

The Study of Social Psychology in the Novel *It Happens for a Reason* by Preeti Shenoy



Neena

M. Phil Scholar,
Deptt. of English,
C. D. L. U. Sirsa, India

Abstract

This research paper aims to analyze the concept of social psychology. Through the social psychology, it can be understood that how a stable relationship can be achieved in life. A stable relationship in life can be achieved by passing through the four stages of The Social Penetration Theory. This theory is given by the psychologists Irwin Altman and Dalmás Taylor. There is an optional stage in this theory also that is De-penetration which shows the break-down of relationship instead stable relationship. *It Happens for a Reason* is a celebrated novel written by a well known Indian author, Preeti Shenoy. It is published in December 2014. This novel is about dreams, friendship, love and life, in which the author has successfully presented a true picture of friendship and love through different characters like Vipasha, Anush, Manav, Dr. Sourabh, Suchi, and Parkash. The novelist has herself admitted that the novel has an autobiographical touch as certain incidents coincide with her own life. All the characters in this novel are fragments of her personality, imagination and thought. They have been drawn on her experiences and feelings. All the characters in this novel chase their dreams and in fulfilling their dreams, they are affected by each other in one way or other. This paper endeavors to present how an unknown person becomes an inseparable part of life and it becomes impossible to imagine life without that person. Through this paper, I will attempt to present the development of different relationships passing through different stages of The Social Penetration Theory.

Keywords: Analyze, Psychology, Fragment, Chase, Affected, Endeavors, Inseparable

Introduction

The Social Penetration Theory shows how a person becomes an important part of one's life. Life can't be imagined without that person. This theory tells how a person interacts when he is introduced to an unknown person. How he becomes intimate with that person with the passage of time to whom he talked limited. In this theory, it is mentioned that how the stable relationships can be established. In it, this is also made clear that one should be conscious in the selection of friends who come into contact in daily life. Sometimes by the selection of wrong people, one has to suffer the whole life.

The Social Penetration Theory is a part of social psychology in which a person's behavior is noticed when he comes into contact with other person's in the society. This theory has been depicted by Irwin Altman and Dalmás Taylor in 1987. It is divided into four stages. These four stages are known as Orientation of Interaction, Exploratory Affective Exchange, Affective Exchange, and Stable Exchange. According to the first stage of this theory, one person knows a very little information about the other person. A person interacts formally to other person, when they meet first time. In the second stage, one person starts to feel connection with other person. It means exploring and learning more information about each other on a personal level. It means formality has been broken, and now one can start on a new level of communication, where people begin to share certain attributes. If both persons feel comfortable, they will show their willingness to move to the next stage of building a relationship. The third stage includes more depth than the last stage. In this stage, intimate friendship and romantic relationship come. In this stage, people share more personal information about their life and future plans. Dating and boyfriend/girlfriend are also defined in this stage. In the fourth stage of this theory, two persons

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have nothing that they have not shared. They have no secrets. There is no need of verbal language to communicate and they decide to live in a stable relationship. Only by passing these stages, a person can achieve a stable relationship in life. In 1996, Altman has up-dated this theory by introducing De-penetration which is an optional stage in this theory. In this stage, a person steps back in his relationship instead to move forward. He withdraws from his relationship that results the break-down of the relationship.

Shenoy is an Indian author. She is a very creative author who has successfully presented the different human relationships in her novels. She has used first and third person narrative techniques to show these relationships. She has not only shown the family relationship but also friendship, love and social relationships. She is born in Pune on 21st December, 1971 and now resides in Bangalore. She is known for her work in romantic genre. She has been nominated for the Forbes List of the 100 most influential celebrities in India since 2013. She is among the highest selling authors in India. *India Today* calls her "the only woman in the highest-selling league" alluding to immense popularity of her books. *Daily News and Analysis* has described her as a "Keenly observant mind" and *Cosmopolitan* has described her as "One of the India's most popular authors". *Afternoon Voice* has described as a writer who "Keeps the reader hooked from the first page to last". On June 30, 2017 Shenoy has been awarded the *Indian of the Year* award. She has also received *Business Excellence Award* instituted by *New Delhi Management Institute*. She is a keynote speaker at *Birmingham Literature Festival*, where has been released the cover of *A Hundred Little Flames* which is author's latest book.

In *It Happens for a Reason*, the author presents human psychology and complexities of human relationships. Vipasha (Vee) is the main character in this novel and the whole story moves around her. Through the character of Vipasha, she has tried to show the willingness of a woman to do something and to stand on her feet. In this novel, she has shown her autobiographical elements. Through the character of Vipasha, author has shown her willingness to do something and proves herself. In this novel, she has also shown her love for animals. In her real life, she has a dog named Lostris. She is very optimistic person. She believes that everything that happens in our life is not in our hands; it is pre-decided or pre-planned by our stars. Everything happens due to some reason that is according to the title of this novel. Every incident that happens, there remains a reason behind it whether it may be understood at that time or not

In this novel, the author has shown how friendship plays an important role in the life of a person. The author shows Vee's friendship with her friend, Suchi who plays the role of pillar in her life. "...it is a very interesting story explaining relationships, discovering some new bold aspects of friendships as they come along, their friends and true love as we see it in today's world" (Dipali, "Some Random

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Reason"). On the relationship between Vee and Suchi, The Social Penetration Theory is fully applied. Through this theory, it becomes clear that how two unknown persons become the most important part of life to each other. Firstly when they meet, they talk formally and with the passage of time, a close friendship is developed between them. Friendship is the only relationship that one chooses by own choice. The other relationships are God gifted that are provided by birth. Suchi is so concerned about the life of Vee that she tries to find out a proper match for her. In the same way, the author shows the development of stable relationship between two unknown person through the characters Suchi and Parkash. According to The Social Penetration Theory, they also decide to live in a stable relationship through marriage after development of close friendship.

The development of friendship between Vee and Dr. Sourabh, is also shown by author that is according to The Social Penetration Theory. This friendship starts when Dr. Sourabh helps her in a critical condition when her dogs were poisoned. In the starting, they talk very formally to each other. They didn't share personal information. With the passage of time, they feel comfortable with each other. She feels his presence as a mental support because she is so depressed by this situation of poisoning the dogs. She becomes so intimate with him that a close friendship is developed between them. They share personal information about each other. At this point, Vee wants to change this relationship into stable relationship but instead stable relationship, there comes De-penetration that leads to the break-down in their relationship because Dr. Sourabh is not ready to move towards stable relationship. So their relationship has to suffer break-down. In the same way, the author shows the close friendship between Vee and Manav that is not changed into a stable relationship because in this relationship Vee is not interested to change it into stable relationship. Through the relationship between Vee and Manav, author shows platonic friendship between them that is also shown by Kamala Markandaya in her novel *The Nowhere Man* (1972) between Srinivas and Mrs Pickering.

In this novel, the author shows how a child can create a bond between parents that is not established in the past. A child can nurture the relationship that remained incomplete due to some reasons in the past. The author shows it in this novel through the characters of Vipasha and Ankush. Ankush is the father of Vee's son. Although the friendship between Vee and Ankush develops and changes into a romantic relationship but it doesn't change into stable relationship. When Vee becomes pregnant, Ankush is not in favor to give birth to this baby, but Vee wants to give birth to her baby at any cost, so their relationship suffers break-down. Through this relationship, the author has shown pre-marital affair as is shown by Khushwant Singh in his novel *Train to Pakistan*, between Juggat Singh and Nooran that does not end in marriage. But when her son tries to contact his father, then Ankush responds his call and comes back. "...I wanted to know more about Ankush, what his life was like away from Vee

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and Aryan, how he became successful guy that he had become, instead what happens is that his character lands up sixteen years later" (Vinay, "A Bookworm's Musing's Review of *It Happens for a Reason*." Vee wants to know more about Ankush and he tells her about his wife and daughter to whom he has lost in an accident. So when Aryan is lost in a trip, they become so emotionally attach to each other that they decide to live with each other in a stable relationship. This is a unique bond that only a child can create between parents. So their relationship is changed into a stable relationship. "...Towards the end Preeti did point to the fact that Vee planed on confessing her feelings to Ankush, but that shouldn't have been left to the reader's imagination, especially when every other part was told in such detail – why rush the gratifying concluding sequence?" (Shanaya Tales, "Review of *It Happens for a Reason*"). I also agree that Shenoy has done ending in hurry but the ending suits to the reader's imagination so it doesn't appear inappropriate.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research paper is to show how a stable relationship can be achieved in life. Through this research paper, it becomes clear that how an unknown person becomes inseparable part of life and it becomes difficult to imagine life without that person. This achievement of stable relationship is shown by passing the four stages of The Social Penetration Theory.

Review of Literature

"...it is a very interesting story explaining relationships, discovering some new bold aspects of friends as they come along, their friends and true love as we see it in today's world" (Dipali, "Some Random Thoughts: Book Review of *It Happens for a Reason*").

"...I wanted to know more about Ankush, what his life was like away from Vee and Aryan, how he became successful guy that he had become, instead what happens is that his character lands up sixteen years later" (Vinay, "A Bookworm's Musing's Review of *It Happens for a Reason*."

"...Towards the end Preeti did point to the fact that Vee planed on confessing her feelings to Ankush, but that shouldn't have been left to the reader's imagination, especially when every other part was told in such detail – why rush the gratifying concluding sequence?" (Shanaya Tales, "Review of *It Happens for a Reason*").

Conclusion

Thus the author has successfully presented different human relationships in this novel. She

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conveys a message that one should be conscious to choose a friend in life. One must go through the steps of The Social Penetration Theory, so that desired relationships and friendships can be achieved. In daily life, every person meets different people, and among them, one chooses some people who become the most important part of life. So everyone should be very careful in dealing with different people. Through this research paper, it can be easily understood that how permanence can be achieved in a relationship by passing through the different stages of The Social Penetration Theory.

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