

Globalisation and Cultural Shift in Chetan Bhagat's Novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*

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Abstract

The 3 Mistakes of My Life by Chetan Bhagat is a very interesting story that captures the impact of cultural changes and globalization in early 21st-century India. The story, which is set in Ahmedabad, focuses on three young men as they negotiate their individual goals, financial difficulties, and interpersonal conflicts in a culture that is changing quickly. The novel shows the impact of global economic liberalization through the characters in the novel. Some characters are shown with success in business. It highlights the appearance of a new middle class motivated by consumer desires and open market brought by liberalisation reform. The novel also examines the cultural shift among young Indians at the same time, giving importance to the increasing influence of Western ideals on identity, education, and relationships throughout the world. The existence of cricket, a national and worldwide desire, serves as another picture of how local culture and global impact tend to meet. This novel also shows how talent can go beyond the social and religious divisions in a modern urban environment. Furthermore, the novel's communal disturbances also show the conflict between conventional belief and the demands of modernity. Thus, Bhagat's story serves as a good text through which readers can analyse the complicities of a society which is undergoing changes, which are influenced by both the advantages and disadvantages of globalization.

Keywords: Cultural change, Globalisation, Identity, Modernity, Urbanisation.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has been one of the most important hands in shaping Indian society in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. With the economic liberalization policies of 1991, India has changed its view on global markets, media and cultural flows. This shift of view has impacted not only the economy but also social identities, cultural expressions and political structures. Literature, particularly in English, has mirrored these transformations on a large scale. Writers like Aravind Adiga, Amitav Ghosh and Chetan Bhagat have started to capture this new social reality in their fictions by capturing the contradictions and promises of globalization.

Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) is one of the popular novels that initiated India's youth readership. It is a story about three friends- Govind, Ishaan and Omi in love, ambition and tragedy in the city of Ahmedabad. Yet beyond the storyline and narrative, the novel also functions as an important document of globalization's impact on India. It mirrors how neo-liberal values in shaping ambition, how cultural hybridity redefines gender and identity, how global media transform sports such as cricket and how the same global forces increase the severity of communal tensions.

This paper examines *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* through the lens of globalization from the theoretical perspectives of Arjun Appadurai, Anthony Giddens, Homi Bhabha and Thomas Friedman. Chetan Bhagat's novel simultaneously appreciates and critiques globalization. It introduces the opportunities for entrepreneurship and mobility while registering the instability, inequalities and moral understandings that globalization introduces. Looking into economic ambition, cultural hybridity, the globalization of cricket and the intensification of communal politics, this paper demonstrates that Bhagat's fiction is not merely popular entertainment but also a paper that narrates India's encounter with globalization.

GLOBALISATION AND CULTURAL SHIFT

Globalization is a concept that scholars approach from different disciplinary angles. Anthony Giddens offers one of the most cited sociological definitions: "Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 64). This definition is crucial for the readers of Bhagat's novel, where local events in Ahmedabad like cricket training, small-scale business journeys, and even communal riots-are tied to larger national and global processes. For example, Govind's entrepreneurial spirit is developed not only by local aspirations but also by global success stories. Arjun Appadurai adds complexity by emphasizing cultural flows. He argues that "The central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (Appadurai 32). Appadurai's categories of ethnoscaples, mediascaples, financescaples, technoscaples and ideoscaples help us understand how global influences spread in local contexts. In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, mediascaples can be seen through cricket broadcasting and cinema; financescaples are shown in Govind's entrepreneurial ideas; ideoscaples appear in the political ideologies that led to communal tensions. Homi Bhabha, is one of the writers that writes primarily in the context of postcolonial theories, offering the concept of hybridity, which is related to cultural globalization. He asserts:

"Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" (Bhabha 112).

In a globalized nation, hybridity is not only a colonial legacy but also a contemporary condition: characters like Vidya embody hybrid subjectivities, caught between traditional expectations and global modernity.

Thomas Friedman, in *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (1999), describes globalization as a levelling force. He claims that "It is the inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before" (Friedman 9).

In Bhagat's novel, markets may seem flat in offering Govind a chance to succeed, but social inequalities and communal divides remind us that the world is not equally flat for all. One of

the most visible factors of globalization in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* is the entrepreneurial ambition of Govind. Govind always dreams of running his own business. His ideas on profits, market trends and investments reflect the rise of neo-liberal subjectivity in post-liberalization India. Globalization in India came to exist after the economic reforms of 1991, which reduced state control over factory, industry or shop licenses, it encouraged privatization and invited foreign investment in locals. This liberalization opened new opportunities for the middle class, encouraging the ideology of entrepreneurial self-making. Giddens explains that globalization is not only a path to achieve economic stability, but it also transforms the idea of self-identity of individuals. Here, Govind is an example of such a transformed self, one who measures worth by profit margins and dreams of rapid upward mobility. In the novel, Govind is shown as if business was in his blood. He works very hard to make money to become a successful person. He always wants to be big. This desire to be big reflects what Arjun Appadurai identifies as the globalization of aspiration in his *Culture and Public Action* as the capacity to aspire, like any cultural capacity, thrives and survives on practice, repetition, exploration, conjecture and refutation. Govind's repeated calculations, investments and negotiations show how globalisation creates aspirations that are not just local but are shaped by the stories of success happening around the world. Govind's entrepreneurial dream is, however, insecure. His small-scale shop depends on community networks and is in a state that is beyond his control. When the earthquake in Gujarat destroyed his shop, Govind cried for all the losses in investment. While Govind can pursue business, he is also vulnerable to systemic risks, including natural disasters, communal politics, and fluctuating markets. His ambition highlights the contradiction of globalization: empowerment without security.

Govind is always fixed on profit and it also shapes his interpersonal relationships. He calculates the costs of Omi's family temple land, negotiates Ishaan's coaching work and views even friendship through a business lens. Thus, economic globalization in the novel does not merely provide material opportunities but also reconfigures values and ethics.

The 3 Mistakes of My Life reflects Thomas Friedman's argument that globalization is not just a trend but a system that now shapes virtually every aspect of business and culture. He even quotes that "globalisation became the dominant international system at the end of the twentieth century - replacing the Cold War system - and to examine how it shapes virtually everyone's domestic politics, commerce, environment and international relations." (Friedman 19). Govind is presented in the novel as both a participant and a casualty brought by this system: he embraces entrepreneurial ideology but suffers when global and local shocks destabilize his journey.

Globalization also reflects its ideas on cultural domains - in the reshaping of identity, language and consumer aspirations. The young protagonists of Bhagat's novel are from urban Indians who are always seen negotiating between both traditional expectations and globalized lifestyles. Their experiences illustrate Appadurai's notion of mediascapes, where "images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed." (Appadurai 35).

The novel's language itself is an object of globalization. Bhagat writes in a conversational English with Indian idioms, reflecting the hybrid linguistic landscape of post-liberalization India. English functions as a marker of aspiration and mobility. In the novel we can also see there is some communication going on with Fred in the English language. Ishaan said, "When is practice tomorrow, Fred, in English if you can" (Bhagat 158). This recognition aligns with Braj Kachru's argument that English in India operates as a language of opportunity and modernization. For Bhagat's character fluency in English opens access to

education, romance and business networks -are all shaped by globalization. Bhabha writes, “Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects.” (Bhabha 112). In Bhagat’s novel, hybridity is evident in Vidya’s character. She wants to become a modern professional woman, studying medicine, while also balancing the family expectations and traditional restrictions. Her romance with Govind, a socially taboo relationship because she is Ishaan’s sister. She is just like her own sister in the traditional thinking. It symbolizes the hybrid negotiation between modern freedom and traditional morality.

Globalization introduces new consumer hopes to which the novel frequently referred to. The characters desire branded goods, want to attend coaching classes and the comfort of modern lifestyles. For example, Govind’s interest in malls and coaching institutes. These are also some of the changes brought by globalisation. Anthony Giddens notes that modern consumption is linked not simply to utility but to lifestyle, identity and symbolic self-expression. Globalisation and modernity have created a society which is unpredictable, out of our will or control. Bhagat’s characters in the novel show this link that success is measured not only in profits but also in the ability to consume and display modern lifestyles. For example, Vidya’s ambitions and Govind’s dreams are inseparable from the desire for modern goods and spaces. Globalization also reorganised the idea of gender relations in this novel. Vidya resists traditional arranged marriage customs and instead she goes with her own romantic desires. She tells Govind that she didn’t want to follow the path chosen by her mother, who had no choice. She wants to live her own life. This power to make choices opens new spaces for women and also simultaneously strengthens parental control. Vidya’s struggle exemplifies this contradiction: she gains such authority through education, but she remains between the restrictions made by social norms and familial expectations.

The novel also reflects the hybridization of leisure time activities under globalization. The friends discuss Bollywood films, watch cricket matches broadcast in the televisions. Appadurai’s idea of mediascapes and ideoscapes are found here: broadcasting of films and cricket infuses the local youth culture with new ideas, hopes and imaginaries but political ideologies continue to give pressure. Bhagat’s novel itself is a product of globalization - written in English, marketed around the world and later developed into a film named *Kai Po Che*. The most rigid example of globalization in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* is none other than cricket. It is in association with India’s colonial past. Cricket has shaped its new face with the globalization. For example, satellite television broadcasting, sponsorships and international talent scouting are one of the examples of its new phase with the impact of globalisation. Cricket in this novel is not just a time passing activity but also acts as a potential career maker. We are able to see this career making especially in Ali, a young prodigy discovered by Ishaan in the novel. The friends’ risky journey into cricket coaching reflects how globalization transforms local talent into marketable capital. In the novel, Ishaan thinks that Ali is special. He could play for India one day if he and his friends guide him properly. This thought reflects the globalization of aspiration: it shows the higher possibility that a boy from a small locality could be played onto an international stage if they guide him properly. Arjun Appadurai’s idea of “ideoscapes” is related here, as cricket functions as an ideology of national representation along with global market possibilities.

Communal violence is one of the most serious incidents happening in the novel. This communal violence narrative is inspired by the 2002 Gujarat riot. It happened because of socio-political destabilization in that time period. Globalization may help in economic growth, but it also changes political scenarios in fast ways. Anthony Giddens also believed

the idea that globalization does not erase local politics but intensifies them by linking them to larger forces. In this novel, we can see Hindu-Muslim tensions are ignited by political persons through their narratives. For example, the riot that killed Ali's neighbours was because of the rumours, speeches and mobilizations that ignited such a powerful riot. Appadurai's idea of mediascapes explained this scenario that the global media, which is a gift of globalisation. It can broadcast cricket as well as it also help in the circulation of this political unrest in a small period of time. In the riot, the three friends tried to protect Ali from rioters, even if he was a muslim. This moment shows how globalization influenced in the minds of youth that they tried to save a national property without thinking about the religious differences even in the time of a riot.

The impact of globalization in Bhagat's novel is not limited to its content only; it can also be seen in the narrative form and readership. *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* is known for written in simple, easy, common English. We can see the entire changing scene of writing in previous Indian authors like Salman Rushdie or Amitav Gosh with Chetan Bhagat. Critics often criticised Bhagat's writing as simplistic, but its accessibility among every citizen because of its simplistic writing makes it a product of globalization. His use of short chapters and ordinary dialogue also helps new readers to be able to read and understand the text in a very easy way. Even in some interviews, Bhagat himself has admitted that he writes for "non-readers," youth category. It referred to those youths who are more comfortable with films for an easier understanding than with books, as books are normally complex. This aligns with Arjun Appadurai's idea that, in a globalized world, "the imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the component of the new global order." (Appadurai 31). Bhagat tried to use every possible narrative strategies like filmic presentation, later producing the adaptation of his novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* into a movie named *Kai Po Che* in 2013. The shift from novel to film is also to illustrate globalization's multimedia cultural flows. Furthermore, Bhagat's mass readership, because of his new way of writing reflects the rise of a new middle class shaped by globalization. These readers found themselves in Govind's entrepreneurial dreams, Vidya's aspirations and Ishaan's love and dedication for cricket. Bhagat's success lies in bringing the audience together by offering a narrative that is both familiar to everyone and global ideas in its themes. Readers found themselves as a character within the novel.

CONCLUSION

The impact of globalization in Chetan Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* involves multiple dimensions in shaping economic growth, cultural identity, political conflict and narrative form. Through Govind's entrepreneurial approach, the novel dramatizes the idea of free market globalization, where self-worth is shown to be equivalent to productivity and profit. Through Vidya's aspirations, we can see how globalisation can impact the traditional belief and also show how a character suffers between traditional beliefs and global modernity and in Ali's character, we can see that how globalization can generate new identities and opportunities, as we think cricket as a leisure activity, but it brings new opportunities. Through the Gujarat riots and Omi's death in the novel, it helps in understanding how globalization can extend its severity in communal politics, exposing the wrong use of media in the context of violence. The novel itself is a cultural significance of globalization as it is written in easy simplistic English, marketed to mass audiences which include both readers and non readers and it is also adapted into a film that helps to circulate globally. Bhagat's style, often criticised as simplistic, reflects the demands of a globalized literary market that give privileges of accessibility of entertainment on both readers and non readers.

Finally, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* reveals globalization as a situation. It offers new and unknown opportunities for Indian youth while simultaneously giving them new risks like economic possibilities, cultural conflicts or contradictions and political treatment. Bhagat's narrative gives the first hand experience of globalization in post-liberalization India, by making his novel as a crucial text for understanding how global forces shape everyday life. As Giddens reminds us, globalization is a dialectical phenomenon, producing new ties across the world but also brings new conflicts and disconnections. Bhagat's novel expresses this logical discussion, showing how hope and tragedy, opportunity and destruction coexist in the age of globalization.

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