# Life is what you make of it by Preeti Shenoy

## Why should I read it?

"Life is What You Make It" is a poignant exploration of resilience in the face of mental illness. It delves into the complexities of navigating life with bipolar disorder, offering insights into the power of hope, the impact of societal pressures, and the importance of understanding and empathy. Through Ankita's journey of self-discovery and struggle, the book advocates for mental health awareness, making it a must-read for its inspirational message and educational value.

## Let us get to the summary of the book

"Life is What You Make It" by Preeti Shenoy intricately weaves the life of Ankita Sharma, a young, dynamic college student who appears to have it all. Set against the vibrant backdrop of the late 1980s and early 1990s in India, Ankita's story unfolds in an era where letters were the essence of romantic communication, and societal norms tightly bound the aspirations and expressions of young women. The narrative captures the essence of youthful exuberance, ambition, and the complexities of first loves through Ankita's relationships, notably with Vaibhav and Abhi, each offering her different facets of affection and understanding.

As the president of the college arts club, Ankita thrives in her leadership role, showcasing her prowess in organizing events, and winning over her peers with her charisma and intelligence. Her academic life is on an upward trajectory, and her personal life blooms with the promise of love. However, beneath this façade of success and happiness, Ankita harbours deep-seated fears and insecurities, stemming from societal expectations and personal aspirations.

The plot takes a dramatic turn when Ankita is diagnosed with bipolar disorder. The revelation is not just a shock to her but also a stark awakening to the realities of mental health issues, which are often stigmatized and misunderstood in society. The diagnosis marks the beginning of her tumultuous journey through the dark alleys of depression and mania, challenging her identity, relationships, and aspirations. The narrative poignantly captures the isolation and despair that Ankita feels, juxtaposed with her internal struggle to reclaim her life and identity.

Despite the overwhelming odds, "Life is What You Make It" is a testament to the power of resilience and hope. Ankita's journey from the depths of despair to the gradual path of recovery underscores the importance of self-acceptance, the strength found in vulnerability, and the courage to face one's demons. The novel sensitively addresses the critical need for awareness, understanding, and support for individuals grappling with mental health issues, highlighting the transformative power of empathy and kindness.

Through Ankita's story, Preeti Shenoy delivers a powerful narrative that resonates with hope, resilience, and the undying spirit of the human will to survive and thrive despite the odds. It is a vivid reminder that life, indeed, is what you make it, shaped not just by the challenges we face but by our courage to overcome them.

## Key Takeaways

1. Complexity of Human Emotions: Ankita's experiences reflect the intricate web of emotions, desires, and fears that define the human experience.
2. Impact of Societal Norms: The story sheds light on how societal pressures and expectations can profoundly affect individual choices and mental well-being.
3. Journey of Self-Discovery: Through the battles with her mental health, Ankita embarks on a profound journey of self-discovery, learning to embrace her vulnerabilities.
4. The Stigma Surrounding Mental Health: Ankita's reluctance to seek help and her initial denial of her condition mirror the societal stigma that often surrounds mental health, emphasizing the need for greater compassion and understanding.
5. Healing Through Support and Empathy: The novel illustrates that healing is possible with the support of loved ones and professional help, advocating for a society that is more accepting and supportive of mental health challenges.