

Sufism in Turkish Fiction: The Forty Rules of Love by Elif Shafak as a Model

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Abstract The Arab Islamic Sufi experience is an important tributary to the contemporary novel. In the midst of the novelist's search for new forms and interesting content in the paths of experimental novels, he found what he was looking for in the Sufi experience, as we saw in the novels that tried to reach the peak of artistic creativity based on the heritage element as the most prominent developmental features of the contemporary novel, as we find in the novels Al-Harafish, Thathra Fawq Al-Nil, and Al-Liss and Al-Kilab by Naguib Mahfouz, "Al-Tajalliyat" by Naguib Al-Ghitani, "Al-Wali Al-Taher Raise His Hands in Supplication" by Taher Wattar, "Al-Zawiya" by Al-Tahami Al-Wazzani, Al-Hawameem, "Tawasin Al-Ghazali", "Bahr Noon", and "Jabal Qaf" by Abdel-Ilah Arafa, and other works that invested the Sufi heritage experience in their narrative texts in form and content. Resorting to the Sufi experience is an aspect of the modernity of the contemporary novel.

Key Words: sufism - islamic - contemporary novel - experience

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Introduction

The new novelists were attracted to the Sufi heritage, and since the novel became that comprehensive text, as Jean-Yves Tadie said, “a collection of genres that embraces poetry, narrative, theater, painting, and myth: fable, dream, and magic, as well as the travel writings with their exploratory nature, and thus it possesses an open structure and multiple discourses”^١

The basis of the narrative discourse is development and continuous search for new worlds and narrative mechanisms that are different from everything that is fixed and stereotypical. “The experimental novel seeks to create forms and in doing so embarks on the adventure of destroying the fixity of ready-made forms, as it establishes its existence on the non-model or the search for a possible model that is different, different, and constantly renewed.”^٢

Therefore, we find that the Sufi experience quenched some of his thirst in his constant search for the new.

Sufism

Sufism, as a devotional practice, is as old as history and has existed in all religions and is known in all sects. It is a departure from the empty mechanical practice of religion. Man, by nature, is always searching for God, always searching for this luminous path that connects him to the origin of his existence. “The Sufi experience is not, then, a theory in the Greek sense about God, but rather a practical practice seeking the face of God. The Sufi does not contemplate God or reflect on Him. He lives by God.”^٣

Islamic history has witnessed many names of Sufis whose paths and worship have become torches to be emulated by all who wish to follow this path, because Islamic Sufism has formed a crucible in which all the spiritual efforts that the Sufis have experienced have gathered. The most famous of these are **Saeed bin Jubair** ٩٥ AH, **Al-Hasan Al-Basri d.** ١١٠ AH, **Ibrahim bin Adham** ١٦١ AH, **Rabia Al-Adawiyya** ١٨٥ AH, **Ma'ruf Al-Karkhi d.** ٢٠٠ AH, until we reach the sixth and seventh centuries AH with **Muhammad Al-Ghazali** ٥٠٥ AH, **Omar Khayyam** ٥٢٦ AH, **Abu Ya'qub Al-Hamadhani** ٥٣٥ AH, **Adi bin Musafir** ٥٥٨ AH,

Abdul Qadir Al-Jilani ٥٦١ AH, Ibn Tufayl ٥٨١ AH, Shihab Al-Din Al-Suhrawardi who was killed ٥٨٧ AH, Ibn Al-Farid ٦٣٢ AH, Ibn Arabi ٦٣٨ AH, Abu Madyan Shu'ayb ٥٨٠ AH, Abu Al-Hasan Al-Shadhili ٦٥٦ AH, Ibn Seventy ٦٦٩ AH - Jalaluddin Rumi ٦٧٢ AH - Ahmed Al-Badawi ٦٧٥ AH - Al-Afeef Al-Tilimsani ٦٩٠ AH

In the seventh century, Sufism reached its peak when Ibn Arabi revealed his embrace of the unity of being and the unity of religions, and Ibn Sab'in believed in absolute unity and Jalal al-Din al-Rumi wrote the Mathnawi book - which is the subject of the studied novel - so we conclude here that Rumi existed in the golden age of Sufism and his spiral method was widely spread in Islamic countries from Turkey to Iraq to Syria to Egypt to Western countries. He is Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Hussein Baha al-Din al-Balkhi, born in ١٢٠٧ AD - died in ١٢٧٢ AD, known as Mawlana Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. He is a Sufi writer, jurist, theorist and legal scholar who was known as Rumi because he spent most of his life with the Seljuks of Rum in present-day Turkey. His birth and mother tongue indicate Persian origins and basic culture, and all his works were written in the new Persian language, which developed during the Persian Renaissance in the regions of Sisan and Khorasan. His works were translated into many languages, including Turkish and Western languages, and the BBC described him as the most popular poet in America.

Title structure:

The contemporary critical arena has witnessed great interest in the title, as creators have been keen to select the best and most attractive titles, and critics have been keen to analyze and interpret those titles aesthetically. "There has been a shift in novel writing from depicting the superficial structure of reality to focusing on its deep structure, which revealed its complexity and dynamism, which assumed a replacement of novelistic tools at the levels of language, techniques, and vision"^٤. The title had the largest share in this, as it became characterized by a dense energy of meanings that are identical between clarity and ambiguity. The title, as Leo Hook says, "must form a question and create anticipation"^٥

The brilliant Turkish novelist deals with the story of Jalaluddin Rumi, a famous figure in the Islamic world as a Sufi and the author of the largest collection of Sufi love poems. The title of the novel indicates this, "The Forty Rules of Love by Jalaluddin Rumi." Perhaps the reader of the title thinks that he will read about the biography of Jalaluddin Rumi. As we know, the title has become one of the textual thresholds of great importance in criticism. Critics such as Gerard Genette and Lucien Goldmann have given it special attention, as **Lewhek** defined it as "a group of linguistic indications that can be established at the beginning of the text in order to designate it and indicate its overall content and in order to attract the intended audience."^٦ "Gerard Genette" identifies four basic functions of the title: temptation, description, suggestion, and designation.^٤ From here we realize the

importance of the title for this novel. The title is **The Forty Rules of Love** in large size, then under it in parentheses (A Novel about Jalaluddin Rumi).

The title is divided into two parts, the first nominal sentence that talks about the rules of love, then the explanatory sentence that links these rules to the famous Sufi figure in the world, Jalaluddin Rumi. The architecture of the novel began from the structure of the title. The novelist wanted to make the title clear, but it was ambiguous clarity because she opened the door for us to Rumi's Sufism and his rules of love. From here, the overlap between the large title and the small title began (if we may use this expression). Through the title, we can read the content of the novel, as Elif Shafak focused on the rules of love and not on Rumi's novel. These rules were followed in the text of the novel from its beginning to its end. Here, we find that "the modern title went beyond the structure of the title sentence to the structure of the text, especially when the main title is accompanied by the subtitle."^٦ With this structure, the title of the novel came, but the novelist was not satisfied with this title, but added subtitles to it within the text. These titles were what shattered the horizon of the reader's expectations and made his reading of the text full of astonishment and confusion. We are facing a Sufi subject that identifies with In love and in describing the manifestations of love, "and here the title has gone beyond the stage of clarity to dance on the edge of clear ambiguity, or ambiguous clarity, so what attracts the reader to this novel in terms of the title is the paradox between the main title and the subtitles, which come to clarify the main title"^٧, thus the novelist carries us through her narrative text in titles that increase our confusion and amazement, so within the original novel, she takes us in the second novel that she titled Sweet Infidelity, so when was infidelity sweet? This title, which consists of two contradictory words, opens the door wide to all possibilities, as it is like an initial shock to the reader of the novel so that he prepares for the surprises that will come to him, as if she wants to tell the recipient that what he will find in the text is very different from what he is accustomed to from past writings, as she titles the first part of the novel Sweet Infidelity The **Earth** and follows it with an explanatory sentence saying: things that are solid, imbibed, and still

Here we explain the state of stability, contentment and satisfaction that its heroes lived. The life of Ayla and her family was stable and steady, and Rumi's life was also stable and harmonious.

Then, she titled the second part **Water** and followed it with an explanatory sentence that says: Liquid things change and cannot be predicted, and from here we guess that the heroes of the novel will live the beginning of change with uncertain consequences. As for the third part, she titled it **Wind**: Things that move - develop - and challenge, change remains the dominant factor in the events of the novel and its heroes, but in a stronger way and at a faster pace. Then, she titled the fourth part **Fire**: Things that destroy and shatter, so in this title we can fathom the endings of the successive events in both novels. As for the fifth part, its title

was **Nothingness**: Things that exist through their absence, and here the Sufi genius that distinguished the novel appears, as while we await the end of the ending, it rejects that and tells that nothingness or absence has no meaning when the soul embraces its luminous spark, and through this embrace it will have immortality with merit and entitlement, as Shams Tabrizi did not end when he was killed and remained immortal in the collection of his soul mate Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, and Rumi did not die because he challenged The courtyard, with its literary and artistic monuments, is still a school to this day.

Time in the novel:

Time is the axis of the novel and its backbone, and the way time is constructed in it reveals the formation of the structure of the text. "The novel is a temporal art, and novelistic time is an expression of a vision towards the universe, life, and humanity." ^٨

The novelist manipulates the time broadcast in the novel, sometimes in ٢٠٠٨, where an American family of five lives a life of monotony and getting used to the daily routine concerns until Ella Rubinstein gets a job as a critic in a literary agency and is assigned to judge the novel "Sweet Blasphemy" by a writer named Aziz Zahara. Through the novel Sweet Blasphemy, the second time of the novel emerges, where Elif Shafak transports us to the thirteenth century AD between Baghdad, Damascus, and Konya, where the committed cleric meets the Sufi Shams Tabrizi. Despite the difference between the two times, they intersect in how to enter the space of love. Thus, Elif Shafak combined two parallel novels that intersect spiritually, and evokes the events through the character of "Ella Rubinstein," an American Jew who lives with her husband and children in Northampton, Massachusetts. Her life changes when she receives the novel "Sweet Blasphemy" by its author Aziz Zahara. In the manuscript "Blasphemy" Al-Halou: The writer discusses Shams Tabrizi and his meeting with Jalaluddin Rumi, his spiritual twin, and the deep friendship that brought them together. However, Rumi's disciples, including his youngest son "Aladdin," did not accept the presence of Shams, who turned his life upside down.

Events intertwine until Shams is killed, and Rumi drowns in intense sadness and recites the most beautiful poems known to humanity, immortalizing his friend in a poetry collection from the abundance of the spiritual relationship that brought them together.

In return, a friendship develops between "Aila" and "Aziz" through exchanging e-mails, which turns into a deep love that makes her leave her family and go to her soul mate. After the meeting, she realizes that he has skin cancer and that he will die in a few months.

The novelist also employed all the techniques that allow her to manipulate time, especially in the novel Sweet Blasphemy, where this appeared clearly through

flashback and anticipation. Flashback “is every return to the past that constitutes, for the narrative, a recollection that has its own past and through which it refers us to events prior to the point the story reached.”^٩ Flashback appears in the novel when Aila recalls her past when she was a teenager and remembers her father’s suicide on New Year’s Eve, which made her not forgive her mother for that—or when she returns to her youth, in which she distinguished herself from all her peers by her commitment to the rules of morality and did not commit any of the foolishness that girls usually commit, to the point that her friends’ mothers took her as a model for the upright girl, which was a reason for the anger of her colleagues and colleagues at the university. We also find flashback with the character of Shams al-Tabrizi when he recalls his childhood, in which he was very different from his peers, saying, “Since my childhood, I used to see visions and hear voices, and I used to talk to God and He would always respond to me, and sometimes I would go up.” To the seventh heaven very lightly, then I land in the deepest hole in the earth “١٠

The writer also employs anticipation, which is expectation or prediction, or precedent, and Gerard Genette defined it as “every movement based on the narration of a subsequent event or its mention in advance.”^{١١} Anticipation appeared in a confusing way in the novel, as it made both Jalal al-Din al-Rumi and Shams al-Tabrizi live the pain of separation at the moment when Shams was assassinated and thrown into the depths of the well of Rumi’s house in the form of a vision that appeared to both of them every time. Anticipation also appears in the form of a flashback at the beginning of the novel *Sweet Blasphemy*, when Shams’s killer recalls that incident as having occurred four years ago, but for the novel it is an anticipation of what will happen to Shams al-Tabrizi, who will meet his death at the hands of a professional killer who belonged to the Hashashin group.

We also find deletions that jump over a period of time, such as the period Shams spent in the dervish lodge, or the period he spent with Rumi when the meeting took place. Although the period was forty days, the writer did not tell us what happened during that period of time.

The writer also employed the scene in the best way, and we can say that the novel was a scene par excellence, due to the writer’s intention to reach the meaning or goal of the novel, from the dialogues that brought the Rubinstein family together at the dinner or lunch table, to the dialogues that Shams led with his friends or enemies, and through these dialogues he included each time one of his rules of love.

Thus, the writer made us move between two very different times, and despite their differences, there were strong ties that connected them, and we can see that through the intermingling of the characters in the two novels.

Characters:

The overlap of times: the present time and the time of the thirteenth century AD produced an overlap in characters and narration, because the character is one of the pillars of the novel's plot, and through the construction of characters, the novel expresses a vision of the world. "The importance of constructing the novel's character cannot be isolated from the artistic value of the narrative construction of the novel's events and what it entails of tension and significance that gives this work its value stemming from the ideas and special existential, political and social issues"^{١٢}. Therefore, the character was defined as "a being endowed with human qualities and committed to human events"^{١٣}

In the novel, the characters of Ella Rubinstein and Aziz Zahara are present, as are the characters of Rumi and Shams Tabrizi, and the unified orbit between these characters is the orbit of love that unites religions and nationalities and does not pay attention to ethnic, religious or social differences. This is what shaped the character of Shams Tabrizi, who dealt with different social classes with the heart of a lover who is compassionate towards the alienation of souls in bodies. He did not judge appearances, but rather delved into the depths. The character of Shams was a pivotal character that influenced the events of the first and second novels. Just as he influenced the characters of the beggar, the repentant prostitute, Suleiman the drunk, Kira, Kimia, Hossam the student, the fanatic teacher, and Rumi's sons Aladdin and Sultan Walad, he also influenced "Ella Rubinstein" and drew for her the path of liberation from the darkness of fear, submission and surrender, making her jump from a life without taste to a life filled with love and truth.

The secondary characters in the novel came to enhance the writer's vision of her subject, and the most important of these characters were in the novel "Sweet Infidelity", as each part was devoted to a character. At the beginning, we find the character of the murderer, called Ras al-Wawi, although he remains unknown at the beginning in a preemptive movement of events, which is the opening of the novel Sweet Infidelity. We also find the character of Mr. "Baba Zaman", who was in charge of the dervish lodge in Baghdad, then the character of the student who was in the dervish lodge to learn the principles of spirituality, but he leaves it forever and turns into a greedy merchant, then the character of Hassan the beggar who suffered from leprosy, which made people avoid approaching him or even looking at him, then the character of the prostitute who was touched by Shams' words and who illuminated the paths of repentance for her, and the character of Suleiman the drunkard addict who could not get rid of drinking alcohol, in addition to the character of the fanatic who only looks at the appearances of things and the character of Baybars the warrior who sways between pretending to be religious and indulging in immorality, the character of the two sons of Rumi The firstborn Sultan Walad, who was a dutiful son to his father, and the second Aladdin, who rejected the change that happened with his father. We also find the character of Kira, the Christian wife of Rumi, who converted to Islam, as well as the child who was taken care of by Rumi, "Kimia", and he was looking after her with proper religious education and upbringing. The novel Sweet Blasphemy contained a great deal of

different and varied characters and events, and despite the difference, diversity and rebellion of the characters, they revolved around the central character, which is the character of Shams Tabrizi. It was an influential and effective character in all the characters of the novel, and its influence exceeded the limits of time and place. Each of these characters is a world in itself, carrying within it the beginning and the end, doubt and certainty, tension and calm, disbelief and faith, evil and good, alienation and stability, journey and travel. There are those who reached safety, such as the character of the desert rose, Hassan the beggar, Suleiman the drunk, Kira, and Sultan Walad. There are those who were stranded because they did not hear the call of their soul and died, as happened to Kimia, or lived regretfully as happened with Aladdin, and all of these characters were affected by Shams in one way or another, bringing out the best or worst in them. The Sufi character does not judge by the appearances of things or what appears to the eye, but rather delves into the inner beings until the messages they contain inhabit him. Shams al-Tabrizi used to speak to the righteous saints and saints whenever he entered a city for the first time, asking them to bless his entry. He did not care whether these saints were Muslims, Jews, or Christians. "Before I entered the gates of any city I had not visited before, I would stop a little to greet the saints and saints, the living and the dead, the known and the hidden, whether they were Muslims, Christians, or Jews, because I believe that the righteous saints are above these trivial nominal differences and they belong to all of humanity."^{١٤}

As the events of the novel "Sweet Blasphemy" grew, the events of "Ella Rubinstein" also grew. She gradually broke free from the murderous stereotype she was living in, and when love appeared to her in the form of Zahara, she was liberated from everything that bound her to the social structure in which she spent most of her life and answered the call of love as a first step towards ascending the ranks of divine love. She left her family, for whom she had spent her life and whom she considered to be among the sacred things in her life, and followed her Sufi Muslim lover, who had no permanent home on earth.

Language in the narrative discourse

Language is considered one of the basic pillars of every literary work. Language in a literary work is not merely a tool for conveying and delivering images, meanings and contents to the recipient's conscience and mind. Rather, it is an organic part of the structure of this work itself. The most difficult thing facing the writer is the language of writing, and how he can load his words with new meanings that give what he writes a cognitive and aesthetic dimension that goes beyond the present to cosmic spaces that are far deep in the human self. This is when we talk about language in ordinary narrative discourse. So what if this discourse is Sufi? There is no doubt that the writer here faces a great challenge because his work with language must be distinct and go beyond ordinary language by many stages. Perhaps the tragedy of the Sufis was due to the difficulty of understanding their language. Sufi knowledge is a special knowledge that only the

elite understand, especially the elite. In addition, each Sufi has his own distinctive way of dealing with language, which is considered one of the important cognitive tributaries that greatly influenced the Arab-Islamic cultural system. Since it is a cognitive form that differs from other existing cognitive systems, it “addresses issues that are difficult for the mind that is not supported by taste to comprehend and difficult for non-symbolic language to reveal their secrets.”^{١٥} Language is a human energy harnessed to contain Imaginative and emotional cognitive loads are circulated or renewed and operate according to complex procedures. Literature does not only reshape life, but also works to create it. Therefore, it is a continuous search for an unknown or lost reality that readers are always thirsty for. This concept has produced a conviction in the usefulness of experimentation and the possibility of change by opening up literary discourse, including the novel, to renewed cognitive fields.

Language of the novel

The language in the novel "The Forty Rules of Love" is a Sufi language par excellence, despite its simplicity in approach. The novelist invested in symbolic language, but what is to her credit is that she did not leave this language ambiguous, but rather tried with all her creativity and techniques to make this language understandable to express her vision and devote herself to the concept for which she wrote this novel. Elif Shafak did not want to delve into the Sufi effusions of Shams Tabrizi and Jalaluddin Rumi, but she wanted to bring the Sufi concept closer to the public through the interpretive stories that she narrated on the tongue of Shams Tabrizi. Despite the availability of the Sufi semantic field in the novel in abundance, such as the dervish - the journey - the travel - the saints - the holy ones - blessings - pure love - annihilation - visions - the presence - the manifestation - the overflow - the disciple - the seclusion - the pilgrimage - the love - the divine self - The rules of love - the station - wine... and other connotations that fall directly into the Sufi field, except that the novel was not a collection of purely Sufi symbols.

Describing Aziz Zahara, she says, “Aziz was a Muslim man who rejected violence and had strong humanitarian views. He believed that all religious wars were essentially a ‘linguistic problem.’ He said that language conceals the truth more than it reveals it, so people always forget to understand and appreciate each other.”^{١٦} The novelist put her finger on the wound and stated that the linguistic problem caused many human tragedies, such as wars, conflicts, and continuous arguments. In such chaos, man loses his true message and loses his way to himself. Here, the novelist wants man to distance himself from all these trivial conflicts, despite their bloodiness, and to turn a deaf ear to all calls for division and listen to the call of his soul, which urges him to goodness, peace, and reconciliation with everyone, and to leave himself to understand that he is a small link within many other links, each of which affects the other. Therefore, man must pay attention to the danger of his existence in life and his effectiveness in the universe. In the novel,

she mentioned the differences in understandings among Humans and this difference is what produces evil, ruin and destruction for humanity, including what came from the tongue of the judge when he wanted to mock Shams Tabrizi when he spoke to him in the dervish lodge when Shams introduced himself to the owner of the lodge that he was a wandering dervish searching for God in God's vast earth. Here... the judge intervened and said: "I cannot understand why you dervishes complicate life in this way, and if God is with you all the time, why do you search for Him?" Shams replied to him and said, "Although he cannot be found by searching for him, only those who search for him can find him..." Then he continued his response to the sarcastic judge to make him understand what was meant, but it seemed that he threw him into a greater maze, he said, "I did not mean to say that one cannot find God if one stays in his hometown, for this is certainly possible, for there are people who have never traveled, and yet they have seen the world." ١٧ The context of the narrative discourse here highlights the vast gap between the Sufi understanding and the ordinary understanding of language, for the judge ruled that the Sufi language was merely a play on words because he did not go beyond the surface in meaning, even if he delved into the words of the dervish to understand what he was aiming at, and to realize the purpose for which we worship God Almighty, and in this way, Elif Shafak takes us in her novel to teach us the forty rules of love, for in every situation and in every story that Shams narrates, we find him mentioning one of the rules, so she says in the first rule: "The way in which we see God is nothing but a reflection of the way in which we see "In it are our souls, so if God brings nothing to our minds but fear and blame, then this means that a great deal of fear and blame is flowing in our souls, but if we see God filled with love and mercy, then we are like that." The second rule says: "The path to truth passes through the heart, not the head, so make your heart, not your mind, your main guide. Face a challenge and ultimately overcome the soul with your heart. Knowing yourself will lead you to knowing God."

The third rule says: You can study God through everything and everyone in this universe, because God's presence is not confined to a mosque, a church, or a synagogue. But if you still want to know where His throne is located, there is only one place, which is the heart of a true lover. No one has ever lived after seeing Him, and no one has ever died after seeing Him. Whoever finds Him will remain with Him forever.

١٨ The one who contemplates these rules finds in them many and varied abundances, and if we were to continue with them, the space of this intervention would not be enough for us, but the novelist's clever handling of these rules made her broadcast them in her novelistic text through the many events that occurred in the life of Shams and all those around him and the life of Ella Rubinstein and those around her as well. It seems that Ella was greatly influenced by these rules to the point that she began to cite them when addressing her daughter or husband or even herself. "Language reproduces the desired reality on the basis of the existing reality, because the novelistic discourse is not based on reasoning from tangible

reality only, but rather creates from its elements a new reality that it wants the reader to live and replace with his lived reality that must be changed or modified.”

Conclusion

A simple critical reading like this cannot encompass all the philosophical dimensions that exist between the lines of this profound novel in terms of its presentation of the topic of Sufism. Elif Shafak presented this novel to the reader in a narrative form that combines the beauty of narration and the depth of vision. It is the philosophy of life that reflects our vision of things, and beyond things is the change we seek or the stability we accept. Man must change and save himself from the iron bars that he finds in his face sometimes in the name of civilization, sometimes in the name of customs and traditions, and sometimes in the name of religion, and perhaps the last of them is the most dangerous because of its effect on the masses' submission to its authority. The deviation of the religious message from its correct path will be a wrecking ball for all of humanity. As Elif Shafak confirmed through the Forty Rules about the possibility of religions coexisting, Jalaluddin Rumi married the Christian "Kira", and the Jewish Ella did not object to marrying Aziz the Muslim. The religion of love is what unites hearts. There is no difference between people, and the one who holds people accountable is the Lord of people. Thus, humanity can worship God. Not out of fear of His punishment or desire for His Paradise, but rather worshipping Him out of love and passion for Him, and this is the highest level of servitude that a human being can reach.

The novelist also corrects the concept of Sufism, which does not mean isolating oneself from people and worshipping in distant solitudes, but rather serving people and spreading goodness and peace among people. This is the true role of the Sufi. Aziz Zahara was Shams Tabrizi, just as Ayla was Jalaluddin Rumi. Everyone must search for his sun in the depths of his self.

Sufism is ultimately a philosophy of life and a method of behavior that a person adopts in order to advance and reach moral perfection and attain the highest truth in order to achieve spiritual happiness.

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