

Representation of Women Characters in Preethi Shenoy's 'It's All in the Planets'

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Abstract

'It's all in the Planets' is a charismatic love story written by Preethi Shenoy. It was published in September 2016. The author of the novel, Preethi Shenoy is an Indian author, Speaker and famous blogger. In this paper, I am analysing this novel from the perspective of feminism, especially how the author presented her female characters. Feminism originated as an offshoot of the women's suffrage movement. The major feminist theorist is Toril Moi, Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter etc. It is a movement against men's ideologies and society's certain representations. Their main concern was the representations of women in literature. Traditionally females are represented in literature as passive characters. Though the feminists broke all such representations, our literary works do not completely get rid of such representations. Many of the authors still present women as passive in their works. In this novel too there are such representations. Superficially it is a love story between two persons who are living in two different worlds. They have their tastes, opinions and attitudes. Even they have two life partners (living relationships). But ultimately fate joins them.

Keywords: Representation, Passive, Incomplete, Meaningless

Introduction

As the name suggests this novel is finely chiselled with the elements of astrology. It is a fusion of love and astrology. It seems quite different. However our author, Preethi Shenoy beautifully combines these two different fields into an enchanting Tale. To make such a picturesque novel her talent as a self-taught painter also helped her a lot. Moreover, she got the 'Indian of the Year award' for 2017 by Brans Academy for her contribution to literature. Other works by the author are 'Life is What You Make It', 'Wake up Life is Calling', 'The Secret Wish List etc. Her novels are like a portrait that is interwoven with life experiences and colourful memories. This one is not different from it.

When we first hear the title of the novel we may think that it is just a usual story. But if we read it and dive deep into its core by avoiding all the hampers we will feel that it holds something significant and something thought-provoking. Like every other love story, this one also contains some tragic elements. Tragic incidents are the real thing that binds the lovers.

The main characters of the story Aniket are Nidhi. Aniket is 27 year old techie who loves a model named Trish. He was sincere in his love. But Trish was not like that. She had another relationship. While Nidhi is 32 years old and resigned from her job to pursue her aspirations. She was engaged to Manoj. Aniket and Nidhi first met during their travel. Both of them learn about each other through that journey. That time Nidhi invite Aniket to her pottery course which can help him to nurture the habit Trish wanted. He agreed to that and began his course. After taking the course a lot of changes swept his life. After the tragic death of Trish, he lost control of his life. But that time Nidhi stood with him. Nidhi began to take care of Aniket. Later they realised that they were in love. The novel ends on a happy note.

Content

The main fascination of this work is that it is structured in the form of a diary or a journal that contains the very thoughts of our two young aspirant lovers. The author used it

because a journal or diary holds personal memories, experiences etc. many of us have the habit of tracking our life using journals or diaries. So by using such a method of narration she is indeed trying to capture the reader's attention and make them a part of her narration. Besides, her narration is much similar to the technique of stream of consciousness that is applied by the writers like Virginia Woolf and James Joyce like them, Preethi Shenoy is also trying to obtain the thought process of the characters through her narrative style.

When we analyse the story from the perspective of feminism, we can notice that the author used different symbols like planets, the Zodiac Signs and the pottery course to convey some strong ideas. But all such things show the traditional way of representing women like women are weak, they can't live without a man etc. even the narrative style of the journal in which thoughts were captured, shows the predicament of characters and their other experiences, especially that of women characters. The story contains three powerful women characters. they first appear as a passive female who holds the image of stereotypical women. But during narration, they broke that cocoon of passivity and create their space. The main female characters are Nidhi, Darshita Sen and Trish. Besides, there are other minor female characters like Aniket's Mother, the girl whom he went to see as a part of a marriage alliance etc.

Nidhi she trains people to make beautiful pots, which is a pottery course. Also, she shares her ideas with people through her blog in which she tells the details of everything she came across in her life. Usually, pots are symbols that are associated with women's community. They use it for various things as a utensil in their kitchen, as a property for their art programmes etc. so by using the same symbol here the author is trying to portray stereotypical women who indulge in her own chores by teaching the pottery course. Moreover, the pot is a symbol that is connected to Mother Nature. It is made from clay or mud that is collected from our environment. Nidhi manipulates it to make different things

like Mother Nature who creates everything using her mud. But she broke all her stereotypical notions when she decided to love Aniket who is younger than she. In fact that decision made her more powerful and added meaning to her life. Traditionally our society doesn't support such marriage in which the man is younger than the woman. But here it is different.

Another woman character portrayed in this novel is Aniket's lover- Trish. Though she works in his tech firm, she is more famous as a model in the fashion industry. This character is opposite to the character of Nidhi who is caring loving and apt for the so-called 'virtuous women' images. The author portrays her as a voluptuous lady who possesses two lovers at the same time. For her, the concepts like love, faith, and commitment are just volatile concepts that hold no place in her life. She only gave importance to the process of attaining money and uses her 'lovers' as a means to achieve material wealth. But her end was tragic that she died due to a fall from a building. Perhaps the author created such an end for her with a certain purpose that is to convey the idea that vicious women will always meet their end like this. This was an age-old concept that transfers from society to society. Moreover this also resembles the ending of fairy tales that is virtue won over vice.

The third powerful woman character in the story is Darshita Sen, a famous astrologer. In the astrology field, women are fewer in number. So by making this astrologer character a woman the author is trying to say that women can control everything in the universe better than men. Also, they can manipulate it in the way they desire to. Her character plays an important role in this story though she appears only one or two times. She predicts Aniket's future and some incidents. Later it came true, especially with the death of his lover. Besides, every chapter begins with her prediction of the main character's daily horoscope. That piece of prediction will turn into true events later. So she is the one who navigates this story without her real presence.

Furthermore, the title of the story it is all in the planets on the surface level reminds us of the art of astrology. But it holds another valuable message which is the balance between men and women. In the planet system, we didn't have gender-wise classification. But from ancient days onwards we have some notions regarding the planets and the gender they stand for. For example the planets like Mars and Jupiter are stands for masculine gender while planets like Venus stands for feminine gender. Together they represent a balance in the universe. Without this our universe is incomplete. They form meaning in everything. In fact this duality makes creations which are moulded by the two different forces of attraction and action. If we look at the novel from this perspective we could find many things, that is the planets here are represented by our two characters Aniket and Nidhi and they form the balance.

There is another point, their zodiac signs are mentioned in the novel. Aniket's zodiac sign is Leo and Nidhi's is Sagittarius. Aniket's zodiac sign Leo is associated with concepts like powerful, mighty, vigorous etc. while Nidhi's is represented as a half human and half horse and it shows an incomplete creation. It is neither a human being nor a horse. Here also we can see a covert dichotomy. Male characters are always represented using the notions like great, potent, dominant etc. while female characters are always presented as weak passive and incomplete. Their life becomes meaningful only after a male figure enters their life. In this novel, Nidhi's life gets its true meaning after her encounter with Aniket. Till that time she was following her passion and trying to find a way to fulfil her life. Besides, the persons born in the zodiac sign Sagittarius are persons who speak their minds like Nidhi. She speaks everything she feels in that situation without considering the situation and the people she dealt with. In our society, we never accept such types of female figures. We brand them as bad women or shackle them in the images of immorality without because such personalities

are the ones who make real changes in this beautiful world. Preethi Shenoy exemplifies this idea through the character of Nidhi who made changes in the life of many troubled souls.

Conclusion

In conclusion, *It's all in the Planet* is a story which is made by the combination of astrology, love and life. We can say that through this novel the author portrays three powerful women characters capable of adding meaning to the life of people they meet. But in some situations, the author portrayed them in a way that our society desires –as passive and mere observers of actions that are made by male characters. In this novel, we can see this. It has three female characters and they are presented as passive and mere observers. Their life is meaningless till a male character enters their life. Even the main male character's zodiac sign is presented as one of the powerful signs that are Leo, whereas that of the female character is half-human which conveys the idea of incompleteness. This paper is to show that, whatever progress occurs in our society there would be some people who hold such ideologies like women are passive, are incapable of many things and unknowingly the author's present society's such notions through their works.

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