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ECHOES OF WAR AND WINGS OF LOVE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF ANUJA CHAUHAN'S ROMANTIC NOVEL *BAAZ*

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Abstract

Anuja Chauhan (17 September 1970) is an Indian author, advertiser, and screenwriter. Because of her engaging storytelling style, she has created marvelous scope in her writings for interesting characters to develop attractive plots. So, Anuja Chauhan's novels are bestsellers and loved by authors. The selected novel for a research study is, Anuja Chauhan's *Baaz* (2017). At heart, this novel narrates a love relation between a peacenik and a pilot, with war as the backdrop. It is a story of Shaanu aka Baaz aka Ishaan and Tehmina and supportive characters Raks, a MiG-21 Fighter, Maddy, a transport pilot who flies a Caribou, and fellow Gnatties Jana, Gana and Mana. The Indian romantic novels will be briefly discussed in this paper and the primary focus will then be the analysis of the themes and characters in *Baaz*. Additionally, it will look into how *Baaz* differs from Anuja Chauhan's previous novels in that it has a male protagonist and creates a male space. It will also find out Anuja Chauhan's autobiographical reflections in the novel.

Keywords: 21st century women characters, male space, autobiographical novel, romantic fiction.

Introduction

Anuja Chauhan (born 1970) held the position of vice-president and executive director of JWT, an advertising agency in India, until her resignation in 2010 when she decided to dedicate herself to a full-time writing career. Renowned for her contributions to advertising, she crafted several successful campaign such as 'Nothing Official About It,' 'Yeh Dil Maange More,' and 'Oye Bubbly,' for cola giant Pepsi. Her notable works include *The Zoya Factor* (2008), *Battle for Bittora* (2010), *Those Pricey*

Thakur Girls (2013), *The House That BJ Built* (2015), *Baaz* (2017), and *Club You to Death* (2018).

Research Methodology

The researcher will use critical and analytical methods for finding the facts. The study will be based on primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will be the original texts and secondary sources will be the books, research articles and material available in the libraries and on the internet.

Discussion

A romance novel focuses on the romantic love and relationship between two people. It has an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending. Indian romance novels are getting more popular every day. There are plenty of great Indian authors who are writing incredible passion, love and romantic stories. They definitely help to get different perspectives on love. *Key to My Soul* (2003) by Probal Mazumdar follows the lives of two characters, Horel and Siddarth. *Your Dreams Are Mine Now* (2014) by Ravinder Singh is set on the Delhi University Campus; this is the story of Arjun and Rupali. *Till The Caste Breath* (2022) is the story of two patients fighting for their lives by Durjoy Dutta, who is known as an engineer and young achiever. *Dating Dr. Dil* (2022) by Nisha Sharma introduces the feisty Kareena Mann. *You Are the Best Wife* (2015) by Ajay Pandey is the story of two people who fall in love despite having opposing ideologies. *Truly, Madly, Deeply* (2010) by Faraaz Kazi is a teenage college romance, between the shy Seema and the highfalutin Rahul. *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009) by Chetan Bhagat tells the story of Krish and Ananya.

In fiction, the various characteristics that make up a person's personality, thoughts, feelings, and decisions are combined to form their characters with different character traits. In a nutshell, the characteristics of these characters define them. It lets the writer develop a variety of character types. Such as devoted, compassionate, giving, sincere, focused, brave, calm, impartial, selfless, hopeful, dishonest, treacherous, cruel, crude, envious, materialistic, impatient, petty, selfish, and unforgiving, among other qualities. Character traits not just aid in character description, but they also advance the plot.

As a part of romantic fictions, Anuja Chauhan's most of the women characters represent 21st century independent women who are romantic, modern, careerist, young, independent, hopeful and cheerful. *The Zoya Factor* tells the story of the central female character Zoya Singh Solanki, a Rajput woman who works as an executive in an advertising agency and meets the Indian cricket team as the

lucky charm. In the second book, *Battle for Bittora* (2010), Jinni, a regular 25-year-old woman, resides in Bombay. Jinni is employed by an animation company. She is happy living a normal, independent life.

Anuja Chauhan's third novel, *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* (2013), in which author described a sprawling bungalow on New Delhi Posh Hailey road, Justice Laxmi Narayan Thakur and his wife Mamata spend their days watching anxiously over their five beautiful but troublesome alphabetically named daughters. After this, *House That BJ Built* (2015) is a recap of the lives of the alphabetically named sisters, Anjini, Binodini, Chandralekha, Debjani, Eshwari, and in *The Pricey Thakur Girls*, the author picturizes families and problems of their own. The fifth novel of Anuja Chauhan is *Bazz* (2017). It is primarily the story of the dashing flying officer Ishaan "Bazz" Faujdar, batch of '68' hero of the 1971 war. And sixth novel by Anuja Chauhan is *Club You to Death* (2021) deviates from romance, it describes a dead, handsome trainer, too many suspects, and the prestigious Delhi Turf Club (DTC).

Anuja Chauhan has created twenty-first century characters showing contemporaneity, like Zoya Singh Solanki, Nikhil Khoda, Monita Mukherjee, etc. in *The Zoya Factor*, Jinni, Zain Altaf Khan, etc. in the novel *Battle for Bittora*. Anjini, Binodini, Chandrakanta, Eshwari, etc. in the novel *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and *The House that BJ Built*. Ishaan Fauzdaar, Maddy, Raka, etc. in the novel *Baaz* and Akash Dogra, Bambi Tadi, ACP Bhavani Sing, etc. in *Club You to Death*.

One of best-known pieces, of Anuja Chauhan, *Baaz*, a national best seller tells a love story of the endearing Flying Officer Ishaan Fauzdaar, nicknamed Baaz (because he would scoop on the enemies 'Baaz-ke-maphik'), is the sensitive, caring, terrific sport and handsome uniformed hero in the IAF, any girl would dream of and Tehmina, a clumsy heroine. Ishaan, who is from the small Haryana village of Chakkahera, is a dapper and macho man who can switch between Haryanvi and English with ease. He's a popular boy with girls, but he's still just a simple boy waiting for his "someone special." Tehmina Dadyseth, in contrast to Ishaan, is a self-reliant, determined

individual who does not adhere to the stereotypes of the "ideal Indian wife." Tehmina's dislike of fighting does not deter Ishaan, who declares his will to win her over. Ishaan Fauzdaar aka Shaanu is a typical disciplined military man who is willing to die for his country or for whatever his superiors tell him to do. Tehmina, on the other hand, is a pacifist who believes in peaceful agreements instead of war.

The storyline, which is set against the backdrop of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, perfectly balances complexity, simplicity, love and war. Essentially a story of Ishaan and Tehmina, *Baaz* portrays the conflict between love and dreams and the debate around hyper-nationalism and war in current times, and so it made *Baaz* popular. Tehmina, someone who visits the refugee camps to spread a little cheer among the kids in the time of war; someone who chooses to prance under a waterfall wearing a bikini for an advertisement to be able to pay for her very expensive new camera, represents the 21st century feminist woman character of Anuja Chauhan.

Like every other book by Anuja Chauhan, In *Baaz*, all of the characters are real. Reading about the incredibly relatable supporting cast of Maddy, Raka, Juhi, Kung Fui, and Kuch Bhi Carvalho makes it easy to remember the past moments spent with a supportive yet pushy friend or relative. In the interview hosted by The Economic Times on May 21, 2017, Anuja Chauhan tells regarding *Baaz* that she has created male space in the novel purposefully as:

I always knew I'd write a book about boys in uniform — the army has been too much a part of my growing-up years to be ignored. Faujis creep up in my books regularly. But in 2016, the faujis in my head started demanding their own book, and I felt ready to write about them. Also, I'd had a bit of a girly overdose after *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and *The House That BJ Built*, so I welcomed the male space.

In the same interview, when she answers the question that 'You are an army child, what are cantonments to you?' She says:

Cantonments are my childhood. They were the original gated communities before India discovered gated communities. We didn't get paid much, that much my parents had told us, but we had all the facilities. Cheese cubes, baked bean tins, crates of Coca-Cola and chicken sausages were regular army ration. I remember the click of the mah-jong tiles from when my mum had her chic little parties, the chiffon saris she would wear for the lunch party that the Chief of Army Staff's wife threw every year.

Thus, *Baaz* is an autobiographical because no doubt author reflects in this novel her thought and imaginations due to her childhood experiences.

However, the author hasn't stopped there. Throughout the book, love is portrayed as being full of action and emotions as well as, war, humanity, friendships, family, and romance. Complicated parenthood and sibling relationships are also discussed, along with a host of other social issues most notably, war and patriotism. The supporting cast members are skillfully integrated into the narrative and leave a lasting impression, much like the first few clever chapters. Because of their social consciousness and the way Anuja wrote about the oxymoron characters of them falling in love, Ishaan aka Baaz and Tehmina aka Tinka are two of the many characters that readers will find more charming.

The Jat-ness of Chaudhari Chimman Singh Fauzdaar and the dynamics of Ishaan's friend squad add depth to the narrative. The author's skillful storytelling brings the characters to life, making even the less important ones vivid and lively.

Conclusion

Anuja Chauhan is an author of commercial fiction her distinct style characterized by unique plots, captivating characters and entertainment. *Baaz* is a romantic narrative with the theme of war and love. It is a partially autobiographical reflection of author's thoughts, feelings and experiences. It is a grand love story of Baaz and Tinka. In *Baaz*, the characters, particularly Ishaan, steal the show, leaving a lasting impression on readers. Other characters add sunshine to the day light and made

Baaz a bestselling novel of the author which is enjoyed by the readers. *Baaz* presents numerous themes like action, love and emotions, humanity, friendships, family and romance, complicated parenthood, sibling relationships while touching upon a number of social issues and most importantly war and patriotism. Moreover, author's successful deployment of family relations and Indianized English adds authenticity, making the characters relatable. Thus, Anuja Chauhan has successfully created twenty-first century characters showing contemporaneity.

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