



THE USE OF 'MAGICAL REALISM' IN THE NOVEL "ONE NIGHT @ THE CALL CENTRE" BY CHETAN BHAGAT

D. RAMSINGH PRABHU

Assistant Professor of English
Department of Science and Humanities
Faculty of Engineering
Karpagam Academy of Higher Education
(TN) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Magical realism, magic realism, or marvelous realism is a style of fiction that paints a realistic view of the modern world while also adding magical elements. It is sometimes called fabulism, in reference to the conventions of fables, myths, and allegory. It is considered a subgenre of fantasy. The borders between magical realism and fantasy are mushy. Magical realism as a genre can be thought of as a subset of fantasy, but in true fantasy novels, the larger outer world does not look like ours, we have been departed to another world altogether. But in a magical realist story, on the other hand, we are in a mundane, familiar place that is inhabited or imbued with something not of this world. The novel, "One Night at the Call Centre", is set in a place, which is very common and familiar to all readers but the writer, all of sudden, introduces a magical element in the plot with a definite purpose. This article aims at identifying the magical element and the purpose of introducing the element.

Key Words: Realism, Supernatural Power, Fiction, Fantasy, Myth.

INTRODUCTION

One Night @the Call Center is Chetan Bhagat's second bestselling novel. It was published in the year 2005 by Rupa & Co, New Delhi. The novel expounds the life and problems of the

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young generation of India in this globalised time. The writer has put sincere effort to bring the issues of the modern urban social milieu to the consciousness to the world. The middle class section of the society is represented in the novel with all its hardships of life in the westernized Indian society. It expresses the concerns of the entire middle class Indian society in general. The novel is set in a call center named Connexions in Gurgaon, Haryana. The story of the novel revolves around within the time span of only one night; however, its many flashbacks and interludes make the reader to be interested. The writer has illustrated even very minor issues of the youngsters, who are working in night shifts in the BPO sector of India. Their personal, professional, and social problems are shown in appealing way. That is why, it can be said that the novel has become a perfect piece of social criticism of contemporary Indian society.

The novel *One Night@ the Call Center* has been written in three segments like prologue, the main content and the epilogue. The writer himself appears in the prologue and the epilogue of the novel to start and conclude the story. There are six main characters in the story of the novel; Shyam, Priyanka, Varun, Esha, Radhika and Military Uncle. Five of them are young and Military Uncle is a retired army man. The story of the novel is told by Shyam Mehra in the first person. Shyam, the narrator of the story, is the chief protagonist of the novel and can be called the mouth piece of the writer, Chetan Bhagat. One can also observe certain sparks of Chetan Bhagat's thinking in the character of Varun also in the novel.

The writer's art of storytelling increases the curiosity of the readers to wonder about what is going on or what may happen next. Shyam is about twenty four years young man and very smart and intelligent but he is an under employed young man, where he works. There are other four characters of his age working with him along with one retired army officer, Military Uncle. Shyam is not happy with his life, because he thinks he is good for nothing and achieved nothing in life and depressed in his life. He lost his self-confidence that is why feels much humiliated instead of trying something better, when people tease him regarding his job as BPO agent and his limited salary. He loves his colleague, Priyanka, who is a modern type of girl. She has high desires in her life. She too loves him and wants to marry him but she is confused, because of social status of Shyam and her mother considers that Shyam is a loser kind of a boy. So she wants Shyam to be successful in his life so that she could prove her mother that her choice, Shyam, is appropriate. Since her mother is very strict about her behavior, she keeps a close observe on every activity of Priyanka but she does not like the over control of her mother in her personal life. But due to clashes of opinions Priyanka breaks up with Shyam and confirms to her mother's wish to marry a boy who is well settled in his life. Her engagement is also fixed with an NRI guy named Ganesh. It is because; Priyanka finds no secured future with Shyam.



The other characters in the novel also have their individual issues in their life as well as in their career. Varun is not happy with his life, because his father divorced his mother to marry his assistant of his office. Varun has no parental property and believes that his life is full of struggle because of his father. He considers his friends enjoy their life because of their rich background and he has to earn money working in a call center to earn money that is also a meager amount.

Esha is somewhat a good-looking girl with a pretty stature, but her height is her problem that she is an inch shorter than the minimum criteria to attain her ambition. She wants to become a model. In spite of that, she keeps on approaching many modeling professionals to get a chance. But she is frustrated by her all attempt. Varun likes her but she could not pay attention to his advances. Because once morally compromises to get a modeling contract and sleeps with a forty year old modeling professional and later on only she comes to know that that man also cheated her. He rejects her indicating her height but enjoyed her. She feels betrayed and she is very unhappy in her career and personal life.

Radhika is a married woman. Her husband is Anuj, he is in Kolkata on a business tour. She is a good house wife and performs all her family responsibility well along with her night shift duties at the call center. When she comes to know about her husband's extra-marital affair with a modern type of girl, Payal, she becomes very much disappointed in life, so she wants to put a full stop to the unfaithful marriage life.

Military Uncle is a retired army man. He could not live with his son and son-in-law, because he is very much firm in the traditional way of life. His son and daughter-in-law could not tolerate his rigidity and he had to leave his son's house. He is working at the call center for his earning. His son has restricted his talk with his grandson also. He feels all alone and wishes to live with them.

Mr. Bakshi, the manager of the call center, is the boss of all the six major characters of the novel. He is an antagonist type of character in the novel. He is very tactful and an opportunist. It is because of his mismanagement, the call center is in the condition of closing down at any moment and the employees will become jobless. All the predicaments in the lives of the major characters are just because of him. He even does not acknowledge the creative works of the agents and pockets all the credits from the top management. Everybody in the call centre hates him because of his selfish and dominating behavior.

All the major characters in the novel have some or the other kind of unfortunate experiences in life. Their life is not worth living. They are not happy or contented in their present life. The social and psychological reality of contemporary Indian middle class people is represented in each of the characters of the novel. The characters are the actual representations of the people

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of modern Indian society which is much westernized. Along with certain modern opportunities, westernization has brought certain threats to the present structure of the society. The call from God in the later part of the novel in chapter # 30, is Bhagat's best illustration of interlocking fantasy to realism. Bhagat has introduced the supernatural element in the novel. He has introduced Deus-Ex-Machine technique in a call from God-the almighty-in the novel. It is Bhagat's art to give a realistic touch to imaginative situation like a call from God talking to the modern jeans and Pizza generation. The call from God in the novel is presented as a remedy to the unending hardships of the characters. God or their inner voice guides them all how to get out of the everlasting anxieties and dilemmas of life. God fills them all, with self-confidence and self-esteem and now the depressed characters set everything right in their lives. Bhagat with this actually reveals his deeper faith in the Almighty and his trust on the power of the inner self for making even tough situations easy.

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