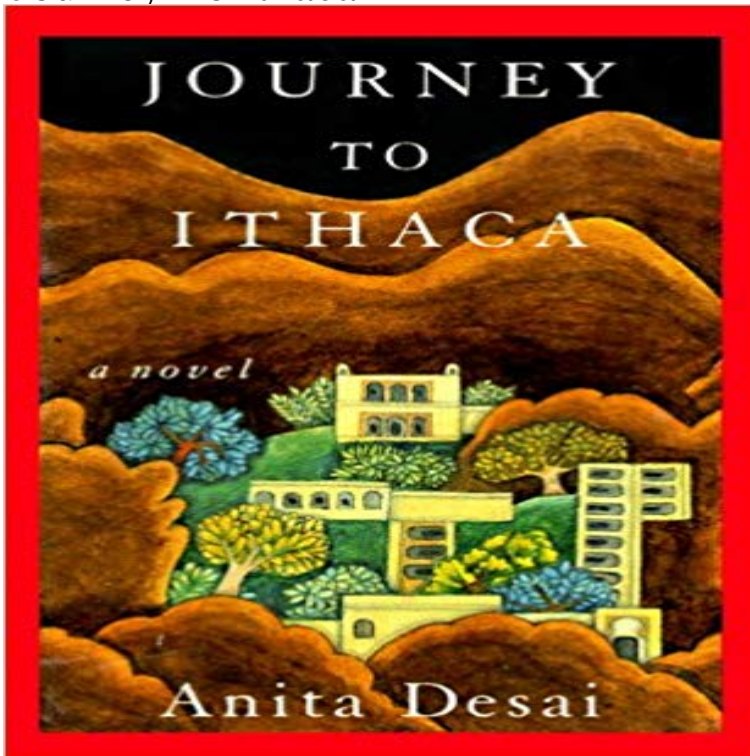


## Journey To Ithaca



In her first novel since the widely praised Baumgartners Bombay, Anita Desai brilliantly evokes spiritual India in all its endless complexity, and examines the nature of pilgrimage through the aspirations and adventures of three superbly realized characters. Matteo and Sophie join the 1970s flight of young Europeans to India. Matteo -- Italian, raised in the luscious countryside around Lake Como, restless since childhood -- has been introduced by a tutor to Hermann Hesses *The Journey to the East*, and it opens in him a desperate longing. Sophie -- German, practical, worldly -- is willing to follow him to the ends of the earth. In India, together they visit swamis, gurus, ashrams -- always searching. Matteo is seeking spiritual enlightenment, but for Sophie fulfillment lies in earthly love. And when they meet a holy woman known as the Mother, the differences between them seem to explode. When we learn the Mothers story, we see it as an earlier version of their own -- the story of a young girl growing up in Cairo and finding her way East by joining a troupe of Indian dancers she has met in Europe. Her journey, a young womans daring progress through Paris and Venice and New York, until she finds her moment of transcendence in India, comments on, and gives added breadth to, the young couples quest. In telling what happens to Matteo and Sophie and the mother, Anita Desai gives us a novel of great richness, an extraordinary vision of a country, and a compassionate portrait of people struggling to find a spiritual home. *Journey to Ithaca* is her most powerful and most involving novel.

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colorful novel almost impossible to absorb in one reading Anita Desai is a fluent artist, working from one vivid salience to the next. She knows the West's long fascination with Indian With just the right blend of empathy and intelligence, Desai (Baumgartners Bombay, 1989) explores the West's long fascination with Indian