

Socio-Social Issues of Multicultural India and Indian Reality in Chetan Bhagat's Novels

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Abstract

A Fusion of Realism in Indian English Literature: A Milestone to the Modern World Indian English Literature is an initiative to highlight the rare gems of Indian writing in English. Indian English has evolved from a fascinating native eruption into a new type of Indian culture and the voice through which India communicates. Indian writers have now resorted to English to demonstrate to the world that they have the ability and intellectual capability to express themselves, and most importantly, they want to reveal India and Indianness as they see it and mark their presence in Western society.

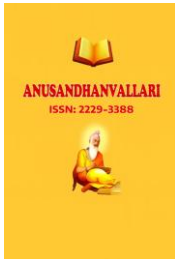
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Literature is fundamentally the product of social forces, and a writer's experiences are consciously or unconsciously incorporated into his or her writing. Even readers empathize with the characters in their writings and seek solace and solutions to their issues through literature. One method for eradicating any societal evil is to raise public awareness through literature and the media. Many Indian English novelists attempt not only to highlight the challenges faced by victims of injustice, but also to propose potential solutions.

The younger generation of authors explores the concept of connection in novel, imaginative, and often startling ways. A significant shift toward localism, observation, and the microcosm of one's own experienced reality, as well as the history of the various environments in which these authors reside. In literary terms, this comeback is related with a shift toward genre fiction and what may be referred to as the tiny form in the modern world of literature.

Chetan Bhagat's novels address a wide range of contemporary social issues. His five novels, *Five Point Someone*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, *Two States*, and *Revolution 2020*, feature adventure, romance, background music, and expert commentary on social, political, and educational systems. It demonstrates his care for women's issues and his societal obligation in resolving one of India's deep-rooted social evils, which dehumanizes women by treating them as interchangeable commodities. This literary style is today acknowledged as one of the most significant developments in novel writing.

In his debut novel *Five Point Someone*, Bhagat depicts students' struggles to get good grades and their subsequent mistakes in reaching their goals. He also reveals the parents' illogical desire for an IIT seat for their children, as well as the negative consequences for their progeny. The second novel, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, examines the struggle of six call centre employees to withstand the tragedy of losing their jobs, as well as their



efforts to keep them. The main reason for the breakup between the two pairs of characters, Shyam and Priyanka and Vroom and Esha, is their disagreements regarding their occupations. *Three Mistakes of My Life* depicts a young man's insatiable desire for cricket and his trouble accepting the agony of failure.

Two States primarily examines the themes of inter-caste marriage and the divide between North and South India, while also reflecting the author's enduring interest in the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT). This fascination is evident in the dialogues and perspectives of various characters throughout the novel. *Revolution 2020* serves as a fitting prequel to *Five Point Someone*, as it narrates a young man's unsuccessful pursuit of admission to an IIT and his determination to create an engineering institution. *Half Girlfriend* illustrates the unwavering resolve of a rural youth from Bihar to master English to the level of a native speaker, demonstrating his commitment to improving the living standards of his underprivileged community, even at the cost of a promising banking career. In *One Indian Girl*, the protagonist Radhika ends her relationships with her boyfriends due to their incompatibility with her professional aspirations and personal life. *The Girl in Room 105* further highlights Chetan Bhagat's preoccupation with IITs, as he integrates elements such as IIT coaching centers and hostels into the narrative, despite the story's primary theme not necessitating such references.

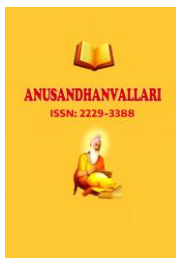
Bhagat's words prove to be absolutely true because the characters of Ryan, Alok, Hari and Prof. Cherian haunt the readers for a longtime and it is a testimony to the kind of success the novel has achieved. "The portrayal of his characters is quite life-like. Without using much of description and largely through dialogues, Bhagat creates some memorable characters. In this respect, Hari, the narrator of the novel, does not leave his own character untouched" (Srivastava 126)

Career is a significant theme in Chetan Bhagat's second novel, *One Night @ the Call Center*. It serves as the primary catalyst for the separation between Shyam and Priyanka, as well as the turmoil experienced by Esha and the discontent of Vroom. The narrative unfolds over the course of a single night. Shyam, Priyanka, Vroom, Radhika, Esha, and Military Uncle are employed at Connexions Call Center in Gurgaon, where they work in Business Process Outsourcing. They travel daily by a Quails vehicle. Their shifts commence at 10:30 PM and continue throughout the night, concluding at 7:00 AM. Shyam acts as the narrator, reflecting on his romantic history and the factors that contributed to his breakup with his fiancée during this pivotal night.

Dhawan says, "The book touches the nerve of India's call center generation and presents a realistic picture of BPO life which is very tough as the employees have to work daily at night shifts with the constant threat of downsizing hanging over their heads like Damocles's sword and the continuous cursing by clients from the USA who hold the Indian responsible for the shortage of jobs in their own country". (36)

The lifestyle of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) employees in call center positions includes a narrative that highlights Bhagat's inclination to address social issues, such as the dowry system. During a date at a restaurant, Priyanka and Shyam encounter a family comprising a young married couple, their twin daughters aged four, and the elderly mother of the young man. The elderly woman persistently criticizes her daughter-in-law for failing to provide an adequate dowry, attributing the family's misfortunes to her actions, which leads the young woman to weep throughout the encounter. "What to do? Since the day this woman came to our house, our family's fortunes have been ruined, the old woman was saying. The Agra girl's side were offering to set up a full clinic. I don't know where our brains were then." (ON@CC 79)

Thus, career plays a major role in affecting the relationship between Shyam and Priyanka and Vroom and Esha. "The theme of this novel involves the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including the elements of career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in a changing India, and the relationship of the youth in the Indian middle class" (Kumar 60)



Chetan Bhagat appears to hold a strong conviction that the most rewarding and prestigious career opportunities in India are accessible primarily to those who graduate from an IIT. While *Two States* predominantly addresses themes of inter-caste marriage and the divide between North and South India, it also highlights the author's affinity for the esteemed IITs. This is evident in the dialogues and perspectives of various characters throughout the novel, presented with a humorous flair. For numerous Indian high school students, securing a place in an IIT represents a cherished aspiration. They perceive admission to an IIT as a transformative opportunity that can significantly enhance their lives. With its exceptional teaching methods and lucrative job placements, the Indian Institute of Technology has established itself as a prestigious institution since its inception in 1951. For many young individuals, being an IIT graduate is a source of immense pride and joy. Nevertheless, certain stereotypes persist regarding IIT graduates, who are often viewed as overly studious and socially withdrawn, with a relentless drive for excellence. They are frequently regarded as intellectuals possessing remarkable and unconventional problem-solving abilities.

It is also believed that in order to achieve IIT, one must stay away from all the worldly pleasures. Even Krish, an IITian by himself also thinks the same way when he looks at Ananya's younger brother who seems to be greatly obsessed with IIT even though he is in class nine. "I saw her brother, around fourteen years of age. The oiled hair, geeky face and spectacles made him look like an IITian embryo. His lack of interest in the world expression told me he would make it." (TS 14)

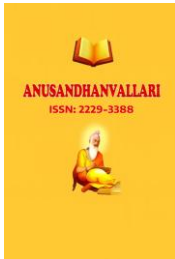
Chetan Bhagat wants to convey the message of the need for national integration i.e. the feeling of oneness, brotherhood and social unity among communities and societies in a country like India. Towards the end of the novel, *Two States* there are many references to national integration either directly or indirectly. The concluding remarks of the emotional speech of Ananya's father reveal the author's mindset too. "Yes, the Tamilian in me is a little disappointed. But the Indian in me is quite happy. And more than anything, the human being in me is happy. After all, we've decided to use this opportunity to create more loved ones for ourselves". (TS 266)

Two States ends on a happy note with Krish and Ananya being blessed with twin boys. When the nurse asks Krish which state the boys belong to since their parents are from two different states, Krish gives the most thought provoking reply which symbolises national integration, "They'll be from a state called India," (TS 269)

Chetan Bhagat has touched some of the sensitive issues of cultural differences. He is of the view that love knows no boundaries whether it be of caste, creed, religion, state or country. ... The customary North Indian - South Indian differentiation is unmistakable all through the novel. Indian culture has more complexities when contrasted with the world around. The perceptions of the marriage of Ananya and Krish are archived in the future. Bhagat presents complex, profoundly established socio-social issues of multicultural India. Through his work, he endeavours to call attention to the deficiencies and allows to redress those in the genuine living. Racial segregation likewise as yet existing in the general public and it is a dreary reality. We are apparently current however internally we are still live in the past stick to conventional framework. (Arunkumar)

Chetan Bhagat uses his refined Post-Modern Literature as an element to bring positive change in India, to make young generation's mind both technically as well as mentally strong. He helps the people dream through his easy words and provides inspiration through witty examples. The novelist wants to be the part and parcel of the never-ever-before kind of historic changes taking place as India is awakening to its full potential. The surmounting pressure to succeed is one of the reasons that is making India a vibrant, fast growing and fast changing economy and society.

Chetan Bhagat's entire writing has emerged up as a potential blockbuster delighting the new generation to find reality in his works thereby developing the mindset of the readers for progressive India, where not only the spirit of patriotism but also the standard of living is high. Contrary, when the elements of Realism are further



groped about in the fictional world of Chetan Bhagat, the decreasing moral consideration in young generation comes to the fore.

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