

Ques. Discuss *Journey to Ithaca* a novel of Spiritual Quest

Or

Discuss the theme of spiritual quest reflected in the novel *Journey to Ithaca*

Or

Discuss *Journey to Ithaca* a novel of pilgrimage.

Ans. *Journey to Ithaca* is a beautiful literary creation by Anita Desai. It highlights the theme of spiritual quest.

In this novel Anita Desai describes the journey of almost all the major characters towards spiritual truth that is sought in India. Three of them are foreigners whereas one is an Indian. All these characters undergo the journey from West to East. At deeper level it is the spiritual journey that leads these characters towards the peace of mind and that is the ultimate truth.

The major character, Matteo who is an Italian is restless from his childhood. He is always in search of ultimate spiritual truth. This urge of him makes him abnormal, different from the normal boys. He loses his interest in worldly things. He dislikes spicy meal, rejects luxurious living etc. That makes him to part from his school. His mother even manages a special tutor for him in the house. But this tutor strengthens his wish. He hands him a copy of Hesse's *The Journey to the East*. After his marriage he starts his journey from Italy to Mumbai; then from Mumbai to Goa; Goa to Bihar; Bihar to Northern part of India, to the foothills of Himalaya. The intention of this journey is search the peace of mind. During this journey he comes across several mishaps, fake sagas. He comes across so called sagas that show discriminations among the human being. Nowhere had he found his destination. At last when he comes in the ashram of Mother he feels that this is the place which he is searching. He finds the expected peace in this place and also doesn't find discrimination in human being. Everyone here is equal. He devotedly

works there as washer man, in charge of printing and publishing and as the letter writer. After making a long journey at last he gets the peace which he was searching from several days. Later he follows 'Mother' for the search of ultimate truth. After her death he also goes on the mountain hill where mother found her destination. In the end of the novel Matteo gets what he was searching. His son Giacomo finds him in the form of Jesus. It shows his success in gaining the divine truth.

Second significant character, Laila, later Mother, also goes through the long journey. Laila begins her journey from Italy to France and after joining the dancing group she travels from France to America to Bombay with Master Krishna's troupe. But later she realizes that she is not seeking the spiritual peace with this group as this group is performing the dance shows just for commercial purposes. So she leaves the group and comes to the East, to Bombay; then from Bombay to Ashram. Her spiritual journey gets its destination in the last phase of her journey. According to the guidance of Prem Krishna she goes on the peak of the mountain where she experiences storm, rain, lightening, river etc. She becomes one with the nature and Prem Krishna who has earlier gone there before Mother. There she reaches to Ithaca, home to celestial city. She experiences Day and Night that is the symbol of life and death. When Mother asks herself ' "Will Day come to meet my Night?"' she experiences the thunder storm and that is the Ithaca she reaches.

The third significant character in this novel is Sophie, wife of Matteo. Sophie is a practical minded girl. She gets many disturbances in her life because of madeness of Matteo for spiritual quest. She follows Matteo so many days. She accompanies him till she gives birth to two children. But at one moment she leaves Matteo and goes back to Italy. But again comes back and decides to search the past of Mother. After searching the same when she comes back in the ashram to inform it to Matteo she gets the news of Mother's death and Mateo's attempts to to gain

the spiritual peace by following Mother on mountain peak. Now she realizes the significance of spiritual quest and she also decides to follow the same path. Thus Anita Desai has shown the urge of spiritual quest that lies in most of the people's mind and she stresses how it is important in human life.