



Struggle For Identity And Freedom: A Study Of Women In Preeti Shenoy's It Happens For A Reason

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Abstract:

Preeti Shenoy, one of the most recent and prominent Indian women writers effectively portrays the issues of women and their inner trauma. Her contribution towards women empowerment and the realistic depiction of their lives is undeniable. She boldly depicts and explicitly challenges the male domination and the pressures experienced by the women in the society. She proves herself as a responsible social reformer through her writings and strives to establish gender equality even in the so-called developed, scientifically advanced modern world. Most of the women's lives are still vulnerable and conservative when compared with few modern women in the society. Women are still not capable to express their sexual desire and their own opinions regarding their lives. But now, women have been slowly trying to stand for their self without any discrimination and inequality. The women in the past struggled in their own way and now women are still struggling to get freedom from patriarchal domination. Their issues are same but the experiences they face are totally different from one another. Shenoy's, It Happens for a Reason realistically depicts the sufferings of women. This paper focuses on the need and the importance of women emancipation and the inequalities they face both in their families and in the society.

Keywords: Inner trauma, Women empowerment, Gender equality, Gender discrimination, patriarchal domination.

Preeti Shenoy is one of the most prominent writers who constantly projects the concepts of liberty and inequality of women through her fictional and non-fictional works. Her novels deal with her own experiences as well as the experiences of many people in the society. The Protagonists of her novels are mostly depicted as bold and beautiful women who daringly challenge society with their strength. They are bold in expressing their opinions be it mental or sexual without any regret in their life. They do not hesitate or suppress their feelings instead they stand for their rights in the society. They play an important role in the family and society by making them equal to their male counterparts both mentally and financially.

Shenoy's sixth novel *It Happens for a Reason* (2014) deals with love, betrayal, true friendship and making choices in life. It portrays the cause of emancipated women in society. Vipasha, a liberated woman decides her life on her own by marrying a person of her choice. She boldly denies the traditional marriage customs and gives birth to a baby out of their love. She takes a step ahead with a courageous heart and faces the male dominated society with her mental strength. The way she portrays herself makes her feel confident and independent among the dominated people in the patriarchal society.

The novel starts with the conversation between Vipasha @ Vee, a young, beautiful and single 34 years old and her son Aryan; they discuss her son's mock test. Vipasha is Paw-factor where she looks after the dogs as a dog sitter and works in a gym as a trainer. Another character that shows up in the novel is Jamu Kaka, who is the general caretaker and he looks after the dogs as he has been with her since 21-year-old. Vee always remarks about Suchi and Prakash as they are the pillars of her life. She considers Suchi as her soul sister.

In the novel, Suchi is the one who often tries to set Vipasha with someone for Vee's better future. She tries to hook up Vee with her husband's friend Nimish for her friend's better life. The story takes up a change as the life of Vee changes after her meeting with Nimish at a dinner party. While getting ready for a dinner party Vee does not get excited instead, she meets Nimish and has a conversation. Meanwhile she gets a call from Ramu Kaka regarding an emergency at Paw factor. When she gets back home, she found that two of her dogs were dead and another were in bad condition then a new character Dr. Saurabh appears who is a veterinary. Meanwhile Jamu Kaka feels guilty of the incident as he is one of the care taker and thinks that lizard might have fallen in the food that have been cooked by him which is fed

to the dogs. Somehow other dogs were rescued but Vee faced a terrible experience from Mehra, one of the owners of the dogs. Mehara brings the media to make Vee feel guilty of her carelessness meanwhile the other owner does not bother about the incident. She felt that something is hooking her up to the problems as she could smell of the arrogance. As she gets her necropsy report, she made up her mind that the institution which told her was right.

Vee confirms that Damodar Shinde is her neighbour who poisoned the dogs. She could not handle her pressures and anger towards him. Vee was helpless as she does not have any evidence towards the revengeful Damodar. She cannot help herself to file a case against him as she was left with empty hands. She could not file an FIR against him as she was helpless and lost hope towards the evidence that has to be gathered. After facing the media that has been brought by Mehara whose dog died because of the poison that has been induced in the dog's food. Vee returns home with a heavy heart as she narrates the story of her past life to Saurabh. She recreates her past with filling up her memorable moments with her special persons in her life. Vipasha tells how she met Suchi in her boarding school in Kodaikanal. Vee also talks about her aunt who resides in Bangalore. She tells him that she enjoys living in her aunt's house as she always fantasizes about living in that house and how she ended up herself in owing Paw-factor.

The narration next turns towards her lover Ankush to whom she fell in love and she even narrates about her lifelong friend Manav. She boldly tells Saurabh that she fell in love with Anukush as she totally gave herself to him. She made love with Anukush and this brought a drastic change in her life. The life of an

eighteen years old changes upside down as she gets pregnant. The life around Vee totally takes a big turn as Anukush Nineteen Years old boy becomes a father of a child.

Vee decided to end up cutting ties with her family and the father of her child Ankush. She even tells Saurabh that she ended up her modeling career as she was in her peaks. She decided to take up a role as a mother than to a modeling star in the society. She was left helpless for having the child by her own family and her lover Ankush and tells that how she started a Paw-Factor. She managed to start a Paw-Factor with the support of her father, Suchi's Mother, Manav and Suchi. She shares her early days of her life which went very pitiful as she managed to move on for the sake of her son Aryan.

Vee also mentions how Manav showed up the title of the novel as Manav had sent a card to Vee which says "It Happens For A Reason". The present life of Vee continues in the 15th chapter. She becomes the headline of the society as the accident of her dog's death made her close the Paw-Factor and work in a gym as a trainer. After a few days Vee develops a feeling for Dr. Saurab, the quirky vet. But all her feelings ended up because of his Asperger's syndrome. She puts an end to all the love and affection towards Saurabh as she finds a hopeless thing in her life. Things went worse before it started as the feelings were not intimate. After ten long years Vee gets a mail from Manav which made her feel the shock as her son searching for his father all these days. He wanted to know the email id of his father as Manav and Ankush were friends long back. When Vee enquires about this to her son Aryan things gets into lime light.

Aryan soon manages to meet up with his father Ankush through the internet and surprisingly he gets a mail from his dad. The life of Aryan, Ankush and Vipasha changes with the presence of the new man for whom Vee was left homeless. Meanwhile Aryan gets to have a conversation with his father Anksuh where both exchange their feelings of their love towards the family. Ankush even tells Aryan that he will be sending tickets for Vee and Arayan to meet him up in Australia. And surprises him by saying that he may visit Bangalore next week.

Vee does not leave her ego and thus decides to plan a date with Nimish as she does not want to meet Ankush. But the arrival of Ankush made Vee to cancel her date with Nimish as he arrived early in the morning. Vee's plan for not meeting Ankush goes in vain as she met with an accident at gym. Meanwhile Ankush leaves for Bangalore for some emergency as he leaves a mail to Aryan which is being intimated by Aryan to his mother Vipasha. Aryan goes to a school trip to Himachal Pradesh and Ankush goes to Bangalore to drop Aryan at school. After a few days they get news saying that the students who have gone on the trip have been washed away by floods. Ankush and Vee decide to go to the place where the incident took place. Meanwhile they both develop a feeling towards each other. When they reach the place of Aryan's accidents, they could not find him and suddenly Vee gets a call from an unknown number where Aryan talks and intimates that he was rescued by the villagers and that he is safe.

At the end they make a family of three where Aryan goes abroad for higher studies and Vipasha completes her doctoral degree in Veterinary Medicines at university of Queensland. Vipasha, being an educated woman consciously and boldly chooses her path without any regret. She rises above gender discrimination and clearly states her own point of view by ignoring all the societal norms created by the patriarchal society. The decision she takes, makes her experience the true reality and the true minds of her own family as she is seen as a odd person moving ahead in her life. The pressure she undergoes does not stop her from achieving her desires, instead she grows stronger to face the societal challenges. She is clear to her conscious and much more possessive about her love: I do want to share the rest of my life with someone, but only if he is the right guy. I definitely don't want a guy just for the sake of it... (P 9)

She rediscovers herself from all obligations both physically and mentally. She lives with her son Aryan boldly without depending on anyone in the patriarchal society. Vipasha mostly discusses her ideas with

her friend Suchi. She emphasizes that the decisions made by Vipasha will be clearly viewed as bad ones, since they do not comply with the existing male-dominated societal norms. The decisions and the ideas she make out will be viewed as unethical in the eyes of male-dominated society. Vipasha and her friend Suchi exchange a few dialogues in this context- We all crave our own paths, Suchi, and I have chosen mine. A path where you have been thrown away a promising career, dropped out of college, have a baby, and have no visible job prospects. (P 138)

Vipasha boldly states that her decisions are very important to her and she is fully aware of how she is going to manage her own life. She is ready to face the aftermath of her unconventional choices. She does not take a step back, instead she fights for an identity. She does not seek any sympathy from anyone and she does not want to be dependent on anyone. She clearly tells that the choices she has made may go wrong but the choices were all her own. She wants to follow her heart and she wants to stick on to the choices she makes till the end. When she wants to make her own decisions about her life, Vipasha is suppressed by the family. When she decides to stay away from marital pressures, she is discriminated and condemned for her actions since they are against the societal norms. Vipasha creates a standard in her actions as she spills out her words confidently though it may seem arrogance to others. Vipasha stands still with her own choices and leads her life with a strong independent mind without anyone's support to prove herself in the society.

Preeti Shenoy has been successful in portraying a 'New Woman' in her novel *It Happens For a Reason*. Through the character of Vipasha, meaning a bold woman, Preeti portrays a girl who chooses an unconventional path and is also ready to face the consequences of her actions. She feels proud in living an independent life as she earns by herself and supports her family with no one else to support her financially. Vipasha's life changes at the end because of her son's accident and this creates a path to reunite her with her husband Ankush. Later Aryan, Ankush and Vipasha live as a family with individual identities. Vipasha later qualifies herself as a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine whereas Aryan continues his studies in Cambridge University.

The novel *It Happens for a Reason*, is a representative work of art which hails woman's independence. The protagonist is depicted as a strong-willed character who leads a contrasting life against the backdrop of societal prejudices that conspire to subjugate women on the basis of their adherence to norms. In Shenoy's novel, the protagonist is not much concerned about offering any explanation for her predicament or to prove her point in relation to the probing moral questions of the society. In today's modern society, a woman who is independent in her thinking does not fall into the orthodox circle instead she takes a step ahead in helping others and willing to lead her life on her own by designing her life to the best by creating a space for herself in the patriarchal society.

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