



Exploring ethnobotany as an expression of Balinese culture in Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*

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ABSTRACT. This study explores the intersection of ethnobotany and literature, focusing on Elizabeth Gilbert's novel *Eat, pray, love* from an ecocriticism perspective. Ethnobotany, a multidisciplinary field, explores the connections between humans, culture, plants, and nature as a critique of Anthropocentrism. It highlights enriching relationships between humans and the natural world within diverse cultures and practices, offering solutions to modern environmental issues by redefining our use and perception of nature. The paper delves into the representation of Balinese culture depicted in Gilbert's novel, highlighting the profound connections between the local indigene and their natural environment, emphasizing practices related to traditional healing and rituals. The study analyses textual sources with a qualitative framework to comprehend the role of plants in Balinese culture and their significance in resisting external influences. The emphasis of this study is foregrounding the vital role of literature, particularly novels, in highlighting the interconnectedness between humans and nature by showcasing the cultivation of indigenous plants for medicinal purposes. By focusing on the narrative strategies delivered by Elizabeth Gilbert, it explores how ethnobotany philosophical implementation criticizes modernity and its detrimental impact on nature. To conclude, this paper contextualizes how local wisdom can propagate a sense of environmental consciousness in this Anthropocene Era.

Keywords: ecocriticism; ethnobotany; indigenous knowledge; Indonesian literature.

Explorando la etnobotánica como expresión de la cultura balinesa en *Eat, pray, love*: una perspectiva ecocrítica de Elizabeth Gilbert

RESUMEN. Este estudio explora la intersección de la etnobotánica y la literatura, centrándose en la novela de Elizabeth Gilbert '*Comer, rezar, amar*', desde una perspectiva de ecocrítica. La etnobotánica, un campo multidisciplinario, explora las conexiones entre los seres humanos, la cultura, las plantas y la naturaleza como una crítica al antropocentrismo. Destaca las relaciones enriquecedoras entre los seres humanos y el mundo natural dentro de diversas culturas y prácticas, ofreciendo soluciones a los problemas ambientales modernos al redefinir nuestro uso y percepción de la naturaleza. El artículo profundiza en la representación de la cultura balinesa representada en la novela de Gilbert, destacando las profundas conexiones entre los indígenas locales y su entorno natural, haciendo hincapié en las prácticas relacionadas con la curación y los rituales tradicionales. El estudio analiza las fuentes textuales con un marco cualitativo para comprender el papel de las plantas en la cultura balinesa y su importancia en la resistencia a las influencias externas. El énfasis de este estudio es poner en primer plano el papel vital de la literatura, en particular de las novelas, para resaltar la interconexión entre los seres humanos y la naturaleza al mostrar el cultivo de plantas autóctonas con fines medicinales. Al centrarse en las estrategias narrativas entregadas por Elizabeth Gilbert, explora cómo la implementación filosófica de la etnobotánica critica la modernidad y su impacto perjudicial en la naturaleza. Para concluir, este artículo contextualiza cómo la sabiduría local puede propagar un sentido de conciencia ambiental en esta Era del Antropoceno.

Palabras-clave: ecocrítica; etnobotánica; conocimientos indígenas; literatura indonesia.

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Introduction

The emergence of environmental crises and contemporary environmental challenges have profoundly impacted the political landscape globally, particularly in Western societies. The emergence of a new political party, the Green Political Party, has directly resulted from this altering phenomenon. Following

this ecological turn, Rachel Carson's revolutionary work, *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, was seen as the spearhead of ecological consciousness among readers (Arthi & Bhuvaneswari, 2023). According to Leopold (1949), Homo sapiens, or humans, inhabit a communal environment known as earth, comprised of several biotic and abiotic components found on land. While Leopold does not directly employ the term 'ecocentrism' within his paper, he does refer to the concept of 'land ethics' that ought to be implemented within the framework of the 'land community'. Within this community, the human species no longer assumes the role of the dominant entity or conqueror, but rather assumes the position of an ordinary member within the community, coexisting with other elements such as soil, water, plants, and animals. As Leopold (1950) contemplates, land ethics can be defined as

[...] an extension of the social conscience from people to land, as we can be ethical only about something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in.... It is inconceivable that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land and a high regard for its value. By value, I mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense (Leopold, 1950, p. 219).

The core idea of ecocentrism recognizes nature as an extraordinary life force that affects all entities within its domain, particularly human beings. In 2002, Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen disputed this notion by proposing Anthropocentrism as a framework to understand the modern age, characterized by the rapid transformation of the earth and its surroundings due to advancements in science and technology. As Huggan and Tiffin posit, the destructive environmental changes in the Anthropocene era were "[...] premised on ontological and epistemological differences between Western and non-Western ideas of human and animal being-in-the world (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p. 11). According to Caracciolo (2023), shifting away from an ecocentric viewpoint, Anthropocentrism positions humans as the central agents whose existence is centred around their needs and desires:

While not explicitly formulated as a story by Crutzen, the concept becomes a productive proto-narrative when it considers a single protagonist (humanity) and an axiologically meaningful change of state (being elevated to a geological agent). The latent narrativity of the Anthropocene has been frequently recognized by humanities scholars—typically in a critical vein and in opposition to Crutzen's science-centric rhetoric (Caracciolo, 2023, p. 544).

The investigation into the interrelationship between humans and nature has experienced significant advancement in contemporary times. The level of interest in this field has experienced a considerable increase to the point that it has evolved into an interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary science that attracts the attention of researchers and practitioners alike. For example, a study by Victoria Reyes-García et al. examined the cultural transmission of ethnobotanical knowledge and skills in an Amerindian society. The research highlighted how traditional environmental knowledge is passed down through generations, influenced by social networks and community practices (Reyes-García et al., 2009, p. 274)

The present study investigates the role of plants and ethnobotanical knowledge in the Balinese culture as portrayed in *Eat, pray, love*, highlighting their significance in preserving traditional healing practices, cultural identity, and ecological integrity amidst the challenges of modernization. Author Elizabeth Gilbert recounted an unforgettable adventure in her acclaimed literary work, *Eat, pray, love*, located within the enchanting atmosphere of Bali. In Indonesia, known for its natural splendor and rich cultural legacy, Gilbert's account explores the issue mental maturation and self-examination. Her narrative highlights the bond between Bali residents and their surroundings. Ethnobotany provides the central framework to underline the interwoven aspect between nature and culture. Through Gilbert's memoir, academics can discover the link between the Balinese and their natural surroundings, gaining insights into ethnobotany. This research examines the intersection of ethnobotany, conservation, and human-environment relationships. It highlights the benefits of this interdisciplinary approach in maintaining cultural heritage and environmental stewardship. The researcher investigates the historical origins of this practice to uncover narratives and truths within Bali's floral fabric. Examining ethnobotany reveals the intricate connection between Bali's cultural legacy and its environment.

To contextualize, many literatures have been written with Bali as the central tenet of their narration. Christopher Koch's *The year of living dangerously* (1983) is one example. Koch's (1983) work allows readers to delve into the intricate connection between environmental concerns and political turmoil. However, the portrayal of the interrelationship between Balinese indigenous cultures and nature is not as prominent in this narrative. Another novel set in Bali is Ellen Sussman's *Paradise guest house* (2013), which explores the

aftermath of a terrorist attack on a local nightclub. This novel delineates the experiences of the characters who survived the 2002 Bali Bomb event, highlighting its impact on their lives. While it does incorporate elements of Balinese culture, its primary focus lies in the psychological and emotional journey of the characters as they attempt to recover from the tragedy. This study's novelty is examining how Gilberts' narration depicts Balinese culture and the environment while emphasizing distinct themes. It illuminates how she integrates Balinese customs, enriching our comprehension of the interplay between culture, nature, and narrative.

Ethnobotany investigates the complex interplay between humans and plants, and ethnobotany bridges multiple fields of knowledge. A comprehensive strategy merging ethnography and botany sheds light on historical and cultural practices and plant utilization through intricate cultural examinations (Young, 2007; Ladio & Lozada, 2009). Derived from the Greek word *ethnos* (refers to people or culture) and *botane* (denotes 'plants'), *ethnobotany* refers to the study of the multifaceted relationships between cultures and the botanical world. This field investigates how plants influence cultural rituals, traditional knowledge, and community well-being. Derived from the endeavors and traditions of native peoples and cultural organizations, ethnobotany has a rich history (Allen & Hatfield, 2016). Throughout history, cultures worldwide have relied on plants for necessities, medicine, housing, clothing, and ceremonies. Researchers record indigenous plant knowledge, exploring practical uses and cultural tales. This knowledge, passed down through generations, illuminates the history and evolution of human societies. Additionally, this perspective underscores the critical requirement of reconciling humans with the non-human environment, a state that existed previously (Indriyanto, 2021).

The field of ethnobotanical research holds considerable importance in preserving traditional knowledge related to plants and their utilization, with a special focus on indigenous and marginalized communities (Voeks & Rashford, 2013). Many indigenous civilizations understand the use of the indigenous flora in their respective locations, often utilizing plants for medicinal purposes, religious ceremonies, and promoting sustainable resource management. For example, Native Hawaiians (*Kānaka*) possess an indigenous knowledge system that encompasses an understanding of their environment, culture, and history, such as *la'au lapa'au*, identifying various plants and natural substances for healing purposes (Meyer, 2014; Antonio et al., 2023). Ethnobotanists collaborate closely with indigenous groups to methodically document, preserve, and respect their ancestral knowledge, which is significant for scientific investigation and preserving cultural heritage and the self-determination of these societies.

Ethnobotany, rooted in history and culture, has rapidly expanded into diverse fields. This interdisciplinary pursuit impacts medicine, pharmacology, agriculture, and conservation. By studying traditional plant use among indigenous communities, researchers uncover new therapies, sustainable farming practices, and biodiversity conservation strategies. Ethnobotanical research enriches our understanding of human-plant relationships and generates practical applications across disciplines. It highlights the intersection of ethnobotany and the humanities, where traditional knowledge and modern science converge to tackle global challenges. Ethnobotany serves as a bridge between ecological preservation and conservation, offering a holistic approach to resource management. It facilitates collaboration between indigenous communities and conservationists to protect vulnerable ecosystems from threats like deforestation and habitat degradation. Integrating traditional knowledge into plant-based conservation initiatives accelerates progress toward these goals. Ethnobotanical research shows that human societies have long maintained a symbiotic relationship with nature. This historical knowledge offers solutions to contemporary ecological challenges, highlighting the importance of preserving and leveraging traditional wisdom in addressing environmental issues.

The intersection of literature and ethnobotany offers theoretical framework which combines language and nature (Hubbell & Ryan, 2021). By employing a literary perspective, researchers can explore the cultural narratives and the significant impact plant life has exerted on human communities (DeLoughrey et al., 2015; James, 2022). Throughout history, the written form of language has frequently functioned as a medium for safeguarding and disseminating indigenous knowledge about flora and its various applications. Humans and plants illuminate how various societies have used botanical resources for medicinal, culinary, and spiritual purposes. An interdisciplinary approach reveals the complex coevolutionary relationship between humans and plants and underscores the role of literature in shaping our understanding of the natural world. These ideas demonstrate the interconnectedness of culture, language, and nature, especially in indigenous societies:

The ability to feel with the land is epistemologically important in the worldviews of many Indigenous peoples and other land-based and ecologically attuned cultural groupings. Such land-based ontologies are often defined by cultural practices that stem from an implicit understanding of land effect as it exists in the ordinary effects of day-to-day life (Bladow & Ladino, 2018, p. 98).

In *Eat, pray, love* by Elizabeth Gilbert, the relationship between human culture, nature, and ethnobotanical practices in Bali is central to exploring literature and ecocriticism. This study examines how the novel highlights the wisdom of indigenous knowledge and the importance of preserving ethnobotanical traditions amidst modernization. By appreciating the intrinsic understanding of the natural world exemplified by Balinese ethnobotany, the narrative suggests connection between humanity and the environment, bridging culture and nature. We analyze Gilbert's narrative strategies with interdisciplinary lens to comprehend Bali's modern challenges. This highlights how stories connect with nature, showing literature's vital role in raising environmental awareness and preserving culture.

Objectives

Our research aims to uncover Bali's intricate cultural and ecological landscape, revealing the interplay between human culture, nature, and ethnobotanical practices. We analyze Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, pray, love*, examining how she portrays indigenous knowledge and addresses modernization challenges in Bali. Our research focuses on how the Balinese maintain their connection to nature amidst modernization, highlighting their preference for plant-based medicine over synthetic alternatives. Using an interdisciplinary approach, we explore the diverse roles that plants play in shaping Balinese cultural identity. Bali's cultural landscape, woven with rituals and architectural designs that blend seamlessly with its natural environment, vividly illustrates its involvement with ethnobotany. We specifically investigate Balinese traditional medicine, where indigenous healing practices intersect with biodiversity and cultural heritage. Our study emphasizes the holistic healing methods practiced in Bali, which integrate natural remedies, spiritual rituals, and mantras, all rooted in the interconnectedness of Balinese culture, nature, and spirituality.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, eschewing quantitative methodologies. Consequently, data acquisition is derived exclusively from textual sources, and analytical-qualitative techniques are subsequently employed to extract and interpret the information contained within the novel's textual content (Creswell, 2009, 2016). Ethnobotany is the foundational framework guiding our textual examination, shedding light on the intricate interplay between human societies and plant life. Through this lens, we emphasize the dynamic reciprocal interactions that contribute to developing local wisdom and cultural expressions. Employing a systematic series of analytical procedures, our research aims to unveil the role played by plants as conduits for preserving and perpetuating indigenous cultural practices. Furthermore, our investigation is motivated by the imperative to safeguard ecological and cultural integrity in the face of the formidable pressures of modernization and globalization.

Bridging cultures: ethnobotany's role in understanding Balinese society

Ethnobotany is a multidisciplinary analysis extrapolating the seemingly contradictory aspects between culture and nature. This study delves into the complex interplay between human societies and the realm of plants, elucidating how diverse cultures have effectively utilized and incorporated botanical knowledge into their everyday existence over an extended period. The interplay between culture and nature exemplifies the significant influence that plants have exerted on human society, encompassing domains such as traditional medicine, sustenance, spirituality, and ceremonial practices. Ethnobotany fundamentally investigates the intricate relationship between human beings and the botanical world. The statement acknowledges the broader cultural importance of plants beyond their role as a human food source. Conversely, they assume a crucial function in influencing the cultural identity, beliefs, and practices of diverse communities across the globe.

The cultural practices and customs of the Balinese people are intrinsically connected to the natural environment, exemplifying a reciprocal relationship between the island's residents and their ecological context. An illustrative instance can be found in *Tri Hita Karana*, a philosophical framework from Bali that underscores the interconnectedness and harmonious coexistence of humanity, nature, and the supernatural.

This is what rituals are for. We do spiritual ceremonies as human beings to create a safe resting place for our most complicated feelings of joy or trauma so that we don't have to haul those feelings around with us forever, weighing us down. We all need such places of ritual safekeeping. And I do believe that if your culture or tradition doesn't have the specific ritual you're craving, then you are permitted to make up a ceremony of your devising, fixing your own broken-down emotional systems with all the do-it-yourself resourcefulness of a generous plumber/poet. If you bring the right earnestness to your homemade ceremony, God will provide the grace. And that is why we need God (Gilbert, 2006, p. 201).

From an ecological perspective, the statement by Ketut Liyer unveils how rituals function as adaptive behaviours within human cultures. Just as species in an ecosystem adapt to their environment to ensure survival and well-being, human cultures develop rituals as adaptive responses to the complex emotional landscapes that individuals navigate. Practices serve as a form of cultural adaptation. They provide a structured and communal way for individuals to cope with intense emotions, whether positive (joy) or negative (trauma) (Hobson et al., 2018). In ecological terms, rituals can be seen as managing emotional 'resources' to maintain individual and collective well-being. In the vibrant cultural tapestry of Bali, practices serve as conduits for expressing human emotion. Rituals are rooted in the island's Hindu tradition. Balinese rituals are remarkable for their intricate choreography and capacity to evoke a wide spectrum of emotions.

Life here is a constant cycle of offerings and rituals. You must perform them all in the correct order and with the correct intention, or the entire universe will fall out of balance. Margaret Mead wrote about 'the incredible busyness' of the Balinese, and it's true—there is rarely an idle moment in a Balinese compound. There are ceremonies here that must be performed five times a day and others that must be performed once a day, once a week, once a month, once a year, once every ten years, once every hundred years, once every thousand years. All these dates and rituals are organized by the priests and holy men, who consult a byzantine system of three calendars (Gilbert, 2006, p. 244, emphasis in original).

The constant cycle of offerings and rituals in Bali reflects a cultural belief in maintaining harmony within their society and the natural world. Just as they must perform these rituals precisely, there is an understanding that their actions affect the environment. This perspective aligns with ecological principles that emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need for balance within ecosystems (Setiadi & Siringoringo, 2016). The Balinese believe the universe will fall out of balance if these rituals are not performed correctly. This belief highlights their perception of a delicate ecological equilibrium. It suggests that they see themselves as stewards of their environment, responsible for maintaining environmental harmony through their rituals and offerings.

Balinese temples and buildings frequently occupy aesthetically pleasing sites characterized by verdant foliage, flowing rivers, or elevated hills, accentuating their inherent affiliation with the natural environment. The act of presenting flowers, fruits, and grains to deities serves as an expression of appreciation for the bountiful resources provided by the earth, so strengthening the concept of fostering a harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

So I take a taxi to the town of Ubud, which seems like a good place to start my journey. I check into a small and pretty hotel there on the fabulously named Monkey Forest Road. The hotel has a sweet swimming pool and a garden crammed with tropical flowers with blossoms bigger than volleyballs (tended to by a highly organized team of hummingbirds and butter-flies). The staff is Balinese, which means they automatically start adoring you and complimenting you on your beauty as soon as you walk in. The room has a view of the tropical treetops, and there's a breakfast included every morning with piles of fresh tropical fruit. In short, it's one of the nicest places I've ever stayed, costing me less than ten dollars a day. It's good to be back (Gilbert, 2006, p. 235).

The excerpt displays how Gilbert depicts the buildings in Bali. The traveler's choice of Ubud as the starting point for their journey reflects a conscious decision to engage with Bali's natural environment. The mention of a hotel with a swimming pool and a garden filled with tropical flowers highlights the traveler's immersion in the local ecology. The presence of hummingbirds and butterflies suggests a delicate balance in the ecosystem, where these creatures play roles in pollination and maintaining the garden's biodiversity. Bali's archaeological tapestry is interwoven with its mesmerizing natural landscapes, inviting tourist exploration from diverse angles. Archaeological buildings coalesced with green nature make Bali a popular ecotourism subject worldwide (Utama et al., 2023).

The cultural fabric of Bali, Indonesia, is intricately woven with ethnobotanical traditions. The island's abundant biodiversity and the connection between the Balinese people and their natural surroundings have contributed to developing diverse traditions and ceremonies centered on plants and herbs.

Mario is one of the guys who work at this hotel. I already made friends with him when I checked in, largely because of his name. Not too long ago I was traveling in a country where many men were named Mario, but not one was a small, muscular, energetic Balinese fellow wearing a silk sarong and a flower behind his ear. So I had to ask, 'Is your name Mario? That doesn't sound very Indonesian' (Gilbert, 2006, p. 236).

The paragraph introduces Mario, a small, muscular, energetic Balinese fellow wearing a silk sarong and a flower behind his ear. Mario's attire, particularly the silk sarong and flower, reflects the influence of Balinese culture on his fashion choices. Balinese culture is rooted in nature and spirituality, often manifested in locals' clothing. The use of silk and a flower in his attire symbolizes the natural world and the importance of aesthetics derived from nature in Balinese culture. The presence of a flower behind Mario's ear is noteworthy from an ecological standpoint. Astor (2016) state that flowers are integral to Bali's lush natural environment. Bali is known for its vibrant and diverse flora, with many tropical flowers adorning the landscape. By wearing a flower behind his ear, Mario adheres to cultural norms and symbolizes the connection between the Balinese people and their ecological surroundings.

The complex intertwines of Balinese culture, characterized by its associations with fashion, archaeology, and rituals, showcases a significant interaction with the discipline of ethnobotany. The Balinese traditional dress is characterized by its symbolism and intricate design, frequently including various plants and natural components. This practice symbolizes the connection between the local flora and the Balinese cultural identity. The archaeological discoveries in Bali provide valuable insights into the historical utilization of plants and their cultural importance in ancient communities, revealing the enduring transmission of ethnobotanical knowledge from one generation to the next. In addition, it is worth noting that rituals and ceremonies in Bali often integrate various plants and herbal treatments, highlighting their significant contribution to the realms of healing and spiritual traditions. The significance of this symbiotic relationship highlights the role of ethnobotany as a crucial means of comprehending Balinese civilization's cultural, historical, and ecological aspects. It serves as an illustration of the interconnection between nature and culture within the rich heritage of this enchanting island.

Eco-health in Bali: the interplay of nature and traditional healing

Building upon the intricate relationship between Balinese culture, nature, and ethnobotanical practices, this study examines traditional medicinal systems in Bali. Central to this is *Usadha*, a holistic healing tradition upheld by Balians (traditional healers) who harness indigenous plants for therapeutic purposes, reflecting the integration of cultural and healthcare practices (Eiseman, 2011). *Usadha* embodies Bali's perspective on health, viewing the body, mind, and spirit as interconnected. This traditional medicine uses various herbal concoctions, meditation, yoga, prayer, and rituals to restore balance. Passed down through generations, *Usadha* involves the entire Balinese community in preserving their cultural heritage and identity.

Ketut Liyer has all these piles of old, lined notebooks and ledgers filled with tiny little handwriting of ancient Balinese-Sanskrit mysteries about healing. He copied these notes into these notebooks in the 1940s or 1950s, sometime after his grandfather died, so he would have all the medical information recorded. This stuff is beyond invaluable. There are volumes of data about rare trees, leaves, and plants and their medicinal properties (Gilbert, 2006, p. 263)

Ketut Liyer acts as a shaman in Bali who is well-known for healing many people there. Ketut Liyer's collection of old notebooks and ledgers, containing meticulously recorded knowledge about Balinese-Sanskrit healing mysteries, provides a remarkable glimpse into the world of ethnomedicine in Bali. These notebooks, dating back to the mid-20th century, serve as repositories of indigenous medical wisdom passed down through generations. Within their pages lies a treasure trove of insights into the healing properties of rare trees, leaves, and plants native to Bali. This ethnomedical tradition reflects the connection between the Balinese people and their natural environment, as their healing practices are rooted in the island's biodiversity. Balinese medicine, rooted in the island's rural culture, incorporates traditional herbal remedies and healing rituals that underscore the interdependence between humans and the natural world, aligning with the agrarianist's perspective stated by Indriyanto (2023) that the sustainable agricultural practices and harmony with the land have interconnectedness.

Preserving this medical information in handwritten notebooks underscores the cultural significance of ethnomedicine in Bali. The meticulous documentation of plant properties and their medicinal uses

demonstrates the Balinese commitment to maintaining their traditional healing practices. It also highlights the crucial role of individuals like Ketut Liyer as custodians of this knowledge, ensuring its continuity for future generations. In this way, these notebooks represent a valuable source of ethnomedical wisdom and serve as a testament to the enduring link between culture, nature, and healthcare in Bali, where indigenous healing practices remain integral to the local way of life.

That night in a village, I had dream. Father, grandfather, great-grandfather—all they come in my dream to my house together and tell me how to heal my burned arm. They tell me make juice from saffron and sandalwood. Put this juice on burn. Then make powder from saffron and sandalwood. Rub this powder on burn. They tell me I must do this, then I not lose my arm. So real this dream, like they in house with me, all of they together. I wake up. I don't know what to do, because sometimes dreams are just joking, you understand? But I make back to my home, and I put this saffron and sandalwood juice on my arm. And then I put this saffron and sandalwood powder on my arm. My arm very infected, very ache, made big, very swell. But after juice and powder, become very cool. Became very cold. Start to feel better. In ten days, my arm is good. All heal (Gilbert, 2006, p. 250).

Ketut Liyer's reliance on saffron and sandalwood for healing reflects the use of locally available resources for medicinal purposes. As Caballero-Serrano et al. (2019, p. 1) argues, “[...] medicinal plants are an ecosystem service directly implicated in human well-being. In many rural communities, they constitute a main treatment for disease or a source of disease prevention”. Ethnomedicine often draws upon the natural environment and indigenous plants to address health issues. Saffron and sandalwood are known for their medicinal properties in various traditional healing systems, and in this case, they are used to treat burns. Bali's rich cultural tapestry is intricately woven with the fragrant threads of sandalwood, a tree that holds spiritual and medicinal significance on the island. For centuries, sandalwood, known as *cendana* in the local language, has been revered for its aromatic allure and its therapeutic properties. Balinese traditional medicine draws upon the healing potential of sandalwood in various forms, harnessing its soothing and anti-inflammatory attributes to treat a range of ailments. Whether it is crafting medicinal balms, aromatic oils for massage, or infusions for skin conditions, sandalwood remains an indispensable component of the island's indigenous healing practices, illustrating the connection between nature, culture, and medicine in Bali.

Beyond its medicinal applications, sandalwood is ingrained in Balinese spirituality and rituals. Its sweet, woody scent infuses sacred spaces and temple offerings, creating an atmosphere of tranquility and reverence. Sandalwood incense is used in religious ceremonies, symbolizing purity and enhancing the connection between the Balinese people and their deities. Thus, in Bali, the fragrant legacy of sandalwood transcends the realm of medicine, becoming a powerful emblem of the island's intertwining of nature, spirituality, and the healing arts, reflecting its holistic approach to well-being.

So now I must be medicine man. Now I have to learn medical books from great-grandfather. These books not made on paper, made on palm leaves. Called lontars. This is Balinese medical encyclopedia. I must learn all different plants on Bali. Not easy. One by one, I learn everything. I learn to take care of people with many problem. One problem is when someone is sick from physical. I help this physical sick with herbs. Other problem is when family is sick, when family always fighting. I help this with harmony, with special magic drawing, also with talking for helping. Put magic drawing in house, no more fighting. Sometimes, people sick in love, not find the right match. For Balinese and Western, too, always a lot of trouble with love, difficult to find right match. I fix love problem with mantra and with magic drawing, bring love to you. Also, I learn black magic, to help people if bad black magic spell on them. My magic drawing, you put in your house, bring you good energy (Gilbert, 2006, p. 251).

Balinese treatment is a holistic attempt that seamlessly integrates using natural medicines and reciting mantras to promote physical and spiritual healing (Arsana et al., 2020). Within this healing paradigm, traditional Balinese healers, known as ‘Balian’, harness the therapeutic properties of indigenous plants and herbs to create remedies tailored to specific ailments. These natural medicines are complemented by the power of mantras, sacred incantations, and chants that serve as conduits to invoke divine energies. The rhythmic recitation of mantras contributes to the patient's mental and emotional well-being and aligns the individual's spiritual and physical realms. This interconnected approach to healing exemplifies the relationship between Balinese culture, nature, and spirituality, underscoring the belief that true wellness encompasses harmony between the physical body and the metaphysical world.

Elizabeth Gilbert's literary work *Eat, pray, love* shows an expedition of self-exploration and restoration while concurrently alluding to the convergence of ethnobotany, the field concerned with examining the connections between individuals and plants and the process of personal development. As Gilbert starts on her globe expedition, she experiences a variety of cultures in Italy, India, and Indonesia, each characterized by their

distinctive plant-based customs and medicinal practices. The author's encounters with various food items, herbs, and ceremonies illuminate the interrelationships between human beings and the botanical realm. The book highlights the significance of ethnobotanical knowledge in exploring one's internal landscape and developing a more comprehension of the world and oneself. It exemplifies this through various experiences, such as indulging in Italian cuisine, investigating the spiritual dimensions of indigenous herbs in Indonesia, and delving into the therapeutic attributes of plants in Bali.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the role of ethnobotany in bridging the gap between literature and the environment, revealing intricate connections among humanity, culture, plants, and nature while challenging anthropocentric perspectives. Ethnobotany offers a valuable lens for reinterpreting literature, particularly within the ecocritical framework, where the humanities and environmental science intersect. This interdisciplinary approach enriches our comprehension of the influence of nature on literary narratives. Literary works, such as Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, pray, love*, serve as compelling vehicles to explore the importance of nature within the reciprocal relationship with humanity and culture.

Elizabeth Gilbert's novel, *Eat, pray, love*, underscores the symbiotic connection between culture, spirituality, and the environment, with a particular focus on the vibrant Balinese culture. The Balinese people's reverence for the natural world and their adept integration of ethnobotanical practices into their daily lives provide compelling evidence of the enduring depth of indigenous wisdom. This study underscores the urgent need to preserve and celebrate ethnobotanical traditions, especially in the face of modernization and the potential loss of traditional heritage. By nurturing an appreciation for the inherent wisdom of the natural world, indigenous environmental knowledge strives to strengthen the bond between humanity, culture, and the non-human world, ultimately fostering a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

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