

THEMATIC STUDY OF LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT BY PREETI SHENOY

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Abstract

Preeti Shenoy is among the top five highest selling authors in India. She is also on the Forbes longlist of the most influential celebrities in India. Her work has been translated to many languages. Her novel 'Life is What you Make it' revolves around protagonist Ankita who is in her 20s and has some issues from the past which haunts her. She faces ups and downs in her life. Because of her love relationship with three persons, Vaibhav, Abhishek and Joseph depression slowly eats her away and she tries to commit suicide. She is then diagnosed with bipolar disorder and admitted in the mental hospital.

After several months Ankita is able to recover from her depression to become the master of her fate. She went on to gain six more academic degrees and she married a kind sensitive man. This paper focuses on Ankita's courage, determination and growing up. It is about how life can take a totally different path from what is planned and yet how one can make a success of it.

Keywords: Depression, Love, Courage, Success

Life is a single word with many different connotations and meanings. Above all ; life is about more than just being; it's also about how one defines that existence. The journey of life may not always be smooth but we must keep going and stay positive all the times. Life is the most precious asset on this planet and must be protected irrespective of its form and appearance.

"Wake up ,Life is Calling" is a story of Ankita. She had a troubled past. She recently came back from a mental asylum, she was admitted there due to Bipolar Disorder. The story started when she joined the course of creative writing. Preeti Shenoy is a well-known name among the readers of romantic and contemporary fiction in India, she has written more than 10 novels already and many of them have achieved the status of bestseller in India. She is among the five best selling novelist of India. Her writings are focused on the reality of life and she tries to judge the situation with various perspectives.

Falling in love is an intense emotional experience at any age. But during adolescence, when everything feels bigger and it's all happening for the first time, the ups and down can be even more extreme. Between the flood of teen hormones and the other physical and emotional changes associated with puberty young love can feel like a roller coaster. It's exhilarating, scary and full of heart- lifting highs and stomach dropping lows.

"A Life is What You Make it a story of Love, Hope and How Determination can overcome even Destiny. The story opens in a mental institution where the protagonist of the novel Ankita Sharma, is apparently brought to unwillingly by her parents. Ankita is 21, good-looking and smart and yet she is among many people with listless looks and lethargic bodies. "I am not like you," she wants to scream. "I won elections in my college. I used to be the Secretary of the Arts Association. I was doing my management from a fine business school. I am not like you all." [1] But, unfortunately, she is – just a first-time patient at the National Mental Health Institute. So, how did she get there? When her number finally comes up, and the doctor starts asking her question, we, the readers, slowly but surely start uncovering the answer to this question. The flashback starts with two letters exchanged between the protagonist and Vaibhav, a childhood friend of hers. We learn that Vaibhav has managed to get into the Indian Institute of Technology – Delhi, and that Ankita is not allowed to do the same by her conservative parents, despite her excellent grades. The reason for it is, of course, the gender of Ankita – and nothing more.

So, expectedly for a girl living in Kerala in 1989, she enters St. Agnes College for Girls. However, she misses Vaibhav who, as we learn from the letters exchanged between the two, was a little more than a friend to her. They say that distance is sometimes capable of sharpening love, but they also say that it is a make-or-break test for it. In the case of Ankita, it seems to be both. At first, it works in favor of Vaibhav whose letters Ankita eagerly awaits – they are not just the highlight of her college life, but basically the only thing she looks forward to. However, as the days pass, Ankita starts fitting in at St. Agnes.

Not only is she a great student, acing her tests and excelling in her extracurricular activities, she is also an all-rounder adored by; absolutely everybody. In fact, she is soon elected to be the Arts Club Secretary, and, even sooner, makes a lot of friends. One of them, Sanjana, introduces her to Abhishek, a stout boy good at playing guitar and great at public speaking. We also learn that he has “a roundish face that sported slight stubble,” that he wears glasses and that he is “friendly and jovial.” And he’s also quite smooth – if not a little corny – with the icebreakers, since the second thing he says to Ankita as he is shaking her hand is: “So what do you do, apart from being so pretty?” [2] And that’s code for “Vaibhav, who?” But that’s also something a student at St. Agnes would expect from someone coming from Mahaveer College, for the simple reason that “even the best-looking girl at Mahaveer, could not match up to an average looking girl at Agnes.” [3] After being left alone with Abhi by her classmates following a cultural event, Ankita is surprised to find out that she has enjoyed every second of her time with her new acquaintance.

She is even more surprised when Abhi drops the “I love you” bombshell: “I fell in love with you the moment I saw you,” he says. “I have never felt like this about anyone before, trust me. I am crazy about you. Honestly. And I have never done anything like this before in my life. This confessing feelings and all, is just not me, but with you I really cannot hold back anymore.” [4] As if he held back at all! Ankita rejects his advances by telling him that she has a boyfriend, but Abhi is persistent. He sends her a letter and, before too long, Ankita visits him at his place. Finally, “during the mother of all cultural festivals, the Mahatma Gandhi University Youth Festival,” Abhi and Ankita kiss. They start going out, and everything in Ankita’s life is looking picture book perfect. Except, you know: as her feelings for Abhi start growing, her love for Vaibhav slowly starts fading away. Years pass and Ankita is obsessed with a new agenda: getting into one of the top institutes in the country offering an MBA program. She gets an interview call from four of them, one of which is the most well-known one located in Bombay. Coincidentally, Ankita’s father is promoted in his company at about this time, and this promotion means that all of Ankita’s family will be moving to Bombay. It also means that her relationship with Abhishek is nearing its end. “Even if my folks were not moving to Bombay,” Ankita says to Abhi, “we would still have parted as I would have chosen to do it in Bombay.” “Pride has gone to your head,” replies Abhi, whom Ankita describes ominously as “an emotional fool.” [5] They break up acrimoniously, and the very next day Abhi’s body is found; it is discovered that he drowned due to an excessive amount of alcohol in his body. And that it may have been a suicide. Only Ankita knows that this is undoubtedly related to her.

She tells her best friend Suvi, and with her help, she calls Abhi’s grandfather. “I know he loved you,” he tells her, even though he hides this information from the police. “I don’t know what happened between you two, but I have only one thing to say. You are young, you are pretty. Please remember *molle, sneham mathram puchikaruthu* [6] No matter from where it comes.” The closest translation that Ankita is able to come up with of these beautiful words in Malayam is “*never belittle love.*” These wise words open a piercing hole inside Ankita’s body.

And even though in Bombay she is doing what she does best – winning the hearts of many and acing all of her exams (whilst writing poems and making notes for everybody until late in the evening) – she is also, slowly but surely (and also, unwittingly) falling down this hole.

To make matters worse, her parents discover the love letters she had been exchanging with Vaibhav and Abhi. They burn them and scold her severely for them. Unsurprisingly, very soon, the darkness gets the better of Ankita: depressed and miserable, she tries to slit her wrists. And she doesn’t stop at her first suicide attempt: the second time it is her father who saves her. And that’s the reason why Ankita is admitted to a mental hospital at the beginning of the novel.

So, back in the present, Ankita is talking to Dr. Madhusudan who diagnoses her with bipolar disorder. He explains to her that what she went through is common and that there are two sides to it: a euphoric one and a despairing one.

The ray of hope? Well, as Dr. Madhusudan explains to Ankita, it is a disorder closely associated with creativity – something Ankita does excel at.

After several months, Ankita is able to recover from her depression. And even though bipolar disorder is not an ailment that can be effectively cured, she is certainly capable of managing it. Or, in other words, to become the “Master of her Fate” as both the last chapter of the book and the poem quoted in the dedication claim. Yes, in case you’re wondering, that poem is none other than “Invictus”. Also, if you want to know what happened to Ankita in the long run – well, let’s just say that she was just fine. The epilogue states that she went on to gain six more academic degrees and that, along the way, she met and married a kind, sensitive man.

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