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400 Days: The Detective-Mystery and Love Fiction

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Abstract:

Keshav Rajpurohit, an aspiring IPS officer and amateur detective, is approached by Alia Arora, a glamorous ex-model and neighbor, whose 12-year-old daughter Siya has been missing for nine months. The police have given up, but Alia refuses to let go. Keshav, drawn by the mystery and Alia's determination, agrees to investigate.

As he digs deeper, Keshav uncovers troubling family dynamics, cryptic online

messages, and a chilling clue from Siya's younger sister about the kidnapper's appearance. The trail leads to a shocking revelation involving a trusted family priest and a disturbing ritual. Keshav rescues Siya from an abandoned sugar factory, but the emotional fallout is intense.

Key Words: Detective-Mystery Fiction, India, Chetan Bhagat.



Introduction:-

400 Days is a 2021 mystery novel by Indian author Chetan Bhagat. The novel blends elements of mystery and romance, focusing on a detective case involving a missing child. After the events of *One Arranged Murder*, Keshav and Saurabh are living with Keshav's parents in a gated community called Icon. Keshav, preparing to become an IPS officer, is approached by Alia Arora, a neighbor seeking help to find her missing 12-year-old daughter, Siya, who disappeared nine months earlier. Initially reluctant, Keshav agrees due to his love for detective work and the promise of a substantial reward. Keshav and his team rescue a traumatized Siya, who reveals she was kidnapped and abused under the guise of a religious ritual.

Chetan Bhagat is good at connecting with middle-class. His plots are always fundamentally good and usually revolve around an issue that today's Indian youth can connect with. *In 400 Days* there's a hero who's down to earth and constantly tussling with his parents, especially his father. Keshav is studying for the civil services – he's targeting the IPS, while at the same time, he runs a detective agency. Keshav's parents want him to ditch the detective agency, clear the civil services and get married, not necessarily in that order.

Keshav Rajpurohit is a budding detective preparing for the Indian Police Service (IPS) under pressure from his parents. He had a brief affair with Alia Arora. Saurabh Maheshwari is an engineer, skilled hacker, and Keshav Rajpurohit's best friend. Alia Arora is Keshav Rajpurohit's and Saurabh Maheshwari's client. She is an ex-model, and Manish Arora's wife, Siya and Suhana Arora's mother. She had a brief affair with Keshav Rajpurohit and wanted to marry him, but he rejected her. Manish Arora is Alia Arora's husband, Siya and Suhana Arora's father. He is the owner of Nava jewelers, who runs an online jewellery business. Siya Arora is the missing teenage



daughter of Alia and Manish Arora and the older sister of Suhana. Suhana Arora is the younger daughter of Alia and Manish Arora, and the younger sister of Siya Arora.

Keshav Rajpurohit is the narrator of the novel and he is preparing for UPSC exam. His dislike about the UPSC exam seen in his feelings, “I hate this stupid UPSC exam”. (Bhagat, 10) Soon the readers are informed of his parents concern for his future, as despite being an IITian, he is still jobless and unmarried. Keshav’s father wasn’t happy with his career. Keshav’s mother wasn’t happy with his marital status. Keshav’s father was disappointed with him saying “Who will marry him?”. ‘No job. Sitting around the house all day. Doing his silly detective business while pretending to prepare for the toughest exam ...’. (Bhagat, 12) Keshav only had two attempts left before he reached the upper age limit of thirty-two years for the exam. His dream of becoming an IPS officer was going to be flushed down. I wanted to be an IPS officer instead of running a tiny detective agency like he was doing at present. As a senior cop, he could solve a lot more crimes and help society. But the problem was, the tough UPSC exam for civil services. A number of students apply for this exam but a general category student like he has to achieve a top-500 rank if they want an IPS seat.

Keshav Rajpurohit lives in Gurgaon, or Gurugram, His best friend Saurabh stays with him. He works at Cybersafe, a computer security company. Keshav grew up in Alwar, where his father was a lawyer by profession. They now lives in their parents’ three-bedroom apartment in a residential building complex called Icon, near the DLF Golf Course. He asked Saurabh, his best friend and partner in his detective agency, Z Detectives, to move in with them as well. Saurabh is working in a computer security company, “Cyberspace.” Banerjee, Debayan states, “The narrative takes a sharp turn when Alia Arora asks Keshav’s help to find out her elder daughter Siya, a twelve –year- old child, who has been missing for nearly nine months when the police



fail to do anything substantial. On his insistence, Alia unfolds in detail the night of the mishap and what followed, including the Arora family's initiative, police investigation, and the media trial that victimized the family". (Page 3) Alia and her husband Manish Arora lives in Tower B, right opposite Saurabh's Tower C.' Her father was in Army. Alia is not happy in her married life. Keshav falls in love with his much-married but not so happily married Alia. Keshav undertakes the case and starts the investigation with his friend. However, as the story progresses, Alia and Keshav get intimate (courtesy of her difficult marriage with Manish). Investigation complements the romance, and the duo, with the help of the police, catches the criminal, who turns out to be the highly respected 'panditji' of the Arora family. The story ends with Siya's rescue, which binds the Arora family together. Keshav withdraws himself and plans to reopen their agency backed by the heavy monetary reward he receives from the Arora family. Bhagat's choice of writing detective stories surely has an axis of becoming popular, and it empowers him to analyse the society more widely and penetrate it with objectivity. Bhagat's forte lies in telling the stories of Indian households in effortless and unpretentious way. His characters are remembered not for their heroics but for their humane emotion. They are portrait as boys next door, perturbed by being jobless or rejected by girls for being fat. The story shows, despite their success in solving two tough cases (recorded in The Girl in Room No 105 and One Arranged Murder), Keshav parents still is worried of Keshav's future. He is forced to prepare for the UPSC, keeping aside the fancy of becoming a professional detective. They are desperate to find a suitable match for him. In the middle of the novel, Keshav plans to go to Kerala to hear the account of abduction from the lone witness, Suhana, Alia's younger daughter. His family restricts him but gives permission when he informs that Alia has already paid him well. Towards the end of the novel, after catching the culprit when Keshav returns home wounded, his father congratulates him. In



the end, when Samsher Arora transacts 1cr as remuneration to Keshav's account, it is his father who comes with the proposal of restarting the agency, the dream both Keshav and Saurabh cherish for a long time. Actually, being typical Indian parents they cannot be satisfied until their son(s) get settled for a secured future. The relationship between Keshav and Saurabh 'Golu' Maheshwari is very intimate. Saurabh is not Keshav's assistant or chronicles of his success, a trope used by Western detective novelists. He is rather Keshav's partner, his comrade in solving the crimes. In the novel we find that Saurabh brilliantly hacks Siya's phone, recovers the highly transcribed data, creates reliable fake profiles on the social media (Telegram) and helps Keshav whenever the latter becomes clueless. He helps to track the Panditji's activity, which incidentally leads them to Siya. Though it is Keshav who fights with the Panditji, Saurabh's contribution is nonetheless important. In fact, when they are planning to restart the agency, he offers the innovative plan to "combine the detective agency with a child security software company" (Bhagat, 342). Keshav's intimate affair with Alia, Siya's mother, makes 400 Days a Bhagatesque novel.

In Bhagat's world, love is the driving force. This novel is not an exception. When Alia meets Keshav, she is in depression. Keshav's words and activity win her trust. Her account shows that she is marginalised in the Arora family, and even though she lives with Manish separately, his extramarital affairs have put the marriage on edge. On top of that, Manish is reluctant to pursue the abduction further as it may badly impact the family's jewellery business. At this juncture of her life, she meets Keshav, who relentlessly searches for the criminal and finally catches him. Interestingly, Siya's return arouses the mother-self in her. She understands that the family needs her now. She fumbles to take the decision of divorce, and Keshav assures her, "It can't be about you and me. It's about Siya. I met Manish. He is trying to make things better..." (Bhagat, 340).



The affair may seem unexpected or unnecessary from the perspective of conventional detective-mystery novels, but it is what makes ChetanBhagat's novels special. Their mutual separation also offers Bhagat's attitude toward marriage and love in the context of present-day India.

In this novel we can see extra marital affairs of Keshav with Alia and Manish with his colleague in his office. Keshav's growing affection for Alia who is married adds emotional complexity. Their relationship is tender yet restrained, reflecting the tension between personal desire and societal norms. Keshav's journey from a directionless UPSC aspirant to a committed detective underscores themes of self-discovery and finding meaning through service. His decision to focus on child safety after the case shows a shift from ambition to impact. The story takes a chilling turn when the investigation uncovers a disturbing ritual linked to a trusted priest. This theme questions the dangers of unquestioned belief and how blind faith can be manipulated for sinister purposes. Siya's Instagram account becomes a key clue in the investigation, revealing how digital platforms can be both a lifeline and a threat. The book critiques how children's online lives can expose them to danger, especially when adults aren't paying attention. The novel explores strained relationships within Alia's joint family, touching on generational clashes, emotional neglect, and the pressure to conform. Keshav's own tension with his parents adds another layer, showing how family expectations can shape and stifle personal dreams.

In conclusion, We can see a mother's relentless love for her daughter. Alia's unwavering determination to find her missing daughter, Siya is appreciating. Also we can see the clash between tradition and modernity. The dark side of social media and blind faith has seen in this novel. Chetan Bhagat's use of allusion and his concern for the growing crimes against the teenage girls. In the novel, the Panditji capitalises on the Arora family's trust. He was obsessed with her as he reveals, "Ever since I saw your mother and placed my hand on her head, I felt



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something...Later I realised, it was you. You were inside her then” (Bhagat, 325, italics original). On that dreadful night, he threatens Siya that he would murder her siblings if she shows any resistance. He later forces her not only to act like his wife but also to habituate a life of confinement. Until captured, he acts like a pandit and uses his profession as a ploy to remain unsuspected. Interestingly, Keshav, whose name resembles one of the names of Lord Rama, rescues Siya. Secondly, in recent times the rate of crime against teenage girls in India is spiking high. Bhagat's choice of using this trend as the theme of this novel seems at once deliberate and purposive. He forms the core of the crime around child sexual abuse. The National Crime Records Bureau points out that sexual crimes against children have risen by 4.5% in 2019, as compared to the previous year. In this context, at the end of the novel, when Saurabh comes up with the idea of combining their detective agency “with a child security software company” (Bhagat, 344), Bhagat’s concern for these budding youth seems palpable.

Works Cited

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