

Navigating Emotional Turmoil: A Critical Analysis of Hope and Healing in Preeti Shenoy's *Work Life is what you make it* *Wake up life is calling*

D.RenitaShirley, Ph.D. Research Scholar, English(FT),Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women,Tirupur,Tamil Nadu,India.

Dr.T.Dhanalakshmi, Assistant Professor,Tiruppur Kumaran College for Women,Tirupur,Tamil Nadu,India.

Abstract

This paper critically analyzes Preeti Shenoy's novels **Life is What You Make It** and **Wake Up, Life is Calling**, focusing on their nuanced exploration of mental health, emotional resilience, and the transformative power of hope. Through the protagonists' struggles with depression, anxiety, and societal expectations, Shenoy portrays the psychological turmoil many individuals face and the paths they carve toward healing and self-discovery. The analysis highlights how Shenoy's characters navigate internal conflicts and external pressures, emphasizing the roles of introspection, therapy, and spirituality in the recovery process. By examining character development, narrative structure, and thematic elements, this study demonstrates how adversity catalyzes growth and empowerment. Ultimately, both novels convey a powerful message of resilience, hope, and the importance of self-awareness in overcoming life's challenges, making them significant contributions to contemporary Indian literature addressing mental health. The significance of hope and individual action in the healing process is emphasized throughout the book. Similar to this, the protagonist of *Wake Up, Life is Calling* sets out on a quest for self-discovery amid interpersonal and professional problems, finding solace via reflection, connections, and the search for purpose in her life. *Wake Up, Life is Calling* and *Life is What You Make It* are compelling stories that highlight the importance of hope, introspection, and emotional fortitude in overcoming adversity.

Keywords: Emotional Turmoil, mental health, self-discovery, societal expectations

In Preeti Shenoy's *Wake Up, Life is Calling* and *Life is What You Make It*, the protagonists' travels revolve around their mental health and emotional challenges. Shenoy uses her characters to explore a range of complicated emotional landscapes, bringing attention to psychological issues that many people deal with yet frequently keep quiet about. Mental health is not only a supporting character but also a major issue in these novels, which show the way mental upheaval affects a person's life and the way they deal and tackle with it.

The main character in *Life is What You Make It*, Ankita, starts off as a prosperous young lady with a bright future. But when her life descends into despair, the novel's main focus shifts to her emotional problems. Shenoy skillfully captures the internal struggle associated with mental health conditions, including feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, and worthlessness, through Ankita's story. "Hope is the light that guides you out of the tunnel, and healing is the journey you take one step at a time" (*WPLIC* 143). Social pressure to uphold perfection and external achievement exacerbates Ankita's struggle with depression. "There is nothing worse than being trapped in your mind, in a web of despair where every door you try leads to darkness" (*LIWYMI* 89). Since Ankita can only heal when she opens up and confronts the depth of her problems, this portrayal emphasizes the significance of identifying mental health concerns and getting aid from the external world.

The protagonist's emotional problems in *Wake Up, Life is Calling* are depicted via the prisms of personal loss, career unhappiness, and the pursuit of meaning. Similar to Ankita, the protagonist goes through a profound emotional crisis, but this time it is brought on by a persistent sense of unfulfillment, burnout, and the strain of juggling one's own desires with those of others.

Both novels show that the characters' emotional problems are greatly exacerbated by societal expectations. The "perfect" route for women is determined by society, and Ankita must balance work success with personal satisfaction and appearance in *Life is What You Make It*. Her mental health problems generally start as a result of this expectation, which frequently causes self-doubt and increased emotional weight. Similar to this, the protagonist in *Wake Up, Life is Calling* feels inadequate because of the way society defines happiness and success, which exacerbates his emotional problems.

The significance of getting aid and taking care of oneself is one of the main topics in these novels. Shenoy highlights via the characters' travels that recovery is impossible without facing the emotional challenges head-on. Ankita's ultimate choice to go to therapy in *Life is What You Make It* represents her first step toward healing and highlights the importance of expert assistance in managing mental health. The idea that self-care and self-awareness are crucial for

emotional well-being is reinforced in *Wake Up, Life is Calling*, where the protagonist's emotional rehabilitation entails escaping unhealthy patterns and pursuing personal hobbies.

The novels highlight the strength of optimism and resiliency even as they delve deeply into emotional pain. Although the protagonists' journeys are paved with obstacles and the journey through mental health crises is not linear, the novels ultimately highlight the strength of recovery and optimism.

Ankita is a young lady who must conform to an idealized definition of femininity while juggling academic success, a bright future, and a satisfying personal life. She starts to doubt her value and skills as a result of these outside forces colliding with her inner wants and emotional challenges. Her descent into despair is exacerbated by the ongoing pressure to be flawless and the stigma associated with mental illness. Her experience of this emotional upheaval emphasizes the negative consequences of unachievable social standards and the significance of escaping them in order to obtain self-acceptance and healing. "Life is truly what you make it. It is all about the choices you make and the chances you take". (*LIWYMI* 12)

Similar to this, the protagonist of *Wake Up, Life is Calling* is greatly impacted by societal expectations regarding personal accomplishment, financial security, and professional success. The protagonist of this novel feels the pressure to perform well and reach outward standards of success as she navigates the hectic world of contemporary work.

The assumption that women should perform traditional gender roles is a significant component of the social pressure that Shenoy examines. In *Life is What You Make It*, social perceptions about what it means to be a "successful" woman exacerbate Ankita's emotional and psychological problems. "Sometimes you need to lose yourself to find what truly matters. Only in the quiet can you hear the voice of your heart" (*WULIC* 36). Despite the fact that these roles are frequently idealized in society, they put a lot of pressure on women to live up to unattainable ideals. The detrimental impacts of strict gender standards are illustrated by Ankita's opposition to these roles and her struggle to live up to the expectations placed on her, which further exacerbates her feelings of failure and loneliness.

The heroes' battle to reconcile their true selves with the expectations of others is among the most captivating elements of both novels. Ankita's internal struggle between her emotional needs and her goals in *Life is What You Make It* causes a big gap between her wishes and social constraints. She starts to doubt whether her accomplishments are genuinely her own or the product of outside forces as she deals with mental health issues. The protagonist of *Wake Up, Life is Calling* sets out on a quest for self-discovery after discovering that his pursuit of the socially acceptable standards of success has diverted him from his own interests and aspirations.

According to Shenoy, genuine emotional recovery can only take place when people recognize the social constraints they encounter and make the deliberate decision to overcome them in order to pursue their own pleasure.

Preeti Shenoy offers a moving reflection on the difficulties of living in a world full of strict conventions and outside demands in *Life is What You Make It* and *Wake Up, Life is Calling*, which examines societal expectations and personal concerns. "We live in a world full of people who want to tell us". (Chatterjee, 2021, p. 143) "In Shenoy's fiction, adversity becomes a catalyst for personal growth, with characters finding strength not despite their struggles but because of them". The characters in both novels eventually experience a sense of empowerment and independence by defying social expectations and accepting who they really are, demonstrating the transformational potential of emotional fortitude and self-realization.

Ankita's battle with mental illness and depression serves as a springboard for her spiritual awakening in *Life is What You Make It*. (Nair, 2018, p. 88) "Spirituality in Shenoy's novels is not a retreat from reality but a journey toward inner peace, enabling her characters to cope with life's uncertainties". Ankita delves inward and turns to spirituality for comfort as she confronts the depths of her inner suffering. This spiritual journey encompasses more than just religious activities; it also entails a more profound pursuit of meaning and purpose. According to the novel, spirituality is a personal journey that enables people to connect with something bigger than themselves, providing solace and understanding in times of distress rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

The main character in *Wake Up, Life is Calling* has a similar spiritual awakening as a reaction to his emotional unhappiness and disgust with social norms. A greater awareness of life's transience and the value of leading a genuine life are hallmarks of his spiritual awakening. The book emphasizes that spirituality may act as a compass, pointing people back to their genuine selves when they become sidetracked by the desire for flimsy success.

In *Life is What You Make It* the foundation of Ankita's healing process is introspection. She is forced to face the decisions she has made and the mental suffering she has been avoiding while she battles her despair. Ankita gains an understanding of the underlying causes of her pain through reflection, which are not just external but also closely related to her own anxieties, insecurities, and unmet goals. The book indicates that introspection can yield the understanding required to get past one's own obstacles.

Both books emphasize the importance of spirituality in healing, even if each character experiences it in a different way. Ankita's recovery from mental illness is entwined with her spiritual journey in *Life is What You Make It*, which gives her a sense of purpose and serenity. It enhances her medical care by assisting her in finding equilibrium and acceptance..

By the time her voyage is over, Ankita has grown stronger and more self-aware. (Kumar, 2019, p. 67) "Shenoy's works often highlight resilience as a recurring theme, showcasing characters who confront their

vulnerabilities and emerge stronger, signaling hope for individuals facing similar struggles”. She learns resilience and self-compassion from her experience with mental illness, which becomes a defining feature of who she is. The book ends on a positive note by highlighting the potential for success in spite of life's obstacles.

The universality of emotional difficulties and the transformational power of healing are emphasized in both books. They stress the value of self-awareness, resilience, and the courage to face one's weaknesses. The protagonists' challenges and recovery strategies are where the main differences can be found. In *Life is What You Make It*, Ankita's path is more structured and tackles the intricacies of mental health from a clinical standpoint. *Wake Up, Life is Calling*, on the other hand, offers a more contemplative and spiritual viewpoint on healing by emphasizing existential issues and the pursuit of personal fulfillment.

These stories highlight the fact that healing is a very individualized journey impacted by one's experiences, decisions, and support networks rather than a straight line. By highlighting the strength of optimism, self-awareness, and resilience, Shenoy's writings serve as a reminder to readers that healing calls for bravery, flexibility, and the readiness to face one's weaknesses. In the end, these books encourage readers to face their own difficulties with the knowledge that, even the most difficult situations, recovery and development are always achievable.

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