CHAPTER-IV

Serious Issues of the Lower Middle Class Society In

*The Three Mistakes of My Life*

[The present chapter analyses Chetan Bhagat’s third novel *Three Mistakes of My Life*. Serious issues of lower middle class Indian society have been explored and analyzed on the basis of the Research Tool defined in the first chapter. The deeper analysis of the novel brings out certain conspicuous issues of contemporary Indian lower middle class society and how the younger generation is influenced by the same. The chapter has been summarized with research findings and certain exclusive observations of the researcher regarding the writer and his art of fiction writing]

4.1 Brief Review of the Novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life*

*The Three Mistakes of My Life* is Chetan Bhagat’s third novel which was published in 2008 by the Rupa & Co, Delhi. The novel has been adapted for the Bollywood movie *Kai Po Che* in the year 2013, directed by Abhishek Kapoor. The size of the book is 13×19 centimetres, which means not much bigger than a pocket book, very light in weight, hardly 75 grams. Having cricket, love, and politics as major themes, the front page of the hard cover of the novel has apt and suggestive picture of the three buddies like the three stumps-sticks of cricket in dark black colour with two bails flung in the air, hit by a spinning ball, and ‘oh...the clean bowled’ type of image is a symbolic representation of the three buddies who are shown in the novel as clean bold in life while struggling for career, love or politics. On the back side hard page, a very small note on the novel ‘*Three Mistakes of My Life*’ has been given to arouse the reader’s curiosity and interest for further reading. A small biographical note of the writer with his photo in a hearty, cheerful and confident pose adds to the appearance of the book. The price of the book, only Rs.95/-, is very reasonable. On the same page the personal website of the writer and his e-mail id have been given so that the reader may feel easy to get more information or do necessary communication.

The paper quality, font size and beautiful binding of the book are a perfect match to call the entire stuff a fiction in the real sense of the term. On the back side of the first opening page,
the stronger marketing mind set of Chetan Bhagat can be clearly noticed while reading the cited appreciative quotes from reputed newspapers like The New York Times, International Herald Tributes, Times of India and India Today for his two previously successful novels ‘Five point someone’ and ‘One Night @the Call Centre’. The reader can find all the publication details, copy rights notes, list of sales destinations all over India, and even the printing press address like Saurabh Printers Pvt. Ltd, Noida on the next page. The writer has dedicated the present fiction to his country (people of India) who, as he writes, called him back perhaps from foreign his job as a banker to become a full time writer. The content of the novel has been divided into twenty one chapters, but surprisingly the same have not been given any specific titles. The writer’s skill of storytelling becomes appreciable when he writes the prologue to provide the best start and the two epilogues to bring the happy ending with an autobiographic overtone. Acknowledgement of the novel, next to the content page, is his honest thanksgiving notes to all those who have been his constant source of inspiration and motivation for being what he is today. Chetan Bhagat is now no more an unknown writer in Indian writing in English especially among the youth of contemporary India because he has brought out the life-style and isolation of an entire generation of youth to the forefront. People, especially the youth, read him with intend because he has the mastery to skilfully reflect the very genuine problems of their life. Brain shaking philosophy neither impresses nor convinces the modern youth of today. They have their own problems and their own complaints against the stereo type life style in the contemporary Indian scenario. The author could present this other side very closely and so he is liked, loved, read and accepted by a very huge readership.

The story has a very good beginning. It has three parts; the prologue, the content and the epilogues. In the prologue, the writer describes how he receives an e-mail containing a suicide note of a 25 year old young businessman who is also his reader when the author was having his morning coffee, and how he immediately flies all the way to India from Singapore to see him who chooses the author only, to send his last words. Here, one can apparently observe the moral responsibility of a writer towards the reader.

Govind Patel, a 25 years old businessman e-mails a suicide note to the writer and the writer feels very uncomfortable and an urge to meet him and to wish him to get well soon. He travels overseas and meets Govind Patel at the Civil Hospital in Ahmadabad. Here, in the
hospital, Govind tells him the reason for his suicide attempt and the three mistakes of his life and all this is the stuff of his story and it becomes the central story content of the novel. The three buddies Govind, Ishaan and Omi are frustrated and disappointed in life and they want to do something that would help them earn money. They cannot ensure their future by college studies. Govind is a topper in Maths. He has scored 100 out of 100. He doesn’t want to study further in engineering or any other discipline. He wants to be a businessman. Though he has a calculative mind-set, he fails to calculate the real sum of life. Omi is a runaway military trainee. Ishaan being a crazy and committed to cricket feels a kind of depression and disappointment for not being successful cricketer though he is the best player of his area. All the three buddies have their own aspirations and dreams in life but they are not able to reach them and so they feel inner emptiness of life. Govind has a plan to start a small business of cricket equipment and he succeeds in convincing Ishaan and Omi, his close friends, to be his business partners. They have the small school children of their pol (residential area) and some other children from surrounding area as their valuable customers. They offer free cricket tips to the children to attract them to their shop. Govind gives tuitions in Maths to earn a little more. He also teaches Maths to Ishaan’s sister Vidya who is preparing for her medical entrance exam. Govind being ambitious for starting a big shop in an AC mall in a posh city area, stakes all the savings of life plus some loan amount for his ambitious project but the natural calamity in Gujarat the deadly earthquake of 26 January, 2001 brought down all his dreams like a castle of cards. He considers this as the first mistake of his life for becoming over ambitious and taking high risk of putting all at stake. Govind considers the corrupt construction company equally responsible for his fall along with the earthquake. Ishaan’s sister Vidya, in spite of being a student of him, tries to grow intimate with Govind. She likes to live like a Bombay type girl with a free mind set. She is a modern type of girl of hardly eighteen. Govind, being aware of the moral ethics of being a teacher and a very close friend of Ishaan, tries to avoid Vidyā’s advances frequently but all that proves useless when he surrenders to her and both crosses the limits into physical intimacy. Govind considers this the second mistake of his life. The author Chetan Bhagat makes the present fiction very interesting by inter-weaving some of the real incidents like 9/11 terrorist attacks on WTC, the Godhra train sabotage, and the communal riots that
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Ishaan has a special liking for one Muslim boy Ali who is the best cricketer of his age and he sees in him the future Sachin Tendulkar of India. He gives special training to this boy who shows some good signs of being a good cricketer. The Godhra train incident has re-scraped the wounds of the communal riots in the city and the consequences are very painful and disastrous for the people. Everybody becomes blood thirsty in the city and the hard hearted opportunist politicians are found baking their political bread on the fire of communal riots. The entire city is set on fire but somehow Ali is safe in the custody of these three friends who are secular but disturbed from within by watching this hellish situation of their loving city. The anti-Muslim mob led by Omi’s Mama rushes to kill Ali but these three friends protect him at their own risk. Ishaan here in this emergency like situation comes to know about the relationship between his sister Vidya and his best friend cum business partner Govind. He feels like being cheated from within, but the time was to save Ali’s life and not to argue with Govind. Though they protect Ali from the mob Govind fails to save Ali’s wrist from the onslaught of Bitto mama’s sharp Trishul and he is badly injured. Ali was to be the best cricketer and this accident to his wrist may cause a great fall to his career. Govind takes the responsibility of this accident on him for not being able to offer him any help and he considers this the third mistake of his life. In this riot-encounter Omi loses his life, but somehow Govind and Ishaan succeed in saving the life of Ali. Later on, they do not run business together and depart. They have different ways of life. They are no more friends. They do not have any interest in each other’s life. Govind approaches Ishaan to confess his guilt of seducing his sister but Ishaan is not ready to forgive him as he has smashed his trust of true friendship. The only common interest they have is Ali and his wrist operation. Both collect money and get Ali operated in London. Ishaan neglects Govind so intensely that he finally attempts to commit suicide by swallowing an overdose of sleeping pills and he is admitted to the Civil Hospital of the town. He sends his last words to the writer and he rushes to the hospital to see him, here he listens the story of Govind. At the end, he shows interest in publishing this entire story as a book but he wants to bring the happy end to the story. Finally Ishaan, Vidya and their parents visit Govind and forgive him for his unforgivable mistake. The author returns back to Singapore. Now Ali is expected to
show positive result after the wrist operation and finally the writer is sent an SMS by Govind that Ali’s operation has been very successful and he is now able to hit off boundaries and sixes.

All in all, the entire story of the fiction is very simple but the writer has given it a very special effect by telling it in a little different way. Though the flow of the story does not suffer from any conspicuous break or error of sequence, it has certain small but serious timing errors between the past events and the same events described in the novel. The skilful descriptions, indigenous knitting of real incidents and most of all sparkling but sometimes satiric or smirking conversations makes the entire stuff a very tempting material for the readers especially for the youth. Some spicy events and one or two sense arousing kissing and hugging scenes and other description of sexual intercourse between Govind and Vidya, gives a tempting appeal to the young readership. To those who are not much interested in the game of cricket, may not enjoy the long dragged cricket-match descriptions and those who believe themselves advocates of morality in society may raise their eye-brows to the sensual descriptions in the fiction. Chetan Bhagat is undoubtedly a block buster, super selling, and widely read young novelist of the present time and that is all because of his matured understanding of the psychology of the young generation of contemporary India with their typical prospects and issues of life.
4.2 Contemporary Indian Society Represented in *The Three Mistakes of My Life*

The society which is reflected in Bhagat’s *The Three Mistakes of My Life* is the lower middle class section of society of India. The setting of the novel is the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat with the lower middle class people, their aspirations and issues. The exact setting depicted in the novel is Belrampur in which the story of the present fiction takes place. The people depicted in the fiction belong to the lower middle class background. The three main characters Govind, Omi and Ishaan are friends. They are young men of about twenty five years of age. They belong to poor families. They run a cricket shop where they sell cheap cricket equipment which the children of her lower class people use for playing cricket in the surrounding area. They also sell school stationery, candies, chocolates and peppermints. The chief protagonist Govind is the son of a woman who sells homemade Gujarati snacks whose husband left her ten years ago. Omi is the son of the priest of a local temple. Ishaan’s father works at a telephone exchange. Various characters in the fiction face constant hardship of life. Both Govind and his mother work to meet the regular expenses of life. Govind’s mother, as mentioned earlier, is a Gujarati snacks seller and Govind gives Maths tuitions to earn extra income. His mother has already sold all her jewelry in tough time till she succeeded in her Gujarati snakes business. Omi’s father is also not paid well for his duty as a priest. Even the salary of Ishaan’s father is also very limited. The children of the area study in a municipal school which has very limited facilities. The school has very low standard of education and infrastructural facilities.

The society and the people depicted in the fiction replicate the actual low class Indian society. The people are observed in the fiction quarreling over small matters. They dispose garbage on the streets. Govind describes the actual condition of his area at the beginning of the novel as:

> As I entered the by lane, two people fought over garbage disposal around the cramped pol (….) there are things about my small town neighbourhood that I want to change. In some ways, it is way behind the rest of Ahmedabad. For, one, the whole old city could be a lot cleaner. The new city across the Sabarmati River has gleaming glass and steel buildings, while the old city finds it difficult to get rubbish cleared on time (Bhagat Three 8).
They are habituated to gossips. They keep themselves busy working-out stories from the small incidents of others’ life. The narrator of the story Govind gives examples like people consider that Omi became stupid because a cricket ball hit his head. People gossip that Ishaan did not run away but he was thrown out of National Defense Academy. Govind’s mother believes as believed by many of the women in the Pol that Govind’s father left her and her son and settled with another woman because of the astrological change of position of the planets. She consults various astrologers to know which planet caused her husband to move out and when the position would change that might make her husband’s return possible. The people described in the fiction are having mentality. Once, Govind goes to a book stall with Ishaan’s sister Vidya, the shop keeper who is an old man raised his eyebrow. He asked him about the girl. Govind consider this as the reason why people think Ahmedabad is small town despite the multiplexes. He takes it as the mentality of the people. (Bhagat Three 85).

The parents of the young characters are described as over expecting guardians of their children. Govind’s mother wants him to do engineering whereas Govind is interested in doing business. She does not like Govind wasting time in giving tuitions or watching cricket with friends all the time. Ishaan’s father wanted him to join the Indian Army. He passed the tests and he was getting training but he ran away and came back to home. He does not have good terms with his father. His father does not like him wasting time in watching cricket matches all the time. Ishaan’s parents want his sister Vidya to get admission to the medical college, so she is studying the complicated theories of Maths which she does not like. Omi’s parents expect that he would be a priest sometime, but Omi does not want to do that. The school boy, Ali’s parents want him to study sincerely rather than playing cricket, though he has all the potential to become the best international cricketer. In all these cases the actuality of the lower middle class people comes to the surface. Most of the lower middle class people of India expect their children to become more successful in life by choosing their career as per their parents’ expectations. Engineering and medical are the most favorite branches which most of the parents prefer to opt for their children for years together. This typical contemporary Indian middle class mentality of parents for their children is reflected in the novel in considerable details.
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The other aspect of contemporary middle class reality of the Indian society is exemplified in novel with a variety of young characters. The young characters like Govind, Ishaan, Omi and Vidya throw light on the typical mentality of lower middle class youth of India. They are the actual representations of the contemporary Indian directionless young generation which has high aspirations in life but life gives them no opportunities to fulfill those aspirations. Govind wants to do business and become a big businessman someday. He faces constant shortage of money to start his business. He starts a small business of cricket equipment with the partnership of his friends, but when he takes some high risk in business, he is ruined by a natural calamity and all his dreams turn into ashes. Ishaan wanted to be an international cricketer but he could not become so because he did not get proper training or chance to perform. He feels that he wasted all his valuable years for cricket but the end result is zero. Omi is influenced by the non-secular and opportunist religious and political forces and he is still a directionless young man. He cannot understand what to do in life. He has no job or work that would help him earn money. He is even not interested in becoming a priest of his ancestral temple. Vidya is a Bombay type of girl. She feels that she is a modern girl. She wants to do a course in PR and become free from the suffocating middle class life. She develops the physical relationship with her tuition teacher. All the young characters in the present novel represent the reality of the middle class youth mentality. They have higher dreams in life but they cannot fulfill their dreams due to many reasons like money, opportunity, motivation or luck. Due to modernization and globalization, the thinking level of the new generation has considerably expanded but they cannot accept the limitations of their life so they face inner emptiness and frustration in life.

The novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* throws light on such a lower middle class society which is devoid of some of the basic necessities of life. People face many hardships of life. They have many personal and social issues in life. The hospital, in which the chief protagonist Govind was admitted, does not have caring doctors. The municipal school depicted in the novel is not equipped with the required facilities. The municipal school, wherein the children of the lower middle class people study, does not have much of the basic facilities for imparting education. A reference is found in the novel that the teachers in the schools do not perform their duties sincerely. Most of the schools lack the facility for sports education and infra-structure for sport activities. They lack funds or money for the
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Overall development of the children. The older city is dirtier than a newly developed one. Heaps of garbage are found on the streets. People quarrel over small matters. They are busy, as mentioned earlier, with made up gossiping. The houses are very small with one or two rooms with almost no furniture. The people have their personal problems in life. Govind’s father had an extra-marital affair and he left Govind’s mother. The young boys do not have any job or work at hand. They waste much of their time watching cricket matches on the television. The parents are shown worried about the future of their children. Ishaan’s father wants him to do something rather than waste time and energy in watching cricket match on the television. Govind and his friends Ishaan and Omi start a small business of cricket equipment and stationery but they have a very tough time running it. They purchase a bigger shop in a newly constructed mall in new city area, but it collapses in the earthquake and they have to suffer great loss. The corruption of the civil contractors in new construction works in the developing cities is exposed with the incident of the earthquake. On the one side the prices of real estate in fast developing cities like Ahmedabad are touching sky heights and on the other side the quality of construction is below the minimum standards. This is also a reality of the contemporary Indian society. People purchase their dream houses at very high costs with home loans to be paid life long and they get low quality of construction in return. Hundred years old houses in the old city are not at all damaged in the earthquake whereas the newly constructed shopping centers turn into heaps of debris at the first jerk of the earthquake. The location of the novel is Gujarat so some of the characteristics of typical Gujarati society and the Gujarati people as reflected in the novel. Govind’s mother runs Gujarati snacks business. The typical Gujarati snacks like Khakhara, Khaman, and Dhokla are considered the typical Gujarati snacks. She has a very good market in her area so it reflects on the food habit of the contemporary Indian society, especially Gujarati society. The people of the area go to cheap restaurants for tea and snacks. One such restaurant mentioned in the novel is Gopi restaurant. The people of Gujarat are business minded and they prefer business more than jobs with steady salary and stability. One such reference is found in the novel that the central character Govind is very good in Maths. He is the topper in the school. He can be considered an engineering material, but he is not interested in further studies of engineering. He is more interested in doing his own business. Here, one can observe the typical mentality of the Gujarati people.
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of the contemporary scenario who prefer to do business more than a job. The writer has pointed out small or big habits and behavior patterns of the people of the lower middle class society by describing various real life incidents and situations in the present novel.

The society of Belrampur, depicted in the present fiction, is heterogeneous in nature wherein Hindus and Muslims live with conspicuous religious tension. The Hindus and the Muslims in Belrampur keep some distance from each other because of some religious biases. The Hindus generally do not turn up to the Muslim area and the Muslims avoid turning up to the Hindu area. One reference is observed in the novel that even the Muslim children avoid coming to Govind’s cricket shop to purchase balls which is located in the temple premise and they get such things purchased by the Hindu children. The narrator Govind says: we had few Muslim customers. Most of them used other Hindu boys to make their purchases (Bhagat Three 29). The characters like Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji represent the prevailing non-secular and dirty political forces which keep disturbing the peace and harmony of contemporary Indian society. The society which is depicted in the present novel does not represent the ideal of unity in diversity. The people do not experience social harmony in the story. The communal differences constantly keep on disturbing the peaceful environment of the society. The extremist political and religious forces like Bittoo mama and Parekh-ji keep on burning the flame of communal tension in the society for their cheap concerns. The society represented in the novel is found divided into the Hindu dominated and the Muslim dominated areas of society. People are fed up with the non-secular thoughts and arguments constantly by the so called authoritarians. Bittoo mama wants to become a famous politician and he uses religion as an instrument to reach his goal. He wants more and more young people to join his party which is based on Hindu concerns. He keeps poisoning the ears of people against the Muslim people. Even Parekh-ji keeps on provoking the sentiments of the common people with anti-secular arguments to strengthen his political agenda. The end results are that the society experiences hellish situations like Godhra sabotage and post Godhra communal riots. The people are stabbed to death or burnt alive in public. It hardly makes any difference to millions of Hindu people or even to Lord Ram Himself whether Ram Temple is built on the very birth place of Ram in Ayodhya, or somewhere else or nowhere but it makes a lot difference to so many opportunist
politicians. The revengeful mindset results into violation of social peace and harmony at regular intervals all around India and the innocent people have to suffer a lot.

The writer Chetan Bhagat has reproduced a realistic picture of contemporary lower middle class Indian society in the present novel. The glimpses of the actualities of the lower middle class sentiments and issues are embodied in the novel. The writer has sincerely worked on representing the ground reality of the contemporary scenario of the present middle class society in the novel. The writer happened to pass two years in Ahmedabad from the year 1995 to 1997 for his management studies in IIM-A, so he has close association with Gujarat and the people of Gujarat. His observations regarding the contemporary lower middle class people of the city of Ahmedabad are presented in this novel. In spite of the lack of certain literary standards and deficiencies of writing novel and certain silly errors in the story, the present novel seems to be the writer’s deep hearted effort to represent the actual picture of the contemporary lower middle class Indian society.
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4.3.1 Lower Middle Class Poverty and Hardships

Chetan Bhagat has depicted the lower middle class hardships of the people of contemporary Indian society in the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* in considerable details. The characters described in the fiction reflect lower middle class scenario of contemporary India. The variety of people in the present fiction belongs to lower middle class background. They have their individual and common issues in life. They experience a sort of hardship in their life. The chief cause of their hardship seems the limited income resources. Shortage of money is a constant cause of the hardship in their lives. For example, the chief protagonist Govind wants to be a big business man but he has to give Maths tuitions to the local children to supplement his mother’s limited income from her small business of Gujarati snacks. Due to limited income resources, Govind’s dreams are not immediately fulfilled. Even the parents of his two friends Ishaan and Omi also have limited income resources. Govind expresses his and his friends’ family condition as:

I am easily poorest of the three, even though Ishaan and Omi aren’t particularly wealthy. Ishaan’s dad works in the telephone exchange, and while they have lots of phones in the house, the salary is modest. Omi’s dad is the priest of the Swami-bhakti temple. Which actually belongs to Omi’s mom’s family for generations? And that does not pay well either. But, still, they are a lot better off than me and my mom. My mom runs a small Gujarati snacks business, and the little bit of money I make from tuitions helps us get by, but that is about it (Bhagat Three 5-6).

Poverty of lower middle class people is reflected in the novel. All the major characters in the fiction have to do compromises in their aspirations in life because of the poverty prevailing in their life. The poverty of Govind’s family can be well understood by his following expression: “We frequently had months where the choice was to buy either rice for our consumption or black pepper for the Papads” (Bhagat Three 9). It is observed in Indian middle class social scenario that those who have money are respected much and they are given more importance. This is true in the case of Govind’s family. Ever since Govind’s father left him and his mother, their economic condition became so poor that his mother
had to sell her ornaments also. It is not apparently depicted in the novel but the following expression of Govind reveals the fact how people used to behave with them when they did not have money and how they got importance from them when they started earning money. Govind says:

With money came not only things like coolers and sofas but also the most important stuff—respect. Shopkeepers no longer avoided us, relatives re-invited us to weddings and our landlord’s visit did not throw us into turmoil (Bhagat Three 11).

Omi’s father is a priest of the local temple and he is not paid well. Ishaan’s father works with a low designation at a telephone exchange. The economic condition of the parents causes considerable hardship in their children’s lives. Govind has to start a small business and also sell school stationery, candies, chocolates and peppermints. He has to give tuitions to supplement his mother’s income. He has high aspirations in life to be a big businessman he has guts and enthusiasm to do that also but the only obstacle is shortage of money which stops him do fast progress. He knows that he has to struggle for many coming years to save enough money to reach his goal. He is shown very calculative characters who keeps eye on every penny he earns. That gives him constant mental pressure to save money by doing many compromises in life. Ishaan had all the guts and potential to be a national cricketer but could not become one due to his poor family background. The father-son relationship between Ishaan and his father is full of tension. Ishaan keeps lying on the couch all the time watching cricket matches on the TV and keeps eating too much which his father does not like. Children like Ali, having all the potential to be national pride, are not promoted by their parents for their talents because of the poor economic condition. When Govind, Ishaan Omi go to Ali’s home to convince his father to send Ali for extra cricket coaching, Ali’s father says:

Cricket coaching? No, Thanks, we are not interested (. . .) Look above, look, there are cracks on the ceiling. There is this room and one other tiny room that I have taken on rent. Does it look like the house of a person who can afford cricket coaching? (Bhagat Three 64).

The writer has drawn the realistic picture of the lower middle class poverty and its effect on the people and their lives because of the low income resources. The writer seems realistic
when he depicts the hardship of the characters due to the shortage of money in their life. Money, as it is mentioned earlier, is one of the root causes of the middle class hardship in contemporary Indian society. Even after many decades of independence, the condition of the lower middle class people has not experienced any conspicuous change. The country has developed to the extent that it has touched the red surface of the Mars, yet millions of poor people are still struggling hard for ensuring two meals a day. The children of the lower middle class people are studying, as shown in the novel, in government schools which have no basic facilities of education. The same is the condition of the public health sector in most of the lower middle class localities of the country. The people have many unsolved problems of drinking water, electricity, road and drainage in almost all parts of the country. The main roads and central areas of towns and cities seem developed, but the condition of the interior parts of the same town or city is still hopelessly shocking. The hollowness of the development of the country is exposed by the hellish situations in which the lower middle class people live. The political forces use them for their vote banks, the religious forces use them for their charity boxes and communal forces use them for their supremacy. The lower middle class of the population of the country has been an instrumental for the growth and development of all but the irony is that the same class is not able to taste the fruits of any development.

4.3.2 Issues Related to Lower Middle Class Youth of India

It has been a tendency of the writer Chetan Bhagat to deal with the issue of youth of the contemporary India in all of his fictions. Youth and the problems of youth have been the central thematic approach of the all his novels. He is the first and the most influential writer in post-modern Indian English literature to have done so. The novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* has the same thematic approach of life-style and isolation of the young generation of Indian in the first few decades of 21st century. One can observe the following issues of the contemporary youth in the present fiction:

4.3.2.1 Independent Behavior of Youth: A Double Edged Sword

The writer has thrown noticeable light on the current issue of the growing autonomous or independent behavior pattern of the contemporary young generation of India in the present fiction. The contemporary young generation shown in the present novel seems to be under the influence of the modernized or westernized values of life. The conventional values of life
are obsolete to them. Their minds have expanded to the extent that they feel a sort of hesitation in following the already set norms of life. The present young generation prefers to remain independent from any traditional dominance on its life. It has its advantages and disadvantages. The growing free-at-will behavior pattern of the present generation is endangering certain significant cultural and social values of the contemporary India. On the other hand, it also challenges certain established traditions and norms which are outdated and still considerably influencing the contemporary scenario of Indian society.

The chief protagonist Govind is the best example of this autonomous behavior pattern of the young generation of India. He is a free-at-will character. His mother wants him to do sincere studies and become an engineer but he, in spite of all his mathematical potential, prefers to start his own business. He is frequently advised by his mother to turn seriously to his studies but he is determined to do what he decides. He likes to do what he thinks right. He has grown a kind of rational mindset. He is also depicted as an over ambitious young man. Another example is Ishaan. His parents wanted him to join the Indian army. He was selected for it but he ran away from it. He did not want to make his career in the army so he ran away leaving his training halfway. Omi is not interested in becoming the priest of his ancestral temple. Vidya is also one such example. She thinks herself a modern type of girl. She does not like to be identified as a small town girl. She prepares for her medical entrance exam but she wants to take a PR course. She wants to build her career as per her choice and not the way her parents force her to do. Though she is hardly eighteen, she believes in unrestricted relationships. She approaches her Maths tuition teacher who happens to be (Govind) her brother Ishaan’s best friend who is about twenty-five years of age. The free-at-will type of mindset of the young generation depicted in the present novel is fatal for their career and it goes to the extent of endangering the social and moral values of contemporary Indian society.

The autonomous thinking mind set of the young generation depicted in the novel, also shows some constructive outputs. The present atmosphere in the novel is communal in the actual sense of the term. The political and religious hypocrisy is at its height in human society. The non-secular forces are shown hyper-active in the society. People live in much communal tension. The authoritarians of religion and politics keep on pouring the venom of communal tension. In such an environment, the young generation in the present novel is
unaffected by the venom of communalism. The writer tries to show that the modernized democratic values are showing results in the thinking and behavior of the present young generation. The characters like Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji target the young people to join their non-secular party which fights for the interests of the Hindu. Govind, Ishaan and Omi are Hindu boys. Bittoo mama is trying to make them think an ardent Hindu for the interests of the Hindus. He keeps on poisoning the ears of these young boys, to fight against the Muslim people who are dominating the county. In spite of all his efforts, the young boys, especially Govind and Ishaan never come under any influence of the communal philosophy except Omi who is a little bent towards his mama’s words. In the end, while the city was affected by the post Godhra communal riots, and the people were burnt alive or stabbed to death, all the three boys remain uninfluenced. They do not jump into the communal riots, and before that time, they keep on neglecting the words of Bittoo who wanted to turn them non-secular. When the city was on the fire of communal riots, they put their lives in danger to save the Muslim boy Ali’s life that was the best cricket player of his age and had all the potential to be a national pride in future.

The writer Chetan Bhagat, through the three young characters in the novel, reveals the secular mindset of the young generation of India which wants to live in a democratic atmosphere which is always away from all the communal tension and non-secular poison. They are less interested in becoming Hindus or Muslims, rather they want to be and they want to remain Indian. Their concerns are not confined to Ram Temple in Ayodhya or Godhra sabotage; on the contrary their real issues are their Jobs, their earning, their future and their possible contributions for building the nation.

**4.3.2.2 Generation Conflicts**

The modernized attitude of the young generation of contemporary India does not match in many ways with the traditional mind-set of the previous generation. The attitude of the previous generation seems much restricted in many matters like relationships, career opportunities, social, religious and also national issues. The young generation due to education and modernity, has grown to be more modernized in behaviour, scientific in thinking and secular in attitude, which is sometimes dissimilar to that of the traditional mentality of the previous generation. The above reality of the contemporary Indian society is mirrored in the attitude and behaviour of the young characters in the present novel by
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Chetan Bhagat in a best possible manner. The predominant female character of the novel Vidya believes:

> Passion verses parents are a tough call. But if you have to choose, passion should win. Humanity wouldn’t have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time. Exactly. Our parents are not innocent either. Weren’t we all conceived in a moment of passion? (Bhagat Three 103).

Vidya, in the novel, is an eye-catching illustration of the modernized mind-set of the young generation. She does not like to be controlled by the parental pressure. She is a girl who is not contented with her present life. She wants to live her life as she wishes. She does not want an external dominance of any kind on her life. Her parents want to make her a doctor, but she is interested a PR course and in settling in a big city like Bombay. She does not like to be called an indigenous type of girl. Here, one can understand her character as an irresponsible one. She in her over consciousness of modernity forgets some of the basic values of life. She develops physical relationship with Govind who is her tutor. Here, the hollowness of the attitude of the young generation under the guise of modernity is exposed in a great manner.

Ishaan has also many unhappy experiences with his parents, especially with his father. His father does not like his wasting time and energy in watching cricket matches, but he does not follow this father’s words. His father frequently shows a disgusted expression on his face. He, as mentioned earlier, was selected in the Indian army but he was too much addicted to cricket. He wanted to be cricketer. He wasted all his golden years of studies in playing cricket, but the end result is a big zero.

> For one whole year he’s been sitting at home. Run away from the army of his own country and then wants to teach lessons to others! He had his loafer friends hanging around the house the entire long (Bhagat Three 5).

One day, Ishaan was watching a cricket match when India’s player Saurav Ganguly and Sachin Tendulkar were playing at seventy no loss after ten overs, Ish was eating, and he suddenly screamed to his mom for sauce. His father was also present there, reading a newspaper. His father picked up the ketchup bottle from the dining table and banged it as hard as possible on the coffee table in front of his son (. . .) Ish pressed the volume button
on the TV remote as loud as possible in protest and said: His mother has made him into a monster and left for his bedroom (Bhagat Three 196).

Govind is interested in doing business rather than becoming an engineer. The traditional ancestral occupation is not appealing to Omi. The thinking pattern of the young characters and the aged characters in the novel The Three Mistakes of My Life does not match in many cases. The older characters like Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji are striving hard to divide the society in the name of religion and politics whereas the young characters like Govind, Ishaan and Omi have different perspectives of living in social peace and harmony. The conflicts in thinking and behaviour pattern between the two generations are apparently visible in the present fiction as in the other fictions of the writer. The generation differences in the thinking and behaviour pattern, as it is shown in the present novel, can be considered as a double edged sword. On the one hand, scientific and modern thinking is the need of the time. The obsolete values need to be banished from the society for the establishment of peace and harmony in the human society. On the other hand, wrong interpretation of modernity leads to social and moral deterioration. The compromises in any of the sustainable values system can prove fatal for the survival of the social and moral well-being of any human society. The writer seems to have pointed out this reality of the contemporary Indian society in the best possible manner.

4.3.2.3 Youth Ethics and Isolation in Unfulfilled Dreams

The novel The Three Mistakes of My Life echoes the ethos and isolation of the contemporary young generation of India. The young characters in the fiction are depicted striving hard to achieve their determined goals of life. They have a different philosophy of life. They do not want to compromise with their ways of living life. All the young characters are individualistic in nature. They believe in modern values of life. They have faith in democratic values of society. The ethos they have in their thinking and behaviour differs from the prevailing ethos of the people. So they differ in their way of life. The people living in the society live in communal tension. They have different social, religious and political approaches in their opinions whereas the young characters like Govind, Ishaan and Omi are different in their opinions. The communal and non-secular philosophy does not appeal to them in anyway. As a result of it, they experience a sort of isolation in their surrounding atmosphere. They belong to the poor class background. They have high dreams in life but experience constant
shortage of money. Govind has high aspirations in life but due to shortage of money he can’t reach them. He says:

I dreamt my biggest dream- to be a big businessman one day. The only hitch was my lack of capital. But I would build it slowly and make my dream come true (. . .) I would start slow and then grow my business. From turnover of thousands, to lakhs, to crore and then to hundreds of crore (Bhagat Three 12).

He neither has any solid business background nor has any experience of doing business. He lives in Gujarat in which people prefer to do business rather than doing a job. He knows that he will be respected in society if he becomes a successful businessman and earns in millions and crore. He feels isolated in his poverty. He wants to do business but his poverty is a big obstacle. He does not want to be an engineer and do a job, as he thinks he the will have less income and less respect in society because he believes that:

Gujarat is the only state in India, where people tend to respect you more if you have a business than if you are in service. The rest of the country dreams about cushy job that gives a steady salary and provides stability. In Ahmedabad, service is for the weak (Bhagat Three 12).

The three friends start a business in partnership. They save money and purchase a big shop in the developed city area. Govind dreams of becoming rich but the fateful earthquake smashes all his dreams into a heap of wreckage. He loses all he had collected penny by penny. Nobody can feel his inner pain and pathos as only he knows the significance of his adventure of buying a big shop in the city area. His two partners were not too much serious about the big enterprise of business. Ishaan’s only passion was cricket and promoting Ali to be a national player. He and Omi have become partners in Govind’s initiative not with big aspirations. It may be a ‘time-pass’ sort of work for both of them, but for Govind, it was something more that. He feels too much isolation when his newly purchased shop collapses in the earthquake. To him, it is like destiny playing a dirty game with him. He is broken from within. He does not understand what to do. He blames the builders. He feels so much anger and feel like suing the builder for the low quality of materials he has used for the construction of the building. He lifts a brick, and throws it at an already smashed window. He cries a lot because his business collapsed even before it opened. He remained in home
for the following three weeks. He had high fever in tension. He narrates his inner isolation as:

I broke down. I never cried the day my father left us. I never cried when my hand got brunt one Diwali and Dr Verma had to give me sedatives to go to sleep. I never cried when India lost a match. I never cried when I couldn’t join engineering college. I never cried when we barely made any money for the first three months of business, but that day, when God slapped my city for no reason, I cried, and cried (Bhagat Three 109)

Ishaan and Omi also feel a kind of isolation because of the unfulfilled dreams in their lives. Ishaan who was a champion cricket player is now a motiveless or directionless young man who is frequently neglected by his parents and relatives. He wasted all his important years of school in playing cricket. He wanted to be in the national cricket team but his destiny does not support him and he is now a directionless and workless young man of around twenty five. He is in a dilemma what to do to earn money. He does not want to do a job at which people would laugh. He took cricket as his life and now since there is no future in cricket for him, he dare not divert himself from it. Vidya feels isolated in the lower middle class society as she thinks she is not made for the poor class life. She wants to run away from such a life. Her interest is in a different career and she is preparing for medical entrance examination. At the end of the novel, Govind tries to commit suicide because he feels high intensity of loneliness when his friend Ishaan stops to talk to him because he comes to know about the love affair between Govind and his sister. In spite of all his smartness and intelligence, he has to take the step of ending up his life because he cannot bear the hatefulfulness and isolation of his closest friend.

The young generation is depicted in the present fiction as much individualistic in attitude and free-at-will in behaviour but the same characteristics put them in utter isolation sometimes. All the human beings are independent by political right in a democratic country, but the point should never be forgotten that all are at the same time inter-dependant. The writer has pointed out the ethos and isolation of the young generation of the contemporary India by drawing the young characters in the present novel strolling for better future. They have high dreams in life but they feel lonely and isolated in the modern world because of their poor economic condition or poor social background. Under the influence of the inner
frustration and ambition for earning money or getting social respect, they commit errors in their life and they have to pay for it. The unfulfilled dreams and aspirations cause great troubles in their lives. The writer has represented real ethos and isolation of the youth of the contemporary Indian society because of their unfulfilled aspirations. The representation of the ethos and isolation of the youth in the novel is the actual reproduction of the striving youth of the contemporary lower middle class society of India.

4.3.2.4 Suicide
The most burning issue of the contemporary Indian society is the increasing cases of suicide by young people in the current social set up. Many of the young and hopeful boys and girls are observed committing suicide for trivial reasons. They hang themselves to the ceiling fan, swallow overdose of sleeping pills, jump into flowing rivers or canals, or burn themselves by spraying highly inflammable fuel. The increasing intensity of short temperedness among the young people can be considered one of the chief causes of suicide cases in the contemporary time. They do not know the art of controlling their anger or their passions in critical situations which may lead them to take such drastic steps. The present generation is also far away from the spiritual touch, so the balance of thoughts is not there in their understanding. In most of the cases, it is observed that love, study, and career are the chief of the reasons behind the suicide cases in recent times. Young boys and girls do not have wide or mature life experiences and hence they cannot control their sentiments in certain critical situations. The already established generation gap can play a pivotal role in such cases. The elders, at the very crucial time, treat their children very rudely and roughly in certain cases like love affairs, or study matters. The young boys and girls sometimes need thought changing counselling and proper guidance on what to do in such crucial situations. But they cannot see with foresight and they lose control over their minds and hearts and take the step of suicide. In the modern times, the level of competition has considerably increased. Due to modernization and westernization the career opportunities have noticeably increased. The same has brought into them inner frustration and depression. The questions of love affairs, study matters and earning opportunities are the constant sources of mental pressure and inner frustration in the young minds of the youth and the unbearable situations in such cases lead suicides.
In the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* one such case of suicide attempt is depicted which is the core of the themes of the novel. The chief protagonist Govind tries to commit suicide in utter desperation in his life. He swallowed a high dose of sleeping pills but fortunately he was timely admitted in the hospital and he was saved. He writes an e-suicide note to the writer himself. When the writer comes to see him in the hospital, he confesses the reason of his suicide at the beginning of the fiction as:

“My suicide is not a sentimental decision. As many around me know. I am a good businessman because I have little emotion. This is no knee-jerk reaction. I waited over three years, watched Ish’s silent face every day. But after he refused my offer yesterday, I had no choice left (Bhagat Three xii)”

He also confesses at the end of the novel as:

“I am not dishonest. I’m not selfish and have made mistakes, but I am not dishonest. And I don’t only care about money. I care about Ali (Bhagat Three 254).”

He is, as mentioned earlier, is a very ambitious young man, around twenty five years of age. He runs a small business in partnership with his close friends Ishaan and Omi. He also gives Maths tuitions to local children to earn some money. One of his students is Vidya; hardly eighteen years of age, who is preparing for her medical entrance examination. She is the only sister of his close friend Ishaan. Govind and Vidya develop love relationship, which goes to the extents of frequent physical intimacies during the tuition hours. Govind keeps this fact hidden from his friend Ishaan but Omi knows of this relationship. Ali is a Muslim boy who is, as mentioned earlier, a national treasure in the field of cricket. At the end of the novel, while Govind and his friends were striving hard to save Ali from the deadly attacks of the rioters of the post-Godhra sabotage, Ishaan comes to know about the relationship between his sister Vidya and his close friend Govind. He becomes so angry but this was the crucial time to save Ali’s life so he does not speak a word. He cuts all the relationships with Govind including the friendship and the business partnership. Govind says to the author as: From that day, exactly three years, two months and one week ago, Ish has not spoken to me again. Every time I try speaking to him he snubs me. (Bhagat Three 250).
The suicide attempt of Govind cannot be evaluated as a consequence of the disclosure of his physical relationship with Vidya to the knowledge of his friend Ishaan only. The character of Govind is depicted in the fiction as a disappointed young man in life. He has struggled all his life to become rich but all his attempts was in vain. Though he is smart and intelligent but he commits certain serious mistakes in life. In his calculation, he believes that he has committed three very serious mistakes in his life. His first mistake is his blind investment of all his earnings to buy a shop in a mall which collapses in the earthquake, the second mistake is his sexual relationship with his close friend’s sister and his student Vidya, and the third mistake is his split second delay to save Ali from the deadly onslaught of Bittoo Mama to kill Ali. The frustration and anxiety in Govind’s life is not only because of his friend Ishaan’s cutting off friendship with him because of his physical relationship with Vidya. He was a complete failure in all his dreams of life. Govind can be taken as a hard hearted and cunning type of character also. His second mistake is not an innocent mistake. He keeps on doing the same mistake over and over again. He knew the consequences of the immorality he was doing with his friend’s sister, but he keeps on indulging it till he is caught by Ishaan. Finally he tries to end up his life when he actually feels the gravity of the sins he committed in his life.

The character of Govind can be taken as the actual representation of the frustrated youth of the contemporary Indian lower middle class society. The young generation of the modern time, has grown a high sense of individualistic temperament in life. Their attitude of free-at will sometimes makes them commit certain unpardonable mistakes in life. The wrong concept of independence sometimes leads them to act or behave the way which is not socially or morally acceptable. They grow so much disappointed or frustrated that they do not hesitate to end up their life. They even do not think of their parents or their family. They commit suicide out of certain silly mistakes in their life. Govind’s case is slightly different. His decision of committing suicide is an outcome of all the past and present happenings in his life. In the present time, suicide cases are increasing because of the self-centeredness and selfishness growing among the youth of the present time. The writer has pointed out this very reality of contemporary Indian society by depicting the character of Govind and his suicide attempt to end up his life because of his utter failure in life.
4.3.3 Devastation of Indian Moral Value System

The contemporary Indian society is experiencing certain productive outcomes due to modernization of the traditional structure of society. Modernization has rooted out certain conventional values which were outdated and those which negatively affected the sustainable progress of society. Along with that, it has brought out certain evils in the moral value system of the contemporary Indian society. It would not be completely correct to merely blame the modern value system for the increasing devastation of the contemporary moral values in society. Under the guise of modernity, people are observed following some social and moral evils that endanger the morality of the society. The dress sense, food habits, public behavior, and many other aspects of society like moral rectitude and cultural values are affected by the hollow understanding of the modern value system. People, in these days, are growing more in rational, insensible and selfish. Family values are becoming insignificant to them. The inter-personal relationship is losing its prominence. The cultural and national values are of no concern in their life. In the long run, the present decaying situation is going to create a scenario which can be called a wasteland in the words of T.S. Eliot.

Chetan Bhagat, in his fictional works, tries to touch upon the growing devastation of the moral value system in the contemporary Indian society. In almost all of his novels, he has taken a space to criticize the prevalent moral value desolation especially in man-woman relationship of the contemporary time. In the present novel, The Three Mistakes of My Life, the novelist has criticized the issue of moral devastation by depicting the illicit physical relationship between a teacher and a student. In the present time, the sacred sector of education in India is much in debate for the frequently exposed the illicit relationships between male teachers and female students in educational institution. The growing immorality in this holy Guru-Shishya relationship is a subject of worry for all the stakeholders of the field of education. The rapid action kinds of steps are immediately needed to prevent such vast spreading immorality in the field of education in India or the consequences would be fatal for the entire system of education in India.

The central character Govind, in the present fiction, is a businessman and a Maths tutor. He, as said earlier, gives tuitions to the local children. His best friend Ishaan’s sister Vidya is his student who is preparing for her medical entrance exam. During the course of tuition, Vidya
a modern type of girl approaches Govind to have an intimate relationship. Govind tries to control her emotions at the beginning but he cannot sustain his control over himself. He also involves himself into this relationship. During the tuition hours, they frequently get physically intimate. Govind the narrator of the fiction says:

We kissed during almost every class since the last month, so it wasn’t a big deal. Sometimes we kissed every time she solved a problem. At other times, we took a kissing break every fifteen minutes. Once, we didn’t kiss at all as she did a mock test. However, we made up, for it in the next class where we spent the first ten minutes kissing and the rest discussing her mistakes. When we felt desire, we kissed. When we felt guilty, we studied. Somehow, we balanced mathematics and romance within the hour quite well (Bhagat Three 197).

They cross all the limits of morality, once on Vidya’s eighteenth birthday, in the evening time, they enjoy physical relationship on the terrace of her house. The student-teacher relationship is no more sacred now. Vidya cheats her parents who are present there at the ground floor having no idea of what is going on, on the terrace in the name of Maths tuition. Govind also violates the trust of his friend Ishaan who is his very close friend and business partner. Their sexual relationship does end here. They enjoy it frequently. The fact can be well understood by the following talk of Vidya, when Govind asks her:

What exactly are you counting? I (Govind) said idly.
The number of times, we have made love, she (Vidya) replied.
Wow, our score is eight already (Bhagat Three 206).

The relationship which Govind and Vidya have developed between themselves, can be considered accidental if once such mistake is committed, but now looking at the frequency of love-making, it crosses all its limits. Now it is intentional. Govind never gives any temptation to Vidya in this case, nor does he put any pressure on her for the relationship. Everything happens between them with each other’s consent. Vidya, hardly eighteen, can be pardoned for a moment for her silly advances towards Govind, but he, a twenty five years of age, having all the maturity of understanding of the rights and wrongs of life, cannot be easily pardoned for what he did with his student. They forget all the seriousness of the relationship. Govind lives in tension because there is a delay in Vidya’s monthly
period. He is scared that if Vidya is pregnant, it would end up everything. He lives in tension till the following SMS come from Vidya:

*Hey, stay safe tonight.*

*By the way, just got my period!! Yippee!!*

*Relieved no? C U soon my hot teacher. Love-me (Bhagat Three 237).*

The SMS reaches the hands of Ishaan while Govind, and Ishaan are struggling hard to save the life of Ali from the blood thirsty rioters. He immediately understands the seriousness of the relationship between his sister Vidya and his close friend Govind. He cuts all his relations with Govind. Govind bears it for more than three years but he cannot tolerate any more and tries to commit suicide. He already knew that the end of such an illicit relationship with his friend’s sister but does not stop it anywhere till the affair is exposed and he has to become shameful in the eyes of his close friend Ishaan and family members.

The writer has pointed out the free-at-will attitude of the young generation of contemporary India through the character of Vidya. She is an illustration of the young minds of contemporary India who believe that they get freedom to do all they want as soon as they cross eighteen. She believes: I am turning eighteen. I can do whatever I want (. . .) I can vote in the election, I can have a bank account, I can marry, I can... (Bhagat Three 184). The writer, through the behaviour of Vidya, conveys the actuality of contemporary young generation with its hollow mentality of modernization. It is a fact that the constitution of India gives freedom to young boys and girls to act and behave freely after the age of eighteen, but that does not mean that one is permitted to violate all the social and moral norms of society. Society has its unwritten constitution and all the members are supposed to follow certain recognised values for the smooth functioning of society. The young generation has to understand it for sure that there is no violation of their democratic rights in following social and moral norms, but it is an inevitable requirement of the time for sustaining certain set values and norms of human society.

### 4.3.4 Issues Challenging Social Integration of India

The present fiction *The Three Mistakes of My Life* focuses on the various issues of contemporary Indian society which are challenging the social integration of India. The social peace and harmony in Indian society are immediate issues to be settled, or the society would be broken into thousands of segments. The Indian society is heterogeneous in nature.
People of all races and religions, caste, community, sects and status live in it. They have their individual aspirations and issues. The progress of any society is directly associated with the peace and harmony maintained in the society. In the present time, the social atmosphere is not healthy, fit and fine. Political and religious hypocrisy, prevailing in the society, can be considered one of the prime reasons behind the prevalent social tension in India. Frequent communal tensions of the past have left lasting effects on the minds and the hearts of the people and the gap of misunderstanding is becoming wider and wider. Opportunist political leaders and parties keep on burning the flames of communal tension among the people so that their selfish aims are fulfilled. The non-secular forces are still not under the control of the authorities and the results are frequent communal tension communal riots and death of many innocent people in the present society.

4.3.4.1 Political and Religious Hypocrisy
Chetan Bhagat in the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* has critically exposed the political and religious hypocrisy prevalent in the contemporary Indian society in the best possible manner. The major part of the present novel is devoted to disclose the fact how such hypocrisy disturbs the peace and harmony of society and how innocent people have to suffer due to it. Bittoo mama and Parekh-ji are two prominent characters representing the prevalent political and religious hypocrisy in the society depicted in the novel. Bittoo mama is the maternal uncle of Omi. He is an ardent Hindu. He is associated with the Hindu Political Party in the novel which works on the basis of protecting Hindu people’s concerns and interests. Parekh-ji is a political cum spiritual leader. Bittoo Mama is an ardent follower of him. He has deep faith in Parekh-ji’s lectures and preaching. Through the character of Bittoo Mama, the writer has exposed the religious hypocrisy in the contemporary India. Bittoo Mama is assigned the duty by Parekh-ji to inspire more and more young people to join their party. He is also a trustee of the Swami-bhakti temple of Belrampur mentioned in the novel. Omi’s father is the preacher of the temple. When the chief protagonist, Govind, his friend Ishaan and Omi wants to start a cricket shop, they have to take permission of Bittoo Mama to take a shop on rent in the temple premises. They get the shop, they also start it, but the frequent visits of Bittoo Mama to the shop and his pretentious religious philosophy becomes a headache for them. Once Bittoo Mama scolds them for not leaving their shoes outside the shop:
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What is this Omi? Wearing shoes? (. . .) Your shop is in a temple, and you are wearing shoes? A Brahmin priest’s boy?

Mama, c’mon this is outside the temple. None of the other shopkeepers wear.

Other shop keepers are useless baniyas so you will also become like them?

Do you do puja every morning before you open?

‘You are Hindu boys. You have your shop in such a pure place. At least remove your shoes, light a lamp (Bhagat Three 31)

The above philosophy is beyond the understanding of Govind as he thinks that he is an Agnostic; one who is not sure whether God exist or not. Bittoo Mama used to believe that all people born in a Hindu family are Hindus and they should follow all the rituals of the Hindu religion. In the modern times, it is not true of all the people who are born in Hindu families. Such people occasionally visit temple, celebrate all the Hindu festivals but they do not like to be ardent Hindus as they feel more comfortable that way. Such people do not deny or doubt the existence of God but they do prefer to remain secular with equal respect for all religions. To some people like Bittoo Mama such people are weak and coward who do not fight for the rights of their religion. Bittoo Mama, being a Hindu Brahmin, does not like to be called just a priest who speaks memorised lines at ceremonies. He thinks himself an authoritarian of Hindutva who would make sure that India’s future generation understands Hindutva properly (Bhagat Three 33).

The Hindutva philosophy of Bittoo Mama is non-secular in nature. He is very communal in his attitude. He cannot accept the existence of any other religion around him. He has conspicuous antagonism towards the Muslims and the Islamic religion. Actually, Bittoo Mama wants to earn credits in politics, so he is following what Parekh-ji speaks. The Hindu Political Party wants to build Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram. Ram Temple in Ayodhya, has been a very sensitive issue in India for decades together. There are thousands of Ram Temples all over India, but they are not given equal attention and importance by some opportunist politicians of India. They know that Ram Temple in Ayodhya is an issue that gives them a lot of political attention all over the country. From time to time such politicians like Parekh-ji keep on raising the issue of this temple by declaring certain public events and such events cause communal tension in society.
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Consequences of Babri Mosque demolition and communal riots that followed are the outcomes of such events. Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji have such a public event in mind to encash public sympathy into votes:

*We are going to Ayodhya for a reason. We will get gunny-bags full of soil from there. We will go to every Hindu house in Belrampur and ask them if they want a spoon of mud from Rama’s birthplace in their house. They can put it in their backyard, mix it with plants or whatever. A great idea from Parekh-ji. (…) No one would say no to a spoonful of soil from Ayodhya. But with that, they were inadvertently buying into the cause. Sympathy for people fighting for Ayodhya would be automatic. And sympathy converted well into votes (Bhagat Three 117).*

The religious hypocrisy of people like Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji is dangerous to the social peace and harmony of the country. In the novel it is mentioned that Parekh-ji is Cambridge, and Harvard University pass out. He had a big hotel business in America, which he sold away and came back. He can speak English. He can play cricket. He was in the Cambridge college team (Bhagat Three 34). He came to India and joined politics. His intention of joining politics is not secular in nature. The words and deeds of the Parekh-ji do not match any way. In public, he shows himself a servant of God but his intention is not as pious as the holy name of God. He gives the reason of his joining politics as:

*I say, I am a servant of God. I didn’t want to join politics. But if I as a Hindu want justice, I need to get involved in how the country is run. And what other way is there to get involved than join politics? Here I am half saffron, half white-at your service (Bhagat Three 44).*

Almost all political parties in India, ever since India got freedom from colonial rules, have been playing the same dirty politics in the name of religion and community in the country. The people of the country have hardly experienced peace and harmony in the country because of the dirty games of political parties. The people are instigated to fight in the name of race, religion, caste and communities. The real problems of the common people like food, clothes, houses, roads, water, drainage, electricity, education, transport and employment are hardly addressed; rather the people live in communal or racial tension. The
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Political hypocrisy prevalent in India has taken the country nowhere. Bhagat expresses his strong views in the present novel through the character Govind as:

> All political parties, spends more time playing politics than working for the country. Creating differences, taking sides, causing divides—they know this too well (. . .) we remained poor, kept fighting wars, electing the same control freaks who did nothing for the country. People’s dream job was a government job, yack. Nobody took risks or stuck their neck out. Just one corrupt banana republic marketed by the leaders as this new socialist, intellectual nation. Tanks and think-tanks, nothing else (Bhagat Three 70).

India is taking pride of having world’s largest youth power at the present time. The youth power of the country has all the potential to contribute to the development of the country to make it a super power. Having all the capacity and calibre, the young people are not provided adequate opportunities to use their talents for the development of the nation. The young generation does not have work at hand to do as per the skills and potential in the country so they have to look towards the foreign countries for the same. Very limited number of young people gets better opportunities in the country. The reason of it can be understood that the ruling political parties, from time to time, have drastically failed to create opportunities for their employment. Some disappointed youth have been observed joining anti-social forces like the underworld, terrorism, non-secular groups which is again very fatal for the society. The youth are used in politics in most of the cases as volunteers; as unpaid workers or labourers in most of the cases. They are used to paste posters, distribute election literature, to shout in rallies for public propaganda, or they are used for booth capturing, threatening people or many such unconstitutional tactics to win the elections. The young generation is tempted during the election time, with the promises of employments in millions, they are shown shining stars in their palms, in day light but the end results are the prevalent unemployment, under employment, and exploitation of the young people.

In the present novel, the chief young characters like Govind, Ishaan and Omi represent the youth of the contemporary India having very limited opportunities to make any progress. Ishaan, though a talented cricket player, does not get proper guidance or motivation for his talent. Omi comes under the influence of Bittoo Mama’s words and starts thinking like a
non-secular person in the beginning. He argues with Ali’s father who is the leader of the secular party when he requests him to visit his party as:

Do you know who you are talking to? I am Pandit Shastri’s son. You have seen the swami temple in Belrampur or not?
How does that matter, son? Ali’s dad said.
You are telling me to come visit your party? I am a Hindu.
We won’t hold that against you. Ours is a secular party.
It is not secular. It is suck-ular party. Suck up politics that is all you know (Bhagat Three 64).

Omi is depicted as the son of a Brahmin priest in the novel, so it is understood that he can have some guts of religiousness in his thinking pattern but the company of Bittoo Mama spreads the poison of non-secular thinking so badly in the mind and heart of Omi that he does not sometime understand what he is thinking and why he is thinking. The writer has pointed out the brainwashing of the young people through the character of Omi and has exposed the actuality of the present time, the way young people think in a non-secular way under the influence of the cunning non-secular forces. Omi further argues with Ali’s father as:

Here is the bias, you call us communal. Your party gives preference to Muslims, but it is secular. Why? Omi said.
What preference have we given? Ali’s dad said.
Why can’t you let us make temple in Ayodhya? Omi said
Because there is a mosque there already.
But there was a temple there before.
This is not proven.
It has. The government keeps hiding those reports
Incorrect.
Whatever. It is not an ordinary place. We believe it is the birth place of our lord. We said, “Give us that site, and we will move the mosque respectfully next door.” But you can’t even do that. And we, the majority, can’t have that one little request fulfilled Parekh-ji is right, what hope does a Hindu have in this country? (Bhagat Three 69).
Omi repeats the exact words which he heard from the Parekh-ji’s speech. He is convinced of what people like Parekh-ji says. He cannot understand the hypocrisy of the cunning politicians like Parekh-ji who are using the young minds for their selfish motives. Govind and Ishaan remain comparatively uninfluenced by such hypocrisy. Later on, Omi also comes to know the mal-intentions of Bittoo Mama. He turns into secular and lastly he gives his life to save a Muslim boy, Ali from the rioters.

4.3.4.2 Politicization of Religion by Non-secular Forces

The novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* throws conspicuous light on the domination of non-secular forces that are, observed as hyper active in politicizing the religious faith of the people in the contemporary Indian society, challenging social peace and harmony. Politics and religion in India run side by side like the two banks of a river. It is understood that they should never meet. In the contemporary Indian scenario, the politicization of religion is a very serious issue. Most of the people in India are associated with one or the other kind of religious sects or spiritual faith. The opportunist politicians know it for sure that their vote bank would overflow if the religious authorities declare open support to their parties. Such people play with the religious faiths of the people to the extents that they do not hesitate to ignite communal riots in the name of religion to secure their chairs. Bhagat opines:

> The gods we pray to, stayed away from politics in their time. If we truly want to follow our gods, we must keep our religion separate from politics. Religion is private, politics public (Bhagat Three 152).

In the present novel, Parekh-ji represents such a mean mentality of the cunning politicians of contemporary India. His speeches contain crafty political intentions behind the ideal of Hindu philosophy. Apparently, he is looked upon as an ideal preacher of Hindu philosophy. His presentation of the content is so appealing and tempting that an average listener can easily come under his influence. He preaches:

> Devotees, the Hindu religion teaches to bear a lot. And we do bear a lot (. . .) our scriptures tell us not to harm others. They teach us acceptance of all faiths, even if those do not accept us. They teach us patience. Thousands of years ago, our wise men thought of such wonderful values, valid even today. And today you great men pass on these values to society (Bhagat Three 42).
He wants to prepare the Hindu vote bank for his leader Hasmukh-ji who has good connections with the party high command. He distributes the Trishuls to the devotees which is supposed to be a symbol of Hindu religion. He, taking the help of Bittoo Mama, gathers many young people to his meetings and gives communal speeches. His interpretations of the Hindu scriptures are mal-intentional. Under the shade of religious preaching, he spreads the communal poison in the minds of the devotees. He argues:

At the same time, the scriptures also tell us not to bear injustice. The Gita tells Arjun to fight a virtuous war. So at some point we are meant to fight back (….) and right now, I see that injustice again. Hindus being asked to compromise, to accept, to bear. Hindus asked for the recurrence on one temple. Not any temple, a temple where one of our most reverend gods was (were) born. But they won’t give it to us. We said we will move the mosque respectfully, round the corner. But no, that was considered unreasonable. We tried to submit proof, but that was surpassed. Is this justice? Should we keep bearing it? (Bhagat Three 43).

He further argues:

I don’t even want to go into who this country belongs to. Because the poor Hindu is accustomed to being ruled by someone else-700 years by Muslims, 250 years by the British. We are independent now, but the Hindu does not assert himself. But what makes me sad, is that we are not even treated as equals. They call themselves secular, but they give preference to the Muslims? The most brutal terrorists are Muslims, but they say we are hardliners. More Hindu kids sleep hungry every night than Muslim, but they say Muslims are downtrodden (Bhagat Three 43).

The above speeches of Parekh-ji in the present fiction represent the non-secular forces of contemporary India which keep on burning the fire of communal tension in society. The writer, by creating the characters like Bittoo Mama and Parekh-ji in the present fiction, seems to convey the message to the society to be aware of such forces who do not have anything to do with people or their religion. In the current scenario, has been observed recently that many religious leaders have direct or indirect connections with one or the other political party in India. In the name of religion, many anti-social activities like black
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money laundering, and many such other nefarious actualities are nurtured into full bloom under the political umbrella. Such people have nothing to do with religion or religious faith of any kind. Their only religion is their mal-intentions to be fulfilled at any rate. The writer seems very much concerned about what is happening in the contemporary Indian society in the name of religion and politics. He has rightly pointed out this very prevalent actuality of contemporary India in the best possible manner thought the realistic characters and situations in the present novel.

4.3.4.3 Communal Differences and their Impacts

The author Chetan Bhagat in the present fiction *The Three Mistakes of My Life* has depicted a replica of the communal differences prevalent currently and the effects that follow in the contemporary Indian society. The writer has utilized the historical facts like Godhra sabotage and communal riots that followed by it, to give it a realistic impression to this very burning issue of the society.

It is a known fact that the Godhra sabotage is a black (dark) page in the history of Gujarat. In the year 2002, near the Godhra railway junction, a bogie of the Sabarmati Express with Kar-Sevaks (Ram Temple volunteers) was set fire by spraying petrol and other inflammable fuel by Muslim miscreants. Many of the Kar-Sevaks were burnt alive by throwing stones at them, to stop them coming out of the burning bogie. The communal riots that followed burnt the entire Gujarat and the flame of communal riots spread to some other parts of the country. Many innocent people from both the communities, the Hindus and the Muslims lost their lives. The anarchic situation took hold of the entire Gujarat. The rioters from both sides burnt houses and shops of innocent people. The spread of rumors all around played the role of adding fuel to fire and many unaffected areas also came under the impact of the communal riots. The fire of communal riots also reached the rural parts of Gujarat and many people had to run away from the villages empty handed. The police and the government were blamed for not taking rapid actions to stop the rioters in time and the consequences are still found in the form of various terrorist attacks after that and a deeper wound of misunderstanding and prejudices between the Hindu and the Muslim is still prevalent in the contemporary Indian society. The victims of such incidents are mostly lower middle class people of the country who have always to suffer in their life for no fault of their own.
It is shown in the course of the story of the present fiction that communal tension is present in the society. The people like Bittoo mama and Parekh-ji are busy spreading the venom of communal differences in the mind and hearts of the people. They have organized the Ram Temple Volunteers’ trip to Ayodhya. On their return journey, near Godhra railway station, a bogie is set to fire. The news channel reported it as:

At least fifty people died and more than a dozen injured when miscreants set fire to a bogie of the Sabarmati Express near the Godhra station in Gujarat on Wednesday morning (. . .) a mob stoned a bogie of Sabarmati Express. The bogie contained kar-sevaks returning from Ayodhya. The passenger shut the metal windows to protect themselves from the stones. The mob threw petrol on the bogie and set it on fire (Bhagat Three 214).

The eyewitnesses reported that the mob were Muslims. They had arguments with the Hindu kar-sevaks and burnt everyone-women, children, the tea vendor said. The news reader reported that fifty-eight people were dead and over twenty injured as per reports from the Godhra hospital (Bhagat Three 215). The writer has reproduced the realistic situation of the Godhra sabotage and its effects that the people experienced during that nightmarish incident. The writer further depicts that cut-and-kill kind of situation was created in the city after the critical incident. The trouble was started in the city. The revengers’ mob burnt two buses down and one building in the local pol was set to fire. Govind narrates the communal riots as:

The city glowed orange in the thick winter night. One, two, three- I saw three balls of flames across the pols. The nearest flame came from a building fifty yards away. A crowd of people stood outside. They threw stones on the burning building. I couldn’t see well, but could hear the screams of the people inside the pol. The screams mixed with celebratory chants. (Bhagat Three 220).

The following description discloses the naked-dance of cruelty in the form of the communal riots in the city, and murder of humanity during the time of the Godhra communal flare-up. Govind narrates as:

A burning man ran across the road. The Hindu mob chased him. He stumbled on a stone and fell, around twenty yards away from us. The mob crowded
over him. Twenty minutes later, the crowd moved away while the man lay still (. . .) my heart beat in the same irregular way as it did on the day of earthquake. Nature caused that disaster, man made this one. I don’t know which is more dangerous is (Bhagat Three 221).

The chief protagonist Govind, Ishaan and Omi, young men of secular mind set were not making any trouble in the city. They were engaged in saving the life of Ali, the national treasure whose parents were stabbed to death by Bittoo mama to take revenge for the killing of his son Dhiraj in the burning bogie of Sabarmati Express. In taking revenge, Bittoo Mama has become blood thirsty. He rushes with other rioters to kill Ali with his blood red Trishul in one hand and Fire-torch in the other. His clothes are coloured with blood. Ali is in the custody of the three friends. They have hidden Ali in the old building of the bank. Omi starts crying in the memory of his maternal cousin Dhiraj’s death when he sees Bittoo Mama at the strong room of the Bank Building where they have hidden Ali. Bittoo Mama says:

Don’t cry. Nobody will cry today (. . .) we Hindus have only cried. While these mother fuckers come and keep killing us over the centuries. In a Hindu country, in a Hindu state, the fuckers can come and burn our kids in broad daylight. And we don’t do anything. We just cry. Come rap us, loot us and burn us. They think they can terrorise the whole fucking world but we will have no guts to do anything (Bhagat Three 222).

Bittoo Mama has taken an oath that he will not cry till he takes full revenge for his son’s death. The revengeful attitude of Bittoo Mama causes the death of his nephew Omi when he rushes to kill Ali with the hard onslaught of his Trishul.

The communal differences and the effects that follow never end in society till the people learn how to live with reciprocal understanding. Even a slight spark and the flame of it, spreads like volcanic lava and burns all the peace and harmony of the society. The revengeful attitude like head for head never brings happiness; rather it brings never ending tension in society. In the birth place of great souls like Gandhi, the greatest follower of Ahimsa, such a social disorder, should be considered as a national shame. He used to believe that an eye for an eye will make the world blind. The writer Chetan Bhagat has drawn his readers’ attention to this past chaos of the society and thrown light on the deadly
effects on the life of people and the society. Through the young secular characters of the novel, the writer seems to appreciate the modern values of the young generation and seems to convey the message that social peace and harmony would be maintained in society not by the fundamentalist mind-set but by modern democratic secular mind-set among the people.

4.3.4.4 Terrorism: A Social Menace
One of the most threatening issues in the contemporary Indian society is the prevalent terrorist activities in the country. Terrorism has made the life of the common people full of uncertainty and insecurity. The terrorists mostly attack the high traffic areas and many people are killed or injured. Mostly in sensitive areas, people live in constant fear and tension. They cannot experience the democratic atmosphere in their life. The terrorist activities in India are mostly observed as stimulated by the fundamentalist people of the country and also encouraged by the outside terrorists in the country. Mostly the unemployed youth are attracted to join such menacing activities with high material returns and heavenly temptations. They are brainwashed by showing certain past communal riots and they become ready to kill innocent people just to spread terror in the society. In the name of Jehaad or holy-war, they take the lives of many innocent people for no fault of their own. Some local non-secular people, and cunning politicians also facilitate terrorism in the society.

The most infested part of the country under terrorist activities is Kashmir. The militant forces, supposed to be supported by Pakistan, are very much hostile in the Kashmir valley. They do not want any Kashmiri Hindu people to reside in the Kashmir valley. They keep on spreading terror and tension to any extents that force the Kashmiri Pandits to leave the place. Till date, thousands of Kashmiri Hindu families had to run away empty handed to save their lives from the militant attacks leaving all their ancestral belongings there. They are living a miserable life as refugees in Delhi and various other parts of the country.

The writer Chetan Bhagat has slightly touched upon the issue of Kashmiri Pandits and their hardships in the contemporary Indian society in the present novel. The hardships of the family of Giriraj Pandit depicted in the novel, reveals the actuality of the life of the Kashmiri Pandits forced to escape from by the militants. In the novel, Giriraj Pandit runs a small shop of sports goods suppliers at Ellis Bridge. Govind describes his condition as:
Giriraj Pandit, had his one-room house right next to it. Until five years ago, he owned a large bat factory in Kashmir. That was before he was kicked out of his hometown by militants who gave him the choice of saving his neck or his factory. Today he felt blessed being a small supplier in Ahmedabad with his family still alive (Bhagat Three 91).

The same is the condition of his cousin who was kicked out of his place. When Govind is bargaining fifty rupees for the price of a cricket bat, Giriraj Says:

Govindbhai, it is a bit tough right now. My cousin’s family has arrived from Kashmir, they’ve lost everything. I have five more mouths to feed until he finds a job and place (. . .) He had a bungalow in Shrinagar and a fifty year old almond business. Now, see what times have come to, kicked out of our own homes, Pandit-ji sighed (Bhagat Three 92).

Giriraj Pandit is settled in Ahmedabad. He is now struggling very hard to run his family. He is doing a small business of sport goods. He has a young daughter of marriageable age. He wants to get her daughter married so he is ready to sell his go-down at lower rate.

The author does not go deep into the details of the actual condition of the Kashmiri refugees but a slight reference to their condition conveys many things about them. Bhagat, through the family hardships of Giriraj Pandit, reveals the actual condition of the refugee Kashmiri Pandits because of the murderous terror of the militant forces. It is estimated that thousands of families of refugee Kashmiri live a low middle class life in Delhi or other parts of the country. The terrorist activities in the contemporary Indian society have been disturbing the life of the lower middle class people in a great deal. Even the condition of the people still living in Kashmir is not satisfactory. They have to live under deep psychological tension due to the eagle-eye observations of the Indian Army, and life taking terror of the Extremist forces.

4.3.5 Environmental Issues and its Effects

The author Chetan Bhagat, for the first time in his writings, has drawn the attention of his readers towards the environmental Issue and its effects on the contemporary Indian society. In the present novel The Three Mistakes of My Life. The real happening of the earthquake of 26 January, 2001 in Gujarat is reproduced in novel, to point out its actual effects on the lower middle class people of the contemporary Indian society. In the present time, the
The world is experiencing certain environmental issues and the natural calamities caused by them. The uncontrolled use of nature and its resources in the name of comforts and luxuries of life, man has disturbed the eco-system of the Nature beyond the permitted level. The climate pattern of the earth is not in order and the results are found in the forms of cyclones, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, draughts, cloud burst, snowstorm and many other natural calamities frequently occurring in one or the other part of the world.

The earthquake of 26 January, 2001 in Gujarat, brought about dreadful destruction in the state. Hundreds of localities were affected by it, thousands of people lost their lives, and millions of dwellings collapsed. The earthquake of the 26 January, along with all the belongings, demolished the life of the people of Gujarat especially middle class people of the society. There were scenes of heaps of debris all over the state. Many shopping centers, schools, hospitals, and houses collapsed like castles of cards resulting in the death of people inside. The slap of Nature was so severe that it reminded the people of the super-power of Nature. The natural calamities did one good thing also. It helped people to forget all the communal, racial, social and economic differences and stand by one another to come out of the fury of Nature. Governments of various states of the country, the NGOs, religious organizations, social volunteers and all such people came forward to help the victims of the earthquake. It was as if humanity has once again cast its charm all over the country and the world. People sent food, clothes, medicine, cash, and all kind of helps from all over the world to heal the victims from the very slap of Nature.

As mentioned earlier, the central hero of the present novel, Govind has purchased a shop in a newly constructed mall in the city. He was very optimistic about this enterprise. He wanted to enhance his business of sports equipment in this way. He has invested all his life earnings for buying the shop. He had a dream to be a rich person by starting the business in a big city mall. All his dreams turn into a heap of debris at the slight assault of Nature in the form of the earthquake of 26 January, 2001. The building in which he got his dream shop booked, also has demolished along with most of the newly constructed sites. The eye-witnessed report of Govind reveals the fact of the demolition of the belongings of people and the dreams of their lives. Govind describes as:
I saw the devastation reroute. The new city areas like satellite suffered heavy damage. Almost every building had their windows broken. Those buildings that were under construction had crumbled to rubble. I entered Navrangpura. Signs of plush shops lay on the road. I reasoned that my new ultra-modern building would have earthquake safety features. I gasped for breath as I ran the last hundred meters. Sweat covered my entire body (. . .) I found finally. Only that the six storied that were intact a day ago had now turned into a concrete heap (Bhagat Three 107).

Govind as a lower middle class young boy saves penny by penny to fulfil his dream. Govind mourns over his present condition as:

Two years of scrimping and saving, twenty years of dreams-all wiped away in twenty seconds. The Navrangpura Mall’s neon sign, once placed at the top of the six floor building, now licked the ground. May be God’s way of saying something-that we shouldn’t have these malls. We were destined to remain a small town and we shouldn’t even try to be like the big cities (Bhagat Three 109).

Bhagat takes the gentle opportunity in the present novel to describe the devastation caused by the earthquake of Gujarat the epicentre of which was the village Bhachau of Kachchh district. The following description clearly reveals the actuality of the annihilation of the people and their lives caused by the deadly earthquake of Gujarat. Govind is very much disturbed looking at the destruction of his dream shop. He breaks down in utter depression. He is taken home by his fried Ishaan. Later on, he comes to know on the television, more destructive pictures of the natural calamity as:

I found out later that over thirty thousand people lost their lives. That is a stadium full of people. In, Bhuj, ninety per cent of homes were destroyed. Schools and hospitals flattened to the ground. Overall in Gujarat, the quake damaged a million structures. One of those structures included my future shop (. . .) the old city fared better than the new city. Somehow our grandfathers believed in cement more than new mall owners (. . .) the new city lost only fifty multi-storey buildings. They said only a few hundred people died in Ahmedabad compared to tens of thousands elsewhere (. . .)
Each of those people would have had families, hopes and aspirations, all shattered in forty-five seconds (Bhagat Three 110-11). Gandhiji once said that Nature can provide for man’s needs but not his greed. Physical environment plays a very significant role in all the stages of human life from birth to burial. In the course of human evolution, nature has played a pivotal role for the growth and prosperity of human life. All living organisms except men have lived on this earth without even slightly disturbing physical environment. **At the initial stage, man used nature for his survival, then for comfort and now for greed.** The concept of co-existence seems almost forgotten and man has exploited it so terribly that there hovers the question of the survival of both man and nature. Many governments, NGOs and individuals of the world around are predicting the danger to the Nature for the existence of the earth. They see the only ray of hope in creating proper understanding in the minds of people to protect Nature not only for the survival of the Nature but for the survival of the entire Humankind and non-human living organisms on the earth.
4.4 Some Minor Issues of Contemporary Lower Middle Class Society in *The Three Mistakes of My Life*

A close analysis of the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* also brings to the surface, along with certain very serious issues, some of the minor issues of contemporary lower middle class Indian society as follow:

### 4.4.1 Issues Related to Education of Lower Middle Class Children

It is shown in the present novel that the children of the lower middle class society study in municipal schools which are not facilitated with the minimum standards of quality. Govind, the chief protagonist and his friends have studied in the municipal school where no emphasis is given on studies and more teachers used to bunk classes than students (Bhagat Three 9). Govind, for his business presentation, visits one Kendriya Vidyalaya with his two friends cum business partners. The description of the school revealing the current situation of the schools can be considered as a real representation of the schools which are located in contemporary lower middle class areas:

> We were in the principal’s office in the Kendriya Vidyalaya. The office was in a poor state, with rickety furniture and dusty trophies. Like most government offices and buildings, old files piled up on several cupboards. The lady principal and six teachers sat around a semi-circular wooden table (Bhagat Three 130)

The school lacks some essential facilities for imparting education. Moreover, it the school lacks funds for repairing leakages of the roof and so there is no question of allotting fund for developing sports-infrastructure. When Govind gives the sport-budget of rupees ten thousand per month, the principal becomes amazed to hear it. The communication between the school admin head and the three friends represents the actual financial condition of the schools of lower middle class locality:

> This is too much. This is a Kendriya Vidyalaya. Not a private school, the administrative head said (…)  
> It is twelve rupees per child a month. Don’t you think sports deserves as much as the cost of a fountain pen?  
> Frankly, no. We get judged on our results. The pass percentage and the first divisions. We have limited resources, the head said.
If everyone thinks that way, where will India’s sportsmen come from? Ish said.

From rich families. The head took out his glasses and wiped them calmly.

But talent is not distributed only among the rich. We have to expand the pool.

Do you know half of our classrooms leak in the rain, the head said. Should we get shiny balls or fix the leaks? (Bhagat Three 131).

Bhagat has pointed out the critical condition of some of municipal schools of contemporary lower middle class areas of the country by illustrating the typical Kendriya Vidyalaya. Such schools lack proper infrastructure and qualified human resource. There may be thousands of such schools all over India in which millions of lower middle class children are taking education. They eat low quality midday meal. The schools do not have good teachers. On the one side, there are schools like five star hotels with all the high class facilities and on the other side some other schools are lacking drinking water facilities or toilet facilities. The major portion of the future of India is taking education in such schools which do not have some of the basic facilities for imparting education. Bhagat, in the present fiction, has not gone deeply into the discussion of the issue related to education for the children of the lower middle class background. However, he has given a spark to this burning issue of the contemporary Indian society.

4.4.2 No Motivation for Sport Activities

In the present fiction, the writer Chetan Bhagat has raised the serious issue of not giving necessary importance and motivation for sport activities to the children by their parents. He has also pointed out the lack of motivation for sport activities by the government in the contemporary Indian scenario. The population of India is a hundred and twenty in crore still the performance of the country in world sports events is not satisfactory. The reason behind it is perhaps, the lack of motivation and encouragement from both the parents’ and administration of the country. The parents always want their children to be doctors, engineers or technocrats. They hardly prefer to make their children full time sport persons as they see no future in it. The administration can also be held responsible for the mentality of the parents for not preparing stable ground for the same. The writer has pointed out the present condition of the un-encouraged sport persons of the contemporary India through
the character of Ishaan. Ishaan, in the present novel, is a sports person who has invested all his valuable years for cricket. He says:

I played for my district, too. Never had the guidance to go further, Ish continued. I wasted my studies, fought with my parents, threw away my career for this game. This means everything to me. (Bhagat Three 140).

He was the best performer of his area, but he was not given proper motivation and guidance and presently his condition is very critical. He is a directionless youth in dilemma. He has no work at hand. He represents millions of young sportspersons of contemporary India, who have invested all their time, caliber and capacity in sports but the present condition of their career is very disappointing.

The traditional mentality of the parents of the contemporary lower middle class people has also been criticized in the present novel. Those children who are gifted in sports are not motivated by their parents under the fear of the future insecurity of their children’s career. On the contrary, they are compelled to study as per their parents’ wish. Ali’s parents, in the fiction, represent the typical mentality of the lower middle class parents who do not like to encourage their children who are talented to become a national player. He expresses his strong annoyance against it as:

Parents will spend thousands teaching kids useless trigonometry and calculus they will never use in real life but if it is sports coaching, it is considered a waste of money (. . .) these kids, look at them, thirteen-year-olds holding their bats with pride. They have a fire in their eyes before every little match at Nana Park. When India wins, they dance (. . .) Of course, in two years’ time they will reach Class X. The bats will be replaced with physics books. And then spark will begin to die, soon they will turn into depressed adults (Bhagat Three 30)

Ishaan asks very poignant questions to the Kendriya Vidyalaya admin authority who hesitate to allot Rs.1000/- of budget for the sport activity of the school students which is merely Rs.12/- per student as per the calculation. He asks:

Are you teaching your kids a subject called teamwork? Are you teaching them how to chase a goal with passion? Are you teaching them discipline? Are you teaching them focus? Sports teaches them all this. And tell me, who
will be more successful in life? The kids who know all the chemical formulae or the one who knows teamwork, passion, discipline and focus? (Bhagat Three 132).

The writer has raised the question against the attitude of the administration and the government for not promoting sport activities in India in comparison with the other smaller countries of the world. To strengthen his argument, the author gives an illustration of the promotional initiatives taken by Australia to establish and run the Australian Institute of Sports (or abbreviated AIS web link http://www.ausport.gov.au/ais) which initiates the world’s best scholarship programme for the gifted sport persons. In the present novel, the Australian cricketer Fred; one of the minor characters says:

Aussies saw the Montreal fiasco as a national shame so the government set up the Australian Institute of Sports or the AIS and initiated the world’s best scholarship programme. And today the AIS have hundreds of staff-coaches, doctors and Physios. They get two hundred million dollars of funding and have excellent facilities. And at the heart of it all, they offer seven hundred scholarships a year (. . .) not just money, mate. It is full on. Experts coaching, accommodation, and travel to tournament, sports, science, and medicine-you name it (Bhagat Three 162).

In India, the sport activities have to suffer a lot due to needless political influence today. The politicization of the sport activities in the country is nurturing nepotism of all kinds. The administrative part is mostly in control of the political people or people who are highly obliged to political powers. It prevents some of the really genuine sport persons from getting the opportunity which they deserve. Sports, for such people, are not an income earning career but it is an opportunity to bring honour to the country. Such sports persons have this kind of emotional attachment to sports ever since their childhood. The fact can be well understood from the following dialogue between the school boy Ali and the Australian sport authority in the novel as:

If I make it to the team, who will I play for? Ali said.

Australia, Mr Cutler said.

But I’m an Indian, Ali said.
But you can become an Australian as well. We are a multicultural society, Mr Greener said.

No, Ali said.

What?

I am an Indian. I want to play for India. Not for anyone else.

But son, we will give you the same respect as your own country. And some good coaching, Mr Greener said.

It will be tough to make it in your country. Your coach knows that, Mr Cutler said.

It’s ok if don’t become a player, but it’s not ok if I am not an Indian, Ali said.

I don’t want to be Australian in my next life. Even, if I have a hundred next lives, I want to be Indian in all of them, Ali said (Bhagat Three 178-79).

Cricket is enjoying its heyday of popularity and importance in the contemporary India. Cricket has reached every nook and corner of the country. Cricket is at the top of all street games being played all over the country. There may be thousands of differences of opinions among people regarding many issues of the country but cricket is the only field that ties all people with one thread. In spite of all the high popularity, cricket has become a victim of political interference. The commercialization of cricket, with some attractive nomenclatures like IPL, is swiping away the very essence of the sport. The glamorization is spoiling the spirit of this game. The capitalist forces are jumping into it, for money laundering under the shade of promoting the emerging players. Political forces have taken complete hold on cricket in contemporary India. It has become an arena of politics in recent time which prevent the emerging gifted sport persons who have all the potential to earn reputation for the nation.

4.4.3 Modernity Mania of Young Generation

One more issue which the writer highlights in the present fiction is, the modernity mania of the young generation in the contemporary lower middle class society. The upcoming young generation in the recent postmodern time, is highly influenced by the so called modern ways of living life. The modern values have its own significance in the present social set up but they need to be properly understood before blindly following them. Modern values are formed on the basis of certain liberal approaches of living life compared to the traditional values of life. Modernity is observed in the young generation in many aspects of life like
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dress sense, food habits, speaking language, public behaviour, education and career opportunity. The modernity mania is observed highly increasing among the contemporary young generation to the extent that young people hardly apply their mind in it. The thinking and behaviour pattern of the modern generation is not showing the expected results for maintaining some of the revered moral and social values of Indian society. The writer in the present fiction has highlighted the said issue of contemporary society through the thinking and behaviour pattern of Vidya.

Vidya is depicted as a lower middle class girl with modern mania in the novel. She seems highly influenced by the modern life style. She thinks that she is a Bombay type of girl. She does not like parental pressure on her personal concerns. She has adorned her room with a typical girlie look-extra clean, extra cute and extra pink. She has pasted posters with cheesy messages like ‘I am the boss’. She wants to join a college in Mumbai. She wants to get out of her hometown Ahmedabad, but due to her parental pressure, she dare not step out (Bhagat, Three 44-17). Her following expression clearly reflects on how she thinks at a very young age.

I am turning eighteen. I can do whatever I want (. . .) I can vote in that election. I can have a bank account. I can marry. I can... (Bhagat Three 184).

Govind gives her Maths tuition. She grows more interested in Govind than in his Maths. She forgets the sacredness of the Guru-Shishya relationship and approaches her tutor Govind for intimate relationship. Govind, is also the best friend of her brother Ishaan. In the course of time, she convinces Govind to enjoy physical intimacy also. She discusses sex related matters with Govind freely. Govind’s behaviour should also be understood equally responsible for the violation of moral ethics of society. They frequently enjoy physical relationship so there is no question of immaturity of understanding. The writer Chetan Bhagat through the depiction of the physical relationship between Vidya and Govind, highlights the modernity mania of the young generation prevalent in the contemporary Indian society. The modern generation enjoys irresponsible liberty of life under the false interpretation of modern values and advanced ways of living life.

The writer has also drawn attention of his readers to, the modernized elevated standard of young mind related to their career selection. Ishaan and Omi are depicted unemployed young men in the present novel. They do not have any work at hand. They discuss various

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career options, but they cannot come to any decision because their expectations are very high. They seem searching for white collar jobs which gives them more comforts and high social status. It is observed that, in spite of their low educational qualifications and work efficiency, they do not generally prefer lower category of work which requires more physical labour. The following extract from the novel, clearly reflects on the above discussed fact of the mentality of contemporary young generation of India. The three prominent young characters of the novel, Govind, Ishaan and Omi are debating the issue of their job options. Ishaan says:

The champion batsman of Belrampur would become an insurance salesman.
Belrampur kids had grown up applauding his boundaries at Nana Park.
I can’t do that man. What was it the last time? A fruit dealership? Ugh? I can’t be weighting watermelons all day.
Car accessories (. . .)
What? Put seat covers all day. No thanks. And the other one-stock broker.
What is that anyway? Ish shrugged.
So what the fuck do you want to do? Beg people to buy insurance? Or sell credit cards at street corners? (Bhagat Three 15).

Modernization has broadened the perspectives and aspirations of the young people from the local to the global level. The young people of the developing counties, especially the lower class of population, are highly impressed by the fantasy world of modernization. Their aspirations are elevated to the extent that they sometimes become ready to compromise with the moral ethics of life. They are sometimes exploited physically and economically. The modernity mania among the young generation is showing very conspicuous results in the contemporary Indian society. The lower middle class young generation which is far away from the ground reality of the virtual world of modernity, is easily attracted towards it, and so it has to suffer a lot when it realises its actuality. The Bombay type modern life for which Vidya is passionate can be tempting for the time being, but in the long run it can hardly be safe her. Govind wants to become a big business man and enjoy his wealth, Ishaan wants to be a national cricketer, but the end result is frustration, depression and disappointment. The writer has rightly highlighted the modernity mania and its consequences on the life and career of the young generation of lower middle class society of India.
4.4.4 Some Miscellaneous Issues

A close analysis of the present fiction brings out certain issues which the writer has not given considerable space to highlight them in the story. One cannot simply underestimate the significance of such issues, but somehow the writer has not given required space to throw the required light on them.

One issue that comes to notice is the Issue related to public health of lower middle class people. Govind is admitted to a hospital of the city because he tried to commit suicide. The writer calls his past professor, Prof. Basant to help him find out Govind and the hospital to which he was admitted. He finds out that Govind was admitted in the Civil Hospital. In reply to the writer’s inquiry about Govind’s present condition, Prof. Basant says; Nothing, it is a government hospital. What do you expect? Anyway, they will flush his stomach and send him home (Bhagat Three xvi). This very expression reveals the actuality of the public health sector of the present time. It may be taken as the actual representation of the present condition of some of the government hospitals which are not facilitated with required standards of treatment wherein thousands of poor patients come to get treatment on a daily basis.

Prof Basant advises the writer not to get too much involved in such a suicide case which is related to police case because he believes that if he probes more into such a matter, he will have much police harassment. Here, the writer seems to highlight the growing apathetic mentality of the educated people for some public issues which may lead to same apathetic attitude toward the national issues in coming time. The educated class is blamed to be unconcerned public matters in the present time which leads to many unhealthy tenderness in society.

Another issue that comes to the surface is about the prevalent corruption of the people involved in the construction business in developing cities who use lower quality material in the construction work to earn more profit. Govind’s shop in a newly constructed mall collapses at the first jerk of the earthquake in the city and hundred year old houses and buildings remain unaffected by it.

The writer also mentions in the present fiction the middle class mentality of the contemporary lower middle class people who take needless interest in the private matters of other people. The fact can be well understood by the incident mentioned in the novel.
when Govind takes Vidya to the market in Law Garden. When they reach the book shop, the shop keeper raises his eyebrow as if he is asking Govind who she is. He doubts some affair between them and Govind has to give an explanation to him that she is her student (Bhagat Three 85). When they go to the Dairy Den lay out for eating pizza, it is mentioned in the novel that two boys at a distance started staring at Vidya (Bhagat Three 87). The writer has also reflected the middle class mentality of the people at the beginning of the novel. The fact can be confirmed from the illustrations of the gossiping mentality of the people of Govind’s locality and her mother’s sentimentality over her husband’s leaving their home for the other woman. The middle class mentality is revealed when the woman are depicted visiting Govind’s mother frequently giving her sympathy and Govind’s mother’s superstitious nature for consulting various astrologers to know the positions of the planets (Bhagat Three 9).

4.5 Summing Up

The researcher has closely analysed the third novel of Chetan Bhagat keeping in view all the select issues of the contemporary Indian society defined as the Research Tool in the first chapter of the present thesis. The researcher in the due course of analysis of the present novel has come across certain already defined issues of contemporary society like poverty, unemployment, ruin of social and moral values, inter-generational conflicts, corruption and terrorism. Along with that, the researcher could explore some very serious issues of the contemporary Indian society which are not defined in the Research Tool. Some of them are closely associated with the youth of the contemporary Indian scenario like growing autonomous behaviour of youth, generation, youth ethos and isolation, suicide, and no motivation for sport activities. The other issues that the researcher could explore during the course of research analysis of the present fiction are directly associated with the entire lower middle class section of society like political and religious hypocrisy, politicization of religion, communal differences and the effects that follow and some other minor issues like the issues related education for the lower middle class children, issues related to public health, growing apathy among the educated people for the nation and middle class mentality of the contemporary lower middle class people.

The researcher came to know certain similar technicalities of writing fiction which are exclusively credited to Chetan Bhagat himself. They are the simple and straightforward
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The language i.e. no heaviness of lexicography, short and simple sentences, no complexity in the story sequences etc... and above all, the sense arousing scenes of kissing and making love. Along with that, the deeper analysis of the content of the present novel enabled the researcher to explore an exclusive dimension to the thematic approach in the novel. He, in the present novel, has taken help of the historical facts to give a realistic touch to the present fiction. The writer has successfully and diplomatically utilised some of the very sensitive historical facts in the fiction like the issue of Godhra sabotage and the communal riots that followed. The writer has also focused on the prevalent political and religious hypocrisy that causes constant communal tension in Indian society. Up till now, the writer was being criticised for just raising issues but not suggesting solutions. Here, the writer breaks that mentality. He raises the issue of communal tension in the fiction and also suggest the solution with perfect illustration of ‘Modern Secular Mind-set’ of the three young characters having modern democratic values which is a need of the time.

The researcher, during the course of reading reviews of the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, came to know about one timing error regarding the actual situation of the historical fact and the fact which is emerges from the novel. The researcher also confirms that it seems the writer’s casualty for not being serious in writing his content. The novel is set in the lower middle class background. The time depicted in the novel is around the year 2000-2002. The historical events like Gujarat earth quake in the year 2001 and the Godhra sabotage occurred in the year 2002 mentioned in the novel justify the time period mentioned in the novel. The controversy that comes out is that the use of mobile phones was not so common during that time for lower class people during the time when incoming, outgoing and messaging rates were very high. The people are depicted very poor who have very limited sources of income. So the question is how come a seventeen year old girl from the lower middle class background has a personal mobile with her and how come she uses it freely as she uses a pen or pencil. The researcher is still searching for the maturity of a writer of two bestselling novels. It may be a limitation from the researcher’s part, but he could not show the required seriousness in his art of characterization, in structuring the plot of the fiction, in his thematic approach and seriousness in style of fiction writing. The jumble of historic facts weakens the charm of the plot construction. It seems that the writer has not focused on his characterization seriously. The major characters must earn all the...
sympathy of the readers throughout the course of the story but the characters depicted in the novel, do not make the readers experience a kind of catharsis or the emotional purification. The real life incidents like the Gujarat earthquake, Godhra sabotage and communal riots that followed, the terrorist attack on WTC, pathetic condition of Kashmiri refuges, and many other issues raised in the fiction need to be seriously depicted with their lasting impacts on the contemporary society.