

What true ability Elif Shafak has! How she moulds those far-flung pieces of story into one wholesome jigsaw, is astounding. In hindsight it so obvious, but whilst in the process of reading, the mysteries conjured up by Ms Shafak's mind are unfathomable.

Her books often rely on using different times and far apart places as cornerstones on which the story builds, with Turkey (her country of birth) - sometimes in the present, sometimes in the past - usually a major feature, coupled with another place.

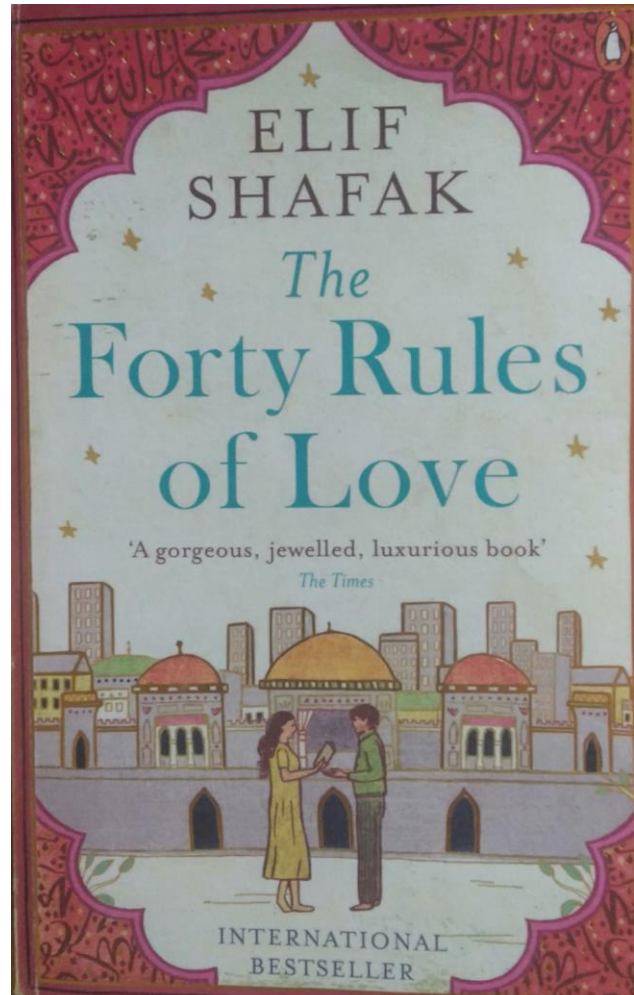
***The Forty Rules of Love*** is no exception. The story centres on a forty-year-old woman, who as a wife and mother in America, feels life slipping away from her. As part of a new job with a publishing house, she reviews a book set in 13<sup>th</sup> Century Turkey and comes step-by-step, to know the author.

The teachings and morals to be drawn from the text, set eight centuries before, relate closely to the challenges faced by the central figure, in today's modern world. Towards the end the two stories - from ancient and modern worlds – the sub-plots blend together in one meaningful whole.

The book focuses on the subject of *love*, it's strengths, its weaknesses and its challenges, as well as the difficulties along the path to knowing true love.

At times I find Ms Shafak's books hard to start; sometimes seeming a little difficult to quickly grasp the gist of what is going on and how it contributes to the developing tale. At that stage, the plot seems to be submerged in unnecessary detail. But always, after some time, the opposing aspects begin to make sense and it invariably becomes an absorbing, enlightening read, with more-often-than-not a surprising twist towards the end.

Elif Shafak is an accomplished and exciting storyteller, whose mastery of the English language puts her in the top echelon of today's writers. She now lives in London and writes in English and in Turkish. Her works are translated into more than 40 languages.



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