

# Preeti Shenoy's *Wake Up, Life is Calling*: A Study of Psychological Trauma

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**Abstract:** The research paper analyses psychological trauma and the process of emotional recovery in *Wake Up, Life is Calling* by Preeti Shenoy through the lens of Psychological Trauma theory. The study focuses on the protagonist named Ankita Sharma, who struggles with the haunting memories of her past, mental illness, fear, guilt, and emotional instability while attempting to rebuild her life as well. The research explores how trauma influences an individual's thoughts, relationships, behaviour, and perception of self. By using textual analysis and secondary sources, the paper examines the themes of mental health, depression, parental care, friendship, hope, love, betrayal, and self-transformation represented in the novel. The study highlights how Ankita Sharma gradually overcomes her traumatic experiences through positive thinking, emotional support, self-realization, and inner strength. The character of Mrs. Hayden serves as an important source of inspiration in Ankita's life towards healing and psychological recovery. The novel also emphasizes the importance of kindness, open mindedness, and meaningful human relationships in overcoming mental struggles. Furthermore, the research attempts to create awareness about the significance of mental health and the social stigma associated with psychological disorders. The paper argues that positive thinking and emotional resilience play a vital role in mending inner peace and transforming one's life. The research concludes that psychological trauma can deeply affect an individual's normal life, yet hope, faith, self-belief and determination can help one emerge stronger from emotional suffering.

**Index Terms** - Psychological Trauma, Mental Health, Positive Thinking, Inner Peace, Emotional Recovery, Bipolar Disorder, Contemporary Indian Fiction

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Indian English literature is now a reality, which cannot be ignored. During the recent decades, it has attracted a widespread interest both in India and abroad. In fact, India is the third largest producer of the novels after USA and UK. What began as a “hot-house plant” has now attained a luxuriant growth, branching off in several directions. Indian novels, specifically, have grown considerably in bulk variety, and maturity. The development of Indian novels follows certain definite patterns, and it is not difficult to trace its gradual progression from the imitative stage to the realistic to the Psychological to the experimental stage. India being the land of diversity with so many languages, religions, races, and cultures, gives the writers an enormous liberty to deal with various themes. Researching on the growth and development of Indian English novel, the 1980s occupy a unique position. During this period, some very promising women novelists published their first works and also earned unheard of honours and distinctions not only in India but also in abroad. The works by these Indian women novelists, like third generation women novelists, speak eloquently about their originality and unprecedented inventiveness. Moreover, in the recent times they have excelled in all areas of literature and achieved global recognition. Expressing the role and position of women through their writings

in English, they have enlightened the literature with its quality and vividness. The Indian women writers have made the most remarkable contribution to the sphere of fiction. Truly, their writings represent the culture, history, and all the variants necessary for the enrichment of the literature worldwide. The voice of Indian women writers also dealt with historical, cultural, philosophical and much more basing their themes around mankind. The Indian women writers have concentrated their themes around sociological, diasporic elements, feminine subjects, science and technologies, explorative writings, and much more.

- **Preeti Shenoy**

Preeti Shenoy (21st Dec 1971) who lives in Bangalore, is a bestselling author, blogger, TEDx speaker, artist and poet. She induces a positive spirit through her works. She has an impeccable sense of carrying a story and keeps it straight and simple. Preeti Shenoy is a very vibrant name in the world of Indian youth and her novels, poems and non-fictional works have attracted much critical attention. She delves into the mysterious psyche of her characters and flawlessly pictures it. Her books have been widely read throughout the country. Her writings invariably manifest her excellent story telling skill. Her keenly observant mind produces stories which one can relate it to their life. Her language is simple and her narration is refreshing. Shenoy created herself a blog in October 2006. In 2007 she wrote a couple of articles for Metro Scan, a local magazine and she was invited to start contributing regularly to the newspaper Times of India and she wrote articles for Reader's Digest "Joy"(2008). She has authored 13 novels, and her name always figures at the top of Amazon's bestsellers list. Being a Contemporary Writer, she has influenced a lot of youngsters by producing a positive vibration in their mind and continues to do so. She has represented India at international literature festivals, and her books are translated into many Indian languages, also into Turkish. She is also a motivational speaker, an artist, photographer and a fitness enthusiast and all her exciting experiences make it in some way or the other into the plots of her engaging books. Preeti Shenoy's debut, *34 Bubblegums and Candies*, her first novel, is the collection of narratives based on her real-life incidents that got launched in October 2008 and it became a national bestseller. Her three other bestselling novels, includes her second book, *Life is What You Make it*, hit the stands and became a bestseller – and it continues to be on the bestseller charts nine years on. It got selected as one of the all-time bestsellers of 2011 by the Times of India. Preeti Shenoy's third book *Tea for Two and A Piece of Cake* is a novel of women who named Nisha, Nisha's life is full of imperfections and also the extraordinary other side of finding true love in life is portrayed, and *The Secret Wish List* is the fourth novel, which is also about a woman deals with her battles against the realities of her life and true value of immortal life is explained. The fifth book, *The One You Cannot Have*, is heart touching as it shows the emotions of love and complex relationship. Her sixth book, *It Happens For a Reason*, is about a single mother facing problems due to two deeply effecting incidents that happened in her life. Preeti Shenoy's seventh novel, *Why We Love the Way We Do*, is a collection of essays based on the issues of life and relationship. Her eighth book, *It's All in the planets*, is a genre of romantic fiction. The ninth book, *A Hundred Little Flames*, is based on the concept of two totally different generations. *Love a Little Longer*, the tenth novel of Preeti Shenoy based on her life stories and fifty anecdotes. The eleventh book, *The Rule Breakers*, in based on the chronicles of a young woman who named Veda. The twelfth novel is *Wake Up, Life is Calling*. The latest novel of Preeti Shenoy is *When Love Came Calling*, is based on young love and discovery. As one of the top-selling women writers in English in the country, she's no stranger to bestseller lists. The first one to get to the list, her most popular second book, *Life is What You Make It*, was rejected by 39 publishers. She pressed on despite the discouraging response – “My poor Ankita, her story needs to be told” – and it was finally accepted by one who priced all he published at Rs.100. “He said my 95,000-word text can't be. I had to go back and trim it down to 60,000 words.” It has sold over half a million copies and been translated into several languages. *Life is What You Make it* and *Wake Up, Life is Calling*, the former's sequel, are a wonderful account on mental health awareness.

- **Thesis Statement**

The aim of the thesis is to apply Psychological Trauma theory to analyse the process of overcoming a traumatic experience as an attempt to mend and achieve inner peace.

- **Research Methodology**

Psychological Trauma is the chief literary tool used in this research paper. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), trauma is “an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster.” However, a person may experience trauma as a response to any event they find physically

or emotionally threatening or harmful. A traumatized person can feel a range of emotions immediately after the event and also for a long term. They may feel overwhelmed, helpless, shocked, or have difficulty processing their experiences. Psychological trauma is a response to an event that a person finds highly stressful. Psychological trauma, its representation in language, and the role of memory in shaping individual and cultural identities are the central concerns that define the field of trauma studies. Psychoanalytic theories on trauma paired with additional theoretical frameworks such as post structural, sociocultural, and postcolonial theory form the basis of criticism that interprets representations of an extreme experience and its effects upon identity and memory. The concept of trauma, itself a source of critique, is generally understood as a severely disruptive experience that profoundly impacts the self's emotional organization and perception of the external world. Trauma studies explore the impact of trauma in literature and society by analysing its psychological, rhetorical, and cultural significance. Scholarship analyses the complex psychological and social factors that influence the self's comprehension of a traumatic experience and how such an experience shapes and is shaped by language. The formal innovations of texts, both print and media, that display insights into the ways that identity, the unconscious, and remembering are influenced by extreme events thus remain a significant focus of the field. A psychosocial trauma is a type of damage to the psyche that occurs as a result of a traumatic event experienced by individuals in their psychosocial environment. Psychological trauma can be caused by natural disasters including earthquakes, flooding, bush fires, and man-made events including war, rape, abuse, violence, mechanized accidents such as car, train or plane crashes etc. or medical emergencies. The trauma responses potentially are normal responses to an unusual, an extreme traumatic event. They also involve the creation of emotional memories about the distressful event that are stored in structures deep within the brain. Moreover, a traumatic event involves a single experience, or an enduring or repeating event or events that completely overwhelm the individual's ability to cope the emotions involved with that experience. There are several behavioural responses common towards stressors including the proactive, reactive and passive responses. Proactive responses include attempts to correct a stressor before it has a noticeable effect on lifestyle. The individuals who are able to be proactive can often overcome stressors. They are more likely to be able to cope well with unexpected situations.

Trauma studies first developed in the 1990s, relied on Freudian theory to develop a model of trauma that imagines an extreme experience which challenges the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether. This model of trauma indicates that suffering is unrepresentable. Crisis, according to Gilliland and James (1993), refers to a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the resources and coping skills of a person. The event or situation can manifest itself in many forms, but it is the emotional reaction to the event or situation that causes the state of crisis. This crisis can be too overwhelming for the individual and may cause the individual to respond in a pathological manner. The state of crisis may cause a person to respond with ideations of suicide and homicide. The crisis itself has the potential to cause serious damage to an individual's cognitive, affective, and behavioural states. Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless (Herman, 1992, p.33). Trauma renders a person helpless and powerless due to the overwhelming force of the event. The traumatic event causing the crisis alters the individual's belief of a just and fair world. The event or situation destroys the individual's sense of control, connection, and meaning (Herman, 1992, p.33). The individual's mind responds to this trauma similar to the body responding to distress. The mind will attempt to reach a state of homeostasis. The psychological trauma represents a condition of acute distress causing a disturbance in the balanced state, thus creating psychological disequilibrium (Everly & Mitchell, 1999, p.2). This psychological disequilibrium is a result of the individual's usual coping skills failing to respond to the psychological trauma. As a result of this response, the individual will suffer from acute distress paired with functional impairment. The degree of distress and functional impairment can fluctuate from mild to severe. Without some form of relief from the crisis, the individual may become increasingly more disturbed and their behaviour may become more disruptive to normal functioning. Acute intervention is then needed to help the individual achieve adaptive functioning to the trauma and crisis. The goals of this crisis intervention, according to Everly and Mitchell (1997), should include: 1) stabilization of the symptoms of acute distress, 2) restoration of a "steady state" of psychological functioning, and 3) assist in the return to an adaptive level of functioning. The intervention should only deal with the current incident of trauma causing crisis and not past maladaptive functioning. It is clear that psychological trauma will alter an individual's mental status. Crisis intervention is used to provide "first aid" for this altered mental status that will help reduce the individual's distress and promote adaptive behaviour. There are many theories surrounding psychological trauma that attempt to provide the much-needed "first aid" for the individual in crisis. There is no single theory or school of thought that encompasses every model on crisis or crisis

intervention (Gilliand & James, 1993, p. 16). During the early 1980's, three crisis theories emerged: 1) basic crisis theory, 2) expanded crisis theory, and 3) applied crisis theory. The basic theory focuses on helping people in crisis to recognize and change cognitive, behavioural, and emotional distortions that are brought on temporarily by the traumatic event. The resolution of these temporary maladaptive states may lead to positive self-growth and diminished negative feelings. The expanded theory draws on the psychoanalytic, systems, adaptational, and interpersonal theories. This theory holds that anyone can fall victim to transient psychological symptoms if the right combination of developmental, psychological, sociological, environmental, and situational determinants exists. The applied theory is a more flexible approach which view each individual reacts differently in any given crisis. This theory supports three types of crisis: 1) normal developmental crisis, 2) situational crisis, and existential crisis. The three crisis theories opened the door for crisis intervention. All crisis intervention models are based on theory (Gilliand & James, 1997, p. 21). Three basic crisis intervention models were developed. The models are the equilibrium model, the cognitive model, and the psychosocial transition model. The equilibrium model helps an individual achieve a state of precrisis equilibrium. The equilibrium is used as a result of a person falling into a state of disequilibrium following a crisis. The model would help the individual regain a sense of control over the malfunctioning coping skills. The cognitive model's basic premise is that people can gain control of the crisis by changing their thinking (Gilliand & James, 1997, p. 22). This premise is best described by viewing the state of crisis as faulty thinking about the events unfolding around the crisis. The psychosocial transition model is similar to the cognitive model. This model holds that the individual must gain control of their internal and external difficulties surrounding the crisis. The individual would need to incorporate coping skills and social supports with adequate resources to find a non-crisis state. Reactive responses occur after the stress and is aimed more at minimizing the damage of a stressful event. The individuals who are more reactive will often experience more noticeable effects from an unexpected stressor. The individuals who are passive, victims of a traumatic event are more likely to suffer from long term traumatic effects. They often enact no intentional coping actions. However, there is no available research outcome showing that these reactions are always true for the trauma victims. By the way, the clinical study outcomes suggest that a passive response is often characterized by an emotional numbness or ignorance of a stressor (Ozer and Weiss, 2004; Street et.al., 2005). The only evidence-based outcome we have on the effect of the psychological traumas indicated that they may lead to serious, long-term negative mental health consequences. This ambiguity comes from the differences in the perception of the trauma at individual level. Different individuals react differently to similar events. One may experience an event as traumatic while another person would not suffer trauma as a result of the same event. This unique characteristic of the perception of traumatic events makes the exploration of the traumatic experience of the individual much more complex.

Post traumatic reactions such as flashback memories, heightened anxiety, feeling depressed, feeling overwhelmed, strained family reactions, social withdrawal required to work with the biological, cognitive, emotional and behavioural areas of the individual suffered as a back ground factors of the reactions precisely. For example, the maladaptive cognitions of the individual such as self-talks "I don't think I can manage seeing what's left of our home, because there won't be much. I'll probably get so upset I won't handle it well and he'll think I'm a wimp.", selfrules ("I must never show signs of weakness"), schemas ("I deserve to feel bad for letting my family down") are examined and treated precisely by the trauma professionals. Therefore, working with psychosocial trauma is essentially difficult not only for the individual suffered but also the professional dealt with them. Mental health is a complex phenomenon including life satisfaction and subjective well-being. Satisfaction with life reflects the degree to which external living-conditions 'fit' with inner lifeabilities. Subjective well-being refers to how people evaluate their lives, and include variables such as life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, positive moods and emotions, lack of depression, lack of anxiety (Diener, 2004). The investigations on people suffering from mood and anxiety disorders abound in 8 psychology and psychiatry literatures (Seligman & Diener, 2002). The interaction between individuals and their environment generates both happiness and psychopathology. Traumas may easily influence negatively the interaction. In other words, psychological traumas as one of the crucial dimensions of mental health may cause some impairment in the intra and interpersonal adaptive process of human functioning (Guney, et. al., 2010). Critical Summary Wake Up, Life is Calling, (17th April 2019), the sequel to the iconic bestseller Life is What You Make it, chronicles the resilience of the human mind and the immense power of positive thinking. The title of this book describes the central theme of the book but the manner in which Preeti Shenoy drives home the point through an interesting story, is delightful. Preeti Shenoy has done up the novel really well with meticulous research in the area of bipolar disorder. The book reflects the most sensitive issue of the Indian

Society, the concept of mental illness, through the protagonist Ankita Sharma. The title of all the thirty-three chapters of the books is of most popular songs titles that blend so well with the story, except chapter twenty-six because it has the book name as its title. The novel reiterates the notion of how Mental Health is more important. The cover of *Wake Up, life is Calling* was launched on (16th March 2019) at the Women Writers Festival in Title Waves Bandra, Mumbai. Preeti Shenoy launched this book cover in Mumbai because; Protagonist Ankita begins her new life in this very city. The cover of this book, unveiled by Shinnie Antony, Kiran Manral and a reader is very significant. It has a flower which signifies life, but in life everything does not go in the way which we wanted to, the petals of the flower symbolize the loss in our life and even though, life is very beautiful it comes to an end. But the end of something is the beginning of a new thing, and that's what the key symbolizes. After eight long years, *Wake Up, life is Calling* published on April 17, 2019. Preeti Shenoy has done so much re-search, she might write fifteen more books, if she wanted to. But it took eight long years as, Preeti Shenoy needs to work herself into building herself up to write it, because Life is What You Make It made lot out of fame, and once she sat down and began writing, she finished it like in the trance in a month but the build-up took eight long years. This sequel; starts exactly where its prequel ends. Ankita is a young girl who had just finished the treatment for bipolar disorder, is mentally trapped, making her go through a series of ups and downs in overcoming the trauma caused. She slowly develops guilt on the inside of her mind leading her to a point of mental breakdown. Preeti Shenoy, through uses a realistic and moving bend to depict Ankita's unspeakable struggles to find inner peace and to achieve her dream. The discovery Ankita makes, of the beauty of the human mind, acts as a key in not just redeeming her but also in motivating her highly to turn all her pains into powers through turning her thoughts positive. At the end of novel, she is back on track, living a normal life, finding her profession, passion and a way of leading a happy life with inner peace. Thus, filling the story with hope, the author has instilled strength inside the readers to overcome any impediments across their ways, with a strong determination.

#### • **Review of Literature**

*Wake Up, Life is Calling* has been topping the Hindustan Times Nielsen highest selling titles in the country for seven consecutive weeks, ever since its release. *Wake Up, life is Calling* is a grand success of Preeti Shenoy and is also counted among one of her best works.

➤ D. Pandeewari, A. Hariharasudan, Sebastin Kot (2020) in their research article Paradigm of Postmodern Paranoia in Preeti Shenoy's *Life is What You Make It And Wake Up, Life is Calling*, alleges on the postmodern perspectives of paranoia. This research emphasizes Shenoy's texts that depict the paranoid thoughts of Ankita Sharma. The issue of paranoia in the texts is substantiated and explored by using the various theories related to postmodern paranoia. The results of the study are compared and discussed with other studies concerning paranoia.

➤ Sevgi Guney (2012) authored chapter six in the book *Essential Notes in Psychiatry*, titled her research *Mental Health, Trauma and Trauma Related Disorders*, based on the mental health, reasons of psychological trauma and trauma related disorders. Researcher has used this as secondary source in this research paper for the justification of the research tool.

## **CHAPTER II – MENDING INNER PEACE IN LIGHT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA**

#### • **Psychological Trauma in *Wake Up, Life is Calling*: A Textual Analysis**

In the beginning, the novel traces the life of Ankita Sharma after coming back from Mental Illness Centre. The story, set in Mumbai, where Ankita begins the new normal life, starts with her choosing to pursue her dream course, Creative Writing, in a college she adores, happily surrounded by family and friends. Ankita states that, "*I was no different. I was full of hope, eager to start my new life. I had tied up my past neatly, sealed it tight in cardboard cartons with duct tape and kicked them out of sight. No more mental hospitals. No more Occupational Therapy. No more psychiatrists. I was going to a new college, a new course - Creative Writing at that! It had always been my dream, and I couldn't believe I was now living it.*" (Shenoy 1). The above-mentioned lines show signs of renewing herself and she is seen to be building herself better than before. But her parents, on the contrary, are still anxious of her stressful past, so they are very much mindful of

ensuring extra care for her. Having shifted to a new apartment in Bandra, Ankita says, *“It meant that nobody knew me here, nobody knew my past, nobody knew of the crazy things I had done when I had bipolar disorder. I was free to forge a new identity.”* (Shenoy 3). She is cheerful that, nobody knows her in the new place, so it is a fresh start. With much excitement she starts her train journey to reach her college. She looks bright on her first day. The cheer is found in her words, *“I had been locked away from the world for so many months. For everyone else in the classroom, all of this was not anything unusual or extraordinary. But I stared at the benches, the blackboard- everything. It had been such a long time since I had seen any institution other than a mental hospital. I revelled in this atmosphere, soaking in every tiny detail.”* (Shenoy 4). These lines show, how much Ankita had been longing for these beautiful moments to pass. She starts to love herself a little more thereafter. She grows, heals, learns and discovers herself. She has a burning aspiration to become writer for Magazines or Newspaper. In college, Ankita befriends Parul and Janki. During interval time, Parul and Janki were free to share about themselves. But Ankita does not want to share about her, because she never wanted others to know about her traumatic past life. *“I didn’t want them to know anything about my past; I had to be careful.”* (Shenoy 16). This shows that, she is very much conscious in not revealing her past life. Ankita completely hated her past life. But somehow her traumatic past kept haunting her. Realising that life is all about living, Ankita starts to live. Her parents are happy to see their daughter getting back to normalcy. Ankita receives a letter from Vaibhav and she is totally shocked about it. His words are magical, filled with deep feelings and tons of love towards her. Ankita is worried after reading Vaibhav’s letter because all she needed was a new start but unfortunately, she falls back into her past. Ankita says, *“After all that I had been through in NMHI, I felt I deserved a fresh start. But now he had got back in touch and spoilt it all.”* (Shenoy 16). *“I wasn’t sure he understood the enormity of what I had gone through, even though he had written that he had. It was evident he had no clue. How could he even comprehend when I myself was grappling with it? There was no question of ‘reaching out’ to him, like he had mentioned in the letter. It had all happened so fast, like being swept away by a gigantic tidal wave. The anguish, the rage, the sheer helplessness of being confined to a mental hospital, the fight to get back to normalcy, the trauma. I couldn’t even begin to explain.”* (Shenoy 17). Her confused state, takes her back to her traumatic experiences. In school days, Ankita and Vaibhav were in love. On her eighteenth birthday, Vaibhav had proposed. Ankita says, *“But all of this seemed to be from another life, before I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, before I had to go away to a hospital to heal. When I had written to him after I was discharged, explaining my silence and mentioning how I was a different person now, I had treated it more as a closure from my side. As far as I was concerned, I was done with my old life and perhaps the people in it too.”* (Shenoy 17). Ankita tries to put an end to her past. But, the recurrence of the people involved in it, makes her miserable. Hence, she resents Vaibhav. But she fails in the attempt as Vaibhav moves to Mumbai. Ankita witnesses’ little progression in her healing as the past kept on haunting her and she has no option but to keep those feeling dumped inside her. Amidst all the pressure she resolves to concentrate on her education and her new friends. Ankita says, *“For me, each word I wrote, each assignment I submitted was a triumph, a victory lap. It was a joy I couldn’t share with anybody. Nobody knew what it was like to be a prisoner of your mind. I had broken those shackles and, oh, how I enjoyed the freedom! My parents were overjoyed to see me in this mode. The medications too had been stopped. I too couldn’t get over it! ‘I am NORMAL, I am NORMAL! I don’t have to take any medications anymore. I can READ, I can WRITE. Do you realise how GOOD that feels?... My mind had shut the door firmly on my past. It was the only way to move forward...If life was a house, then you could compartmentalise things you did not want to deal with by pushing them into a room which you never enter and forget all about. That is what I had done. I had presumed I could get by without ever opening that door. But as long as that room existed, it couldn’t stay locked forever...For me, that door to my past opened up when I least expected it.”* (Shenoy 24-25). Ankita, no matter how hard she tries, her life somehow takes a different path and gets merged with her past, but she never loses hope. Very soon to her surprise, when she returns backs from college Ankita meets Vaibhav in her home. He had developed a wonderfully healthy relationship with her parents. The more she resented him, the more her parent welcomed him. The more she tried to get away from him, the more she got closer. Ankita is very much disturbed by Vaibhav’s repeated and unexpected visits. Ankita felt very bad as her parents never seem to bother about her comfortability in his presence. But since Ankita cares about their feelings, she chooses to pretend thus keeping quiet about it. Ankita is highly matured and this is evident in her ability to forward thinking and she boldly faces all her obstacles. Mind is the source of provoking thoughts as it influences both good and bad thoughts. The only alternative way to change our negative, bad mindsets is by provoking positive thoughts and setting good vibes around us. Therefore, Ankita participates in Euphoria, the three-day Annual Cultural Festival hosted by her college. *“The memory of my last public speaking event came back*

then, and I felt my hands go clammy as I recalled the details. How flawlessly I had spoken at 'JAM' ...I remembered how engaging my little talk was and how everyone in the room had forgotten it was only for a minute, ... Now I was off medication, and was 'normal'. I did not have the 'special powers' I had then. How could I hope to repeat that performance? Why had I gone and committed myself?" (Shenoy 40). Ankita says, "My only focus was on winning the contest. I wanted to hear the applause of the crowd ringing in my ears... I craved recognition and adulation. Winning a contest also brought so much respect. I was hungry for it." (Shenoy 48). Ankita is extremely enthusiastic in performing every game with complete involvement. She aims to be perfect in everything. Her only motive is to work hard and win the cup. All of sudden, Ankita's life takes U-turn, when she discovers a suicide manual book in the stock room of her college library. Ankita says, "*The Best Way to Go: A Handbook on Suicide for the Dying, read the title... It was a strange book.*" (Shenoy 50). Unaware of the consequences she is soon going to face, her mind convinces her to read it. Ankita says, "My heartbeats increased as I read what it contained. I felt the muscles in my body tighten. My palms went sweaty. I wasn't aware that I was holding my breath and when I released it, it came in a shallow gasp...The memories of the two times that I had tried to take my life came flooding back, drowning me. I remembered how my father had grabbed the knife from my hand the first time and how he had found me on the terrace of our building the second time; I was in the grip of the lows of bipolar disorder then." Amidst these emotional upheavals, somehow Ankita decides to read it. "I was dying to read it. I felt a dark energy present in the book drawing me to it with great force. I couldn't resist it. A suicide manual... A suicide manual... A suicide manual." (Shenoy 51-52). After completing her reading Ankita says, "When I finished the book, I was in turmoil... What an idiot I was to have not only read it, but also studied it in depth. I wished now I could undo all that reading... with just one book, here I was thinking about death again... Why was death drawing me towards it? Hadn't I escaped its clutches twice? And here I was flirting with death once more." (Shenoy 56-57). Ankita's thoughts grow contradictory and she is incapable of identifying why she searches for death even after escaping two suicide attempts. Ankita says, "I was restless. And yet exhilarated... I was overcome with an urgent desire to write down whatever was in my head. I could sense something larger than life that I wanted to express." (Shenoy 57). The Trauma had not only succeeded in revisiting her but had also pushed her into a deep and dark pit again. Ankita starts writing poems. Ankita says, "Suddenly the poem was crystal clear. I realised in that instant why I was pushing Vaibhav away... I was so terrified that what happened to Abhi might repeat itself with Vaibhav. The logical side of me told me that Vaibhav wasn't Abhi. Vaibhav was a different guy... Most people associate love with feelings of pleasant, carefree memories. For me, the word love conjured up death and the sound of an old man's wails. It was a word that strangled me. That was why I was rejecting it. Abhi had let me down. By dying. I had fooled myself into thinking that it didn't matter anymore, though every detail of the horrifying days that followed his death was imprinted on my soul... I recalled that horrible morning my mother read out a report in the newspaper of the discovery of Abhi's body, and asked me if I knew him. I could only say that I'd known him in passing. I would never know if Abhi had killed himself or whether it was an accident. His love had been too heavy for me to bear in the end, ... And here I was, trying to limp back to normalcy. Normal people didn't do this, a voice inside my head told me. Normal people did not read a book about suicide, memorising all the methods to take their lives. You can never be normal, the voice inside my head screamed. Shut up... Shut up, I wanted to say. I wanted to gag the voice. I wanted it to go away. But I was helpless. The voice continued taunting me, tormenting me. What are the best methods to kill oneself, the voice asked. I answered in great detail, without any emotion, narrating everything I had just read. Good, well done, said the voice." (Shenoy 58-59). The above lines clearly state the completely trapped condition Ankita was in. She wanted her inner voice to be quiet, but she could not control her thoughts which made her feel insecure. Next day, Ankita does not wake as usual and her mom, terrified, tries hard to wake her. Ankita says, "That was the thing about having been a patient in a mental hospital. Every action, every little thing you said or did would be carefully scrutinised and measured against a degree of 'normalcy'. I had to prove to everyone that I was 'normal'." (Shenoy 60-61). This shows that, even little changes in Ankita's daily routine affect her parent's peace who are keenly observant of her routine life. That evening, as Ankita returns home, Vaibhav asks for a date for she is ready. Ankita says, "Vaibhav was having his coffee, and he froze midway when he saw me. Our eyes locked. I held his gaze. The admiration in his eyes travelled all over my body, even though his eyes did not leave mine... This was the look of a man hopelessly and completely in love. I recognised that look in his eyes. Then I shuddered involuntarily. It was the same look I had seen in Abhi's eyes all those years ago." (Shenoy 66). This shows, Ankita remembers Abhi even when she is with Vaibhav. In every passing moment with Vaibhav, Ankita sees a resemblance of Abhi followed by the traumatic past.

However, she tries hard to forget and feels it like a scar, that travels with her in every aspect of her life. In their car journey, Vaibhav Switches on a playlist of romantic songs. Ankita shares to the readers, *“People always talk about how music transports them back in time, back to happy memories they associate with a particular song...Little had I known at that time how coldly and cruelly life would smash me, break me down, trample upon everything that meant the world to me, destroy me completely and then spit me out...I coped by studying hard, and drowning myself in college activities. It took my mind off... a lot. In NMHI, I had learnt to focus on the present moment to get through each day...I had to rein it in. Now Vaibhav was rekindling an old unwanted memory by playing this song.”* (Shenoy 68-69). Ankita smells the difference between normal people’s lives and her life, even though she suffers, she tries hard to cope up prioritising her parents’ happiness. Ankita says, *“All romantic songs. Unfortunately, they took me right back to NMHI, ...The last thing I wanted was to be reminded of my time in NMHI...The songs were painful...I remembered the time when I was helpless, struggling to read...I was struggling to breathe, struggling to stay afloat. I was holding my breath. Stop. Calm down, calm down. I don’t want this. Not this. Never this.”* (Shenoy 69-70). Songs are researched to be possessing a strong inclination to an individual’s feelings. Ankita, is no exception. As expected, she is extremely traumatised by the compelling journey to her haunting past, that the music causes. can take one to their traumatic past experiences. Later, she struggles to come back to normalcy as Vaibhav had planned to visit so many wonderful and stunning places in Bombay just to make Ankita Happy. Ankita says, *“I felt light-hearted and happy. Even though this date had started badly, I was now enjoying myself.”* (Shenoy 74). Ankita feels utterly defeated as she is unable to think of anything but the scars of her past. When the couple reach the restaurant, gradually Ankita starts sharing about her past to Vaibhav. Under the impression that Vaibhav would understand her, she gathers the courage to share the past, with much emotions, but to her surprise, Vaibhav turns judgemental. *“I told him everything that had happened ever since we parted and I joined St. Agnes...I told him about how I met Abhi,...and how I had gone to Abhi’s house, and then evaded him when he kept declaring his love for me, a love I did not return. I told him about Abhi’s senseless death in a fit of pique that haunts me till today...I told him in detail about the psychiatrists I had seen, ...I explained my fears, my sadness, my obsessive thoughts, my hatred, my suicide attempts. I told him how I had struggled to read and my routine at NMHI and about Dr Madhusudan. I held back nothing.”* (Shenoy 81). Though Ankita had trusted Vaibhav. he did not understand her feelings and he hurt her. Their date starts and ends with bad vibes making Ankita feel low. It is unbearable and she is not able to imagine a life without Vaibhav. She feels responsible for the loss of a good relationship of her parent with Vaibhav and the inner voice in her, constantly tries to fill her with guilt ultimately, making her feel worthless. *“I thought of what it would mean if he vanished from my life. What would happen to his badminton sessions with my father? What about his conversations with my mother? How badly I had messed this up...You always hurt those who love you. That’s all you are capable of. You killed a good friendship. You killed Abhi. You hurt people. You disappoint your parents. You are worthless. The thoughts kept going round in my head, tormenting me.”* (Shenoy 85-86). These lines are perfect evidence that Ankita has fallen deeply into a pit of thoughts that she once battled with and hoped never to revisit them again. Ankita’s mind is the greatest enemy which spoils her own self. After returning home, Ankita pretends to be happy for the sake of her parents. Ankita longs for a trauma-free life but reality slowly sucks her day by day. Every event that takes place further, relates with her past. *“Deep down, one part of me was acutely aware of the mania phase of my illness, ...A thin line separates creativity from insanity. I was tiptoeing that line every single day, in constant fear of whether my actions would be considered normal or abnormal...Yes, I was not afraid of being on stage, but I was terrified of losing my mental balance, and going back to the psychiatrists where every action of mine would be analysed and dissected in medical terms.”* (Shenoy 101). It’s not an easy process for her to get rid of her dreadful thoughts. One evening, after returning home from college, Ankita shares to her parents how everyone appreciated about her speech in college and she tells that, she was selected in round one, round two and semi-finals too. Though she is enthusiastic about it as she shares this with her parent she feels judged. *“That day I realised that no matter what I did, it would forever be viewed through the prism of the symptoms of a mental illness. All my little victories would be tinged with the fear of my mind going out of control. My happiness would forever carry that little bit of sadness, a reminder of my past when I had lost my balance.”* (Shenoy 102-103). Ankita feels inferior about herself, and they make her feel insecure for what she is being. Ankita says, *“AAAAAARGH... AAAAAAARGH... AAAAARGH,’ ...Hide it. Hide it. Hide it. Hide it. If you don’t, they will find you and drag you to a doctor.”* (Shenoy 103). Whenever Ankita feels worse, she engages in writing Life’s Little Notes. Her aim is to win the trophy and make her parents proud without the fear of thinking about her mental illness. Day by day, Ankita’s problems grows bigger and bigger. Life takes her into different paths

which makes her face more difficulties. But, when the time comes for her to act towards the goal, due to an unfortunate turn of events, Ankita fails. *“How did he come here? How was he sitting next to Parul and Janki? What was going on? Was I hallucinating?”* (Shenoy 106). Ankita is totally down and her haunting past resurfaces in her and she falls down unconscious as everything is blurred. In addition to a roller coaster of emotional turmoil’s she goes through, now, due to her failure, she feels ashamed in front of everyone in the auditorium. Ankita says, *“I had failed. And failed miserably at that. I had let down every single person who depended on me. The Goenka cup - it was gone now, along with my dignity.”* (Shenoy 108). The negative phrases that arise from Ankita torment her and she feels very ashamed of herself. This shows how was influenced by her own psychological traumatic thoughts. Ankita says, *“million other laments came into my head and made a place for themselves in my brain. I tried to dislodge them, chuck them out with logic...It was mania. When I had kissed Joseph, it was the illness acting, not me... it was not ‘my fault’ or ‘my mistake’ and how I had no control over it”* (Shenoy 111). Ankita feels insecure and humiliated. In spite of her parents’ consolation, she is not normal, her thoughts are filled with nothing but humiliation. *“The ugly reminder of the morning’s event now reared its head, taunting me. I replayed the scene in my head...I wished there was a switch in my head to turn it off.”* (Shenoy 115-116). Ankita is filled with stress, she knows that her negative thoughts influence her to the extreme edge, but she could not get out from her deep, past memories. Ankita writes her Life’s little Notes based on her understanding of life, *“Life doesn’t care if you have worked hard for it or not. Life doesn’t play fair. Life doesn’t play by the rules you make. Life has its own way of doing things.”* (Shenoy 117). The pain of Ankita is evident. Writing makes her feel better, helps her cope with the shame and pain. Whenever she feels low, surrounded by fear and anxiety, she starts writing. Only writing makes her heal all her pain and sufferings. But still, sometimes she feels trapped as the inner voice keeps recurring in her head with ever loud voice day by day. This is because, writing serves as a therapy whose effects lasting only for a while. Ankita’s parents start worrying again about her condition. They recommend medication for her better improvement. She denies, as she fears if the medication would hamper her creativity, thus paralysing her thoughts. Ankita is aware of her capability of being normal but somehow at some point she feels low whenever she connects her present life incidents with her traumatic past. Ankita says, *“I found my mind wandering. The taunting voice inside my head started its usual cacophony...My thoughts had come back to maul my brain.”* (Shenoy 126). She wants to control her thoughts but she could not. Hence, she decides to write. In the college, Parul convinces Ankita to meet Joseph for once which Ankita accepts. But later, she realized her mistake. While meeting Joseph, Ankita confesses her bipolar disorder, her Maniac condition, panic attacks and her stay in NMHI and later apologizes to him for her bizarre behaviour in her past. But he makes fun of her which her feel worthless, again. Holidays begin, and so Ankita takes some books from her library to work on her holiday assignments. Even Ankita’s Holiday Assignment topic exactly relates with her past. Ankita says, *“When I read it, my immediate reaction was panic...I definitely couldn’t write the truth. The truth was: I wanted to change everything from the day I joined that college in Kerala. I wouldn’t have met Abhi then...I would not have told Joseph I loved him when I didn’t. I would have stopped my mania. I would change the bipolar disorder episode”* (Shenoy 141). Everyone in her college celebrates the day because it is the last day of college before holiday, but Ankita wants to concentrate on the assignment. *“I didn’t know what to write for the essay Mrs Hayden had assigned. I did not know what to tell Vaibhav about the whole Joseph incident. I also felt bad that I had hurt Joseph for no fault of his, ...The voices in my head were only too happy to agree with me. Nothing in my life was going according to plan...The business of daily life had sucked it all out of me, and left me bereft.”* (Shenoy 144-145). The events in the life of Ankita, after her discharge from NMHI, everything seems to track her back into the only track she feared of travelling in. as she keeps of thinking about her past, she justifies herself but also feels guilt and most especially she is pretending to her parents like being happy but deep inside she mourns by thinking her failures and guilty surrounds her tight. Ankita says, *“I was terrified that if I didn’t pretend to be normal, they would drag me back to the psychiatrist. That was the last thing I wanted...I just wanted to live an ordinary life, with no complications. I didn’t want a ‘perfect life’. Somewhere halfway was okay too.”* (Shenoy 145). She craves for an ordinary life; she does not expect any pleasures but only peace in her life. No matter how hard she tries, she keeps failing. Though driven by a high level of frustration, every morning she determines to be happy. But none of that helps. The harder she tries to fight the blanket of hopelessness that engulfs her, the more she feels caught in the misery of it. *“...no matter what I did, I was sinking. I had no interest in anything.”* (Shenoy 147). Next in the line of the strategies that Ankita designs for herself to overcome her haunting past is sleep. She notices that she is unable to sleep well and identifies it to be a problem that might be holding her back. She, basically, does not sleep well because she is trapped in her thoughts, she knows her problem but she fails

in finding a solution. Ankita started to get ready to visit Parul's home for Freddy's Birthday party. Ankita hates the people there as everyone indulges in drinking and talk animatedly. She hates the crowd, cigarette smell and the awkward noises. But she never knows that, her destiny is going to become worse than before. In the party, Joseph tries to misbehave by which. Ankita is terrified and pushes him away, but unfortunately Joseph falls on the floor of the balcony. Joseph, under the influence of liquor, mistakes that he fell off the balcony. Hearing him scream loud his cousin Freddy and others come to the rescue. Joseph calls Ankita a, psycho bitch in everyone's presence and adds that she has a mental disorder and that she is just back from a mental asylum. Ankita says, *"I stood there in shocked silence and disbelief. Joseph had just told them my deepest, darkest secret. That which I had told him in confidence was now public knowledge."* (Shenoy 154). None supported Ankita, not even Parul. She turns numb with pain and shock. Ankita attended the party having Parul's happiness in mind, but Parul abandoned her, which made her to feel lower than before. Ankita feels the pain to be debilitating. This shows that, Ankita is psychologically trapped by her past and the reflection of it keeps on following her in the present, she could not concentrate in anything, she feels bad that she cannot even think about her academics. She resorts to a notion of not trusting love and convinces herself of that fact with the evidences from her life. Later, as days pass by, she misses Vaibhav and yearns for him at the times when she feels low. Every time she finds a solution, the event that follows soon after proves the solution to either be short-lived or futile. She could not win the battle she is fighting. It makes her feel frustrated only when the solutions seem to be promising but ends as a deception. Ankita says, *"I very badly want to sleep. To escape. I want a respite...Sleep. Forever. It will end."* (Shenoy 158). To relieve herself from all her problems, Ankita entertains suicidal thoughts. She decides to read the suicide manual book once again and she reads about the plastic cover method in it. She thinks for a second of killing herself with the plastic cover but luckily, she sleeps deep as a result of taking a high dosage of pills. Ankita is broken beyond repair; she is completely down due to her psychological trauma. Ankita says, *"These thoughts are zooming through my head now...all of them grow in magnitude and attack me now. I just want it all to stop. So, I take two pills and crawl into bed. Maybe I should use the plastic cover now? But I can't think straight. So, I just place it over my head and shut my eyes. I can feel all thoughts slowly recede. They don't seem so terrible anymore."* (Shenoy 159). Finally, after taking pills Ankita felt sleepy and she is in state of bliss because slowly her dreadful thoughts are fading away. Ankita says, *"I slept like I hadn't slept for months. Deep, dreamless. Nothing tormented me, nothing troubled me; for the first time, I was free of pain. I have no idea how many hours I slept."* (Shenoy 160). When Ankita woke from her bed, she feels bad as her parents are terrified. They decide to take her to Dr. Neeraj, the psychiatrist suggested by Dr. Madhusudan. Ankita wants to convince her parents that her act was not suicidal. But Ankita is clueless as all the factors build up to support the idea that she had in fact attempted to kill herself. *"How could I convince them now? How messed up this was. Yes, I did feel sad. I did feel upset...But who will believe me now? A thought hisses and spits in my head like a snake: Drop out of this course. This is not for you."* (Shenoy 163-164). Though Ankita's parents plead her to take medication but she is adamant. She fears that her tongue would become thick and she will be unable to talk and think, so she requests her father to go away. But her father keeps on pleading her to take pills. Ankita says, *"I can't stand the helpless expression on their faces, the pleading looks, their panic. But mostly, it's the depth of their love that I can't bear. They don't deserve this."* (Shenoy 164). Ankita feels guilty as feels that she is tormenting her parents more than ever and she desperately wants to end all her agony so that her parents turn happy. All of sudden, in high pitched voice Ankita asks her father to get out from the room, but unknowingly she picks up a paperweight and flings it at her father. Soon after this, she is able to do nothing but throw herself on the pillow and wail, which is a sign of sheer guilt. Negativity engulfs Ankita and she apologises for her thoughtless act and decides to consult the doctor. *"... 'But before you do that, will you please hear me out?'"* (Shenoy 166). Ankita wants her parents to listen, gaining some confidence to open up. This is a big step for Ankita for at one stage she refused to trust any form of love. But now, she believes her parents. She narrates all untold happenings. She says about Joseph and her bizarre behaviour towards him when she was in mania state, her parents listened to her quietly. Next, Ankita says about how much she worked hard to win the Goenka Cup but ended in humiliation. Then, she confesses about how she met Joseph again and told him all about her darkest secret and that too ended in pain and caused her the deepest agony and she told them about details of previous night's party which left scars in her heart as a result of the words of Joseph and Freddy. Her parents understand her point and says that it was incredible of her to have fought all her battles and her father assures her of their support to her no matter what, but also insists upon meeting with the doctor for the improvement of Ankita's Mind and health. Next in the line of fears, for Ankita, is the fear of getting admitted in the hospital. Her parents are also afraid her to see her in this condition and they both

undergo the fear of losing their only child, given the fact that she is considered as the apple of their eyes. Ankita slowly understands her ability. It's undoubtable that, Ankita is incredibly a brave girl. Next, her father asks her about the suicide manual and he feels very bad to know that, she identified that book in her college library, Ankita begs her father not to return the book to college Librarian Mrs Asthana, but her father already accepted not to beat Joseph for his misbehaviour towards her for the sake of Ankita, but now he had made up his mind to return the book as it had influenced Ankita in many negative ways. All these display her parents' infinite love and affection for her. No matter how numerous ups and down's take place in life, parents will always support, and that is the strength we all need. Ankita had no way, so she gave the book to her father and it troubled her a lot but she had no way. Ankita says, *"All is good as long as we do not get into trouble, and are able to manage things on our own. But nothing's in our control. Things go horribly wrong. We do not know what to do. We turn to our parents then. Whether we follow the rules or not, they are always there for us... Parents can be your wings when yours are broken, and you need a little help to fly."* (Shenoy 177). Ankita feels quite content as she had found her strength, her parents. Ankita decides not to hide anything and to face the circumstances without excuses. Ankita says, *"I was so stressed thinking about the doctor's visit that I couldn't sleep that night again. I did not want to lie in bed and keep thinking negative thoughts."* (Shenoy 179). She knows that, by thinking deep, negative thoughts influence her. She starts reading the Dream Dictionary book. *"The Dream Dictionary said that the monster could represent the society or situations that were a threat. It could also indicate disgust over something happening in your life that you needed to address. It could also indicate that the monster was the 'idle gossip' of the people around you; maybe they were talking about you. All these explanations made sense to me."* (Shenoy 190). Ankita thinks that the dragons in her dream symbolize herself mainly due to her fierce personality, monster might refer to the society that makes her feel low through idle gossips. *"As long as I was at home, protected and comforted by my parents, I was safe. I was in a cocoon, in fine, caring hands."* (Shenoy 170-180). Ankita realizes her comfort zone in being with her parents, she understands that, parents are the true saviours of their children and she feels safe whenever she is at her home. Later, Ankita is reminded of the assignment given by Mrs. Hayden, which makes her break a cold sweat. Ankita suffers on a daily basis, her inner thoughts act as demons in her life and she is psychologically trapped in it. From chapter 26, there is a tremendous change in Ankita's life, it marks the new turning point Ankita gets transformed into a new person completely. There comes a glow in her life as she understands its true aspects. Instead of mourning about her traumatic past, she starts learning from her every mistake, past incidents and slowly renews herself and emerges like a beautiful sculpture. Finally, the day has come to meet Dr Neeraj. Ankita is deeply worried. At the hospital, the receptionist treats Ankita as a patient, triggering emotions of frustration. Her parents wait outside and she meets Dr. Neeraj. He expects Ankita to explain the situations that trouble her. As Ankita narrates Dr. Neeraj makes careful notes, which Ankita detests. Dr. Neeraj encourages Ankita to open up about medication. After she explains how the medicines make her feel numb, and unable to write, Dr Neeraj calls Ankita as true artist and he says that she has no symptoms of Mania and that gradually she can cope up without medication. Most importantly, he asks her to regulate her sleep by herself and prescribes sleeping pills that is completely herbal. Ankita is impressed with Dr Neeraj as he speaks. *"'Life is calling, Ankita,' said Dr Neeraj, as we stepped out of his room. 'Wake up!' Then he smiled and waved."* (Shenoy 186). Ankita is relieved after consulting Dr. Neeraj. There is a visible sign of will power and courage that were fed into her. She gets some clarity after consulting Dr. Neeraj. She is filled with optimism and it pushes her forward, making her face anything that crosses her way but never to give up. When Ankita and her mom return home, she is surprised to see Mrs Hayden waiting for her in her lobby. Ankita introduces Mrs Hayden to her mom and invites her into their home. Mrs Hayden makes clear that, she had come to meet Ankita's parents to apologise. She reveals that Ruth Hayden is none but herself and that the suicide manual belongs to her, and she also informs that, the book was gifted by her husband. She also asks Ankita's mom to convey her apology to Ankita's father, too. Mrs Hayden adds that, she also does not know how the book ended up in the library and truly no idea about how it reached the hands of Ankita. Mrs Hayden also shares about her errands which happens to involve arranging the piles of books to help to set library in the area. Ankita volunteers after her mom permits. Meanwhile though Ankita misses Vaibhav a lot, she consoles herself and resolves to let it go. Mrs Hayden's home creates positive vibes. Ankita says, *"Everywhere I turned, there was only loveliness."* (Shenoy 200). Ankita starts to give attention to Mrs Hayden's home, she finds every painting unique and learns that it was all her son's painting, but he is no more now. During a talk with her, Ankita listens to Mrs. Hayden saying, if it hurts then one have to learn to let it go. Ankita understands that meeting anyone in life is not accidental is on purpose. *"The more time I spent with her sorting out the books, the friendlier we became. Books were binding us together in a strange way,*

*bridging the gap between us.*” (Shenoy 204). Ankita returns a note to Mrs Hayden which she found inside in the suicide manual. Mrs Hayden asks, why her father was upset and frustrated when he returned suicide manual to Mrs Asthana in the college library. *“Things were fine between us till that point. But if I narrated to her all that had happened, would she judge me? I didn’t know. It was difficult for me to talk about it...not saying anything. I was furiously trying to think of something clever to say.”* (Shenoy 206-207). Ankita’s thoughts resurface, Mrs Hayden understands that something is bothering Ankita deeply, so she asks Ankita to learn to make peace with past, only then can she move forward and she insists Ankita to accept her own self, but just nodded her head. Mrs. Hayden advises her not to listen to people’s words but to listen what the inner voice to which Ankita says, *“My inner voice tells me I’m worthless.”* (Shenoy 207). Ankita asks Mrs Hayden what to do if her inner voice often yells such demotivating things. Learning to silence her inner voice and to tame her mind would prove helpful, suggest Mrs. Hayden. She adds that, it would not be easy in the beginning, but over the years she would learn how to silence her mind. Mrs Hayden insists Ankita to replace her negative voices with voices of positivity. She also suggests visualisation exercises. Ankita said, *“I think I need those, Mrs Hayden...I felt I could trust Mrs Hayden, and more than that, I felt she could help me. She seemed to understand exactly what I was talking about. There was deep wisdom in her eyes as she looked at me.”* (Shenoy 208). Mrs Hayden had lightened her soul with hope. Ankita slowly learns to handle life with the help of the words of Mrs Hayden. Finally, Mrs Hayden asks Ankita whether she would like to hear her story. Ankita says yes, but little did she know that it would create great impact in her life to change for the better just by listening to the most painful life experience of Mrs Hayden. Ankita is more curious to know how Mrs Hayden got to be so calm and wise. Mrs Hayden starts sharing her childhood experiences. She had lived in India until she was eight after which her dad, a British officer, was called back to England. Her mom also hated to leave India, but she had to and it was too painful for Mrs Hayden to leave India. In 1938, she and her parents left to Liverpool. Her mom was isolated and ship travel took her health away. She died due to pneumonia. Then, she was raised by her spinster aunt. However, her dad was in touch with her maternal grandparents. Mrs Hayden visited India when she was nineteen. It was the happiest time of her life. She returned to England to continue her college life where her dad and aunt wanted her to complete her education. She met Michael, her professor. She fell in love with him at the age of twenty-one. Her dad and aunt approved her marriage as Michael was an educated British man. After her graduation, they got married. Within a year, she gave birth to her son Ethan. She decided to study and her aunt helped her take care of Ethan. Mrs. Hayden at the same time, taught in university too. Later, her grandparents passed away, but she could not attend their final respects. Mrs. Hayden says, in her life a bigger tragedy struck. She says, she had never thought she would recover again in her life after that painful tragedy. She says, Ethan killed himself in the age of twenty-four. He suffered from Huntington’s disease. It was horrible disease which will damage the whole body. Before his death, Ethan written a notebook of how much he loved his parents, it hurt her most. They had to deal with so deep a depression. Michael started drinking heavily to hide his pain. Mrs. Hayden said that, she did a course of counselling and started working with young people, to help herself out of depression. Mrs. Hayden says it was her way of healing from the terrible loss. To Ankita says, *“Her sad words felt like arrows being shot into my own heart.”* (Shenoy 215). Mrs Hayden went on to say that, one should be careful of what they wished for. Five years later Michael gets diagnosed with the same disease. The Huntington disease killed him slowly. First, Ethan now Michael. Later, making her heart up, Mrs. Hayden and Scott, the doctor and friend of Michael, decide to give Michael a lethal injection. Though Mrs. Hayden wanted Michael to live, she also wanted to give him peace, as Michael was frustrated of living. Before dying, Michael thanked Scott and he assured hi love Mrs. Hayden. Scott injected the drug and Michael was supposed to die in seven minutes. As he struggled, Scott and Mrs. Hayden put a pillow on his face and then Michael was dead. After that, Mrs Hayden could not live in UK, so she came back to India. Mrs Hayden said, by growing a garden in her home, she was healing gradually. She also said that, so much of guilt and other negative thoughts tried to take over her in a single day, but she tried hard to overcome all her negativity. Finally, she ends her struggle story by saying that, our mind is our biggest enemy and also a best friend. She advises Ankita to look at the beauty in life. Mrs Hayden’s story creates a deep impact in Ankita’s life. She understands that, everyone is a warrior and all have their own battles, and everyone should keep on trying to defeat it. Ankita says, *“Her story was a whirlpool within me. Mrs. Hayden seemed so perfect from the outside. Yet there was such darkness inside her. I had tried to kill myself, twice. It was a burden I had carried for so long. But when I thought about Mrs Hayden’s story and the guilt that she carries every single day, I felt it was not that big a burden anymore.”* (Shenoy 222). This shows the transformation of Ankita. Next day, Ankita felt free to share her past with Mrs. Hayden as she had considered that what was important was her own well-being and that she would fight and

not let her thoughts take over. Mrs Hayden had purely been inspirational. *“If Mrs Hayden could embrace life and go on even after all her losses, she realised, she could too. I would grab life and I would live it.”* (Shenoy 227). This line marks the tremendous change needed in Ankita. When she starts thinking that, everything has its own timing and has its own reason, she starts to taste the beauty of life. Now, Ankita feels easy to work on the assignment given by Mrs Hayden, and the topic does not hurt her anymore. Soon, Vaibhav comes back into her life. All is set good, Vaibhav apologises, and justifies his behaviour with his work pressure, explains his point of view and promises not to leave Ankita here after, at any cost. Vaibhav also assures that, it was Ankita’s parents who ask him to visit every day, so that Ankita would slowly start to be normal and happy, and he confessed that, he loves Ankita more than ever. *“Happiness flowed through my heart, warming me up from the inside. It felt so wonderful to have someone all to yourself.”* (Shenoy 236). Every bad thing holds a goodness within it, but it is late when we people can understand such twists of life. What is meant for us will be always ours. Ankita is happier and after facing many afflicting circumstances, now she is back to her normal life. Finally, Ankita had learnt the ability to face her failures and her negative thoughts had vanished completely. She deserved her success as per her desire. All her dark days were now over. Most importantly, without the support of her parents she would not have achieved anything. *“I had given them nothing but trouble and pain so far. It was not that I had done it purposely. But my condition had dragged us all to hell and back. I decided then that I would make them proud one day. I didn’t know how I would do it. I didn’t have an executable action plan. But I wanted it more than anything else in the world.”* (Shenoy 238). Everyone should choose to aim, no matter how big it is. Everyone should make their parents proud. by setting a goal, trying hard as there is no gain without pain, there is no calm without storm. We need to be patient, to persevere. Success though not easy, is attainable. Hard work is needed without compromising passion. *“I felt free. I felt light. I felt wonderful. I felt alive. Life was calling, and I was awake.”* (Shenoy 240). Ankita’s parents, Mrs Hayden, Dr Neeraj and Vaibhav are the real angels in Ankita’s life. She had become a winner and had succeeded by putting an end to all her haunting traumatic past memories. The novel ends on note of hope, convincing the reader that, everyone can achieve, nothing is impossible. Every problem has a solution for sure. The hardest battle in Mrs. Hayden’s life made Ankita realize the true essence of life. As she desired, she topped the batch, made her parents proud and most importantly she learnt that, only the mistakes would make us grow stronger. Every moment in our life is precious, wasting it by worrying does not change the situation, but only leads a worse situation. One should learn to challenge the challenge, so achievement becomes possible. If life strikes one with grief, it cannot stay permanent. Life would also give bundles of bliss as unexpected moments are always likely to occur and one should know that, everyone’s life is miniscule, and so one should refrain from regretting and keeps themselves happier because life is worth celebrating.

- **Research Questions**

1. **How does mental illness isolate the growth of an adult?**

The story revolves around Ankita who, after defeating her mania, with hope and determination, is back to her normal life. As she desired, Ankita enrolled her name in her dream course Creative Writing. Fighting with someone is easy, but a person’s greatest fight is the one where a person has to fight with themselves on a daily basis. Ankita looks forward to start a new life by locking away her past. But somehow it always finds a way back into her life. The only way to deal with it is to accept the mistakes. Only then, will one be really able to make peace with it and grow out of it. The book portrays the tragic life of Ankita and how she's overcoming the obstacles, but things start taking a bad turn again when she discovers a banned book with a suspicious title in the college library and her past memories revisit her all of a sudden. Mind is the foremost foe of Ankita, but later she changes her thoughts positive and makes her mind, her greatest friend. Ankita decides not to share her dark past to her college friends Parul and Janki. She isolates herself even though she is cured, but still the impact of her haunting past had a deep scar inside her. Ankita says, *“Old memories have a way of resurfacing when you least expect them to. They clutch your heart, dredging up emotions you thought you had killed.”* (Shenoy 21). The above-mentioned lines convey that, no matter how hard one can try to hide the past it would somehow resurface. Ankita literally isolates herself as she did not want to remember the past. Ankita is afraid to open up about her traumatic past life experiences. Ankita says, *“I had told them only half the truth.”* (Shenoy 33). Ankita tries hard to hide her past. She worries even to talk about her photogenic mind, her academic skills, writing ability, creative thinking, about her first-class marks in her previous college. She isolates herself and hides her talents because, if she does not, it would let others know what she had undergone. So, Ankita compels herself to conceal her talents till a certain point. These incidents from the novel are the examples of how mental illness isolates the growth of an adult. Breaking down the stigma around mental

health, these novel analyses mental illness from the perspective of the sufferer. The best part about the book is the underlying message about the human psyche and how thoughts can affect a life and the people involved in it. Like unto a master, Preeti Shenoy has detailed the mental issues and symptoms one tends to show which is an unending cycle of pessimism and self-doubt. It brings out the storm that brews inside Ankita and she tries hard to give a positive outlook in her life. Ankita's journey is a wonderful source of inspiration. She is a diverse character, emotional yet firm, smart and most importantly, strong enough to mend her broken life with inner peace.

## 2. What is the healing process involved in overcoming traumatic experiences?

The novel revolves around the life of a dynamic young girl Ankita who bravely fights bipolar disorder, and constantly strives to fit into the normal world. Indeed, life is much messy for her. Healing from trauma is not easy, it is a long-time process. It takes times, to refresh one's soul and mind. Only by practising to heal painful memories and unsettling events continuously, can help in healing one psychologically. The novel is deep. It points out that, sometimes problem is not the problem itself, but how one goes about dealing it. The strength and hope of Ankita, to get over her problems by herself without medication is purely appreciable. By overcoming the emotional turmoil, anxiety, fear and insecurities with lots of life lessons, she achieves her inner peace. The way she messed up and how she managed her obsessive thoughts are mentioned in the novel. The character of Mrs Hayden is exemplary. And most importantly, her parents are the best. *"If you have a set of parents who are in your corner, no matter what, it is a massive strength. Parents can be your wings when yours are broken, and you need a little help to fly. With care, love and understanding, anything can heal. Anything."* (Shenoy 177). *"I imagined 'you are worthless' written in bold letters. The letters were suspended in the sky, mocking me. I imagined each of those letters entering the balloon, one by one, till none were left. I imagined knotting up the balloon. Mrs Hayden then told me to take another negative phrase and do the same... Now imagine all these balloons floating up... up... and away... They are now tiny specks in the sky. They have flown far away... They have vanished... gone forever... Mrs Hayden continued in her soft voice. I sat there with my eyes closed, mesmerised."* (Shenoy 209-210). The visualisation exercises suggested by Mrs Hayden helps Ankita heal herself. Preeti Shenoy's creation of Mrs Hayden character is truly brilliant. Visualisation exercises take off the tough phase of Ankita and gains momentum in her life. *"Our mind is our biggest enemy, Ankita. But it can also be our biggest friend. There's so much beauty in life. We only have to look."* (Shenoy 219). Life is a process of learning; every phase of life holds its own beauty in it. When Ankita thinks of Mrs. Hayden's story and the guilt that she carried every single day, *"she feels it was not that big a burden anymore... We had to come to terms with it, take responsibility for our actions, and then move on. It was a paradigm shift. I had never looked at it that way."* (Shenoy 220). Transformation had occurred in the life of Ankita. She understands that, in life everyone has their own battles, how we cope up with it, matters the most. More than anything, we need to find beauty even where there is none. It exists. Always. We need to know where to look. Ankita had healing herself. Mrs Hayden advises Ankita by saying that everyone wired differently. It is something that none can help. Everyone deals with a different set of cards in life. All one can do is to make the best use of those cards with our judgement. She reminds her that it is because of her strength that she emerged victorious, so far. They act as an energy booster in Ankita. Mrs Hayden says, *"You know, Ankita, we are not responsible for other people's actions. Those are choices they make."* (Shenoy 225). From this line, Ankita understands that she can control only her mind but not other's choice of words. From her father, Ankita understands that nobody can hurt her without her permission. And the time which she spent with Mrs Hayden is proved to be invaluable. Ankita says, *"For the first time I decided that what was important was my well-being. I would fight. I would not let my thoughts take over. If Mrs Hayden could embrace life and go on even after all her losses, I could too. I would grab life and I would live it."* (Shenoy 227). Ankita's healing process starts from here. She realises that she had never been responsible for the decisions Abhi and Joseph had taken. Whenever thoughts of the past haunt her, she employs the method Mrs. Hayden had taught her and overcomes every depression thought. *"I felt free. I felt light. I felt wonderful. I felt alive. Life was calling, and I was awake."* (Shenoy 239-240). Finally, Ankita mended herself by healing. The usage of words of affirmation that Mrs. Hayden had taught her, changed her future. *"Each of our mistakes makes us stronger. They are our life lessons. They make us grow. And I think that is most important thing in life. To keep making mistakes and learning from them, so that we never stop growing. So here's to mistakes and here's to life itself."* (Shenoy 242). Be you, Be 'you' tiful. Trust the wait, embrace the uncertainty, enjoy the beauty of becoming, when nothing is certain anything is possible. Ankita learns and recovers from Mrs Hayden's Painful heart-rending tragic story. Finally, Ankita's plan of breaking all the strings from her past does seem

to go well. Every phase of life is a stack of motivation. The toughest sides of Ankita made her stronger. She learns to face her mental trauma; she turns all her pains into powers. Her recovery from her traumatic past is the most adorable and satisfying thing in this novel. Ankita's vibes are contagious; she inspires one to face the struggles of life with a smile on face. We can only win life when we change our thought, our mind, and our perspectives in positive ways. The blue balloon of hope and positivity engulfed all her dreadful thoughts; she basked in the sun of newfound love and confidence. Ankita's life events, in a new light, would have inspired the reader from the very beginning. Ankita's zeal for living her life even after traumatic past is commendable. Don't be ashamed of facing your past, maintain friendship with good set of people especially who are ready to accept you for what you have been and for what you are going to be, because only those kinds of relationships will be engaged for the lifetime. At any point, don't lose hope, things will be better for sure. *Wake Up, Life is Calling* is all about how Ankita embraces happiness by loving herself no matter what, how she becomes stronger, the challenges she faces to overcome hard circumstances and how moves forward in search of her inner peace that aid her into living a healthier life, forever.

### CHAPTER III – CONCLUSION

The novel *Wake Up, Life is Calling* by Preeti Shenoy is analysed using the research tool, Psychological Trauma. The results are as follows. The research paper has analysis of the chief character Ankita Sharma, who deals with the demons of her past, learning how to be mentally strong and how to face the circumstances boldly. Ankita is psychologically trapped in her haunting traumatic experiences. The titles of all thirty-three chapters are quite thoughtful. The writing style of Preeti Shenoy is very simple yet intricately woven. The title and cover of the book is meaningful. The topics that the story focuses on are mental health, bullying, love, hope, parental care and faith. There are deep traumatic quotes mentioned in the simplest manner and the story also reflects upon two entirely different people finding each other's company. Preeti Shenoy's style of writing is very engaging. Mrs Hayden's heart-rending tragic story changes the mindset of Ankita. The LIFE'S LITTLE NOTES which the protagonist Ankita writes has the power to make everyone who have lost hopes in their lives to come back to the positive track. The character and the story of Mrs. Hayden is so beautifully portrayed that it has the power to bring back Ankita to her normalcy. Mental health problem is like a shadow. Wherever one go, it will be scrutinised, whatever they do will be judged as a disease, and they won't be able to express the emotions, in a fear of being misjudged. These kinds of problems are undergone by Ankita who is out in the normal world. She wants to erase her past and start all over. But the return of her past memories, Joseph and her encounter with the suicide manual throws her off track. One after the other external circumstances builds up new challenges for her. The character of Ankita is well developed and the ending of the novel is uplifting and shows how severe mental illness can be treated. The wise choice of words about life management and fixing one's mind towards positivity is truly stunning. Even though, Ankita feels she is imperfect, she is perfect in her own ways. There is no wrong in being imperfect; Ankita is imperfectly perfect in her own way of living her life. Ankita's dark past, the way of overcoming her haunting past and learning about life, all these would show she is really incredible. The Story is set in the year 1993 and it has been meticulously followed and wonderfully portrayed. Preeti Shenoy through the dressing style, songs and mention of the past events relate with the present. This novel focusses on the importance of having kind hearted and open- minded people around, who listen, support and encourage. Sometimes many don't find that kind of unconditional positive support in parents nor in friends, but it may be a kind stranger, an acquaintance or a teacher. This novel, highlights the importance of having soulful conversations and having the strength to overcome negative thoughts. Preeti Shenoy is a phenomenal author who captures the agony of the mind and urges people to get over negative resilience. Though the book is a sequel, Shenoy has beautifully unravelled the past in periodically. The Title of all the thirty-three chapters of the book are of most popular songs titles that blend so well with the story, except chapter twenty-six because it has the book name as its title. This novel reiterates how mental health is important. The book deals with depression, mental health, love, college life, friendship, betrayal, trust, parental care and relationship. This is an enlightening tale with a meaningful end. It explores different facets of bipolar disorder and makes one realize it's gravity that things can drastically change for someone from being the topper of the class to considering dropping the course, from memorizing every sentence with just a glance it, to unable to read even a single word.

Preeti Shenoy, an acclaimed wizard at her craft, leaves no stones un-turned and pulls back in the world of Ankita with fitness. Though eight years apart, none will miss the pulse of this sequel book. This novel takes

one inside the mind of Ankita, as she battles with her mind while stepping into the real world. Ankita loves everything that she does at the present until all her past turns up at her doorstep. This novel explores the depth of a mind, submerged in negativity and also shows how to emerge with positivity. One of the best parts of this book is the way how Ankita handles her mental pressure by writing notes. Ankita is considered as a girl of positive aura. Mrs. Hayden is the most important part of the novel. There is a heart wrenching back-story for Mrs. Hayden, acting as a source of inspiration for Ankita. Mrs. Hayden's way of approaching life and her tough battles she faced were incomparable. That make Ankita face her life with positive thoughts. In the end, Ankita tops her batch. Her life changes into the best way as she had imagined. This book accurately exposes what a depression survivor goes through. In the end, Ankita is stronger. Some books change our way of thinking, gives value to our relationships, analyses our life events in a new light and inspire us from the very beginning. This book belongs to that kind of rare species. *Wake Up, Life is Calling* is a book that brings out the sheer importance of something that we have always taken for granted--Mental health. This book is nothing less than motivation written in a flowery language. No matter, what happens we have to believe, embrace, challenge to accept the life. Believing in self-transformation makes us grow. Moreover, if our mind is in conflict, resolving it instead of self-pitying or self-doubting would prove helpful. Trust the wait, embrace the uncertainty, and enjoy the beauty of becoming strong, when nothing is certain anything is possible. This novel teaches the lesson of, keep on fighting the unwanted things in your life. The book is a deep inspiring account of growing up. Hope has the power to change someone's life, entirely. Whatever happens in our lives is not permanent. All we need to have is hope and positivity even at difficult situations. Life is all about balancing the upcoming arrivals and departures. Learn to move on, believe in universe, have faith in God and have hope in your life. The novel demonstrates how one can reset one's life by changing the thoughts. The positive ending of this novel is like a light in the dark tunnel. The research paper doesn't stop with analysing the psychological trauma but goes on to talk about how the mentally ill person is treated even in their close circle. The research finds out that the mind is the ultimate source of stimulating bad thoughts and influencing one to be trapped in their own head. The paper briefly describes about how psychological trauma has the power to destroy one's normal life. This paper tries to prove that psychological trauma is the reason for Ankita's sufferings. It also, suggests steps to overcome the haunting traumatic experiences. Through the novel, one can understand that, by changing our thoughts, we can change our life itself.

In this research paper, the reference from the original text is used to justify the psychological trauma undergone by the protagonist Ankita Sharma. By doing so, the paper paves way for further research of the power of positive thinking present in the novel. Lack of positive thinking makes Ankita doubt herself, so she gets depressed to live her life. This paper finds out that the positive thinking present in the novel can influence an adult's life and make them to feel inferior of their own existence. The paper analyses how mind acts as foe in one's life and it can also be a friend when one tries hard to break their self-doubt and fear. This solution is stated from the novel. This paper compares how one's fear and guilt spoil the life of an adult by getting trapped into one's own negative thoughts that eradicates the agony of mind. This research project traces the most important topic, mental health. It also compares the upcoming circumstances to create awareness in this contemporary world. This research delineates that mind is the source of one's happiness in life.

The objective of this research is to make people understand the significance and notions of mental health. This research provides wide knowledge of mental illness which helps people to understand the importance of mental health and the fact that, mental health is equally important like our physical health. Every idea discussed in Chapter II is to justify the answer for the research question and this paper would help future researchers to get a better understanding of Psychological Trauma. The research paper also focuses on how positive thinking changes one's life in a positive way to achieve and mend inner peace. It also tends to prove the statement in the second chapter. Choice of words and powerful positive hopeful sentences plays a vital role in this novel which was chosen by author is more engaging and elegant. Finally, the research paper includes a delightful ending with a positive note, which is the soothing event in protagonist Ankita's life. It would be the proud moment of Ankita in her college auditorium on the graduation. This would be considered as the achievement of mending inner peace by defeating psychological trauma that kept Ankita chained. Since Psychological Trauma is an emerging new theory, secondary sources are limited. The research can only answer the research questions and it has answered it in great detail by acknowledging the quotations using the primary source. While answering the questions in detail, the research has to limit itself to contain the answer. It has tried to prove how mental health is equally important like physical health for mending inner peace in one's life.

### • Scope for Further Research

Future research can be conducted on the writing style and narrative technique of a positive thinking, philosophical views and Individual Psychology. The results of the research can be useful for the future research based using hope theory. The research could be conducted in detail by collecting the empirical data. The research can also be undertaken with the theory of Positive Thinking.

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