

## Ceasing Trauma by submerging into Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love*

**Yashasvi Jangid**

BA Honors III, Department of English  
St. Xavier's College, Jaipur (Raj)

### **Abstract**

Since the seeds of it were ingrained and humans gained conscience, Literature served as a thriving therapeutic vineyard, capable of healing one's aching wounds; from an outpouring of emotion in response to a traumatic event that triggers one's coping skills, causing restlessness and helplessness, as well as a loss in identity and the ability to feel a wide range of emotions and experiences. Significant factors seem to have an influence on an individual's future experiences, symptomatology, and probable odds of recovery. The exegesis may differ or vary from culture to culture, but the purgative use of Literature in healing the appeasement of traumatic experiences, and recovery of the societal and individual good has been the innate best. Many philosophers and academics believe that reading, re-analyzing, interpreting, and linking texts allow an individual's developing side to emerge.

Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* (2009) depicts universal truths of life and re-gaining love. It takes Sufism to a new height of peace, love, and blissfulness. The author channels her thoughts with Rumi's beliefs of considering love as the only glory of human beings which leads to success with tranquility here and everywhere. This paper aims to analyze the very idea of the book where it inspires readers to overcome their distressing events and recommence seeing the beauty of life, and thus, understand the cleansing and embracing of traumatizing events. The researcher, by the method of analysis of Rumi-based lively core novel *The Forty Rules of Love*, will endeavor to show the power of different cultures, beliefs and myths which can be the greatest of tools to conquer the dark side of a traumatic world one goes through.

**Keywords:** Trauma; Healing; Love/Life; Culture/Sufism; Relationships

Trauma as a causative element in mental diseases was foreseen by Janet, Freud, and Breuer as early as the nineteenth century, and more explicitly during World Wars I and II. It is technically described as a reaction to a profoundly unpleasant or troubling incident that overwhelms an individual's capacity to cope, creates feelings of helplessness, erodes their sense of self, and impairs their ability to feel a variety of emotions and experiences. According to several sources, trauma embodies seven stages: Shock and denial, Pain and guilt, Anger and bargaining, Depression, The upward turn, Reconstruction, Acceptance and hope. Due to the fact that not everyone goes through all these stages, the sequence in which they appear varies from individual to individual. Many times, the process of healing becomes hard to perceive by some people. The catharsis seems beyond their will, and they become unknown to the actual process of healing. As a concept, self-reconciliation and self-discovery has been the ultimate goal of healing one's trauma, and one only negotiates the goal through self-realization or fulfillment by oneself.

The contentious work 'The Spirit of the Laws,' written by French philosopher Charles De Secondat, continues to reverberate today. A strong statement by him was set down once:

“I've never known any trouble that an hour's reading didn't assuage.”

Its core is bibliotherapy, the therapeutic use of literature. It refers to the prescription of literature as a sort of creative therapy that develops self-awareness and cathartic release. It fosters a more nuanced comprehension of emotional, psychological, social, and cognitive issues through the reading of literature. We can't deny the deeply pleasurable feeling and sense of satisfaction we get when we connect with literature that comforts us and resonates with us, whether it's fiction or nonfiction (e.g., memoir, biography, self-help books, essays), or other reading materials such as poetry, whether we call it that or not. As a matter of fact, reading emphasizes on the reader's desire to reflect on the importance of literary thought and find meaning within the literary language through self-reflection, writing, and/or debate. [5] Several surveys have shown that, during the healing process, upon reading the content or meeting the relevant character, the individual recognises and connects with it. The text assists the individual in establishing a

connection with their feeling, allowing for a cathartic response. Based on challenges experienced by the character in the literature, the person is capable of therapeutically integrating these, providing insight into their own circumstances. And then, catharsis takes place at this point, allowing suppressed emotions to be released.

The literature strives to provide insights on our future prospects, liberating ourselves, allowing self-discovery, realization of emotional neediness, and our capability to optimize our lives through valuable lessons that offer meaning and purpose. To legitimize ourselves, it provides us with an outlet for expression and a way to express our thoughts and feelings.

Numerous novels have inspired and changed the lives of numerous individuals. Elif Shafak's 'The Forty Rules of Love' is one such book. The Forty Rules of Love is a novel inside a novel. It recounts two parallel storylines of love and life that span two radically different cultures and seven intervening centuries.

Elif Shafak was born in the city of Strasbourg, France, in the year 1971. She has been acclaimed as one of the most distinctive voices in current Turkish and English writing. She is a multi-award-winning author and Turkey's most popular female essayist, with over a million readers. Along with the novel *The Bastard of Istanbul*, she has also written a journal called the "Black Milk." Her writings have been translated into over thirty different dialects. She is also a TED Global Speaker and a public speaker for The London Speaker Bureau. Shafak is a Turkish author whose writings are heavily influenced by Islamic Mysticism, particularly the works of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. In many of her interviews, she has strongly proclaimed that she believes in living life and conquering fear. Elif, who is married and has two children, divides her time between London and Istanbul. [4]

Shafak's forty rules of love are fundamentally Sufi Literature, since Sufism leads us to our profundity, true selves, spread love, to avoid becoming a barbarian, and to enlighten your heart with affection in order to become a kind-hearted man capable of defeating our fears and past traumatic experiences. It elevates Sufism to epic status. The book contains forty rules of love for us to contemplate and apply, to again believe in oneself, to believe in 'oneness' of oneself and

explains to us that the greatness of an individual revolves around affection, which allows you to achieve to a big extent as well and overcome sorrow.

It was proposed by Firdous (2014) in his study article, *The Forty Rules of Love* as a Bildungsroman, that the novel *The Forty Rules of Love* is an especially enthralling work of formation and progress. It tells the narrative of Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, a famous pair of 13th century poets, in contrast to Ella, a Jewish housewife in her forties, meets Aziz Zahra, whose manuscript she is analyzing as just an editor with the purpose of writing a review. It is therefore full research of contrasts, such as in this story, heart versus brain, acceptance versus outlook, peril versus foundation, love versus cause, youth versus wit and exuberance versus discipline. On top of all that, it's also an impeccable "bildungsroman," in which character growth and maturity are central themes. Throughout the novel, the protagonist undertakes an internal journey in order to discover the true meaning of life, as well as growing mentally by letting go of all of her fears and sorrows. Additionally, the protagonist is given an opportunity for self-discovery through the foundation of love (Firdous, 2014).

The research paper, *The Experience and the Overcoming of Female Anxiety of Authorship in Elif Shafak's The Forty Rules of Love*, Alaa Walid Malak (2013) conveyed that *The Forty Rules of Love's* female characters exhibit authorship anxiety in parts of the text. They justify their struggle against "subordination" that exemplifies their quest for artistic 'self-definition'. Ella and David's marriage has its peaks and troughs. She is a dissatisfied wife who wants more and to actually be happy. After their twenty years of marriage, Ella claims that the only thing that has remained between her and David, has been the 'acoustic silence':

"Twenty years of marriage, twenty years of sleeping in the same bed, sharing same shower, eating the same food, raising three kids-and what it all added up to was silence." (Shafak, 2010 and Alaa Walid Malak, 2013)

To conquer the fear of being unhappy, Ella considers some of the forty rules of love by Shams of Tabriz. She finally finds herself reunited with the love of her life, which propels her into an

exotic realm where faith, love, and hope are all explored in greater depths. In one of her incidents, she mummurs one of Shams' rules:

*"It is never too late to ask yourself, 'Am I ready to change the life I am living? Am I ready to change within?' 'Even if a single day in your life is the same as the day before, it surely is a pity. At every moment and with each new breath, one should be renewed and renewed again, There is only one way to be born into a new life: to die before death.'" (Shafak, 2010)*

The epic necessitates love, perseverance, tolerance, and a variety of other principles that a person must possess in order to live a happy life. In the grand scheme of things, the narrative is overpowering, living, and emitting a tranquil energy that might avert psychological torment. The tale communicates the lesson that there is a distinction between otherworldliness and culture, and that one should not be terrified of external traps that might cause trauma. Sham says:

*"This world is erected upon the principle of reciprocity. Neither a drop of kindness nor a speck of evil will remain unreciprocated. Fear not the plots, deceptions, or tricks of other people. If somebody is setting a trap, remember, so is God. He is the biggest plotter. Not even a leaf stirs outside God's knowledge. Simply and fully believe in that. Whatever God does, He does beautifully." (Shafak, 2010)*

In light of the stringent conflicts, power struggles, and political assertions that exist in our world, mankind is abused by obsession, separation, arguments, and destructive attitudes that are detrimental to their well-being. Human beings get affected by their past/present distressing experiences and somehow or other, can also overcome them and regain hope. The epic "Forty Rules of Love" by Elif Shafak explores the idea that in this turbulent world, people can actually find satisfaction, faithfulness, and joy by conquering all odds in their daily lives. Individuals can be absorbed beneath the aegis of kindness, love, and self-disclosure, as the book says. It's one of the forty rules which Shams conveys to the world:

*"If you want to strengthen your faith, you will need to soften inside. For your faith to be rock solid, your heart needs to be as soft as a feather. Through an illness, accident, loss, or fright, one*

*way or another, we all are faced with incidents that teach how to become less selfish and judgmental and more compassionate and generous. Yet some of us learn the lesson and manage to become milder while some others end up becoming even harsher than before. The only way to get closer to Truth is to expand your heart so that it will encompass all humanity and still have room for more Love.” (Shafak, 2010)*

With regard to Elif Shafak's novel, the Forty Rules, the book is hailed as "a portrayal of Sufism's miracle " because of the connection which is established between two centuries, for example, the thirteenth and the twenty-first centuries, methodically of a well-known researcher into a spiritualist artist as a result of his connection with a wandering dervish as well as the relationship of a home wife with a spiritualist writer. Shafak transcended period, space, and culture in order to expand the philosophy of Spirituality, which is global in nature and whose cornerstone is love. The tale teaches us the pervasive verities viz. the human race's connection and fellowship are founded on a shared mysticism, and love serves as the constraining principle regardless of whether it is eastern or western, and it is only through affection that solidarity is accomplished. In the story, after conquering all her past episodes and trauma of always missing something and then reuniting with Aziz, her lover, Ella goes through the despairing phase of his death shortly after a year of being together. This phase, obviously, seemed very difficult for her., as she had left behind a huge fraction of her life- her husband and her three kids. All that for the sake of attachment she had found in Aziz, and she saw it all crumble rapidly. To let herself go and move on, she recalls the fortieth rule of love:

*“A life without love is of no account. Don't ask yourself what kind of love you should seek, spiritual or material, divine or mundane, Eastern or Western... Divisions only lead to more divisions. Love has no labels, no definitions. It is what it is, pure and simple. “Love is the water of life. And a lover is a soul of fire! “The universe turns differently when fire loves water.” (Shafak, 2010)*

The final episodes of the book witness the cathartic release of Ella altogether as a result of her job to read Sweet Blasphemy by Aziz Z. Zahara, a mystical, historical novel on the exceptional

bond between Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, which, in turn, alters her entire outlook on life and how she lives it. The tale comes into the realization that has the ability to instill strength, hope, and vitality in a person who is going through a traumatic ordeal, by instilling the concept of enjoying and living life despite its difficulties. Elif Shafak's *The Forty Rules of Love* is itself a life-changing book as claimed by many readers across the world. It's one of a kind, just like a journey of one's life.

As a result, the author's endeavor to present love as the central topic and foundation of life, as well as the novel's ability to triumph over adversity, is plainly successful. The tale of Rumi, a mystical poet, and Shams of Tabriz, an exalted dervish, extends to explain that the road of love begins with one's self and continues further into mankind, ultimately leading to a state of peace with everything. It takes practice to overcome all obstacles and to ensure that its shade is universally recognised and known. Besides being an enjoyable read, the book offers readers an opportunity to grow spiritually, uncover their own inner selves, and learn new things. It provokes thought, encourages self-analysis, and gives an enriching and gratifying experience. Thus, *The Forty Rules of Love* is the best illustration of how anyone who reads this book will be moved and motivated to overcome adversity, because there will always be something in the novel that will resonate with anyone experiencing a difficult day.

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