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A Rich Kaleidoscope of Human Relations, Emotions and Experiences in Chetan Bhagat's Novels

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the popular literature. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern to the society in his novels, ranging from the romantic love story to a deplorable condition of the present educational system. He has started a crusade against eradicating the evils of the society by his 'sugar coated novels'. Chetan Bhagat, in almost all his novels, highlights the problems faced by the youth. He presents before us a world which is full of optimism and comic elements. Chetan Bhagat has acumen of giving comic treatment to a very serious theme. The main objective of this paper is to bring out the thematic style of Chetan Bhagat's writing along with the way in which he presented his characters. This paper will also discuss the concept of social reflection and concept of modernity and how through the delineation of the various characters he portrays the contemporary reality.

Key Words: Modernity, Exploitation, Corruption, Ambition, Alienation, Religious, Political and Natural Calamities

Chetan Bhagat has always tried to touch upon something new in his writings. His writings have always been close to reality and presented a true picture of life in India. He has always expressed himself in a way which is understood by all and every generation can connect itself to it. His thoughts are worded in such a skillful way that they are understood by readers instantly. It has been one of the major reasons, why his writings have captured the minds of the younger generation. Though he has written a handful of books, he has touched upon a variety of subjects from life at call center, secularism, pressure in today's education system, inter – community marriages, corruption and many more. He has a huge fan following.

In *Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT* (2004), Chetan Bhagat focuses on the lives of three friends of IIT Delhi –Hari Kumar (the narrator), Alok Gupta and Ryan Oberoi. The trio suffers ridicule of the teachers as well as the classmates. However, they avow to reform the patriarchal system of education. They dislike the teaching method, which is as old as the college itself. The students are asked to mug the subjects in order to score good grades. Bhagat puts emphasis on the observational teaching. He believes this technique must help the students in getting rid of mugging. It must support them to apprehend the things in a natural way. The observational technique makes the students to observe the things minutely and find out solution in the objects. After all, if they fail to make it out, they are invited to discuss the same with the teachers and other classmates. At last, the student finds answer to his query. Nonetheless, such method is a good for nothing in the big sci-fi institute.

Bhagat grieves for the sterile dogmatism of the education system. He finds the professors bigotry not to allow any prolific change in the system. He is straightforward in his approach to life. He listens to the voice of his soul, which he strongly believes in, is ever true. The man listening to the inner voice may suffer a big loss but finally emerges out victorious. For instance, all three friends suffer ignominy at college campus. All the teachers as well as the students take them for nuts, idiots and losers only because they underperform in the exams and notch five points something. But like others they are not muggers, they are freethinkers, true lovers of life, harbingers of innovative ideas, icons of liberty and precursors of the youth-calling-approach. They never lose confidence, work harder on the lube project and consequently their project is approved and they succeed to achieve big fame and name.

Bhagat just asks the youth to listen to the voice of their heart. A bad thing is to be turned down and a good thing is to be accepted whether it comes from an intellectual or from a layman. Acceptance or rejection depends upon the nature of the thing. It should not concern the nature of the person. That is why Ryan suggests his friends a plan how to keep away from the cynicism of the teachers and enjoy the prime days of the life at the institute. He names the plan C2D i.e. “cooperate to dominate” and all others approve it. Under the plan, each one attends one subject and others repose and rejoice in life.

Bhagat gives more value for life than anything. To him life is for enjoyment not for repression. He feels that since human life is limited, seeking pleasure is not a sin. We can not see this with other writers. They focus the suffering and helplessness of the people. Bhagat manifests the untiring efforts of his characters to come out of the slough of melancholy. He portrays his men and women as the true revelers of the human life. Adversity does not stay with them for long. It does not subdue their will to enjoy life. They very soon emerge out of it and start delighting in the life.

Unlike his predecessors, Bhagat has glorified sex in his works. He uses it to unite two families and two states. He hits on the hypocrisy of the people and turns them towards the Vedic interpretation of this creative energy viz. sex. He succeeds to make the young men and women openly accept it and deal with it as a mutual need for the betterment of the society. In fact, many say, sex is against Indian culture, a bizarre notion for a country where the great sage, Vatsayan was born. It is shameful to ignore it (sex) in the country where the people worship Kamdev, the god of love and sex. The Lord Rama was learnt to take his wife into the exile and madly loiter in her search when she is missed, and the Lord Krishna was supposed to have played Raasaleela with the beautiful young maidens on the banks of the river Yamuna.

Bhagat believes in sanctity of sex, that he validates referring to the Holy Scriptures of Indian culture. He says, “Our ancient texts such as the Upanishads discuss sex in an explicit manner. The Mahabharata refers to Drupadi’s polyandry. The temples in Khujaraho leave little to the imagination”. He seems sad over the man’s attitude changed towards holiness of the creative force of life (sex) during the span. No other writer of the past but Bhagat sanctified sex. They posted it in the harlotry. They watched it in the reluctance of the woman. They found it in the sadism of man. Sometimes, they observed it in the molestation of the children. Bhagat has installed it in the willingness of the woman. He has served it as the unifying force. His men and

women perform it and break virginity knot without social rituals. At last, they either get married or committed to live together.

For the first time in the history of Indian English literature, Chetan Bhagat introduced God as a cozy friend with mobile phone in his second blockbuster novel *One Night @ The Call Centre* (2005). A phone call from God is an additional element in his works. No novelist has presented God using mobile phone to guide his devotees in the crisis. Here God advises his friends-cum-devotees how to come out of the iron web of death. The phone call encourages the survivors to settle account with their boss. They risk their job for the welfare of the thousands of the employees. The boss agree to cancel the pay-offs if Shyam and Vroom resign their jobs. The two friends force the boss to terminate them from their services. Shyam's sacrifice proves him a true team leader, which results in his engagement with Priyanka.

The call from God on Shyam's phone surprises him. Bhagat inputs the spiritual interlude in the novel. He tends to make the people firm and strategic in hard times. Actually, this is the call from the within of everyone. This is the call of their "will to do" or "will to live". Bhagat places the interlude to make each realize their actual purpose in life. He advises the people to attend "the inner call", which is more important than many other calls a person attends in a day. This inner call is the call of vitality –a ruling power of the universe. The divine voice asks the survivors to ponder over two things –one, "Think about what you really want" and two, "what you need to change in your life to get it". Shyam wants to be with Priyanka. He needs to wake up confidence and shake off the armour of defensiveness. The inner call knows Shyam's weak nerve. It proclaims, "Shyam has lost it (self-confidence). He is hundred percent convinced he is good for nothing". Shyam admits, "I want to get my confidence back". The voice finds out the root of Shyam's failing. Actually, it does not lie in him but somewhere else. It is the company. The company affects the character of a person. If a person gets to live with a criticizer, eventually he takes criticism for true. Shyam's boss considers him a loser and he takes it for granted. On the opposite, the boss is loser. The inner call enthuses Shyam, "Don't be scared and you will get it back". Shyam feels warm up with the words of so-called inner call. He decides to teach a lesson to the man, who killed a part of his life and put everyone's job at stake. Now he turns offensive for the sake of his ladylove as well for humanity. Shyam acts upon the call of his inner being and thus becomes the revolutionist. He with the help of his friend Varun blackmails his boss to cancel the layoffs. Besides, he suggests another source to increase the call volume of the company. Eventually, he starts his own website developing company in collaboration with his friend Varun. Thus, he proves his capability and makes himself worthy of his ladylove's ambition. A person, who does not believe in his capability, cannot attain anything in life.

The novel exposes filth of the modeling industry. Esha was assured with a modelling contract if she sleeps with a designer for a night. She offers herself but she could not get the contract. The man turns out an opportunistic as he betrays her telling that she cannot be a model due to short height. He compensates her in-bed-deed by sending her money. She repents the deed and is haunted by a sense of guilt. Whenever the guilty conscience inflicts her, she cuts her skin with sharp blade. She believes she can atone for her guilt by punishing herself. Varun loves Esha but she does not accept his proposal due to guilty conscience. Once he finds her badly cursing herself for the filthy barren deed and consoles her. He offers to accept her for his love-sake that is quite capable to ward off her guilt. Radhika is the best example of a good housewife and deft

customer care representative. She is expert in handling kitchen and managing office promptly. She looks after her old grand mother-in-law. She loves her husband very much and trusts him blindly. When she comes to know that her husband loves some other woman of Delhi, instantly breaks her relation with him and goes to Chandigarh with Esha forever. Other novelists might have discovered the creases within the makeup of the smiling faces. Bhagat has traced the shocking causes of the dried up tears in the glowing eyes of the people of the glamour world.

Bhagat's *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008) consists of a profound story decked with beautiful rhymes. It is an example of an ideal novel, which has ventured to include all the genres of the literature. It is a novel of the dark passion. It records the sexual audacity of the woman protagonist. It unites the three friends to preserve the national talent. This is the first time when an Indian English writer has elevated his characters above the trifles of the society such as casteism, religion and idolatry. The novel in hand mainly focuses on the venture of three friends –Govind, Ishan and Omi. Bhagat has portrayed his characters as decision makers. Other writers of the past have delineated their protagonists subjected to the will of their parents or their boss. Unlike other writers, Bhagat advises the youth not to follow every word of their parents and the boss blindly. Revolutionary spirit of Bhagat thus appears in his comment: "Humanity wouldn't have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time". This is a message to the youth for taking decision personally for their own welfare and for the humanity as well.

Bhagat conveys God resides in the satisfaction after the arduous labour of the day. He (God) is always there with a person in his firm will-to-achieve-it anyhow. He lives in the will of the person directed to serve the humanity for no personal gains. Bhagat does not install God in the temple. He installs Him in the natural instinct of his personnel.

Bhagat keeps humanity far above sectarianism –caste, religion etc. This virtue of Bhagat's outlook distinguishes him from other thinkers of his age as well as of the ancient times. He finds only a human being in the people of all sects and religions. One more thing, which distinguishes him from other writers, is his treatment of love. His men do not chase women. The women are the chasers and the men are the chased in his novels. Bhagat's women take initiative in the courtship.

His novel '**Two States-the story of my marriage**' (2009) deals with the complex human relationships. This novel portrays how the cultural differences can create in the matrimonial alliances, and how hard the couple has to fight against the destiny to be in wed-lock. In this novel we find love mushrooming in an orthodox, conservative society. It talks about two lovers from two different states of India, who have to make an extra effort to turn their dream into reality. Here, we find love shining amidst darkness and despair. Shakespeare once said 'The course of true love never runs smooth' and this is very true in the case of Krish and Ananya. Chetan Bhagat deals with a very serious theme in a lighter vein. This novel definitely gives us cultural shocks. Chetan Bhagat has touched some of the sensitive issues of cultural differences, father-son relationship, and corporate exploitation. He is of the view that love knows no boundaries of caste, creed, religion, states or countries. To some extent, this story seems to be of Chetan Bhagat, but he never claimed it. It's definitely love that triumphs against all odds.

Revolution 2020 (2011) stands for the revolutionary spirit of Chetan Bhagat. Raghav disregards the suggestion of his father to get admission in IIT, even though he was eligible for it. He listens to his heart. He serves the downtrodden of his city by communicating their pains through the media to the responsible authorities. He emerges as a successful journalist. He writes the daily news on the papers and distributes them to the social activists. It was quite a tough job but he does not abandon his service. In the end, the exploiters yield to the revolutionary spirit of the journalist. Gopal, the big exploiter of the students as well as Raghav's arch-enemy surrenders to the latter's vitality. Gopal sacrifices his love, Aarti to the saviour of the poor and wretched. The writers often portray their characters killing each other for woman, property and egoism. They portray their women giving up their mates due to the lack of physical facilities. On the opposite, Bhagat's women get away from their partners due to the lack of time. Aarti of *Revolution 2020* craves to borrow some time of her mate, Raghav but she fails. She feels uncomfortable with the revolutionist. Bhagat is different from other writers to an extent. He reposes humanity in his characters more than any mundane aspiration.

Bhagat has introduced some unique trends in the Indian English literature. He has focused the interest of the youth. He has written about their aspirations and for them. He has attempted to guide their ripe energies into proper direction. This is no surprise if they acclaim him as the youth writer. His novels touch an emotional chord of the younger generation. These display the ambition of the youth, mixed with fears and tinged with tears. His men and women observe morality in the warm heartedness of the human relations. They are epicureans in nature. Therefore, they take life for pleasure. They enjoy even being called five pointers that is sort of insulting. Their concern lies specifically in the innovation of education system and the society as a whole. They believe in success comes to those who crave for practicability not for mugginess in life. Bhagat puts stress on liberty of women. His woman characters believe in 'an absolute, a perfect, a pure and a noble freedom'. Hence, Bhagat has purposefully employed youth calling approach in his novels.

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