

**Understanding the Traditions and Traditional Roles of Women in
the**

Three Counties (Italy, India and Indonesia) in *Eat Pray Love* by

Elizabeth Gilbert

B.A Dissertation

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B.A. (Honours) in English by

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in the dissertation entitled ‘Understanding the traditional roles of women in the three countries (Italy, India and Indonesia) in *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert’ is being submitted to the Department of English, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of Bachelor in English is my original research work.

The Dissertation embodies the results of investigations, observations, and experiments carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any other degree/diploma anywhere.

Sanjana Rana

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SLE 1071

Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled ‘Understanding the traditional roles of women in the three countries (Italy, India and Indonesia) in *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert’ submitted by Miss Sanjana Rana has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work done in this dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate.

The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged.

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Abstract

This work will deal with a close introspection of the conventional roles of women and the representation of the cultures in the three countries, namely Italy, India and Indonesia, in the 2006 novel *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. The author, who is also the protagonist, travelled in order to discover and explore herself. She begins her journey from New York City and ends up globetrotting in Rome, India and Bali. It will also show how the protagonist dealt with the stereotypical and standardised norms associated with a woman in the countries being an independent, educated American woman. When Elizabeth Gilbert finally discovers herself, the chaotic and adventurous journey paves the way for her happiness and content. There will also be a discussion on how natives of the given countries perceived the idea of a woman on a solo transnational trip. This research work will also show the protagonist's attitude towards the host culture and how she respects and appreciates the multiplicity of the three countries.

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Chapter I Introduction

'*Eat, Pray, Love*' is an example of autobiographical travel writing by the American author Elizabeth Gilbert. It is a memoir which has also been adapted into a movie by the same name in 2010, directed by Ryan Murphy, starring Julia Roberts. It describes the author's transnational trip across the three countries after her divorce and her endeavour to rediscover herself. The novel portrays the culture and tradition of each country. It also presents the status of women and their stereotypical roles in the countries. The novel also shows the traveller's manners towards the host countries and how she absorbs and assimilates into the host cultures.

Committed is the sequel of this book which covered Gilbert's life after the former book and her explanation of the concept of marriage. The writer seeks her lost balance and true self through her travels. This whole memoir has been divided into 108 stories like the 108 beads of a japa mala used by the Hindus and Buddhists in India or a rosary used in Europe. The author mentions that the number 108 is considered to be auspicious as it is a perfect three digit multiple of three, the numbers add up to nine which is three times three. The number three represents the supreme balance of the Holy Trinity. The 108 tales have further been divided into 3 parts about Italy, India and Indonesia, leaving us with 36 tales in each part. The 109th bead of the japa mala hangs outside the circle like a pendant, its purpose being allowing the person to pause and thank their teacher.

The author decides to travel for a whole year in the three countries, all of which are rich in their cultures. Italy has two prominent cultural representatives, language and food.

During her divorce and the time after in New York, Gilbert had drastically lost her weight and appetite. She decides to visit Rome in order to reawaken her pursuit of pleasure. She eats Italian food and learns their language as well. She finds their language beautiful and melodious.

India has a varied cultural and religious diversity. The natives and the landscape have also been explicitly described as peculiar but interesting at the same time. Devotion and spiritualism also play an important role, as in the ashram which brings Elizabeth to India. She learns to pray and meditate here.

Lastly, Indonesia has a rich culture of language and food. It has beautiful landscapes and the natives are also very interesting, so is their culture. Gilbert seeks to find balance in Indonesia between the universe and humans. She also wanted to find a balance between pleasure that she experienced in Italy and spirituality experienced in India.

About travel writing

Travel writing is non-fiction which includes creativity. In this genre there are other subtypes such as guide books, nature writing, outdoor literature and travel memoirs. The narrator encounters new places, people, traditions, cultures et cetera.

Travel writing is not only about exploring a place but also about exploration of the writer's self. The travelling and exploring is not only on a physical level but can also be on a spiritual and metaphorical level.

Some scholars argue that the destination is a little less important as compared to the act of travel and journey of the writer. According to them the journey plays a more prominent role than the destination.

Travel writing is usually done in first person using the pronoun 'I'. It is descriptive, entertaining and informative.

Travel writing can be in the form of a guide and give an idea on how to travel to the reader. It can also help the reader to know the best time to travel to a destination. This genre portrays the travel experiences for the readers so that they can learn from it and it also helps the readers to understand the experiences of the traveller. Travel writing also helps the readers not to make the same mistakes as the travellers and writers had made.

Travel writing celebrates the different cultures, customs and traditions across the world. This genre also helps the readers to understand other places, people and their lifestyles. It helps the readers to plan their own trips and also helps them to avoid expensive mistakes while traveling. Most of all travel writing helps the readers travel to far off places where they actually may never be able to go.

About the author

Elizabeth Gilbert was born on 18 July 1969 in Connecticut, United States to her parents John Gilbert, a chemical engineer and Carole Gilbert, a housewife. She has a sister named Catherine Gilbert Murdock who is also a successful novelist. Elizabeth Gilbert is 52 years old and she is an American author and journalist. She is best known for the novel being covered in the research work '*Eat Pray Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia*' (2006).

The book sold over 12 million copies. It has also been translated into more than 30 languages worldwide. Elizabeth Gilbert made around \$10 million from the book and she also earned about \$1 million for the film rights.

The book catapulted her career and she eventually became one of the hundred most influential people in the world according to the *Time* magazine.

Early life

The Gilbert family resided far away from the city life in the countryside. They rarely had any neighbours or any other source of entertainment such as television or record players.

This became a reason for their avid reading habit. The family used to read a lot.

Education and early career

Elizabeth Gilbert went to the New York University where she completed her degree in political science, after which she worked in many different areas. Gilbert worked as a waitress, cook, bartender and even worked for some magazines. When she was in NYU, she used to write short stories at night.

Career and works

Elizabeth Gilbert's first short story '*Pilgrims*' was published in 1993 in the magazine '*Esquire*'. She also worked for various magazines like *SPIN*, *GQ*, *Allure* and *New York Times*. Her article '*The Muse of the Coyote Ugly Saloon*' was published in the *GQ* magazine. The story is a short memoir of her time as a bartender. It also formed the foundation of the 2000 film '*Coyote Ugly*'.

Elizabeth Gilbert's first book '*Pilgrims*' is a collection of 12 short stories. This book was published in the year 1997.

Some of her other works include '*Stern Men*' (2000), '*The Last American Man*'

(2002), *Committed: A Skeptical Makes Peace With Marriage* (2010), *The Signature of All Things* (2013), *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear* (2015) and *City of Girls* (2019).

Personal life

Elizabeth Gilbert was first married to Michael Cooper from 1994 to 2002. She met him while working at the Coyote Ugly Saloon. The marriage had come to an end as Gilbert left Michael for another man.

Her second husband, José Nunes, met her in Bali in 2007. She describes how she met him, and the kind of relationship that they shared in her book *Eat Pray Love*. The couple lived in Frenchtown, New Jersey. Gilbert and Nunes owned and ran a huge company based in Asia that dealt with importing stuff. The company was called Two Buttons, but they later sold it in the year 2015. The couple split in July 2016, Gilbert went public with this news when she posted it on her “Facebook” page, announcing that the split was harmonious and the reasons very personal.

In September of the same year, Elizabeth Gilbert posted on “Facebook” about her relationship with her female best friend, Rayya Elias. Elias was a hairdresser and author by profession and also the reason for the failure of her marriage to Nunes. Elias and Gilbert were friends since 2000 and became a couple after Gilbert realised her feelings for her best friend. Unfortunately, this was followed by Elia’s diagnosis of terminal cancer. In 2017, the pair celebrated their commitment in a small ceremony with near and dear ones. Legally, the ceremony was not binding. Elias took her last breath in January, 2018.

In March, 2019, Gilbert shared a post on “Instagram” about her relationship with Simon MacArthur, a United Kingdom-born photographer. Simon was a close friend of Elias. In 2020, Elizabeth mentioned in an interview that her relationship with Simon is over and that it was short lived.

Gap area

A lot of work has been done on this book from the lens of feminism, ecofeminism, spiritualism and transcendentalism, this work aims to look at the book and focus on the concept of a woman traveling solo transnationally, her spiritual and mental journey and progress, and also how various cultures view her life as an American woman. It also includes how the locals grasp the concept of divorce and a single woman in her thirties with no children. This work will also focus on the traditions of the three countries, Italy, India and Indonesia.

This idea seems very interesting and has to do with the fact that I am a travel enthusiast, and have travelled solo domestically. Lately, traveling has become an integral part of people’s lives in the 21st century, though the internet can provide the world with unlimited material and statistical data on various destinations of one’s choices, only a deep knowledge of the place, the locals and the traditions can help one become a part of that place. This will lead to the truest and purest essence of traveling on the ground level.

This thesis might help a lot of travel enthusiasts to know more about traveling and exploring a place. It might also help them with preparations for traveling to a foreign place and will aid them in understanding the place and people better.

Objective

The objective of this dissertation is to analyse the text through a fresh perspective. It is to understand the traditional female roles in the countries the author travels in, how the natives absorb or reject the idea of solo women travellers and a divorced woman in her thirties with no children. We will also observe the way the protagonist deals with these preformed norms that women are expected to follow.

The countries, Italy, India and Indonesia all have a rich culture. To see it from the perspective of this book as a female would be interesting, which will be done in this work.

Research methodology

Travel writing or travel memoir is a famous genre and a lot of text has been written on it. While there are a number of types of this research work has a qualitative nature of study. The paper will focus on the roles of women in the three countries, how the local people of the specific areas view the author as an American solo travellers, who is also divorced and also focus on the various traditions of the different places. We will also deal with the author's spiritual and mental progress through the novel and how she develops from her wrecked marriage into a beautiful woman who finally finds what she has been looking for all the time.

Chapter II

The Traditions and Traditional Roles of Women in the Three Counties

(Italy, India and Indonesia) in *Eat Pray Love*

Background

Elizabeth Gilbert is the author and protagonist of this travel memoir, *Eat Pray Love: A Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia*. This novel traces her life in New York and then her transnational journey through Italy, India and Indonesia. The triggering point for the author for this journey is her divorce with her husband in New York. After a very difficult legal series of settlement, where she loses all her money, a toxic relationship with her boyfriend, David, where she becomes addicted to him and a long span of severe depression, Gilbert decides to take herself on this year long-trip. After so much struggle, she feels that it is justified to finally do something that she has always wanted to do.

The three countries that she chooses all begin with the letter 'I' (Italy, India, Indonesia). She romantically muses this as a metaphor for what she would like to have found by the end of the year-long journey, herself, a sense of self and independence. Gilbert wants to explore pleasure, devotion and most importantly a balance between the two. In the beginning of the book, in the introduction or "How This Book Works" section, Elizabeth explains how she has structured the book according to the Indian beads used for praying, also known as japa malas. The Indian prayer beads contain 108 beads, which is a significant number as it is a three-digit multiple of three. Number 'three' has been signified by the author by dividing the book into three parts, each talking about her experiences in the three countries. Each part consists of 36 tales each, which is again an important number as the author was 36 years old when she wrote this introduction.

The book begins with the author in Italy. She had made a vow of celibacy to herself, which she sometimes found a little difficult to maintain, however she stuck to her vow in Italy.

The story does not unfold in a sequential or chronological order, the author keeps on switching from her present escapades to her past experiences. Most of these experiences are traumatic, and heart wrenching. She recalls the times of her despair, how she spent most of the nights on her bathroom floor either crying or overthinking.

Elizabeth Gilbert hasn't explicitly mentioned the reason for her separation with her husband, but she did mention that she did not want to be a mother, contrary to what she and her husband had decided. The couple had earlier decided that they would start trying to get pregnant once Liz reaches the age of 30.

One night, while sobbing on the bathroom floor, Liz realises that not only does she not want to be a mother, but also that she does not want to be married anymore. She is mortified by her own thoughts. She gets a comforting assurance by a voice, which she later realises was her own voice from the future. Ending the marriage does not turn out to be the best thing, as Liz's husband does nothing to make the process better. She assumes most of the blame, gives away all her money to free herself from her husband. Finally, after two years of the messy procedure the couple separates.

Elizabeth jumps into another relationship amidst the mess with her husband, which further lessens her self-confidence and makes her dependent on another man. She recalls her work trip to Bali, where she met a medicine man named Ketut Liyer. He had already predicted that Elizabeth would lose all her money, only to get it back soon and that she would visit Bali again, which eventually turned out to be true.

In the pursuit of pleasure, Liz wants to go to Italy, due to her newfound love for the Italian language which brings her pleasure every time she speaks it. In search of devotion and peace, she decides to visit her Guru's ashram in India. And thinking about

Ketut's prophecy, she plans to end her trip in Bali. It is in Bali that she learns the balance between worldly pleasure and heavenly devotion.

The first destination, Italy, comprises of speaking the beautiful Italian language and eating the delicious Italian food. Liz overcomes her anxiety and depression gradually; she even stops taking her depression medications. Initially, it is very hard for her but eventually she overcomes it all alone. Here she makes some friends through her old contacts. She even enrolls in a language school where she meets more friends. They all help her to learn and understand Italian culture and language. Liz had lost a lot of weight during the two years of her divorce, she finally gains weight in Rome after savouring delicious, authentic Italian dishes. She let herself free and did not feel guilty for gaining so much weight. The food and language of Italy uplifted Liz. She found pleasure in these simple things and also remained a celibate all this time. She did not break her vow or date anyone in Rome.

The second destination, India, was based on Liz's Guru's ashram, whom she met through David. She practices devotion and explores her spiritual life and spirituality. However, this is not an easy journey for Liz. She finds meditating extremely difficult due to the chaos in her head and David. She particularly finds Gurugita, a long devotional prayer, very exhaustive and impossible to cope up with. Liz was assigned to clean the floors of the ashram, which required a lot of strength and energy, and it was also a monotonous work. This work can be seen as a metaphor of cleaning one's own heart. Elizabeth did not complain and did her work diligently. She met a lot of friends in the ashram. One of her closest friends was Richard from Texas. He helped her recognise her control issues and many other problems like the problems related to her love life. He encouraged her to get over herself and meditate properly. Richard used to call Liz

‘Groceries’ due to her large appetite.

Initially, Liz had decided to stay in the ashram for just a month and then explore India in the leftover time. However, a life changing experience pushes her to stay in the ashram and dedicate her whole four months to meditation and prayer. She had a mindful experience on the terrace of the ashram when she wanted to let go of her guilt about her divorce and she wanted her ex-husband to forgive her. After this incident, she felt very relieved and anew. In India, Liz learnt to forgive and be forgiven, she also let David go. She finally made peace with her mind with the help of prayers, chants, long hours of meditation and vegetarian food.

The final stop of her trip was in Indonesia. This is a very important part of her itinerary since it is here that she learns to love herself and her life. She also learns balance between the pleasure that she experienced in Italy and the spiritualism that she explored in India. She initially spends a lot of her time with the medicine man, Ketut Liyer. He teaches her the smiling meditation and also notices how beautiful Elizabeth has grown since the last time she met him. He sees the glow of happiness on her face. Ketut also advises her to continue the yoga and meditation that she learnt in India. Through the stories in Bali, we get to know that the Balinese society is very patriarchal. The most prominent example is that of Liz’s friend, Wayan, who is a healer by profession. We will explore more about this further on.

Gilbert makes a lot of friends in Bali too. She lives in a hotel first, where she meets Mario, who helps her find the medicine man. Then she shifts to a house with a big garden. She also meets expatriates from Western countries in Bali. It is in Bali that she meets her lover, Felipe, a Brazilian man who is 52 years old. Elizabeth Gilbert falls in love with Felipe through the course of time and at last gives up on the vow of celibacy.

She seems very happy with Felipe.

Wayan, the healing lady plays a very important role in Gilbert's trip to Bali. Wayan becomes a very close friend of Liz, she becomes like a sister. Wayan is a divorced woman, something which is frowned upon a lot in the Balinese culture. She is treated like an outcast by the family and neighbours. She manages to get custody of her only daughter, Tutti, with great difficulty. Wayan also adopts two orphan girls from a temple and takes care of them. Even though Wayan herself is extremely poor, she has a big and kind heart and she decides to keep the two girls with her. She treats the two girls the same way she treats her own daughter. One major problem in Wayan's life was that of lack of a permanent residence. Since they did not have a permanent home, the family had to keep shifting from one place to another which badly affected Tutti's education and life too. She had to be pulled out of school several times when they shifted places. This makes Liz think about the whole situation and she decides to come up with a solution. She emails all her friends about Wayan's situation and asks them all to donate money for building a house for Wayan as the author's birthday present.

To her surprise, the email had reached across the globe and Liz had been getting money from complete strangers. She collected around \$18000 for Wayan. Finally, after a lot of struggle, Wayan was able to buy land for herself and the author's aim was fulfilled. At the end of the book, Elizabeth falls in love with Felipe and successfully gets a place for Wayan and her three daughters. The story ends like a fairy tale.

Italy or "Say It Like You Eat It" or "Thirty Six Tales about the Pursuit of Pleasure".

Elizabeth Gilbert's motivation to take a trip to Italy was mostly driven by the fact that she loved the Italian language. She wanted to take a break from her chaotic life and experience pleasure. Pleasure not in the sense of sexuality but pleasure in speaking the language that she found very poetic, romantic and beautiful. She also decided to spend the entire year in celibacy, which was sometimes hard for her. She wanted to adjust her rules sometimes, but did not.

Italian culture is very rich and varied. The author was in awe of the language and she fell in love with the beauty of it. Elizabeth Gilbert started learning Italian when she was in New York and she describes it as being more beautiful than roses. Though she could not make a practical justification for studying the language and was even mocked by her friends for learning a language which is only spoken in one country. Liz describes this language as a magic trick, as if a bird was singing. She would come back home from her classes and draw a hot bath for herself and would read an Italian dictionary to take her mind off her divorce. Italian words made her laugh with joy. Only speaking these words and using them in her everyday life made her feel happy about herself.

Elizabeth Gilbert even enrolled herself in a language school when she arrived in Italy. Her friends in the class, like her, came to Rome for the same reason as her, to study Italian just because they felt like it. None of them had a solid reason to learn this language, they just wanted to speak Italian because they loved the way it made them feel. The history of the Italian language is as beautiful as the language itself. The Italians handpicked the most beautiful of all the local dialects that was spoken in the area and crowned it Italian. This is what sets Italian apart from other European languages. The Italian that is spoken today is not Roman, Venetian or Florentine, it is Dantean. It has been taken from the Florentine poet, Dante's works. This makes Italian an artistic pedigree and a perfectly

ordained language to express human emotions. Elizabeth Gilbert seems to be obsessed with the language and even confesses in her novel that she is lovesick over the language.

The other important aspect that brings pleasure to the author is food. She travels around Rome and explores multiple places that serve authentic food. Her first meal in Rome is homemade pasta with a side order of sautéed spinach and garlic. She explores a place that sells the best gelato in Rome, Il Gelato di San Crispino and she visits the place three times in one day. She tries different flavours of gelatos there. Liz even starts her day sometimes with a breakfast of chocolate pastries and double cappuccino. She tries frozen rice pudding, intestines of new-born lamb, guts and tongues and parts of an animal thrown away by the rich people up north. One day she prepares her own meal which consists of soft boiled brown eggs, stalks of asparagus, olives and some goat cheese. She even adds two slices of salmon and for dessert a peach. The author describes that she admired her lunch so much that she could not touch it for some time because to her it was a true expression of the art of making something out of nothing, which is taken from a phrase in Italian, *l'arte d'arrangiarsi*. Liz tries spaghetti cacio e pepe with some roasted chicken. Elizabeth and her friend Sofie visit a place called Pizzeria da Michele where they order some really delicious pizza. Gilbert feels like she is having a relationship with the pizza, almost like an affair. She has risotto ai fungus, pasta in the shape of a pope's hat stuffed with crustaceans and octopus and squid, ricotta sprinkled with pistachios and bread chunks. Once she even cooks an American Thanksgiving dinner for her friend's birthday.

Italians have a close-knit family; they tend to live with their families even when they grow old and financially independent. Elizabeth's friend Giovanni, was a man in his twenties who still lived with his mother. Liz found this very interesting, because

Americans do not live with their parents once they become adults. Elizabeth's another friend, Luca Spaghetti had travelled a lot but claimed that he could never live anywhere else but in Rome, with his mother, since he is an Italian man. Another reason for him to live in Rome is that his friends live there and also his girlfriend, whom he has been in love with since they were teenagers. All his friends are the same that he has had since he was a child, all of them belonging to the same neighbourhood. They have grown together watching soccer matches every Sunday either in a bar or in a stadium. After the match ends, they all return to their homes separately where they have a get together, to eat the big Sunday meals which have been cooked by their mothers and grandmothers.

Soccer is an important sport for Italians. The Italians get to choose early in life if they are going to be a Lazio fan or a Roma fan. This is the deciding factor for the group whom an individual will hang out with every Sunday afternoon for the rest of the time. Elizabeth Gilbert travels in Bologna, Florence, Venice, Sardinia, Sicily, Naples, then in Calabria. For her, travel is her constant love. She becomes more intact through the enjoyment of harmless pleasures. Gilbert is glad that she has put on weight and now she exists more than she did four months ago.

The author in the past had been very disturbed due to her failed relationship and marriage. But now in Italy she gave herself the executive authorisation to enjoy her experience in the new country. She claimed a double major, in speaking and in eating Italian. In her flashback from her marriage the author recalls how she had reached the deadline of 30 years of age and now she was expected to want to have a baby. Gilbert did not want to have a baby. However, the couple did try to get pregnant but nothing ever happened except for her psychosomatic morning sickness.

In a conversation with a local lady, Elizabeth Gilbert is asked the question if she is married. When she tells the lady that she is divorced, she is asked why. The author is confused and stammers before answering that they broke up. The lady does not reply and walks away without even turning around to look at her. Gilbert feels like the lady was mad at her because she was a divorced woman traveling alone in Rome.

The novel also talks about how when Elizabeth visited Italy as a 19-year-old, she was constantly harassed by men on the street. It used to be a little risky traveling alone in Italy, especially as a woman. Now, at the age of 34 the author feels invisible as no one harassed or cat called her. She wonders what has changed. She also doubts herself and her beauty. However, it turns out that there has truly been a shift in Italy in the last decade. The reason for this could be either the victory of feminism or/and evolution in the Italian culture. Italy as a society has come to terms with the fact that pestering, misbehaving or stalking a woman is no longer acceptable among them. The Italian men have improved quite a lot. This gave relief to the author because she was now assured that it wasn't her lack in beauty for not getting any attention. Another positive perspective that can be seen here is that women can now safely travel alone in Italy without the fear of being harassed or stalked by the Italian men.

The author had also travelled in Venice in the novel and claims it to be a conservative society. This can be further explained with the incident of a beautiful young Venetian woman who owned and ran a restaurant near her accommodation in Venice. She had once been in love with a Sardinian artist who had promised her a better life but eventually left her with a heartbreak and three children. This woman also had a few affairs with some other men and the neighbours talked about her behind her back. The lady's mother advised her to at least wear a wedding ring saying that this is not Rome

where one can live as one wants.

Italian men are described as emotionally available. They are open to the feelings and heartily and lovingly participate in the families. They regard and respect the women and children in their lives very much. This is a sign that the country regardless, of numerous data and surveys, is doing really well.

Overall, the author's experience in Italy made her get over her depression and anxiety. It helps her experience pleasure after a very long time, and this progress could be seen physically in the form of her gaining body weight. She no longer depended on her depression pills to feel better. In fact, right after her first meal in Rome she felt content and happy.

India or “Congratulations to Meet You” or “Thirty Six Tales about the Pursuit of Devotion”.

The ashram that Elizabeth Gilbert comes to visit in India is located somewhere in the outskirts of the city of Mumbai. Her Guru was introduced to her by her ex-boyfriend David in his apartment in New York. The first time Elizabeth Gilbert saw a picture of David's guru she instantly knew that she needed one too. Gilbert followed her in New York and then decided to come to India to her ashram. She was very inspired by her Guru.

Liz reaches the ashram in a taxi right in time for the morning Aarti. The Aarti is sung every day at 3:30 am. Liz quietly slips in for the Aarti and describes herself as being there since forever. Recently back from her Italian escapade, she has not even thought of meditation. Even though Liz finds meditation difficult, there is something else that she

finds murderously difficult, the Gurugita. Gilbert thinks of it as long, tedious, sonorous and insufferable. It has a total of 182 verses and each verse has a paragraph written in Sanskrit. It takes around an hour and a half to perform. Gurugita is a text of unimaginable power. Liz finally decided to come up with a solution for this, she decided to devote her Gurugita to her nephew, Nick. Nick was having problems while sleeping because he could not still his mind, so she sang her Gurugita to him to help him sleep.

Once, Liz jumped out of her window to attend the Gurugita when her roommate locked her in as she had been sleeping late. She had a great excuse not to go for the Gurugita but she did go. When she jumped out of the window of her room, she fell down and bled a lot. She picked herself up and started singing the Gurugita. This incident changed her relationship with this spiritual practice.

Liz meets new people here again and becomes friends with them. Some of her roommates were a middle-aged Afro-American devout Baptist and meditation instructor from South Carolina, an Argentinian dancer, a Swiss homeopath, a Mexican secretary, an Australian mother of five, a young Bangladeshi computer programmer, a paediatrician from Maine, a Filipino accountant., a plumber/poet from New Zealand, an Irish dairy farmer, Tulsi an Indian teenage girl and a nun from South Africa.

The ashram is not an easily accessible place, first it is located on the outskirts of Mumbai on a dirt road in a rural river valley near a pretty and scrappy village. Secondly the ashram is more like a university, not everyone can get in. One needs to apply to come here and in order to get accepted by the ashram, one must show that that person has been studying yoga seriously and sincerely for a long time. On the outer side of the walls of the ashram there is nothing but only dust and poverty. While on the inside, it's all irrigated, there are gardens, beds of flowers, hidden orchids, mango trees, jackfruit trees, cashew

trees, palm trees, Mongolia and banyan trees. The building is not very big and grand but it is nice. The ashram has a simple dining hall, library and a few temples. The ashram also has two meditation caves.

This can be seen as a metaphor. The outside of the ashram represents the outer appearance of a human being and the inside of the ashram represents the pure heart of a person who practices yoga and meditation.

In the Sanskrit language, yoga can be translated as union. This union could be between mind and body, between the individual and her /his God, between one's thoughts and the source of those thoughts, between teacher and student or even between an individual and her/his difficult to deal with neighbour. Yoga is not just limited to this, it could also mean trying to search for God through the process of meditation, through scholarly studies, through the practice of silence, through devotional service, also called seva or through chanting mantra, the repetition of sacred words in Sanskrit. However, yoga must not be seen as a synonym of Hinduism. All Hindus are not yogis. True yoga does not compete or preclude any other religion. It promotes harmony and peace.

Initially Liz had thought of staying in the ashram for just six weeks. She wanted to have a bit of transcendental experience and then continue traveling in India. Everything was decided, she had maps, guidebooks, hiking boots etc. She had the whole itinerary planned and the holy men that she was about to meet. Everything was listed, she wanted to explore places, temples, different monuments and cities. She even wanted to meet the Dalai Lama. However, she decided to stay in the ashram for four months even though this was not her initial plan. She now planned to stay back and work on her spiritual growth and development.

On her last night in India Liz decided not to go to sleep at all but to spend the whole evening in one of the meditation rooms and pray. She was not a late-night person by nature but something in her wanted to stay awake for the last night in the ashram.

Although she had sacrificed her night's sleep for various other reasons like partying, making love, arguing with someone, driving long distances, dancing, crying, worrying etc. But this would be the first time when she would dedicate the whole night to prayer.

She could see the significant change in herself.

Mostly the western tourists in India are taken advantage of by salesmen like a Kashmiri salesman, who was trying to sell a carpet to Elizabeth Gilbert and it seemed like he was trying to unload his wares on her.

This part of the novel also gives a very detailed description of Indian women. On New Year's Eve the Indian women are dressed up as if they're going for a wedding, their hair is oiled, dark and braided. On this occasion they wear their finest silk saris and bracelets of gold. They also put on bindis. Indian women like dressing up. Even when Elizabeth comes across women doing road work, she notices that even under the scorching heat of the direct sun the women are barefoot and seem to be strangely beautiful. They are also dressed in jewel-coloured saris and have necklaces and bracelets on. Even under these grave circumstances these women gave beautiful smiles which the author cannot understand. She wonders how can these women be happy doing such rough work under such difficult and terrible circumstances.

The Indian teenage girls are compared to butterflies who look much younger than American 18-year-old girls. On the contrary, Indian boys look much older than American boys of the same age. Elizabeth Gilbert becomes friends with a 17-year-old Indian girl whose name is Tulsi. She works with her in scrubbing the temple floors. Tulsi is described

as a rebel, tomboyish bookworm, who discusses two topics with Liz, God and hip hop music. Liz and Tulsi also talked a lot about marriage, Tulsi would be reaching the age of 18 and then she would be regarded as a legitimate prospect for marriage. For this Tulsi will be expected to attend Indian weddings in bright sarees trying to display her womanhood.

However, Tulsi was least interested in this. She did not want to get married to a stranger so early in her life. Also, Tulsi does not like the gossiping, dressing up and dancing in these weddings. She was ambitious and goal oriented, unlike the other girls of her age, she wanted to study psychology in college, just like their guru did. Tulsi also wanted to travel around the world like Elizabeth Gilbert. She is a smart girl and quite matured for her age.

Gilbert gets out of India as a firm believer in peace, and devotion. She also has some surreal encounters during her meditation. She also learns to tackle her control issues and the other relationship issues. She learns to choose her thoughts through constant practice. Liz meditates and attends the Gurugita with enthusiasm. She gradually evolves from being a person who hated the Gurugita to someone who jumped out of her window to attend it. Four months of constant meditation and vegetarian food make her feel pure.

Indonesia or “Even in My Underpants I Feel Different” or “Thirty Six Tales about the Pursuit of Balance”.

Bali is a tiny Hindu Island which is located in the centre of the two-thousand-mile-long Indonesian archipelago. Almost all the people in Bali are either a king, a priest or an artist, which makes the Balinese have pride and brilliance. Everyone in Bali is considered to be

in a clan and if for any reason anyone is kicked out of a clan, that person becomes as good as dead.

People widely speak English in Bali, which makes the author feel guiltily relieved. Since she had been very occupied with Italian and Sanskrit lately. The author did not wish to learn Indonesian language, so she stuck with English. There was a bombing attack in Bali after the author's last visit. This left the place devoid of tourists, which made the locals desperate to help the tourists as they were all desperate for work. The Balinese are very much into looks and physical appearances. For them, beauty is safety. When Liz enters her hotel, the hotel staff floods her with compliments on her physical beauty. Also, when there is any major ceremony in Bali, people dress their best in shiny, silky sarongs and kaput. The attendees sit in the ceremony and stare and admire each other for a long time.

The Balinese follow a tradition while naming the baby, they give them only four names. These are Wayan, Made, Nyoman and Ketut. These names have no specific meaning, they only designate the order of the birth of the child. Wayan means first, Made second, Nyoman third and Ketut fourth. If there is a fifth child the name cycle runs again starting from Wayan. This is an indication of the fact that Balinese give a lot of importance to the placement of a member in the family. To avoid the complication of this naming system, the people have come up with nicknames.

Every Balinese knows exactly where she/he belongs. They are very well oriented in the huge grid system. Also, Balinese do not like the Javanese a bit. Elizabeth's friend Yudhi is also a Javanese. He had lived in America for some time and he felt that his own nation was more prejudiced towards him than America ever was.

For the Balinese, land is as precious as cattle is for the Masai. They value their land beyond the reaches of economic sense. The Balinese believe that one can never own enough

land and if one has land, he/she must never let it go. Even if someone wants to sell land, they don't like other people to know that their land is up for sale. This is due to the fact that the person selling the land is seen as someone who is desperate for cash and also if the person's neighbours get to know about the land, they start asking for money from the owner.

The other interesting concept that the Balinese believe in is that of *taksu*, the spirit of each place. Before buying any piece of land, the Balinese check the *taksu* of that place. Also, before doing anything big like buying land, they always consider consulting a priest. For them, nothing significant can be taken place or done before a proper auspicious date is chosen by the priest.

Menstruation is considered impure in Balinese culture, the period blood is considered dirty as it is believed that it can make the temple impure. Therefore, women are prohibited from entering the temples when they are on their periods. Not only this, but also the men and women who are in *cuntaka* or having a recent demise of any family member, are also not allowed to enter the temples.

Another interesting tradition that the author comes across is that of baby ceremony. Liz gets to experience this when the medicine man, Ketut Liyer offers her to go with him for the ceremony. According to the Balinese beliefs, a new born baby till the age of six months is considered God sent straight from heaven, so they do not let the child touch the ground for the first six months of the child's life. Balinese babies are therefore carried for the first six months and respected and revered as tiny deities. If a baby dies before the age of six months, a special cremation ceremony is held for it and the ashes of the baby are not placed in the cemetery of humans because they think that the baby was never a human. It was a God. If the baby gets to live for more than six months, then a big ceremony is held

for the baby and its feet are finally allowed to be touched on the ground at last. The baby is then welcomed to the human world.

These are only a few among other numerous traditions and cultures followed in Bali. The Balinese are very emotive and sentimental about their followings, even the little kids are very well aware of all the traditions and cultures. All of them respect these with full sincerity.

Balinese customs and traditions can sometimes be a little tiring. A survey estimated that a typical Balinese woman following the proper culture spends almost one third of her life preparing for a ceremony, taking part in a ceremony or cleaning and tidying up after the ceremony. For Balinese people, divorce is a big, sad thing. Wayan is a divorced woman who had tried very hard to work on her marriage. She prayed every day, got beatings from her husband but still tried to continue her marriage. It was very difficult for her to leave her husband and get custody of her daughter. The author also avoids telling people about her divorce as she knows that the locals might frown upon it. She chooses to answer by saying that she is not married yet.

Another interesting tradition followed by the Balinese people is that of making one's brother's wife their wife after one's wife dies. After the death of Ketut's wife, his brother's wife Nyomo started living in both the houses. She took care of the family and was Ketut's wife in every sense except for they were not physically involved.

The society in Bali is patriarchal and this can be clearly seen through the healer's procedure of treating problems related to conceiving or sexuality. When a couple is not able to conceive and Wayan tells them that the problem is with the female, she treats the female but when the problem is with the male, she cannot directly tell the male about it.

This is because it would be equivalent to hurting the man's ego. And this might even result in domestic violence with his wife, something that Wayan doesn't want. So she informs the couple that the lady needs to come alone for the treatment. She arranges a male to copulate the lady and the problem of conceiving a baby is solved.

For the Balinese, balance and planning is very important. A person from Bali will always know what she/ he is doing, where they are going, where they are coming from etc. People came to the medicine man to look for balance. Anyone who was out of balance, needed their equilibrium restored. The author was in search of balance, but when she was in Bali, she did not feel like she was searching or looking for anything because the balance had come very naturally into place and aligned with her. The balance brought her peace and she swung between her devotional practices like meditation and the pleasure of the beauty around, food and her friends. Amidst all this, the author also learns that sometimes one needs to lose balance in love in order to live a balanced life.

The author ends her trip in Bali, she has learnt about pleasure, devotion and the balance between the two. And she gets to learn a lot of things from the medicine man; she also builds a house for a single divorced woman with three children and most of all she falls in love fearlessly.

Chapter III Conclusion

The paper gave an overall idea about all the three countries. We can conclude that the three countries have a very rich culture and they all follow it to the core. Be it the food in Italy, spiritualism in India and the oriented society in Indonesia. The work gave a deep understanding of how things work, how the people are in these three countries. Not only this but we also got to know about the traditional role of women, what they are expected to do, and how they absorb the idea of a Westerner coming to their country, especially a woman traveling on her own.

The author's main aim and goal was to learn to live in this world and also enjoy the delights that it offers, but at the same time to also devote herself to God. She also wanted to find a balance between the two without having more inclination towards either one of them. To find pleasure, she travels to Italy. The reason she travels to Italy is that she loves the Italian language, to her merely pronouncing the words brings her pleasure and joy. Though there is no practical use of this language in her life, she hopes to learn it just for the fact that it brings happiness to her. In Italy the author experiences pleasure through the beautiful language and the delicious food. She also admires the various beautiful architectural structures throughout the city. She is very much impressed by the beautiful fountains across the city. She makes quite some friends in Italy, and practices the language with them. She explores Rome with her friends. This trip enables her to get rid of her depression pills and she finally feels happy in her heart.

In order to practise devotion, she goes to India to her guru's Ashram whom she got to know through David. Here also Gilbert meets a lot of people, the closest friend that she

makes in the Ashram is Richard from Texas. He is the one who makes her realize her control issues and other issues related to her relationships, encourages her to get out of her head and make the best use of her time in the Ashram. Initially, Elizabeth struggled a lot with focusing her mind on meditation and reciting the Gurugita. With time she gets better at it and willingly participates in the activities. She even decides to be silent for some while which is quite a task for her as she is very talkative. She even decides to quit her plan of exploring India and stays in the Ashram for four months. She progresses and grows spiritually; she feels closer to God and finds peace in her mind.

When Elizabeth Gilbert arrives in Indonesia, she is completely clueless and has no plans per se. Nobody there is expecting her and the medicine man that she wants to meet, she's not sure if he is still alive or not. Eventually she meets the medicine man, learns new methods of meditation from him and a lot of more things. She is in Bali to find a balance between pleasure and devotion which by the end of the novel she does. She falls in love with the Brazilian man in Bali and breaks her vow of celibacy. At the end of the novel, she takes Felipe with her to a quiet island where she had gone two years ago when she was totally depressed and heartbroken. In the present time when she goes to the island she is a completely different and transformed woman, this is the progress that we see in the author from her divorce to her time in Bali.

Talking about the traditional roles of women in the three countries, we learn a lot from the novel. In Italy, women are expected to take care of the families even when the children are old enough to take care of themselves. Until a few years back Italy was a country where harassing and catcalling women was very common but now a drastic change has been observed in the Italian men. None of this happens anymore which makes it a safe place for women to travel alone. The relationships in Italy are very close knit. People

remain friends from childhood till their adult life. The families are very close and live together.

India, which has been shown from the rural perspective, is a country where patriarchy still prevails. Women are expected to look presentable in order to signal their womanhood and be a suitable match for any eligible bachelor. The standards of being a suitable bride are very shallow. Girls are seen as a burden and the parents want to get their girls married as soon as possible. Elizabeth Gilbert is welcomed in the country with open arms, even though she does not travel in India per se but she stays in the Ashram for four whole months. A striking character is that of Tulsi who symbolises and represents the Indian girls who are entering the age of marriage. Even though Tulsi has her own dreams and ambitions her parents want to get her married in order to set themselves free from the responsibility.

Indonesia as mentioned earlier serves as a hub for the author to find a balance in her life. She not only ends up with a proper balance but also finds love in Bali. The most striking character in the novel from the eyes of feminism is that of Wayan, the healer.

This character gives us an insight of the Balinese believes and culture. Wayan's divorce makes her an outsider or an outcast in the community. She financially becomes very unstable and nobody helps her. And this indicates a very important aspect of the culture, that in Bali divorce is considered a big deal. For the Balinese their family and community mean everything to them. So, if a divorced person plans to visit Bali, and there he/she is asked the question if they're married, they should answer by saying not yet.

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