



## Eerines of Human Psyche: Explicating Preeti Shenoy's *Wake Up, Life is Calling*

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### Abstract

Mental illness is regarded as a taboo in some societies and is rarely discussed in public. Mental illness is a broad term that encompasses a variety of disorders including depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and eating disorders. People who suffer from mental illness often experience stigma and discrimination which can make it difficult for them to seek help and support. Preeti Shenoy is a postmodern Indian writer. Shenoy has chosen a sensitive but less discussed topic; mental illness in her novels *Life is What You Make it* and *Wake Up, Life is Calling*. Ankita Sharma, the protagonist, is affected by bipolar disorder. Her life is shattered and she had to live in a mental asylum. She fought with bipolar disorder and was taunted by the trauma of her past, which caused a sudden turn of events and a plunge into emotional chaos. The novel brings out the paranoid thoughts, bipolar episodes of her life, and how she has escaped from the clutches of her past and regrets. The aim of the study is to find the paranoia and psychological trauma in Preeti Shenoy's select work. This paper also attempts to depict how one can change their life with strong determination and willpower.

Keywords: Paranoia, trauma, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, psychosis, mental health.

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### 1. Introduction

Mental illness is still stigmatized in many societies. Physical illness receives more attention than mental illness does. In terms of general health, well-being, and quality of life, mental health is increasingly acknowledged as crucial. In addition, mental well-being is necessary for building and sustaining supportive social networks as well as for appropriate interactions with the environment. The ability to manage daily challenges and make wise decisions and choices depends significantly on one's mental health. Although talking about and getting care for mental health issues might be challenging due to the stigma surrounding them, this does not mean one should disregard the problem. In order to lessen stigma and ensure that people feel comfortable discussing their mental health difficulties, mental health awareness is crucial. It's also necessary to keep in mind that many people who struggle with mental health difficulties don't get the assistance they require. This can be because their loved ones don't understand them or because they can't get the services they require. Mild to severe mental health conditions can have a significant influence on our lives.

Preeti Shenoy is a versatile postmodern writer. Shenoy is a self-taught artist, novelist, and writer from India. She is among the best-selling authors in India, with fifteen bestsellers to her credit. Shenoy uses her characters to exhibit the ups and downs of life. Her stories are based on reality, and as a result, her characters are very similar to regular people. Her writings address pertinent topics including mental health, gender inequality, the precarious state of women, the empowerment of depressed women, the dynamics of relationships, and the difficulties experienced by young adults.

The novel *Wake Up, Life is Calling* centres on Ankita's holocaust of mind and how she came back to her normal life. Ankita's narrative describes how she finds it hard to live and later how she finds a way to survive. Shenoy is eradicating the stigma of mental illness through the publication of her books. Ankita desires a new beginning and a new life. She dropped her MBA classes and enrolled in a new course in creative writing. The study emphasizes the postmodern paranoia and trauma of the main character, Ankita, and extensively examines how the heroine overcame life's challenges and broke free from the grip of her unsettling past.

Paranoia is influenced by anxiety, which produces irrational feelings. Schizophrenia, tantrums, depression, and exasperation are characteristics of paranoia. The word "paranoia" is Greek in origin and means "madness". It is a psychological condition. Shenoy's novel's main themes centre on the suffering of women and the empowerment of depressed women.

Ankita suffers from paranoia. In Preeti Shenoy's *Wake Up, Life is Calling*, Ankita says, "There is so much troubling me. I struggle every day to control my thoughts. I am fighting a daily battle with my mind" (Shenoy 2019: 128). Preeti Shenoy gives substantiation to the theories of postmodern paranoia. She highlights the excruciating suffering Ankita has as a result of her bipolar disorder. Azra Tahassum states "bipolar syndrome is a kind of mood disorder, characterized by fluctuations in a person's emotions, energy, and ability to function throughout the day" (2020:1). It is a mental ailment that results in a shifting of the mood of a person. For such a person, living becomes a challenging task to move on. It was so hard for Ankita to put her memories behind her and move on. She was struggling with herself. She had no idea where her life was going. She gradually began to lose all hope. She regrets some events from her manic periods and is trapped in her past memories. Even though she tried to keep those memories away or compartmentalize them in a room of her heart that she would never open, they continued to resurface in her life, making it extremely difficult for her to find a solution. She learned that the past cannot be locked or sealed; it always finds a way to resurface in the present. The only way one can deal with the problems of the past and regrets is through acceptance. She engaged in risky behaviour. From the library store, she took a book that was a suicide instruction manual. She was least worried about the future repercussions. She continued to read the book till late at night. In addition, she even studied them thoroughly. As Joseph exposed her mental anguish during the party, she had used a suicide technique from the text. Depressed, Ankita makes an attempt at suicide. She learns how to commit suicide from the book, which is a suicide manual, and thinks deeply about each technique. She had no control over her actions or thoughts, and she was unaware of what she was doing. Those who suffer from paranoia won't be able to control their actions.

Ankita's mind is overflowing with negative ideas. Her parents and Abhishek shatter her aspirations. Ankita hopes to acquire a new identity so she can start over. Thought has the power to improve and degrade things in life. Ankita experienced numerous worries and anxieties. Her only desire was to lead an ordinary life. She didn't want a perfect life; she just wanted an ordinary life without any complications, one that was simple and uncomplicated. Everything she did was evaluated on a scale of normalcy. She makes sure that everything she says and does seems natural. Her thoughts were her greatest foe. "My life was about fighting my thoughts. Everyday" (Preeti Shenoy, *Wake Up, Life is Calling*. 2019: 95). She believes that there was no room for joy in her life because it was entirely devoted to grieving. She learns that it is very difficult for her to live like this without having any control over her thoughts. She engages in mental combat. She struggles daily to keep her thoughts under control, and there are a lot of things keeping her from leading a peaceful life. She had self-doubt and saw herself as worthless.

Human beings cannot escape from relationships. It is the cornerstone of human existence. Healthy relationships are a requisite for a healthy existence, and any breakdown in these ties can result in emotional distress. It might possibly result in an outbreak of psychological distress. Ankita struggled to concentrate on anything. She was constantly informed that she was a failure by the taunting voice inside her heart. Even her sleep was not restful. No matter what she did, she was unable to close her eyes. She didn't get enough sleep. She learns about the effects of sleep deprivation from a book on sleep disorders. She discovered the root of the problem but was unable to resolve it.

According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the unconscious plays a major role in mental illness (Freud, 2014). Every individual has some hidden memories that they have tried to forget at some point in their lives. One may try to conceal these memories due to feelings of guilt, anxiety, fear, embarrassment, pain, or discomfort.

Trauma is a physical or psychological injury caused by shock, violence, or an unexpected event. Trauma usually results from adverse life experiences that devastate an individual's capacity to cope with a threat they may be faced with (van der Kolk, 1996). Caruth writes in *Unclaimed Experience*, that 'trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature-the way it is precisely not known in the first instance- returns to haunt the survivor later on'(Caruth 4). There are initial reactions to these terrible events. The long-term reactions beyond the initial reactions of shock and denial include unpredictable emotions and flashbacks, which will lead to strained relationships and also to physical symptoms like headaches and nausea. The sufferer will suddenly go out of control and feel that he or she has lost complete control over their emotions. Then the memories of those terrible events will continue to haunt and disturb them, making them experience the same distressing and disturbing emotions again. In the case of relationships, you will begin to recoil, and the relationship will be strained. One will begin to feel the pain, even if it is not a physical trauma.

In the case of Ankita, as discussed earlier, she was finding it difficult to deal with her past. Certain instances would remind her of her past and bring back the memories that she tried to hide deep inside. Even though she wished to have a new life and identity, her past pulled her back from having those. Though all she wanted was to forget her past, destiny had other plans

for her. The situation worsened as people from her past began to reappear in her present. When she was with Vaibhav, she couldn't help but think of Abhi. She was often reminded of visiting psychiatrists and her time at NMHI whenever her parents discussed doctors or medications. She was initially even disturbed by Vaibhav consistently turning up. When Joseph returned, she became much more upset. He brought up memories of her manic time. She wasn't prepared to confront him. Ankita recalls all that has taken place up to this point. She constantly wants to leave her past behind, but she is unaware that it haunts us wherever we go. "Memories resurfaced, rising in waves, submerging me... images flashed in front of my eyes" (Shenoy 2019: 106).

Ankita tries to commit suicide out of depression. From the book, which was a suicide manual, she learned ways to commit suicide and had deep thoughts on each method. She does not know what she was doing and had no control over what she was doing and thinking. Someone who is affected by paranoia won't know what they are doing (Freud, 2014).

An extravagant self-esteem is seen later in Ankita. She becomes very passionate about writing. She was able to process her traumatic experiences and organize her thoughts through writing. She made note of her thoughts and gave the book the title "Life's Little Notes." Her writing helped her explore and express her pain and agony. Life is always unexpected. No matter how hard you have worked, life always proceeds in its own way. Life always has a way of doing things. Ankita talks about life and how she discovers that even the little things matter. She understands that life is a great teacher, and it will give you exams but not the syllabus. It is up to an individual to set their own lessons.

Ankita was totally helpless. Nothing went as she had anticipated, and her hope was ebbing away. She had no idea where her life was leading. She was in desperate need of a person who could understand her. But people around her failed to know what she was going through. The words "mental patient" and "psycho bitch" nearly broke her (154), but she was able to shrink them, place them in balloons, and send them away as part of the exercise instructed by Mrs. Hayden, her lecturer. Afterwards, she received some significant support and assistance from those nearby. She felt wonderful and alive. Life was calling her, and she was awake.

The reader can see how Ankita, the main character, was able to break free from the bonds of her past and regrets throughout the course of the book, which also explores aspects of postmodern trauma and paranoia. Her greatest enemy, the mind, became her closest friend. From her life, she had learned that compartmentalizing memories deep inside one's heart or locking them would never take the past and its influences away from life. The only way to solve the problem or escape from the clutches of one's past and mistakes is through acceptance. Only by acknowledging one's past and mistakes one can live a better and more peaceful life. Here, all her sufferings made her life like heaven. Ankita validates, "I loved it all! It was my own personal slice of heaven" (Shenoy 2019: 4). The novel ends with an epilogue, where a new Ankita is seen, who is confident and resilient enough to handle the challenges in her life. She is no longer affected by her past and her mistakes. Ankita asserts that every error one makes, strengthens them. These setbacks are the life lessons that actually helps one to grow; that is, one can only improve by learning from our mistakes. She is happy about everything that has happened to her. She had fought really hard, but she dealt with it, and all these things made her stronger.

## 2. Conclusion

People should take the time to understand, address, and manage our mental health if one want to live happy, healthy, and productive lives. People who are confident in themselves are better able to cope with the stresses of daily life and maintain their mental health. Both society and one's psyche play vital roles in balancing one's psyche. A person experiencing a traumatic event must first learn to manage the emotional stress of the experience. Once they have developed coping mechanisms, they may begin to look at the trauma and set up plans to deal with any lingering effects. This can be accomplished in numerous ways, including seeking professional assistance, relying on a network of family and friends for support, developing self-forgiveness, and partaking in activities that keep one's mind off the trauma. Self-care techniques can also be learned in order to move forward and cultivate a more optimistic attitude in life. Anyone suffering from trauma or any other mental condition should understand that their feelings are normal. There is nothing abnormal about these feelings. As the character Ankita in the novel shows, every individual can change their destiny with courage, determination, and dedication.

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