

**The Pursuit of Happiness in *Eat Pray Love* by (2006) by
Elizabeth Gilbert in Relevance to Martin Seligman's
Theory of Authentic Happiness**

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Abstract

Although happiness seems to be human's ultimate goal and the aim of their existence, the definition of happiness somehow remains blurred and elusive. Throughout history, philosophers, writers, and more recently, psychologists, socialists and even politicians have pondered on the essence of happiness and how it is attained. In 1998, Positive Psychology was introduced by Martin E.P. Seligman as a new domain of psychology. Positive psychology is concerned with [the](#) study of the factors that contribute the most to a well-lived and fulfilling life thus a happy life. In 2002, Seligman further proposed a new theory of happiness known as the Theory of Authentic Happiness. According to Seligman, happiness is achieved upon discovering, recognizing and cultivating one's signature strengths. It consists of three distinct –but interrelated- stages: the Pleasant Life, the Good Life, and the Meaningful Life. The Pleasant Life is realized through the realization of day-to-day pleasures that add joy and excitement to one's life. The Good Life is achieved through identifying one's unique strengths and virtues and engaging these them to enrich one's life. The Meaningful Life involves a deep sense of fulfillment that comes from using one's strengths and virtues in ways that benefit the lives of others and/or that make the world a better place. (Seligman, 2002) This research paper uses literary criticism and Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory as its framework to investigate Elizabeth Gilbert's journey in her 2006 novel *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything across Italy, India and Indonesia*. It scrutinizes the three distinct kinds of lives Elizabeth Gilbert experiences in each country she visits: Italy, India and

Indonesia in relevance to the Authentic Happiness Theory and establishes the key factors contributing to Elizabeth Gilbert's success in her pursuit of happiness.

Keywords: happiness, positive psychology, Authentic Happiness Theory, Martin Seligman, pleasure, devotion, balance

Introduction

The definition of Happiness is the subject of persistent debate on usage, meaning, and on possible differences in understanding in different cultures. Tracing back the definition of happiness to the western tradition, the concept was the subject of relentless arguments: from Aristotle's definition of Eudaimonia, which is variously translated as happiness, denoting welfare and [flourishing](#); to the traditional European Christian societies linking happiness with morality in relation to social life; to the later Western [ethicists](#) who made arguments for how humans should behave, either individually or collectively, based on the resulting happiness of such behavior; and the [Utilitarians](#), such as [John Stuart Mill](#) and [Jeremy Bentham](#), who advocated the [greatest happiness principle](#) as a guide for ethical behavior.

Nevertheless, happiness nowadays is commonly used in relation to either the current experience of emotions or to the appraisal of [life satisfaction](#) and/or the [quality of life](#). In 'Webster's third new international dictionary', happiness is defined as a state of well-being characterized by relative permanence, by dominantly agreeable emotion ranging in value from mere contentment to deep and intense joy in living, and by a natural desire for its continuation.

In late 1990s, Positive Psychology was introduced by Professor Martin E.P. Seligman as a new domain of psychology that is concerned with the study of happiness and [the](#) factors that contribute the most to a well-lived and good life. While not attempting a strict definition of the good life, positive psychologists agree that one must live a contented, engaged, and meaningful life in order to experience the good life. Seligman refers to the good life as using one's signature strengths

every day to produce authentic happiness and abundant gratification. (Seligman 2000, p.15) Positive psychology has further placed a significant emphasis on fostering positive attitudes toward one's subjective experiences, individual traits, and life events. The goal is to encourage acceptance of one's past, excitement and optimism about one's future experiences, and a sense of contentment and well-being in the present.

In 2002, Seligman further proposed the Theory of Authentic Happiness as the center of Positive Psychology. According to Seligman, happiness is achieved upon discovering, recognizing and cultivating one's 'signature strengths' and virtues. This can be cultivated through three distinct kinds of lives: the Pleasant Life, the Good Life, and the Meaningful Life. The Pleasant life endorses how people optimally experience, forecast, and savor the positive feelings and emotions that are part of normal and healthy living (e.g., relationships, hobbies, interests, entertainment, etc.). Despite the attention given, Seligman says this most transient element of happiness may be the least important. The Good life, on the other hand, involves the investigation of the beneficial effects of immersion, absorption, and flow, felt by individuals, after exploring and developing their strengths, when optimally engaged with their primary activities. Whereas finally the inquiry into the Meaningful life questions how individuals derive a positive sense of well-being and purpose from being part of and contributing back to something larger and more permanent than themselves (e.g., nature, social groups, organizations, movements, traditions, belief systems). Happiness thus has three aspects, each of which feeds into life satisfaction.

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything across Italy, India and Indonesia is a 2006 novel by American author Elizabeth Gilbert. The book tells an autobiographical novel in which the narrator-protagonist, known as Liz, takes the reader on a trip around three countries, Italy, India and Indonesia in pursuit of happiness. At her early 30s, Liz is educated, has a home, a husband, and a successful career as a writer. She is, however, unhappy in her marriage and initiates a

divorce. Feeling devastated and lonely after divorce, she embarks on a one-year trip in pursuit of happiness. She spends four months in Italy, eating and enjoying life ("Eat"). She spends three months in India, finding her spirituality ("Pray"). She ends the year in Bali, Indonesia, looking for "balance" of the two and falls in love with a Brazilian businessman ("Love").

This research paper aims to investigate Elizabeth Gilbert's pursuit of happiness in her trip around the world in relation to Seligman's Theory of Authentic Happiness. In Italy, Elizabeth experiences the Pleasant Life. She visits Italy in 'pursuit of pleasure' and indulges in pleasure seeking; "I wanted to explore the art of Pleasure in Italy," she says. When in India, Elizabeth experiences the Good Life through the healthy exercise and development of her strengths and virtues. In 'pursuit of devotion,' Liza manages to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness through meditation and inner peace. When in Indonesia, Elizabeth finds the Meaningful Life through her love to her 'new family' and Felipe in Bali, which enables her to continue striving for a desirable goal while engaging her own strengths and virtues.

This research paper aims to scrutinize Elizabeth Gilbert's success in her pursuit of happiness as evidently related to Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory and the three distinct kinds of lives she experiences in each country she visits: Italy, India and Indonesia. It further establishes the pursuit of these three lives as crucial to living a full-life and be happy.

Discussion

Happiness encompasses a wide variety of positive emotions, including cheerfulness, serenity, optimism, and ecstasy. Etymologically, in the late 14c, it was considered as an adjective denoting luck, favored by fortune and prosperity of events. In 1500s some literatures recorded the meaning of 'happy' as to be greatly 'pleased' and/or 'contented'. Transformed into abstract noun by the 1700s, happiness was used to refer to 'contented mental state'. More recently, 'Happiness' as a noun

is commonly defined as relating to fortune, luck; content, joy, ecstasy; and/or felicitation.

Happiness has been the topic of discussion and debate among philosophers, writers, psychologists, and even politicians who have pondered on the essence of happiness and the best way to attain it. According to Freud, people always strive after Happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so. In Ancient Greek times, Happiness - Hedonism - is perceived as the philosophy denoting seeking pleasure and avoiding suffering as the only components of well-being. In Ancient Egypt, Happiness, depicted through simple daily pleasure seeking scenes in tombs and temples, as the means to good and joyful life. Since the days of Aristotle, Happiness has been moreover conceptualized as being composed of at least two aspects – 'hedonia' (pleasure) and [eudaimonia](#) (life as well-lived). It has been used with a broader sense since then to be synonymous with 'quality of life' or 'well-being'.

In present time, there has been an amounting interest in perceiving the concept of Happiness as one of the most prevailing, compelling and intriguing areas of study in various fields and domains. Positive Psychology, has been introduced in the 1990s as one of the most recent approaches in Psychology studying the feelings, emotions, institutions and positive behaviors that have human happiness as their ultimate goal. The science and practice of Positive Psychology are directed toward the identification and understanding of human qualities and virtues, as well as promoting conditions for people to have happier and more productive lives.

Born in 1942, Martin E. P. Seligman is credited as the father of Positive Psychology. Seligman is known for his experimental research in the psychopathology field. Seligman is a renowned scientist and scholar for his investments not only in the dissemination of Positive Psychology in academia or outside of it but in trans-cultural studies that contribute to the improvement of the concepts on human development. After more than 20 years since his initial thoughts on Positive Psychology,

Seligman presented and legitimized the term Positive Psychology in 1998.

According to Seligman, Positive Psychology is defined as "the branch of psychology that uses scientific understanding and effective intervention to aid in the achievement of a satisfactory life." (Seligman 2002, p.45) Although numerous psychologists have developed theories and practices pertaining to human happiness and flourishing, the work of Seligman is regularly quoted as keynote to the definition of happiness. His efforts to scientifically explore human potentials and propose models that lead people to the so-called happiness are of paramount significance. Positive Psychology, as a matter of fact, is the root of the astounding Authentic Happiness Theory introduced by Seligman in 2002:

Authentic Happiness Theory is an attempt to explain a real thing—happiness— as defined by life satisfaction, where on a 1-to-10 ladder, people rate their satisfaction with their lives. People who have the most positive emotion, the most engagement, and the most meaning in life are the happiest, and they have the most life satisfaction. (Seligman 2002, p.12)

In his 2002 book [*Authentic Happiness*](#), Seligman proposes that happiness has three dimensions that can be cultivated by humanity through positive institutions, namely: the Pleasant Life, the Good Life, and the Meaningful Life. The Pleasant Life is realized when one learns to savor and appreciate such basic pleasures as companionship, the natural environment and bodily needs. Seligman provides a mental guide of strategies to achieve what he calls the Pleasant Life by enabling people to: think constructively about the past through gratitude and forgiveness, gain optimism and hope for the future and, as a result, achieve greater happiness in the present by breaking habituation, savoring experiences and using mindfulness. He further stresses the importance of positive emotions. Frequent experiencing of positive emotions, argues Seligman, is related to higher level of life satisfaction and thereby happiness.

People, however, can remain pleasantly mesmerized at this stage or they can go on to experience the Good Life. The Good Life, Seligman proposes, is achieved through discovering one's unique virtues (wisdom & knowledge, courage, love & humanity, justice, temperance,

spirituality & transcendence) and strengths (the moral traits that can be developed and learned through effort), and employing them creatively to enhance one's lives. Seligman believes that the healthy exercise and development of strengths and virtues are key factors to the Good Life – a life in which one uses one's "signature strengths every day in the main realms of one's life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness" (Seligman 2002, p. 161). The Good Life is a place of happiness, good relationships and work, and from this point, Seligman encourages people to go further to seek a Meaningful Life in the continual quest for happiness.

Seligman emphasizes that the Meaningful Life is crucial in achieving one's happiness. It is in the Meaningful Life that one finds a deep sense of fulfillment and contentment by employing one's unique strengths for a purpose greater than ourselves. Seligman clarifies that "positive emotions developed in the Pleasant Life alienated from the exercise of character leads to emptiness, inauthenticity, depression and, as one ages, to the gnawing realization that we are fidgeting until we die" (Seligman 2002, p. 8). He further affirms that there are no shortcuts to happiness. While the pleasant life might bring more positive emotions to one's life, to foster a deeper more enduring happiness, one needs to explore the realm of meaning.

Without the application of one's unique strengths and the development of one's virtues towards an end bigger than one's self, one's potential tends to be "whittled away by a mundane, inauthentic, empty pursuit of pleasure." (p.9) Seligman goes one step further by exploring the experience of flow and the loss of self-consciousness that is involved in acts of altruism and of kindness. The exercise of kindness is a gratification in contrast to pleasure. As a gratification, it calls on one's strengths to rise to an occasion and meet a challenge, particularly in the service of others. Thus, investing oneself into creative work creates a greater sense of meaning in life and accordingly, a greater sense of happiness. The genius of Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory lies, as a matter of fact, in the fact that it reconciles two conflicting views of human happiness; the Individualistic approach, which emphasizes that one should take care of oneself and nurture one's own strengths, and the

Altruistic approach, which tends to downplay individuality and emphasizes sacrifice for the greater purpose.

The Authentic Happiness Theory introduced by Martin Seligman can be applied in the examination of Elizabeth Gilbert's journey in pursuit of happiness in her novel *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything across Italy, India and Indonesia*. The novel tells the story of Liz's journey for self discovery, transformation, making different choices, finding balance, inspiration and thus happiness. The three words in the title - *Eat, Pray, Love* - correspond to the three sections of the book. These in turn refer to the three different countries Liz travels to 'in search for everything'. The plan set by Liz in pursuit of her happiness mirrors consecutively Seligman's three distinctive interrelated stages for happiness. The 'Pursuit of Pleasure' in Italy corresponds to the Pleasant Life; the 'Pursuit of Devotion' in India corresponds to the Good Life; whereas the 'Pursuit of Balance' in Indonesia corresponds to the Meaningful Life She writes:

It wasn't so much that I wanted to thoroughly explore the countries themselves. This has been done. It was more that I wanted to thoroughly explore one aspect of myself set against the backdrop of each country...I wanted to explore the art of pleasure in Italy, the art of devotion in India and, in Indonesia, the art of balancing the two. It was only later. . . that I noticed . . . it seemed [like] a voyage of self-discovery. (Gilbert 2006, p.31)

The book opens with Liz, a high-achieving, wealthy "career girl" in her early 30s, living with her husband in the rich suburbs of New York. She is at the point in her life where she has always assumed she would be happy. But she is not:

Wasn't I proud of all I'd accumulated—the prestigious home in the Hudson Valley, the apartment in Manhattan, the eight phone lines, the friends and the picnics and the parties, the weekends spent roaming the aisles of some box-shaped superstore of our choice, buying ever more appliances on credit? I had actively participated in every moment of the creation of this life—so why did I feel like none of it resembled me?" (Gilbert 2006, p.18)

At night Liz repeatedly finds herself in the bathroom crying her eyes out. She feels 'desperate' and 'hopeless'. All she wants is to be free from her life: "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—somewhere in my stolen moments—a writer? I don't want to be married anymore." (p.19) Over the next few pages covering several months in her, Liz has been "tottering on the brink of becoming a self-governing individual," and mostly wondering: "What do *you* want to do, Liz?" (pp.23-24)

In contrast to the classic beliefs that link happiness to the 'good quality' of life one leads, Liz is not happy although she has it all: a flourishing career, a decent husband, once her 'romantic hero, luxurious house and a good life of her choice. She suffers painfully as she disentangles herself from the good life; including the painful and financially crippling divorce, the failed suicide attempts and the passionate, but 'impossible' love affair, with a young man called David. Liz pays enormous financial and emotional cost but shortly manages to be delighted on becoming a "self-governed individual" and probes "What do *you* want to do, Liz?" She decides she needs to experience "the dual glories of a human life -"worldly enjoyment and divine transcendence—to find happiness while practicing 'balance'. And thus she embarks in pursuit of true happiness. "I think I deserve something beautiful," she says. (Gilbert 2006, pp.23-24)

Italy, "a culture where pleasure and beauty are revered", is the first country Liz visits in "the Pursuit of Pleasure". Her life in Italy can be evidently interpreted in relevance to Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory. Liz achieves happiness in Italy through pursuing the small pleasures in Seligman's Pleasant Life, which is a constituent part of her well-being. In Italy, there are "so many manifestations of pleasure," says Liz, "fashion, or opera, or cinema, or fancy automobiles, or skiing in the Alps." To her surprise, however, Liz declares her pleasure as simple as this: "I found that all I really wanted was to eat beautiful food and to speak as much beautiful Italian as possible." It is in the very basic

pleasures that Liz wishes to pursue her happiness: "That was it," she asserts. However, "the amount of pleasure this eating and speaking brought to [her] was inestimable, and yet so simple." (Gilbert 2006, pp. 65-66)

Indulging in the pleasure of savoring the Italian cuisine; the meals, the wine and the dessert, provides Liz with overwhelming contentment that she starts to heal soothingly from her past sufferings. She thus describes her 'early symptoms of contentment' as soon as she had her first meal in Rome; no more crying at night and no more worrying:

The first meal I ate in Rome was nothing much. Just some homemade pasta (spaghetti carbonara) with a side order of sautéed spinach and garlic ... After the spaghetti, I tried the veal...I drank a bottle of house red... and ate some warm bread, with olive oil and salt. Tiramisu for dessert. Walking home after that meal, around 11:00 PM... I climbed the stairs to my apartment, lay down in my new bed and turned off the light. I waited to start crying or worrying, since that's what usually happened to me with the lights off, but I actually felt OK. I felt fine. I felt the early symptoms of contentment." (Gilbert 2006, p.71)

After a few weeks, Liz similarly describes her contentment upon preparing a meal for herself in Rome, which she compares to a 'true expression of art'. Although she is eating alone, Liz feels fine. It is as if she has forgiven her past mistakes leading to her 'loneliness':

I walked home to my apartment and soft-boiled a pair of fresh brown eggs for my lunch. I peeled the eggs and arranged them on a plate beside the seven stalks of asparagus. I put some olives on the plate, too, and the four knobs of goat's cheese I'd picked up from the formaggeria down the street, and two slices of pink, oily salmon...For the longest time I couldn't even touch this food because it was such a masterpiece of lunch, a true

expression of the art of making something out of nothing.(Gilbert 2006, p.67)

After enjoying the 'prettiness' of her meal, while reading her daily newspaper article in Italian, Liz feels that "happiness inhabited [her] every molecule." Liz dismisses the hovering sense of 'guilt' that sometimes surfaces regarding her heartbroken husband and affirms that the feelings of contentment she is living now are worth turning her back to her entire life back in New York. Liz finds in the small pleasures of food a pathway to accepting her past. According to Seligman, Liz is now capable of dealing with her past constructively and so she achieves the Pleasant Life.

As often happened during those first months of travel, whenever I would feel such happiness - my guilt alarm went off. I heard my ex-husband's voice speaking disdainfully in my ear: "*so this is what you gave up everything for? This is why you gutted our entire life together?*" I replied aloud to him... yes." (p.67)

Liz's account of her positive emotions developing from the pleasures continues to be largely related to food. When in Naples, she describes her pleasure in experiencing the Neapolitan pizza as a 'widely exciting prospect'. When in Pizzeria Da Michele, she feels like losing her mind and says: "I love my pizza so much that I have come to believe in my delirium that my pizza might actually love me, in return. I am having a relationship with this pizza, almost an affair." Although Liz notices that she is gaining weight every day, she is perfectly fine. "When I look at myself in the mirror of the best pizzeria in Naples," She confirms, "I see a bright-eyed, clear-skinned, happy and healthy face." According to Seligman, Liza is dismissing all the negative emotions of guilt, remorse and self-reproach related to unhealthy habits in favor of positive ones through her Pleasant Life in Italy. She is definitely not in denial, she is just enjoying 'pure pleasure': "Ok, Kid, Live it up...when your little experiment ... is over ... I'll see what I can do about damage control." (Gilbert 2006, pp.83-85) Similarly, when in Bologna, Florence, Venice,

Sicily and Sardinia, Liz continues to marvel at the 'heavenly' food and 'gelato' and indulges in pleasure.

Likewise, Chapter 36 – the last one on Italy –marks the high point in Liz's account of her celebration and enjoyment of 'pleasure' through food. She visits Sicily, and despite the comparative urban ugliness and striking signs of poverty there, she discovers that it harbors the 'zenith of Italian culinary delights'. In a Sicilian restaurant, Liz thus describes her meal and her feelings:

I am busily eating the hands-down most amazing meal I've eaten yet in all of Italy. It's pasta, but a shape of pasta I've never before seen – big, fresh, sheets of pasta folded ravioli-like into the shape...of the pope's hat, stuffed with a hot, aromatic puree of crustaceans and octopus and squid, served tossed like a hot salad with fresh cockles and strips of julienned vegetables, all swimming in an olivey, oceany broth. (Gilbert 2007: 118)

The extensive detailed description of the meals, the table set-up and her feelings is meant to highlight the delight and pleasure Liz gains in the present time through food. She even stresses the importance of the positive emotions in fighting against the negativity of life; "In a world of disorder and disaster and fraud," she asserts, "Pleasure cannot be bargained." (p.120) This echoes Seligman's guide to combating unhappiness in the Pleasant Life through hope and optimism.

The Italian language - 'a language [she] find(s) more beautiful than roses' - is also depicted as a parallel source of great pleasure for Liz in her pursuit of happiness in Italy. "I felt a glimmer of happiness when I started studying Italian," she says. Indulging in the beauty of learning and speaking the Italian language provides Liz much of the delight and joy craved. She describes Italian as the 'most seductively beautiful language in the world,' and clarifies that she wants to learn Italian "because [she] love(s) the *dolce vita*". Liz wants to learn the Italian language in part of her pursuit of pleasure represented by - the sweet life. She believes that no language was ever more perfectly ordained to express human emotions than Italian. (p.48) She therefore falls in love

with every word she learns in her Italian dictionary and she says it even brings her 'laughter':

I loved it. Every word was a singing sparrow, a magic trick, a truffle for me. I would slosh home through the rain after class, draw a hot bath, and lie there in the bubbles reading the Italian dictionary aloud to myself, taking my mind off my divorce pressures and my heartache. The words made me laugh in delight. (Gilbert 2006, p. 46)

Liz is enchanted by learning many Italian expressions. She is contented for instance by learning the 'cherished Italian ideal': "*Il bel far niente*" which means 'the beauty of doing nothing'. Liz marvels at the Italian beauty of doing nothing as the goal of one's work, the final accomplishment for which one is most highly congratulated. Liz even relates this Italian ideal to her 'Pursuit of Pleasure' and says, "To devote yourself to the creation and enjoyment of beauty, then, can be a serious business." (P.120) She delights in realizing that the more exquisitely and delightfully one can pursue one's pleasure, the higher one's life's achievement is.

Liz similarly marvels at the beauty of the Italian expression "Attraversiamos" which means "Let's cross over." She likes it very much and finds much delight in saying it, because "to my ear," she says, "it's the perfect combination of Italian sounds. The wistful ah of introduction, the rolling trill, the soothing s, that lingering "ee-ah-moh" combo at the end. I love this word. I say it all the time now."(p. 49) The contentment related to this word is even more evident at the end of the novel when Liz decides that "Attraversiamos" is her word and uses it to mark the end of her self-discovery journey.

Not only do the Italian words bring Liz happiness, laughter and delight but it seems that 'just speaking' these words makes her feel 'sexy' and 'happy'. (Gilbert 2006, p.46) It seems that speaking in Italian boosts her self-esteem and makes her feel more confident. This of course relates to Authentic Happiness as the center of positive psychology which,

according to Snyder and Lopez, promotes self-esteem as playing a key role in human behavior towards attaining happiness and fulfillment. (p.17)

It is in this obvious affection and devotion to the enjoyment and pleasure provided by food and the Italian language that Liz succeeds in her pursuit of happiness in Italy. Liz had a correlation between the two pleasures based on the Italian expression "Parla come magni," which means, 'Say it like you eat it.' For Liz it is a reminder to keep her language as simple and direct as Roman food is. It seems that Elizabeth Pursuit of Pleasure is fulfilled in Italy through her indulging in these two 'simple' pleasures of savoring the food and speaking the Italian language. "The amount of pleasure this eating and speaking brought to me was inestimable," she confirms, "I will always count amongst the happiest of my life." (p.83)

Liz's Pursuit of Pleasure in Italy is thus evidently related to Seligman's Theory of Authentic Happiness and the Pleasant Life. Relishing in the simple pleasures of savoring food and speaking Italian in Italy is Liz's pathway to drawing the curtains on her personal drama—in this case the feelings of loneliness, guilt and depression—and allowing herself to indulge in happiness. In the Pleasant Life and through all the little pleasures that can make her happy in Italy -pizza, pasta, gelato and the Italian local dialects- Liz succeeds to think constructively about the past, gain optimism and hope for a better future while enjoying greater happiness in the present. She concludes her 'Pursuit of Pleasure' by saying: "You were given life; it is your duty (and also your entitlement as a human being) to find something beautiful within life, no matter how slight. (Gilbert 2006, p.120)

In 'Pursuit of Devotion', Liz then visits India. Liz's indulgence in the Pleasant Life through her Pursuit of Pleasure in Italy has been however an essential for her 'Pursuit of Devotion' and spiritual quest in India. The stark disparity between Liz's Italian experience and what she would find at the Ashram in India is thus captured by Liz:

The search for God is a reversal of the normal, mundane worldly order. In the search for God, you revert from what attracts you and swim toward that which is difficult. You abandon your comforting and familiar habits with the hope (the mere hope!) that something greater will be offered in return for what you've given up. (Gilbert 2006, p.184)

The sharp distinction between the two different pursuits in Italy and India is further emphasized through the description of life in the Ashram in India:

Ashram life is rigorous. Not just physically, with days that begin at 3:00 AM and end at 9:00 PM, but also psychologically. You're going to be spending hours and hours a day in silent meditation and contemplation, with little distraction or relief from the apparatus of your own mind. You will be living in close quarters with strangers, in rural India. There are bugs and snakes and rodents. The weather can be extreme – sometimes torrents of rain for weeks on end, sometimes 100 degrees in the shade before breakfast. Things can get deeply real around here, very fast. (Gilbert 2006, pp. 125-126):

Upon arriving to the Ashram near Mumbai in India, Guru, Liz's spiritual Instructor, emphasizes that the only thing that will happen in the Ashram is that Liz will discover who she really is. Liz's 'Pursuit of Devotion' is thus to be realized but only after she loses herself completely. The zenith of her spiritual quest, however, is achieved when Liz encounters 'pure divine love', 'godly love', that is entirely devoid of the pleasures she has already experienced in Italy.

It wasn't hallucinogenic, what I was feeling. It was the most basic of events. It was heaven, yes. It was the deepest love I'd ever experienced, beyond anything I could have previously imagined, but it wasn't euphoric. It wasn't exciting. There wasn't enough ego or passion left in me to create euphoria and excitement. It was just obvious...I wondered, "Why have I been

chasing happiness my whole life when bliss was here the entire time?" (Gilbert 2006, p.209)

In India, Liz experiences the Good Life introduced as the second stage in Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory- a life in which one uses one's 'signature strengths' and virtues every day in the main realms of life 'to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness'. Seligman establishes the core virtues as they are found and valued in almost all cultures and religions (wisdom & knowledge, courage, love & humanity, justice, temperance, spirituality & transcendence) whereas he defines strengths as the moral traits. According to Seligman, it is only through the healthy exercise and development of strengths and virtues that one can find the Good. (Seligman 2002, p.58)

In the practices and activities in the Ashram Liz learns to develop her strengths and virtues and in the process finds much happiness and gratification. 'Yoga', she explains, "is about disentangling the built-in glitches of the human condition, which I'm going to over-simplify here as the heartbreaking inability to sustain contentment." (Gilbert 2006, p.152) In practicing yoga, Liz meets God in meditation and thus finds her contentment in India: "Yoga can also mean trying to find God through meditation, through scholarly study, through the practice of silence, through devotional service or through mantra—the repetition of sacred words in Sanskrit." (p.153) Through yoga Liza enjoys the feeling of having her mind and body united and thus being united with God: "and the task at hand in Yoga is to find union—between mind and body, between the individual and her God, between our thoughts and the source of our thoughts." (p.154)

Through meditation, Liz further finds deep contentment in her liberation from the burdening self-inflicted depressing thoughts and emotions. She realizes that

All the pain of a human life is caused by words, as is all the joy.
We create words to define our experience and those words bring attendant emotions. We get seduced by our own mantras (I'm a

failure...I'm lonely... I'm a failure... I'm lonely...) and we become monuments to them. To stop talking for a while, then, is to attempt to strip away the power of words, to stop choking ourselves with words, to liberate ourselves from our suffocating mantras.(Gilbert 2006, p. 340)

Liz realizes that she has been chasing happiness her whole life while carrying the key all through. "We are, after all, what we think," she asserts. "Our emotions are the slaves to our thoughts, and we are the slave to our emotions." Liz thus figures out that happiness is an inner job achieved only through mastering one's thinking. Guru further instructs Liz on dealing with her emotions saying: "you should never give yourself a chance to fall apart because, when you do, it becomes a tendency and it happens over and over again. You must practice staying strong, instead." (p. 212) It is then in developing her strength that Liz can assume positive vibes in life and be happy. This obviously echoes Seligman's route to the Good Life.

At the Ashram, Liz also meets a man, one of the most colorful characters in the book; Richard from Texas. Liz says she learns a lot from Richard for he also helps illuminating her path to happiness by emphasizing the importance of controlling the way she thinks and thus developing her mental strength further. Richard emphasizes:

You need to learn how to select your thoughts just the same way you select what clothes you're gonna wear every day. This is a power you can cultivate. If you want to control things in your life so bad, work on the mind. That's the only thing you should be trying to control. Drop everything else but that. Because if you can't learn to master your thinking, you're in deep trouble forever. (Gilbert 2006, pp. 146-147)

Developing the strength to control the way she thinks is crucial in Liz's achieving her 'Pursuit of Devotion' and happiness in India. "Instead of trying to forcefully take thoughts out of your mind," Liz now understands, "give your mind something better to play with. Something healthier." (p.148) Liz finds nothing better than 'pure divine love' through meditation and prayer to replace her burdened thoughts.

There is a difference, however, between Prayer and meditation. Although they both seek communication with God, Liz says, "Prayer is the act of talking to God, while meditation is the act of listening." Both talking and listening to God constitute an essential part of Liz's pursuit of devotion and happiness. She says, he: "I just want God. I want God inside me. I want God to play in my bloodstream the way sunlight amuses itself on water." Once she finds God, Liz feels physically and mentally strong. She rejoices the contentment of her 'liberation':

So I stood up and did a handstand on my Guru's roof, to celebrate the notion of liberation. I felt the dusty tiles under my hands. I felt my own strength and balance. I felt the easy night breeze on the palms of my bare feet. This kind of thing — a spontaneous handstand—isn't something a disembodied cool blue soul can do, but a human being can do it. We have hands; we can stand on them if we want to. That's our privilege. That's the joy of a mortal body. And that's why God needs us. Because God loves to feel things through our hands. (Gilbert 2006, p. 209)

Liz realizes that happiness is a choice that is only found within the realm of her heart and mind; a choice that she decides to make continuously in her pursuit of happiness:

We search for happiness everywhere, but we are like Tolstoy's fabled beggar who spent his life sitting on a pot of gold, under him the whole time. Your treasure--your perfection--is within you already. But to claim it, you must leave the buy commotion of the mind and abandon the desires of the ego and enter into the silence of the heart." (Gilbert 2006, p.164)

In her Pursuit of Devotion in India and through the different practices of yoga, meditation prayer, and 'pure divine love', Liz experiences the 'sweet quiet contentment' that she has been seeking for months. She thus describes her achieved happiness in India:

This love that I was feeling. It was godly...I felt so deeply, terribly happy. I thought to myself, "Whatever this feeling is- this is what I

have been praying for. And this is also what I have been praying to.
(Gilbert 2006, p.213)

The kind of happiness achieved in India is evidently relevant to Seligman's Authentic Theory of Happiness. Seligman sees the healthy exercise and development of strengths and virtues as a key factor to the Good Life. This is exactly what Liz has experienced in India. Through her newly found strengths and virtues of knowledge, wisdom, love, spirituality and transcendence, Liz enjoys the Good Life, which is the place of ultimate happiness.

According to Seligman, however, there are no shortcuts to happiness. While the Pleasant Life might bring positive emotion to one's life, to foster a deeper more enduring happiness in the Good Life, one needs to explore the realm of meaning. Without the application of one's unique strengths and the development of one's virtues towards an end bigger than one's self, "one's potential tends to be whittled away by a mundane, inauthentic, empty pursuit of pleasure." Seligman therefore encourages people to go further to seek the Meaningful Life in their continual pursuit of happiness (Seligman 2002, pp. 159-161). In Bali, Indonesia, Liz encounters love and ultimate happiness by investing her highest strengths to develop more positive emotions, more meaning, more accomplishments, and healthier relationships.

In Bali, Liz meets an old medicine man named Ketut, who had in an earlier trip to Bali, gave her a 'magic picture'. It was meant to help her clear her soul from sorrows and anxiety, and bring her happiness for a fresh new start in her life. Ketut describes this drawing and its healing power in these words:

This is what you must become. You must keep your feet grounded so firmly on the earth that it's like you have four legs, instead of two. That way, you can stay in the world with a clear mind. Indeed, you need to stop looking at the world through your

head. You must look through your heart instead. That way, you will know God. (Gilbert 2006, p.231)

Ketut tells Liz to keep her feet grounded on the earth so as to have a balanced life. He also suggests that she sees the world with her heart instead of with her head. Meeting Ketut again gives Liz great happiness for Ketut enlightens more her Pursuit of Balance. She asks "But how should we find peace within ourselves?" and Ketut further elaborates: "Meditation." He asserts that the "purpose of meditation is only happiness and peace—very easy." (p.232)

In Bali, Liz does not only feel happy but she also feels deeply secured. She now identifies happiness through her effort in mediation. She confirms:

Happiness is the consequence of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it. You have to participate relentlessly in the manifestations of your own blessings. And once you have achieved a state of happiness, you must never become lax about maintaining it. You must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upward into that happiness forever, to stay afloat on top of it. (Gilbert 2006, p.245)

In addition, Liz now looks 'happier' and 'brighter' when dealing with the people she meets in Bali: "this little group of people in Bali had become my family, and we must take care of our families wherever we find them."(p. 285) This is how Liz has achieved her pursued happiness in Bali. According to Seligman the exercise of kindness is a gratification, which calls on one's strengths to rise and meet the challenges in the service of others. (Seligman 2002, p. 171)

After a road accident, Liz meets Wayan, the medicine women who cured her wound. On talking with Wayan, Liz develops a sincere interest in helping Wayan and her daughter Tutty to buy a house of their

own instead of living in rentals. She also feels concerned to secure Tutty's education. It is in Wayan and Tutty's happiness that Liz encounters hers. Liz sends for her friends describing how she feels about Wayan as follows: "I told everyone that my birthday was coming ... and that if there was anything in this world that I needed or wanted...to celebrate this birthday ... it would be ... my friends and family ... care to make a donation to help a woman named Wayan Nuriyasih buy a house in Indonesia for herself and her children." (Gilbert 2006, p.286)

Similarly, Liz feels enormous excitement and delight in the love she shares with Wayan's family and friends - the kind she has never experienced before. Liz thus describes her excitement and contentment when Wayan celebrates her thirty-fifth birthday:

Wayan threw a birthday party for me in her shop, quite unlike any I have ever experienced before. Wayan had dressed me in a traditional Balinese birthday suit ... [it] was squeezing me like an ardent huh, and I was feeling like this was definitely the strangest – but maybe the happiest – birthday party I'd ever experienced in my whole life. (Gilbert 2006, p.320)

Likewise, Liz experiences enormous love when falls in love with a Brazilian man named Felipe, 'a caregiver by nature', in Bali. Liz has never expected to fall in love with Felipe. But he solicits "let me take care of you forever." "You can decide to feel however you want to, but I love you and I will always love you," he also vows. Liz ends up "falling in love with this man". They had a most satisfying and fulfilling relationship that she thus portrays contently: "I am happy and healthy and balanced. And, yes, I cannot but notice that I am sailing to this pretty little tropical island with my Brazilian lover. Which is – I admit it! – an almost ludicrously fairy-tale ending to this story." (Gilbert 2006, pp.325-326)

Although indulging a fairy-tale love story, Liz is not rescued by prince charming. She clarifies, "I was not rescued by a prince; I was the administrator of my own rescue." (p.329) According to Seligman's Authentic Happiness Theory, in the Meaningful Life, through kindness and gratification one enriches the lives of others while engaging one's own strengths and virtues.(p. 175). It is thus how Liz succeeds in her Pursuit of Balance in Bali by enriching the love of those she love and creating her own satisfying and gratifying life.

Conclusion

"After that realization occurs, nothing will ever be the same again."

After scrutinizing Elizabeth Gilbert's journey in her 2006 novel *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything across Italy, India and Indonesia*, the researcher reaches the conclusion that the three distinct experiences she had in pursuit of her happiness are evidently associated to Martin Seligman's Theory of Authentic Happiness.

Although happiness seems to be human's ultimate goal and the aim of their existence, the definition of happiness somehow remains blurred and elusive. Some people view happiness in ways that emphasize virtues and enlightened spirituality. Others see happiness as the inner peace resulting from deep satisfaction. Still others view happiness mostly as meaningful and rewarding engagement with their environment. In *Eat, Pray, Liz* makes plans to travel the world in pursuit of her happiness and in search for "everything". Liz's life Italy is mouthwatering in 'Pursuit of Pleasure'. She spends her time savoring simple Italian meals with wine and tiramisu for dessert, roaming around the cities and streets with frequent 'cappuccino' and 'gelato' refreshment breaks, and joining an Italian language simply to 'revel' in the texture of this 'mellifluous language'.

Leaving Italy, happier, she embarks on her four months of meditation in India in 'Pursuit of Devotion'. These four months are spent in an

Ashram near Mumbai. Having grown up in a non-religious family, she approaches the road to spiritual enlightenment with a fair degree of skepticism. At the Ashram, she is keen to practice yoga and find God. Elizabeth then moves on, calm and grateful, to the final destination of her journey, Indonesia in 'Pursuit of Balance'. In Bali, Elizabeth comes together with a few local Balinese and her spontaneous involvement in their personal lives turns out to be pleasing and gratifying. Elizabeth then indulges in her romantic relationship with the Brazilian, Felipe, and finds her balance through true love. Liz succeeds in her pursuit of happiness only after experiencing the three distinct lives in the three countries.

The three lives Liz experiences in her journey evidently mirror Seligman's Theory of Authentic Happiness. According to Seligman's, happiness has three dimensions: the Pleasant Life, the Good Life, and the Meaningful Life. These can be cultivated through discovering and exploiting one's unique combination of "signature strengths," such as humanity, temperance and persistence. In Eat, Pray, Love, Liz experience the Pleasant Life in Italy through indulging in the small pleasure of food and an Italian language. In India, she endorses the Good Life through the healthy exercise and development of her strengths and virtues while practicing Yoga, prayer, and/or meditation. In Indonesia, Liz nurtures her well-being in the Meaningful life and finds love and ultimate happiness by deploying her highest strengths- altruism and kindness- to gain positive emotions, more meaning, more accomplishments, and healthier relationships.

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الملخص

على الرغم من أن السعادة تبدو هدف الإنسان النهائي وغاية وجوده ، إلا أن تعريف السعادة بشكل قاطع ما يزال يعد عملاً صعب المنال. ولقد أهتم كل من الفلاسفة والكتاب وعلماء النفس وعلماء الاجتماع وحتى السياسيون على مدار التاريخ بالوصول إلى جوهر السعادة وماهيتها والطريق إلى تحقيقها. وفي عام 1998 ، تم تقديم علم النفس الإيجابي بواسطة مارتين سيليجمان كمجال جديد في علم النفس يهتم بشكل مباشر بدراسة العوامل التي تساهم أكثر في إيجاد حياة جيدة ومرضية وبالتالي حياة سعيدة.

وفي عام 2002 ، اقترح سيليجمان نظرية جديدة للسعادة تعرف باسم نظرية السعادة الحقيقية/الأصيلة. ووفقاً لسليجمان ، تتحقق السعادة عند اكتشاف نقاط القوة المميزة لدى الإنسان والتعرف عليها وتمييزها. وتتألف السعادة من ثلاث مراحل مختلفة : الحياة السارة ، والحياة الجيدة ، والحياة ذات المعنى. تتحقق الحياة السارة من خلال تحقيق المذاذات اليومية التي تضيف الفرح والإثارة إلى حياة الإنسان، وتتحقق الحياة الجيدة من خلال تحديد نقاط القوة والفضائل الفريدة وإشراكها لإثراء حياة الإنسان، وتتضمن الحياة ذات المعنى إحساساً عميقاً بالرضا ينبع من استخدام نقاط القوة والفضائل بطرق تفيد حياة الآخرين و تجعل العالم مكاناً أفضل. (سيليجمان ، 2002)

ويستخدم هذا البحث نظريات النقد الأدبي ونظرية السعادة الحقيقية/الأصيلة لسليجمان كإطار لدراسة رحلة إليزابيث جيلبرت في روايتها لعام 2006 "كل ، صلي ، حب: بحث امرأة واحدة عن كل شيء عبر إيطاليا والهند وإندونيسيا". ويقوم البحث بتحليل الأنماط الثلاثة المميزة للحياة التي تعيشها إليزابيث جيلبرت في كل بلد تزوره، وذلك في إطار نظرية السعادة الأصيلة وفي محاولة لتحديد العوامل الرئيسية التي ساهمت في نجاح إليزابيث جيلبرت في سعيها لتحقيق السعادة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السعادة ، علم النفس الإيجابي ، نظرية السعادة الأصيلة ، مارتن سيليجمان ، المتعة ، الإخلاص ، التوازن