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The Other Senses by Preeti Monga

Author: Preeti Monga
Genre: Non-Fiction/ Memoir
Publisher: Lotus Collection. Roli Books
Year: 2012
Pages: 177
Price: 250/-
ISBN: 978-81-7436-908-6

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The *Other Senses* documents struggle of survival of a visually challenged woman, Preeti Monga, a disability rights activist and first blind aerobics trainer in India, who fathoms domestic violence and abuse to establish herself as a corporate trainer and trauma counsellor through her sheer gut and determination. The narrative is built on her experiences and hardships faced by her due to her feminine gender and disability. The memoir focuses on the three major phases of her life i.e. her life in parental care, abusive marriage and emancipation.

Preeti's life shuttles between the cities due to the frequent transfer of her father Charanjit. While studying in Agartala she has been diagnosed with impaired vision due to partial paralysis of the optic nerves of the eyes. Her vision gradually deteriorates and she loses her eyesight at the age of thirteen years. A gradual decline of vision and strong senses accorded her an opportunity to have positive memories of the places she lived. Once the news of her impaired vision became public she was only left with the sympathy of friends and neighbours and she feels isolated in society. The sudden illness of her father brought her to Delhi where she has been admitted to Loreto Convent. School principal Sister Clare made the necessary adjustment to facilitate her education. She proved a very good learner despite her inability to see things clearly but the transfer



of Sister Clare has changed the course of life. She has been thrown out of school due to her disability. Thereafter Preeti never got an opportunity to get a formal education in any regular school. She learns typing, music and life skills through her efforts.

Out of concern about her marriage, her grandmother publishes a matrimonial advertisement without mentioning her disability. Preeti also looked the marriage, as an option to settle down in life and dreamed about the prince charming but her disability was a major hurdle in it. She tried dating Govind and her relation with pen pal Narendra did not work due to her disability. She gets an offer of work in a five-star hotel but her dream to work independently come to an abrupt ending due to the strike of other employees who were not willing to work with a blind girl. She has been relocated to Delhi from Goa. She meets Keith, an elder brother of Sandy's friend and fallen in love with him. His caring attitude rekindled the hope of getting settled with a loving husband and having her own family but her marriage with Keith proved disastrous and darkest period of life. Keith deceived her by pretending to be a gentleman before marriage but proved useless. Keith used to call her blind bat. He regularly tortured for no fault of her own, pushing her towards suicidal attempt. The birth of her children Fiona and Mark could not bring peace in her life. She silently suffered abuse and domestic violence to keep her family intact.

Domestic violence and abuse forced her to look beyond marital ties to secure her financial independence but disability has left her with few choices. She tries her hand in pickle marketing and sold more units than other sales boys. Impressed by her skill Sunil, a family friend offers her the job of a marketing manager. Preeti performed exceptionally well in the endeavour which lead to the offer of partnership in business though it never materializes. Preeti comes out from painful marriage through the tedious process of divorce. She meets Aswani, who became her right hand in the business and their relation culminated in a happy marriage. Sunil did not like the idea of the marriage of Preeti and Ashwani and he throw them out of business, leaving them to fend their way together. Preeti worked on many part time assignments. She got an offer to head the public relations department of Dr Shroff's Charity Hospital but life always has something in reserve. She fell seriously ill and it took her a long time to recover from a serious bout of illness. She finally settles peacefully in loving care of Ashwani and her children Fiona and Mark and established her own company Silver Lining Human Resource Solutions Pvt. Limited and NGO for the education of blind children.



The Other Senses leads readers on the trail of the beautiful journey of Preeti in poetic prose in a very simple language. She beautifully threads her life narrative in small unnumbered episodes but continuity is never lost and it progressed like a panoramic film which is full of happy memories of childhood and dreaded experience of married life. The book provides an opportunity for readers to see the world from the perspective of specially- abled woman. It is a really good read for all those who wish to make society more inclusive and happy.