

*A Minor Research Project*  
*On*  
**SPIRITUAL QUEST IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF KAHLIL GIBRAN,  
ELIZABETH GILBERT AND ELIF SHAFAK**

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**SUMMARY**

Human being's existence in the form of life, followed by death marking the end of life, the curiosity in mind regarding the mystery of this universe, and the belief in the hand of any bigger power controlling the whole existence; these are the realities of mankind that attract a person towards spiritual quest, towards gaining a deeper understanding of life, and towards meditation. Spiritual quest is a yearning to understand God or to delve into deep experiences of soul to find one's authenticity or to give meaning to life by connecting with soul. Spirituality is something that cannot be explained with logic or reasoning and cannot be justified with scientific rationality. It can be equated more with feelings, mental balance, and divinity of soul. Spirituality is related to heart, as its origin is said to be out of love. Many writers of literature have explored the theme of spiritual quest in their works. The different aspects related to this theme, as presented by selected writers during different periods of time, is the thrust of this research. How the quest of deeper truths of life and death, and the searching of true meaning of life, become a whole journey taking a person to another level of existence, is the aim of the present research.

The authors selected for the present research have been successful in giving new meanings to spirituality through their works. An extensive study of their selected works aims to understand different expressions of spiritual quest at different periods of time. A parallel study of these writers attempts to bring new insight into the previous research works on spiritual quest. The study also aims to take a comparative approach towards the selected works. Whereas Kahlil Gibran's works make an appropriate study for the comparison between Eastern and Western cultures that had their impact on Gibran, the works by Elizabeth Gilbert and Elif Shafak have been explored with feminist approach along with tracing the effect of spirituality on women.

**FINDINGS**

Kahlil Gibran's masterpiece *The Prophet* is a book in which he associated his spiritual quest with love, nature, human relationships and the purpose of life. His explorations related to God and life are connected with these other aspects of life. Gibran was a poet and writer who

belonged to East as well as West. His sensitiveness towards nature and his bent of mind towards spirituality made him draw symbolic paintings and write spiritual works. The blending of Eastern culture and Western culture in his personality turned out to be another quality that enriched his works. The spiritual longing in his heart made him write works like *The Prophet* and *The Earth Gods*. The impact that he produced through his works has been tremendous in quenching the thirst of spirituality among readers..

Elizabeth Gilbert proved herself to be an influential writer with her memoir *Eat, Pray, Love*. In the memoir she describes her spiritual journey while travelling three countries Italy, India and Indonesia. She began exploring her questions related to spirituality in India and found answers regarding her quest for God after she learnt the importance of meditation. She could understand the importance of balance between love and spirituality after her stay in Bali. Hence travelling became a source of strength and fulfillment in her life.

Elif Shafak's novel *The Forty Rules of Love* became very popular in which mysticism in East and West has been juxtaposed during completely different periods of time. The protagonist reads a novel as a part of her job and gets influenced by the spiritual ideas of its Sufi author, A.Z. Zahara. Her life changes completely after she turns towards Sufi spirituality. Instead of continuing to live under the shadow of her unloving and womanizer husband, she takes the decision to follow her heart. As she starts understanding the Sufi way of life, she realizes that an ocean of hardships is to be crossed before union with God.

### **SOCIAL RELEVANCE**

Tracing the experiences of spiritual quest in the selected works of Kahlil Gibran, Elizabeth Gilbert and Elif Shafak, was the aim of the present research. The three authors have written these works with spiritual quest as the prime theme. This theme is of utmost concern for the readers who understand the importance of spiritual satisfaction in life. If the existence of human body is taken at the level of three perspectives, namely physical, mental, and spiritual, then spiritual health is as important as physical and mental health. People yearn for understanding the deeper truths of life and the connection with God. Their journey of spiritual quest begins in search of these answers and this research work can be helpful to them in finding such answers.