

Dhvani in Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*: An Analysis Through the Lens of Anandavardhana's Dhvani Theory

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1.0 Abstract

Elif Shafak's work "*The Forty Rules of Love*" is centred on Rumi and Shams Tabrizi as it depicts their changing relationship. Many researchers have published their findings related to this book. There are several literature studies which have examined various aspects of the novel focusing on style, theme and character development. Nevertheless, there is a research gap when it comes to applying Indian Aesthetics with specific regard to Anandavardhana's Dhvani theory. We know that aesthetics contributes significantly to the shaping of literary texts by evoking emotions, creating worlds, developing characters, etc., and satisfying readers' readings. Much of this is achieved through such elements as language, images, symbols, rhythmical patterns and forms. Some themes explored in the book include love, change, culture, Sufi mysticism, bending rules, storytelling magic. Through parallel accounts about Ella and Rumi the author undermines typical religious interpretations, praises anomalous romance and comments on today's lives. It also brings out the fact that literature can transform lives by telling stories. Complexity and subtlety characterize "The Forty Rules of Love" by Elif Shafak enabling one to appreciate life's ambiguities, and by always taking them along into love, change and spirituality.

Key Words: Dhvani theory, Aesthetics, suggestive meaning, Indian Aesthetics

1.1 Introduction

Elif Shafak is a Turkish writer who has authored the book *The Forty Rules of Love*. Her degree in Gender and Women's Studies motivated her to write this book. The book is about Rumi, and his divine companion Shams Tabrizi. It describes how Shams transformed a scholar into a Sufi mystic. This book was sold in over 750,000 copies in Turkey and France. The book is highly popular and has become a matter of discussion among various researchers. Many researches and studies have been carried out on this book. It's not just about the story itself, rather it encompasses ways in which the author employs language, structure and imagery to evoke emotions. The author also seeks to paint a picture which shapes our understanding.

1.2 Literature Review and Research Gap

The existing literature has explored the following areas- stylistic analysis of the novel, the intersection of multiple historical, socio-cultural and political discourses as presented in the novel and postmodernity in prevailing social structure. The existing literature has analysed the novel through the binary of localism-supralocalism and particularism-universalism, thematic concerns of the novel, psychological analysis, study of structure and the narrative technique, analysis of the metaphorical expressions in the novel, marriage and female identity. Everyday a new aspect of the novel is being studied. There is no limit to the perspectives. The existing literature has explored a lot about the book but it hasn't produced any research about the application of Indian Aesthetics to the novel. This is a major field yet to be explored. The novel is always linked to Sufism and philosophies that are valid in Rumi's age and also in this contemporary time. But the gap that we found is Indian Aesthetics has not been applied to the novel. Hence, our research aims to go for a brief analysis of the book in the light of Anandavardhana's Dhvani theory, a major aspect of Indian aesthetics.

1.3 Methodology

Here the application method has been used for highlighting and analysing the applicability of Dhvani theory along with identifying the ways of its presence in this literary text. So, identifying and analysing are done for the validation of the aesthetic appeals present in the text through the theory.

1.4 Aesthetics and its importance:

Aesthetics, often associated with beauty and sensory experience, plays a pivotal role in shaping the impact and interpretation of literary texts. It is an art of crafting text that not only conveys meaning, but also evokes emotions, stimulates imagination while provides a pleasurable reading experience.

Aesthetics play a crucial role in literature, influencing various aspects of the reading experience. Emotional engagement is one key function, as aesthetic elements like imagery, metaphor, and rhythm evoke a wide range of emotions in readers. A vivid description of a sunset, for example, can elicit feelings of peace and tranquility. Additionally, aesthetic choices contribute to world-building by creating believable and immersive settings, transporting readers to different times, places, and cultures. These choices also aid in character development, revealing traits and motivations through details such as a character's speech, attire, and movements. Themes within a literary work can be deepened through aesthetic elements, like the use of symbolism to convey complex ideas in visually compelling ways. Furthermore, a well-crafted text offers readers satisfaction, enhancing their enjoyment of the literary work.

Several specific aesthetic elements contribute to this experience. Language, including word choice, syntax, and tone, shapes the overall aesthetic. Imagery appeals to the senses, creating vivid mental pictures that enhance understanding. Symbolism adds depth and complexity by using objects, characters, or events to represent abstract ideas. Rhythm and sound, through devices like alliteration and rhyme, lend a musicality to the language, creating specific moods or atmospheres. Finally, the structure of the text, including plot, character development, and theme arrangement, plays a significant role in shaping the overall aesthetic experiences. Hence, we can state that aesthetics is not merely adornment but a fundamental aspect of literary creation. It is through aesthetic choices that authors engage readers on a deeper level. They invite them to participate in the construction of meaning and experience. Here are some key points:

****Beyond Content****: Aesthetics transcends mere plot or characters It's about how an author manipulates words. Sentence structure and figurative language such as similes and metaphors and even the overarching structure of the story like chapters and pacing must be considered. These elements converge to create a profound effect.

****Form and Content****: These aspects are interwoven. The "form" or how the story is conveyed, amplifies the "content" or the subject matter. Imagine a suspenseful narrative communicated in slow monotonous prose are hardly effective.

****Emotional Response****: An aesthetic experience frequently evokes an emotional reaction. It arouses awe, fear, sadness, or joy or anything in between. A meticulously crafted story induces these feelings.

****Subjectivity****: Not all readers perceive beauty uniformly. Literary aesthetics hold a degree of subjectivity. Certain techniques and elements are generally accepted to foster a potent aesthetic experience.

Examples:

The chilling atmosphere is created by Edgar Allan Poe through the use of dark imagery and suspenseful language. The rhythmic flow and vivid descriptions are found in the poetry of William Wordsworth. The use of humour and irony is found in Jane Austen's novels. They create a witty and satirical aesthetic. Overall aesthetics in literature is about the way a writer employs tools of language. They create an experience that transcends merely reading words on a page. It's about how they make us feel. It makes us think and imagine.

1.5 Dhvani Theory

The Dhvani Theory is a fascinating concept in Indian aesthetics particularly within the realm of literature. Developed by Anandavardhana in the 9th century, it focuses on the power of suggestion. It emphasizes the implied meaning in poetry. Dhvani is a branch of mediaeval Indian poetics which states that aesthetic pleasure from literary works can be achieved not by the images created by the direct meanings of words but by the associations and ideas evoked by these images. The literal meaning of the text does not give us artistic enjoyment or aesthetic pleasure but the suggestive meaning, the hidden meaning gives us aesthetic pleasure.

Anandavardhana's "Dhvanyaloka," which is believed to have been composed in the ninth century, is the most significant work on Dhvani. Anandavardhana says that Dhvani is the soul of poetry. Although language, prosody, metaphors, diction, and other factors make up the body of poetry, dhvani, the soul of poetry is easily perceptible to sahrudaya (sensitive-hearted person). With the use of words, great poets may recreate meanings in delicate minds. Suggestions are given greater weight by Anandavardhana than literal interpretations. The true source of aesthetic pleasure is the implied meaning. He asserts that although words have a

literal meaning, the bhavakas' minds can give them a deeper meaning as well. Anandavardhana describes dhvani as the soul of poetry that emerges from sphota and vyanjana. The Dhvani theory is a philosophy of symbolism and meaning. It relates to poetry of suggestion. Dhvani is present through the use of three-layered word meanings: Vyanjana: suggestive meanings; Lakshana: indicating meanings other than the literal meaning; and Abidha: literal meanings.

The verbal structure is the primary factor in Dhvani theory. Poetry relies heavily not just on words to convey emotion, but also on sounds. Indian rhetoricians have explored words' emotive context and meaning in great detail. Words can have two meanings at least: suggestive meaning and actual meaning. The meaning proposed can be referred to as dhvani. There are differences in the way our minds interpret a word, but there are neither qualitative nor quantitative distinctions in its substance. Our delicate mind is overflowing with potential meaning as we grab. It's known as sphota. Because Dhvani is sphota, it sounds, rings, or reverberates, which is why it has been given this name. While Lakshana and Abidha are paths, Vyanjana is the ultimate path. Anandavardhana uses three categories of implicit sense: vastudhvani, alamkar dhvani, and 'rasadhvani'. Vastudhvani hints at uncommon thoughts, alamkara dhvani indicates speech figures, and rasadhvani evokes rasa, the ultimate aesthetic quality of art. It cannot be conveyed through words.

“Anandavardhana gives more importance to suggestive meanings rather than primary meanings. The true source of aesthetic pleasure is the suggested meaning. He says that utterances possess literal meaning but they can convey a further meaning that flashes in the mind of the bhavak”. (Upadhyay,125)

The word dhvani is used for conventional symbol, conventional meaning, the power of word to convey the suggestive meaning, suggestive meaning and poetic work containing the suggestive element. Dhvani can be felt in the smallest possible word or words and even the whole text can be suggestive. Anandavardhana called Dhvani to be the soul of poetry so he said that nothing is poetry if it is not suggestive.

1.6 Introduction to the novel “*The Forty Rules of Love*”

A novel within a novel, *The Forty Rules of Love*, tells two parallel stories that reflect on each other across two very different cultures and seven intervening centuries. Ella, a housewife, receives a book named Sweet Blasphemy for evaluation at the beginning of the story. Shams Tabrizi, a poet, from the thirteenth century, serves as Rumi's spiritual mentor and is the subject of this work. Shams's Forty Love Rules are scattered throughout the novel. Water,

Air, Earth, Fire, and Void are the five elements of nature that are highlighted in Sweet Blasphemy's framework. According to the characteristics of each element, the chapters in each segment tells a story. The novel perfectly aligns with the ideas of the Indian Poetics and the theme of spirituality turns it more close to the ideals of Indian Aesthetics. Meant for entertainment, art affects us and transforms us directing us towards the path of *moksha*. True art liberates us. Hence, Kirthika Soundararajan says, "*In this story, the love discussed is spiritual, associated with God. The Forty Rules help one attain God*". (Soundararajan, Kirthika) and this aligns well with the goal of Indian aesthetics.

1.7 Dhvani in the text

The Forty Rules of Love by Elif Shafak explores several possible meanings of which some include:

The Nature of Love: The novel delves into the multifaceted nature of love. It explores romantic love, spiritual love and self-love. The transformative power of love in all its forms is also examined. The "Forty Rules" themselves, though not explicitly presented, act as a guide to understanding and experiencing a deeper kind of love.

The Power of Transformation: Both the historical and the contemporary narratives showcase characters undergoing significant changes. Rumi, a respected scholar, finds his life and work ignited by Shams' influence. Ella, a seemingly complacent housewife, awakens to her desires and seeks a more fulfilling life. The novel suggests love has the potential to push us beyond our comfort zones. It can lead us to personal growth.

Bridging Cultures and Time Periods: The story seamlessly blends the 13th-century world of Rumi and Shams with the contemporary world of Ella. It allows the novel to explore timeless and universally relevant themes. It emphasizes the enduring nature of love, spirituality and the human quest for meaning.

Importance of Sufism: Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, plays a central role in the novel. It sheds light on the concept of divine love. It illuminates the path of spiritual enlightenment. While not a religious text itself, the novel offers glimpses of the practices and philosophies of Sufism.

Questioning Tradition: Both the storylines challenge the established norms and expectations. Rumi and Shams face societal disapproval. Their unconventional relationship sparks controversy. Ella breaks free from the constraints of her domestic life. The novel invites readers to question rigid traditions. Side by side it encourages individual growth.

Importance of Storytelling: The act of storytelling itself is a significant theme. The novel within the novel, "Sweet Blasphemy" allows Ella to connect with Rumi's story. It also engages the reader. The novel highlights the power of stories to transcend time and culture.

These are just some of the possible meanings one can find in *The Forty Rules of Love*. The richness of the novel lies in its ability to evoke different interpretations and spark personal reflection in each reader.

"The Forty Rules of Love"

Here are some possible critical interpretations of the novel along with arguments to support them:

1. A Challenge to Traditional Interpretations of Religion:

Argument: The novel presents a more mystical and personal interpretation of Islam particularly Sufism through the character of Shams. This challenges the rigid and literal interpretations often associated with religion.

Evidence: Shams' unconventional behaviour and teachings often clash with established religious authorities. The emphasis on love as universal force and path to God transcends strict adherence to religious rituals.

2. A Celebration of Unconventional Love:

Argument: The novel celebrates love that defies societal norms. This theme is vividly illustrated in the relationship between Shams and Rumi. This love transcends sexuality. It focuses on spiritual connection and transformation.

Evidence: The public disapproval of the bond of Shams and Rumi highlights societal discomfort with their unconventional closeness. The focus on mystical union and the loss of self emphasizes the spiritual dimension of their love.

3. An Exploration of Identity and Transformation: Argument. Both Ella and Rumi undergo significant transformations. These changes result from their encounters with love. The novel explores how love can challenge our established identities. It pushes us towards personal growth.

Evidence: Ella awakens from her routine life. She rediscovers her passion through the story of Rumi and Shams. Rumi's encounter with Shams shakes his foundations. It awakens his true mystical calling.

4. A Critique of Modern Life:

Argument: The novel critiques the emptiness. Dissatisfaction that can come with focus on material possessions and societal expectations as seen in Ella's initial life. It contrasts with the pursuit of spiritual fulfilment through love.

Evidence: Ella's initial dissatisfaction despite having a seemingly perfect life highlights the limitations of materialism. Ella feels incomplete. The contrast between Ella's mundane world and the passionate journey of Rumi and Shams emphasizes yearning for a more meaningful existence. The juxtaposition is striking. There exists a profound dichotomy between their lives.

5. A Defense of Storytelling and the Power of Literature:

Argument: The novel showcases the transformative power of storytelling. Especially in how the fictional manuscript "Sweet Blasphemy" ignites a change in Ella's life.

Evidence: Ella's journey is deeply affected by her connection with the story of Rumi and Shams. The interweaving of the past and present narratives highlights the enduring power of stories. It bridges time. It connects people. It's important to note that these are just a few possible interpretations. The novel's richness allows for diverse readings and can be analysed through various critical lenses. These lenses include gender studies. They also include post-colonialism or historical fiction.

The above possible interpretations that we have discussed so far are attesting the prominent presence of dhvani in the novel. This also confirms the credibility of the author and magic of her narrative style, use of diction and rich philosophical thoughts. The suggestions are wide and open unfolding different layers at different stages making ways to the pivotal presence of dhvani.

1.8 Conclusion

Aesthetics is a key factor in what is regarded as vital for literature since it helps in making the audience feel, create environments, build characters, explore issues, and meet the expectations and needs of the readers through some beautiful reactions. The theory of Dhvani has been applied successfully to this novel with fruitful outcomes. In an endeavour to explicate the concept of multiple meanings in words, the theory postulates three meanings that are Vyanjana, Lakshana and Abhidha in an attempt to depict added layers of meanings for poetic expressions. The Forty Rules of Love teaches love; change; the crossing between cultures and time; Sufism; the role of questioning; and the art of narrating a story. It has multiple interpretations that are presented through such subjects as love, metamorphosis, self-image, the world, and the ability to narrate. The novel is an example of the writer's protest against Puritanism, an ode to free love, an exploration of the concepts of an individual and a change of personalities and the position on the modern world and for the importance of narrating and writing. And all these suggestions suggest that dhvani is evidently present in this text. The dynamics between such characters as Rumi and Shams more or less, and Ella's transformation, as well as societal issues, can be viewed in multiple ways. Given this, The Forty Rules of Love can be read and appreciated in many different ways and is relevant to the area of gender/sexuality, post-colonial, and historical fiction. And further research can be done on these areas and other Indian theories of criticism.

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