Introduction

The tradition of novel is only one hundred and fifty year old in Turkey. It was imported from Europe along with the revolutionary ideas of modernity during the late 19th century when the majestic pillars of the Ottoman Empire began to collapse. Before the novel spread its roots, the genre of poetry was quite predominant. Novel, because it posed a challenge to the centuries old tradition of poetry, became in itself a symbol of revolution, modernity and a vehicle in the quest for new identity. The theme of East-West encounter in Turkish novel is as old as the Turkish novel itself. It started with the novelists of the late 19th century who adopted this newly imported genre from Europe to set foundation for mass change and development. In every novel, whether written by men or women, an elite or a middleclass novelist, the West was always one central character and its relation with Turkey the most important theme.

This theme has remained the key ingredient from late the 19th century when Turkish novelists directly imitated the style of western novelists to the present
times, when Turkish novelists have raised the standard of novel to such a height which critics believe is no more possible for their western counterparts (McGaha, 2008). A great number of Turkish novels are being translated into more than forty languages and are selling in millions around the world. From Yasar Kemal’s Peace Prize of the *German Book Trade* (1997) to Orhan Pamuk’s Nobel Prize (2006), from growing publication rate to being guest of honour in Frankfurt book fair, which is world’s largest literature event, Turkish novel has carved a distinguished position for itself.

However, at an international level, the Turkish novel has become synonymous with Orhan Pamuk, one of the most illustrious literary figures of Turkey. He is accredited with having “single-handedly managed to popularize” reading novels, in his country. On 12th October 2006, the Swedish Academy while honouring him with the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature recognized him as a writer who has “stolen the novel from the Westerners and transformed it into something partly different from what we have ever seen before by including marvelous stories, tales, myths and mystical symbols in his web of prose” (2006, retrieved). Pamuk is widely considered an expert when it comes to East-West question. From his first novel *Cevdet Bey and Sons* (1979) to his most recently published *A Strangeness in my Mind* (2015) he has fervently explored the theme of cross-cultural confrontation and collaboration. He describes his culture as the one where, “the clash of East and West, or the harmony of East and West, is the lifestyle” (2003, retrieved). The present study tries to examine how Pamuk
grapples with different facets of Turkey’s relation with the west, its merits and
drawbacks and, most importantly, why and how he tries to bridge the gulf between
these two civilizations.

Chapter I of this study entitled, “The Rise of Turkish Novel”, tries to
provide an overview of the history of the Turkish novel from Semsettin Sami
(1850-1904), the author of the first Turkish novel to Elif Shafaq (1971), one of the
most noted contemporary Turkish novelists. Chapter I focuses on how novel as a
literary genre flourished under the western influence during the late 19th and early
20th century in Turkey. The chapter also tries to illustrate how in the newly formed
Republic novelists, who were largely considered as staunch advocates of
westernization, dedicated their works to the promotion of western ideas which
they considered indispensable for the economic and scientific development. As a
result of which most of the novels written during this era focused on the theme of
the westernization. How the post 1950s political unrest and Cultural Revolution
led to the emergence of new genres, such as satire, modernism, postmodernism,
detective fiction and so on. To fully elucidate it the chapter has tried to provide an
outline of themes depicted by different Turkish novelists in their most acclaimed
novels.

Chapter II of this study entitled “Orhan Pamuk as a Novelist: Changing
Attitude” begins with a detailed biographical sketch of Orhan Pamuk. This is
important as it helps to understand how different stages in his life shaped his
sensibilities as a novelist and helped him emerge as a master of the Turkish novel. Apart from this, the Chapter tries to demonstrate how his attitude changed towards writing, by discussing some of the significant events in his life. The Chapter also briefly discusses his first novel Cevdet Bey and Son (1979), which is his only untranslated novel so far. From his first novel upto his last, the chapter provides a detailed account of how Pamuk emerged from a young writer, who borrowed the techniques of western novelist, to a unique styled novelist, who brought international recognition to his native Turkish literature. In one of his interview with Angel Gurria Quintana, Pamuk said that “each book an author writes represents a period in his development. One’s novels can be seen as the milestones in the development of one’s spirit” (2009, retrieved). This Chapter tries to examine how Pamuk’s attitude, over a career of thirty-six years, changed towards self, nation, religion, modernity, East-West relation and above all towards literature.

Chapter III of this study entitled “Orhan Pamuk: Problematizing East-West Cultural Confrontation”, attempts to examine the theme of the cultural conflict or the impact of East-West confrontation in the select novels of Orhan Pamuk. The Chapter tries to illustrate how Pamuk grapples with Turkey’s decline from “centre” to a “sick man of Europe” which resulted in a collective sense of disillusionment and marginalization. This Chapter is important as it helps us to understand why there is a need to reconcile the East and the West or to bridge the gulf between them.
Chapter IV entitled “Orhan Pamuk: Bridging the Gulf between East and West”, tries to examine the role Pamuk’s novels play in bringing the two cultures together. The Chapter makes an attempt to illustrate various symbols and themes explored in the novels, *The White Castle* (1990), *The Black Book* (1994), *My Name is Red* (2001), *Snow* (2004), *The Museum of Innocence* (2009) and *Silent House* (2012) which serve to elucidate how he has, by defying clichés and stereotypes, intermingling the eastern and western philosophy, culture, mysticism and literary techniques, succeeded in bridging the gulf between East and West.

The “Conclusion” tries to provide a defined outline of the whole study in relation to the main research topic. It summarizes the role played by Pamuk’s fiction in fortifying the East-West relationship and thereby opening new space for further cross-cultural dialogue and discourse.