ or an ‘embroiderer’. It is possible that it refers to the profession followed by his family, but it may just as easily have been a metaphorical usage indicative of his spiritual capacity to imprint the name of God upon disciple’s heart, Khawaja Bahauddin was likewise entrusted to a Sufi saint, Muhammad Baba as-Samasi (d. 1354), who lived in a village called Samas, This saint was a spiritual descendent of Khawaja Abu Yaqub Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 1140), founder of Silsila-i-Khawajia. It is said that Samasi could see the latent spirituality and greatness of Bahauddin and therefore assigned his training to his chief Murid, Amir Kulal (d. 1371). According to Curtis:

Naqshbandi Sufis practice a form of Sufism in which participants use silence and internal contemplation in order to connect with God. The term Naqshbandi
incorporates two ideas: the Naqsh or “engraving” the name of Allah in the heart and
the band or “bond” describing the link between the individual and the Creator, the
Naqshbandis are also known as «silent Sufis” because of their practice of the silent
meditation of the heart. The Naqshbandi Sufi Order traces its origins to Abu Bakr
as-Siddiq, a seventh-century caliph who succeeded the prophet Muhammad in
leading the early Muslim community. In the middle Ages, the Naqshbandi school of
thought flourished in central Asia and India, and in the 20th century spread to China,
the Soviet Union, Western Europe, and the United States. Although Naqshbandis
believe that other Sufi paths are able to find a path to God through Dhikr, the
repetition of the names of God, the Naqshbandi believe there are 70,000 veils
between the uninitiated and the station that Prophet Muhammad reached and that
Dhikr should be practiced in silence (416).

The last order in Sufism is The Firdausi order traces its origins to Najmuddin Kubra (d
1221) through his disciple, Saifuddin Said Bakharzi (d. 1260). Najmuddin Kubra’s pirs
(spiritual mentors) were all either companions or disciples of Abu Najib Suhrawardi (d.
1168), the spiritual founder of the Suhrawardi Silsila and for this reason the Kubrawiya and
the Firdausiya are considered to be collateral lines of the Suhrawardiya, Najmuddin Kubra
called his disciple Saifuddin Bakharzi, ‘The Shaykh of Paradise’, and hence his spiritual
lineage is known as Firdausi. Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya narrates the story of Bakharzi’s
conversion to Sufism.

In his youth Shaykh Bakharzi was opposed to Sufism, going to the extent of
condemning the Sufis publicly in his lectures, Once Shaykh Bakharzi was delivering a lecture
full of venom against Sufism, with Shaykh Najmuddin Kubra part of the audience. He never
even once contradicted the speaker but while leaving the mosque, he asked, ‘Where is that
Sufi?’ meaning Bakharzi, at this Bakharzi fell down at his feet and became his disciple. After
giving him spiritual training, Shaykh Najmuddin sent him to Bukhara, where he died in 1260. According to Dehlvi:

Khawaja Badrudin Samraqandi was a disciple of saifudin Bakharzi, and eminent disciple of Shaykh Kubra of Khwarazum who established the Kubrawi Sufi order. Shaykh Najmudin earned the title Shaykh evalitarash; master sculptor of the Sufis for a number of his Sufis disciples become renowned Sufis. Khawaja Badruddin established the Firdausi order in India a branch of the central Asian Kubrawi Sufis order, Khawaja Badruddin often met Hazarat Nizamuddin Aulyia indicating that the relations between the Firdausi and the Chishti were amicable. Khawaja successors Khaykhruskunddin and Najibuddin, Firdausi, who's Dargahs are in Kilokhri and Meharuali, Khawaja died on 21 Shaaban, which is when the annual celebrations take place. Khawaja Badruddin arrived in Delhi after Khawaja Qutub who had popularized the Chishti order, as a result the Firdausi Sufi were unable to make any impact in the capital city. Shaykh Sharfuddin a disciple of Najibuddin he soon shifted from Firdausi order to Bihar.

As we mentioned before Sufism has a wealth of art including music, dance and literature. According to Frishkopf: “Sufi music presents problems of its own because it contrasts with Islam but some forms are allowed for example: theosophy to voluntary religious associations (Turuq), from ritual ecstasy to simple veneration (Madih) of the Prophet” (150).

When we talk about Dancing in Sufism Ibn Muhammad divided it into three categories describing it as:

The forbidden category is the dancing of the common with ladies and youths present. This can lead to spoiling and uncontrolled lower natures and satanic selves and so on. Its
purpose is to show off and to exhibit a state which is not real. This is permissible, and it does not call for prohibition, because the causes of forbidding dancing are what were mentioned before. Finally, the category of dancing which is recommended is the dancing of the Sufis, the people of taste and state, whether they are in ecstasy or seeking ecstasy, whether that is in the presence of the Dhikr or in Sema (23).

Sufist literature reached many places in the Middle East, and it tends to extend its geographical emergence to attract audience from near place like North Africa. According to Ahmet:

Sufist want to attract new audience as in Egypt and North Africa with the emergence of a self-conscious in Sufism the is less than clear, but in Iran, especially Khurasan, and in Transoxania, this need to produce a coherent narratives so they a literally legacy needed to be f preserved, evaluated they become famous of two genres nature historical reports about the Sufi s or survey, and the biographical compilation and they focused on such themes like, Dhikr, Sema,Khirqa, and Qur’an interpretation should also be viewed as unmistakable signs of the building of a Sufi tradition (98.99).

In fact, Sufism does not only reach the areas acquainted with it, it is also spread in the West and particularly in USA.
due to its culture, especially literature, Sufism travels from the East to the West. Islam entered the United States throughout many stages. The presence of Islam in the United States was earlier due to the immigrants from the moors and their intermarriage with the Native Americans. According to Van Sertima:

The existence of Islam in American immigrants is unique among Western countries because of its long history, some suggest that the presence of Islam in America is prior to the 1500s. These earliest contacts are thanks to the African immigrants and intermarriage with the Native Americans. There is also evidence that implies a small number of Moors. (12)

Also Mroueh clarifies:” Muslims who were expelled from Spain following Ferdinand and Isabella’s ordination, moved to the Caribbean Islands and even far away to the southern tip of Florida. Additionally, at least 15 percent of African slaves brought to America during the Slave Trade are thought to have been Muslim, most of them lost their identity because of the dehumanizing conditions of slavery (Austin, 35).

Muslim immigrants arrived to America within five visible periods: “The first wave occurred between 1875 and 1912 and mixed by emigrants from what was known as Greater Syria (Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Lebanon) when a few early Muslim communities were settled in New York City, North Dakota, Michigan, and Iowa”(Smith, 51).

According to Smith as well: “The second wave of immigration took place after the First World War, which also signified the end of the Ottoman Empire, a majority of those who arrived at this time had relatives who were already established in America” (52-53).
The third wave was limited to family members of Muslims already in America and occurred during the 1930s. The fourth period, which lasted from 1947 to 1960, as clarified by Hazen “Factors that distinguish this wave from the previous ones include a higher rate of educated professionals; they were students seeking educational and professional opportunities” (54). While the fifth wave, beginning in 1965 described by Hermansen:

It was influenced by both a removal of quotas based on ethnic origin and an increase of turmoil in Muslim countries including Iran, Palestine, South Asia, and the Balkans. It is not uncommon for Muslims, having come to America for educational opportunities or otherwise, to settle permanently and marry Americans (193).

In the 20th century, the majority of the Americans were unaware of Sufism except for the few intellectuals who knew about it that really studied the Islam and Muslims as well; Sufi practices were not typically neither known nor practiced by Americans. Unlike the Buddhist and Hindu texts which were applied by the American Transcendentalists as Hermansen explained:

American Sufism has been ignored in the past, but this phenomenon get closer attention than it has received in the past, with the coming of the whiter Americans into Islam. The phenomenon of Sufism in America presents a way through the cultural activities” (185)

Although Sufism is mainly related to universal spirituality, it is historically, philosophically, and theologically bound to the tradition of Islam. And there are a lot of spiritual and religious movements and organizations that claim to be Sufi. So, Sufism has strongly impacted the formation and character of the New Age,” in particular the element of
transcending the ego” (Kőszegi, 211). For example, Inayat Khan’s¹⁰ Sufi Order in the West specifically helped to shape the New Age beginning in the 1960s.

For the purpose of this study, Sufism has become a part of the religions that America contains and Sufism became as an alternative religion in America because it is a part of the mainstream religious environment, even among Muslim immigrants. Within Sufism in America, the newer manifestations of Sufism should not be considered separate from the traditional Islamic Tariqas so Sufism did place itself in good position in the American society and buy this we can consider Sufism she moved from its place of emergence to become universal in the west as Hazen claims:

They avoid making judgments on the authenticity of acculturated Sufi movements, plus the popular notion that Sufism extends beyond the traditional Tariqas prevents me from making further distinctions within the Sufi movements in America. Over time, Sufism is becoming better established and more well-known, and it may eventually become part of the mainstream or simply continue to enrich the religious setting with both its traditional and less conventional manifestations (52-53)

Sufism was introduced into the United States with the spread of Islam through many stages and waves. in its begging Sufism was ignored as a part of Islam, and it was not well known, only few people were interested in ,however by time it became more popular and one the major interests of many Americans and this increased popularity was due to its beliefs and principles and specially its music , literature and poems get discovered.
End Notes to Chapter One

1 was born in 986 CE (376 AH) in Nishapur which is in Khurasan Province in Iran he is best known for his writings about Sufism one best works is *Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism*.

2 They were a Muslim mystic group active in 9th century Greater Khurasan. Their root word of their name is the Arabic word Malamah (ملامة) "blame". The Mulamati believed in the value of self-blame.

3 is a medieval Islamic term applied by Muslims to individuals who are considered to hold views or follow practices that are contrary to central Islamic dogmas

4 Is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood or Tariqa and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation

5 Also known as Gharîb Nawâz (Benefactor of the Poor), was an imam, Islamic scholar and philosopher from South Asia. Chishti introduced and established the Chishti Order of Sufism in the Indian subcontinent

6 One of the first Nezamiyehs, was established in 1065. In July 1091, Nizam al-Mulk appointed the 33-year-old Al-Ghazali as a professor of the school. Offering free education, it has been described as the "largest university of the medieval world"

7 A Sufi ceremony performed as Dhikr. Sama means "listening", while Dhikr means "remembrance". These rituals often include singing, playing instruments, dancing, recitation of poetry and prayers, wearing symbolic attire, and other rituals. It is a particularly popular form of worship in the Chishti order of the Indian subcontinent.
is the initiatory cloak of the Sufi chain of spirituality, it is the esoteric knowledge and Baraka is passed from the Murshid or the Shaykh to the aspirant Murid.

They were Muslim inhabitants of the Maghreb, the Iberian Peninsula, Sicily, and Malta during the middle Ages. The Moors were initially of Berber and Arab descent, though the term was later applied to Africans, Iberian Christian converts to Islam, and people of mixed ancestry.

He was the founder of The Sufi Order in the West in 1914 (London) and teacher of Universal Sufism. His International Sufi Movement" very active in all movement can be found in the Netherlands, France, England, Germany, the United States, Canada, Russia and Australia
Chapter Two: the Impact of Sufism on the American Society:

Ella’s Case

This chapter will deal with the impact of Sufism on the American society. In fact, this treatment will be conducted with reference to Ella, the main character of *The Forty Rules of Love*. Ella is a typical American character; she represents all the ideals of a modern American white woman, wife and worker. However, at one moment in the novel she has totally changed when she gets knowledge with Aziz, a Sufist writer. The latter introduces, Sufism, a whole foreign religion to Ella who is influenced by an Eastern culture. Here, the shift is so symbolic because it explains how the myth of Jalaluddin Rumi has traveled from East to West as clarified by Furlanetto:

The Understanding the history of Sufism implies reading about one of its prominent figures Rumi, and how it has travelled from the East to the West, undergoing massive structural transformations along the way. Nonetheless, Rumi’s sensational impact on the Anglophone market problematical discourses that insist on marginalizing Turkey’s cultural relevance in the Western world, relegating it to the peripheries by emphasizing the notion of Europe’s and America’s Christian roots, The recent American fascination with Rumi target of a most controversial reception at home(02).

Rumi, as one of the prominent Sufist figures, has an important effect on the American society, his books and poems become bestsellers in the U.S. As Laderman illustrates:

Public awareness of Sufism in the West has augmented through music and literature. For instance the translations of the Sufist poet Rumi doing by American poet Coleman Barks’ are bestsellers in America and have been performed by
celebrities such as Deepak Chopra and Madonna. Also music has inspired the West like the music of Pakistani Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Moroccan Gnawi\(^1\) performers (145).

It can also be said that the impact or the spread of Sufist ideas in the American society is not contemporary or modern. It dates back to the days of Emerson. As Pittman explains:

That Sufi poetry and mysticism emerged not anywhere else in the world than in the American society. For instance, Ralph Emerson\(^2\) has presented a version of Sufi poetry especially from Jami and Attar because the Sufis represented through love and ordinary knowledge. All that can be expressed with wisdom (14).

It can be noticed here that the theme of love has had an effective impact on the American audience. As it is known, love is an important theme in the Sufist doctrine, it has a great power.

In fact definition of love in Sufism definitions saying that nothing is subtle than love Sufism are quintessentially loved and that love and Sufism are synonymous. For instance, the most famous statement about love was, “A thing can be explained only by means of something more subtle than itself, and since there is nothing subtler than love, by what, then can one explain it. As Losensky clarifies: “anything can only explained by something that is finer and more subtle than itself and there is nothing more subtle than love. thus how can explained love; in other words love can’t be explained “(384)” .Also, Abu l-Husayn Nuri, the most important theorist of divine love, was the first Sufi to speak about the passionate love and the use of the term Ishq (passionate love) to refer to the love of God, himself having claimed himself to be a lover (Ashiq) of God. According to Şeker: “he made a close connection between experiential knowledge and claiming that love is the natural indication and the result of love”, Abu Hamid Muhammad al Ghazali and his brother Ahmad Ghazali in
the Book of love, Claim that “first principle of love (Al-hub) is that it cannot occur without interior knowledge or gnosis (Ma’rifa) and perception (Idrak)” (321).

Then Ayn Al-Qudat Hamadani in his *Tamhidat* as follows: “... The lovers follow the religion and the community of God. They do not follow the religion and creed of Shafi’i or Abu Hanifa or anyone else; they follow the Creed of Love and the Creed of God (Greenberg, 201).

Muslim Sufis’ moral intuition of the universal “religion of love” *Mathnawi* of Rumi one of the greatest poet of Love’s in addition to, Ibn Arabi both of them were the prominent figure in the religion of love, as Chittick illustrates: “Despite the large number of authors who wrote on divine and Human love, Ibn Arabia and Rumi can be considered the two greatest masters of the tradition (87).

While reading the novel, the reader finds that love has really changed the life of Ella. This does not mean that her life was empty of love. She loves her family, however; she knows the real meaning of love when she has got contact with Sufism. At first, Ella does not accept the marriage of her daughter with her boyfriend Scott though they love each other. Her excuse is that he is not mature enough and she even calls him “unfortunately it was no one other than she who had lifted that lid and she had done it by dialing Scott’s number and asking him not to marry her daughter “(*TFROL*, 34). However, the situation has totally changed when Ella discovers Sufism and after having discussed the story of her daughter with Aziz. He helps her in solving the problem and convinces her to change her mind. After that, she asks apologies from her daughter saying: “I got your message, honey listen I’m so sorry I want to apologize to you and I should have shown more respect to your feelings “(*TFROL*, 78).

Ella has changed her mind due to her contact with the Sufist writer. This is shown in Ella’s letter to Aziz:
Thanks for your kind and heartwarming reply, which helped me through a family crisis. My daughter and I managed to leave behind that awful misunderstanding, as you politely called it. You were right about one thing. I constantly vacillate between two opposites: aggressive and passive. Either I meddle too much in the lives of loved ones or I feel helpless in the face of their actions. As for submission, I’ve never experienced the kind of peaceful surrender you wrote to me about. Honestly, I don’t think I have what it takes to be a Sufi. But I have to give you this: Amazingly, things between Jeannette and me turned out the way I wanted only after I stopped wanting and interfering. I owe you a big thank-you. I, too, would have prayed for you, but it has been such a long time since I last knocked on God’s door that I’m not sure if He still lives in the same place. Oops, did I speak like the innkeeper in your story? Don’t worry; I’m not that bitter not yet (TFROL78-79).

Furthermore, the effect of love can be seen when Ella regains herself. She has suffered a lot with her egoist traitor husband. She felt so helpless that she hated herself. However, Sufism and discovering the power of love allow her to regain herself and confront her reality. She set herself free when she expresses overtly her feelings in front of her husband and all people around her during the dinner in the restaurant claiming that she is in love with the Sufist writer and there is no longer relationship with her old and dull life.

Ella clasped her hands, feeling as if everything and everyone in the restaurant the customers, the waiters, the cooks, and even the tropical fish in the fish tank had stopped to hear what she was going to say. “It is about love,” she said at last. “I love Aziz.” Ella expected her husband to roll with laughter. But when she finally found the courage to look him in the eye, there was only horror on his face, quickly replaced by the expression of someone who was trying to solve a problem with minimal damage. Suddenly she had a moment of knowing. “Love” was a serious
word, loaded and quite unusual, for her a woman who had said so many negative
things about love in the past” (*TFROL*.250).

Here, almost at the end of the book, love has now another meaning for Ella. It is
different from all what she knew about it before. It can be deduced that Ella has
taken a journey in the Sufist world and at the end of the tunnel she can see the light
of love.

Eventually, Ella sees love very important, and even the essence of life. The moment of
her education about love is related to the moment of remembering what Rumi said about love:

> “Because love is the very essence and purpose of life. As Rumi reminds us, it hits
everybody, including those who shun love even those who use the word” «romantic”
as a sign of disapproval. Ella was as bowled over as if she had read there, ‘love can
hit even a middle-aged housewife in Northampton named Ella Rubinstein”
(*TFROL*, 15).

The effect of love is well-apparent when Ella turns from a materialistic woman into a
spiritual one. It is explained earlier in the letter sent to Aziz when she says “…but it has been
such a long time since I last knocked on God’s door that I’m not sure if he still lives in the
same place” (*TFROL*,79). Her life was spiritually empty until she discovers Sufism and its
spirituality. In fact, Ella is a member of the American society. Her family everyday life is a
microcosmic image of the whole society.

Westerns and especially the Americans tend to be more materialistic people in their
social encounters rather than being spiritual or religious ones. This materialism is tightly
interrelated with modernity and it is the opposite of spirituality this explained by Owen:

> “Some argue that the separation of Church and States of America and the augmentation of
secularization, spirituality described as the practice that linked it to modernity, Western idiomatic use of the opposite of spirituality is materiality”. (12)

*The Forty Rules of Love* has tackled this point of materialism and spiritual emptiness. This can be seen in the case of Ella and her family. David, Ella’s husband, is a successful dentist who works hard and makes a lot of money. His only objective is earning money, he neglects emotionally his wife. Ella has always known that they do not connect on any deep level, and connecting emotionally is not a priority on a married couple’s list. She thought, especially for a man and a woman who had been married for so long, such ideas are unimportant. For them, there are more important things than passion and love in a marriage, such as understanding, affection, compassion, and that most godlike act a person could perform, forgiveness. Love is secondary to any of these. Unless, that is, one lived in novels or romantic movies, where the protagonists are always larger than life and their love nothing short of legend. The following passage describes Ella thinking about how her husband is cheating on her:

"Better safe than sorry,” said the Web site. “Check his shirts for lipstick stains, see if he comes home smelling of unfamiliar perfumes." This was the first time Ella Rubinstein had taken an online test, titled “How to Tell If Your Husband is cheating on you!” Although she found the questions tacky, by now she knew that life itself could occasionally feel like one big cliché. In spite of her final test score, Ella didn’t want to confront David on this matter. She still had not asked Him where he’d been on the nights he hadn’t come home. These days she spent most of her time reading *Sweet Blasphemy* (*TFROL*, 129).

Ella’s indifference about her husband’s careless acts can be interpreted in terms of the spiritual absence from their life. Both of them Ella and David behave in the same way every
day. He always comes home and takes his place at the table in the evenings. She always cooks and he always eats, gladly and gratefully, whatever she puts on his plate. At the end of each dinner, her role is very dull and thinks that there is no news in her life even she feels sorry for the way she lives until she gets forty years. She thinks that she has much love but it is not demanded as the narrator shows:

When dinner was over, Ella sat at the kitchen table on her own, finding the stillness around her heavy and unsettling. Suddenly the food she had cooked, the outcome of hours of hard work, seemed not only dull and boring but easily replaceable. She felt sorry for herself. It was a pity that, at almost forty, she hadn’t been able to make more of her life. She has also much love to give and yet no one demanding it her thoughts turned to *Sweet Blasphemy*. She was intrigued by the character of Shams of Tabriz (*TFROL*, 36).

In the novel, Ella wants to change her dull life through going out for work. Her husband finds for her a job in the literary agency, and then she comes across the email of Aziz. Then, she starts to exchange emails with him. Due to Aziz and his words Ella starts to think about spirituality, especially when he helped her in solving her family problems. This act makes her consider her life because she wonders how a strange man provides help without any interest: “Ella shut off the laptop, moved to learn that a complete stranger in a remote corner of the world had prayed for her well-being. She closed her eyes and imagined her name written on a piece of paper tied to a wish tree, dangling like a kite in the air, free and happy” (*TFROL*, 55). Here, Ella begins to act spiritually.

Gradually throughout the novel, Ella starts to believe in non-materialistic things like love and practicing some spiritual things like prayer. The turning point in the novel is when
Ella prays and confesses that she does not remember when she prayed the last time. This prayer has really affected Ella’s psychology as depicted in the following passage:

I know you’re a religious person, but I’m not. Though as a family we celebrate the Sabbath every so often, personally I don’t even remember the last time I prayed. (Oops, I do now. In my kitchen just two days ago, but that doesn’t count, because it was more like complaining to a higher Self.) Contemplating these issues on the last day of May, Ella did something she hadn’t done in a long while. She prayed. She asked God to either provide her with a love that would absorb her whole being or else make her tough and careless enough not to mind the absence of love in her life. “Whichever one you choose, please be quick,” she added as an afterthought. You might have forgotten, but I’m already forty. And as you can see, I don’t carry my years well (*TFROL*, 144).

We know that Aziz helped Ella in changing her mind about her daughter’s marriage. However, Ella’s decision is against her religion because Scott is Christian. Her family is Jewish and in their beliefs it is not allowed inter-faith marriage. So, it can be said that Sufism has a real impact on Ella. It can further be said that the writer wants to shed light on one of the contemporary problems of the American society.

The inter faith marriage is a present problem in the American society, and more precisely in the Jews and Christians communities and how these two religions see this phenomenon. McCarthy explains this point:

Christians and Jews are most combination of the inter faith marriage in the US, but it seems a very big problem to marry from another religion represents a temptation to Idolatry, for the Israelites’ faithfulness to their one God this according to the book of Deuteronomy. 

“Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to
their sons or Taking their daughters for your sons, for that would turn away your children from Following me to serve other gods, Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly” (Deut 7:3–4), this can be a threat to the Jews throughout history it describe the fear of the assimilation in a Christian dominated culture will. (128)

As it can be seen that in America and especially for the Jews the interfaith marriage is forbidden, but in the case of The Forty Rules of Love, Ella is Jewish and at first she refused harshly the marriage of her daughter to a Christian when she addresses Jeanette:

Sweetheart, I’ll be completely honest with you, even if you might not like it. I know how wonderful it’s to be young and in love. Believe me, I do. But to get married to someone from a different background is big gamble, and as your parents we want to make sure you’re doing the right thing and how do you know your right thing is the right thing for me (TFROL, 13).

Though, Ella accepts later and changes her mind, she, too, falls in the same situation with Aziz. It is more complicated because not only Ella is a Jewish woman but also a married woman. Ella herself falls in love with Aziz, who comes from a completely different background. This is the result of consecutive messages, email and phones. The following passage explains the first meeting between Ella and Aziz:

By the time Ella got to the hotel, she was so tense she couldn’t think properly. There was a group of Japanese tourists in the lobby, all of whom appeared to be in their seventies and sported the same haircut. She crossed the lobby, scanning the paintings on the walls, so as not to have to look in the eyes of the people around
her. But it didn’t take long for her curiosity to defeat her timidity, and the moment her gaze slid toward the meeting area, she saw him, watching her (*TFROL*, 301).

After that, Aziz asks her to leave him because he is sick and will die in a few months and moving to Amsterdam. When tells him that she told her husband that she is in love with another guy. At this moment, Ella seems to leave behind all her beliefs and traditions:

She started to cry. Don’t, please. I wanted you to come with me to Amsterdam more than anything. I wanted to say, ‘Let’s travel the world together. Let’s see distant lands, get to know other people and admire God’s composition together.’

That would be nice,” Ella said sniffing, like a child offered some bright-colored toy in the midst of her wailing. Aziz’s face darkened. He looked away from her toward the window. “But I was afraid to ask you. I was even afraid to touch you, let alone make love. How could I ask you to be with me and abandon your family when I had no future to offer you?” Cringing at his question, Ella said, “Why are we being so pessimistic? You can fight this illness. You can do it for me for us (*TFROL*, 326).

In fact, though Ella commits adultery and unaccepted deeds, she thinks that she right and innocent. It can be noticed that each time Ella wants to escape her dull life she thinks or reads *Sweet Blasphemy*. This book is written by Aziz and it is the book that changed Ella’s life. In this book, Aziz writes about the relationship between Rumi and Shams. They are spiritually lovers."The lovers" are the lovers of God.

It must be noted that the words “love” and “lover” have become sexualized in the English language. Only thirty years ago, for example, “making love” in popular songs meant no more than hugging and kissing. Now it always means “having sexual relations. Similarly, “lovers” now always means "people who have or had sex together. There is no longer any concept of lovers who do not engage in sex with each other: such as “unrequited lovers”
meaning people in love who are unable to be sexual. So many accused Rumi and Chams by describing them as nudist by getting rid of their clothes and this known as nudism which is forbidden by Islam, Others accused them but there is no evidence to prove that there is a "physical relationship" between these two great Sufi saints. In other words, the two saints were gays and can be named a sweet blasphemy because it was a suspicious relationship but described as innocent. As Gamard explains:

First of all, it is necessary to understand that in Persian Sufi poetry, the word "lover" [Ashiq] means being a lover of God. And in the paths of Sufism that view the mystic seeker as the lover and God as the Beloved so «love" and "lover" have become sexualized in the English language. With the increasing of homosexuality has increasingly become accepted and viewed as natural in our culture. As a result, it is more common to think/assume/suspect that men who are close to each other and enjoy spending time together might be homosexuals or bisexuals. As a result, when we read that when Mawlana and Shams first met, they were so enthralled with each other that they spent several months secluded together [actually, in the prayer-retreat cell of Mewlana's disciple, Husamuddin. For the Western reader, the thought is almost irresistible to wonder if they might have had a sexual, as well as a deeply spiritual (1).

Subsequently, Ella’s behavior can be explained with reference to Sweet Blasphemy. At the beginning, when she was treating her communication with Aziz as a secret. Also, she enjoys her flirting with the author of the book in secret. For Ella, the trace of flirtation between her and Aziz is good for both of them and she hoped that this sweet blasphemy can really give her back what she lost in her marriage as it is shown: “They could flirt with each other, positioning themselves in distant corners within the infinite maze of
cyberspace. Thanks to this exchange, she hoped to regain a portion of the sense of worth she had lost during her marriage (“TFROL, 143).

In their affair, Ella and Aziz do not talk about concrete things like weather or recent events; they talk about abstract things like life and love, so, in this relationship we can see that Ella was affected by the story of both Rumi and Shams which seems a forbidden relationship but it was innocent. Ella justifies her so-called innocent love affair as follows:

Aziz didn’t write about the weather or the latest movie he had seen. He wrote about other things, deeper things, like life and death, and above all love. Ella was not used to expressing her feelings on such issues, especially to a stranger, but perhaps it took a stranger to make a woman like her speak her mind. If there was a trace of flirtation in their exchange, Ella thought, it was an innocent one that might do them both good. They could flirt with each other, positioning themselves in distant corners within the infinite maze of cyberspace (“TFROL, 143).

The effect of Sweet Blasphemy, Aziz and Sufism all together on Ella can merely be explained in her radical behavior and thought’s change. From a perfect housewife who cares for her children and spending the day watching cooking shows into a moody woman who tells lies and hides secrets and skipping the cooking shows. She adopted a new charming mood that appears only in her conversations with Aziz on the phone regardless of the five hours difference in time between both of them as it is mentioned in the novel:

She had converted from a woman whose life was as transparent as the skin of a new born baby into a woman wallowing in secrets and lies. What surprised her even more than this change was seeing that it did not disturb her in the least? It was as if she were waiting, confidently and patiently, for something momentous to happen. This irrational expectation was part of the charm of her new mood, for despite all
the Secrets, charming it was. By this time e-mails weren’t enough. It was Ella who first called Aziz. Now, despite the five-hour time difference, they talked on the phone almost every day. Aziz had told her that her voice was soft and fragile. When she laughed, her laughter came in ripples, punctuated by short gasps, as if she weren’t sure how much more to laugh. It was the laughter of a woman who had never learned not to pay too much attention to the judgments of others (*TFROL*, 174-175).

The last effect of sweet blasphemy can be explained in terms of cheating and bad behavior. Ella still thinks that she did the right thing when she lies to her husband and her children by pretending that she is going to meet a friend of her Michelle. In real she is going to meet Aziz who comes to Boston, Ella decides to see him at night.

All those lies and secrets can be interpreted as the effect of sweet blasphemy. She considers her acts innocent as the narrator says:

Ella knew that her husband didn’t believe her, not in the least, and yet she also felt she had to stick with her story, not to convince her husband or deceive her children but for herself, to make it possible for her “That’d be lovely,” she said, forcing herself to smile. “But we’re going to need to leave the house before seven A.M. Michelle says she wants to talk to me in private before the others join in.” “Oh, forget it, then,” Orly chimed in, knowing how much her father detested waking up early. “Daddy Now Ella and David looked at each other, locking into a level gaze over the heads of their children, each waiting for the other one to make the first move. It seemed an eternity before he could say anything. In that long moment, his eyes were the eyes of a man who had neither the strength nor the emotion left in him to stop his wife from going to another man (*TFROL*, 80-281).
Ella’s life changed at the age of forty. In fact, there is a recurrence of number forty in the novel starting from its title. In religious terms, number forty has significance in saint books as the Quran and The Bible. In Quran and Islam, this number can refer to our prophet (PBUH). He became a prophet at the age forty. Also, Moses traveled forty years in the desert; he spent forty days on Mount Sinai where he received the Ten Commandments. Prophet Yunus, too, stayed in a whale’s mouth forty days (Tahab).

Also On the forty the verse of Surah Baqarah, Allah changes the topic, Forty was the number of days that Prophet Elias spent in the wilderness before God appeared to him in a cave on Mount Horeb, also Forty was the number of days that Prophet Isa was tempted in the desert by Satan as well, And Muhammad (PBUH) was praying and fasting in the cave for 40 days. More over Muhammad (PBUH) had 40 followers to spread the religion of Islam.Prophets Dauud and Suleiman each ruled for forty years, and the flood that Noah encountered, it is said that for forty days water continued to pour from the heavens and to Stream out over the earth. Prophet Jesus walked the desert and fasted in the wilderness for forty days and there is also a hadith from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that the prayers of a person who gossips would not be accepted for forty days and nights (Al-Kulayni, 400).

Imam Ali has narrated from Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) that one who memorizes and preserves forty hadith relating to their religious needs shall be raised by Allah as a learned scholar on the Day of Resurrection.

It is said that a person’s intellect attains maturity in forty years, everyone according to his own capacity, and It is believed that one who assists a blind man for forty steps becomes worthy of entering heaven, also Imam Baghir has said: “The prayers of someone who drinks wine are not accepted for forty days, then Believers have also been encouraged to devote
themselves to God Almighty for forty days to see the springs of wisdom break forth from their hearts and flow from their tongues.

Finally forty is represented many times in Islamic matters, but also took place in the other books (Bible, Torah). There are probably more than this, what you think is the reason for the high value, and Allah knows all (Tahab).

While talking about the significance of number forty in Sufism we can summarize it in what happened with Shams and Rumi. They stayed in the library for forty days, it is during that period they discussed the forty rules of the religion of love. Also, the dreams seen by Rumi in his last forty days. Shams spent forty years as dervish then when Shams meets Rumi he was aged forty years as the following passage explains:

Exactly forty days after my father and the dervish had cloistered themselves in the library, something strange happened. I was crouched at the door again, eavesdropping on a thicker silence than usual, when all of a sudden I heard the dervish speak up. “It has been forty days since we retreated here. Every day we discussed another of The Forty Rules of the Religion of Love. Now that we are done, I think we’d better go out. Your absence might have upset your family (TFROL, 162).

The importance of this number in the story is when Aziz motivates Ella to change her life. He tries to convince her that at this age one can be reborn. He explains to her the importance of this number. He tells her:

Happy birthday! Forty is a most beautiful age for both men and women. Did you know that in mystic thought forty symbolizes the ascent from one level to a higher one and spiritual awakening? When we mourn we mourn for forty days. When a baby is born it
takes Forty days for him to get ready to start life on earth. And when we are in love we need to wait for forty days to be sure of our feelings. The Flood of Noah lasted forty days, and while the waters destroyed life, they also washed all impurity away and enabled human Beings to make a new, fresh start. In Islamic mysticism there are forty degrees between man and God. Likewise, there are four basic stages of consciousness and ten degrees in each, making forty levels in total. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days and nights. Muhammad was forty years old when he received the call to become a prophet. Buddha meditated under a linden tree for forty days. Not to mention the forty rules of Shams. You receive a new mission at forty, a new lease on life! You have reached a most auspicious number. Congratulations! And don’t worry about getting old. There are no wrinkles or gray hair strong enough to defy the power of forty (TFROL, 118).

At this moment, Ella is convinced and she starts to compare her actual life to the previous one. Before, she thought that she will continue living a boring life and there is no hope in improving herself or her life from bad to better. Then, she starts thinking that after forty, she can accomplish some goals like improving her time management, be better organized, and be determined to make the most of her time. She thinks about buying a new day planner, adding mineral supplements and antioxidants to her diet, then changing the upholstery, buying new plants, and getting new cushions. She starts thinking seriously about other missions like evaluating her life, values, and beliefs, also eliminating meat from her diet, make a healthy menu every week, and start giving your body the respect it deserves but the most important was Start reading Rumi’s poems and Opening her heart to love!

The last illustration can be the turning point in Ella’s life. In a letter sent to Aziz, after turning to forty she wants to get rid of the old dull life and starting a new life claiming that forty is a new thirty, also she was wondering why she is living this boring life while she is
capable to improve it. She felt sorry for herself, and it was stupid thinking she is almost forty, and she hadn’t been able to make more of her life. She had so much love to give and yet no one demanding it, and this depicted clearly in the novel:

Today is my birthday! I feel like I have reached a milestone in my life. They say turning forty is a defining moment, especially for women. They also say that forty is the new thirty (and sixty is the new forty), but as much as I’d like to believe all that, it sounds too far-fetched to me. I mean, who are we kidding? Forty is forty! I guess now I’ll have “more” of everything more knowledge, more wisdom, and of course more wrinkle and gray hair. Birthdays have always made me happy, but this morning I woke up with heaviness in my chest, asking questions too large for someone who hadn’t even had her morning coffee yet. I kept wondering, is the way I’ve lived my life the way I want to continue from now on? And then a fearful feeling came over me what if both a yes and a no might generate equally disastrous consequences? So I found another answer: maybe (TFROL, 114).

Both conversion of Ella and Aziz passed through many difficult stages until they become Sufist. So the situation was either very hard for the Americans or other non Muslims from different countries to convert to Islam according to Zebiri:

There was considerable discomfort with the idea of having converted to Islam because of the concept that everyone is born a believer in God. Also, many do not consider themselves as having rejected their previous religious traditions because Islam does not deny the prophets in Judaism or Christianity this response differed greatly from (15).
First we can tend to analyze the story Aziz and how he turned to Islam from a Christian photographer to a Sufist writer passing these steps in his life consisting of four stages the first stage is the letter S in the word Sufis as it is mentioned in the novel:

I was a boy once. Love opened up my eyes to a more fulfilled life. After I lost the woman I loved, I metamorphosed drastically. Neither a boy nor an adult, I became a trapped animal. This stage of my life I call my encounter with the letter S in the word “Sufi.” I hope I haven’t bored you with such a long letter (TFROL, 214).

The second stage in this long trip in the life of Aziz is the letter u in the word Sufism as shown in The Forty Rules of Love:

Life is odd, Ella. In the end I never made it to Mecca or Medina. Not then, not later. Not even after I converted to Islam. Destiny took me on a different route altogether, one of unexpected twists and turns, each of which changed me so profoundly and irrevocably that after a while the original destination lost its significance. Though motivated by purely materialistic reasons at the outset, when the journey came to an end, I was a transformed man. As for the Sufis, who could have known that what I had initially seen as a means to an end would very soon become an end in itself? This part of my life I call my encounter with the letter u in the word “Sufi” (TFROL, 282.).

The third stage which named the f in the word Sufi is explained:

Now, you are going to think I’m crazy. But I swear to God, at that moment I heard a rustle of silk in the background, first far off, then drawing nearer, and I saw the shadow of someone who wasn’t there. Perhaps it was the evening breeze moving across the Branches or maybe it was a pair of angel wings. Either way, I suddenly
knew that I didn’t need to go anywhere. Not anymore. I was sick and tired of always longing to be somewhere else, somewhere beyond, always in a rush despite myself. I was already where I wanted to be. All I needed was to stay and look within. This new part of my life I call my encounter with the letter $f$ in the word “Sufi” (TFROL, 234).

While the fourth stage was a difficult stage as he became mature and fulfilled spiritually but what was more difficult and important knows that women come out from nowhere, and in this stage the impact was interrelated in both of them. In other words, Ella influenced by Aziz and followed him and his faith and Aziz also influenced by Ella. For Aziz, their lives complete each other like the story of Shams and Jalaluddin. The Sufist principles are about living the present and forgetting about the past and the future as it is shown in the novel:

This new and final stage of his life he called his encounter with the letter $I$ n the word “Sufi.” And he said so far this stage had proved to be much more difficult than all the earlier ones, because it had come at a time when he thought he’d worked through most, if not all, of his inner conflicts, a time when he thought he was spiritually mature and fulfilled. “In Sufism you learn how to die before death. I have gone through each of those stages, step by step. Then, just when I start to think I’ve got it all neatly sorted, here comes this woman out of nowhere. She writes to me, and I write back. After each e-mail I start waiting for her answer with bated breath. Words become more precious than ever. The whole world turns into a blank screen, waiting to be written upon. And I realize I want to get to know this person. I need more time with her. Suddenly my life is not enough anymore. I realize I am scared of death, and one part of me is ready to rebel against the God I have revered and submitted to (TFROL, 325).
Finally, the impact of Sufism on Ella can be summarized in the following passage:

Some time ago you asked me if I was Shams, remember? You said I reminded you of him. As happy as I was to hear that, I cannot be Shams. I think he was way beyond and above me. But you can be Rumi. If you let love take hold of you and change you, at first through its presence, then through its absence “I’m not a poet,” Ella said this time. “Rumi wasn’t a poet either. But he was transformed into one.” “Don’t you get it? I’m just a housewife, for God’s sake, a mother of three,” Ella exclaimed, breathing in huge gulps. “We’re all what we are,” murmured Aziz. “And we’re all subject to change. It is a journey from here to there. You can make that journey. And if you are brave enough and if I am brave enough, we can go to Konya together in the end. That is where I want to die.” Ella gasped. “Stop talking like that!” Aziz watched her for a moment, and then his eyes dropped. There was a new expression on his face now, a distance in his tone, as if he were swiftly drifting away, like a dry leaf at the mercy of the wind. “Or else,” he said slowly, “go home, Ella. Go back to your children and your house. You decide, love. Whatever you choose, I will respect your decision (TFROL, 326-327).
End Notes to Chapter two

It refers generally to people who also practice healing rituals, with apparent ties to pre-Islamic African animism rites, Gnawa ceremonies use music and dance to evoke ancestral

2 He was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet who led the Transcendentalist movement of the mid 19th century. He was seen as a champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society, and he disseminated his thoughts through dozens of published essays and more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States.

3 Ayn-al-Qożāt I’s Tamhīdāt (Prelude) are masterpieces of Sufi literature and mystical and philosophical significance. Ayn al-Qožāt Hamadānī quoted a few verses apparently in his own Iranian dialect.

4 Also written Mathnawi, Ma'navi, or Mathnavi, is an extensive poem written in Persian by Jalaluddin Rumi, it celebrates the Persian Sufi saint and poet. It is one of the best known and most influential works of both Sufism and. The Masnavi is a series of six books of poetry that together also It is a spiritual writing that teaches Sufis how to reach their goal of being in true love with God

5 Is the fifth book of the Hebrew Bible, and of the Jewish Torah. The Hebrew title is taken from the opening phrase Eleh ha-devarim, "These are the words..."); the English title is from a Greek mistranslation of the Hebrew phrase mishneh ha-torah ha-zoth, "a copy of this law".
Chapter Three: Where the West Meets the East

The setting of the Forty Rules of Love is Boston in the 21st century, yet, the reader can notice that the story between Ella and Aziz resembles in many respects the story between Shams of Tabriz and Jalaluddin Rumi in the 13th century. So, this chapter will compare between the 13th and the 21st centuries. It will also investigate the relationship between Ella, the American, and Aziz, the Sufi, to bridge the gap between the long history between the West and Islam.

III. The 13th C Vs. the 21st C: A long History of Conflict

Though the time separating them is too vast, however; for this research, these two centuries share common aspects, for instance, both of them are known for religious clashes. In the 13th century, wars overspread, the Mongols and crusaders attacked and invaded the Muslim regions. Also, there existed Muslim assassins who were famous for killing the Muslim rulers. In the 21st century, wars and clashes are a prominent aspect. We find clashes between the Jews and the Muslims, the Christians and the Muslims. Consequently, Islam has harshly been criticized by the West which has led to the emergence of Islamophobia. Though the existence of a lot of problems between the two sides of the world, the Sufis then and now have always been seeking peace rather than going to war and keeping themselves away from all those clashes as it is shown in the novel:

Beset with religious clashes, political disputes, and endless power struggles, the thirteenth century was a turbulent period in Anatolia. In the West, the Crusaders, on their way to Jerusalem, occupied and sacked Constantinople, are leading to the partition of the Byzantine Empire. In the East, highly disciplined Mongol armies
swiftly expanded under the military genius of Genghis Khan. In between, different 
Turkish tribes fought among themselves while the Byzantines tried to recover their 
lost land, wealth, and power. It was a time of unprecedented chaos when Christians 
fought Christians; Christians fought Muslims, and Muslims fought Muslims. 
Everywhere one turned, there was hostility and anguish and an intense fear of what 
might happen next. In the midst of this chaos lived a distinguished Islamic scholar, 
known as Jalaluddin Rumi. Nicknamed Mawlana “Our Master” by many, he had 
thousands of disciples and admirers from all over the region and beyond, and was 
regarded as a beacon to all Muslims. (TFROL, 19).

So, the 13th century is totally characterized by Chaos. It can be said we do not know 
who kills who? This era was so violent and had known many wars as Morgan and Amitai 
explain:

The war between the Mongols and rulers of Iran and the Mamluks sultan of Egypt 
and Syria commenced with the battle of AynJalut in 1260 and continued to the 
second decade of the 14th century. These hostilities marked by a huge number of 
invasions of Syria, many raids and expeditions over both sides in the borders, 
espionage and diplomatic maneuvers from both sides to weapon themselves by 
ideological and propaganda arms. In 1320, the conflict ended through negotiations 
(57).

In 1258, the Mongols invaded the city of the caliphs. They burned books, they 
butchered between 200,000 and 1,000,000 people in one week. So, Baghdad left depopulated 
and uninhabitable, what is called the destruction of Baghdad. It is still the most prominent 
event in the Muslims history, because that invasion that led to the end of the Abbasside 
dynasty.
Then, the situation became more serious at the Islamic world where the Crusaders and the Mongols were attacking from both sides especially after their alliance. They successfully reached the Easter Mediterranean and defeated the Muslims. This can lead us to another example of clash of religions. The latter is between the crusades and the Muslims during the 13th century. As Tyerman clarifies:

After 1229, eastern crusades progressed from the pragmatic to the optimistic to the desperate. […] The Franks’ alliance with the Mongols who invaded Syria in the late 1250s, followed by the Mongols’ defeat by the Mamluks and withdrawal from the region in 1260, left them vulnerable to the new Egyptian sultan, Baibars⁵ (1260–77), who was committed to eradicating the Christian settlement […] Despite the continued popularity of crusading as an ideal and activity, between 1229 and the final loss of the last Christian outposts in Syria and Palestine in 1291, only one international campaign of substance reached the eastern Mediterranean, the crusade of Louis IX of France, 1248–54 (48).

It can be further said that in spite of the fact that the Mongols were allies of the Christians, the Mongols, too, killed the Christians as Desert Rose, a Christian character in the Forty Rules of Love narrates that they were not only afraid of the Seljuk “Next we heard about Seljuk attacks. And before the Tales of terror of the Seljuk army faded, those of the ruthless Mongols started” (TFROL, 118)

The Muslims, too, suffered from the persecutions of their brothers. The conflict was ethnic more than religious. A group, called the assassins by Hassan Sabah, who were assassinating the rulers. As Likar explains:

The Assassins, was a fanatical branch of the Shiite Ismaili³ sect. The Assassins operated from the 11th to the 13th century, sometimes striking at the occupying
Christian crusaders; but mainly attacking Sunni Muslim leaders in the regions of Persia and Syria, the Assassins, used the dagger as their weapon of choice, and both were prepared to die as a result of their assassination missions (38).

A former Assassin killed Shams of Tabriz a prominent figure in the Sufi history, and this event is mentioned in the novel:

We have heard from a reliable source where you came from and who you really were, the letter said, a former member of the Assassins! We also know that after the death of Hassan Sabah and the incarceration of your leaders, the order is not what it used to be. You came to Konya to escape persecution, and you have been under disguise ever since (TFROL, 21).

The Assassins belong to a sect. They were famous for their meticulous killing methods and extensive use of poisonous substances. They targeted influential people and murdered their victims in public, to plant fear and panic in people’s hearts.

They had gone as far as leaving a poisoned cake in Saladin’s tent with a note that said you are in our hands. And Saladin, this great commander of Islam who had fought bravely against the Christian Crusaders and recaptured Jerusalem, had not dared to fight against the Assassins, preferring to make peace with them. How could people think Shams could be linked with this sect of terror (TFROL, 202)?

Since Elif returns back to the 13th C events, evidently; we can make the link with the 21st C. Nowadays, the world is full wars, conflicts that are essentially based on religion. For instance, the conflict (the Jews and the Muslims) between Judaism and Islam in which there were a lot of wars as campo clarifies:
It can be concluded in the Strong nationalist current in Europe who coupled with growing anti-Semitic propaganda give rise to the Zionist movement among the European Jews, the chief objective of the Zionist was to establish a homeland for the Jews in Palestine which had been a part of the Ottoman Empire there were wars like the arabo-israeli wars, also there are stereotypic treatments to the Jews in the Muslims countries which led them to immigrate to Israel and American (413).

Second, an important event happened at the beginning of the 21st C. It is 9/11 terrorist attacks where the West put the blame on Muslims and Islam. The conflict between the Christians and the Muslims is not a new one as it is explained by Ye’or:

The examination of the ways to apply the mission is followed by an analysis of the information issues. Already in the preceding pages, the authors had frequently denounced the West’s unfair and tendentious prejudices toward Islam, demanding their punishments by their respective governments. To neutralize nuisance by the media, coordination between European politicians and the OIC was required. The dialogue between civilizations and educational, cultural, social and religious planning would facilitate preventing Islmaphobia and drawing a link between Islam and terrorism. As part of the mission, information activities had to serve Islam; the right to knowledge is respected but within the ambit of Shari’a (98).

Also, nowadays, the Muslims are killing the Muslims. For instance, the salafi-jihadi sees the Shia and the Sufi and other groups as non-Muslims. As Figueira claims:

for extermination for a Salafi-jihadi Muslims is a Sunni and the Salafi-jihadi is the vanguard of Islam in the 21 century for the Salafi-jihadi there are two wars the first one against the west while the other is within Islamic aspect when they consider Muslim as hypocrites when they turned their back on the Islamic basis and they
accused Shia and Sufis that they are not Muslims as a consequence both Muslims and non Muslims are the target of those salafi-jihadi (7).

Additionally, it can be said that the mentioned events and high-contempt among the Muslims and against the West have led to the emergence of ISIS. As Barake explains:

Due to ethnical and ideological the Muslims world being wondering about how horrible and bloody those recent events happened especially what is made by ISIS who try to persuade the world that those thing are the right thing to do from killing innocent people women and children (11).

At the moment when all religions have clashes within or with other religions. Sufism stands in a neutral position away from all sorts of conflicts and violence.

This can be understood from its principles of love and peace. It respects all religions and communities. The Sufis have a tradition which is called a Sufi Dargah Astahan or Ziarat. They visit the shrine of a revered Muslim. This shrine becomes like a meeting point of a lot of Muslims. This event promotes for ideas of love and peace between different communities (Epilogue.63). Also, “Sufis always want to be peaceful while jihadists called the martyrs who they blow themselves to kill people “(Lindholm and Zúquete).

This neutrality of Sufism is represented in the novel when the narrator describes those who want to go to war against other religions by the name of zealots. As Shams says: “Instead of losing themselves in the Love of God and waging a war against their ego, religious zealots fight other people, generating wave after wave of fear (TFROL, 181).

In fact, not only do the two centuries related to each other via the historical and religious events. They are also associated through the analogy between the relationship between Shams of Tabriz and Jalaluddin Rumi and the one between Ella and Aziz,
respectively. In the 13th C Jalaluddin was influenced by Shams while in the 21st C, Elle is influenced by Aziz. So, Ella is similar to Rumi and Aziz can be depicted as a modern Shams.

IV. Where the West Meets the East:

While people from different religions and origins were killing each other, Rumi and shams were searching for each other. They were parts of a love story which started even before meeting each other. Rumi had seen Shams in his dreams for forty days. He saw a man with a veil on his face and his fingers aflame. He was a dervish who will change his life forever. They met each other 1244 in the city of Konya:

In the midst of this chaos lived a distinguished Islamic scholar, known as Jalaluddin Rumi. Nick named Mawlana—“Our Master”—by many, he had thousands of disciples and admirers from allover the region and beyond, and was regarded as a beacon to all Muslims. In 1244, Rumi met Shams—a wandering dervish with unconventional ways and heretical Proclamations. Their encounter altered both their lives. At the same time, it marked the beginning of solid, unique friendship that Sufis in the centuries to follow likened to the union of two oceans (TFROL, 19).

On the other hand, the story between Aziz and Ella starts two weeks after Ella’s fortieth birthday. Elle works for a literary agency based in Boston. It is her husband who found her the job through one of his clients and this was in 2008:

Beyond wildest dreams, Aziz said, strange things happened to people when they were ready for the unusual and the unexpected. But not a single bone in Ella’s body was ready for the one strange thing that happened this week: Aziz Z. Zahara came to Boston to see her (TFROL, 277).
We can draw up many common characteristics between the four characters. For instance, on one hand Aziz and Shams live a nomadic life and they worship the religion of love. “You see, Shams is not an easy person. As long as he lived a nomadic life, he could manage it pretty well” (TFROL, 81), the same Aziz was having a nomadic life as well.

She had learned from his blog that Aziz was a professional photographer and an avid globe-trotter who found navigating his way through the farthest corners of the world as natural and easy as taking a stroll around the neighborhood park. A relentless nomad at heart, he had been everywhere, equally at home in Siberia, Shanghai, Calcutta, and Casablanca. Traveling with only backpack and a reed flute, he had made friends in places Ella couldn’t even find on the map (TFROL, 158).

Both shams and Aziz are full of love. As shams says:

Our religion is the religion of love. And we are all connected in a chain of hearts. If and when one of the links is broken, another one is added elsewhere. For every Shams of Tabriz who has passed away, there will emerge a new one in a different age, under a different name. Names change, they come and go, but the essence remains the same (TFROL, 344).

On the other hand, Ella and Rumi live a normal life but there is something missing which is love. Both of them are in need of a companion of love. Ella’s life lacks many things especially love :“Orly’s bad eating habits, Avi’s poor grades, Aunt Esther and her sad cakes, her dog Spirit’s decaying health, Jeannette’s marriage plans, her husband’s secret flings, the absence of love in her life … One by one, she locked them all in small mental boxes” (TFROL, 14).
Unlike the dull and bored life of Ella, Rumi was erect and proud, wise and noble followed by admirers and fans. He has a charismatic and a confident personality. He had a happy family and was the great Imam in the village, giving sermons in the great mosque. With all this incomparable success Rumi’s life was missing something important this is love, in other words, a companion of love:

Bountiful is your life, full and complete. Or so you think, until someone comes along and makes you realize what you have been missing all this time. Like a mirror that Reflects what is absent rather than present, he shows you the void in your soul—the Void you have resisted seeing (TFROL, 192).

The life of Rumi and Ella has changed after their meeting with Shams and Aziz respectively. At the end both of them confess that love is the essence of life. Rumi admits that shams was his companion and the person that he can complete him and filled his emptiness. Due to Shams Rumi becomes one of the greatest poets. Ella leaves her family and decides to follow Aziz who changes her dull and empty life into an exciting one:

That person can be a lover, a friend, or a spiritual master. Sometimes it can be a child to look after. What matters is to find the soul that will complete yours. All the prophets have given the same advice: Find the one who will be your mirror! For me that mirror Shams of Tabriz. Until he came and forced me to look deep into the crannies of my soul, I had not faced the fundamental truth about myself: that though successful and prosperous outside, I was lonely and unfulfilled inside (TFROL, 192).

Likewise, Ella confirms that love is the key essence of this life:
It’s Rule Number Forty,” she said slowly. “A life without love is of no account. Don’t ask yourself what kind of love you should seek, spiritual or material, divine or mundane, Eastern or Western. Divisions only lead to more divisions. Love has no labels, no definitions. It is what it is, pure and simple. “Love is the water of life. And a lover is a soul of fire! “The universe turns differently when fire loves water” (TFROL, 350).

Not only does Ella explain that love is so important, however; she also displays that love can solve all the problems of the world. In fact, the whole novel offers a vision that may reunite the world that might be ruled by love and engenders peace and happiness. Undoubtedly, this vision may bridge the gap between nations, between religions and between the East and West. This can be explained in a story told by Shams:

Once there were four travelers, a Greek, an Arab, a Persian, and a Turk. Upon reaching a small-town, they decided to get something to eat. As they had limited money they had only one choice to make. Each said he had the best food in the world in mind. When asked what that was, the Persian answered “angoor,” the Greek said “staph lion,” the Arab asked for “aneb,” and the Turk demanded “üzüm.” Unable to understand one another’s language, they began to argue. They kept quarreling among them, feeling more resentful and bitter with every passing minute, until a Sufi who happened to pass by interrupted them. With the money collected the Sufi bought a bunch of grapes. He then put the grapes in a container and pressed hard. He made the revelers drink the juice and threw away the skin, because what mattered was the essence of the fruit, not its outer form. “Christians, Jews, and Muslims are like those travelers. While they quarrel about the outer form, the Sufi is after the essence,” Shams said, giving me a smile that conveyed such excitement that it was hard not to be carried away by it. (TFROL, 299).
The effect of Shams on Rumi and Aziz on Ella is so subtle that Rumi/Ella rejects/sacrifices their families for the sake of love. Tough Ella knows that Aziz is dying from cancer; she decides to leave with him. Aziz tells her “My doctors tell me I have sixteen months,” Aziz said, lightly but firmly. “They might be wrong. Or they might be right …But I was afraid to ask you. I was even afraid to touch you, let alone make love. How could I ask you to be with me and abandon your family when I had no future to offer you? (TFROL, 326)

She lies to her husband to go and see Aziz:

A shadow of agony crossed David’s face. It seemed an eternity before he could say anything. In that long moment, his eyes were the eyes of a man who had neither the strength nor the emotion left in him to stop his wife from going to another man you want; you should go now (TFROL, 281).

She even neglects her duty as a mother; she refuses to help her children in doing homework. This is evidence that Ella rejects all the members of her family:

But, Mom, I thought you were going to help me with math this evening,” Avi objected. Ella felt her face burn. “I know, dear. Why don’t we do that tomorrow?”“Oh, let her go.” Orly turned to her brother teasingly. “You don’t need your mama by your side all the time. When are you going to grow up?” The other, and just like that, Ella grabbed her cell phone and dashed upstairs. As soon as she closed the bedroom door, she threw herself onto the bed and text-messaged Aziz. A shadow of agony crossed David’s face. It seemed an eternity before he could say anything. In that long moment, his eyes were the eyes of a man who had neither the strength nor the emotion left in him to stop his wife from going to another man you wants, you should go now (TFROL. 281).
Similarly, Rumi, too, rejected his family since he had known Shams and his principle of the religion of love. He forgets about his wife Kerra and his sons, Aladdin and Sultan Wallad, and his daughter. Ultimately, Aladdin sent one of the former assassins to kill Shams who, for him, ruined their life and led their father to a cheer blasphemy:

Every morning Kerra prepared breakfast and left it on a tray in front of their door. No matter what delicacies she prepared for them, they refused it all exactly forty days after my father and the dervish had cloistered themselves in the library, something strange happened. I was crouched at the door again, eavesdropping on a thicker silence than usual, when all of a sudden I heard the dervish speak up. “It has been forty days since we retreated here. Every day we discussed another of The Forty Rules of the Religion of Love. Now that we are done, I think we’d better go out. Your absence might have upset your family. “My father objected. “Don’t worry. My wife and sons are mature enough to understand that I might need to spend some time away from them.””Well, I don’t know anything about your wife, but your two boys are as different as night and day, “Shams responded. “The older one walks in your footsteps, but the younger one, I am afraid, marches to different drummer altogether. His heart is darkened with resentment and envy” (TFROL, 163).

In giving up their families, Rumi and Ella practice what is called sweet blasphemy. The latter justifies their deeds and they claim to do what is right. In Rumi relationship with Shams, he manifests this blasphemy in two aspects. First, when he, as a respectful and religious man, obeys Shams when he asks him to go to a tavern and drink wine:

Would you like me to ask Kerra what she can do about it?” Rumi asked... “Instead of going to the kitchen for water, would you go to the tavern for wine?” “You mean, you want me to get you wine?” Rumi asked, pronouncing the last word cautiously, as if
afraid of breaking it. “That’s right. I’d so much appreciate it if you would get us some
wine. […] But do me a favor, please. When you go to the tavern, don’t just simply get
the bottles and come back. Stay there for a while. Talk to the people. I’ll be waiting
here for you. No need to rush.” […] But to my great relief, Rumi stood up and nodded.
“I have never been to a tavern before and have never consumed wine. […] But I trust
you fully, because I trust the love between us. There must be a reason you have asked
me to do such a thing … I’ll go and bring us wine” (TFROL, 236).

Second, when he performs a dance “Sema”, these three aspects are not permissible in
Islam and so welcome in the religion of love or what they call Sufism. As it is shown in the
novel:

You should come to our performance,” Shams said when he saw me coming. “What
performance?” I asked. “A spiritual dance, Kerra, the likes of which you have never
seen.” I looked at my husband in astonishment. What was going on? What dance were
they talking about? “Mawlana, you are a respected scholar, not an entertainer. What
will people think of you?” I asked, feeling my face growing hot. “Don’t you worry,”
Rumi said. “Shams and I have been talking about this for a long time. We want to
introduce the dance of the whirling dervishes. It is called the Sema (TFROL, 266-267).

Furthermore, an important effect of love can be discussed. It is helping the other (the
poor, women, children, an unfortunate people…); Shams and Aziz make Rumi and Ella care
about the unfortunate and the incomplete people. Shams taught Rumi to help the harlots, the
drunk and the beggar: “They always condemn those who drink wine, or are on the lookout for
adulterous women to stone, but when it comes to gossiping, which is a far more serious sin in
the eyes of God; they take no notice of any wrongdoing” (TFROL.224)”. Rumi helps a harlot
named Desert Rose: “Late in the evening, I showed Desert Rose the bed where she would
sleep. And when she fell asleep immediately, I returned to the main room, where I found Rumi and Shams talking” (*TFROL* .266).

Likewise, Aziz teaches Ella to take care of the orphans and think about the poor in Ethiopia. Aziz answers Ella:”Your e-mail found me as I was getting ready to leave Amsterdam for Malawi. I have been assigned to take pictures of the people in village where AIDS is rampant and most children are orphans” (*TFROL* .145). Gradually, Ella becomes more aware about the suffering of people and misery that exists in the world: “while she observed their stories as through watching a TV program on famine in Ethiopia. It saddened Ella that such tragedies were unfolding in the world, but the truth was that she never saw herself as sharing the same universe with those unfortunate ones”(*TFROL* .130).

So, Ella becomes more humane and learns about what is happening in the world. She implicitly shows that Sufism is the religion of love and can teach people carefulness. Shams summarizes that Sufism is a religion that gives importance to man regardless of his background, race, religion, gender and origins:

My father had always been a loving man. He embraced people of all faiths. He was into his life; his circle of love became so vast it included even the most fallen of society prostitutes, drunks, and beggars, the scum of the scum. I believe he could even love Shams’ killers. There was, and still is, only one person he could not manage to love: his son (*TFROL* .338).

It can be said that we can learn about Sufism and the love story between the mentioned characters, however; unfortunately, love stories end tragically and always come to an end. This is the same case for Rumi/Shams and Ella/Aziz. Shams and Aziz left behind their companions alone. Aziz falls in love at an unexpected moment and Shams- even though he knew that he would be murdered- he left Rumi alone. The same tragic end for two different
stories the first in 1248 and the second in 2008. Shams and Aziz are buried in the same place, Konya: “We’re all what we are,” murmured Aziz. “And we’re all subject to change. It is a journey from here to there. You can make that journey. And if you are brave enough and if I am brave enough, we can go to Konya together in the end. That is where I want to die (TFROL.327).

The moment of the death of Shams and Aziz was so hard for Rumi and Ella: “When she walked back half an hour later, she found a doctor and a young, head-scarved nurse in the room and the bed sheet pulled over Aziz’s head. He had passed away” (TFROL.348).

…I was so angry at the three young men for their insolence that I could easily have let the dervish go and fought them instead. But before long, one of the men started to yell hysterically. “Help! Help us, Jackal Head! He is going to kill us.” Fast as lightning I threw my sword aside, pulled my dagger out of my belt, and dashed forward. The seven of us knocked the dervish to the ground, and in one swift move I stabbed him in the heart. A single hoarse cry came out of his mouth, his voice breaking at its peak. He didn’t stir again, nor did he breathe. Together we lifted his body, which was strangely light, and dumped him into the well. Gasping loudly for air, we each then took a step back and waited to hear the sound of his body hitting the water. It never came (TFROL 323).

The death of Aziz and Shams leaves a huge impact on Ella and Rumi respectively. Ella takes charges of all the details of the funeral, because Aziz asks her to be buried in Konya the place in which Shams is buried:

Aziz was buried in Konya, following in the footsteps of his beloved Rumi. Ella took care of all the preparations, trying to plan every little detail but also trusting that God would help her with the ones she couldn’t handle. First she arranged the spot where he
would be buried—under huge magnolia tree in an old Muslim cemetery. Then she found Sufi musicians who agreed to play the *ney* and sent an e-mail to Aziz’s friends everywhere, inviting them to the funeral. (*TFROL*, 348)

On the other hand, Rumi spent forty days enclosed thinking about the forty rules of love which they are called a chilla. Many people helped him in those hard days. After the death of Shams Rumi became a great poet of love and four years later he started reciting the *Mathnawi*. He claimed that Shams did not die because he will return in the future with a different name. This explains another Sufist principle which states that what matters is not who the Sufist as a person, but the essence of the religion which is love:

> Our religion is the religion of love. And we are all connected in a chain of hearts. If and when one of the links is broken, another one is added elsewhere. For every Shams of Tabriz who has passed away, there will emerge a new one in a different age, under a different name. Names change, they come and go, but the essence remains the same (*TFROL*, 34).
End Notes to Chapter Three

It took place on 3 September 1260 between Muslim Mamluks and the Mongols, it marked the south-westernmost extent of the Mongols, and this was blamed on the sudden death of the then-Khagan Möngke Khan; an event that forced the Mongol khanate Hulagu Khan to take a large part of his army back with him on the way to Mongolia. This left Hulagu's lieutenant, Kitbuga, with only a small detachment of soldiers.

2 Was the fourth Sultan of Egypt from the Mamluk Bahri dynasty. He was one of the commanders of the Egyptian forces that inflicted a defeat on the Seventh Crusade of King Louis IX of France. He also led the vanguard of the Egyptian army at the Battle of Ayn Jalut in 1260, which marked the first substantial defeat of the Mongol army and is considered a turning point in history.

3 Is a branch of Shia Islam. The Ismāʿīlī get their name from their acceptance of Ismaʿīl Ibn Jafar as the appointed spiritual successor (Imām) to Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, wherein they differ from the Twelvers, who accept Musa al-Kadhim, younger brother of Ismaʿīl, as the true Imām.

4 Was a Nizārī Ismāʿīlī missionary who converted a community in the late 11th century in the heart of the Alborz Mountains of northern Persia. He later seized a mountain fortress called Alamut. He founded a group of fedayeen whose members are often referred to as the Hashshashin, or "Assassins"
My personal translation from “One Religion, One Faith in Christ's Crucifixion and the Prophecy of Mohammed” written by Barake Imad (p.11).

Is an Islamic shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure, often a Sufi saint or dervish. Muslims may visit the shrine for Ziyarat.

The Zealots were originally a political movement in 1st century Second Temple Judaism which sought to incite the people of Judaea Province to rebel against the Roman Empire and expel it from the Holy Land by force of arms.

It is a city in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey. It is the seventh most populous city in Turkey. As of 2014, Konya has a population of 1,174,536. Konya is an economically and industrially developed city and the capital of Konya Province.

Konya was historically the capital of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum and the Karamanids.

Is a spiritual practice of penance and solitude in Sufism known mostly in Indian and Persian traditions? In this ritual a mendicant or ascetic attempts to remain seated in a circle practicing meditation techniques without food for 40 days and nights in imitation of the Arba'een. The word Chilla is derived from the Persian word Chehel "forty". Chilla is commonly performed in a solitary cell called a chilla-Khana.
General Conclusion:

In the last few decades, Sufist literature emerged as an important body of writing at the international scene. It is widely read in the Western society. For instance Jalaluddin Rumi’s poetry is well-received in the American society. Subsequently, this literary production and its success are worth studying.

Elif Shafak is a Turkish writer who lives in U.S.A and she is interested in the Sufist history. In *The Forty Rules of Love*, she depicts Ella, a white American woman at the age of forty, who converts to Sufism after she has exchanged emails with Aziz, a Scottish Sufist writer who wrote *Sweet Blasphemy*. From those emails, Ella discovers the mystic spiritual side of Sufism and learns about its principles particularly love, a totally absent element from her current life. She is charmed by this religion especially after she has learned about the love relationship between Shams of Tabriz and Rumi.

She has gradually changed, she feels like living a long spiritual trip that resulted into her conversion to Sufism. Ultimately, she leaves her children and husband to join Aziz, though she knows that he will die after a short period of time. She gives up all her old empty aimless life to go and fulfill Aziz’s will to bury him in Konya, where Rumi is buried.

This novel is not only about Ella’s life change, it involves also historical facts and events related to Sufism and frequent flashbacks to the 13th century. The recurrent shift from the 21st C to the 13th C inspires us to compare between these two centuries. The first common point is the analogy of love story that combines on one side Aziz/Ella and on the other side Chams/Rumi. Second, these two centuries are known for the spread of religious and political clashes. In the middle of those clashes Sufism seems to be neutral and against any kind of conflict.
To conclude, through depicting and emphasizing on Sufism as a spiritual and peaceful religion, Elif tries to convey implicitly that the solution for all conflicts nowadays is such a religion that promotes for love. She wants to bridge the gap between the West and the East. In fact, reading such a novel changes one’s perspectives about life.
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