

RIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL SPIRITUAL CONCEPTS: A
CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE OF *SIDDHARTHA*, *PAVILION
OF WOMEN*, *THE ALCHEMIST*, *JOURNEY TO ITHACA*, AND
BARDANA

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Abstract: Like all other beings in the World, human being has been (and will be) essentially a part of nature. The relationship between Man and Nature, therefore, has been the subject of contemplation for mankind since the pre-historic times. Scientists have their scientific ways to explore the principles of nature, and poets, philosophers and sages also have been in the pursuit of the knowledge of the underlined reality of the universe. Intuitive spiritual glimpses have played a very significant role in the spiritual quest of human beings and its manifestations are seen in the sacred books of all faiths in the World. The theme of spiritual quest has been a sort of challenge to the great literary minds of the World. One of the significant features of this selection is that the novels present a combination of spiritual concepts from the East and the West.

Siddhartha is written by a German writer Hermann Hesse (a Nobel laureate) *Pavilion of Women* is written by the American-Chinese novelist Pearl S. Buck (a Nobel laureate), *The Alchemist* is written by a Brazilian novelist Paulo Coelho, and *Journey to Ithaca* is written by an Indian novelist Anita Desai. The last novel *Bardana* is written in Marathi by P. B. Deshpande-Kejkar. In spite of some overt differences there is an important point of convergence where the selected authors, hailing from different cultural backgrounds, appear to meet together. At the core of all the novels there is an idea of withdrawal from mundane materialistic life and going back to the purity of unspoiled nature in search of peace and some regenerative power. In this sense all the novels are novels of pilgrimage, of people's spiritual quest.

A comprehensive study of all the five novels reveals the writer's innate zeal to help ordinary people move towards some awareness of the depths of spiritual development which forms the central theme of all the seven novels. In spite of living among adverse conditions and various kinds of temptations, the protagonists of the seven novels ultimately reach their goals of spirituality. The novels under study renovate common man's interest in spirituality and show how it is relevant to our lives in the modern world with moral perplexity and uncertainty.

The spiritual realization of the protagonists of the five novels becomes possible only after intense spiritual conflicts and moral awareness. Many obstacles and distractions come in the way of their spiritual journey, which are dispelled finally. Like the chief characters of Eliot's plays, the chief characters of the seven selected

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novels attain spiritual liberation only after self-scrutiny, self-exploration and heart-searching. With some spiritual guidance, they attain their ultimate goals. In the article “Quest for Self-Realization in T.S. Eliot’s plays”, Amukha Malyada and Sumitra Kukreti observe, “While achieving the final absolute of human perfection (self-realization), the East emphasizes the importance of inward contemplation whereas the West gives importance to the outward activity” (Malyada; Kukreti, 2004: 228). This observation is significant in the context of the present study. The analysis and interpretation of *Bardana* (a novel of the East), and that of *The Alchemist* (a novel of the West) significantly brings out the importance of the above observation. At the same time the above-mentioned writers observe, “Western suffering and confession are considered to be similar to concentration and renunciation of Patanjali in the Eastern Philosophy” (Ibid: 228). This comment significantly reveals that the philosophies of all the major faiths of the World have at their cores one and the same spirit only. In other words, all the faiths of the world emphasize the union of the soul with the Divine as the goal of spiritual life. The details in the process of this spiritual pursuit may vary, but a striking semblance emerges from the perspectives of the seven writers with regard to the course as well as the goal of these physical-cum-spiritual journeys.

The concept of journey, the concept of spiritual disciple and his spiritual mentor, the process of renunciation of material life and sensory pleasures, the process of self-purification, the process of earning the spiritual realization by hard work and continuous efforts, and finally merging the self into the Universal Soul constitute the thematic and spiritual design of all the selected novels. In other words, all the authors employ the same process to obtain their spiritual perceptions; and that forms their vision of life.

The selected authors have used symbols and imagery in order to convey their vision. They have used the five elements (Earth, water, fire, wind and sky). The images of journey and the mountain are unanimously used. All the novelists use the symbols and images essentially selected from the natural world around us. The analysis also shows that all the novelists have depicted their main characters establishing a kind of communion with the Universal Soul, omnipresent in the nature. It is this communion with the universal spirit that is present in every object of nature that constitutes the affirmative spiritual vision of the novelists. This communion with the Universal Soul, in other words, constitutes the concept of universal love. It is this universal love that has shaped the spiritual vision of the selected novelists. , the study of all the seven novels reveal that the basic spiritual perceptions of all these authors is the process of losing the self or the ego in order to qualify oneself and then experience the spiritual bliss by merging the ego with the spirit of nature.

By its very nature the experience of the Transcendent defies expression and cannot be conveyed in plain language.

The most common and dominant symbol that has been used by almost all the authors of the present study is that of ‘journey’. ‘Journey’ has been used right from the days of Homer to symbolize man’s ‘spiritual quest’. In *Siddhartha*, the concept of Siddhartha’s spiritual journey is conveyed in terms of the ‘ascent of the self’ from the lower to the higher planes of consciousness. Thus, Hesse’s *Siddhartha* is a novel about

the soul's journey to enlightenment and awakening. Siddhartha's journey in search of peace, tranquility, the divinity and the meaning of existence forms the spiritual meaning of the novel. His journey is punctuated into four stages *brahmacharya*, *grahastha*, *vanprastha* and *sannyasa* through which he first attains his identity with perfection, fit to attain salvation. He passes from his individual egoistic identity through a series of failures, loses it and attains the ideal spiritual identity in selfless service (*nishkamkarma*). He wanders still he achieves complete anonymity, selects a retreat in the nature for his penance and attains identity in illumination and miraculous spiritual power. Thus, he finds finally what he has sought out since the beginning of his journey.

Though, Madame Wu does not undertake any physical journey (as Siddhartha and Mrs. Moore do), the novel *Pavilion of Women* demonstrates her spiritual journey. Madame Wu retires from wifehood "to pursue her own happiness" (307). Like Hesse's Siddhartha and Anita Desai's Laila and Matteo (in *Journey to Ithaca*), Madame Wu's pursuit for happiness and for "eternal life" (329), is a journey for spiritual sustenance. Madame Wu initiates into her spiritual journey by announcing her detachment to married life. In her spiritual journey she encounters Brother Andre who provides her with proper spiritual guidance, and she reaches "to her eternal life" (329) and becomes "immortal" (329).

Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* is a remarkable novel about the most magical of all journeys. In the novel 'journey' appears to be a dominant symbol signifying that wisdom is found in the journey and not in destination. The hero of the novel, Santiago, travels in search of a worldly treasure from his home in Spain to the markets of Tangiers and into the Egyptian desert, where his fateful encounter with the alchemist brings him the spiritual enlightenment and self-realization.

Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* is essentially a novel of journey. It is a story of multiple journeys undertaken by three characters at different planes of existence. In the novel Laila (Mother) and Matteo undertake a journey to fulfill their spiritual quest and Sophie, Matteo's wife follows her husband's way after learning the essential significance of the journey. Thus, in the novel 'journey' has been used to indicate clearly the spiritual quest of the respective characters. Like, Hesse's *Siddhartha* which is described by Zilkowasky as 'the landscape of the soul'; Prakash Deshpande-Kejkar's *Bardana* is the landscape of Raosaheb's soul. Through the dreams and trances and through the symbolic passages the author has revealed at the symbolic journey of Raosaheb's soul to merge into the universal spirit.

Thus, in forming their perceptions of life all the selected novelists have used the symbol of 'journey'. The symbol of 'journey' is essentially linked up with the 'quest' motif of the characters. Both the oriental and occidental writers have the same perceptions of spiritual journey. All the seven writers seem to convey that spiritual realization cannot be achieved by wealth and possession, fake rites and rituals; it can only be gained and enjoyed by renouncing the wealth and possessions. If we are pure of heart and soul, we may unconsciously or inadvertently reach the doorsteps of the Divine. Further, it requires a great devotion to attain the supreme bliss. In *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha, the hero leaves his own house and parents, leaves Kamala and the material wealth and sensual pleasure with her and finally his own son. Thus, his renunciation of

the material world and physical pleasure makes him qualified to undertake the spiritual journey. In *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu renounces the physical pleasure at the age of forty. Under the spiritual influence of Brother Andre, she also loses her interest in the mundane world and makes herself qualified to understand the universal spirit. In *The Alchemist* Santiago abandons his home, parents and sheep, he renounces the wealth and power already bestowed on him by the chieftains of the oasis. He also leaves Fatima and goes ahead with the alchemist. Even after finding the treasure under the sycamore tree in Spain he wishes to leave Spain for Fatima. It indicates that for Santiago the wealth is not at all the ultimate goal. In fact, his encounter with the wind, the sun and 'the hand that wrote all' has already qualified him to understand the universal soul.

In *Journey to Ithaca* Laila and Matteo (even Sophie at later stage) leave their homes, parents, motherlands, and their wealth in order to qualify them to understand the universal soul. In the same way in *Bardana* also Raosaheb, under the spiritual influence of Hakimsaheb, loses his interest in the mundane world and qualifies himself to understand the universal soul. Thus, all the seven novelists subscribe to the basic principle of spiritual realization, which is evident in all major faiths of the world, that in order to fulfill the spiritual quest one has to transcend the realm of the mundane and material world.

Paulo Coelho, the author of *The Alchemist* also holds the view that one has to open the inner door that is the door of the immortal soul to reach to the destination of spirituality. He has expressed his spiritual reflections through the title character alchemist. The alchemist asks Santiago to "listen to your heart [- - -] because it came from the Soul of the World, and it will one day return there" (134). Moreover, Santiago gives up his luxurious life (for two times) and literally follows his quest.

Anita Desai's protagonists Laila (Mother) and Matteo are born rebels. Both Laila and Matteo abandon the luxurious lives and follow the path of spirituality. With single minded devotion Laila reaches the zenith of spirituality and later on becomes the 'Mother of all'. Matteo follows the path of the Mother and achieves the miraculous spiritual power. The course of journey transforms Sophie into an eternal pilgrim – and she, too, undertakes the path of her husband – abandoning all worldly luxury.

It seems that all the selected authors' aim at man's inward transformation. It is the inward transformation that leads to the realization of the self. In *Siddhartha*, the symbolic death of Kamala's rare songbird in a small golden cage brings about the inward transformation of Siddhartha, and Siddhartha achieves his goal of becoming just as enlightened as the Buddha had been by discovering knowledge through his own personal experiences. The enlightened and transformed Siddhartha, now, neither rejects life nor the world; he rather loves both because in them he observes the immanence of God. He sees the Divine as the indwelling spirit of all creatures. While explaining the cycle of change to Govinda, he says: "This is a stone, it is also animal, God and Buddha. [- - -] it has already long been everything and always is everything. [- - -] There are stones that feel like oil or soup, that look like leaves or sand, and each one is different and worships Om in its own way; each one is Brahman" (116). One finds a great similarity between the perceptions of Hesse and Forster regarding good and evil.

For Pearl S. Buck, too, God is present in every object of nature. She believes that “He (God) is in the air and the water in life and death in mankind” (160). Thus, like Hesse and Forster, for Pearl S. Buck, too, the Divine is the indwelling spirit of all creatures.

Buck instructs us that we need to utilize our energies towards the world around us, just like that of Brother Andre and Madame Wu in *Pavilion of Women*, not with a view to controlling or manipulating them but with a view to spiritualizing society and establishing brotherhood. She makes us believe that humanism is the only moral alternative to the evils and odds of the modern civilization. Following the teachings of Brother Andre, Madame Wu undertakes the selfless service of mankind and becomes happy. It is Brother Andre that helps Madame Wu to enter into the eternal joy of spirituality. Buck lays stress on inward transformation that leads the respective characters to the realization of the self.

The Brazilian author Paulo Coelho, too, lays stress on inward transformation that leads to the realization of the self. In his *The Alchemist*, the protagonist Santiago feels, “I have inside me the winds, the deserts, the oceans, the stars, and everything created in the universe. [- -] he saw that that Soul of the God was his own soul” (160). This realization comes to Santiago and he sees the Divine in every object of the nature. He searches for the Divine sincerely within his own body, instead of seeking him outside himself; he realizes the Self soon and then views the body as the temple of God. Through such experience, he attains deification.

The perceptions of the two Indian writers studied in the present study are also identical with the perceptions of Hesse and Paulo Coelho. They also lay stress on man’s inward transformation that leads to the realization of the self. In *Journey to Ithaca* the transformed Laila smiles “at the mangy dogs that foraged in the dust, even the crows that morning seemed to sing, not scream” (300). In *Bardana*, too, the protagonist Raosaheb embarks on his great spiritual journey only when he is transformed inwardly.

Thus, all five authors discussed in the present study lay stress on inward transformation as the means to the realization of eternal spirit.

About the theme of spiritual quest A.K. Bachchan opines, “Freedom from institutionalism [- -] is the essential precondition for a searcher of truth and enlightenment” All the writers under the present study hold this view. Here institutionalism means an organized orthodox body of rituals under the philosophy of certain faith. For Siddhartha the vedantic verbosity would not lead one to salvation. He even renounces the rituals of Buddhism; thus, he transcends the institutional framework of Hinduism and Buddhism. In *Pavilion of Women* the Christian faith and the Confucian beliefs merge together by crossing the limits of the rituals of the respective institutions. In *The Alchemist* the Christianity and Islam are brought together, and it is significant to note that we do not find any institutional ritualistic encounter in the novel. Here again both the religious faiths are brought on the spiritual level and hence the essence of the novel lies in the language of the universe. (the language of the desert, of the birds, of the wind, of the sun and ultimately the language of the hand that wrote all). In *Journey to Ithaca* Anita Desai brings Christianity, Hinduism and Islam together (in the form of Matteo, Prem-Krishna and Laila i.e. the

Mother). Here also orthodox rituals of these faiths have not given any voice. On the contrary the emphasis is on the spiritual realm. In *Bardana* Hindu, Muslim and Sufi faiths are brought together in the form of Raosaheb and Hakimsaheb. The images in the novel represent the major faiths in the world. The reference to sheep and shepherd has clear biblical overtones and Hakimsaheb's prayer to Allah in the mosque represents Islam. Here all the faiths seem to subordinate their institutional dogmas in order to express their essence which is the spiritual experience.

Most of the authors of the present study have symbolically represented their views of the oriental philosophy. Hesse's *Siddhartha* is described as 'poetic expression to Indian Philosophy'. Hesse himself has sub-titled the novel as 'An Indic Poem'. As mentioned earlier, Siddhartha passes from four *Ashrams*, learns the cycle of nature, he also learns about the nature of birth and death, sees the immanence of God in every aspect of nature and becomes enlightened. Hesse's preoccupation with 'the spiritual side of India', his concerns with Indic and Chinese studies, and his impressive range of reading in oriental literatures and philosophy has made the novel a poetic expression to Indian philosophy. The dynamic and inspiring teachings of *Upanishadic Vedanta*, *Bhagwat Gita* and Buddhism are of the view that faith in or surrender to an incarnation or a prophet will bring about one's redemption. Hesse has employed this Eastern concept in his novel *Siddhartha*. Leaving behind the sinful city of *Sansara*, Siddhartha comes to a river and decides to stay near the river with Vasudeva as his assistant. The river teaches him of how everything moves in a cycle, and he learns that the present only exists. Thus, the river becomes his teacher, his guru. He learns that the river is like he himself, like the life of any person. It is unchanging and yet it is always changing within. The river teaches him that life is a recurring cycle of birth and death and he achieves enlightenment or *Moksha*.

One finds the representation of the 'teacher-student' philosophy in Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women*. This novel, too, is full of oriental philosophy. Madame Wu retires from wifehood and enters into *Vanprastha Ashram*. According to the oriental philosophy, the passion or demands of the flesh i.e. the physical side of man-woman relationship is the principle obstacle in the way of spiritual pursuit. Madame Wu crosses the ocean of *Sansara* and initiates into spiritual life. She surrenders to the teachings of Brother Andre.

Further, there is the representation of the 'teacher-student' philosophy in Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* and Deshpande's *Bardana*. In both the novels there is full expression to Indian philosophy of spirituality. In *Journey to Ithaca* the Mother emerges as a 'Guru' to Matteo as his deeply disturbed soul finally finds solace in the Mother. Her speech transports him to a unique experience, "an experience of unity, the unity of the spiritual with the physical, the dark with the light, the human with the natural" (99). The Mother expresses the basic Hindu philosophy as she says: "the Divine Force is not in some idol, not in the Cross, not even in the book. We know the Divine Force is everywhere" (99). Further, the Mother teaches her disciples the principle of *niskamkarma*. Like Matteo, Laila (Mother), too, finds solace to her disturbed soul in Master Prem-Krishnaji. Matteo's faith in the Mother and his surrendering to her finally brings about his redemption. The whole image of Krishna dominates the spiritual realm of the novel and the Indian philosophy of *nadbrahma* is

also clearly visible in the novel. Further, in *Bardana*, the relationship between Raosaheb and Hakimsaheb is that of a spiritual disciple and a spiritual guide. Hakimsaheb leads Raosaheb on the path of spirituality through his spiritual teachings. He helps Raosaheb to get free from the mundane, materialistic world. Here, the divine sound 'Alkha Niranjana' prevails throughout the novel. In fact, the novel begins with it and ends with it. The sound 'Alakha Niranjana' represents the Hindu philosophy of life.

Thus, Hesse, Pearl Buck, Anita Desai, and Prakash Deshpande seem to suggest that the acceptance of higher values, like love, charity, compassion, selfless service, and the concurrent negation or rejection of vices like hatred, anger, selfishness, envy, revenge naturally pave the way for the attainment of the highest 'joy' or 'bliss'. These writers – Hermann Hesse, Pearl Buck, Anita Desai and Prakash Deshpande – encapsulate the wisdom of Oriental Philosophy in their respective novels.

It is interesting to note here that a close parallel exists between *Siddhartha* and *Journey to Ithaca*. These two novels have similar pattern of stories and deal primarily with the theme of 'spiritual quest'. Hesse's book – *Journey to the East* and *Siddhartha* – kindle in Desai's protagonist, Matteo, a curiosity towards Eastern philosophy and he leaves home to search for spiritual enlightenment and the ultimate Truth in the ashrams of India. Thus, it is crystal clear that the source of Desai's inspiration is Hesse's books those have served her as model. In this context Desai says: "I have also drawn upon the following for information and instruction: *Siddhartha* and *The Journey to the East*" (Desai, 1995: VII-VIII). It is in this context Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* assumes significance and invites comparison with Hesse's *Siddhartha* since both the novels dramatize the timeless theme of spiritual quest. What keeps Hesse and Desai preoccupied here is the idea of a continuing journey, something like that of a well-known *Upanishadic* term *Charaybeti* (go ahead; don't stop). Interestingly enough, both novels are stories of multiple journeys undertaken by three different characters in each novel at different planes of existence. Each of these journey interlinked to the other. The only difference in this regard is that Hesse, a German poet and novelist, has selected his characters from India – Siddhartha, Govinda and Kamala; and Anita Desai, an Indian novelist, has selected her characters from Europe – Matteo and Sophie from Italy and the Mother (Laila), a Muslim, from Egypt. However, these major characters, in both the novels, undertake the journey with an intention in search of the root of spirituality. The setting of both the novels is India. Hesse and Desai have artistically expressed their individual perceptions of the spirituality in the respective novels. Both the novels exhibit that unless you have faith and belief in yourself you will not attain peace of mind and the enlightenment. It is the following affirmative spiritual gospel of *Gita* that constitutes the basic visions of Hesse and Anita Desai.

Hermann Hesse, Pearl Buck, Anita Desai, Paulo Coelho and Prakash Deshpande seem to convey that spiritual realization can be achieved by those who discard the physical attainments of the world and enter into the world of nature.

Further the basic perceptions of all these authors reveal 'you cannot teach or learn wisdom'. You must earn it on your own, by way of your own path'. It is essential to experience everything oneself. That's why Hesse says, 'Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom'. One must be his own teacher based upon one's own

experience. Hesse is of the view that, anyone may potentially become as enlightened as the Buddha, as the potential Buddha exists in everybody. Desai's philosophy is not different from that of Hesse. Laila earns the wisdom after overcoming many obstacles and temptations. After the death of the Mother, Matteo sets out to 'the mountain', where the Mother had received her enlightenment. After the Mother's death he becomes his own teacher. In *The Alchemist* the spiritual guide, the alchemist leaves the company of Santiago after providing him the essential wisdom and spiritual experience. But the final wisdom of life is gained by Santiago in the absence of the alchemist. In *Bardana*, too, after Hakimsaheb's death Raosaheb attains his goal of spirituality. Even in *A Passage to India*, Mrs. Moore undertakes the process of understanding the supreme soul which is a form of earning the wisdom. Madame Wu continues to earn the spiritual wisdom even after the death of Brother Andre.

Siddhartha (*Siddhartha*), Matteo (*Journey to Ithaca*), Raosaheb (*Bardana*) attain the 'miraculous spiritual power' after the deaths of their respective gurus'. Vasudeva, The Mother and Hakimsaheb are but the 'spiritual mentors' who guide their disciples towards truth and God. Once they have put their disciples on the proper path, their work is over. According to Hinduism the Guru is the one, who shows the path of liberation (*Moksha*) to the disciple but the *Moksha* is to be achieved by oneself by trial and tribulation. It is because 'wisdom is not communicable'. After the deaths of their respective gurus it is the nature that provides them the spiritual enlightenment and they attain the peace. While Siddhartha achieves the highest bliss at the river; Matteo attains his absolute peace at the 'mountain peak', and Raosaheb seeks his union with the almighty in the temple on the 'mountain top'. In *The Alchemist* Paulo says: "When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it" (23). Most of the selected novels are the illustrations of this dictum.

Paulo's protagonist Santiago, too, attains his 'miraculous spiritual power' on the cliff. Like Siddhartha, Matteo or Raosaheb, Santiago, too, attains the 'wisdom of life' in the absence of his spiritual guide – the alchemist. Thus, one finds a great resemblance in the perceptions of Hesse, Desai, Deshpande and Paulo in terms of the spiritual quest. They are of the view that the spiritual realization is to be earned by an individual himself.

Further, the 'concept of love' is described by each of these writers in his/her own way. All these writers seem to convey that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of universal love. In *Siddhartha*, the hero lifts a stone and tells Govinda, his friend, that he loves the stone as it is a part of Om. Within the cycle of change the stone can become man and spirit, a plant or an animal. He realizes that each stone is "Brahman" (116). Siddhartha explains that he loves the stone because love is the most important thing to have in the world, to love a person, a place and the world. Thus, Siddhartha learns that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of universal love.

In *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu attains her salvation by loving the orphans collected by Brother Andre under his roof. It is her love for dead Brother Andre that leads her in 'Gods way of love' and makes her immortal to live forever in happiness and joy. In this sense we can say that salvation is a matter of what you become – not where you shall go. Madame Wu's love for Andre brings her transformation, and she

undertakes the selfless service of mankind. Thus, her spiritual love for dead Andre awakens her sleeping soul and makes her deathless, immortal. Andre changes the whole personality of Madame Wu who, “all her life [- -] has struggled against her dislike of human beings”, and with his spiritual love he fills her heart full of love for every earthly creature. The novel ends with this same triumph of love.

Madame Wu’s love for every earthly creature essentially reveals her state of enlightenment. Like Siddhartha, she too, learns that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of universal love.

In *The Alchemist* Paulo opines that “Love is the force that transforms and improves the soul” (158). Further he says: “When we love, we always strive to become better than we are” (159). His love for Fatima, which is essentially spiritual, leads him to complete his project and achieve its objective. Further, it is through love he becomes able to communicate with the wind, the sand, the desert, and the sun. It is his love with the elements that transforms him, and he realizes the ultimate truth. Thus, through the concept of love he achieves the alchemical transformation and sees inside himself “the winds, the deserts, the oceans, the stars and everything created in the universe” (154), and sees “that the Soul of God was his own Soul” (160). Thus, in *The Alchemist* Paulo has described the spiritual strength of love.

In *Journey to Ithaca*, Matteo’s spiritual mentor, the Mother follows no religion in particular but only preaches love. According to the Mother we can experience the bliss when, “we feel ourselves loved [- -] we are filled with bliss” (97). She further asks her disciples to open their hearts to love and light and experience the joy of loving. Moreover, according to her love makes everything easy as “its pow-err, its forr-ce” (120). This view of Anita Desai regarding the power of love is identical with that of Paulo Coelho’s in *The Alchemist*, where Paulo says: “That his love for her would enable him to discover every treasure in the world”. The perceptions of both Anita Desai and Paulo Coelho reveal that love is power, it is also a force – and it makes everything easy. Thus, both Desai and Paulo convey us the spiritual power of love.

Lastly, Prakash Deshpande’s protagonist is full of love for his farm and his pet animals. His love for the elements of nature is essentially his spiritual love. In the last phase of his Journey he feels love for the wind, the trees, all the cows in the flock, the sheep and lastly he sees the immanence of God in every stone that he encounters on his way towards the ultimate union with the universal spirit. Lastly, all the authors have used ‘Nature-imagery’ to convey their perceptions of spirituality. In Hesse’s *Siddhartha* we have two images of nature – a songbird in a golden cage and a river. Kamala’s dead songbird makes him believe that it is his self that has been killed due to his own ignorance and pride. It makes him to feel a sense of loss within himself and he leaves the town of *Sansara*. Secondly, the river communicates the intimations of immortality to Siddhartha. Thus, nature plays a vital role in the process of Siddhartha’s enlightenment.

Anita Desai and Prakash Deshpande lay stress on ‘cleansing the spirit or heart’ as a means to inward transformation. For them ‘water’ is a means of purification. In Anita Desai’s *Journey to Ithaca*, the symbol of ‘water’ is a too clear means of purification. Laila takes bathe before her ultimate union with the Divine. The ‘water’ cleans her heart of negative thoughts and she is left purified. She feels: “I [- -] bathe

today in the waters of divine love! The river flows and carries my past away and leaves me pure and joyous as the new-born, fit to meet with the divine" (300). In *Bardana*, Raosaheb also takes the bathe in the water of a stream and thus he purifies himself for the meeting with the Divine. Thus, the East as well as the West considers the 'water' as a means of 'purification'.

The 'Mountain' is a common symbol that has been employed by most of the authors of the present study to convey their perceptions of spirituality. The mountains symbolize spiritual height. Out of seven authors of the present study five authors have employed the symbol of 'mountain' to convey their spiritual perception. Like the symbol of water, the symbol of 'mountain' has same implications in the East and in the West. In Pearl S. Buck's *Pavilion of Women*, the most significant symbol is the 'artist's picture'. In the picture there is a human figure shown to be climbing a mountain. It reflects Madame Wu's yearning for higher values of life. Buck has used the 'mountain' as a symbol of the zenith of spiritual height. In Paulo's *The Alchemist*, the hero, Santiago realizes the oneness of Man, Nature and God on the 'top of a cliff'. In Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* the Mother attains her highest enlightenment on the mountain peak, and Matteo travels "to the mountains where the Mother received enlightenment" (304). Thus, in the novel mountain symbolizes spiritual height. Raosaheb, in *Bardana*, too, receives his enlightenment in a temple on the mountain top. In all these four novels the symbol of 'mountain' is used as a zenith of spirituality. This symbol helps the writers to convey their perception of spirituality.

Another common symbol used by Paulo Coelho and Prakash Deshpande is that of a 'fire'. The 'fire' signifies the pain and penance the mortal must undergo to achieve 'deification'. The symbolic value of the fire is hinted at through the symbolic language of alchemy by Paulo. He writes: "The alchemist spent years' in their laboratories, observing the fire that purified the metals. They spent too much time close to the fire that gradually they gave up the vanities of the world. They discovered that the purification of the metals had led to a purification of themselves" (85). Further, in *Bardana*, Deshpande, too, has used the symbol of 'fire' as a means of purification. The fire purifies Raosaheb and leaves him pure and joyous as the new-born, fit to meet with the Divine.

In the pursuit of spiritual quest some characters hold the communication with the elements of nature. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago speaks with the sand, the wind, the sun and the sky. In *Siddhartha*, Siddhartha learns the language of the river. In *Journey to Ithaca* the Mother feels "they (stars) call to me. They seem to say, 'Higher, climb Higher'. In Prakash Deshpande's *Bardana*, the hero of the novel holds communication with the wind, the water, the trees, the animals, and lastly with the sky. What these authors try to convey by this is that at the time of highest enlightenment the man becomes one with the elements of Nature. He sees no difference between his soul and the elements. In everything of nature, he senses the presence of the almighty spirit. Thus, the comprehensive study of all these novels reveal that the basic spiritual perceptions of all these authors is the process of losing the self or the ego in order to qualify oneself and then experience the spiritual bliss by merging the ego with the spirit of nature.

Spiritual quest necessarily requires the basic quality of personal goodness. It is this quality of personal goodness that has been explored and reasserted in all the selected novels under discussion. In *Siddhartha* the personal goodness is represented by the characters like Siddhartha and Vasudeva, in *Pavilion of Women* by Brother Andre and afterwards by Madame Wu, in *Journey to Ithaca* by the Mother and Matteo, in *The Alchemist* by king of Salem, the Crystal merchant, the alchemist and lastly by Santiago; and lastly in *Bardana* by the characters of Hakimsaheb and Raosaheb. Therefore, the personal goodness becomes the first and essential criterion for the spiritual enlightenment. It is on this point, the selected novelists, in spite of some overt differences, hailing from different spatial-cultural backgrounds, meet with and hold up parallels to each other. Their perceptions reveal that, although Heaven and Nirvana are slightly different notions, the notion of reaching perfection through suffering and the shedding off of all earthly impediments such as desire, ambition and the demands of the senses is common to Christian, Islam and Hindu thought.

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