

Delineation of Youth in ChetanBhagat's "*The 3 Mistakes of My Life*".

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Abstract:

ChetanBhagat's The 3 Mistakes of my Life vibrantly depicts the incidents happened in the lives of the strong characters Gopal, Ishaan and Vidhya. Bhagat's characters are almost youth. The depiction of such characters and their attitude towards the society is stupendous. In a growing country like India, where nearly fifty percentage of the population is youth, it is inevitable to assimilate their role in the society. The hardships and hindrances they face during their life span mould them as a complete human being. This paper is an attempt to analyse the youth, and their thrust to survive in the globalized world. It also traces out their dilemmas, which is interwoven in the fabric of life.

Key words: Family bonding, friendship, anxieties, responsible, passion, conscious, hardworking, dynamic.

ChetanBhagat has become an iconic figure in the contemporary Indian writing scenario. His writings emanate from the rootedness of everyday Indian cultural and political situation. His commercial success in the publishing field helps to extend the reach of English literature to a broader audience in and outside India. As a writer of popular fiction, Bhagat avoids the use of complicated and passive sentences, which beguiles many young readers. Most of his characters are youth and especially below thirty. The young people who read his novels can easily identify themselves with the characters and situations depicted in them. His narrative springs out of the ease of life that makes abiding spaces in the conscious mind of his readers. Youth in the globalized world face many problems in their day-to-day life. Swami Vivekananda says, 'Youth is the best time. The way in which you utilize this period will decide the nature of coming years that lie ahead. You are the creator of your own destiny,' but the youth are in a conundrum to decide their fate or to shape up their own life. Every youth in India or outside the nation have their own problem with hidden

solution in it. The most common crisis all around the world are generation gap, religion, political upheavals, influence of Western Civilizations, drugs and violence, dependence on peer group and so on.

Bhagat's "The 3 Mistakes of my life" (2008) sets in the state of Gujarat. The novel lucidly depicts the passion for cricket in India of all age groups. Other than cricket, Bhagat keenly focusses on themes like Religion, Politics, Romance and so on. The story explains the life of three friends Govind, Ishaan and Omi, and their endeavours to fulfil their dreams and passions in the backdrop of communal violence, politics and natural disaster (Bhuj earthquake). The Gujarati youth depicted in the novel represents the youth in the whole world. Youth is the important section in the society, who are supposed to build a nation. Bhagat's inaugural speech at Symbiosis, Pune goes like this, 'Life is one those races in nursery school, where you have to run with marble in a spoon kept in your mouth. If the marble falls, there is no point in coming first.' (The Times of India, dated 24 July 2008)

One of the protagonists, Govind, prevails his life with his mother, who runs a small snacks shop which earns them low income. Govind has no other way to persuade with mother and he plans to start a business in his own city. Every youth has his / her passion about their own city. The Gujaratis love business because they believe that people tend to respect you more if you have a business than if you are in service, as Govind rightly says, 'Yes, Ahmedabad is my city. If you have had happy times in a city for a long time, you consider it the best city in the world. Gujaratis, we love business. My dream was more realistic. I don't want to be an engineer, mob. My heart is in business'. (p11)

shows his urge to earn money in a short time. Govind's father left him over ten years ago and it's his own efforts to prosper in his studies. He scores good marks. He loves mathematics and renders financial help to his mom by teaching math. The youth in the novel is portrayed in such a way, that they never wasted money by buying unnecessary things. The discussion between Govind and mother goes like this,

'If I have a good Diwali season, I will get you a colour TV. Noneed. You need a bigger grinderurgently. I will by the TV if only the business makes extra money. If I make extra money, I'll put back in the business'. (p11)

As the title of the novel suggests, there are three mistakes committed by Govind, which led him in frustration. The Navrangpura shopping mall and the whole Ahmedabad city is completely destroyed because of the Gujarat earthquake on January 25th. Govind and friends were shocked as they invested much more in business. As they expected, it had already reached lakhs. But the one incident – 'BhujEarthquake' completely collapsed everything. Govindfrustratedly says, 'anger for making the first big mistake of my life. Twenty years of scrimping and saving, twenty years of dreams – all wiped away in twenty seconds' (p107, 108). Govind and his friends feels the pressure of debts and their shattered dreams now and then. The future becomes anguish to them.

ChetanBhagat's female characters are strong and bold enough, as they acts as a catalyst force to their partners to encourage them to succeed. Govind's mother is a source of inspiration to all because she leads a successful life even after her husband's death. Another powerful woman in the novel is Vidhya. She ultimately represents the girls in the urban metropolitan cities. Vidhya has clear thoughts and she assures her rights in her own way.

Vidhya, the young girl, who comes to learn maths from Govind is Ishaan's sister. Both Govind and Vidhya has a subtle relation in the novel. Their romance adds beauty to the story. Their hasty love feelings and desire to copulate creates unnecessary problems to bothGovind and Ishaan. Vidhya has her own identity and she is very keen in asserting her own feelings and opinions as in the following lines, 'Two months, she wiggled two fingers. Two months and I will turn eighteen. Time to bring me another nice gift. Anyway please continue'(p 183)

Vidhya helps Govind to recover from his anxieties. As a result, the intimate relationship between Govind and Vidhya leads to a tension between the friends. AccordingtoGovind, this intimate relationship with his own friend's sister is his second mistake. He often worries about this relationship as a betrayal. When Ishaan knows about GovindandVidhya's love affair, he stops talking with Govind.

One of the major problems of youth is their complete reliability on the peer group. The three friends and their plans regarding business, profits and cricket shows the certitude they possess in their friendship. Even after Ishaan knows about sister Vidhya's affair withGovind, he feels betrayed by his friend and becomes drug addict. Youth consumes drugs and alcohols whenever they feel frustrated and sometimes to enjoy the week end. Pub culture and party mood becomes the significant symbol to denote youth.According to American Psychological Association,

'Alcohol consumption among adolescents and young adults occurs at high rates, with such use resulting in potentially adverse consequences in may critical domains of life, such as academic and occupational achievement, family and peer relationships and physical and mental health.' (Alcohol, problems – 67)

Cricket is the most celebrated game in India. Every kid to adult, eulogized cricket, as our National Game. The victory of Indian team is celebrated as the victory of every youth. Indian youths' love and craze for cricket is commented on through Ishaan who doesn't get any support from his family is clearly revealed in the following lines, 'Dancing after an Indian victory was a ritual we had started when we were eleven. The cook prepared dinner, a bigger feast than usual as India had won the match.'(p 6, 7)

This spirit and love for cricket paves the way to the three friends to open a shop that sells cricket materials named "Team India Cricket Shop". They also sell stationary items and later on it becomes the place for cricket coaching and Maths tuition centre. After seven months, Govind and his

friends saw profit and clearly divides money for the future plans and some percent for their entertainment tonight. The modern youth are dutiful, as well as they take pleasure in their own way.

Ishaan, who has been a district level cricketer, takes under his wings a young boy Ali, who is gifted by nature in that he can see in slow motion a ball that has been delivered by a fast bowler. Dr.Muktani explains about Ali's reflex actions. He is purely Indian team material. Ishaan adopts Ali, trained him in a successful way. The three friends and their sense of responsibility and hard work is clearly seen in the final chapters which explains when a crucial life threatening stage arrives to Ali, Govind and Ishaan spent almost all their money to save Ali's life. Govind's subconscious mind always gives him a guilt feel that he misses the chance to save Omi from the violent Bittoo Hama's attacks. All the three mistakes makes him more frustrated and he tends to commit suicide. Bhagat appears in the novel as a character who tracks Govind, and saves his life and reconciles the friends after three years gap. The novel ends with a happy note denoting Vidhya and Govind's marriage. Youths' responsibility in saving a life is much more important than saving money is clearly visible from the lines uttered by Govind, 'Ish saved two lakhs in the past three years. I saved another three. I said let's pool over resources and get Ali operated.' (p253)

The novel has some indirect comments on religion. Govind and Ishaan are not keen on the issues of religion like Omi and his Bittoo Mama. Omi is interested in religion because of his family background. "For great men, religion is a way of making friends, small people makes religion a fighting tool," says our former President Dr.A.P.J.AbdulKalam. The novel tells us about the infamous Godhra carnage in which some Muslim fanatics burnt a train carrying Hindu devotees forms an important plank of the plot. The horrendous event sets off large-scale communal clashes in the state. Though this communal riot questions the survival of Ali, the three youth takes their responsibility to save him.

The youth and their observations on politics and politicians seems to be philosophical can be viewed from the following lines by Ishaan,

'Anyway screw politics. My point is, that the clueless sixties to eighties generation is now old, and running the country. But the nineties and the, what so they say....'

'Zeroes'

'Yeah, whatever. The zeros think different. But we are being run by old fogeys who never did anything worthwhile in their primetime. The Doordarshan generation is running the star TV generation.' (p75)

Youth need political change throughout the country. Young minds are ready to step forward with young leaders with tremendous calibre.Bhagat through his narratives defends that the youth of today are equally conscious about their responsibility regarding national issues.

After the Bhuj earthquake, the shopping mall where the trio, opened a new shop was completely destroyed. All their investments has been wasted and their hopes and ambition and aspiration fades away. Later on their hard work and will power helped them to get rid of their depressions and debts. The younger generation seems to be hard working, with sense of responsibilities, despite physical emotions. Their duties towards the society and family is clearly rooted in their minds. *'Success in life is not measured by our position in life but, by the obstacles we overcame to get there.'* (You can win 52)says Shiv Khera, a dynamic motivational speaker about the hurdles one who faces during his busy span of life. The characters in this novel overcomes all these obstacles and took them as an opportunity to prove their strength. India is a secular nation, where religion based politics is not entertained. Youth are aware of every change occurring in India. They become more and more matured enough with a ray of hope in them to face the future as Franklin D. Roosevelt says, 'we cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.'

The three predominant youth in the novel are Govind, Ishaan and Vidhya. Govind seems to very sensitive and hardworking. Ishaan though belongs to an upper-middle class family, he quits his job for the sake of cricket. Ishaan is a typical example, who lives only for his passions. Vidhya seeks the fulfilment of her desires in the company of Govind and the implications of hard-core maths go beyond her discernment. Bhagat's youth can be defined as a camouflage of passions, identities and grapples. They strive hard to the core to hook a position in the complex world.

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