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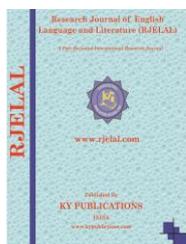
2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

PATRIOTISM IN *THE 3 MISTAKES OF MY LIFE*

Dr.R.VISHALAKSHI¹, V.KEERTHIHA²

¹Research Supervisor & Assistant Professor, PRIST University, Thanjavur

²M.Phil., Research Scholar, PRIST University, Thanjavur.



ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is a writer of repute in the post-modern era. He has this spirit of patriotism in him, which is solely responsible for bringing a kind of awareness among the general public about the rights and responsibilities of not only the leaders but also of the people when their turn comes for voting the right individual to represent the state and the nation. His timely exposition of the problems and evils rampant in a democratic country like India will certainly bear fruit provided all his writings are taken due note of. Though the writer calls it a story about business, cricket and religion, it is worth trying the experiment of making it a patriotic and romantic novel. It definitely contains the fabric of patriotism and national interest, though it is not professed in an outright manner. The way things move along in the story give scope for a lot of patriotism among its folks.

Chetan Bhagat is one such realistic writer interested in the development of his country and her people. He is the author of four best-selling novels – *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* ((2008) and *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009). Chetan is also a popular columnist and motivational speaker. Time magazine has named him as one amongst the ‘100 Most Influential People in the world.’ He writes for leading English and Hindi newspapers on youth and developmental issues. The present work is about patriotism and romance in his novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*.

Patriotism is nothing but feeling interested in the country and its people. Any patriotic individual will have utmost faith in his country and the people living in it. They will not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country they love too much. They will take part in all the important activities contributing to the general interest and welfare of the nation. In times of emergency like the Freedom Struggle, the Foreign Invasion, War with the Enemy countries, plague or

flood or earthquake the country will fall in line to show solidarity with the affected and resolve to fight till the very end all fissiparous tendencies and divisive forces that will try to overpower the authorities.

The story involving three friends, Omi the Hindu priest’s son, Ishaan, the cricket coach and Govind, the Maths tuition teacher and seller of shop goods runs smoothly along with each taking to their respective job. They all together open Team India Cricket Shop in Belrampur. The sale of balls start with Harsh buying one set for use in his place. When asked about his play, the boy reports that he will play a few shots, but mostly with good bats. Another boy purchases a bat. They could make forty bucks on the bat and four on the two balls. They begin to earn money with other products getting introduced for sale from the shop. The name board now indicates that it is also a place for stationery, cricket coaching and Maths Tutions. Bittoo Mama visits the place and behaves like a true Hindu religious devotee. He objects to their wearing shoes in the temple premises, since the shop is situated in the temple

ground. He says thus: "Your shop is in a temple and you are wearing shoes?" (MML, 31).

Soon the boys find a talented boy in Ali, who could stroke the ball marvelously for the initial four balls and thereafter go into a shell. When Ish puts him to test, Ali hits the first three balls for consecutive sixes. Omi keeps wickets, while Ish bowls at Ali. The fourth ball from Ish happens to be a full toss. It deserves the treatment at the hands of Ali who smashes it by coming two steps forward. Then Ali sits down complaining that he has headache. This feat from the boy has made Ish think about him and his problem. With money saved by earnings from the sale and the tuitions, Govind plans to set up the shop at Navrangpura through lease. After getting consent from Ali's father about his health check-up, they meet Dr.Verma who examines Ali and his defects. He advises Ish to take the boy to Dr.Multani working in the city hospital. After taking MRI scan, Dr.Multani says thus after giving him several tests:

"Ali's brain is fascinating. His first, second and third reflex way of thinking is fused. His response time is as fast as that of a reflex action, yet his decision-making is as accurate as the analyzed mode. You may think he hit the superfast delivery of yours by luck, but his brain saw its path easily" (MML, 60).

The training starts for Ali with permission from his parents. The boy is also given coaching in Maths by Govind. One day Ish hits the boy in anger for not taking the coaching in the right spirit. The boy feels angry and does not want the presence of the coach anymore. Ish gets upset and curses himself for having behaved in a silly manner. He moans that he has no talent like Ali. He recalls his own ambition to become a big player – "I gave up studies and now that I think of it, even my future. And then comes this marble player who has this freakish gift. I could never see the ball and whack it like Ali" (MML, 97). Ish shouts at him for not taking the job seriously and disappointing him by playing marbles all day. Govind silences him telling that Ali is a guy who is yet to learn and it is not good to scold him for that.

Patriotism runs high in the minds of the boys, whenever a cricket match is in progress

anywhere in India. During the test match at Kolkatta played between India and Australia at the famous Eden Gardens from 11th to 15th of March, 2001, they were hoping for victory by the Indians. However the opponents smashed 445 in their first innings. The Indians in reply started in a poor way, getting out cheaply all on a sudden. The score came to a mere 171. The Kiwis asked India to follow on and in the second innings India tried their luck. The boys, especially Ish was very much worried, as the blood of cricket in him would alert him every now and then. He even went to the extent of closing the cricket coaching business, if India went down to Australia. He said that he would give dinner if India managed to draw the match. Laxman came in place of Ramesh. At the end of the third day India stood at 254/4. After adding 171 to the total, India needed only 20 runs to match Australia's first innings score. The fourth day ended with the score at 589/4. Laxman ended the day at 275 not out. Dravid made 155 not out. Ish could finally heaved a sigh of relief, as he felt that at least a draw would be on the cards. The fifth and final day saw Laxman scoring 281 and leaving thereafter. After an hour's lay for the day, the captain Ganguli announced the closure of the Indian second innings at 657/7. Everyone was puzzled to know if Ganguli's gamble would work out.

The Australians were forced to play their second innings against India. They needed 384 to win the match. Omi prayed to God for His blessings to the Indian team. Initially Australia cruised to 166/3. But Harbhajan's five deadly overs including a hat-trick gave India the chance to win, when the visitors were reeling at 174/8. The last two wickets also fell cheaply with Harbhajan taking six wickets in all. Ish had the fullest satisfaction at the incredible win. He clapped when the captain came to receive the trophy. This is patriotism at its level best.

The patriotic spirit of the youngsters is such that they take to violence in the aftermath of the Godhra train tragedy. People like Mama and others could not keep quiet and so they take the matter in their hands and begin to attack all the Muslims and the opponents to their cause. Ish has gone to the bank with Ali to get away from the unnecessary comments thrown by his dad. He gets news about the end of Dhiraj from Govind. He asks the boys to

come and stay with him in the bank premises. A burning man runs across to save himself from the crowd. The Hindu mob chases him and sees to it that he loses his life. Govind who witnesses this ugly scene for the first time in his life says in shock thus: "My heart beat in the same irregular way as it did on the day of the earthquake. Nature caused that disaster, man made this one" (MML, 220-221).

Mama is now in a terrible mood to make short work of Ali, the enemy whom he wants to kill in retaliation for the Godhra outrage. He comes to the bank with a group of men to take revenge on the killers. Ish, Omi and Govind try to convince him of the futility of the exercise because Mama has turned blind to reality. If someone killed the kar sevaks on their way home, it is not wise to take Ali's life for that. But Mama gets clean chit from his leader to put to death all the enemies. He knocks at the bank gate and tells the boys to come out with the boy so that they can have a go at him. But the scene gets explosive and even goes out of hands. Ish goes to the top floor of the bank and gets ready with explosives to throw them at the crowd waiting for revenge. His words as also the words of Omi do not fall on Mama. His men get an upper hand and begin to indulge in acts of violence. The boys have successfully hidden Ali in the vault. Mama will not stop until he gets at Ali, his target. When the situation develops into a crescendo, Omi comes in between mama and Ali and the men throw the trishul into the body of Omi who goes in protection of Ali.

All excepting one man fall victims to the evil plan of getting at the killers of the Godhra carnage. The lone man from the killer gang escapes at last from the scene. Ali is taken home by Ish and Govind is admitted in the hospital for treatment. Ali would have been completely unhurt if Govind had dived a second earlier to protect him from danger. But that is the third mistake made by him in his life. During the fight Ish comes to know of Govind's affair with his sister and he gets angry over this. He gives Govind a heavy push and attacks him severely. They do not talk with each other, but in the end Govind's mother sets things right and Vidya herself tells about it openly. The patriotic spirit of the Hindu leaders and soldiers is such that they do not see

reason into the happenings and in a blindfold manner attack the opponents, particularly the Muslim boy, Ali who is but innocent of the whole thing.

Patriotism of the boys is well presented by the novelist Chetan Bhagat in the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life*. Cricket is the passion for almost all the Indians. It is because it is the only sport that is given importance more than any other game in India. Australia has twenty million people, but India has nearly fifty times that number, yet they lag behind. Ish and others speak about the fact that the Australians want every game to be won. His observation regarding the kids studying in school and their deep interest in cricket is reported thus:

"These kids, Govind. Look at them, thirteen year olds holding their bats with pride. Or the way they want to learn to bowl better. They have a fire in their eyes before every little match at Nana Park. When India wins, they dance. They are the only people I see with passion. I like being with them" (MML, 30).

Finally the book is a thriller in that it creates interest in spheres like nation-building, better relationship between friends and neighbors and mutual harmony at all times. Chetan Bhagat has really done well to promote nationalism through the pages of the book. To realize their goals the boys have to face all kinds of opposition – religious, political, economic, calamities, unacceptable .love and above all their own mistakes.

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