
**MODERN WOMANHOOD IDIOSYNCRASIES AND SPATIAL TALES OF
THE COMMONPLACE AND EVERYDAY IN ANUJA CHAUHAN'S
WORKS**

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Abstract

This article will examine the literary works of Anuja Chauhan on the topics of language, gender, politics, and class. She also researches the newly popularized genre of "Chick Literature" and Chauhan's appropriation of it to express some issues that are specifically Indian. This article examines Anuja Chauhan's experience via the prism of urban spatiality and analyses the main character's relationship to Delhi through common places. In Delhi stories like Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* and Khushwant Singh's *Delhi: A Work*, a sense of lost grandeur and culture hangs heavily, but Chauhan's work, set in post-liberalization Delhi, does not carry the same weight of historicity or a lament for the past. There is a change in emphasis towards narratives of average people that highlight the banal realities of urban living. Instead of attempting to tell a comprehensive story about the nation or the city, the book concentrates on the neighborhood of Karol Bagh and shows how many individuals or social actors negotiate its spaces. In a language with liberal use of Hinglish, commercial catchphrases, and song lyrics, a new story about the city is revealed at the nexus of the magical and the everyday.

Keywords: Hinglish, everyday spaces, narratives of city, Delhi, politics

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anuja Chauhan is a fascinating person to research in the context of modern Indian English-language writing. She is as well-known and lucrative as they come while maintaining respectably sound prose and pleasantly surprising depths of insight in her writing. [1] With a background in advertising, Chauhan oversaw some of the most successful and long-lasting campaigns of the 1990s and early 2000s. She has argued that in her quest for creative independence, writing became a vehicle for her to convey stories in a way that the million dollar structure of advertising did not allow her to. [2] However, it is because of her knowledge of advertising that she can construct conversations, make astute judgments about society, and write in a unique and novel way. *Battle for Bittora* (2010) and *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013) are the only two of her works I've chosen to focus on in my article. Important subjects that have been discussed in the article also include Chauhan's use of and subversion of the romantic novel form, the concept of "chick lit" as a genre, and how her work reflects her particularly Indian concerns.

[3] The narrative Chauhan is rife with allusions to important occasions and then-current pop culture references. The second most popular Chauhan novel, *Battle for Bittora* (2010), is examined in this research. *Battle for Bittora*, like her other books, is a romantic comedy with a young female lead in her early 20s but is set in the political backdrop of North India's hinterlands. [4] The Nawab of Bittorgarh and Zain Altaf Khan, her childhood sweetheart, is her major rival. The primary conflict in the plot is formed by the two characters' intense professional conflict and sexual. In the book, Chauhan discusses many topics, including communalism, the divisive nature of Indian electoral politics, dynasties of politics, and institutional corruption.

2. CONCEIT, CARELESSNESS, AND GREED IN ANUJA CHAUHAN WORKS

The female leads in Chauhan's works are up-and-coming, independent professionals. At *DeshDarpan*, also known as *DD*, Jinni works as a graphic technician and Dabbu reads the news. They are never fully free from the entanglement of kin and relations, though. For instance, in *Battle for Bittora*, Jinni enters politics only after her seasoned politician grandmother Pushpa Pande virtually forces her to do so. Dabbu is encircled by her sisters, parents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and their peers in *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*. [5-6] The family ends up serving as the focal point, binding both of her protagonists together. They are

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conventionally attractive women from wealthy families.

The story makes us aware of the luxury that results from the protagonists' social standing and attractiveness, even though they may not be aware of it.[7] Like in most love novels, Dabbu and Jinni's actions towards the male romantic heroes of the books shape who they are as people. The first step to validation is to win Dylan and Zain's approval. The period in which the novel is situated may have provided the background for Dabbu's chastity. Although she has a propensity to repeatedly apologize for her sexual attraction to Zain since it endangers her reputation on both a political level and sexual, Jinni is demonstrated to be more sexually uninhibited.

The older, flirty Anju, whose wandering eye is continuously criticized throughout the poem, continually compares favorably to Dabbu. The plot, however, justifies this authorial criticism by attributing its origins to Anju's conceit, carelessness, and selfishness.[8] A significant recurring concept in both novels is the skilled Indian woman who battles constant sexualization while attempting to perform her job, as seen in the dilemma caused by Jinni's nymphomania allegations or the demeanor with which Dabbu's male coworkers in the DD offices treat her.

It's crucial to remember that Anju's seeming vanity results from her awareness of her own attractiveness and sexual allure. The regretful, middle-aged woman has been parodied in characters like Gudia Aunty and Chachi in both *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and *Battle for Bittora*. Despite their traumatic pasts and ongoing victimization,[9] Chauhan shows no pity for them in the novels, portraying them as squeamish yet ferociously insecure individuals. Even though their class positions are different, Hot Dulari from *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and Munni from *Battle For Bittora* are both examples of strong women who strive for greater social mobility. The following is how romance is defined as a genre by romance author and literary critic Jennifer Crusie:

"It must involve love. Not a wonderful love story, but a love story nonetheless. It must be a book with a central conflict involving two people who fall in love and struggle to maintain their relationship. The love story should revolve around the tension in the book. The main characters in the love tale should be the same as the main characters in the novel. The love story should be resolved at the book's conclusion. As long as the major plot is the conflict in the relationship, a writer is free to use as many subplots as they

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choose”.

Both of the works discussed in this research study can be viewed as mostly falling within the "chick-lit" and romance genres. [10]Chick lit is defined as a genre of fiction that frequently uses humor and lightheartedness to discuss topics related to contemporary womanhood. Chick-lit does not directly come from the romance novel genre, despite the fact that its narratives occasionally feature love elements, because the heroine's platonic relationships with her friends or family are frequently given equal weight with her romantic ones. Both works have typical literary elements, such as the initial romantic encounter, wooing or pursuing, initial attraction, conflict, and resolution, when viewed through the romantic lens. *Battle for Bittora*, however, is quite subversive because the heroine triumphs in their professional rivalry, forcing Zain to concede Jinni's victory in the Lok Sabha elections. Dylan's views on politics and journalistic ethics, in contrast to Dabbu's doll-like mouthing of official disinformation in her private school pronunciation, are better in *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* because they are based on a greater understanding of contemporary India.

3. TEMPER TANTRUMS

In terms of physical attractiveness and masculinity, Dylan Singh Shekhawat is a hybrid of the Rajputs and Mangalorean Catholics, two exoticized communities. *The Pricey Thakur Girls* portrays Dylan, a St. Stephen's College alumnus, as a passionate and courageous print writer. Dylan's carefree, romantic demeanour is meant to represent his Christian heritage, but the book attributes his dubious sexual reputation and infrequent fits of rage to his Rajput ancestry. Gulgul Bhaisaab, a relative of the Thakur sisters and the well-intended but dim-witted adopted son of elders, is another fascinating illustration of masculinity. His desire was to run a gym and his love of bodybuilding clash with his feeble attempts to pass the bar exam. His emasculated situation within the plot, where he has no kind of economic, sexual, or familial authority over any of the female characters, is in striking and apparent contrast to Gulgul Bhaisaab's hefty physique. Instead, he turns into a painfully humorous character—a topic of sympathy rather than awe—much like Gudia Aunty from *Battle for Bittora*.

Like the majority of authors of chick-lit fiction, Chauhan employs humor to illustrate the peculiarities of contemporary womanhood in her writing. Dabbu and Jinni are

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frequently depicted as having awkward social encounters. Numerous of these interactions provide Chauhan's characterization humor, making the circumstances both funny and cringe-inducing. Her female heroines appear to her target audience to be extremely relatable due to the inclusion of commonplace uncomfortable events. Chauhan's male characters are also created to correspond to ideals of manly beauty, thus they too feel the strain to adapt to conventional beauty standards. As a result, across both works, Zain and Dylan are consistently depicted as stunningly gorgeous guys with chiseled facial lines and "taut" chests.

4. POLITICAL DYNASTIES AND SYCOPHANCY

Battle for Bittora is mostly a political book. The storyline describes what happens when two opposing candidates begin dating and is set against the backdrop of the Lok Sabha elections. Numerous references in the work are made to the calculations based on caste and creed required to win a seat in a constituency as deeply divided along communal lines as Bittora. Because she is a young woman from a well-known political family, Jinni was chosen as the Pragati Party's candidate. The politics of the dynasties and the sycophancy associated with them play a significant role in the story. The interactions between Jinni and Pushpa are distinguished by the loyal helpers' almost obsessive devotion to the family. Although both Zain and Jinni come from prominent royal families that once controlled Bittoragarh, Zain is seen as being more committed to enhancing the lives of his constituents. But by the book's conclusion, Jinni is seen to understand that she owes it to the Bittora residents who chose her to represent them. The article extensively explains how elections work, including how money is raised, campaigns are run, candidates are nominated, votes are cast, and results are tallied.

5. THE ZOYA FACTOR'S URBAN SPATIALITY VIEWPOINT

This paper examines The Zoya Factor by Anuja Chauhan via the prism of urban spatiality and analyses how Zoya is connected to Delhi through common living spaces. In The Zoya Factor, the main character, who is a Delhi native, lives there with her family while the action takes place in Mumbai, Dhaka, Sydney, Melbourne, and the Gold Coast. Because of her job as an advertising executive, Zoya frequently travels. Although her relationship with Indian cricket captain Nikhil began outside of Delhi and experienced some misunderstandings, it eventually deepened and solidified there as she navigated the neighborhood's common places.

A noticeable shift in the protagonist's pattern of interaction with the city can be seen if Zoya Factor is viewed in the context of Delhi novels' literary history. Chauhan's novel, which is set in post-liberalization Delhi, focuses on the spaces used for daily habitation. Unlike Khushwant Singh's monumental work *Delhi: A Novel*, which is a history of Delhi told by various narrators over several centuries, "a sense of lost grandeur hangs heavy, and may only be remembered through stories of a glorious past," She contends that by focusing on ordinary life in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Delhi, these authors undermine the whole idea of an event rather than portraying the rise of "New India" and its sparkling cities as an unanticipated tragedy. Instead of using broad narratives of chaotic convulsions, they critically assess globalization through its small-scale, local effects.

6. RIDICULOUS SUPERSTITION

When Zoya and Nikhil go to "the famous all-night Monday cart market," they learn about Karol Bagh's eternal "soul" and the connections people make with it, only for people on foot. Even if streets and locations are physically shown and marked on maps, it is the people who move through them that create distinctive, real-life stories. Michel de Certeau emphasises the significance of people's daily actions in constructing spaces in cities as opposed to the spatial order created by planners through maps and schemes.

The physical environment of the city is not passive; rather, the market's social actors—the competing buyers and sellers—transform it into a 'gay street carnival, with merchants selling every imaginable snack and toy on carts lighted with cheerily hissing hurricane lights'. While Zoya has enjoyed her many trips there over the years, Nikhil is nevertheless overcome by the wonder and thrill of his first visit. At the convergence of local and tourist gaze, response to unmapped and mapped areas, sale of familiar and unfamiliar commodities, and manipulation of street signs and mental maps, the location is revealed. The Karol Bagh market is especially well-known for marriage shopping, notably for saris and jewelry. However, at night, the market takes on a carnival-like atmosphere

as small-scale vendors fill the spaces in front of the huge showrooms.

In stark contrast to malls and shops, the market is described. It's critical to note the spatial contrast Nikhil navigated; only one hour prior, he was presiding over the Miss India Final Competition at a five-star hotel. Nikhil is astounded by the variety of goods being sold as he strolls through the market, including sponges, wooden serving spoon sets, children's shoes, dresses, smartwatches, and nets for mosquitoes. The metaphor of chakkar is used by Ajay Gandhi in "The Hermeneutics of the Bazaar" to characterize the bazaar's ongoing, entwined, and diverse activity. Social existence is perceived and articulated in a constantly changing now with an unpredicted future. Relationships involve entanglement with others, which allows for the inclusion of other viewpoints in reflection and navigation. The attraction of the place is that it sells regional specialties rather than the typical commodities produced by global corporations.

7. HETEROGENEITY AND IMPROVISATION

The novel's fundamental concepts for using space are spontaneity and diversity; these concepts also apply to food. While Rinku Chachi Indianizes the pizzas at Zoya's house, "loaded with tandoori chicken, achari paneer, Amul cheese, and hara dhaniya and no Italian would ever recognize them, but they rocked", Nikhil and Zoya are enjoying the tikkis in the bazaar while the effects of globalization are evident in "fusion foods" at Zoya's home. Tadka noodles and paneer tikka pizza are two examples of how food products, particularly Chinese and Italian dishes, were taken and altered beyond recognition in Indian eateries. By introducing foods like the aloo tikki burger, international food giants like McDonald's have attempted to appeal to regional tastes.

In the same way that culinary experiments produce fusions of international and regional flavors, linguistic experiments involve shifting between Hindi and English and code-mixing. Earlier, mixing was a feature of spoken language, but after linguistic liberalization, it appears that code-mixing and the use of Hinglish have gained new appeal. This is especially noticeable in Hindi cinema dialogues and songs as well as in news and advertising. The masala combination of cultures and languages is discussed by Jon Mee: From this vantage point, English is connected

to the polyphony of Indian languages, and by delving into the complexity it explains, its colonial power is weakened.

8. TRADITION OF MAGICAL REALISM

The amorous encounters between Nikhil and Zoya in Delhi shattered the notion that post-liberalization Delhi's traditional dating venues include cafés, theatres, and shopping centers. The Karol Bagh girl, Zoya, takes Nikhil to the night bazaar, eats street food, shells peanuts in the park, drinks Boost milk in the garden, and spends quiet time under the madhumalati to demonstrate her affection for the area. The interactions between Zoya and Nikhil result in unexpected pleasures and an unusual play of meanings. Chauhan is recognised by Carvalho with developing an Indian aesthetic through a distinct writing style that imitates everyday speech, pays special attention to the peculiarities of daily life, and draws on the magical realism tradition.

While the World Cup is still going on, Zoya renounces her role as Team India's charm and returns to her employment as a marketing executive in order to assert her identity as an entrepreneur and not only the cricket board's ambassador. She rejects the deification that sought to safeguard her "purity" by restricting her sexual activities in the process, and she also declines to take part in the national obsession with sports. After spending some time in the cricket action, passion, and media spotlight, Zoya returns to Delhi, to her modest home, work, and neighbourhood. Instead of attempting to tell a great story about the nation or the city, Chauhan's writing focuses on a specific neighborhood and portrays the social players involved in the mundane activities of Karol Bagh, or a smaller version of Delhi. In Zoya's home, the fervor and mayhem of Karol Bagh are also apparent. The house's architecture is a reflection of the city's haphazard and unplanned growth.

9. CONCLUSION

Chauhan's writing is challenging and significant when one considers the harsh social criticism that undercuts it and enriches her stories. A knowledgeable and personal awareness of topics like class, politics, morality, and India's shifting sociocultural background is woven into the romance's structure. This paper examines how the authorial voice that can weave major themes like the ones mentioned above into the story subverts and affirms the commercial structure of genre literature. It may be argued that Anuja Chauhan is a very productive author

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whose major goal is to provide a book that is accessible to readers. She is the ideal representation of what a woman is capable of when she puts her mind to it. She is constantly focused on assisting, encouraging, and motivating everyone around her.

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