

Representing Misapprehension and Absurdity in Chetan Bhagat's Select Novels

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ABSTRACT:

Chetan Bhagat's novels express the deep human experiences of a heart and mind, particularly the behavioural pattern of life of people in the socio economic milieu with changing perspectives of life strategy. He uses simple language, deal with the lives, incidents and psyche of the new generation. The writer belongs to middle class and writes about same which makes them popular among the mass readers. Most of his themes revolves around education, love, religion, corruption, ambition etc, through which he tries to discuss about the divisive issues or the burning issues such as varying trend in education, natural calamities, human disaster, sacred disparities, miserable state of mind, suicide attempts etc which are prevailing in the society. Lack of self consciousness moves oneself towards unrealistic things which end up drastically in life. So a realistic approach of the people is the need of the hour accepting the reality without any delusions and move optimistically towards the life.

Key words: *Illusion, human psyche, social commitment, absurdity, reality*

In Chetan Bhagat's novel *One night @ the call center*, the story revolves around six call centre employees working at the connections call centre. The story takes place in a span of one night, during which all the six characters confront troublesome situations in their life, which makes them desperate of life on earth. The story is told through the main protagonist Shyam, a young hard working person but narrow minded without much ambition in life. The theme revolves around disillusioned love story, ambitions, failure in human relationship, and impact of globalized system and pressurized work environment. Shyam's love for Priyanka, Vroom's love for Esha, Radika's love for her husband, and Military Uncle's love for his grandson and each one's love is left behind because of lack of courage, ambition in life and lack of money. The love between Shyam and Priyanka comes to a standstill when Priyanka tries to concur with her mother's words. She starts to look the world through her mother's eye and rejects Shyam as she felt that he has not settled in the life. Priyanka starts to chase for gratification in the world of illusion, and built castles in the air about her future life with an NRI. Priyanka makes a confirmation to Shyam that she accepts her mother's NRI proposal when Shyam comments on Priyanka's mother. "Your mom is a psycho." (139) Shyam's world of love is now filled with darkness with Priyanka's words of fire against him. "She is my mother. It is not as if she does not know what is good for me. I want someone doing well in his career as well." (140) Vroom's craving for a date with Esha ends up in futile. Esha's aspiration to become a model made her move from Chandigarh to Delhi. Though she was admired for her beauty she couldn't get into modelling as she was too short to become a model. "Esha won the title of the 'hottest chick at Connexions.'" (19) Esha's world of fantasy

to become a popular model drew her to do an illicit thing of sleeping with a contractor. But he betrays her by sending her money instead of offering a modelling contract. Esha degraded the principles of society and human values and done an offensive act only to fulfill her ambition. She lost her way in the world of illusion by losing her chastity and finds solution for her mental illness by hurts herself with surgical things on her body. Radhika was married to Anuj three years ago but she lives in Anuj's joint family with her ultra traditional parents. Though she was the only daughter of a single parent, she welcomed the world of marriage life with open arms. She is traditionally bound with customs and rules of the society by serving her mother-in-law the whole day and searching for self reliance through her call center job. But her marriage life is not fruitful as Anuj lives in Delhi and Radhika satisfies herself by being a good and an obedient daughter-in-law. She made an absurd promise to herself that her husband would also show equivalent love towards her if she serves his mother with utmost care. But her self-belief on bondage of marriage is built on love, affection and care ends up in contemplation when she happens to hear from Anuj about his girl friend Payal. Radhika comes to know about her husband when Varun makes a trick to play a radio Jockey and calls Anuj and pretends that he is calling from a radio show. He tells that "he has won a small prize, a dozen red roses which he could send to anyone he loves, any one in India with a loving message. (147)Anuj says that he would like to send a message and bouquet to his girlfriend Payal who lives in Delhi and is a "modern type of girl." (147) Radhika was in the world of illusion which is filled with darkness now decides to comes out of it when she comes to know her husband's betrayal attitude. Radhika is a replica of a true Indian wife, rejected the traditional female role and started to reinvent the wheel. As she had been denied identity in the society, she tried to unfold her new wings and space for free flight of thoughts, ideas, talents and identity. But for woman who are economically deprived in the society need to shoulder all the responsibilities in the family but a husband personified man always tries to exploit the woman in all the possible ways. Radhika is now free of delusions, gained strength and power to enrich her new perspective thoughts about life in the society.

"Five Point Someone- What not to do at IIT!" Chetan Bhagat's debut novel is about the happenings and incidents in student's life in India's one of the best institution i.e. IIT. The novel deals with the stress and anxiety of the students towards education, family conditions and human relations exhibited through three characters Hari Kumar, Ryan Oberai and Alok Gupta. They fall in trap of illusion and start to view life in new dimension. As Tagore says 'Illusion is the first appearance of the Truth' these three students very soon realized that they have been chasing the world of illusion quite away from the reality where only academic scores are counted and students are pushed to perform and achieve all academic goals against all odds. The students were set targets to achieve within the stipulated time period without considering the students plight. They were shorn of the opportunity to express their views and exhibit their creative ideas. The system adopted by the management is traditional method where the students has to by heart the things and produce the same without any change. The writers' agony against the educational system is felt through the words of Ryan when he poses a question – "I mean this is supposed to be the best college in India, the best technology institute for a country of a billion. But has IIT ever invented anything? Or made any technical contribution to India? This system of relative grading and overburdening the students. I mean it kills the best fun years of your life. But it kills something else. Where is the time for creativity?" (Pg 34-35)

The novelist had tinted clearly the college life of the students in a striking manner mixing up the trends of real college life of students with some examples like sports, fun time, cinema, alcohol, friends and love to the readers in a more impressive style. Hari, Ryan and Alok are the replicas of the most of the Indian students who always live a life of delusion without concentrating on the real situation and its consequences against them. When the three students were marked with the lowest GPA, they felt embarrassed and become rebellious against the system. The students were denied importance for their excellence in co-curricular activities in the class and by the authorities as being marked five pointers. All the three started to use up their intelligence and framed new methods like Corporate to Dominate, Operation Pendulum to outright the traditional educational system. Without proper encouragement, guidance, moral support during their catastrophe made them select the crooked way to reach the Adam's apple. This we come to know from Ryan's words "IIT system has suppressed their talent, individual spirit and the brightest minds of the students. The GAP system had destroyed their relationships between the students and the professors that is why Ryan wanted to change the system which is more convenient to the student and asked to sign the paper with their blood. Once Ryan designed a modified screw-jack and presented before to Prof.Vohra with the hope that he would be appreciated but he got scoldings from him. When there is no platform to exhibit creative talents in oneself it outburst with negative impulses that obliterate things. Hari, Ryan and Alok made absurd promises to wipe-out the stringent educational system and to bring out a new student friendly system. But they failed to cope with each ones ideas and thoughts which resulted in failures. So they selected an erroneous approach and named it as Operation Pendulum to steal the question paper from Prof.Churian's office. When they were caught and placed before the DISCO they realized their mistakes. Alok decided to pledge his life, Hari his love and Ryan his presumptuous. The writer had brought out the struggles of the students in the IIT to cope up with the oppressive grading system burying their talents and desires. In this present society Man is the deciding factor who is being presented with ample opportunities or choices to decide upon and change his or her life with new innovative ideas and thoughts. His capability in deciding things doesn't put down him only with the selection of thoughts but he should take up the outcome of it without any trepidation. Innate thinking of a human mind can be felt in George Bernard Shaw words "People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them."

In *Three mistakes of my life* the writer has touched the most crucial point of Hindu-Muslim relationship bringing out the Godhra massacre as the consequences of frail relationship and also correlated the importance of having a cohesive relationship with the others, highlighting the concept of Patriotism as the subtle need in the society.

Indianness of three friends with three different backgrounds, having diversified views towards their future and their endearment to achieve it, is delightfully brought out in this novel with suitable plot, structure, theme, subject, mood etc. The story brings out the struggle, sacrifice and achievement of three friends for the goodwill of the nation. Bhagat has the usual style of beginning the main plot of the story with the male characters, as the quintessence of sufferings either psychological problems due to love failures, friendship

breakup or business loss. The writer has picked out the characters from the life of three common middle class families, mixing up the real life incidents; tragedy, humor and love exert a pull on the reader. The story begins with a prologue where the writer happens to receive an email stating confession and a suicide note from a reader in Ahmedabad. The writer traces him through one of his teacher in IIM and reaches him travelling a long way back from Singapore. The main protagonist Govind hails from a poor family, supported by a single parent, intelligent and hard worker, and aspires to become a business man. The writer transcend Govind's wish to the people of Gujarat. "There is something about Gujaratis, we love business. Gujarat is the only state in India where people tend to respect you more if you have a business that if you are in service. That was why I dreamt my biggest dream- to be a big businessman one day." (Pg-12) Ishaan one among the three, comes from the middle class background whose father is an employer in telephone exchange and the bread winners of the family. Ishaan is a bold and courageous boy left the NDA a year ago for not interested in it as his vision and ambition is to become a cricketer. Omi, the son of a priest, is a timid boy, a pious person not much ambitious but interested on God, food and health. All the characters are around the age of 21 years lives in the same place-Belrampur(Ahmedabad) who were friends since their childhood. Each one has different vision towards their life but they are linked with the tag of friendship through which they ultimately achieve their target in life that benefits the whole country. Govind makes an absurd promise to himself his dream could be accomplished, whereas Ishaan's dream of being in the Indian cricket team is a stupid dream which couldn't be achieved. Govind is a shrewd person, moves earth and heaven to make all the arrangements to start a business without capital investment. Though he was an ex-district player, he was in complete despair about his ambition and accepted Govind's idea of starting business. Omi thinks more physically than mentally, loves to have more food for satisfying his belly after 200 push-ups, 10 rounds and 1 hour at gym, hates to become a priest which his father insists upon. Govind applies his tactics and persuades them to become partners pointing at their Achilles' heel. They start their business in the temple area named as Team India Cricket shop. Govind's plan of expanding the business by starting stationary items, cricket coaching, Maths tuitions and fitness centre to train the students. Govind's dream get collapsed by the Gujarat earthquake where he also becomes a victim who loses his shop in Navrangpura char rasta whereas Ishaan's dream springs up on seeing Ali, a boy with supernatural power who can hit the ball at any distance. Ishaan comes to know about Ali's extreme power in batting, considers him to be the national treasure. Ishaan's passion for cricket makes him to train Ali with all his intelligence. Though Ishaan's delusion to become a part of Indian cricket team ends up drastically, he gets a chance to become a coach for the gifted Ali with hyper-reflex power and finds a place in the Indian cricket team. Ali has become the joint responsibility of the trio.

Bittoo mama, a religious and orthodox person, considers his religion as the supremo than any other religion. He is much influenced by Parekhiji a politician and a Hindu party leader in Belrampur. Politics and religion the soul and blood of Bittoo make all the efforts to attract the youth to the Hindu party.

Chetan Bhagat has concentrated on the most crucial religious aspect Hindu-Muslim divergence in India. India is a sovereign country which has the principle of unity in diversity. Since independence conflict arises among the people with par to region, caste and religion.

Of the most dangerous and most antiquity of conflict which tasted the blood of many people is religious quarrel – Hindu and Muslim conflict. He has invoked the religious aspects such as birth place of revered God and the domination of the Muslims over the other. Things are brought into reality through delineating the real situation like Babar Masjid, Ayodha, Gujarat train massacre and the traumas of the people is precisely done by the writer.

Bittoo mama turns into a ferocious person who makes an absurd promise to kill the Muslims, as a revenge for the loss of his son Dhiraj. Here the man's anxiety and thrust for blood pictures the cruel mentality of a human being against his own human kingdom. Bhagat has also touched love along with friendship – the character Vidya is the representation of the youth have tasted and welcomed the western culture degrading the Indian culture. Bhagat titled the novel as *Three mistakes of my life*, had pointed out the three mistakes done by his main protagonist Govind in three different situations- lose of the shop in Gujarat Earth quake, having illicit relationship with his friend's sister, a seconds delay in reacting killed his friends life. The writer creates a illusion in the minds of the readers that all the three mistakes are done by the one person only, but the reality is that when something naturally happens, we can't term it as a mistake done by a human being. The second mistake he is not the only one responsible for it, as both were involved. When one's life is at risk probably one will give importance to once own life than the other which is a natural instinct.

Chetan Bhagat's novels express the deep human experiences of a heart and mind, particularly the behavioral pattern of life of people in the socio economic milieu with changing perspectives of life strategy. In the novel *Five point someone* the writer concentrated on education as the core for any human being on the earth. The illusion about education made them think that degree alone will help them lead a luxurious life. But the true fact of education aims to develop good character, good and analytical mind in oneself. Today, the students are deluded by the view that education is only a way to lead a luxurious life. The only motive of students is to get higher grades and to get a highly paid job. The parents and teachers stress their mind to get higher marks, and it leads them to an illegal way. It becomes a burden which lands them in a deep mind stress, which they cannot share even with their parents. Though the three friends are brilliant and smart students, they are unable to cope with IIT patterns which have suppressed their creativity. And at the end the author reveals that the true aim of education is not to memorize the syllabus with hateful mind and that the main aim of it is to develop a good character, good mind to analyze things which are good and bad. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Education means that which gives ability for a person not to depend others for anything." But, in today's condition the true aim of educations has disappeared. There are many illusory views about education to teachers and parents too. In *One night @ the call center* the writer has brought out the concept of social commitment and bondage of a human being towards the society. All the characters move heaven and earth to lead a life according to social norms without pure satisfaction of their self. They withdrew from the responsibility with the fear of failure, lack of courage and confidence to face the problems. Bhagat reconsiders the problem as today's youngster's crisis and draws solution and provides remedies for the ailments for the same in his novel. In *Three mistakes of my life* Bhagat dealt with the burning problems like education crisis, fanaticism in politics, fraudulent politicians, and religious extremism, chauvinism towards agnostic and atheists amid the brighter lower middle class youth. The writer has covered the journey of a boy – a middle class aspirant to a man who struggles with the inevitable circumstances of life and tries to

fight against them with an intention to be successful in their lives. Man being a social animal lives amidst the human beings must abide by the norms of the society, though trapped in illusion attracted by the things around him makes an absurd promises to himself and works hard to achieve it. But in the course of his struggle he fails to accept the social commitment he has towards his people. Lack of self consciousness moves them towards unrealistic things which end up drastically in life. So a realistic approach of the people is the need of the hour accepting the reality without any delusions and move optimistically towards the life.

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