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S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



Depiction of disabled characters in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is what you make it* and the Tamil

film 3 :A Psychological Perspective

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Abstract :

Preeti Shenoy is the most well-known novelist in the field of Indian writing in English.. Her works had been translated into many languages. In her novel, *Life is what you make it*, the protagonist Ankita suffers from mental illness. This novel is not only about bipolar disorder but also about a story of courage, determination and growing up. Life has its own twists and turns. But one can achieve success out of it if the person has faith, belief and perseverance. In this way even destiny can be changed. In the Tamil film -3 – the main character Ram is affected by bipolar disorder. The sufferings he has undergone due to the mental illness move the audience to the core. This paper aims to portray the lives of the disabled protagonists – Ankita in Preeti Shenoy's novel and Ram in the Tamil film -3 in the psychological perspective.

Key words :

Bipolar disorder, Mental illness, Destiny, Faith, Belief, Perseverance and Psychology.

Preeti Shenoy is the most well-known novelist in the field of Indian writing in English.. Her works had been translated into many languages. Her novel *Life is what you make it* deals with the mental agony of Ankita due to Bipolar disorder and her courage to overcome it.. This paper aims to portray the disabled characters in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is what you make it* and the Tamil film 3 in a Psychological Perspective.

The novel opens in the National Mental Health Institute. The main character of the novel. Ankita Sharma, the smart girl of 21 years old is brought there by her parents. She is unwilling to

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visit the hospital. She wants to shout in this way:”I am not like you...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.” When her turn comes, the doctor starts asking her questions. Then only the mystery of her life unfolds.

The flash back story of Ankita reveals the fact that she was friendly with Vaibhav, her childhood friend. Vaibhav has managed to get into the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, but not Ankita. Though she has got excellent grades, she is not allowed to do the same by her conservative parents. As a girl living in Kerala in 1989, she enters St. Agnes College for girls. At first she misses Vaibhav as a friend. But the exchange of the letters makes it clear that he is more than a friend to her. She eagerly waits for his letters. Later she starts fitting in at St. Agnes. She is a great student and excels in her extra-curricular activities. She is also an all-rounder adored by all. She is soon elected to be the Arts Club Secretary and she makes a lot of friends too. One of her friends Sanjana introduces Ankita to Abhishek. He is a stout boy good at playing guitar, wears glasses and ‘friendly and jovial’.

Once Ankita is left alone with Abhishek by her classmates following a cultural event. She is surprised to find out that she has enjoyed every second of her time with her new friend. She feels happy when he says: “I fell in love with you the moment I saw you...I have never felt like this about anyone before, trust me. I am crazy about you. Honestly”. They start loving and they go out for places. As her feelings for Abhishek start growing, her love for Vaibhav slowly starts fading away: “Vaibhav and I were still in touch but not with the intensity as earlier... It seemed as though Abhi and I had been through so much together and somewhere along the way, Vaibhav had been left far behind”.

Ankita’s family moves to Bombay due to the promotion of her father and for her pursuing of MBA program. When she says this to Abhishek, he replies “Pride has gone to your head”. So Ankita describes him “An emotional fool”. Then they break up and the very next day Abhishek’s body is found. It is discovered that he drowned due to excess consumption of alcohol in his body.



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It is suspected to be a suicide. The sudden demise of Abhishek makes her feel guilty. Her parents discover the love letters of them, burn the letters and scold her severely for them. So she is depressed a lot and get affected by Bipolar Disorder.

In the present life, Ankita talks 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 of it: “a euphoric one and a despairing one”. He explains to her that it is a disorder closely associated with creativity – something Ankita does excel at. After several months, she is able to recover from her depression and is capable of managing it.

Research has demonstrated that most emotional conditioning and habitual behaviors were set in place, in fact were ‘*programmed*’, very early in life by parents, peers, teachers, and the like. These basic beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes held by others are often simply accepted as “fact” and become the “truth.” In this way the recent research has shown that you are what you believe. What you perceive is what you believe. Your personal ‘*perception*’ of reality is determined by the beliefs you hold. Des Cartes also utters : ‘*Cogito Ergo Sum*’ which means ‘I think therefore I am.’ Ankita in the novel believes that she can overcome her fate through her courage and she also excels in it.

The film ‘3’ opens with Ram’s funeral and the flashback story reveals the past life of Ram and Janani when they are 12th standard students. Ram and Janani’s 3 stages of love – their attraction for each other during their school days, their love at college days and the relationship when they mature – are explored in this film. They fall in love and Janani has gone to the extent of burning her passport to go to the US only to stay with Ram and marry him. Despite the opposition of the elders, they get married. In the present Janani finds a suicide letter from Ram in his coat. He visits the house of his friend Senthil and asks him to reveal the secret of his suicide. Senthil tells her that she is leaving for the US and Kumaran, another friend of Ram, has got a job



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in Singapore. When Ram realizes that the closest friends of him are leaving, he develops Bipolar Disorder.

Due to the symptoms of Bipolar disorder, Ram kills Janani's pet dog and bashes Senthil's head against a steering wheel. He hallucinates a young girl and a priest on both of his sides. When Ram goes to the bedroom of Janani, he is forced to kill her or to commit suicide. He is much terrified and comes out. Then he writes a suicide note and now also the hallucinations continue. He picks up a knife and utters, "I love you Janani" and immediately slits his throat. The film ends with Janani crying a lot in grief as she comes to know about her husband's fate.

In Preethi Shenoy's novel and in the film '3' the protagonists suffer from extreme depression. In the film '3', Ram faces it pessimistically and commits suicide at the end. Whereas Ankita in the novel faces the worse situations in a bold way and even overcomes them in an optimistic way. Suicide is not the solution for all the problems. One can even change one's destiny with the strong determination of mind. To sum up with the lines of William James, "The greatest revolution in our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives".

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