



Navigating the Enigma: Discovering of Self in Elizabeth Gilbert's *eat pray love*

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Abstract: The aim of the article is to analyze the concept of self-discovery and personal transformation as portrayed in the novel *eat pray love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. The study also focuses on the protagonist's journey of self-exploration across three distinct geographical and cultural landscapes. Through Gilbert's narrative, themes of self-discovery, healing, and cultural immersion emerge as central motifs. Her encounters with various individuals and traditions offer profound insights into the complexities of human existence and the universal quest for meaning and fulfillment. Kierkegaard, Danish theologian and philosopher, argues that individuals must actively seek meaning and purpose in their lives through subjective engagement. Gilbert experiences a sense of existential despair and dissatisfaction in her life, leading her to question her marriage and conventional choices. Her journey becomes a way to confront and navigate this existential, seeking meaning beyond societal norms. Gilbert's journey is a deliberate and conscious pursuit of meaning. By navigating the enigma of self-discovery, Gilbert invites readers to embark on their own journey of introspection and self-awareness, reminding them that true fulfillment lies not in external validation but in the profound connection with their innermost selves.

Keywords: Self-discovery, Transformation, Introspection, Journey, Fulfillment.

Introduction

Self-discovery is the process of gaining insight into one's own identity, values, beliefs, and purpose in life. It involves exploring and understanding one's emotions, motivations, strengths, weaknesses, and desires. Self-discovery often occurs through reflection, introspection, and engaging in experiences that challenge or expand one's perspective. It is a journey of uncovering hidden aspects of oneself and aligning actions and choices with one's authentic self. Transformation, on the other hand, refers to a profound and fundamental change in one's beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, or perspectives. It involves a shift from one state or condition to another, often leading to personal growth, development, and empowerment. It often involves letting go of old patterns or identities and embracing new ways of being that are more aligned with one's values and aspirations. Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat Pray Love* serves as a testament to the transformative power of travel and the capacity of the human spirit to transcend adversity.

Elizabeth Gilbert is an American author, essayist, short story writer, biographer, novelist, and memoirist. The novel *eat pray love* is based on Gilbert's memoir and her real-life experience. This book chronicles her solo journey around the world after her heartbreaking divorce. Her work is a travelogue of spiritual exploration that showcases her travel skills in her own ways. It depicts the adventurous experiences during her travels. It is one of the most popular novels with many readers. The work is full of escape, longing, and sensual exploration, and contains hints of stimulating emotional imbalance.

Self-identity

This work deals with the theme of human existence. The novel is about a woman searching for her own identity in three countries: Italy, India, and Indonesia. She became lower and took extreme action. She sells her members and embarks on a journey to these lands to heal her depression and find her true self. The first country she visits is Italy, she enjoys life in the Italian way and tries out different Italian dishes. Further in the city of Rome, she learns the character of the city to become herself. She then continues her journey to India. India is a country where

she learns about devotion and she finds peace of mind with the help of a local teacher at the ashram. When she meets a wise Texan, she begins her discipline spiritual quest over the course of four full months. Meditation and Yoga at the Ashram pave the way for the soul to create balance and simplicity. To know the meaning of service, we establish a vertical connection between humans and God. When she finally visits Indonesia, she realizes that her goal is to create a balance of worldly joy and heavenly happiness. That is why she chose Bali to enjoy her own life. That's where she found her identity, including her true love.

Identity encompasses characteristics, attributes, convictions, and manifestations that distinguish and identify a person or a group. It includes both individual and group dimensions, influencing people's perceptions of themselves and others. On the other hand, an identity crisis can be a difficult and even painful event, but it can also be very important for a person's growth and development. Here are some explanations of why a person's identity crisis may be significant in their life. According to Victoria Erickson, "Self-discovery is a journey that involves both internal research and external exploration, with the realization that through understanding others, you also uncover bits of yourself". Self-discovery, or identity crises, forces people to delve deeply into introspection and investigation. It offers a chance to learn about one's values, views, and interests, which promotes self-awareness. The quest for identity is a basic component of human growth and self-awareness, and people pursue it for a variety of reasons. Sense of belonging people get a sense of connection and belonging when they identify with a certain group or community. A fundamental human desire for social contact and support is satisfied by this sense of belonging.

It might be referring to the existentialist philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard. He is a Danish philosopher and is often considered a pioneer of existentialism. While he did not use the term "existentialism" himself, his ideas have a profound influence on later existentialist thinkers. Soren Kierkegaard emphasizes individual choice, subjective experience, and personal responsibility. Kierkegaard clarifies his judgment, below;

an existing individual is himself in the process of becoming... in existence the watchword is always forward. Existence is the child that is born of the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and his therefore a constant striving. (Copleston 348).

Kierkegaard divides human existence into three parts. They are the aesthetic phase, the ethical phase, and the religious phase. The Aesthetic Phase, due to its particular boundary point of life, this stage is marked by a terrible position. The emotional and sensory experience has an open place at the aesthetic stage. The aesthetic stage leads to the ethical stage, which is a higher stage than the preceding stage, which only ends in disappointment and hopelessness. However, this ethical stage is thought to offer better chances of leading a comfortable existence. The more knowledge is moral guidelines taken into account. In the ethical stage, the person is aware of the general guidelines to follow. According to Kierkegaard, the highest stage of existence is the religious stage. This is an explanation of despair as a means of gaining trust quickly. Despair is a stage on the way to a new beginning rather than the end of existence so desperation is often seen as a prelude to religious existence, which it is. This stage is when things stop being so concrete and instead go straight to the heart of a person, recognizing "God as an absolute reality and their conscience as sinners in need of God's forgiveness" (Dagun 40).

While the novel is rooted in existentialist philosophy, certain themes and elements within the story can be related to existentialist ideas. Existentialism is a philosophical movement that emphasizes individual freedom, choice, and the responsibility of creating one's meaning in life. Existentialism often explores the idea that individuals must actively seek and create meaning in their lives. In the novel, Elizabeth Gilbert embarks on a journey of self-discovery across Italy, India, and Indonesia, seeking meaning and purpose beyond societal expectations. One of the importance of individual freedom and the ability to make choices. Elizabeth Gilbert makes a conscious decision to break away from her previous life, including a challenging marriage and a conventional career, to explore her path and pursue personal fulfillment. It encourages individuals to live authentically, true to themselves and their values. As Gilbert travels and experiences different cultures, she reflects on her authentic desires and seeks a more genuine and fulfilling life. Existentialist philosophy holds that individuals are responsible for the consequences of their choices. In "*eat pray love*" Gilbert takes responsibility for her past decisions, confronts her flaws, and actively works toward personal growth and self-improvement. Often discuss the anxiety that arises from the awareness of one's freedom and responsibility. Gilbert experiences a form of existential crisis, grappling with questions about identity, purpose, and the nature of happiness. While "*eat pray love*" by Elizabeth Gilbert is not explicitly grounded in existentialist philosophy, certain aspects of the protagonist Elizabeth "Liz" Gilbert's journey can be interpreted through an existentialist lens.

Search for Authenticity, Liz's journey begins with a realization that her current life does not align with her authentic self. This aligns with existentialist themes of living authentically and true to one's nature. Liz embarks on a quest to rediscover her genuine desires and to live a more authentic life. Freedom and Choice, Existentialism emphasizes the importance of individual freedom and the power of choice. Liz exercises her freedom by choosing

to leave her marriage and embark on a year-long journey of self-discovery. Her decision to travel to Italy, India, and Indonesia is a deliberate choice to take control of her own life and shape her destiny. Personal Responsibility, which individuals are responsible for their existence and the choices they make. Liz takes responsibility for her past decisions, acknowledging her role in her failed marriage. Throughout her journey, she actively engages in self-reflection and personal growth, taking responsibility for her happiness. Existentialist philosophy often deals with the idea that individuals must actively create meaning in their lives. Liz's journey is a search for meaning and purpose beyond societal expectations. Each leg of her journey eating in Italy, praying in India, and finding balance in Indonesia contributes to her evolving sense of purpose. Existential anxiety catalyzes her journey, prompting her to reevaluate her life and seek deeper meaning. Spiritual Exploration allows for a broad exploration of different philosophical and spiritual perspectives. Liz's time in an ashram in India and her interactions with spiritual teachers reflect a search for existential truths and insights into the nature of existence. It captures elements of existentialist themes through Liz's journey. The novel can be seen as an exploration of individual freedom, responsibility, authenticity, and the quest for meaning, all of which align with key existentialist principles.

Conclusion

The novel explores how individuals can navigate their paths, make choices that align with their authentic selves, and find a sense of purpose and fulfillment in the process. Through Gilbert's journey, readers are invited to reflect on their own quest for self-discovery, grappling with universal themes of identity, belonging, and fulfillment. "Eat Pray Love" serves as a compelling narrative of resilience and self-renewal, reminding us that the path to enlightenment is often found in the most unexpected places, within the depths of our own souls.

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