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A Critical Study of Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* as the Indian Cricket Fiction

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Kulkarni Vibhati Vasantryao

N. E. S. Science College, Nanded (MH)

**Corresponding Author- Kulkarni Vibhati Vasantryao**

Email id: [vibhatikul@gmail.com](mailto:vibhatikul@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:**

*The Zoya Factor* (2008), a best-selling novel by Anuja Chauhan, tells the love story of Zoya Singh Solanki, who is upset being single and Nikhil Khoda, the captain of the Indian Cricket team. The book has drawn attention for its prominent themes, including autobiographical novel, chick lit, young adult fiction and romantic narrative. The author presents 21<sup>st</sup> century middle-class India with subtlety. She narrates humorously the urban middle-class English-educated but bilingual global desi type. The characters in the novel will be showing indianness. The goal of the current study in this paper is to focus on *The Zoya Factor* as the Indian cricket fiction. The study comprises dependent, independent, demographic, and extraneous variables like the qualities and characteristics of the writer and the selected work. The study used the textual analysis method and the biographical method. The hypothesis of the study is Anuja Chauhan's novel *The Zoya Factor* (2008) is an Indian cricket fiction. To discover the discussion of cricket, the study included a review of works by Indian authors such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, or Upamanyu Chatterjee, Anuja Chauhan, Sujit Mukherjee, Pramesh Ratnakar, and Sushil Gupta. The focus is on celebrating the selected novel by Anuja Chauhan and its significant theme of cricket fiction.

**Key Words:** Indian, romantic, cricket, fiction, realistic, comedy,

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**Introduction:**

Anuja Chauhan (1970-) is a creative Indian writer. She is well known for her advertisements, screenplays and bestselling narratives. She has created numerous popular advertising campaigns, including 'Nothing Official About It,' 'Yeh Dil Maange More,' and 'Oye Bubbly,' for cola giant Pepsi. *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) are among her most well-known works. *The Zoya Factor* a romantic novel. Zoya met Nikhil the team captain and the Indian Cricket Team through her job as an executive in an advertising agency. She is supposed to be lucky as she was born on the exact date and time as India won its first world cup in the year 1983. So gradually Indian Cricket team except Nikhil accepts her as a lucky charm for the team for the world cup of 2011. The title suggests the significance of the twenty-seven-year-old heroine Zoya's luck factor and its winning effect for the Indian cricket team. All characters' love for cricket reflects their

ultimate love for nation. Thus, a hugely entertaining and popular novel, makes fun of the Indian obsession with cricket which shapes the novel as Romantic Comedy.

**Materials and Methods:** The data has been collected using qualitative research methodology, especially the textual analysis method and biographical methods. Other methodologies used are surveying and collecting related book reviews, newspaper reviews, interviews with the author, and researching articles related to the theme. In addition to these, major methodologies employed are exploratory, interpretative, evaluative, and analytical. Critical and comparative analysis is the central agenda for the research. The study of the selected work is done from a thematic point of view. The details are as follows;

**2.2 Data and Sources of Data:** Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) and M. H. Abrams' *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1999) are the primary sources used for the study, and secondary data has been collected from various books, and websites like hindustantimes.com., thehindu.com. etc. The

renowned journals are also reviewed for this purpose.

### III. Discussion:

#### 3.1 Results of Study Variables

Cricket is a popular sport in Anglophone culture. It also appears in some literary works. In Victorian, Australian, and New Zealand cricket fiction, cricket is mentioned. Some of the greatest English writers of the Edwardian period wrote about cricket. It was also prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. A few contemporary Indian writers have used cricket as a theme. The ultimate result of the study is that Anuja Chauhan's *The Zoya Factor* (2008) has cricket as its central theme.

#### 3.2 Discussion:

Dickens's famous first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), includes a brief description of a cricket match between the All-Muggleton team and the Dingley Dell Cricket Club. Mr. Pickwick watches as Mr. Jingle provides a running commentary. The game of cricket also plays a prominent part in Tom Brown's *Schooldays* (1857), and Anthony Trollope also wrote occasionally about cricket. E. W. Hornung and Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a series of short stories in which they mention the cricket.

Cricket began to appear in Indo-Anglian fiction in the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century. Established authors like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, or Upamanyu Chatterjee do not mention it in their books, but it is the subject of numerous other novels. The first of its kind is the *Autobiography of an Unknown Cricketer* (1996), based on the life of Ravi Dayal written by Sujit Mukherjee, a professor of English and later a publisher. Some noteworthy Indian cricket fictions are *Centurion: The Father, the Son and The Spirit of Cricket* (2012) by Pramesh Ratnakar and K.N. Raghavan's *Reverse Swing* (2022). *The Fourth Monkey* (2007) by Sushil Gupta is another book that captures the cricket craze that is so rampant in India. Anuja Chauhan wanted to write a splendid romantic story. She selected the Indian Cricket team captain Nikhil Khoda as a protagonist of the romantic narrative, *The Zoya Factor*. Anuja Chauhan says in one Interview with IBNLive about her desire to write *The Zoya Factor*:

And I was very clear that I wanted to write a romance. Being a romantic person, I was sure

that I would not write a regular boy-meets-girl love story. My love story had to be grand, and it really can't be grander than the captain of the Indian cricket team. (Sep 24, 2008, Web.)

Most of the characters in the novel are fans of Indian cricket. Their love of cricket shows the nationalism and nationalistic attitude of cricket lovers. Readers can see and smell Zoya's Karolbagh Indian family, particularly her father, Vijayendra Singh Solanki, a lieutenant colonel in the Indian Army and a widower who is a cricket fanatic. Her brother, Zorvar Singh Solanki, also works in the Indian Army and is fond of cricket. Thus, in the Cricket Rom-Com, *The Zoya Factor*, the worlds of advertising and cricket humorously come to life. The novel describes cricket players as typical Indian characters who are realistic and well-presented. The dialogue of these characters is crackling, comical, and unpretentious. Hairy, the Indian opener, is funny because of his English and groin problems; Lingnath Baba is funny because of his sadhugiri; Lokey, the celebrity agent, is funny because of his pista eating habits, etc. The list goes on and on.

The superstitious belief in the luck factor of Indian cricket dominates the novel. Zoya is supposed to be a lucky charm for the Indian cricket team. The character Rinku Chachi talks about how Zoya proves to be a lucky charm for the Indian cricket team. "See, Zoya, your luck is already working," Rinku Chachi triumphantly said. "She was looking very young and flushed in her blue Zing!" (Chauhan, Anuja.140.) Everybody started believing in the luck factor. The belief was that whenever she ate breakfast with the Indian Cricket Team, they would win the next match.

After the IBCC's cricket board discovers this, she is sent with the Indian team to Australia to help them bring back the cup. With her unblemished record, the international media believes that India has an unfair and unnatural advantage and has criticized her. The rest of the story is about whether a simple girl like Zoya can handle these pressures and help Team India win the World Cup. But Nikhil Khoda, captain of the Indian cricket team, is against this misbelief. He refuses to give luck its due and believes in hard work. He becomes irritated by the superstitious people who give credit to Zoya for the victory of the Indian cricket team. He says:

Because I want to win fair and square,' he answered without hesitation, his eyes blazing. 'Not like this. Not because of some' – he flung his arms in the air – 'Voodoo goddess.!' (Chauhan, Anuja. 243.)

When Lopamudra Ghatak asks Anuja Chauhan, "Who is Nikhil Khoda based on?" She says in the IBNLive interview that Nikhil Khoda is not Mahendra Singh Dhoni but a figment of her imagination. She didn't have anyone in mind. His identity is original.

Meenu Annadurai writes in the book review in her Book Blog about Zoya:

If there is one thing she doesn't love in the world, that would be Cricket but as fate would have it, she is forced to work with the Men in Blue for an ad film...This actually brings about a turf between The Skipper and our Lucky Charm. Despite having a remarkable chemistry, they both are always on the opposite sides of each other because they both have one hell of an ego clash going on between them. (April 29, 2021, Web.)

As Zoya does not like cricket, and Anuja Chauhan is also not very passionate about cricket, her advertising career connected her to Indian cricket. So, she could write this novel with all the minute details about cricket matches, players' performances, and reports. Thus, all types of readers, especially cricket lovers, are attracted to reading and reviewing the cricket fiction.

#### IV. Conclusion:

The Zoya Factor is a romantic narrative written in the wittiest and most distinct style by Anuja Chauhan. It is a grand love story of a woman searching for her way and an Indian captain who is deeply nationalist. The cricket-loving readers and reviewers liked the novel. So, The Zoya Factor is a romantic story and, as a result, cricket fiction. It is also a satire on superstitious Indian society. It presents the

act that Indians love their country and Indian cricket.

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