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The Pragmatic Study of Metafiction in Preeti Shenoy's 'The Secret Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason'

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Abstract

This study aims to spotlight the postmodern tendency of metafiction in Preeti Shenoy's selected texts. Metafiction is self-conscious in relation to language, literary form, and storytelling in fiction. This form of fiction accentuates its construct and reminds the readers to be aware of a fictional work. Shenoy is a noteworthy postmodern writer, and her famous novels are 'The Secret Wish List' (2012) and 'It Happens for Reason' (2014). These two novels exhibit the subject of postmodern metafiction through her writings. In these novels, the protagonists overcome their family doctrines to fulfill their wishes. The method of study adopted the metafiction theories proposed by Mark Currie, Patricia Waugh, and Linda Hutcheon. It highlights Shenoy's texts that represent the elements of metafiction through the protagonists. Using various theories related to postmodern metafiction, the view of metafiction in the texts is substantiated and explored. The postmodern perspective of metafiction is explored in Shenoy's texts and analyzed with metafiction theories. The study results are compared and discussed with other studies and contemporary texts concerning metafiction. The findings show that metafiction is applicable in the texts of the two novels by Shenoy. She projects the aspects of

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metafiction in her works through her writing, especially narration, both fiction and reality.

Keywords: Fiction, metafiction, postmodern, theories.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of English literature, many novels have aspects of postmodern tendencies, especially in Indian writing. Postmodernism (Hariharasudan et al., 2022) is a broad area movement that comprises many aspects such as liberal feminism, paranoia, intertextuality, parody, magical realism, pastiche, metafiction, and so on. Waugh (1984) mentions that contemporary metafictional writing deals with a response and contribution related to reality or history. While studying metafictional work gives the effect of the novel's identity. The characteristics of metafiction are unreliable narration, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality, and they often treatise both historical and political. Preeti Shenoy is a popular writer in English. Most of her works are projected as women-centric. Her notable works are 'The Secret Wish List' (Shenoy, 2012) and 'It Happens for a Reason' (Shenoy, 2014). These two novels have the postmodern tendency of metafiction, and Shenoy explores the incidents and sufferings especially faced by a married woman in the real world. She reflects these problems on the protagonists, Diksha in 'The Secret Wish List', and Vipasha in 'It Happens for a Reason'.

Many studies have been chosen regarding postmodern tendencies of paranoia (Pandeewari et al., 2020), intertextuality (Pandeewari et al., 2021), feminism (Rolin, 2004), and metanarrative (Pandeewari et al., 2022). Many researchers have also conducted the study of metafiction in different works. Some postmodern tendencies have been analyzed in Preeti Shenoy's works, but none has investigated postmodern metafiction in her works. She is a multifarious postmodern writer, and her works deal with many aspects of postmodern tendencies. Her notable works are 'The Secret Wish List' (Shenoy, 2012) and 'It Happens for a Reason' (Shenoy, 2014).

Some postmodern ideas have been explored in the work of Shenoy (see Pandeewari et al., 2020, 2021, 2022). Hence, no study transmitted the postmodern tendency of metafiction in her work, and this idea kindled the researchers to research in this area. Therefore, the present study links the gap in the literature. Furthermore, most writers express their personal ideas, issues, and sufferings in their works. Likewise, Shenoy has reflected on her perspective and interpretation of women. This highlights the novelty and significance of the present study as well. The present study focuses on postmodern metafiction in Shenoy's texts by employing the metafiction theories of Waugh, Hutcheon, and Currie, who are all centering on self-consciousness, self-historiography, and self-referential. Accordingly, the research question proposed in this study is:

- What are the metafiction elements in the selected texts of Preeti Shenoy's 'The Secret Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason'?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Postmodernism and the Definition of Metafiction

Postmodernism is an indicative effect of modernism in all fields, especially art and literature. These connotations are visible in fiction. In the postmodern age, fiction has been filled with postmodern perspectives. The famous philosopher and theorist Jean Francois Lyotard abbreviated postmodernism as “I have said and will say again that ‘postmodernism’ signifies not the end of modernism, but another relation to modernism” (Lyotard, 1984, p. 277). Postmodernism is a broad movement comprising many tendencies (Hariharasudan et al., 2022). Metafiction is among the noteworthy postmodern perspectives, and it is high relative to the self-conscious narration. Gass (1970) coined the term ‘metafiction’ in his book ‘Fiction and the Figures of Life’. He explained metafiction, and the use of metafiction is merely for understanding. This way of understanding may lead to a drastic change in the writings of fiction (Gass, 1970, pp. 24-25).

According to Gass’ theory of metafiction, Scholes (1979) defines the aspect of metafiction into four divisions. They are formal, philosophical, structural, and behavioral. The characteristics of metafiction are to break the boundary between the writer and reader, self-reflexive, and experimental. It deals with the constructive of the text, especially the exploration of ideas such as language, storytelling, the writer’s actual experience, to create awareness among the readers, and interpretation of some issues. Eco (1976) explicates, “in order to be impressed, disturbed, frightened, or touched by even the most impossible of (fictitious) worlds; we must rely upon our knowledge of the actual one” (p. 83). Here, he elucidates that the text writers must rely upon the reader’s knowledge, and each text must give a unique connotation, advice, or personal experience of a particular sequence.

2.2 Theories of Metafiction

Patricia Waugh is a popular metafiction theorist and is working as a professor at Durham University. She is a leading figure in both modernism and postmodernism. She wrote the book ‘Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction’ (Waugh, 1984). In this book, she mentions the texts’ quality and explores metafiction tactics. In the postmodern age, most of the texts have been filled with the perspective of metafiction. Therefore, she highlights metafiction that many writers explore some characters, incidents, scenes, and issues self-consciously. That is why she highly explores many connotations regarding metafiction in her 1984 book. She mentions metafiction as blended with reality in fiction. Some writers explored their slang, issues, autobiography, and experience in their texts.

Linda Hutcheon is the best metafiction theorist, and she coined the term ‘historiography metafiction’ and used it in ‘A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction’ (Hutcheon, 1988). In this book, she abbreviates the term ‘historiography metafiction’ that correlates three connotations: fiction, reality, and history. Another notable work of Hutcheon is ‘Historiography metafiction parody and the intertextuality of history’ (Hutcheon, 1989). This work artifice the aspect of metafiction with a historical note. She considers metafiction as an element explored in

fiction related to history. Hutcheon abbreviates metafiction related to the narrative technique reflected in postmodern texts. It is an exodus from the traditional narration.

Mark Currie is a notable metafiction theorist and contributed so many perspectives on postmodernism, especially metafiction and deconstruction. He has written many theoretical works, such as 'Metafiction' (Currie, 1995), 'Postmodern Narrative Theory' (Currie, 1998), and 'The Invention of Deconstruction' (Currie, 2013). These three different works are related to postmodern tendencies. In 'Metafiction', he associates metafiction with the border between fiction and criticism because some writers used different narration for metafiction. During this narration, writers explored some historical issues that may create some problems as 'misrepresentation of issues'. Metafiction texts rely upon the border between fiction and criticism, and they also sometimes relate to reality (Currie, 1995).

2.3 Related Studies in Metafiction

2.3.1 Studies Related to Patricia Waugh's Metafiction Theory

Patricia Waugh is a leading figure in both modernism and postmodernism. She is a dynamic theorist because she has contributed to metafiction, history, neuroscience, and postmodernism. She is best known for her work 'Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction' (Waugh, 1984). In this work, she has explored metafiction and its competence. She points out the characteristic features of metafiction that examine the fictional system, incorporating an aspect of both theory and criticism, creating biographies of imaginary writers, and presenting fictional works of imaginary characters (Waugh, 1984). For instance, Johnston (2017) explores metafiction through gender and politics in Egan's work by utilizing data surveillance and Waugh's (1984) metafiction theory. He found that metadata and metafiction in Egan's (2010) 'A Visit from the Goon Squad' are self-reflexive, and the ideologies are related to postmodern metafiction. In addition, this work has combined both real and fiction by bringing the idea of metafiction and highlighting the political position. In 'A Visit from the Goon Squad', Albert is the real explorer to Lou's son and guide, and Egan relates to Lou's son to evoke the history of how a real explorer behaves.

The study by Donnelly (2014) also employs the metafiction theory of Waugh (1984), it abbreviates metafiction and its development. The author points out metafiction in Naipaul's (1988) 'The Enigma of Arrival' and Wicomb's (1987) 'You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town'. These two writers have used the postmodern technique of metafiction to replicate the multipart and imbalanced structure. These two books track the narrator's development from childhood to adulthood structure. The narration helps the technique of metafiction towards its development.

The study of Bhadury (2013) explicates metafiction by highlighting the self-reflexive quality from Waugh's (1984) self-conscious narrative technique in Funke's Inkworld trilogy: 'Inkheart' (Funke, 2003), 'Inkspell' (Funke, 2005), and 'Inkdeath' (Funke, 2007), and Ende's (1979) 'The Neverending Story'. Bhadury (2013) points out that both Ende and Funke's texts are within the limit of Waugh's (1984) self-conscious narrative concept in metafiction. Cornelia Funke explores the characteristics of metatextual ideas, such as Orpheus as the villain in the 'Inkworld trilogy'. Funke further explores his childhood incidents in 'Inkheart' through the character of Fenoglio.

2.3.2 Studies Employing Hutcheon's Theory

Linda Hutcheon is a noteworthy postmodern theorist. According to her, metafiction is the relationship between the text and the world (Hutcheon, 2014). She further points out the construction of the text through the story with the writer's interpretation. She abbreviates metafiction with history and politics because many past incidents are reflected in the text. For instance, the study by Masemola (2020) explicates metafiction in South African Transitional literature. He analyses African cultural memory aspects in Fred Khumalo from his notable works 'Touch my Blood' (Khumalo, 2006) and 'Seven Steps to Heaven' (Khumalo, 2008). In these works, Khumalo explores the narrative of allochthonous memory and intermediary character, and metafiction through the portrayal of Canada, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, especially urban and rural areas. Masemola (2020) then utilizes Hutcheon's metafiction theory (Hutcheon, 1989). In 'Touch my Blood', Khumalo has explicated a nightclub fight with South Africans. Another metafiction link is that the writer Khumalo's mother's name is Thokozile, and he names Sizwe's mother's name as Thoko in 'Seven Steps to Heaven'. Next, Khumalo's father's name is Mandlakayise, who was in Seven Steps as Mandla (Masemola, 2020).

The study by Stovel (2006) utilizes Hutcheon's (1989) metafiction theory to illustrate metafiction in Shields' (2002) 'Unless' novel. This novel highlights the issues of feminism and postmodernism. In this study, Stovel (2006) abbreviates an interview with Shields. Shields explores her sufferings and feminist thought in 'Unless'. Stovel (2006) points out that the works of Shields have been filled with the postmodern technique of metafiction. In 'Unless', Shields explores reality as the main content through the narrator, who resolves her real-life dilemma. The idea of metafiction in 'Unless' is that Shields mentioned architecture through the character of Norah. Shields takes the epigraph from Eliot's (1871, 1872) 'Middlemarch'.

The study by Moss (1990) abbreviates metafiction and poetics in children's literature. Moss (1990) analyzes 'Charlotte's Web' (White, 1952), 'The Wind in Willows' (Grahame, 1908), and 'The Secret Garden' (Burnett, 1911) or 'The Eighteenth Emergency' (Byars, 1973). These works belong to true stories and are filled with metafictional elements, but not for children because they find it challenging to understand these metafiction elements. These kinds of texts have foregrounded the technique of metafiction. The writer may explore his/her childhood experience or may explore the stories of kings and queens. Therefore, these kinds of stories come under metafiction. Moss (1990) mentions that storytelling structure is difficult in children's literature, and utilizes Hutcheon's (1989) metafiction theory to illustrate metafiction in these children's literature.

The study by Goellnicht (1989) states the history of metafiction, by pointing out that metafiction is considered self-referring or auto-representational because many writers have explored their flashbacks or childhood experience through their writing. By employing Hutcheon's (1980) metafiction theory, Goellnicht (1989) analyzes metafiction in Kogawa's (1981) 'Obasan'. In this fiction, the author of the novel explores the narration of marginalized society. Naomi is the protagonist who goes to Alberta. Through this character, the writer has explored about Japanese minority group problem, but the government does not allow 21,000 Canadians into their country between March and September 1942. These Japanese and Canadians deviated from many groups, such as housing projects, farms, road camps, and war. These ideas are

explored in Kogawa's text, and it problematizes the very act of reconstructing history. This minority group problem is derived from historical and documentary work.

2.3.3 Studies Employing Currie's Theory

Mark Currie is a notable thinker of metafiction. He published many books related to metafiction. In 'Metafiction' (Currie, 1995), he mentions metafiction that comprises two elements, they are cause and effect. First, cause indicates the interpenetration of criticism and practice of writing. Secondly, the effect is an emphasis on the playing with styles and forms from enhanced self-consciousness and awareness of the elusiveness of meaning. This work has been employed in many studies by various authors. For instance, the study by Tunca (2018), by using Currie's (1995) metafiction theory describes metafiction in Adichie's (2006) 'Jumping Monkey Hill'. It is one among the collection of 'The Thing around Your Neck' (Adichie, 2009). Tunca (2018) points out that Adichie has explored the metafiction device of *mise en abyme* in 'Jumping Monkey Hill'. This work is metafiction with Conrad's (1899) 'Heart of Darkness' because Conrad mentioned Congo and racism. Likewise, Adichie explored racism, and 'Jumping Monkey Hill' is the name of a resort that takes place in her works also.

The study by Butler and Gurr (2008) also utilizes Currie's (1995) metafiction theory to explain metafiction in Auster's (2007) 'Travels in the Scriptorium'. In this work, Mr. Blank is the protagonist, who leads his life in an anonymous cell-like room. It is also one of the strategies of Auster through metafiction. Auster has explored both reality and unreality. This story is related to de Maistre's (1794) 'Journey around my Room'. Auster has combined the text with language, reality, history, and reader.

3. METHODS

This study analyzed Preeti Shenoy's texts in her novels 'The Secret Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason' by adopting three metafiction theories proposed by Mark Currie, Patricia Waugh, and Linda Hutcheon. Currie (1995) mentions metafiction as fictional self-consciousness. It is the borderline between fiction and criticism. The metafictional characteristics can be found throughout prehistory or postmodernism. There is something about postmodern fiction: the deep involvement with its own past and the constant dialogue with its own conventions that project self-analysis. Currie (1995) highlights metafiction in two aspects. First, metafiction is a kind of storytelling with the ability of words to share experiences or converse. Second, to surrogate the reader who feels like the protagonist and she makes sense of the incident, interprets, and compares. Metafiction always takes that border as its subject (Currie, 1995) because the writers reflect their texts' sufferings, interpretations, and issues. She mentions that metafictional novels reject the traditional figure of the author.

Waugh (1984) mentions that metafiction relates to fictional writing, which describes self-consciously and systematically. It deals with posing questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In contributing a critique of own construction methods, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction but also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text (Bhadury, 2013). According to Waugh (1984), metafiction deals with the

outside world in a literary text. She mentions that metafictional novels are instrumental to study because it offers the representational nature of fiction and the literary history of the novel.

Hutcheon (2014) explains metafiction as self-referring or auto-representational because it provides its own status in fiction through language. It is known for its own process of production and reception. The metafictional novel includes a commentary on its own narrative and linguistic identity. She deviates metafiction as mimesis of process and mimesis of product.

4. RESULTS

Based on the analysis, Preeti Shenoy's texts substantiate the metafiction theories proposed by Mark Currie, Patricia Waugh, and Linda Hutcheon. Many ideas are exhibited concerning metafiction in Shenoy's works. The exploration of metafiction is noticeable in Shenoy's texts, and this is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Metafiction theorists and their theories applicable to Shenoy's texts.

No.	Theorist(s)	Book(s)	Definition of theories	Metafiction theories applicable in Shenoy's texts
1	Mark Currie	'Metafiction' (Currie, 1995)	Metafiction text places itself on the border between fiction and criticism and takes that border as its subject.	'The Secret Wish List' (Shenoy, 2012), and 'It Happens for a Reason' (Shenoy, 2014)
2	Patricia Waugh	'Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction' (Waugh, 1984)	Fictional writing self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.	'It Happens for a Reason' (Shenoy, 2014)
3	Linda Hutcheon	'Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox' (Hutcheon, 2014)	Metafiction, as it has now been named, is fiction about fiction-that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its narrative and/or linguistic identity.	'It Happens for a Reason' (Shenoy, 2014)

The next subsections elaborates the findings of this present study.

4.1 Mark Currie's Metafiction Theory

Mark Currie is a noteworthy metafiction theorist. He assumes so many connotations regarding the metafiction text 'Metafiction'. Currie (1995) states that "metafiction text places itself on the border between fiction and criticism and takes that border as its subject" (p. 2). He abbreviates that metafiction texts are connected to

the border between fiction and criticism. This idea is considered a 'subject'. Firstly, in 'It Happens for a Reason', Vipasha is the protagonist, who says:

- (1) "The Paw-Factor nets me a good profit most months, especially so during the holiday season when we are full up. There is always a demand for good boarding hours for dogs". (Shenoy, 2014, p. 6)

Shenoy loves dogs very much, explored through the protagonist, Vipasha. Secondly, in 'The Secret Wish List', Shenoy portrayed the protagonist Diksha related to the border between fiction and criticism because Diksha has listed her wishes in her diary, and she wants to fulfill her wishes on her own. This is fiction. For criticism, she has learned that her life is full of sacrifice. Therefore, she decided to come out from her family doctrine to attain her wishes. This part comes under criticism because, as a mother, she cannot come out from her family in reality, but she did that. Diksha says:

- (2) "This is my life, and I am determined now to really live it, to follow my heart's urging which I have ignored and tried to suppress for so long". (Shenoy, 2012, p. 249)

Most writers project their ideas and experience through some characters in their text. The metafiction theorist Currie (1995) mentions, "a kind of surrogate author grappling with his ability as a storyteller and with the ability of words to communicate...experiences; as well as a surrogate reader trying, as protagonist...to make sense of events and to interpret (their) significance in a manner analogous to that of the external reader" (p. 4). He notifies that many writers explored their point of view and connotations through some characters. Those characters are a replica of the writer's experience or idea. Likewise, Shenoy portrays her wish toward dogs in her work, and Vipasha, the protagonist, is a replica of Shenoy in this fiction. She maintains a paw factor and earns some amount. Shenoy utilizes the character of Vipasha as a storyteller and interprets her to wish for dogs. Vipasha says:

- (3) "Dogs have always been a part of my childhood, and I am so comfortable around them". (Shenoy, 2014, p. 45)

The role of dogs in Shenoy's life is vital and is explored through Vipasha. Shenoy mentions about dogs in the column of 'a note from the author'. She writes:

- (4) "Dogs do make the world a better place. Whatever you give a dog, you get back exponentially, multiplied to the power of infinity. Dogs have that much love to give". (Shenoy, 2014, p. 258)

Therefore, Shenoy is fond of dogs, and this event is depicted through the protagonists in her in two different novels: Vipasha and Trish. Vipasha retorts:

- (5) "There is Jojo, the German shepherd; Salt and Peppa, the two Labradors; Shiro, a pampered beagle; Manga, who is a cross between a German shepherd and an India dog; Zoobi, a rescued Lhasa Apso; Calvin, a boxer; Duke, a mixture between a terrier and a cocker spaniel; Mini, another beagle; Sheri, a Dalmatian; and Angel, an Indian dog". (Shenoy, 2014, p. 6)

Storytelling is a unique concept; storytellers can communicate, narrate, interpret, or surrogate any of their own experiences. Likewise, first, Shenoy surrogates the impediments of a woman and how she overcomes all the obstacles. This idea is projected through the character of Diksha in 'The Secret Wish List'. In the middle part, Diksha comes out from her family to attain her wishes. Here, the writer projects liberty

work through the character of Diksha. Likewise, Shenoy explores the reader's point of view, where most women want to do all the things according to their wishes. The writer kindles the readers' minds to attain their goals and what they want to become. This concept relates to [Currie's \(1995\)](#) metafiction theory.

Various texts have been filled with some conscious and unconscious levels of portraying ideas in the text. [Currie \(1995\)](#) states that the text's conscious and unconscious levels both contain metafiction. He mentions that metafiction is visible through the concepts of conscious and unconscious. This is explored in Shenoy's 'The Secret Wish List'. In this fiction, Diksha's life starts with Sandeep as unconscious because she does not have an interest in marriage, and she wants to go for higher studies, but she gets married to Sandeep with the compulsion of family members. During this state, she is unconscious and does everything for her family's sake. When she begets a child, she realizes her life and wants to attain her wishes. She realizes:

- (6) "I have done everything that a good wife and a mother is expected to do. I have never once failed in my duties. I have raised my child well; I have kept the house well. I have cooked, cleaned, and served. I have supported Sandeep in all that he has wanted to do. I have never once protested, grumbled or complained". ([Shenoy, 2012, p. 251](#))

Most of the writers employ different structures, behavioral, and idealistic views. [Currie \(1995\)](#) explores, "metafiction assimilates all the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself. It may emphasize structural, formal, behavioral, or philosophical qualities" ([p. 106](#)). This concept is applicable in Shenoy's works: 'The Secret of Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason'. She utilizes many bombastic words and behavioral and philosophical qualities in these works. The aspect of criticism has been adopted into a fictional format. Diksha breaks all the rules in 'The Secret Wish List' and comes out of her sentimental life. Here, criticism based on the character of a mother, Diksha writes her wishes:

- (7) "[...] Get drunk!, Learn salsa, Wear a bikini [...]". ([Shenoy, 2012, pp. 77-78](#))

In real life, no such mother leaves her children for any cause. This part emphasizes Currie's behavioral concept. This concept has been projected in Shenoy's other novel 'It Happens for a Reason', but the protagonist's name is different in this novel. Similarly, in the above novel, Vipasha has abandoned her boyfriend, Ankush. After this incident, she gets a new job and starts a new life with her son, Aryan. Her only idea is to give her son a good education; as a mother, she does not send her son to boarding school. Vipasha says:

- (8) "[...] I would never send my child away to a boarding school, no matter how prestigious it was or how great the education". ([Shenoy, 2014, p. 117](#))

This is one between philosophical quality and behavioral quality in Shenoy's 'It Happens for a Reason'. Next, Shenoy portrayed another philosophical quality through the character of Manav. His words encourages the readers to feel positive and works hard to attain their dream:

- (9) "Yesterday is but a dream and tomorrow is a vision, But today well lived can make every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope". ([Shenoy, 2014, p. 114](#))

4.2 Patricia Waugh's Metafiction Theory

Patricia Waugh mentions metafiction concepts in 'Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction'. In this book, [Waugh \(1984\)](#) explains, "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to post questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (p. 2). She asserts that the writing of metafiction is related to self-conscious and systematic status. This idea posts a question linked with reality and unreality things that have blended into the text. This idea is connected with the protagonist Vipasha in 'It Happens for a Reason'. She is pregnant. After knowing this incident from her parents, they are not allowing their daughter to beget a child, even though she is willing to beget a child. Therefore, Shenoy blends both reality and unreality. Here, the reality is Vipasha's courageous act, and the unreality is that before marriage, no woman can beget a child without the parents' support. Therefore, Shenoy posts an artifact question through a link between reality and unreality in the text of 'It Happens for a Reason'. Here, reality is combined with fiction.

[Waugh \(1984\)](#) mentions that metafiction is a hint to developing a story. Through the story, the authors make a proclamation or moral regarding the formation of the story. She explicates the aim of metafiction, "simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction" ([Waugh, 1984, p. 6](#)). This concept is linked with Shenoy's work 'It Happens for a Reason'. First, Vipasha shares:

- (10) "I have created a huge wall between 'life before Aryan' and 'life after Aryan'. I am now on this side of the wall. The reality now is that I am perpetually short on money, but I am proud because every single rupee that I spend is what I have earned". ([Shenoy, 2014, p. 14](#))

For Vipasha, after begetting her son only, Vipasha's life has started with a new beginning. Before this, her life had been shattered with many sufferings and broken ideas. That is why Vipasha mentions 'life before Aryan and life after Aryan'. Here, 'life after Aryan' only, Vipasha leads her life full of happiness, which is a hint to frame the story. Shenoy has projected the creation of this fiction through the protagonist in this fiction. She classified the story as 'life before Aryan and life after Aryan'.

4.3 Linda Hutcheon's Metafiction Theory

Linda Hutcheon is a noteworthy metafiction theorist. [Hutcheon \(2014\)](#) is known for the famous book 'Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox'. Many researchers utilize this book for metafiction theory. She highlights the postmodern aspect of metafiction in many aspects. She signifies "metafiction, as it has now been named, is fiction about fiction-that is, fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity" ([Hutcheon, 2014, p. 1](#)). She emphasizes that metafiction implements fiction. Metafiction includes a commentary on its narrative or linguistic form ([Sangeetha et al., 2022](#)). Some writers explore their narrative by elucidating some real-life incidents through narration ([Hariharasudan & Thavabalan, 2018](#)). Likewise, Shenoy explores fiction within her commentary narrative. She mentions the readers' insistence on watching a movie in 'It Happens for a Reason' through her narration. She says:

- (11) “Anyone who does like dogs have to watch the movie Hachiko’s Story, which is based on the real-life dog, Hachiko, who has a statue erected in his honor in Japan” (Shenoy, 2014, p. 257).

The linguistic identity has been explored in this fiction. She utilizes many dialects through some characters, like Ankush’s “Paudhon ka koyiprayojanhonachahiye” (Shenoy, 2014, p. 212). This proves that Hutcheon’s metafiction theory is seen in Shenoy’s works in the form of narration.

Hutcheon underlines that “(...) metafiction is less a departure from the mimetic novelistic tradition than a reworking of it. It is simplistic to say, as reviewers this for years, has nothing to do with “life”. The implied reduction of “life” to a mere *product* level that ignores *process* is what this book aims to counteract” (Hutcheon, 2014, p. 5). This theory is applicable in Shenoy’s texts. First, Vipasha as the main character in ‘It Happens for a Reason’. In this fiction, the first half of the story projects life, and it is a product. When she realizes her life, everything changes. Vipasha mentions:

- (12) “My parents, I think, were paranoid about what society would say” (Shenoy, 2014, p. 110)

Those words were uttered because Vipasha’s parents do not allow her to beget a child. Vipasha says:

- (13) “I don’t want to come back. I want to give this child the best of what I can. I want him to be raised in an atmosphere of love—where he is welcomed, wanted. Home is not the best place, Dad” (Shenoy, 2014, p. 125).

This is the feeling of a mother. According to her, she wants to fulfill a mother’s duty and grow her son with love. Therefore, Hutcheon’s (2014) metafiction theory as the element of the tradition is related to Shenoy’s texts.

5. DISCUSSION

The elements of metafiction are highly explored in many postmodern texts, but they deal with different concepts of metafiction. Findings that are relatable to previous research are found in this study. First, Shenoy also explores the aspect of metafiction in her work (‘The Secret Wish List’) through the concept of memory portrayed via diary because the protagonist has written her wishes in her diary that kindles her mind to fulfill her wishes. Masemola (2020) found the same thing while analyzing the works of Khumalo (2006, 2008) through allochthonous memory by connecting memory with the locale, especially South Africa. Shenoy is also found to utilize the self-conscious narrative techniques in her two novels. The self-conscious narrative concept has been explored through the protagonists of these novels. Likewise, Bhadury (2013) also self-conscious narrative concept in the novels by Ende (1979) and Funke (2003, 2005, 2008).

In terms of reality, Shenoy explores some issues with reality in ‘The Secret Wish List’. In this fiction, Diksha is the protagonist, who struggles a lot to lead her life with a workaholic person, Sandeep. He is always concerned about his job alone, not his family. Therefore, Diksha comes out from her family life, and it is not an easy way to explore. This is a kind of mission to fulfill her wishes on her own (Shenoy, 2012).

Correspondingly, [Brown \(2016\)](#) found that [Mitchell \(2004\)](#) in the work of 'Cloud Atlas' also blended with some missionaries.

Other elements found in the studied novels combine text with language, reality, history, and reader (i.e., reality and unreality). Shenoy builds some problems through the protagonist Diksha in 'The Secret Wish List'. Many problems have flourished in her life, even though she fought for her freedom to fulfill her wishes. Therefore, Diksha came out of her family life, but in reality, no woman agrees with this kind of action of giving up her children to anyone. This concept may be indirectly referred to a particular person by Shenoy. Therefore, reality and unreality are blended. This metafiction is also found in the analysis by Butler and Gurr (2008) on the work by [Auster \(2007\)](#) and [de Maistre \(1794\)](#).

The study of [Moss \(1990\)](#) abbreviates metafiction and poetics in children's literature. He studies works not in the fiction category, and they belong to short stories. These kinds of texts have foregrounded the technique of metafiction. [Moss \(1990\)](#) found that it is common for writers to explore their childhood experiences through their writings. In the same way, Shenoy depicts her fondness of, and this idea is depicted in her novel, 'It Happens for a Reason', through the protagonist, Vipasha.

Furthermore, Thomas Pynchon, a notable postmodern writer and theorist had most of his works deal with all the postmodern aspects. Here, metafiction has been explored in his novel, 'Mason and Dixon' ([Pynchon, 1997](#)). In this fiction, he retells about Surveyors of British. They are Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon. They occupied so many places, especially Pennsylvania and Maryland. Therefore, this novel explicates the real incident, and the writer's intention is explored in the texts. [Pynchon \(1997\)](#) states the real incidents with his connotations. The aspects of reality and history have blended into this fiction. Likewise, Shenoy projects the issues related to women in her works. According to tradition, women are supposed to do household chores and take care of their children ([Hariharasudan & Pandeewari, 2020](#)). Shenoy mentions women's sufferings and given importance to women and their wishes in 'The Secret Wish List' ([Shenoy, 2012](#)). The writer has expressed her connotations and desires through the protagonist, Diksha. Here, history and reality are blended. This study is known as 'fiction-centered' metafiction.

David Wiesner is an illustrator and writer, and wrote 'The Three Pigs' ([Wiesner, 2001](#)). In this work, he narrates the three pigs and their activities. They want to build a house, but two pigs are lazy, and the other pigs are very meticulous. Finally, these three pigs built a house to protect themselves from wolves. This is a replica of the classic 'Three Little Pigs'. Here, the writer creates some controversy and applies the same concept. Similarly, Shenoy has explored the same concepts in her texts as women empowerment in 'The Secret Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason'. The writer has projected women-centered concepts, their sufferings, and their roles in these three novels. These two writers, [Wiesner \(2001\)](#) and [Shenoy \(2012, 2014\)](#) demonstrate the issues or persons, and thus, their texts are referred to as 'indirect metafiction'.

Ariel S. Winter is a noteworthy writer in English, and he received many awards for his debut novel, 'The Twenty-Year Death' ([Winter, 2012](#)). This novel reveals the story of the writer Shem Rosencrantz and his wife Clotilde-ma-Fleur because their attitudes, especially egotistical, obliterate this couple. This book comprises three books just as a trilogy, but the three books retold the story of the couple in different years. This novel is mainly based on crime, and the writer has proved that he is known as a crime novelist. Similarly, Shenoy also narrates a couple's life, especially the life of

Diksha, in 'The Secret Wish List' because no one gives importance to her. She has been treated as a doll. Shenoy has treated the women characters in the same aspects, but the ending alone differs from her three texts. This study comes under critical metafiction because the two writers' works depict a couple's story, and no one knows the exact thing.

David Mitchell is a well-known British writer. His famous work is 'Cloud Atlas' (Mitchell, 2004). For this fiction, he received many awards: The British Book Award for Literary Fiction, Book of the Year, and Nebula Award for Best Novel. This novel has been adapted into a film version. In this novel, the writer describes the aspects of both metafiction and historic metafiction. This novel comprises six stories in six different places with different characters. This story is based on a particular character who experiences six different places and explores post-apocalyptic prospects. Shenoy also projects Vipasha's life in 'It Happens for a Reason', and it is categorized as life before Aryan, and life after Aryan. He is the son of Vipasha, who takes care of her son perfectly. Shenoy (2014) illustrates the problems of women and struggles in her life indirectly. These two writers have not projected any particular person, but they indirectly convey the issues in society. Therefore, this study relates to indirect metafiction.

William Goldman is a notable American playwright, novelist, and screenwriter. His famous novel is 'The Princess Bride' (Goldman, 1973). This novel is an abridged version of the fictional character Morgenstern. Goldman has given his name as the protagonist in 'The Princess Bride'. It is a romance and fantasy novel. This novel begins in the renaissance period. First, the author, to his daughter, narrates this story as 'princesses and other brides'. Later, it changed to 'The Princess Bride' with an abridged version. The narrator in the story is a persona. The writer comprises the story and elucidates it in short form. Similarly, Shenoy utilizes an abridged version in her texts. First, in Nisha's life, she comes out from all the suffering and stands without anyone's help. She desires to buy a house in Pondicherry. Finally, she buys a house in the same place. From this segment, everything has been mentioned in the abridged version (Shenoy, 2012). Second, Vipasha reunites with her husband, but the writer uses the abridged version after reuniting as she runs a paw factor for her son's wish (Shenoy, 2014).

6. CONCLUSION

The present study draws attention to the postmodern tendency of metafiction, which is a narrative style. It is infrequent to discover in literature, especially in Indian writing. This aspect has been rendered in some studies and texts. The present study spotlights Preeti Shenoy's works 'The Secret Wish List' and 'It Happens for a Reason'. These novels were analyzed through metafiction theories proposed by distinguished theorists. The findings show that metafiction is applicable in the texts of the two novels by Shenoy. She has projected the aspects of metafiction in her works through her writing, especially narration, both fiction and reality.

This study has its limitation that it only researched on two characters: Diksha and Vipasha, from the two novels. Future related studies are encouraged to focus on other prominent characters in the novels as well. There are also other theorists on postmodern metafiction, and so, future work are recommended to analyze these works

based on their theories. The present study suggests that future studies can be carried out in the areas of psychology, alienation, workaholic, family doctrines, philosophy, feminism, metanarrative, and metafiction in other interrelated works.

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