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Psychological Study of Islamic Mysticism in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*

Abstract:

*Mysticism presents, amidst others, a unique worldview to unfold the cosmic mysteries through experiential ways, often rendering mystical experiences somewhat subjective and elusive. This makes it highly pertinent to delve into the human psyche, which is the fountainhead of such experiences. Psychology offers theoretical tools, thereby enabling researchers to resolve riddles at one hand and enriching their understanding on the other. It is almost in the same vein that the current research is carried out, namely analyzing mystical experience from a psychological perspective. The paper contends that the culmination of a mystic's experience of the Divine is equated with his psychological wellbeing and emotional development. Drawing on Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration, the researchers study a literary text, *The Forty Rules of Love*, written by Elif Shafak. The findings of this research lead to a nullification of the confusion of mystical experiences with psychological disorders.*

Key Words:

Mysticism, Mystical Experience, Primary Integration, Positive Disintegration, Secondary Integration

Introduction

[Donald Bishop \(1995\)](#) notes that mysticism is usually explained through several images in terms of uplift or a path of ascent, that is, the movement from the lower to the higher levels. This path may also be thought of as an inner or psychological journey. "In the West, mysticism is most often described as a path or way consisting of the three steps or stages of preparation, illumination, and union [or communion], each being a preparation for the next" (p.15). In almost all mystical traditions, purgation or purification of the self is the first step. As a major prerequisite for mystical experiences, it is characterized by the eradication of evils in mind, forsaking worldly things and giving up self-will, self-assertion and the sense of having separate selfhood. The second stage or step of the path is the Illumination of the self, which follows purgation. For when the mind becomes emptied of falsehoods and misconceptions, it can then be filled with or illuminated by truth. Illumination is also related to the act of freeing from negativities. "... the mind and the self must be freed from passions, ill will, and negative attitudes such as jealousy and pride, if one is to become kind, compassionate, and humble preparation for communion" (ibid, p.17). The third step is the culmination of mystical struggle when a mystic connects deeply with the essential 'Self' lying mysteriously at the core of his existence. This is characterized by union with the Ultimate Reality.

Many scholars agree not to confuse mysticism with supernatural activities and other hysterical episodes. It is rather a challenging undertaking of holding communion with the Absolute. It is a journey initiated by very few individuals of society, either independent of any religion or being attached to

a particular religious tradition. Since the process involves self-correction, the realization of individual potentials and invoking the spiritual sense in order to seek unification, it is inadequate to relate it to downright irrationalism as Walter Stace, in discussing what mysticism is not, declares that "there is nothing misty, foggy, vague or sloppy about mysticism" (Bishop, 1995, p.22). Mysticism, whether "Indian, Taoist, Sufi, or Christian, presumes a fundamental identity of the soul of man with the Oversoul, of the spirit with God, of the lover with

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the Beloved” (Politella, 1964, p.15). Man’s life is an estrangement or a kind of exile from which the remembrance of his true home is not altogether lost. A mystic is highly sensitive to and aware of his “... Divine heredity, of his roaming in the labyrinth of matter, and of how all his efforts must be directed to return home. The return is only self-realization. To know who one is is to discover one’s identity [within] God” (ibid). Rudolph Otto (1957) believes that the most important characteristic of mysticism is the unique concept of God that it gives. It views God, not as a personal entity. Further, it is not merely a union with the Divine, but essentially a way of life lived in the knowledge of this “wholly other” God” (p.98). According to Carman (1983), numerous definitions of mysticism tend to stress one or more of the following features: (a) a particular ontology, in accord with the mystic’s insight, usually either monistic or theistic; (b) an immediacy or intensity of experience not present in other forms of religion; (c) a separation from the physical, or from ordinary social life, or from ordinary forms of consciousness (p.192). In fact, it is an innate human disposition or tendency which seeks to attain a direct experience of Reality or God. Since the nature of this experience is highly subjective and intuitive, it transcends reason. Mystic longs for this union where God becomes an experience rather than an entity or object.

Mystics are the people who have an intense desire and will to know the unknown, and more often than not, their struggles are based on their respective religious traditions. In such cases, however, they interpret things differently. Sometimes, certain organized faiths disapprove of mystics’ deviation, while there may be others that consider their pursuits as embodiments of the tradition’s cherished ideals. Even within the same tradition, there is a great possibility for opposing views. For instance, the ‘Wahabi’ school of thought in Islam considers mysticism as contrary to the basic teachings of the Quran and ‘Shariah’ given by the Prophet Muhammad. The followers of this sect deem mystical journeys as unnecessary aberrations of mind and mystics as lunatics. However, people from other sects cite scriptural evidences in support of the esoteric dimensions of Islam, which are chiefly cherished by the Sufis. To them, there is an enormous amount of evidence found in the words of God and the acts of the Prophet to lend mysticism as a genuine and valid pursuit. In their struggle for holding communion with the Divine, mystics seek a state of mind when the difference between the ego and the Absolute gets diminished. Mystical experiences involve the process of personal transformation. Based on the foregoing discussion, it can be argued that mystical experience is an attempt to seek union with God, Divine, Absolute, Reality or the Sacred that resides within the self, and it is, therefore, a psychological undertaking. It involves the exercise of intuitive faculties which enables a mystic to ignite the divine spark within him/her, most often leading towards inarticulateness, breaking conventions and setting high moral or philosophical ideals. Mystics, therefore, are those rare individuals who achieve a higher level of personality development after allowing the disintegration of the existing psychological structures.

Research Question

How do the mystics, as described in the novel *The Forty Rules of Love* attain secondary integration in the light of the theory of positive disintegration?

Theoretical Framework

The Theory of Positive Disintegration

Dabrowski (1902-1980) earned his PhD in experimental psychology in 1932 from the University of Poznan. He taught psychology at Laval University and the University of Alberta in Canada during the sixties and seventies. He wrote more than twenty books and nearly a hundred articles in Polish, French and English. He developed his theory of personality development that comprises five levels. It is a seminal product of his life-long study of psychology and is based on the principle of positive disintegration that ultimately leads to the final reintegration of personality. He has also composed an enormous amount of poetry under the pen-name PawelCienin.

Background to TPD

As per his theory of Positive Disintegration (TPD), an individual is viewed as capable of transcending his/her existence to a higher level by making a value-laden choice to transform the self. This process of transformation involves passing through the levels contained in theory. Dabrowski believes that the struggle for attaining wisdom can be undertaken only if the intellectual and the emotional functions of the mind work in collaboration. He also values empathy, the highest human emotion, and suffering to be necessary for personal development. Following a sequential process of development, the qualities get polished and refined to the degree that way for further development is paved for the individual. Every act that stands in contradictory relation to moral principles must be cast aside. "Each good act, each fulfilment of the principles of love, each activity which purifies our primitive instincts - counts for us, brings us closer to perfection" ([Dabrowski, 1970, ibid, p.9](#)). Since the theory involves the disintegration of personality ultimately culminating into integration, the element of suffering is quite natural to it. An individual is prompted to raise himself up from the instinctual level and deconstruct his/her preconceptions about life.

Sufferings and crises in individual life are regarded as highly significant in Dabrowski's theory. He does not think of them as a mere burden. Rather he views them as offering an opportunity for a person to develop and grow. In fact, it offers the chance to choose to become. The theory is based on the concept that the development of mental functioning is underpinned by growing conflict and personal consciousness. It rules out the Aristotelian assumption that lower functioning of the mind is governed by emotions and the higher ones by the intellect. On the contrary, Dabrowski is in favour of an amalgamation or merging of the functions of the intellect and emotions. The transition from one level to another is characterized by an increased understanding and awareness of moral or ethical situations.

The following chief characteristics of Dabrowski's theory may be outlined:

1. The fusion of intellectual and emotional functions results in the development of higher mental functions, which are marked by an elevated level of consciousness that enables a person to make higher-level choices. This ultimately leads him/her to make a transition from "what is" towards "what ought to be". During this transition, the developmental process ensues, and there emerges a new, unique and more empathetic personality. It is Dabrowski's idea of "multileveled" that allows an individual to make a developmental progression.
2. Individual progressing towards the higher levels of the theory rises above the biological level and environmental influences. Moreover, the growth of the third factor leads to the development of personality, for it carries within it the potential for the emergence of the new personality ideal. This ideal comes about through the "... inner psychic transformation, self-awareness, self-control, education-of-oneself and autopsychotherapy" ([Dabrowski, 1996, p.19](#)).
3. The theory comprises of different levels, and there are levels within the levels as well. This Multi-levelness is the hallmark of Dabrowski's theory. Each level is characteristic of certain values, and the "... span between the levels of a given phenomenon became by far more significant than the content of the term defining the phenomenon" ([Dabrowski, 1977, p.xii](#)).
4. The presence of inner conflicts is highly important to the Theory of Positive Disintegration. Generally speaking, the sufferings, unpleasant experiences, traumatic events and crises usually lead to the deterioration of psychic functioning, especially in the case of ordinary human beings. They become a stumbling-block to personal development or transformation. However, in the case of persons with higher developmental potential, such conflicts work as blessings in disguise, for they intensify the urge for psychological and emotional development. Conflicts, traumas and frustrations, although often cause a psychological imbalance in average individuals, do not lead to self-transformation and further

development. However, in individuals with high developmental potential, difficult experiences awaken and/or intensify the need for psychological growth.

5. The theory also advances the notion of deconstructing preconceptions, the existing worldviews and the psychological structures. The internal conflicts are ultimately resolved, and the result is the creation of an autonomous and authentic self.

Levels within the Theory of Positive Disintegration

Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration identifies five levels of personality development. The first level is that of the primary integration, where biological impulses hold sway and other mental activities remain subordinated. The second, third and fourth phases are characterized by the process of personality disintegration. They are followed by the final stage, where reintegration of the personality is carried out. This stage is marked by attributes such as self-possession, self-control, responsibility and autonomy. These attributes emerge effortlessly out of the centre of consciousness which Dabrowski calls "the personality ideal". Individuals do not pass through these stages automatically, nor is it common that everyone would go through these phases. Many people remain in the first stage throughout their lives. They are unable to undergo development that might take them beyond the first level. Some may be found in the second stage, struggling to progress. There are still few who reach the third, and very few indeed are those who pass through the stages beyond. In a word, personality development is not spontaneous or automatic. The theory consists of the following levels.

Level I: Primary Integration

Level II: Uni-level Disintegration

Level III: Spontaneous Multi-level Disintegration

Level IV: Organized Multi-level Disintegration

Level V: Secondary Integration

Level I and Level V are the stages of integration. Although in both the levels, individuals are free from inner conflict and behaviour is spontaneous, marked differences can be seen between the two. At the level I, individuals are wholly driven by their basic instinctive drives, whereas in Level V, individuals acquire a degree of personality development where drives and impulses are channelized by the fully manifest personality ideal. Moreover, certain dynamisms like cognition, imagination and emotions are refined and differentiated. At level I, these dimensions are underdeveloped. People at this stage are mainly indifferent to altruistic concerns.

Level I: Primary Integration

As the name implies, this level involves no disintegration and, therefore, no conflict. An individual's existence is confined within particular structures, and there is no way for development. People at this level are generally self-centred as they are governed largely by their basic and secondary instincts. "Behaviour is controlled by primitive drives and by externality. Intelligence neither controls nor transforms basic drives; it serves the ends determined by primitive drives" (Dabrowski, 1996, p.18). Since an individual's life and actions are based on biological impulses, he/she is more like an unthinking subject and accepts things as they are. He/she shows a conforming attitude towards social norms, prevailing ethical system and moral values. There is, in fact, an uncritical acceptance of nearly everything on the part of an individual. The rigid, stereotypical, impulsive actions and behaviour are controlled by external forces. An individual unconsciously adjusts himself/herself and fits him/her in the social scheme of things. There are two forms of adjustment of an individual to society, namely the negative adjustment and negative maladjustment. In the former, an individual conforms to social conventions without thinking or questioning the nature of things. This is an adjustment to "what is". In negative maladjustment, although an individual shows disregard for social norms, what he chooses for himself is really base and degrading. His deliberate disregard for social norms aims at extreme egocentrism. Adherence

to social norms and values is replaced by lower goals. Criminals and psychopaths can be seen as the examples of negative maladjustment.

Level II: Uni-level Disintegration

At this level, an individual's existing perceptions about the self, world and life begin to collapse. He/she begins to be critical of "the way things are" and, as a result, starts noticing a gap between "where the world is" and "where it could be". This dissatisfaction leads one to question the prevalent social norms, and common behaviour and ethics are thought to be inadequate, wrong or hypocritical. This existential crisis heralds further development of individual provided that he/she has the potential to reach the next level. The existential crisis implies a loosening or breaking of the formerly well-integrated primary structure of personality. This level is manifested through ambivalences, doubts, scepticism, hesitations, mood swings and alike. The disintegration of personality is initiated at this stage which might lead to mental disturbances in severe cases in the form of illness and even suicide. Nevertheless, this level indicates potential in individuals for growth and is marked by the initial disintegration of preconceptions and perceptions. Dabrowski feels that most of humanity inhabits this level. Here people have a vague feeling of something lacking or missing in their lives. Dissatisfaction emerges and grows with the passage of time, but they hardly have any idea what to do. ". . . there is continual vacillation between "pros" and "cons" with no clear direction out of the vicious circle" ([Dabrowski, 1996, p.18](#)). The conflict grows intense when a person perpetuates his journey to level III. Prompted by an element of discontent or conflict, he desperately likes to remedy his disoriented state of mind. If he remains stuck in such a state for a long and is unable to progress, he is likely to contract some serious psychological disorder and might become a patient. Dabrowski points out that the severity of internal conflicts at this level can take an individual to a "no exit situation. Severe mental disorders are associated with Unilever developmental structure" (ibid).

Level III: Spontaneous Multi-level Disintegration

The crisis begins at Level II now gets more stable and establishes sound footing to take individual forward by dint of developmental potential. The growing dissatisfaction with the existing values and social ways prompt individual to set certain substitutes. The actual behaviour of people and the social cum moral practices in vogue are juxtaposed with the higher idealized choices. An individual is made to substitute the existing perceptions with higher ideals. In other words, the individual's dissatisfaction enables him or her to set a concrete body of choices to follow. Dabrowski maintains that the individual has to have developmental potential to progress. If he/she falls short of the ideal, he/she will suffer from internal disharmony, and in extreme cases, the individual can go violent and show destructive behaviour. This level is, in fact, marked by an inner as well as an outer battle which may emerge from any event like job loss, disease, death of near one, marriage etc. The event as such carries the seeds of development as it brings on profound emotional response in an individual. Conflict gets overwhelmingly strong and individual passes through the process of "... self-evaluation, reflection, intense moral conflict, perception of the uniqueness of others, and existential anxiety" (ibid, p.19). At this level, we notice the emergence of multi-levelness – a growing sense of "what ought to be" and growing maladjustment to "what is". Since it offers better choices, this is a positive maladjustment. The individual learns to distinguish between lower and higher levels in his feelings, thoughts and behaviour. He/she begins to understand that he/she is capable of both good and evil, and the choice between them is uniquely his/her own. This understanding is highly synonymous with self-realization. The ability to discern lower and higher levels in his feelings furthers internal conflicts, guilt, unhappiness and inferiority, which in other words is positive disintegration. Experiences such as "inner conflict, sadness, anxiety, obsession, depression, and psychic tension all cooperate in the promotion of humanistic development" ([Dabrowski, 1967, p.vi](#)). The individual makes concerted efforts to move from "what is" and reach the higher, indicated by "what ought to be". This is a crucial point in this theory.

Level IV: Organized Multi-level Disintegration

It is termed as 'organized' because the hitherto dispersed and disoriented feelings are subsumed under the individual's conscious choice. Conflicts subside to a great degree, and individual exercises his capacity to choose and decide independently. He/she now has a vivid idea of "what ought to be". Self-centeredness is replaced by altruism and selflessness, and feelings of empathy gain strength. The individual is enabled to view his/her self in a more objective way. At this level, the individual gains a maximum degree of self-realization and takes full control of his development. All the involuntary spontaneous reactions like impulsiveness, violence, short temper, anger etc., are replaced by a conscious, self-directed view of life. The individual begins to concretize the ideal choices set at the previous level. In other words, he or she starts following the legend of his/her own life. The norms and conventions imposed by the external forces are scrutinized. They are followed only if they are deemed appropriate or in accordance with the set ideals; otherwise, they are consciously replaced by an individual's self-perceived higher values. This level is marked by conscious efforts on the part of the individual in shaping and systematizing behaviour. This conscious shaping of behaviour is carried out with the intent of achieving planned self-transformation. The individual is developed enough to have a clear vision of his/her aims and cherished values. The inner conflicts are largely resolved, and so are the external conflicts. Self-autonomy comes to be dominant. Personality disintegration culminates into a stage where an individual embraces the highest human values, and positive adjustment to the personality ideals can be observed.

Level V: Secondary Integration

According to Dabrowski, this is the final stage of personality development that only a few rare individuals reach. It is the climax of an individual's journey where horrors are ended, and feelings of immense joy and peace prevail. An individual reaches the "what ought to be" and "what was" becomes only a past memory. Personality development is complete. The developmental dynamisms present at level V are "responsibility, autonomy, authentic and personality ideal" ([Dabrowski, 1996, p.20](#)). Here, the individual integrates different aspects of his/her personality to seek wholeness and unity. Everything related to an individual is it good or bad, is confronted, accepted and integrated. There can be observed a complete harmonization of one's personality with the personality ideal. This level is characterized by a complete sense of responsibility, self-autonomy, authentic and self-perfection. The individual achieves self-realization as he/she becomes a trend-setter. Social conventions and stereotypical norms are no longer followed slavishly. The individual is likely to face resistance from society which may be extreme in certain cases. But the individual's personality is developed on such lines that he or she won't care about what the world says and how people perceives his/her actions or behaviour. Owing to his highly developed consciousness and strong feelings of empathy, this transformed individual is now more concerned about others' wellbeing.

Kazimierz Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration is paradoxical, for it is based on the idea of integration through disintegration, construction through destruction, joys through sorrows and the attainment of a peaceful state of mind through sufferings. Opposites are complementary and concomitantly related to each other. The theory posits that the dissolution of existing personality structures is a prerequisite for the developed self. According to this theory, personality development is carried out in the following two ways: (1) Dissolving the existing structures related to personality by sticking to the self-chosen idealized choices reflecting as "what it ought to be". The purpose is to become an autonomous, more responsible and empathetic individual. (2) To fulfil the idealized choices by means of love and empathy. Egocentrism is replaced by selflessness and altruism. For this, emotional development is crucial, as it leads to self-perfection and to loss of self.

Psychological Analysis of "The Forty Rules of Love"

The two central characters in *The Forty Rules of Love* who have had mystical experiences are Ella Rubinstein

and Jalaluddin Rumi, former a middle-aged American housewife and later a 13th century Sufi poet. At a surface level, both of them seem to lead a conforming life, sticking to the established norms and complying with their respective cultural values. Rumi enjoys his social position as a famous cleric with a number of followers and admirers from far and wide. On the other hand, Ella lives a kind of dependent life as a traditional housewife, possessed by domestic needs and family concerns and cautious about the family reputation. "Building her whole life around her husband and children, Ella lacked any survival techniques to help her cope with life's hardships on her own" (Shafak, 2010, p.3). At the start of the novel, she is infuriated by her daughter's decision of marrying a guy from some other cultural background. She is, in fact, apprehensive of losing her family reputation. In the context of Dabrowski's theory of personality development, both the characters can adequately be placed at level I. At this level, there is not only an attitude of conformity and blind adherence to prevalent norms, but there is also a "concern for the preservation of one's line of tradition" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p.178). Ella's focus is chiefly laid on her relation to the family and other domestic matters. Her psychological state is much in line with Dabrowski's first phase of personality development, where an individual is mostly self-centred and is dominated by the basic drives. At a deeper level, however, both Ella and Rumi show a marked mystical tendency as is evident in their behaviour. Amidst the routine chores, Ella is obsessed with questionings, inquisitiveness and dissatisfaction. As she says: "No matter who we are or where we live, deep inside we all feel incomplete. It is like we have lost something ... fewer manage to go out and look for it" (Shafak, 2010, p.43). Given that Shafak bases her novel on the theme of mysticism, the 'something', in this context, therefore points towards finding the sense of Divine within the self. It must be reiterated that the Divine does not exist as an entity in the external world; rather it is the highest part of oneself, seeking of which requires optimum development of consciousness. In Dabrowskian terms, an individual begins to carry out the pursuit of his/her personality ideal. However, the pursuit is preceded by setting the ideal that often starts with an inward struggle. Ella begins to undergo a kind of inner conflict: "...why her mind turned from time to time into a coven of dark thoughts? Or how come she felt so lonely even though she had a large, loving family?" (pp.36-37). Likewise, Rumi's immediate and accommodating response to Shams' unconventional teachings also indicates that he has a profound urge and inquisitiveness to know more and more about himself. The dissatisfaction with the way things are results in inner conflict which both Ella and Rumi feel. Both have inclination towards seeking answers to the broad human questions even prior to meeting with their respective spiritual guides. Their inner conflict may well be deemed as a striking feature of the level of unilevel disintegration. Also characteristic of level II are what Dabrowski and Piechowski (1977) refer to as "ambitendencies: indecision, wanting and not wanting, or wanting two irreconcilable things at once" (p.41). This dynamism can be seen in Ella's vacillating mental condition as is evidenced in her request made to Aziz to show her what line of action she must follow. "I don't know why I'm down in the dumps today. I can't give you a reason ...I guess this is what they call midlife crisis" (Shafak, 2010, p.114). Besides, there is another prominent trait found in unilevel disintegration, which is "... the susceptibility to social opinion, the guidance of one's behaviour based on a need for recognition and approval, and internalization of values from external sources" (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, p.41). Both the characters implicitly speak of their desire to please, of being esteemed or how they were worried that others would see how vain they were. Rumi remained a popular cleric/preacher. He would go far and wide to deliver sermons and was hailed warmly by his followers. Likewise, Ella's dissatisfaction stems partly from the fact that her domestic position is challenged by the rebellion shown by both her spouse and daughter. Ella wants to be acknowledged as a seasoned in charge of household affairs and wants her decisions to be weighed and considered.

When the inner conflict becomes more intense, and an individual desperately wants to fill in the void, he/she becomes more critical of the way things are. Conflict becomes a battle between the individual and his/her external surroundings. It is at this stage the existential crisis begins. The individual sets an ideal that carries his/her vision of how things ought to be. In the mystic's journey towards the union with Reality, a similar kind of inner conflict turns into a battle. Mystic shows sheer dissatisfaction with the existing structures. The existential crisis entails pain and suffering, as is articulated by Shams through an analogy:

The midwife knows that when there is no pain, the way for the baby cannot be opened, and the mother cannot give birth. Likewise, for a new Self to be born, hardship is necessary. Just as clay needs to go through intense heat to become strong, Love can only be perfected in pain. ([Shafak, 2010, p., 86](#)).

The idea of the birth of a new Self is very much compatible with Dabrowski's concept of secondary integration that is followed by disintegration of personality in the same way as the existing personality structures of a Sufi are disintegrated till he/she seeks mystical union. The idea of 'rebirth' in mysticism is, therefore, synonymous with the idea of positive disintegration of personality that comes about as secondary integration. Prompted by the insights offered by their respective mentors, both Ella and Rumi experience a marked change in the quality and degree of their inner battle. Instead of preoccupation with a concern for the reputation or what Jung calls the persona, can be noticed a multi-level conflict. Rumi now feels it "flattering to hear people praise (his) preaching skills" (*ibid*, p.99). This is an instance of spontaneous multi-level disintegration as both begin to see a gap between what they are and what people think they are. They begin to disentangle themselves from every thought that has hitherto troubled them. Their concern to trust in the "self" in order to know the Divine is a value now to which both are somewhat intrinsically committed. The dissatisfaction grows, and its nature changes, thereby enabling them to break from ambivalencies. Now they have one tendency, to surrender themselves completely to their highest value which in their case is the Divine force residing within. Submission to the idealized value is another characteristic of this level. "Those who submit to the divine essence of life will live in unperturbed tranquillity and peace ..." (*ibid*, p.292).

In the fourth level of personality development, an individual manages to form a vivid picture of his/her personality ideal. The inner psychic milieu takes control of the external environment. The road taken by the individual is purely his/her own choice. The chief characteristic of the organized phase of multi-level disintegration is also the enhanced self-realization and increasing control over the process of development. In the mystical journey, this stage comes about when "all idols that stood between the individual and God are demolished, including fame, wealth, rank and even religion" (*ibid*, p.290). Now the idealized values supersede the common ones, and mystics are ready to throw away the latter in case they are found contradictory to their idealized ones. Ella initiates a journey in the light of a new frame of reference, and so does Rumi. Inspired by the tale of Shams and Rumi, she carries out a psychological journey of transformation. It is at this level of development that Rumi asserts, "Religious rules and prohibitions are important, but they should not be turned into unquestionable taboos" (*ibid*, p.246). In the theory of positive disintegration, this is the level where people adhere to their ideals and consciously oversee their developmental process. Mystics follow the same as one of the rules says, "... belief in your own values and your rules, but never lord them over others" (*ibid*.). Guided by the mentors, they develop a sense of autonomy and belief in their idealized choices. They are refined enough to feel the Divine within and to respond to its voice. As is characteristic of multi-level disintegration, they are consciously aware of their developmental process. Both of them exhibit enormous psychological strength and faith in their mystical stance by pursuing their personality ideals. Now instead of being slavish followers, they show sublime faith in their own ideals. And this is the hallmark of mystical experience, as Shams remarks: "Do not go with the flow. Be the flow" (*ibid*, p.136). "Be the flow" indicates a sense of self-autonomy and mystic's conviction that he/she is not a blind follower of some doctrine but an active seeker who has carved his/her destiny in becoming one with the Divine.

The transformation that takes place is reflected through seeking self-autonomy, self-realization and growing love for humanity. Egoism is replaced by altruism and humanitarian feelings overcome the racial, religious and cultural differences. The developmental dynamisms present at level V are "responsibility, autonomy, authenticity and personality ideal" ([Dabrowski, 1996, p.20](#)). Rumi's desire is to please God by loving others. He realizes the significance of reaching the Divine through His creations. Psychologically speaking, he responds to his cherished ideals without caring for what the world says. He goes to the tavern, brings wine and follows a new spiritual dimension consciously. He sticks to the mystical rule, which says, "If you keep breaking

other people's hearts, whatever religious duty you perform is no good" ([Shafak, 2010, p.136](#)). Almost similar kind of conscious development of inner standards pertaining to empathy and love can be seen in Ella Rubenstein. She reminds herself of Rumi's words: "We don't need to hunt for love outside ourselves. All we need to do is to eliminate the barriers inside that keep us away from love" (ibid, p.250). Here, love can be taken in both literal and metaphorical terms. Literally, it means love for fellow beings, other creatures and also self-love. Metaphorically it refers to God or the Absolute or the Ultimate Reality. This stage of development is equivalent to the level Dabrowski refers to as Secondary Integration. Both Rumi and Ella feel they have benefited from the guidance provided to them by their respective mentors and learnt a great deal from their mystical experiences. They begin to see the world from a different angle. In the context of this theory, their spiritual direction helped them in their transition from spontaneous to organized multi-level disintegration, and it led ultimately to the level of secondary integration. At this level, an individual becomes not only tolerant but also confident and bold in articulating his/her worldviews. "When something needs to be said, I'll say it even if the whole world grabs me by the neck and tells me to keep quiet" (ibid, p.49). Besides, mystical union with the Divine produces feelings of immense joy, peace and tranquillity. This is again characteristic of secondary integration of personality that is actually a kind of rebirth carried out in the wake of disintegration (death) of the existing psychic structures as [Shafak \(2010\)](#) writes, "In Sufism, you learn how to die before death" (p.325).

Conclusion

Mystical experiences manifested in characters' worldviews, thoughts, actions and responses to certain situations with regard to the novel *The Forty Rules of Love* have been analyzed in the light of Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration. Textual analysis of the novel reveals that various stages in the mystical quest for self-discovery may well be equated with the phenomenon of multileveled present in the psychological theory of personality development. Various dynamisms related to each level of the theory are more or less reflected in mystical striving for the union with the Absolute. The way these mystics (Rumi and Ella) succeed in overcoming ego-limitations, going beyond social affiliations and labels, breaking pre-conceived moral notions and religious prejudices and ultimately connecting with the higher self (Divine) is chiefly synonymous with Dabrowskian idea of disintegrating of existing psychological structures that lead them to secondary integration stage, the final of personality development reached by a very few individuals. It is characterized by dynamism such as self-autonomy, self-realization, humanitarianism, love and empathy, the features manifested in the consummation of mystical struggle. The study also suggests that confusing mystical experience with psychological disorders such as psychosis is misleading and lacking in evidence.

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