



Philosophical reverberations in Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Museum of Innocence* through the lens of Indian philosophy, particularly Vedanta. Through the honest presentation of the protagonist's perception of the world, the novel hints at how individual perceptions of the world differ from the 'real' world. The world, for human beings, is just a mental construct. By enhancing the ambiguity of human perception as seen in the case of Kemal - with happiness and sorrow, love and hatred, and individuality being uncertain - the novel questions the existence of a concrete real world. It thus echoes Vedantic thought that the world, for human beings, is not real but a delusive vision, a product of the mind which is transient, ever-changing and perishable. Given the example of the protagonist's imaginative world, visibly to the readers much different from the so-called real world, the reader seriously thinks of his own imaginative world and the possibility of it being utterly different from the actual reality.

Keywords: Maya, projection, superimposition, ignorance, illusory world, real world, *Adhyasa*

Introduction

In the latter half of the twentieth century there has been a revolutionary increase in the popularity of non-western, non-English literature. Poetry and fiction written from the so far unacknowledged parts of the world were emerging and acquiring worldwide acceptance. African literature, Latin American non-English fiction, and Turkish literature are examples. These literatures were widely translated into English after which they gained fame all around the world. Turkish writer, Orhan Pamuk is one such writer who got worldwide acceptance after his novels got translated into English and a lot of other languages.

Orhan Pamuk, a novelist, screenwriter, and academic, received the 2006 Nobel Prize in Literature. He is one of Turkey's most prominent novelists, and author of the famous novels: *The White Castle*, *The Black Book*, *The New Life*, *My Name Is Red*, *Snow* and *The Museum of Innocence*.

The Museum of Innocence (2009) is a best seller, by Orhan Pamuk. It tells the story of its protagonist, Kemal. Apart from the discussions that the novel makes at the surface level, at a deeper level we find it enfolding complex realms of human psyche. At a still deeper level or rather covertly behind the wholesomeness of it, we find it echoing serious philosophical notions about human existence and the purpose of human life. So the objective of this paper is to inspect the philosophical aspects of the novel through the concepts like Maya propounded by Vedanta.

Echoes of Maya in *The Museum of Innocence*

The life of the novel's protagonist is apparently one that is spent in an illusory world, where all objects, places, and incidents converge to a unified whole, that is love for Füsün. Everything, for Kemal, gradually gets evolved into denotative aids to support the illusory function of the romance. For a typical reader Kemal's life and his lens of the world are

obviously queer. An overt distinction is there between Kemal's perspective, which is comparatively abnormal, and that of the common people both in the novel and generally in reality. The reality which should naturally have been the same for both Kemal and others, here proves to be totally independent and different. Hence a keen reader becomes conscious of the inevitability of thinking about the question of normality and abnormality of mind. If Kemal's mind is to be reckoned abnormal, there arise two questions;

1. How does Kemal's mind differ from that of a normal individual? This can be answered pointing out the eerie fantasies that his mind entertains. But then the second question,
2. Does a normal individual not have fantasies?

This, of course, is a perplexing question. For it has been already discussed well that human mind has this very natural characteristic of producing and entertaining fantasies. Human mind undoubtedly creates certain fantastic worlds in some respect or the other at least at times. So Kemal's case becomes just an extrapolation of it. In a broader sense, in fact, everything is experienced by human beings in this fantastic realm, for no reality is proven to be ultimately true. There are only various versions of reality.

As a result of the fantastic nature of the mind different individuals perceive the world differently. Thus for each individual his own world is unique. Although the things they see around may be the same, each one sees it much differently from the other.

Though Kemal and his friends like Zaim and Sibel see the same Istanbul city, Kemal's Istanbul is evidently different from that of the others. Same is the case with the objects in his collection, Çukurcuma house, everything. For any common person those are mere objects. They look at it with no particular attachment. But for Kemal they are elements of a

world, elaborate yet imaginary to others. So Kemal's is a typical case that clearly demonstrates how one creates his own imaginary world. In a way man's mind is typically none the less imaginative. Kemal's case is a bit exaggerated through which we can easily understand how we create our own worlds at the psychic level. However a psychoanalytical reading is more or less inappropriate or even ineffective to explain such notions, which fundamentally have philosophical overtones.

Therefore, one has to adopt the philosophical concept of Maya to understand such a world of mental creation. Maya propounds the hypothesis that the whole of the visible world is just an illusion. The things one sees do, in truth, not exist or if at all there exists something, it is a holistic truth which is not relative and multiple but unique. The different objects we see are but illusive manifestations of the same truth. Vedanta philosophy calls this truth as Brahman. Swami Nikhilananda, a disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada, explains Brahman in his introduction to the English translation of Sri Sankara's *Ātmabōdha- Self Knowledge*:

According to Vedanta philosophy, Brahman, which is One and without a second and is of the nature of existence, Knowledge and Bliss, is real and the only Substance; all material objects are unreal and unsubstantial; they are products of ignorance. (47-48)

Human beings live in a world of illusion, believing strongly that what they see is the very reality; that the visible objects, in reality, are what they appear to be; that every element of the world has its very meaning and purpose same as their perspective on it. This illusion is a product of an ignorance, a part of which is shared by a community or, on extension, by all beings, which may more appropriately be called a collective component of ignorance. And the other part is that which varies from individual to individual; that depends on the physical characteristics and experience of the individual. Thus all knowledge has its purpose ultimately to lead to the knowledge that the whole world, with its millions of objects, creatures etc., is itself an illusion and it is but a delusive vision; that the manifold world deprived of its illusive appearance is Brahman itself. This ultimate knowledge is the one that destroys the aforesaid sort of ignorance. The realization that the world is a delusive vision, a resultant of the pre-existent ignorance is the ultimate aim of human life. The mysterious force that creates the delusive vision, which is obviously a component of the ignorance, is called *maya*. Sri Sankara defines *maya* as:

*Avyaktanāmnī paramēśa śakti-
ranādyavidyā trigunātmikā parā
Kāryānumēyāsudhiyaiva māya
Yayā jagatsarvamidam prasūyatē. (Verse 108)*

There is One – undifferentiated and undivided. Nobody can define what it is, but it has the power of God. Beginningless and, yet, also called ignorance, it has three qualities: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. It cannot be understood except by its action, and that, only by the illuminated ones. It has created all this universe - produced it all. It is *Maya*. (*Vivekacudamani* 46)

Swami Nikhilananda delineates *Maya*:

. . . *maya* is said to be “something positive”. The word *something* here denotes its unsubstantiality or worthlessness. The word *positive* denotes its capability of producing the visible universe. It also serves the purpose of removing the erroneous notion that *Maya*, or ignorance, is pure negation because it is the absence of Knowledge. *Maya* is said to be “antagonistic to Knowledge” because both *Maya* and its effect, the material universe, disappear when one attains the knowledge of Brahman. Brahman and *Maya* cannot coexist any more than the absolute and the relative, the One and the many. When one of these is perceived, the other is non-existent. They are not even correlatives. (Nikhilananda, 53)

That the world is not a reality, constant with change in time and individual perspectives is a truth evident in its representations in the novel. The world, for Kemal, which had initially been of luxury and licentiousness, transforms to a horrible place to live as he becomes melancholy with the pains of missing his lover. The places in Istanbul city, which were once his favorites, become ones that evoke grief. Even Merhamet apartments which had apparently been a heavenly realm, becomes at times a source of consolation, as well as disappointment at others. Life itself, according to him, seems to be oscillating between happiness and sorrow. Thereby joy and grief too proves to be part of illusion or uncertainty. A single extract from the novel serves a great deal in endorsing this argument.

It was not just that the searing pains of love would disappear the moment I sat down at the same table with Fusun, I would immediately forget that until just now, this same pain had brought me to thoughts of suicide. So, at Füsün's side, with the agony having subsided, I would forget my wretched undoing; convincing myself that I had been restored to “normal”. I returned to my old self; I would succumb to the illusion that I was strong, decisive, even free. But after our first three outings I came to notice that such ecstasy was inevitably followed by the familiar despair, and so, as I sat across from her, thinking how soon I would miss her, foreseeing the pain of the days to come, I would discreetly pilfer various objects from the table as reminders of the happiness I'd felt there and then- and to fortify myself later when I was alone. (Pamuk 256)

Here the trembling balance between happiness and sorrow exposes itself to be so unstable. Kemal thus reveals himself to be having a peculiar behavior of clinging tightly to his love for Füsün abnormally so that he completely discards everything else in the world. The world in the common man's eye is comprised of its multiple fragments, that of the different objects, beings etc. Though, as we know, there too is the question of perspectives, it can be called conforming to what we called the collective component of ignorance, so that people having illusions or fantasies which conform to or which do not cross the limits of the general ignorance are considered to be the so-called normal individuals. The thing that determines our psychic normality is how we conform to

the general imaginative structure of the society. In that sense Kemal cannot be called normal. For his illusions converge or concentrate towards a unified cause that is love for Füsün. It is only that love that he considers to be real and the life itself has, apparently, no other meaning than to serve this purpose of loving her. Everything else in the world in his own words are “vulgar distractions”. The only purpose that everything else serves is to signify categorically every feeling, memory and emotion associated with that love. The Merhamet apartments, Museum of innocence, Çukurcuma, Beyoğlu theatre, Bosphorus, everything serve this purpose of being monuments of the love. What we see here is a peculiar phenomenon which is equivalent to that caused by the power of projection of Maya. The lack created in Kemal due to his being dispossessed of the love of Füsün induces a vision which projects the things associated with love in everything that he sees. This is why world, for him, becomes a collection of things monumental to his love. In order to understand the phenomenon we may better refer to the theoretical side of Maya and its powers.

Maya, since it is not overtly present in the physical world, cannot be proved as truly existent or non-existent. However its existence can be inferred from its effects on its product, i.e. the material universe. It is said to have certain powers:

Though *maya* is indescribable and indefinable, yet its existence can be inferred from its effects, such as the projection or manifestation (*srsti*), the preservation (*sthiti*), and the dissolution (*laya*), of the universe. Maya carries on this work through two powers, known as the power of concealment (*avaranasakti*) and the power of projection (*viksepasakti*). The former obscures the knowledge of the observer; it conceals, as it were, the true nature of Brahman. (Nikhilananda 59)

Of the three *gunas* mentioned before in Sri Sankara’s definition of Maya, ‘rajas’ has the power of *viksepa* or projection. This particular power acts just like imagination. This power projects and thereby ascribes the function of another on an object. As a result of this power of *rajas*, along with the veiling power of *tamas*, the true nature of things is covered so that things appear as other than what they really are.

The concealing power and the projecting power of *maya* function almost simultaneously. Ignorance, which conceals the real nature of the rope, by the very power inherent in it creates the illusion of a snake or stick. The projecting power of *maya* creates the entire universe and all the objects dwelling therein. (Nikhilananda 60)

The concealing power is nurtured by the third *guna*, *tamas*.

*Eṣāvṛutirnāma tamōgunasya
Śaktiryā vāstvāvabhāsatēnyathā
Saiṣā nidānam puruṣasya samskrutēr-
vikṣhēpaśaktēh prasarasya hētuh* (Verse 113)

The property of *tamas* is to cover, as scattering is the property of *rajas*. It makes things appear to be what they are not, and that is the cause of bondage, and even of

decentralization [projection]. It is really one reality one quality, appearing in different names. It is one force in *tamas* lies dormant the power that is manifested in *rajas* – decentralization. (Sri Sankara, *Vivekacudamani* 49)

The *guna*, *tamas* creates a veil over things so that they are not seen or noticed.

We shall consider the novel to be mirroring such philosophical strains of thought. Kemal’s psychic world is obviously, in many respects, different from the actual world of reality. The museum that he creates may be just a heap of junks to an external observer who does not empathize with him. But some mysterious force, obviously a component of the fire of love in Kemal, persuades him to think of those objects to be objects of great value. Each object loses its original nature and serves another function. This is a perfect as well as queer instance from the novel which elucidates the power of projection that we are discussing. The fire of love, as far as Vedanta is concerned, is typical of the *guna*, *rajas*. And this fire does play a prominent part in the process of projection or *viksepa*. This particularly is associated with one individual, Füsün. And hence the projection takes the form of elements associated with his love for her.

For Kemal, the same old world which had appeared dull and saddening becomes pleasant and charming once he is with Füsün. Not only that, but his mind becomes happy. Resultantly this means the world, in his view, becomes gay, which gives the feeling that the world is concentric to the love and that the world takes its form from the very same centre.

When I was far from Füsün, the world troubled me; it was a puzzle whose pieces were all out of place. The moment I saw her, they all fit back together, reminding me that the world was a beautiful, meaningful whole where I could just relax. (Pamuk 319)

Thus this typically exemplifies Maya and how it operates. Love, then, is evidently a part of the so called *avidya* or ignorance, and it is because of the same ignorance that Maya creates the material universe. Likewise here love creates the world for Kemal. This is one perfect instance through which the novel exhibits the congruence of its strain of thought with that of Vedanta. That the world is not ultimately real, but an ever-changing reality; which is uncertain to be existent in truth, but is in some respects created (either by mind or by Maya) are notions implicit in both.

Sri Sankara propounds the idea of *Adhyasa*, which literally means superimposition or illusion, to explain how Maya operates through individuals. On having an experience or seeing an object one superimposes his past memories connected with that object or experience on it. This is called *superimposition*. In Sri Sankara’s own words *Adhyasa* is

Smṛtirūpah paratra pūrvadruṣṭāvabhāśah

Like memory it is just a reflection elsewhere of something seen earlier. (*Prasthanathraya*, Vol VI: *Brahmasutra* 3,6)

A famous example is of *rajju-sarpa* (rope and snake): in semi-darkness one mistakes a rope for a snake. This is clearly an illusion so powerful that it is capable of frightening the

subject. And the illusion persists with all its strength no less than that of reality until light comes and the truth is revealed. This illusion of mistaking an object for another is a simple exemplification. Extending the sense behind the example, we may think of the illusion working behind the perception of objects. An individual's reservoir of memories and experiences greatly influence the encounter of a reality and thereby the memories even determine how a thing may be perceived.

A man sees in semi-darkness only a harmless rope, yet he may firmly believe that it is a snake and nothing else. The snake is real to him. The dream experiences are real to the dreamer. (Nikhilananda 49)

Every perception is bound to this principle. One, in truth, does not see an object as what it really is. Rather he superimposes certain predetermined images on the object so that its functionality subsequently changes from the original to that of representing an element in the perceptor's mind. Sankara explains *Adhyasa* otherwise:

Atasmin tadbuddhiritavyavochama

To imagine a thing to be there where actually it is not, is called superimposition. (*Prasthanathraya Vol VI: Brahmasutra 5,8*)

Thus when one sees an object he is actually not seeing the actual object but a much different thing, ascribed a much different function, constructed within him as a result of the associated individual experiences. Extending this we can infer that a society or community has its unique way of 'seeing things', which is influential of the commonly accepted ideologies and imaginative frameworks. Likewise the whole mankind, or even the set of all creatures, unanimously has a particular way of 'seeing things', which makes the world appear much different from what it actually is. This notion hence becomes the base for the argument that what we see need not be the reality but an illusion, that of *Maya*.

Kemal's perspective of the objects in his collection certainly has the overtones of *superimposition*. Neither are they, being monuments of his love, looked upon as actual objects nor are they acknowledged with their original functions. A completely different function is ascribed as already discussed. Once Füsün had ceased to turn up, Kemal started entertaining certain fantasies. These fantasies can categorically be understood as resultant of an active function of the mind. In his taking consolation in the objects associated with Füsün, certain qualities are ascribed to things so that they are transformed (within Kemal's mind) into elements of an imaginative realm. Things here cease to have their own genuine attributes and start taking roles totally different. The things that surround the bed in Merhamet apartments lose their normal character and function and achieve the common quality that they have all been at least once touched by Füsün. Consequently each one of the things in Kemal's collection occupies certain predetermined spaces in a complex imaginative whole.

In the episode after the disappearance of Füsün, while roaming around the streets hoping to see her by chance,

shocking to himself, Kemal mistakes other girls for Füsün. These figures appear creating an exact replica of Füsün figure before his eyes but immediately get revealed to be strange people, some of whom have strong resemblance with Füsün and others turn out to be having only some of their characteristics similar to that of Füsün. Actually his mind superimposes the figure of Füsün on other girls. This process of superimposition is revealed to be demanding no resemblance of the girls' features with that of Füsün. The intensity of the aforementioned power of projection (*viksepa*) is so great that it needs no physical or material support for creating the projection.

This instance suggests that if the mind has this ability to project illusory objects which in turn, however, reveal themselves to be fake, in the case of real things, it is possible that the so called real world with all its objects is itself an illusion. It is possible that some revelation just like that in the case of illusory vision happens and one later realizes that the whole world was a mere illusion. Such is the indeterminacy of human perception.

In an objective analysis of Kemal's story, the readers can very well understand that Füsün, need not have been in all possibility, a good hearted, compassionate woman. Kemal's grand and glorified descriptions of her character, of her ever-variant facial expressions, of each of her movements, gestures, meaningful looks, tender smiles, together endow Füsün with some greatness. At times she becomes a symbol of magnanimity too. However one cannot deny the possibility that she had been a little bit ambitious sort of a woman and that she wanted to become a film star more importantly than living with the man who lived his life, only to love her, and to be with her, thinking always about her. There are numerous indications in his narration which tend to persuade the reader never to ignore such a version of the story.

Here are some such instances:

Füsün openly pleads with Kemal to make it fast investing his money for Feridun's film project, revealing that she needs only his money and does not have a concern for his love for her. Her words broke Kemal's heart:

"So you're saying that you really are going to shell out the money to make this film? Please don't take offense, Cousin Kemal, but let me tell you, we're sick and tired of waiting." (Pamuk 270)

Though this attitude of hers changes gradually, these words indicate her selfishness. She proves herself to be stubborn too, eventually, as she never does apologize to Kemal for this, even though he expects that she would.

Kemal himself at times confesses that what he describes of Füsün's behaviors may not be true. That it may be false inferences controlled by his intense love:

Anytime I entered the house of an evening and our eyes met, it was like a conquest. In spite of everything, and no matter what had happened to dash my hopes and my pride, there was the glory of being here once more, and most of the time I saw the light of the same happiness in Füsün's eyes. Or so I would believe, and, convinced that my stubbornness, my resolve had made an impression on her, I

would find my life's beauty was restored. (Pamuk 318)

And finally when she was about to live a happy life with the ever-loving Kemal, however, she appears desperate that she could not become an actress. This despair and frustration along with the intoxicated state that she is in somehow leads her to suicidal tendencies and to the fatal car-accident.

If this version of the character Füsün is to be considered, it becomes inevitable to agree that Kemal's is an illusory or unreal perspective of her. Thus here, the perception is one that is forcefully created by the intense power of *viksepa*, with no regard to the actual reality, or the truth which is clearly comprehensible to the senses. His intense love and the power of *projection* (*Viksepa*) arisen from it manipulates the function of his senses and makes it impossible for him to view the true self of Füsün. The same power facilitates him to forget about the bodily reality that was Füsün, once she is dead. From there on, the projection completely frees itself from the physical reality, to exist only on the psychic realm.

Kemal's perspective of the world shows how much deviant it is from reality as it appears to the so-called normal individuals. But this poses the question whether one can assure his perspective of the world to be the reality. The answer is, of course, no. Hence the novel induces the reader to be enlightened with the knowledge that just as Kemal's world differs from what others see, the general perspective on the material world is possibly much different from the actuality of it; moreover that, there is no world as one sees but some absolute reality that is being superimposed on by the mind and hence seen accordingly. Life has its meaning only to realize that what is seen and experienced are mere illusions, they are, just as collection of objects in the museum, momentary and ever changing realities. And, looking back, life as a whole is just a line connecting them like the string that connects the objects in the museum.

One is obliged to note that *The museum of innocence*, though it apparently has no connection with Indian philosophy, has internal reverberations of certain major concepts of Vedanta, particularly 'Maya'. Moreover, by presenting a strange world through the eyes of its protagonist, it shows how the 'world' is different for different individuals and how these imaginary 'worlds' differ from the real world.

Mind and Maya

The mind and Maya are metonymic in nature. In this way a close connection can be seen at work between the functioning of mind and that of Maya. In fact, as far as an individual is concerned, Maya operates through his mind. It is rather easy to establish the connection. If one turns to the Vedantic base offered by Sri Sankara in his hymn, "Dakṣiṇāmūrtistōtram":

*Viśvā darpanadṛśyamānanagarītulyam nijāntargatam
Paśyannātmani māyaya bahirivōdbhūtam yathā nidrayā
Yah sakṣātkurute prabōdhasamayē swatmānamevāvayam
Tasmai śrīgurumurtayē nama idam śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye*

[I bow to Sri Dakṣiṇāmūrti in the form of my guru:

I bow to him by whose grace the whole of the world

Is found to exist entirely in the mind, like a city's image mirrored in a glass, Though, like a dream, through Maya's power it appears outside;

And by whose grace, again, on the dawn of knowledge,
It is perceived as the everlasting and non-dual Self] (Sri Sankara, *Self-Knowledge* 196)

Hence world exists not outside but within human mind. And Maya mirrors it outside so that one mistakes the world to be real, unaware of the truth that it is just a creation of the mind. But this is only till the dawn of knowledge. When one attains knowledge, the mirror vanishes and what he will perceive in place of the manifold universe is the 'everlasting and non-dual self'. Thereafter, the mind ceases to create diversity before one's eyes; rather the diverse world reveals itself to be 'one'.

Kemal, for the most part of his life, was immersed in the belief that what he thinks and sees is right, that to reunite with his beloved, to love her for the rest of his life is the sole purpose of his life. He gave such a great importance to materiality so that the transience of material existence never bothered him. It needs no further proof than his description of each of the minute details of Füsün's characteristics, each of her facial expressions while watching a movie, her gestures, her diverse ways of stubbing out cigarettes in her different moods (note that he collected 4,213 such cigarette stubs, and could tell what her mood was just by looking at the way that each one is stubbed out), her smiles, looks etc. Moreover he fell a victim to the delusions created by mind. His imagination associated with the objects is part of such delusion.

However, he does not remain in this state forever. His clinging tight to materiality is seen loosening. Once Füsün dies, this process of 'loosening' attains its peak. Thereafter he has physically nothing to cling on to, for the material reality that had so far set the framework for his mind's imagination, or creation is no more. This is, notably, equivalent to what is seen from the Freudian perspective. The object of desire is no more so that the unconscious ceases to have a strong control over the conscious. Thus literally he is being conscious of the reality. Consequently, what he had so far thought to be the most important thing in life now appears to him, up to an extent, to be a sort of absurdity. These words of Kemal immediately after his recovery from the accident justify it:

Learning to walk again felt like starting life over and as I embarked on my new existence, I thought about Füsün constantly. But thinking about her now had no connection to the future, or to no desire I'd once felt; slowly Füsün became a dream of the past, the stuff of memories. This was unbearably painful, now that suffering for her no longer took the form of desiring her, but of pitying myself. (Pamuk 491)

Hence looking back he feels as if Füsün were a 'dream'. And looking back at his past life to be one spoiled merely for an all-consuming wish would be 'pitying' himself. But things are not so. His life has never been wasted for anything. Because it is on account of whatever has happened in his life that he realizes that love is of foremost importance and not individuals, emotions, material world and material pleasures. For him the past, thereafter, becomes a dream, the only thing that remains real and equally powerful is love. A partial equivalence to this state can be found in what Sri Sankara called 'the dawn of Knowledge'. Before him, there is only one

reality; that is love, which too is everlasting and non-dual, since it is pure and no longer dependent on any worldly object. This is, of course, not an immediate discovery. Rather it is a gradual progression attaining the zenith. Because much early in the novel, we hear thoughts from Kemal, of a similar nature. The words from the episode where he discovers Füsün to have married Feridun is one such instance:

As I surveyed the small toilet, searching for one other object that might offer me consolation during the difficult days awaiting me after I'd left this place, I saw myself in the mirror, and from my expression I had a shocking intimation of the rift between my body and my soul, whereas my face was drained by defeat and shock, inside my head was another universe: I now understood as an elemental fact of life that while I was here, inside my body was a soul, a meaning, that all things were made of desire, touch, and love, that what I was suffering was composed of the same elements.(Pamuk 242)

The protagonist hereby realizes that the world is not composed of the material universe in its actuality; it is but composed of "desire, touch and love". The same elements are part of the *guna, rajas*, which in turn induces the *vikṣepa* and thereby creates the world around him.

Kemal further says:

Between the low moan of the lute and the joyous chatter of the kanun was a tired but hopeful female voice, coming to me through the bathroom's half open window, saying, "it's love, it's love, the reason for everything in the universe." With the help of this singer, I thus lived through one of my life's profoundly spiritual moments standing in front of the mirror; the universe was one, and one with all inside it. (Pamuk 242)

Though this encounter happened when he was in a drunken state, he himself confesses it to be 'one of the profoundly spiritual moments' of his life. From the discussions made so far, it can be realized that it is indeed 'love', as he says, that is 'the reason for everything in the universe'. Because, it is love that controls his mind, and it is the same love that creates the 'universe' for him. The realization on his part, that the 'universe is one' gives him, obviously, a glimpse of what could be called the 'dawn of knowledge' that he actualizes towards the end. This is justified as he continues his words:

I found myself verbalizing all this, as I peered in the mirror. I recognized in my eyes something of the innocence and playfulness I'd had as a child, and when I experimented with my reflection, I made a shocking discovery: By imitating Füsün, I could escape my own being by the strength of my love; I could consider-and even feel-all that passed through her heart and mind; I could speak through her mouth, understand how she felt it herself-for I was she. (Pamuk 243)

This proves that his reflection that the universe is one - that is composed of love - was not a mere fantasy. Because, here one

witnesses it becoming an experience, breaking even the frameworks of individuality and personality. Since everything is composed of 'love', there are no distinctions such as individuality, and identity. The same helps Kemal break the limits of individual identity and expand to that of Füsün's.

In the end, since this love is no longer connected with any particularly physical reality, he is able to expand it to the whole world. This he does by visiting museums. In fifteen years he visits 1,743 museums and he identifies with the creators and respects them. Museum, thus, becomes a symbol of the symbolic nature of human perception. Standing inside every museum, he felt happy:

I did not however, invoke such concepts at that time, gauging my spiritual alteration instead by the simple awareness that I felt happy the moment I entered one of these places(museums), . . .(Pamuk 496)

He feels happy standing inside every museum because it reminds him of the realization that just as the objects exhibited create a symbolic world, so does the human mind create its own world.

Again, the museum that he creates is a monument not of any person but of pure love. It is evidently not for any other reason that it is named "*The Museum of Innocence*". For each object points to a distinct moment of his life, no longer mixed with any emotion or desire, but with pure love.

In the middle of one moonlit night passed at the house In Cukurcuma, I awoke in my little curtainless attic room, bathed in a sweet glow, and gazed down at the empty space of the museum below. The silvery moonlight pouring through the windows into my museum, which sometimes seemed as if it might never be completed, gave the building and its empty center a frighteningly vacant aspect, as if it were continuous with infinite space. My entire collection of thirty years stood nestled in the shadows on the lower floors, encroaching like the gallery of the theater upon this emptiness. I could see it all-the things that Füsün and her family had used in this house, the rusting wreck of the Chevrolet, every fixture from the stove to the refrigerator, from the table on which we ate supper for eight years to the television we had watched while eating; and like a shaman who can see the souls of things, I could feel their stories flickering inside me . . . In the light of the moon, each and every thing tucked into the shadows, as if part of the empty space seemed to point to an indivisible moment, akin to Aristotle's indivisible atoms.

His museum appears 'as if it were continuous with infinite space' because it represents love not merely for a particular person but for the whole world. It does not limit itself inside the four walls of the apartment but expands much further. Again it eternalizes, as far as Kemal is concerned, his life-moments.

These moments evoke in him no emotion or desire, but glimpses of happiness. They were moments mixed with ever-variant happiness and sorrow. But now, for him, they become moments only of happiness. For, looking back with an eye

which can see only love and nothing else, he can feel only happiness. This is why he says confidently the last words to the readers:

“Let everyone know, I lived a very happy life.”(Pamuk 532)

Hence, *The Museum of Innocence* succeeds in blending the psychological and the philosophical, with the delineation of the strange ways of human mind converging to the concepts related to Maya and resultantly to the Vedantic thought of self actualization. Mental construct rightly exemplifies the process through which Maya executes ‘world-creation’. Mind and its nature thus open a door to the mystery of Maya. The knowledge of the mind’s convulsion leads to the knowledge of Maya and gradually to the ‘dawn of knowledge’, where everything becomes one: the absolute reality - which the novel suggests as ‘love’.

Conclusion

In the light of the discourse in the paper certain statements could be made by way of conclusion. The novel induces the awareness that world, for human beings, is just a mental construct. By enhancing the ambiguity of human perception as seen in the case of Kemal - with happiness and sorrow, love and hatred, and individuality being uncertain - the novel questions the existence of a concrete real world. It thus echoes Vedantic thought that the world, for human beings, is not real but a delusive vision, a product of the mind which is transient, ever-changing and perishable. Given the example of the protagonist’s imaginative world, visibly to the readers much different from the so-called real world, the reader seriously thinks of his own imaginative world and the possibility of it being utterly different from the actual reality. Thus the novel is one that proves before the reader that the concept of Maya is practically understandable and true. World then is a *projection* of the viewer’s mind and its inner currents. As for Kemal love for Füsün gets *superimposed* on each constituent of the world.

Besides Maya is not a mere philosophical concept, but one that has emerged from lived experience the depth of which extends to different sectors including literature, aesthetics and mundane life. It is therefore not inappropriate to apply Maya in real life and in literature.

The Museum of Innocence also puts forward a philosophy having overtones of Vedanta, that the purpose of one’s life is the realization of the fake world that his mind creates before him till Knowledge dawns; that success of one’s life is determined not physically but spiritually; that one’s life, which is a total failure to the public eye, can be totally successful to oneself and that he can well call it a ‘very happy life’. It satirizes the unnecessary importance that people give to physical objects and materiality by pointing at the transience of their existence and by proving the uncertainty and ambivalence associated with their nature. The reader gets a glimpse of the probability of such a mental state, of self actualization propounded by Vedanta, where one realizes the manifold universe as a single entity, not as distinct objects but as manifestations of a single truth which can be called by any name, say ‘love’. This entity is, just like the protagonist’s

‘love’ towards the end of the novel, pure and independent of any physical aspect.

It is noteworthy that the novel reads as an ordinary fiction craftily preserving the realism and the emotional effectiveness of presentation. But the real greatness of the work lies in the fact that it is more than a fiction; that it offers a deep exploration of the nature of human mind resultantly to open a window towards practically understanding certain highly philosophical concepts.

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