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PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA IN PREETI SHENOY'S LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

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ABSTRACT

Literature has always served as a window into the multifaceted aspects of human existence. It incorporates all kinds of human relationships, not just those between men and women. It draws attention to many social aspects of the human experience while offering insightful suggestions for societal advancement. In addition to reflecting social reality, literature also influences the intricate ways in which men and women construct themselves, interact with one another, and perceive sociocultural reality. Every human being requires the company and support of other people to survive. Nevertheless, despite the shared objectives and passions, the significance of emotional value cannot be overlooked. This article highlights the viewpoint expressed by Preeti Shenoy in one of her best-selling Indian novels. Life is What You Make it, her second novel, was one of the best-selling in 2011. People have referred to her as a relationship specialist. She examines human interactions in Preeti Shenoy's novel, Life is What You Make it; that is the goal of this research.

KEYWORDS: Dependence, Emotions, Gender, Relationship, Survival, Psychology, Society, and Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preeti Shenoy is a well-established Indian author, renowned for her work in the contemporary fiction genre. Over the course of her literary career, she has authored several best-selling novels, short story collections, and essays that have resonated with a wide audience. A significant aspect of her appeal lies in her ability to weave deeply emotional and relatable narratives; often the author's academic background in business management reflects her structured approach to storytelling, which is evident in her well-planned plots and character arcs. Despite her background in business, she shifted to a full-time writing career, and this transition showcases her passion for literature and her desire to share stories that touch the hearts of readers. Her writing style is characterized by clarity, accessibility, and emotional depth. Her novels are known for their simple yet evocative prose, which makes them easy to engage with while also leaving an impression on the reader. She often incorporates themes such as personal challenges, the intricacies of familial and romantic relationships, and the societal pressures faced by individuals in modern India. By exploring these themes, Shenoy connects with a diverse readership, offering relatable characters who navigate life's complexities in a way that mirrors the experiences of many readers. She is known for her ability to balance emotional intensity with a pragmatic view of life. While her stories often involve profound emotional experiences, they do so with a sense of hope and resilience, suggesting that personal growth and healing are always possible, even in the face of hardship. Shenoy adeptly crafts relatable settings in her writing. Whether it is the bustling streets of urban India or quiet rural locales, her descriptive writing transports readers to environments that feel authentic and lived-in. The places she describes often act as an extension of the characters, influencing their emotions and decisions, thus enhancing the reader's connection to the story. Her work is marked by an optimism that underscores her narratives. While the characters may face deep emotional struggles or challenging circumstances, the overarching message tends to be one of resilience, healing, and self-empowerment. This balance of optimism with realistic portrayals of life's difficulties allows Shenoy's work to resonate with readers from diverse backgrounds and walks of life.

2. TESTAMENT TO THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS AND RESILIENCE

Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It* stands as a poignant testament to the transformative power of relationships and resilience, yet its thematic depth—encompassing the interplay of love, mental fragility, and existential defiance—invites fruitful comparisons with canonical works in English literature. By juxtaposing Shenoy's narrative against those of Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, and Arundhati Roy, we discern shared preoccupations with the inner lives of women ensnared by societal webs, while noting Shenoy's distinctive infusion of redemptive hope amid modern Indian contexts. These parallels illuminate how Shenoy both echoes and innovates upon literary explorations of personal agency, where bonds either liberate or confine, and perseverance emerges as a bulwark against nihilistic despair.

A striking affinity emerges between Ankita Sharma's psychological unraveling and Esther Greenwood's in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), both chronicling the harrowing descent of ambitious young women into mental illness precipitated by relational pressures and unattainable ideals. Like Ankita, whose bipolar disorder fractures her seemingly perfect life, Esther grapples with indecision and alienation, her mind a battleground where love's promises curdle into isolation. Plath captures this suffocation through the novel's titular metaphor: "To the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is a bad dream" (Plath 78). This echoes Ankita's letters to Vaibhav, where vulnerability bleeds into despair, as in her plea, "Take care, ok? I love you" (Shenoy 29-42), a fragile tether amid emotional collapse. Yet, where Plath's existentialism veers toward unrelenting bleakness—Esther's recovery tentative and shadowed by suicide's specter—Shenoy pivots toward affirmation. Ankita's evolution to "I am a totally different person from the one you knew" (Shenoy 289-301) underscores perseverance's triumph, offering a culturally resonant counterpoint to Plath's Western ennui, infused with Indian emphases on familial bonds and self-forgiveness. Both authors, however, wield intimate epistolary elements—Esther's journals paralleling Ankita's correspondence—to humanize madness, challenging readers to confront mental health not as aberration but as a relational crucible.

Shenoy's nonlinear structure, commencing with flashbacks to Ankita's letters, further aligns with Virginia Woolf's modernist innovations in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), where fragmented inner monologues dissect the passage of time and the fragility of self amid social facades. Clarissa Dalloway's party preparations unfold over a single

day, much like Ankita's retrospective revelations, both narratives weaving past and present to expose how relationships warp temporal experience. Woolf muses on this distortion: "The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length" (Woolf 45). This resonates with Ankita's stalled youth, her twenties eclipsed by institutionalization, yet Shenoy tempers Woolf's elegiac melancholy—evident in Septimus Warren Smith's suicidal unraveling—with hope's persistence, as Vaibhav's vow, "Life is what you make it, Ankita. I am willing to wait for you forever" (Shenoy 78-89), refracts Clarissa's fleeting "moments of being." While Woolf critiques post-war disillusionment through class-bound isolation, Shenoy extends this to postcolonial youth nihilism, advocating existential choice over fatalism, her prose more accessible yet equally probing of women's veiled turmoil.

Within Indian English literature, Shenoy's portrayal of love as a defiant force against fate finds a profound counterpart in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), where forbidden bonds shatter under caste and colonial legacies, mirroring Ankita's relational trials in a stratified society. Roy's twins, Rahel and Estha, navigate fractured family ties much as Ankita does, their story a tapestry of "Love Laws" dictating affection's bounds: "They all broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (Roy 159). This parallels Shenoy's theme of perseverance conquering destiny, as Ammu and Velutha's illicit passion—doomed yet luminous—evokes Vaibhav's unwavering faith, refusing to "belittle love" (Shenoy 115-130). Both novels employ nonlinear timelines to revisit trauma, but Roy's lyrical surrealism amplifies political indictment, contrasting Shenoy's intimate psychological realism. Where Roy mourns love's tragic inevitability amid systemic violence, Shenoy champions its redemptive potential, aligning with her broader oeuvre's existential humanism that counters youth alienation through relational renewal.

In synthesizing these voices, Shenoy emerges as a bridge between modernist introspection and contemporary self-help ethos, her work less fatalistic than Plath or Woolf, more optimistic than Roy's elegy. Through Ankita, Shenoy reaffirms literature's role in weaving social fabrics anew, urging readers toward bonds that foster, rather than fracture, the human spirit.

3. FAMILY RULES, FORBIDDEN LOVES, AND HIDDEN REGRETS

In Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It*, the plot unfurls as a tapestry of constrained affections and emotional reckonings, where Ankita Sharma's journey from youthful exuberance to psychological fracture is inexorably shaped by the rigid edifice of conservative familial expectations. Her parents' prohibitions—barring male companionship beyond supervised spheres or even telephonic intimacies—erect invisible barriers that amplify the clandestine intensity of her bonds, transforming love into a perilous rebellion. Shenoy masterfully elevates these dynamics to underscore the bedrock virtues of trust, love, and reciprocity in familial and friendly ties, positing them as the true architects of fulfillment. As Ankita navigates her entanglements with Vaibhav, the steadfast epistolary anchor from her Delhi schooldays; Abhi, whose blood-scrawled missive and subsequent tragic drowning etch indelible guilt; and Joseph, a Bombay MBA-era salve that only deepens her self-loathing, the narrative whispers a profound truth: "I loathed myself for lying to Joseph. I loathed myself for not having admitted the truth to Abhi. And I loathed myself for not being able to tell the whole truth to Vaibhav. I despised myself for getting involved with three different men" (Shenoy 210). This confessional torrent, culminating in her forty-two-page epistle to Suvi, illuminates how unreciprocated expectations—Abhi's fervent pleas for marital vows unmet by Ankita's ambivalence—can precipitate catastrophe, birthing bipolar swings between manic creativity and abyssal voids. Shenoy thus critiques the gendered asymmetries in romantic envisioning: where women may romanticize futures, men invest with irrevocable gravity, a mismatch that, compounded by parental incineration of love letters, fosters a guilt complex that erodes the self. Yet, amid this, Shenoy advocates for empathetic reciprocity, urging readers to honor love's roots lest it wither into regret, while affirming that hope and acceptance can mend even destiny's cruelest weaves.

This exploration of love's double-edged blade—nurturing yet devastating under societal and familial scrutiny—resonates deeply with English literary traditions, where female protagonists similarly contend with relational guilts that catalyze mental disintegration. A poignant parallel emerges in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963), where Esther Greenwood's descent mirrors Ankita's bipolar odyssey, both triggered by the suffocating interplay of romantic disillusionment and patriarchal oversight. Esther, like Ankita, feigns normalcy amid academic triumphs and fleeting affairs, only for guilt over unspoken truths to propel her into electroshock therapies and suicidal

ideation: "I felt very still and very empty, the way the eye of a tornado must feel, moving dully along in the middle of the surrounding hullabaloo" (Plath 102). Plath's raw depiction of manic highs—Esther's fig-tree reveries of infinite paths—echoes Ankita's terrace dances and poetic frenzies as futile balms for Abhi's ghost, yet where Plath's narrative lingers in unrelieved alienation, Shenoy infuses redemptive arcs through Vaibhav's enduring letters, transforming guilt into a catalyst for growth rather than eternal entrapment. Both authors, drawing from personal encounters with mental fragility, humanize bipolarity as a relational affliction, not mere pathology, challenging readers to dismantle the stigma of women's emotional "hysteria" in conservative milieus.

Shenoy's nonlinear revelations of past loves, interspersed with present-day asylum reflections, further evoke Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), where Clarissa Dalloway's poised sociality conceals a lifetime of suppressed desires and survivor's guilt over lost paramours like Peter Walsh. Woolf probes the temporal distortions wrought by relational regrets—"What is this terror? what is this ecstasy?" (Woolf 12)—much as Ankita's flashbacks to Abhi's seaside demise replay in manic loops, her parents' letter-burning a symbolic severing akin to Clarissa's renunciation of passion for marital security. However, Woolf's modernist melancholy, shadowed by Septimus's war-haunted suicide, contrasts Shenoy's existential optimism; Ankita's vow to "not belittle a person's love" (Shenoy 115) refracts Clarissa's fleeting "moments of being" into a deliberate reclamation of agency, adapting Woolf's introspection to postcolonial Indian conservatism where familial "Love Laws" stifle more insidiously than Edwardian propriety.

Within the diaspora of Indian English literature, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) amplifies these motifs through Ammu's forbidden dalliance with Velutha, a transgression against caste-bound conservatism that unleashes familial wrath and psychological exile, paralleling Ankita's parental vetoes on her suitors. Roy's incantatory prose captures love's vengeful undercurrents: "The steel band dissolved into the night... It left a metallic echo on the water, like the sound of grief" (Roy 273), evoking Abhi's alcohol-fueled drowning as a grief-echo of unmet vows. Both narratives dissect how conservative scaffolds—Ankita's blood-tied letters consigned to flames, Ammu's "small things" policed by history—engender guilt that fractures the psyche, yet Roy's tragic fatalism, steeped in colonial scars, yields to Shenoy's hopeful humanism, where Joseph's flawed interlude and Vaibhav's fidelity propel Ankita toward integration, not isolation. Shenoy thus extends Roy's indictment of relational taboos into a blueprint for empathy, positing that reciprocal bonds, unmarred by belittlement, can transcend even the most conservative fates.

Through these lenses, Shenoy's passages emerge as a vital interlocutor in English letters, bridging Plath and Woolf's introspective despair with Roy's socio-political lament, while carving a niche for resilient Indian femininity. In an era where mental health dialogues proliferate, her work reaffirms literature's alchemy: transmuting personal guilts into universal beacons of perseverance.

4. ECLIPSE OF THE SELF: BIPOLAR SHADOWS AND LITERATURE'S ILLUMINATING ROLE

Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It* charts Ankita Sharma's harrowing plunge into psychological abyss following her romantic upheavals, where grief morphs into a pervasive melancholy that severs her from academia and sleep alike. Sleepless nights haunted by unrelenting sorrow culminate in two failed suicide attempts during her nadir, precipitating a formal diagnosis of bipolar disorder—a volatile affliction marked by precipitous oscillations between manic exuberance, brimming with vitality and euphoria, and depressive troughs that summon suicidal ideation. As her symptoms escalate, her parents, once unwitting architects of her relational constraints, rally with desperate fervor to orchestrate interventions, ultimately consigning her to a psychiatric ward where despair amplifies to excruciating crescendos. In this vortex, fate's inexorable cruelty appears to orchestrate her unraveling, rendering her existence a maelstrom of institutional sterility and inner torment. Shenoy poignantly captures this duality in Ankita's manic highs: "I felt invincible... words flowed like a river in spate" (Shenoy 180), only for the depressive crash to echo as "a void so deep, it swallowed everything" (Shenoy 206), underscoring bipolar's propensity for relational ruin and suicidal peril, as the narrative warns, "Bipolar disorder can be so severely crippling that it can result in damaged relationships... and even suicide" (Shenoy 206).

This generational portrait extends beyond individual pathos to indict modernity's frenetic cadence, where youth falters under unrelenting pressures, blurring triumphs with irretrievable erosions. Shenoy positions literature as an unfailing compass—delineating societal fissures while proffering antidotes—its symbiotic dance with culture both mirroring conventions, mores, and ethos, and mending communal lacunae. As cultural stewards, authors—immersed yet acutely

observant—seize resonant afflictions, channeling personal convictions into communal visions to shatter entrenched myths. Shenoy embodies this ethos, her narrative not merely dissecting bipolar stigma but advocating resilience and recovery, as Ankita emerges from asylum shadows to affirm, "Life is what you make it... with hope, you can rewrite your story" (Shenoy 312). In an interdependent literary-societal nexus, such works enrich collective intellect, urging contemporary scribes to perpetuate this vigilant, transformative dialogue.

Shenoy's unflinching gaze on bipolar's manic-depressive pendulum and institutional entrapment resonates profoundly with English literature's canon of mental anguish, where female psyches fracture under existential and societal strains, yet often glint with redemptive flickers. Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) offers the starkest analogue, with Esther Greenwood's suicide bids—gassing ovens, pill hoards—mirroring Ankita's attempts amid a similar post-romantic void, both ensnared by the "bell jar" of depression: "It was as if what I wanted to kill in myself had been transformed into a beautiful transparent lace curtain" (Plath 154). Plath's semi-autobiographical ferocity, drawn from her own electroconvulsive therapies, parallels Shenoy's awareness-raising intent, humanizing bipolar as a societal indictment rather than isolated frailty; however, where Plath's recovery teeters on ambiguity, Ankita's parental advocacy and therapeutic odyssey yield explicit renewal, adapting Plath's mid-century alienation to millennial Indian resilience. Both novels dismantle stigma through visceral confessionals, positioning literature as a bulwark against the "fast-paced, crazy lifestyle" that exacerbates such descents.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) extends this thread through Septimus Warren Smith's shell-shocked disintegration—hallucinations birthing suicidal leaps from windows—juxtaposed against Clarissa Dalloway's veiled melancholies, evoking Ankita's restless institutional nights as echoes of Woolf's temporal distortions: "She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged... Life; London; this moment of June" (Woolf 3). Woolf's modernist polyphony, informed by her own manic-depressive cycles and institutional sojourns, critiques post-war disaffection much as Shenoy probes generational stress, yet Woolf's fatalism—Septimus's unheeded pleas—contrasts Shenoy's hopeful reciprocity, where parental "great lengths" for treatment symbolize literature's gap-filling potential. Woolf, too, as societal observer, wields narrative to dispel "false viewpoints" of mental fortitude, her stream-of-consciousness a precursor to Shenoy's epistolary flashbacks, both illuminating how culture's "conventions" amplify inner turmoil.

In the postcolonial vein, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) amplifies these motifs via the twins' trauma-induced silences and Ammu's guilt-fueled decline, where forbidden loves precipitate a depressive stasis akin to Ankita's college abandonment: "The river shrank and black crows gorged on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees" (Roy 1), a lyrical shroud over familial disintegration. Roy's indictment of caste-bound "Love Laws" parallels Shenoy's conservative parental edicts, both engendering suicidal undercurrents—Estha's mute despair evoking Ankita's voids—yet Roy's cyclical fatalism yields to Shenoy's linear redemption, where literature's "torchbearer" role manifests in Ankita's rebirth, countering Roy's elegiac losses with actionable hope. Shenoy thus bridges Woolf and Plath's introspective despair with Roy's socio-cultural lament, her work a contemporary clarion for mental health equity, affirming literature's perennial duty to "enhance the intellectual fabric" amid ambiguity.

5. THERAPEUTIC EMPATHY AND THE ALCHEMY OF SELF-REINVENTION

In the shadowed corridors of recovery within Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It*, Ankita Sharma encounters Dr. Madhusudan, an enigmatic yet profoundly compassionate psychiatrist whose interventions become the fulcrum of her metamorphosis from despair to empowerment. As a stranger initially, he swiftly transcends clinical detachment, framing her bipolar disorder not as a curse but as a hallmark of heightened sensitivity among the gifted: “Creativity is closely associated with bipolar disorder. This condition is unique. Many famous historical figures and artists have had this. Yet they have led a full life and contributed so much to the society and world at large. See, you have a gift. People with bipolar disorder are very very sensitive... They are able to experience emotions in a very deep and intense way. It gives them a very different perspective of the world. It is not that they lose touch with reality. But the feelings of extreme intensity are manifested in creating things. They pour their emotions into either writing or whatever field they have chosen” (Shenoy 181). This empathetic reframing dissolves Ankita's anxiety, igniting a spark of validation; as she reflects, “He truly cared and that made all the difference. It is indeed amazing how words and kindness have the power to heal” (Shenoy 182). Inspired by Dr. Madhusudan's personal odyssey—his sister's suicide propelling him into psychiatry—he imparts a philosophy of life's sanctity: “Life is a gift... Nothing is lost just because you dropped out

of MBA. It is not the be-all and end-all of life. You can still do other things in life" (Shenoy 185). This paradigm shift unveils uncharted vistas for Ankita, who discovers her latent prowess in writing—evident from her forty-two-page confessional to Suvi—and painting, talents unearthed through the doctor's perceptive gaze. Initially stunned by the exposure of her intimacies, she finds liberation in unburdening: "Sometimes all one needs is a strong anchor, a person you can trust blindly. Someone will be there to lead you and never let you down. To me, Dr Madhusudan was that person" (Shenoy 190).

Dr. Madhusudan's archetype of the ideal healer—marked by unwavering presence and motivational candor—facilitates Ankita's discharge with a heartfelt token: a card inscribed, "I owe you a lot. You have taught me the value of life" (Shenoy 250). Her rehabilitation unfolds through a holistic regimen of pharmacotherapy, structured routines encompassing reading, yoga, and nature immersion, alongside sustained counseling. Over six months in the psychiatric institute, she forges bonds with fellow patients, rooted in empathy, solidarity, and reciprocal trust, emerging not merely restored but transfigured. This institutional cocoon fosters relational maturity, ethical evolution, and an abiding reverence for existence's fragility. Ankita internalizes that life's quintessence resides in love, care, and unyielding appreciation, vowing henceforth to "never belittle love, no matter where it comes from," and to attune to others' affections with profound empathy (Shenoy 115). Culminating in a creed of daily gratitude—"If you do not laugh for a day, if you have not made somebody's day happier, if you have not appreciated something good that has happened to you, and if you have not felt thankful to be alive, then you have wasted that day of your life on earth" (Shenoy 300)—her journey epitomizes therapy's alchemy: transmuting affliction into artistry, isolation into interconnection, and despondency into deliberate flourishing.

Shenoy's depiction of therapeutic redemption and creative catharsis in bipolar recovery dialogues are richly with English literature's explorations of mental healing, where empathetic anchors and self-reinvention illuminate the psyche's resilience against institutional and societal shadows. Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) provides a visceral parallel in Esther Greenwood's electroshock odyssey under the brusque Dr. Gordon, whose mechanical detachment exacerbates her alienation, contrasting Dr. Madhusudan's nurturing profundity: "I thought the bell jar descended again and pressed down on my head" (Plath 155). Yet, Esther's tentative resurgence—scribbling poetry post-therapy—mirrors Ankita's channeled intensities, both affirming creativity's lifeline amid mania; Plath's confessional rawness, drawn from her own treatments, underscores therapy's dual edge, but Shenoy's optimistic closure, with Ankita's patient solidarities, extends Plath's ambiguity into affirmative agency, adapting mid-century American skepticism to Indian familial fortitude.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and her essay *On Being Ill* (1926) further resonate, portraying mental fragility through Clarissa's introspective recoveries and Septimus's thwarted pleas for compassionate care, evoking Woolf's advocacy for "the art of illness" as a portal to deepened perception: "Illness... sharpens the edge of consciousness" (Woolf, *On Being Ill* 12). This echoes Dr. Madhusudan's gift-of-sensitivity discourse, where bipolar's "extreme intensity" fuels artistic outpourings, much as Woolf's own manic phases birthed modernist masterpieces; however, Woolf's elegiac undercurrents—therapy as fleeting solace—yield to Shenoy's structured renewal via yoga and communal bonds, Woolf's Bloomsbury elitism refracted through Shenoy's accessible, postcolonial humanism that democratizes healing as relational praxis.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) complements this triad by weaving therapeutic echoes into narrative reclamation, where Ammu's post-trauma fragments find partial mending through the twins' empathetic witnessing, akin to Ankita's co-patient alliances: "Small things. And big things... Things that were not supposed to happen" (Roy 135). Roy's lyrical indictment of caste-bound madness parallels Shenoy's conservative catalysts for Ankita's breakdown, yet where Roy's healing remains haunted by irrevocable losses, Shenoy's culminates in proactive vows—never to waste a day—infusing Roy's fatalistic poetics with existential blueprints for gratitude and kindness, thus bridging literary lament to lived transformation.

Through these convergences, Shenoy's passages affirm literature's therapeutic lineage: from Plath's stark reckonings and Woolf's perceptual illuminations to Roy's socio-emotional sutures, her work carves a beacon for contemporary readers, where anchors like Dr. Madhusudan herald not just survival, but symphonic selfhood.

6. CONCLUSION

In the luminous tapestry of Preeti Shenoy's *Life Is What You Make It*, Ankita Sharma's odyssey—from the euphoric heights of youthful ambition to the shadowed valleys of bipolar despair, and

ultimately to the dawn of self-reclaimed serenity—serves as a microcosm of the human spirit's indomitable weave. Through her masterful interplay of relational fractures and redemptive bonds, Shenoy not only chronicles the perils of conservative strictures and romantic asymmetries but also extols the alchemical grace of therapeutic empathy and communal solidarity. This narrative arc, infused with an unyielding optimism, transcends the personal to echo the collective yearnings of a generation adrift in modernity's tempests, where mental fragility is both a crucible and a catalyst for profound reinvention.

By drawing resonant parallels with Sylvia Plath's confessional starkness, Virginia Woolf's modernist reveries, and Arundhati Roy's postcolonial elegies, Shenoy positions her work as a vital conduit in English literature's enduring dialogue on women's inner worlds. Where Plath and Woolf linger in the elegiac mists of alienation and temporal disarray, and Roy mourns the inexorable scars of societal edicts, Shenoy charts a bolder trajectory: one where fate's cruel designs yield to the deliberate artistry of perseverance, gratitude, and unbelittled love. Her accessible prose, rooted in the authentic pulse of urban and familial India, democratizes these explorations, rendering mental health not as an esoteric affliction but as a universal summons to empathy and growth.

Finally, *Life Is What You Make It* stands as Shenoy's clarion call to readers: in the intricate dance of relationships and resilience, every unraveling thread offers the promise of a stronger seam. As Ankita emerges, transformed yet tenderly human, she embodies the novel's credo—that life's true measure lies not in evading shadows, but in illuminating them with acts of kindness, creative fervor, and unwavering hope. In an era shadowed by isolation and haste, Shenoy's voice reminds us that literature, ever the faithful mirror and mender of our souls, invites us to rewrite our stories, one empathetic stitch at a time. Through such tales, we not only heal but harmonize, forging from fragility a legacy of luminous possibility.

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