



Materialism to Spiritualism in Elizabeth Gilbert's Eat, Pray, and Love

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the thematic alteration from the journey of materialism to spiritualism in the life of Elizabeth Gilbert. It focuses on the writer's personal growth and how she recovers through travel after suffering a terrible life breakdown. The paper highlights Gilbert's extensive journey through three countries: Italy, India, and Indonesia. Each country represents a stage in her transformation. Initially, Gilbert's journey begins with her first materialistic delight in Italy and progresses into a deep investigation of spirituality self-realization in India and Indonesia. She traveled in search of pleasure, peace, and harmony in her heart. She visits India to seek God and discover her hidden talents, ultimately overcoming personal crises and loneliness. This paper analyses Gilbert's journey through the theory of cultural materialism, it reflects an alteration from the pursuit of material wealth and societal status to a deeper exploration of spiritual and emotional well-being. It focuses on the shift from valuing material possessions and external achievements to prioritizing inner peace and spiritual development. This paper explores the thematic alteration from the journey of materialism to spiritualism in the life of Elizabeth Gilbert. It focuses on the writer's personal growth and how she recovers through travel after suffering a terrible life breakdown. The paper highlights Gilbert's extensive journey through three countries: Italy, India, and Indonesia. Each country represents a stage in her transformation. Initially, Gilbert's journey begins with her first materialistic delight in Italy and progresses into a deep investigation of spirituality self-realization in India and Indonesia. She traveled in search of pleasure, peace, and harmony in her heart. She visits India to seek God and discover her hidden talents, ultimately overcoming personal crises and loneliness. This paper analyses Gilbert's journey through the theory of cultural materialism, it reflects an alteration from the pursuit of material wealth and societal status to a deeper exploration of spiritual and emotional well-being. It focuses on the shift from valuing material possessions and external achievements to prioritizing inner peace and spiritual development. This paper underscores the potential of an individual's rebirth by abandoning materialism excess in favor of spiritual enlightenment.

KEYWORDS

Materialism, Spiritualism, Novels, Happiness, Freedom, Inner Peace, Eat, Pray, Love,

Identity, Elizabeth Gilbert.

1.INTRODUCTION

Elizabeth Gilbert is an American writer and journalist. She was born on July 18, 1969 Waterbury, Connecticut U.S. She is known for her best-selling memoir to Eat, Pray, and Love. The book was also made into a film of the same name in 2010. The novel was published in 2006. Gilbert believes that writers find stories not in discussion rooms but through investing in the world. The subtitle of the novel was Eat, pray and Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India, and Indonesia. Elizabeth Gilbert has written novels like City of Girls (2019), The Signature of All Things (2013), and memoirs Eat, Pray and Love, and Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear. Eat, Pray, and Love is a memoir of her spiritual journey from a materialistic life. She went abroad to search for the happiness she had anticipated. The work revolves around the themes of self-discovery, identity formation, and self-realization, additionally, it delves into the themes of Love, Loss, Family, and the healing power of nature. The protagonist Liz struggles to find her identity, freedom, and happiness throughout her journey.

Generally, many of us have a different opinion about spiritualism. It exactly means “when the spirit of dead people can communicate with people who are still alive.” It provides self-assurance in fostering positive relationships with others and oneself. It eases the symptoms of disease, tension, and worry in both the individual and others. Spirituality can assist you with managing pressure by providing you with a feeling of harmony, reason, and pardon. People say that you can't carry on means with a spiritual existence while living in a materialistic culture, to do so you need to forsake all pleasure in a materialistic world. To adopt an otherworldly path, you need to make psychological makeup, do some practice, and think does it makes sense to you or suits your mind or body.

Materialistic life is divergent from spiritualism. They believe that to possess and acquire the things is necessary to succeed in life. However, in doing so they abandoned their own life goals. Materialism can lead to a distressing path that causes hopelessness, anxiety, and depression. It commences negative impact. Gautama Buddha once said that, “He believes in self-purification. It is mainly the occupant of the human mind who can purify oneself.” On the other hand, materialism represents the possession or power to acquire things whether it makes you happy or not. A materialistic existence is short and unfulfilling, worldly people think that owning and purchasing things is essential for achieving life goals like happiness, and success. However, they frequently neglect other crucial objectives in their pursuit of more possessions. Materialism is often viewed negatively within society, as it suggests that materialistic individuals prioritize monetary wealth, status, and personal achievement over other values. They are unable to enjoy their lives and cannot escape this lifestyle. These issues are prevalent in our generation, where an individual's status and position are prioritized over personal happiness, even if this lifestyle becomes burdensome.

In English literature of cultural studies, the term cultural materialism is a theory that views culture as a productive process, focusing on arts such as literature. Cultural materialism term was coined by Raymond Williams, it tries to find the different aspects of society, arts, economics, language, and politics. There are several definitions proposed by

philosophers and professors about materialism and spiritualism. An American author, researcher, and professor Russell W. Belk proposed a definition explaining materialism in his book: "Materialism reflects the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions. At the highest levels of materialism, such possessions assume a central place in a person's life and are believed to provide the greatest sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in life" (Belk 291). Culture and materialism both adversely affected the life of Elizabeth Gilbert. Culture had a profound effect on Gilbert as she immersed herself in different cultures, languages, and environments which changed her lifestyle. The cultural experience allows her to appreciate the pleasure of simple, sensory joys rather than a materialistic proprietorship.

In the memoir *Eat, Pray, and Love* materialism significantly affects the psychology of Elizabeth Gilbert. She encounters a sense of dissatisfaction with her life after possessing material wealth. Her internal conflict disturbed her mind and she questioned the meaning and purpose of life. Her psychology indicates that material possessions and outward success fail to meet her inner needs and desires. She measures her life compared to materialistic wealth and spiritual accomplishment and decides to take a break from the materialistic principles that have dominated her life. Everyone has a different cultural heritage as religion, music, architecture, food, etc. The paper highlights the blend of culture in the protagonist's life. Being an American woman, she traveled to other countries to make herself free from all the stuff. She identifies her hidden talents and abilities throughout her whole journey, that immensely helpful in overcoming her depression and anxiety. Gilbert has tackled the same subject in her other writings.

In the other memoir *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert accepts thoughts are natural and animated as are plants and creatures. She considered thought as a different element that cooperates with us, having its consciousness and will to exist. In addition to that, she says the idea is a manifestation of human thoughts and our thoughts use us as a model to convey the same. These thoughts will lead to materialistic positions to spiritualism which focuses on our soul and what we feel, think, and want to be. This book gives the reader a kind of motivation to face their fear and prevent them from acquiring creative progress. It shows how to let go of inhibitions and let your creativity flow freely while overcoming your inhibitions.

The novel *The Signature of All Things* also deals with the self-divulgence that embarks on a journey that will have a lasting impact on both the main character and the reader. The character Alma grew up in a society where adults value learning, but they hardly ever show one other physical affection. Her parents encourage this pursuit of knowledge. Alma comes to terms with the fact that she will probably live isolated for her whole life. The novel ends with Gilbert's quotes, In the end, I've come to believe in something I call "The Physics of the Quest". A natural force regulated by actual laws comparable to the laws of gravity. An article examines "After *Eat, Pray, Love*: Tourism, Orientalism, and Cartographies of Salvation". It discusses specific travel and tourist practices that serve as neo-colonial extensions of colonialism engagement between the global north and the global south. It represents uncivilized and undiscovered space in analyses of critical transnational feminist methods. This paper is based on *The Pleasure of Food*, and the *Spiritual: Eat, Pray, Love* and *Babette's Feast*. It investigates the importance of eating to satisfy action about spirituality. It contends that enjoyment of food plays a significant role in the text.

Another one deals with *Encounters with the Self: Women's Travel Experience* in Eliza Gilbert's *Eat, Pray and Love*, and Cheryl Strayed's *Wild*. It is a representation of women's travel experience in three different countries. The paper is compared with Cheryl Strayed's *Wild a Journey from Lost to Found* (2012). Both the writer's characters were

traveling to learn about their crisis and regain control of their life. A Self-Help Guide for the Colonialist Neoliberal. It portrays the connection between honor and the gendered neoliberal thoughts of self-investigation by traveling. It follows the method of eco-feminism which seeks to understand the association between mind, body, and soul. It justifies that traveling is a spiritual journey. Traveling constitutes an integral aspect of human existence, representing the pursuit of equilibrium and the quest for resolving personal challenges. Elizabeth Gilbert has made her life happy and satisfying by transforming her sense of despair. Her trip turned her life's conflicts into a tranquil existence, which shows a new mirror to see her life again from a different perspective.

The way women's authors account for their travels at the start of the twenty-first century is impacted by both general conventions and pervasive social and cultural issues. While modern travel books continue to be influenced by the romantic legacy of sensibility, which celebrates the individual as a wandering free spirit on a self-quest, whose writing is authentic, spontaneous, and confessional, their authors shift away from the interest in the exploration of the other towards giving an account of traveler's experience. To be happy and satisfied Elizabeth Gilbert spreads her feet to embark on a spiritual journey to escape a miserable life of materialism. It is a journey to the enlightenment of Elizabeth Gilbert. Frustrated and dissatisfied with her marriage, she bravely decided to separate from her husband in pursuit of a more peaceful life. She pleads for a break from her marriage, expressing her desire to no longer be married. She perceives the honor that she must have the option to go on a real journey. It may not be restricted to the wealthy lifestyle people who can afford this excursion. According to one's manner for the spiritual journey, we can use meditation, consideration, and self-transformation as tools. The memoir gives different kinds of encouragement to move ahead. Elizabeth Gilbert has everything in her life a good lifestyle, her own house, husband, family, etc. Despite that, she was still unsatisfied and eager for greater happiness and freedom in her life. After enduring immense hardship, she ultimately got divorced from her spouse while still maintaining her dignity. However, she takes a stance to satisfy herself, despite all circumstances.

Eventually, she realized that undoubtedly nobody can bring joy in this world aside from a genuine living god which is everlasting. "Why did I feel so overwhelmed with duty, tired of being the primary breadwinner and the housekeeper and the social coordinator and the dog-walker and the wife and the soon-to-be mother, and—somewhere in my stolen moments—a writer . . .?" (Gilbert 21). Being a protestant Christian woman Gilbert prays to God for the first time. She attempts to recuperate herself from an extremely profound and spiritual crisis. After a divorce, a bounce-back sentiment, and much deliberation, she chooses to go year-round to Italy, India, and Indonesia. In light of her downturn, she took this choice to recuperate her aggravation and unsteady brain to think that she was herself. She settles on a choice to travel the three different countries 4 months to Italy for pleasure, 3 months to India for devotion, and 4 months to Indonesia for balance between the two. Being a successful woman, living in a materialistic society that encourages people for their ultimate life goal, where you can buy everything that comforts you. She sought to live an enlightened, unimaginable life in a materialistic world and left everything behind. She takes off on a round-the-world journey to find herself. After recovering from her mental stress, she steps out of her comfort zone, risking everything to change her own life. Settles out on excursions all over the world that turn into a journey for self-disclosure. In her journey, Gilbert explored the genuine delight of nourishment by eating in Italy, the power

prayer in India, and finally and unexpectedly inward harmony, peace, and balance of true love in Indonesia (Bali). “Four feet on the ground, a head full of foliage, looking at the world through the heart...” (Gilbert 48).

Gilbert embarks on her journey with a specific purpose one country for pleasure for her senses, the other is for her spiritual insight, and the last one is to restore and balance her life. The book opens with the heartbroken woman Gilbert who is lying on the bathroom floor of her house and crying the whole night. Leaving every painful moment behind she sets trip to Italy, India, and Indonesia. The First trip to Italy is delicious for Gilbert. She tastes Italian food with wine and also eats the Tiramisu (an Italian dessert) on her first day in Rome. Wandering around the street of Rome with a cappuccino. She spends her four months in Italy enjoying the food of Italy. She finds herself happier than before. Moreover, she took Italian language classes to enjoy the country's language. She has the curiosity to learn new things including language, culture, music, etc. She read the first Italian poem “Dal Centro Della Mia vita Venne una Grande Fontana” (Gilbert 50).

An English translation of this line is “From the center of my life, there came a great fountain...” This poem was by Louis Gluck which she purchased yesterday. She opens the poem book beneath the orange tree. After experiencing everything she left Italy with so many remembrances and memories. Gilbert searches for spiritual energy but cannot attain it in Italy. Later, Gilbert was equipped for the next trip to India in the city of Mumbai, where she stayed in an Ashram. India is known for its rich past and cultural legacy. Many countries are known for spiritual destinations like Varanasi, Amritsar, Ajmer, Goa, Rameswaram, Mathura, Ajothya, etc. Having experienced childhood in a non-religious family, she moves towards the way otherworldly with a fair level of skepticism. In India she begins her day with meditation, chanting the mantra “OM NAMAH SHIVAY” syllable by syllable. She practices yoga and searches for God. Gilbert was a Christian, but She has never had a religious inclination. She was born into a protestant family. She developed her faith and trust in god. India had an insightful effect on her; for the first time in her life, her mind and spirit were in a tranquil setting. She obtained inspiration from Ashram Guru’s to move forward despite everything. She learned calmness and persistence from the ashram gurus. Gilbert stays in the ashram consistently in complete seclusion. She devoted herself entirely, both physically and mentally. Spiritualism is the only way to ascertain who you are; it familiarizes people with their real identity. Gilbert could comprehend herself, searched for her identity, and recognized herself during this expedition. The whole ashram people sit in the courtyard for midnight to chant until the year changes over. Even when she sits for dinner, the guru asks her to be in moderation. By practicing yoga and following every instruction of the ashram she devoted herself to reaching God from her mind and soul. She was unconcerned by the world’s condemnation and her past transgressions. Her journey to become a spiritualist was filled with ecstasy and perseverance, she began to enjoy her journey gradually. Each religion in the world has had a subset of enthusiasts who look for a direct extraordinary involvement in God. India's otherworldliness and religion are essential for an individual’s day-to-day existence. Individual reflection and conviction, ceremonies, and sanctuary love have made the most astonishing architecture. Ultimately, she says, “I believe in a magnificent God” (Gilbert 24).

Gilbert's third and last trip was to Indonesia (Bali), which symbolizes the love part of her journey. Elizabeth Gilbert cooperates with a couple of neighborhood Balinese and her reckless contribution to their own lives is eccentric and entertaining. Gilbert met with Ketut Liyer a medicine man, a traditional Balinese man, and a spiritual guide, whom she wanted to meet two years ago. Gilbert gained advice and encouragement from Ketut Liyer to help her grow personally and maintain a healthy equilibrium in her life. By visiting these nations, she manages to accomplish her desired objectives. Gilbert puts her thoughts and desires in front of Ketut Liyer and asks for the balance of her life. As she said, "I want to have a lasting experience of God," I told him. "Sometimes I feel like I understand the divinity of this world, but then I lose it because I get distracted by my petty desires and fears. I want to be with God all the time. But I don't want to be a monk or give up worldly pleasures. I guess what I want to learn is how to live in this world and enjoy its delights, but also devote myself to God"(Gilbert 37). Bali is a vast, unseen system of roads, rituals, and spirit guides. In Bali, she continued her meditation, and she realized that this happiness was different from what I had experienced in the whole world on this earth. In the end, Gilbert states, "I was so glad that I had decided to stay alone" (Gilbert 366).

The memoir uses the Concept of "TRI HITA KARANA" Life Ideology as a Cultural Identity of Balinese Society Reflected in Elizabeth Gilbert's Eat, Pray, and Love. It uses the Anthropological approach in the paper. Balinese society respectfully plays out some religious practices, a few customary ceremonies, and certain contribution functions. This paper is an analysis of The Pursuit of Happiness in Eat, Pray, Love relevance to Martin Seligman's theory of authentic happiness. It shows the importance of happiness in a person's life and it is the ultimate goal and aim of existence.

The paper concludes, how a materialistic woman gets out of her comfort zone and steps into the spiritualistic life which gives her everything that she was expecting with her life. This paper gives an unmistakable message about misery, loneliness, and a transformation into a new spiritual woman. It is not just a fascinating journey of the three nations that she visits yet but also to awaken her spiritual consciousness. Additionally, Gilbert carried her reader along with her quest for spiritual satisfaction. The exploration in this work gives significance to individual tasks contributing to a feeling of her reason. While she was living in an ashram, she was assigned some tasks related to cleaning temple floors, also to purify herself to clean her heart from all her worries. Gilbert shares her experience of finally intermingling with God. Gilbert's regard for all religions is equal to mine. In the face of taking inspiration from Hinduism, and Buddhism she gets to know that every religion has the same law of poetics they all question the same ultimate truth. Gilbert comes to know that they both are troubled by Western people. In an attempt to convert to spiritualism, she makes a few essentially important things are that first let go of things that hurt youth or break you, and second, forgive oneself.

Gilbert's transformative journey results in substantial personal growth, identity, and self-discovery. By stepping away from materialism, she uncovers her true self and finds what truly brings her joy and contentment. Exploring her inner world and addressing her emotional and spiritual needs leads to healing and a deeper understanding of herself. This healing starkly contrasts with the emptiness she experienced when her life focused on material success. Frequently, we impose suffering on ourselves since we are so tightly holding our past, to mistakes that we had made, and the grief that we face. That night, as the sun set into the great beyond and stars overwhelmed the obscuring sky, Gilbert felt a closeness to the heavenly. It was then she addressed her husband in the spiritual encounter and carried the relationship to a complete and peaceful end. Gilbert ultimately finds more enduring happiness that stems from her inner state rather than external possessions. Her journey implies that genuine well-being is nurtured from within

and through meaningful experiences, rather than from material wealth. Gilbert expresses her love for traveling and illustrates how it has completely transformed her life. “Traveling is the great true love of my life. Since I was sixteen years old and first went to Russia with my saved-up babysitting money, I have always felt that travel is worth any cost or sacrifice. I am loyal and constant in my love for travel, as I have not always been loyal and constant in my other loves” (Gilbert 53).

Eventually, in Gilbert’s memoir, there is a fundamental philosophical shift away from materialism towards a holistic view of happiness and fulfillment. This shift underscores the significance of balancing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Gilbert’s journey of spiritualism inspired us for the future paths ahead, it gives courage, dedication, and the faith in possibility of a better tomorrow. At the end of the memoir Elizabeth Gilbert comes to realize that, “Happiness is the consequence of the 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 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” (Gilbert).

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