

Preeti Shenoy's Portrayal of New Woman in *It Happens for a Reason*

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Abstract:

Preeti Shenoy is a well renowned writer among the top five highest selling authors in India. She has been awarded the Academia Award for Business Excellence by the New Delhi Institute of Management. She has also given lectures in many educational institutions including IIT's and IIM's and corporate organisations such as KPMG, Infosys and Accenture. Her works include *34 Bubblegums and Candies, Life is What You Make It, Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake, The Secret Wishlist, The One You Can not Have, It Happens for a Reason, Love, Kisses and All Things Warm, Why We Love The Way We Do, Its All in the Planets, A Hundred Little Flames, Love A Little Stronger, The Rule Breakers, Wake Up, Life is Calling, and The Magic Mindset: How to Find Your Happy Place*. Shenoy depicts her women characters bold, independent, and strong woman. Trisha, Nidhi, Sujata, Mary in *Its All in the Planets* and Vipasha Mishra in *It Happens for a Reason* are such examples. Trisha wants to live life according to her own wish. She does not like possessive nature of Aniket. Nidhi follows her own dreams and takes interest in blogging and pottery. Vipasha Mishra gives birth to a son out of wedlock and rearshim single handedly. And *Tea for Two and a Piece of Cake* is a story of Nisha who is a girl-next door with an average appearance and plum and her life is far from perfect. But she learns live life according to her own wish.

Keywords: free zeal, passion, decision making, career, independent status, and destiny.

In *It Happens for a Reason*, the protagonist Vipasha Mishra is only nineteen years old when novel begins. She has given birth to her son Aryan without wedlock. Everyone, including her own parents specially her mother, is reluctant. They do not support her in this decision. Even the father of child Ankush Bhargav also suggests her to not to give birth this child, but she takes decision and gives birth to the child. She cuts the ties with everyone except with her friend Suchi and her mother. When she gives birth to her son Aryan at hospital, there is no one from family and friends except the hospital staff. Later, Suchi's mother comes and takes care of both the newly born child and its mother. She is a single mother. Her decision of giving birth, in spite of reluctance of so many people, shows her bold self. She does not get love of her mother. This reason may have been behind her decision of giving birth to her child even going against the society, because she wants to give love to the child. It is clear when she states:

When I look back, the most prominent thing I can remember about my growing -up years is the hurt and confusion. May be that was why I decided to keep the baby when I discovered I was pregnant. It was as though the baby was one stable thing that was exclusively mine- something that nobody could take away from me, something of my very own, where I was in charge. Something to cherish, to love and to care. (47)

Vipasha's mother has been indifferent towards her. Even she was sent to boarding school, when she was only eight years old. It was happened after when she found her mother sharing bed with other man. After sending to boarding school, she even rarely visits her father's home in summer vacations. She spends time with her best friend Suchi's home at Kerala during vacations. And her mother never complains about it, instead, she is happy with it. Usha Bande in *Mothers and Mother- Figures in Indo -English Literature*, rightly remarks about mother daughter relationship: "[Paradoxically and quite interestingly] It is only when the daughter reconnects with the mother through memories and unwritten histories of the male hegemonic power that the daughter is able to identify with the mother and validate the self" (92-93).

Mother's influence on the daughter's life leaves indelible impressions. Mother involuntarily becomes instrumental in instilling the patterns of inferiority in their daughter's mind that creates the feelings of ambivalence in the daughter. The changing socio-cultural demands autonomy of thoughts as the two are different individuals and have different expectations and challenges to meet in their lives. Vipasha's mother neglects her throughout years. This thing instills Vipasha with feelings of rejection. Her mother was never with her.

When Vipasha gets fame through modelling career, she starts introducing her to her friend circle. But when she finds that Vipasha is pregnant, she does not support her, and stops talking to her. Even she suggests her abortion. But Vipasha, who has lived indifference of her mother so far, is now reluctant to follow her instructions. When she asks Vipasha, “Why? What was need? And who is it? That boy who came home?”, Vipasha replies, “‘Yes Ma, and I love him.’ / At least I think it is love.”

Her mother further asks:

‘What the hell do you know of love, Vipasha? How in the world can you sleep with someone in the name of love? How . . . how could you?’

Then Vipasha replied in rude tone:

‘The same way you cheated on Dad and slept with whoever you slept with’. (103)

Vipasha further regrets what she says:

There are some truths you should never say. No matter how much it bothers you, no matter how much you want to blurt it out, no matter how important you think it is to say it, it is best buried, suppressed, killed. Saying the truth out loud will only cause a pain so lacerating, so wounding that it will be impossible to heal. But I was too young, frightened and in a massive state of shock to comprehend that. I wished the instant I said them that could take them back. And tell her that I didn’t mean them. That the words had come out harsher than I’d intended. But I was angry and hurt. I was lashing out. I was defending myself. (103- 104)

Vipasha speaks the unspeakable. The words are so harsh that the effect it has on her mother is hard to witness. Her shoulders slump. She opens her mouth to speak and then swallows. She says nothing. She goes pale. And leaves the room. Vipasha wants to call out to her, to tell her that she is sorry. She wants to tell her that it is all terrible mistake. But she is so regretful and goes to her room. She cries and feels that she needs her mother now more than ever:

I went to my room and I lay down on my bed. I did not recognize the animal – like sound that came from my throat. It was a primitive cry of pain. A hollow wail. I was weeping for the little girl who had been sent away to boarding school because she had discovered her mother was having an affair. I was weeping for the child who had craved a mother who was there for her. I was weeping for the little baby that might be growing inside me.

I was weeping because I was scared, confused, hurt. I had suppressed all that I felt this far and now it seemed as though all the sorrow inside me had exploded. I couldn't stop it anymore. I needed my mother now more than ever, and once again she had walked away- and this time too, I was responsible. (104)

Her mother blames her for bad name. She stops calling to Vipasha. She does not share emotional bond with her. Vipasha contemplates on her relationship with her mother, and it is very disheartening to find that she lacks that strong bond with her:

My mother had stopped calling me completely. I felt miserable about it but there was nothing I could do. As long I was a model, appearing regularly on magazines and such things, she was happy to show me off. The moment I made a decision to have a baby, she had shunned me. What kind of a mother was she? I could not understand how a mother could be so selfish. None of my friends had mothers like mine. In one of the books that I read, there was a lady who abandoned three children and ran away to pursue her career in Broadway. If my mother had done this for a reason, I could at least try to understand that she was chasing her dreams. Here, it seemed to be just pure selfishness and nothing else. There was no other way to explain her behaviour. For her, she came first. I swore that when I had my baby, I would never do to my child what my mother had done to me. I would be a hands- on mother. I would be involved in everything that my child did. I would never send my child away to a boarding school, no matter how prestigious it was or how great the education. I would read a lot to my child, would do things with him/her, and would be a firm but kind mother. (117)

The above statement by Vipasha shows how much lonely she feels. She needs the care and affection of her mother, but it lacks in her life. Her mother suggests her to give this child for adoption. But for Vipasha, this baby is most precious. It is her treasure, her joy, her world, and her everything. She never planned her life. She never had goals, dreams or ambitions. She had gone along where life had taken her. And she was certain that she would find a way. And now, in her womb a real, live child is growing. She does some mental calculations. She can take care of this baby for two or three years. She does not need to do work for two or three years, after that she will manage. She shows her strong decision regarding upbringing of the child. She states: "I didn't know what I would do, but I was certain that I would be able to do something. Yes, I had definitely not planned for this baby. But then I hadn't planned for a career in modelling either"(117).

Fulfilling their roles as wives and mothers, Shenoy's women protagonists look up to themselves for doing work for better existence in this male dominated society. In *It Happens for a Reason*, Vipasha creates her own place where she gets solace for her restless soul. She begins her search for knowledge and for a solution for her personal problems. Assuming new roles or new attitudes towards old roles, she breaks the mental barriers. She learns more about life and gradually overcome her feeling of hatred towards people who creates hurdles for her. However, these transitory retreats help her to fight against opposite circumstances. Vipasha is exceptional as she crafts her individuality and struggle against all odds to write her own destiny. Her visionary zeal illuminated the tough paths chosen by her and made her successful. She never wavers from her path. She basks in her chosen glory and gets immense pleasure in defying stereotypical social system.

Works Cited

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