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NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE AND STYLE IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S THE 3 MISTAKES OF MY LIFE

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**Abstract**

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the Indian fiction. He has written about modern Indian youths and their need in his novels. He says that novels are entertainment tools through which one can express his views and opinions about society and the youth. In the modern India human behavior changed into lust, greed, hypocrisy, and hatred and these are the major themes of Bhagat's novels. His novels are incomplete without humour, friendship, love, family conflicts and marriage. The background in which Chetan Bhagat has written novels is predominantly of the society in the post globalization era. His novels are based on day-to-day happenings in the Indian society so ultimately he has written the problems of Indian society in a humorous ways. He has handled the modern situation in proper manner. His characters easily get involved in friendship and love and suffer a lot. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern to the society in his novels ranging from romantic love story to a shocking condition of the Indian multiculturalism. Bhagat, in the novels describes about the Indian culture and trend using different narrative technique and style. This paper aims to study the narrative technique and

style used in his The 3 Mistakes Of My Life.

**Keywords:** Religious politics, Casteism, Communal harmony

**Introduction**

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian author, columnist, and speaker. He is the author of eight blockbuster novels, *Five Point Someone-What not to do at IIT* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014), *One Indian Girl* (2016) and *The Girl In Room 105* (2018) and two non-fictions, *What Young India Wants* (2012) and *Making India Awesome* (2015). All these books have best-seller since their release and some bollywood films like *3 idiots*, *Hello*, *Kai Po Che*, *2 States* and *Half Girlfriend* took inspiration from these novels. Chetan Bhagat is seen more as a youth icon than just an author. This IIT and IIM-A graduate is making India read like never before.

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Any narrative as a technique of delineation has two overlapping aspects, one refers to content, or the assemblage of material and the nature of the connections implied. The other is rhetorical. It is the mode of presenting the narrative to the reader, or audience. So the art of narration pertains to two basic queries- 'what' and 'how'.

'What' part of narration discusses the various recurrent themes at length. In the present paper, a study is undertaken to elaborate in details the 'how' aspect of narrative technique. As the realm of narrative technique is quite vast and endless, an attempt is made to limit the study to the use of various modes like humour, simile, metaphor, irony, symbolism, personification, hyperbole, repetition etc. as found in the '*The 3 Mistakes of My Life*' of Chetan Bhagat.

Thus, humour is generally used by all the creative artists to provide a variety to the texture and also to relieve the atmosphere of tension and gloom. It helps the author to intersperse comic relief in an otherwise serious plot. Instances of humour abundantly abound in the novels of Chetan Bhagat. Most of them are available in '*The 3 Mistakes of My Life*'. In the novel Bhagat describes how Omi becomes stupid. Govind, Ishaan and Omi are good friends. Govind is more interested in business and Ishaan, in cricket. Omi always stays confused. Everyone talks about his confused condition. Govind says he becomes stupid "because a cricket ball hit

him". (3MML 8) Govind also makes a comment on Ishaan who wastes his time in playing and watching cricket. He says, "Ishaan is not ran away from the NDA but he was thrown out of it". (3MML, 8).

Govind and his friends sometimes eat at Gopi, a vegetarian restaurant. Omi eats too much food. Ishaan says to him, "That is your tenth chapatti" (3MML, 13) and warns him that all that food is bad for him. Govind says, "People like Omi are no profit customers, there is no way Gopi could make money of him" (3MML, 14). Bittoo mama is a great follower of Parekhji. He invites Omi and his friends at Parekhji's residence for political meeting. All the guests follow the meeting protocol and dress in white or saffron. Ish looks odd with his skull and crossbones, black Metallica T-shirt. Govind says, "Everyone had either grey hair or no hair. It looked like a marriage party where only the priests were invited"(3MML, 40). Vidya, the younger sister of Ishaan is preparing for medical entrance exam. She hates maths most and said to Govind "between an electric shock or a maths test, I will choose the former"(3MML, 45). She is even ready to do anything-difficult thing instead of maths study. She says, "I heard some people have to walk two miles to get water in Rajasthan, I would trade my problems for that walk, everyday" (3MML, 45).

Ishaan is a cricket freak and wants Ali to play in Indian team. Once these trios go to Ali's house where they tell his father

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to send Ali regularly for cricket and maths coaching. Ali's father offers them dinner. Govind and Ishaan take its advantage but Omi being priest's son does not eat at Muslim's house. Ali's father feels Omi may like non-veg, so he asks him, "Sorry I can't offer you meat, this is all we have today" (3MML, 65). But instantly Omi says to him, "I don't eat meat, I am a priest's son" (3MML, 65). These friends open a shop at the premises of Swamibhakti temple where they sell stationery and cricket materials. Once due to slow time in business they sit outside of the shop. On seeing Bittoo mama, Omi signals Govind to bring tea for him but suddenly mama says, "Get something to eat as well" (3MML, 76). Govind thought about the money required for the snack. He says, "Who the fuck pays for mama's snacks?" (3MML, 76). Bittoo mama always attends Parekh-ji's political and religious meetings and inspires youngsters to come there. He asks Govind, as he wants him to be there. Govind says that he is agnostic and does not want to attend the religious-political meeting. Mama tells him that he takes very less rent of their shop so they owe him something. Govind replies that given the situation the rent they pay is fair. After hearing Govind, he says, "Look at his pride! This two bit shop and a giant ego." (3MML, 77) Govind and his friends try everything to lure customers to purchase the materials from their shop.

They even allow women to keep their children into the shop when latter go

for prayer at temple. Babloo is one of such children who come with his grandmother at the temple's premises. Ishaan allows him to sit and watch cricket match. Ishaan gets excited and kisses the TV when Harbhajan Singh takes a wicket. Babloo tells Ishaan, "Don't watch the TV from so close" (3MML, 123). Ishaan childishly tells him, "Don't listen to grown-up all the time. Nobody went blind watching TV from close. Don't people work on computers?" (3MML, 123)

Simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. The language of a novelist has to be different in order to be attractive and appealing Ishaan is a good player during his school days and plays district level matches. Ali is a Muslim boy who takes admission in the same school where Ishaan learns. Kids tell Ishaan that Ali hits only sixes. Govind remarks on Ali that he looks "like the school has his worthy successor" (3MML, 28). The novelist tells Ali's ability of playing cricket just like Ishaan. Omi and his friends attend the religious meeting at Parekh-ji's house. All the guests other than Omi and his friends are priests.

They wear white or saffron colour dress; have grey hair or no hair. The party looks "like a marriage party where only the priests were invited. Most of them carried some form of accessory like a trishul or rudraksha or a holy book" (3MML, 30). All these guests divide into two groups of

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saffron and white “like shoal of fishes” (3MML, 30) and sit down in two neat section. At the party, all the guests are in dress code but Ishaan wears T-shirt, which has a picture of skull and crossbones. Govind and Ishaan look “like the protagonists of those ugly duckling stories in their mismatched cloths” (3MML, 30). Vidya is Govind’s student at coaching class. She always does different things than study. Once she wears a T-shirt, on which ‘fairy queen’ words are written. Govind is confused and thinks how can she wears such a T-shirt. The novelist says such thoughts in Govind’s mind may come, as Vidya does not look “like a cute ragdoll in those cloths” (3MML, 62). Vidya tells Govind her desire to take admission in Mumbai. She blames her parents for not allowing her to go outside of the house. Govind cannot tolerate her childlike attitude. He tells her to think by her nice, big, oiled brain that is not pea sized “like bird’s” (3MML, 64). Govind invests money in new shop at Navaragpura. An earthquake comes and shatters Govind’s aim of becoming a businessman. He runs from his house towards new city to see his shop’s condition.

All most all the buildings are damaged. He sees new city areas “like satellite suffered heavy damage” (3MML 66). Ishaan and his friends take Ali to Australia to give him cricket practice. They admit Ali at a cricket coaching class and go at Bondi beach for enjoyment where they see hundreds of beautiful women. Looking

at them, Govind comments that it is “like all the beautiful women in the world emailed each other and decided to meet at Bondi” (3 MML 97). The novelist compares Australian women with world’s most beautiful women. At Bondi beach, these friends enjoy a lot. They swim and eat breakfast there. Govind sees a woman who has black hair, busy in applying lotion on her semi naked body. On seeing her Govind says something hurts inside him and feels “like someone pounded my chest” (3MML 97). Ishaan and Omi splash seawater on each other at Bondi beach. On seeing those, Govind imagines as if Vidya and he splash water on each other. Bhagat says random thoughts circulate in Govind’s head “like oiled fingers in hair” (3MML, 97).

Govind starts loving Vidya and their love grows day by day. Vidya does not like Govind’s tour of Goa and Australia, as she does not want to keep herself away from him. Govind without caring for money makes her a phone call from Australia. Thoughts of meeting Vidya make him uneasy. He says when he reaches Ahmedabad the name of Vidya rings “like an alarm in his head” (3MML, 105). It shows how Govind’s love for Vidya cannot stop him from thinking about her. Love keeps him reminded of her. Govind and Vidya make sex many times. Vidya is frightened when period comes late to her. She tells Govind that it does not happen with her in past. She asks him if she is pregnant. After hearing the ‘pregnant’ word from Vidya, the sweat erupts on Govind’s

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forehead “like he had jogged thrice around the ATIRA lawn” (3MML, 118).

Metaphor is a figure of speech, which makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics. In other words, a resemblance of two contradictory or different objects is made based on a single or some common characteristics. Pandit-ji sells cricket materials to Govind and his friends. He settles in Ahmedabad as he is forced to leave Kashmir. Kashmiri’s are fair in color. He starts panting due to the weight of trunk he carries to Govind’s shop. Bhagat uses the metaphor “rosy red” for Pandit-ji. He depicts “Pandit-ji’s white face a rosy red” (FPS, 118). Chetan Bhagat uses conventional metaphor for describing relation between father and son. Ali is born to Naseer from his first wife. His second wife does not take Ali’s care. Ishaan wants to test Ali at the hands of Australian players at Goa. Ali’s father comes to railway station to say Ali good-bye. Ali’s father says to Govind, “Ali is a piece of my heart” (3MML, 135).

Irony is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.

In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, an ironical statement is used about alcoholic drink in Gujarat. Gujarat is a dry state where drink is prohibited but it is easily available at hotels. Govind says, “Food in Gujarat is a

passion, especially as Gujarat is a dry state; people here get drunk on food” (3MML, 7). Ishaan is a cricket freak who leaves NDA and takes cricket coaching. He is the best player at his school and plays district level matches. Ishaan tells Govind that he wants to apply for insurance job. One cannot imagine that a champion batsman of Belrampur will become an insurance salesman. Govind ironically says to Ishaan, “When he had no life ahead, he wanted to insure other people’s live” (3MML, 14).

Personification is a figure of speech in which a thing, an idea, or an animal is given human attributes. The non-human objects are portrayed in such a way that we feel they have the ability to act like human beings.

Parekh-ji, a political leader, uses religion for political purpose. Hindu people respect him. He is a great supporter of Ram temple at Ayodhya. He takes the help of idol and scripture to change people’s mind towards Hinduism. He says, “Our scriptures tell us not to harm others” (3MML, 42). Parekh-ji again inspires his followers by saying, “The Gita tells Arjun to fight a virtuous war” (3MML, 43). Here also Gita is given the role of human being who orders Arjun to fight a war. Govind wants to become a businessman. He moves towards his aim by booking a shop at a mall but an earthquake shatters his hope by collapsing his booked shop. Govind says he never cries when India losses a match, when he cannot join engineering college and when he barely makes money for the first three months

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from business. But that day when “God slapped my city for no reason” I cried and cried (3MML, 109). Here God is personalized as human being.

Repetition is a device to make the same claim twice in succession. This mode gives emphasis on the statement made. Bhagat in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* describes about religious politics. He says Muslim and Hindu, after the fight should come together. That means reconciliatory mechanisms are important. Govind says in India steps are not taken to resolve the problems after the conflicts. He says, “Yes, so that means politicians fuel a fire, there is no fire brigade to check it” (3MML, 71).

Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Bhagat also presents the symbol of national integrity in the novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. Omi is a strict follower of Hinduism. But when Hindu-Muslim riot takes place in Gujarat, he comes forward and saves Ali, a Muslim boy. While dying he says to Bittoo mama, “He (Ali) is a good boy mama, he didn’t kill your son. All Muslims are not bad” (3MML, 244).

**Conclusion:**

Thus, Chetan Bhagat in his novel, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* has tried to present the different narrative technique and style. He has used simile, metaphor, personification, repetition, hyperbole etc. In the novel the

author has given stress on humour and other techniques. Govind, Ishaan, Omi and Vidya used figurative language. Bhagat is successful in making the reader happy. New readers who don’t know the literary language can also enjoy the writing style of Chetan Bhagat. Bhagat has succeeded here in describing all the things in beautiful manner. He has also succeeded in keeping the readers stick to novel up to at the end.

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