

A Psychoanalytical Reading of Preeti Shenoy's Select Novels

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Abstract

Indian English Literature have brought an enormous revolution in the literary world and took it to the great heights of success in recent years. Many of the young and dynamic writers are contributing to the lives which directly appeal to young adults. Preeti Shenoy is one of those new talents that emerged in the field of writing. She has written many triggering and inspiring novels to make her readers appreciate the value of life. This paper attempts to use psychoanalytical approach to understand the psyche of the female protagonists of the two of her renowned novels 'Life is what you make it' and 'The Secret Wishlist'. The protagonists of both the novels experience psychological disturbance which results in their mental dissonance and this chaotic condition leads to their unsociable lifestyle. However, after going through all the turmoil, the way they develop a positive approach towards life and society, is the crux of this study.

Keywords: Psychoanalytical Approach, Mental Dissonance, Positive Approach.

Introduction

Preeti Shenoy is considered as the best read Indian English female author of the twenty first century. She is prominently known for her style of writing, her views towards the social practices and their effects on the lives of Indian people. She is recognized for the representation of Indian people, especially women in her stories. Shenoy also discusses the problems of gender and sexuality in her fiction. She is one of those outstanding Indian novelists, who deliberately describe the struggle of Postmodern Indian life and culture. Shenoy is now a widespread author for her distinguished masterpiece, Life Is What You Make It (2011). She began with writing as profession with 34 Bubble-gum and Candies (2008) and her latest book

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is *A Place Called Home* (2022). Preeti Shenoy, a fifty years old writer has contributed more than fifteen literary works in the world of Indian English Literature. *A Hundred Little Flames* (2017), *It Happens for a Reason* (2014), *The Rule Breakers* (2018), *Wake Up Life Is Calling* (2019), *When Love Came Calling* (2020) are some of her very famous fictional and nonfictional works. All her novels discuss not only women's issues but the problems of postmodern generation. Her stories are true reflection of Postmodern society and her women characters struggle to fight against it. They struggle to resolve their psychological conflict and finally recuperate their individuality.

Postmodern young generation is intolerant to read anything unfamiliar that does not belong to the vision and ambition of the world they are living in. They are living in the world where channel of their television could be changed with an electrical lazy bone called remote. They are learned enough to use touch screens and flip through screens which saves their time and energy. Such speedy activities of young grownups need to be connected in order to turn their minds towards reading. Shenoy's style of writing and storytelling techniques attract young minds to read. As a writer of the twenty-first century, Preeti Shenoy mirrors the modern Indian societal background that discloses the normative or conservative practices in the lives and culture of the Indian society. Shenoy's woman represents the disturbing condition and the miseries faced by the Indian women. She proves herself to be the part of Indian English literature, that not only portray the outlook of the female inner self but also show the situations of widows and house wives in modern Indian society.

Indian authors have brought noticeable changes in the literary world not through any enormous upheaval but with the simplicity in writing that has made them attain bigger success. It has been observed throughout years that the role of creative writers in any society is to help people through their work. Their writing plays a crucial role in the lives of people. Though they encourage straightforwardness, they also focus on their responsibilities toward chiselling the thoughts of future generation by imparting confidence in them. Even though the Simplicity of the Indian authors receives a kind of disdainful and cold response by the academics, the style of their writing triggers the young adults similar to their western equals. The literature that straight affect to the young generation much to these writers. The views and values of the adult and young worlds are diverse or they are supposed inversely in the two creative worlds. It cannot be decided that the one fails and the other flourishes.

Psychoanalytical aspect of the novel

Human psychology is connected with the hidden desires and unexpressed feelings of a person. Therefore, it is important for us to understand the basic theories of psychology and its relation

to human behaviour. The famous Australian neurologist Sigmund Freud had introduced the term ‘Psychoanalytical Criticism’. In his theory Freud describes how the unconscious part of our mind comprises of numerous desires, sex drives, worries, thoughts, and sorrows which could not be expressed directly because those are considered as tabooed ideas in our society. Freud also suggests that people through the process of purgation, gain awareness about their present state of mind by carrying the content of the unconscious consciousness. This process can help a person find relief from psychological pain. At this stage, it is fairly pertinent to relate this thought process with some important characters in the novels of Preeti Shenoy. The protagonists of Preeti Shenoy’s two renowned novels, *Life is What You Make it* and *A Secret Wishlist* fight against the conflict between their unconscious mind and conscience. Ankita and Diksha experience the tremendous distressing conditions in their life for different reasons. Due to social constrain they suppress their past memories about their love and dreams. However, they could not repress their memories due to their unconscious motives. Even though the thoughts in unconscious are buried deeper in our mind, they somehow find ways to come out at any point of time.

Ankita’s Journey to Mental Asylum

Life is What You Make it is the story of a lovely and bright girl. In the book Preeti Shenoy not only expresses us a love story but she also shows us moral lessons. The story is of Ankita Sharma, a smart and cheerful college girl who eventually reaches into an asylum. She falls in love and regrettably faces bipolar disorder. The protagonist of the novel changes her life and overthrow this sickness with will power and fortitude. The entire story revolves around Abhishek and Ankita. It shows that love does not always give pleasure and sometimes, one has to face hard and discouraging situations which make human presence a worthless and despondent affair.

Love is an inescapable feeling of life. It is the ultimate emotion. It is primarily connected to humankind as well as nature. Nonetheless, sometimes it gives a lot of hitches in life and in this story the central character faces the same. The story begins with the heroine Ankita Sharma, who initially lives with her parents in Kerala but after the transfer of his father they all shift to Cochin from where she starts her graduation. While she was in Cochin, she was still in contact with her boyfriend Vaibhav through letters. But she did not imagine that her life would change entirely after that, and she did not know that she would like someone else. She encounters Abhishek who is a pleasant boy and adores her. But somewhere inside, she felt that she is betraying Vaibhav. Abhishek falls in love with Ankita deeply and expresses her strong feelings toward her. Though they are both serious about the relationship, they are completely different

from each other. Ankita was a bright student and want to accomplish something in life and her career is her priority. However, Abhishek wanted her to get married with him. Ankita being an ambitious girl rejects his marriage proposal:

“How could I promise? How could I tell that my dreams had grown beyond the town of Cochin? (Shenoy 76) And next day Abhishek commits suicide.

Somewhere, Ankita blames her own for his death, she thinks it’s her fault. After the incident Ankita returns to Bombay and completely pours herself into study. Ankita was changing every day and always worried about her study. her overreaction on every normal thing was abnormal. She worked the full night without any interruption and next day leave for college. Every time She recalls the last meeting with Abhishek. She desired to talk with him and yearns to hear his voice. Eventually her condition started getting worst day by day that she locks herself her in room and avoids people. Now her attractiveness, sense of humour and charisma has gone. There is only desperateness and gloom in her life. Her parents finally have to consult with psychiatrist when she tries suicide attempts twice. However, there was no change in her mental condition after taking the medicine. Finally, her parents decide to keep her under observation in the mental asylum.

Sigmund Freud rightly emphasizes in his psychoanalytic theory:

“The unconscious plays a major role in mental illness”. Every human being has some secreted memoirs that they don’t want to recall in their upcoming lives. People always try their best to hide these bitter memoirs due to feelings of culpability, worry, anxiety, discomfiture, agony, or embarrassment. In the complicated life of Ankita, as discoursed previously, she was trying but unable to forget her past. There were always certain occurrences which would recall her memories which she desperately wanted to keep behind. In spite of her desire to live a novel life and individuality, her past pulled her back from attaining those.

Psychological ailment is still stigmatized in today’s world. Physical sickness gets more consideration than psychological ailment. Concerning overall fitness, good health, and virtuous quality life, mental well-being is more and more recognized as vital. In addition, psychological security is essential for building and nourishing opportunities for being socialised, as well as for suitable connections with the society. The capability to achieve day-to-day tasks and make prudent choices are subject to mainly on one's psychological well-being. While speaking about and taking care of mental health problems could be thought-provoking for the disgrace surrounding it, this by no means one should disrespect the issue. In the interest of reducing this humiliation and confirm that people are relaxed discoursing their mental health complications, mental health mindfulness is vital. It's also required to understand that several people who fight

with psychological health problems are not denied the support they necessitate. The prime reason for this is, their near and dear ones avoid realizing their condition or because they could not avail the facilities they need. Minor to serious mental health situations can have a substantial impact on our lives. This story revolves around Ankita's catastrophe of mind and how she resumed her regular life. Ankita's story describes her struggle to find it difficult to live and then the way she learns to continue. Shenoy is trying to remove the disgrace of psychological illness through this masterpiece. the novel represents the postmodern obsession and suffering of the central character, Ankita, and broadly observes how the protagonist overpowered life's challenges and escaped from the clutches of her disturbing memories.

Representation of married women's condition in A Secret Wishlist

We proudly say that we live in the age of people having liberal and progressive mindset. The time we are in is labelled as contemporary, advanced, developed and considered as the best time ever. The entire world Today, talk about various revolutionary changes such as, women empowerment, gender equality, Financially independent women. It's not questionable that there is improvement in the condition of women but every coin has two sides. Similarly, this picture also has another dark and gloomy side which is portrayed effectively in A Secret Wishlist.

It's been observed that in the novel The Secret Wish List Preeti Shenoy discusses about women's identity and their individuality. She shows agony the women's heart enduring. When Diksha, the protagonist of the novel reflects about past life, she says to herself: "I have played the role of wife and mother to perfection. So much so that I have forgotten what I want as an individual. My identity is truly Sandeep's wife or Abhay's mother." (Shenoy 16)

In this novel, Shenoy epitomizes various damaging aspects of traditional Indian marriages. She describes the dull and monotonous lives of women after marriages. There are numerous limitations and boundaries set by their partner as well as other members of family and society. Just like a slave they have to serve their family unconditionally. Diksha is also in fury to perform the daily household chores keeping her own wishes and happiness aside for the sake of her family.

The story of Diksha moves from present to past and then again to present time. When frustrated Diksha remembers the years she spent before marriage, she recalls the memories with her friend Tanu and the first love of her life Ankit. However, for Diksha Life has transformed entirely after marriage. She was completely different person than who she used to be. Her presence in the lives of her husband and her son meant nothing to them and it is clearly observed when she tries put her feelings into words: "The pattern that a couple inadvertently sets in the early years

of marriage continues even later, unless a conscious effort is made to change it. That never happened in our case. And so, to this day, he and our nine-year-old son, Abhay, eat together and leave. I always eat later. The praise has stopped though. He does not utter even one word in appreciation these days.” (Shenoy 9)

However, Diksha’s life changes by an accidental turn of events when Tanu and Ankit re-enters her life. The Reunion with Ankit makes Diksha regain her confidence and contentment. She accepts that Ankit is the real person she needed in her life: “Ankit truly makes my life worth living. I know I want him more than anything else.” (Shenoy 212).

It is observed that unconscious is a way to attain pleasures and that’s how a person can fulfil its suppressed desires even in the time of miseries. As the unconscious portion of mind stores only repressed wishes or traumatized past, it enforces Diksha to achieve the objective of her unconscious mind. The unconscious mind never thinks or bothers about the social norms or tabooed ideas. In fact, it is entirely focused on attaining one’s hidden desires. Hence, Diksha being married and a mother could decide to follow her happiness which she finds with Ankit. However, in the end she decides to emancipate herself from the clutches of her doomed marriage and chooses to spend the remaining life with Ankit.

Conclusion

Preeti Shenoy always tries to induce positivity in youth through her works. Her novels are not just mere stories but discuss the condition of modern women. There is a representation of the challenges and predicaments they undergo affect the psyche of women. But Shenoy’s women depict the valour to face the challenges and overcome the psychological disruption.

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