



## SPIRITUAL QUEST IN ELIZABETH GILBERT'S *EAT PRAY LOVE*

English

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### ABSTRACT

Every individual has a unique cultural heritage blending of different influences in terms of language, religions, music, architecture, food etc. In this paper we can clearly see the cultural blends in the Protagonist life. *Eat Pray Love* is a memoir of Elizabeth Gilbert. She travels to different countries in pursuit of Pleasure, Peace and Harmony in her heart. The concept of the memoir is Spiritual Journey in Gilbert's life. She feels lonely, stressed in her heart due to the personal crisis. As a result of it she visits India in search of God to get real peace and joy. Finally she concludes that spiritual journey helps her to gain peace and joy by visiting different sacred places in India. Likewise she discovers her ability, capacity and hidden talents which helps her to come out of all the stress and depression.

### KEYWORDS

Spiritual Quest, inner Peace, Search Of God, Discovers Hidden Talents

### INTRODUCTION

A spiritual journey is a quest for a greater awareness of the sacred in daily life, a deeper sense of meaning and purpose. Journey is an ideal metaphor for the spiritual life. It encourages us to see our experiences as a movement towards transformation, wholeness, and holiness.

*Eat Pray Love* is a true story of Elizabeth Gilbert. This book encourages us to face all the challenges of life boldly, in any situation and not to give up. Elizabeth Gilbert is married and has everything in life one can dream of. But she is not happy and satisfied. So after a long struggling she ends her marriage. After divorce, she is filled with sorrow. Thus, she goes into deep depression. It is one of the most difficult phases of her life. She loses a lot of weight and thinks of self-destruction. Finally, she realizes that no one else can make her happy. Certainly no one can give happiness on this earth except true living God which is Eternal. Weeping in her bathroom, Elizabeth Gilbert prays to God for the first time in her life, having grown up Protestant but with no particular faith. She is a nominal Christian who prays for rituals. So she decides to spend 4 months each in Italy, India and Indonesia.

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Success on our spiritual journeys, wherever they may take us, is measured not only by the personal fulfillment that they bring us. The successful spiritual journey will also bring good and happiness to all those around us.

Spiritual Journey does not need money or materialistic possessions it just needs heart, mind and soul and *Eat Pray Love* is a wonderful book about the personal journey of the author and it describes Gilbert's midlife meltdown and her subsequent yearlong global quest for food, pleasure and salvation.

The concept in the memoir *Eat Pray Love* is Spiritual Journey. In each and every individual there is a spiritual longing, which can be satisfied by nothing in this world or the next, but which God alone can satisfy. That is why man at the end of his life he repents and confesses and turns to God. Every human being at some point of his life cries to God for mercy and grace. Holmes writes, "All mankind longs for God, just as young birds open their mouths for food" EPL (24). Just as the deer in the forest longs for the spring of water, so the human heart continually thirsts for God with restless longing until it finds Him.

Gilbert prays for the first time, speaking to the "creator of the universe as though we had just been introduced at a cocktail party," EPL (16) the simple essence of her prayer, "Please tell me what to do" EPL (17). In addition, the response she received which began with a comforting sense of being surrounded by silence and stillness and ended up with a voice speaking to her from within that still silence with warm compassion. She beautifully describes the voice "perfectly wise, calm and compassionate and this was her beginning of her religious experience" EPL (19). Although man tries in all the possible ways to fulfill this great longing, through varied endeavor seeking to attain his object, and is ever possessed by this yearning and desire as long as he

fails to find God. The fact is that it is only God who created both the heart and the heart's desire that complete fulfillment and satisfaction can be found.

As a Jewish philosopher, Philo said, "Man's voice was made to be heard but God's voice to be seen. The things God has said are revealed not by words but by His deeds" EPL (28). That is, He speaks in the depth of the heart when our heart is pure and clean before the sight of God.

It is true that in our day today life one has to face many difficulties and trials. However, having to face them is necessary and beneficial, without them spiritual progress is impossible. Only in difficult crisis can one seek the help of God. Therefore, no one in the world is exempt from them. As Aristotle says that one who suffers no trial is either God or beast. Just as birds carry wings, yet the wings carry the birds, so experience bears witness to the fact that the Cross-lifts those people.

Every step along the way counts because it gets us further along the path. To revive the spirituality one has to undergo different situations or crises. From the creation of the world man looks for spiritual renewal and so he visits pilgrimages and sacred places. They have set out with great seriousness and high hopes for energizing their faith. Along the way, they have squared off against obstacles and often found spiritual companions with whom they could share their experiences and insights. Sometimes they have wandered off the established route in order to follow the dictates of their hearts. They know that where they go is not as important as how they get there.

She faces a mixture of different feelings of guilty, regret, conditional love in her life and so she plunges into depression. This has made her turn to God for guidance. She wanted both "worldly enjoyment and divine transcendence which is the glory of human life and the singular balance of the good and the beautiful" EPL (22). Though she is a nominal Christian woman yet in this situation wholeheartedly she clings to the feet of God. Expectations are of no value on spiritual journeys. In fact, they prevent us from coming closer to God and it leads to discouragement and disappointment so in the spiritual journey one must be able to sacrifice anything at any cost only at that point of time deeper communion with God can be felt or realized.

One can take a spiritual journey without leaving home it is not that visiting pilgrimages or religious places because wherever we go we take our "self" with us. So just by visiting religious places one cannot become a spiritual person the journey to transform ourselves begins with a journey inward, not outward. That is an insight as old as the Genesis story of Abraham.

Abraham is guided by God to set forth on a journey, which demands that he leave his country, his homeland, and his father's house. So the ability to journey physically is clearly disconnected from the ability to journey spiritually. However, to make it a necessity is to make spiritual journey a subset of travel and leisure, available to the wealthy or to those willing to live a beggar's life. That is why Abraham's spiritual journey, like all of ours, begins not with a journey outward, but with a journey inward.

The book has two classic elements of spiritual memoir, the inner quest for spiritual transformation and the outward pilgrimage to faraway places, and it strikes a balance between devotion and irreverence through the careful use of humor and irony. Spiritual journey is a worthwhile pursuit, there are many ways for it, and Gilbert particularly focuses on her spiritual pursuit in the middle section of the book. Although the India section particularly focuses on Gilbert's pursuit of spiritual enlightenment the whole book could easily be labeled as a spiritual memoir.

*Eat Pray Love* is a travelogue and an autobiography. She says that she wanted to have a lasting experience of God and she wants to understand the divinity of the world, but she gets distracted by my petty desires and fears. She wants to be with God all the time.

Elizabeth writes with memoir with honesty and loyal whatever she feels and experiences. Man is neither entirely a puppet of God; nor it is he entirely the captain of his own destiny as there are chances to think in such a way that the difficult situation and circumstances are given by God. The Italy experience is quite interesting because of the history and spiritual struggle that Elizabeth had shared in this book the experience in India makes Elizabeth settle down and devote her mind to the discipline of prayer and meditation.

### CONCLUSION

This book gives a clear message deliver from suffering, depression and loneliness. It is not only a delightful read on the three countries that Elizabeth had visited but she had brought her readers along with her in her search of spiritual fulfillment, devotion and balance, and finally the true love of God .The author's writing style is unique, with its use of literary devices and conversational language. Elizabeth Gilbert uses many similes and comic descriptions in her writing. While reading, the reader may feel that as though she is dictating her story to a friend, rather than writing a book because of the use of literary devices in her writing.

Her use of personification when she describes depression and loneliness tailing her in Italy, as though police officers, brings life to the story. It brought a light-heartedness to the story that allows those of us who have not experienced a severe depression like she has, to imagine her emotions and relate to them.

Overall, Gilbert's casual, descriptive language is an asset to the novel. Although the comic, colloquial language does make the author's struggles seem less important, it makes the writing much more interesting, than if she were to simply detail her experiences.

She is assigned the menial task of scrubbing the temple floors, a task symbolic of scrubbing clean her heart in order to purify it. We learn of her difficulties at meditation though she had been doing it on her own before entering the ashram, and she shares the experience where she finally experiences God.

Happiness, Gilbert comes to realize, that it is the consequence of personal effort which makes to fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it. Gilbert's attempt at combining memoir, travelogue, and spiritual autobiography forced the reader to slow down in order to taste the food, experience the culture and absorb the teachings as she searches for both herself and God. She found the journey quite pleasant.

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