

A Critical Study of Socio-Economic Pattern in The Novels of Chetan Bhagat

Dr. Vikas Sharma

*Associate Professor,
Dept. of English,
C.C.S. University, Meerut
Email Id: drvikas.27nov@gmail.com*

Sadma

*Research Scholar,
Dept. of English,
C.C.S. University, Meerut*

Abstract

Chetan Bhagat is a follower of the theory of art for the sake of morality. With his novels he wants to make the best ideas prevail in society. With his tools of irony and satire he exposes the evils of capitalism, corruption, traditional pattern of education, poverty, fake secularism, demerits of corrupt democratic system etc. He advocates 'change' in the socio-economic and political system of the country so that India may be one of the advanced countries of the world. He is not really satisfied with the changes that have taken place in the last 72 years. But the citizens of the country ought to go on working with full vigour and zeal for a prosperous future and for this they must have imagination, intelligence, self-confidence, team-spirit and patience in times of natural disasters and other problems. Hope is the best word to illustrate his vision of life.

Key words: *Marxism, screwed up, communism, democratic socialism, Philanthropist, Vindictive.*

Reference to this paper should
be made as follows:

**Dr. Vikas Sharma,
Sadma,**

*A Critical Study of Socio-
Economic Pattern in The
Novels of Chetan Bhagat*

Notions Dec. 2019,
Vol. X, No. 2,
pp.49-59,

Article No.07

Online available at :
[https://anubooks.com/
?page_id=6318](https://anubooks.com/?page_id=6318)

Introduction

As a minute observer of Indian life Chetan Bhagat notices the present degeneration of ethical values in society. He notices that frustration of young men and women has reached its climax because the public sector and the private sector units have failed to create sufficient jobs in the field of production. The truth is that the balance between exports and imports is totally disturbed these days. Every reader reads in the newspapers the tragic event of the fall of G.D.P. at present and government's efforts have failed to revive its growth. Indian economists are equally worried about it and yet find themselves helpless. If this trend continues for some more years, the whole country will be in the crisis.

In spite of economic hardships Chetan Bhagat proposes the economics of hope, vigour, zeal, self-confidence and self-realization. Every country is often in the net of inflation/deflation and the planning commission prepares annual plan carefully to boost the national economy. It is too late to blame demonetization for unemployment. Actually economic scenario became dark after the introduction of liberalization and globalization. M.K. Gandhi always asserted the need of cottage industries so that the rural folk may earn their living in the villages and needn't depend upon urban support. On the contrary Pt. Nehru had seen the heavy industries of western countries and regarded industrialization as the best tool of economic growth of the country. Since he was the Prime Minister of the country, he introduced the concept of heavy industries in public and private sectors. The units of public sector continued to be a burden upon government's treasury for many years and proved to be white elephant. A lot of them have been closed and the people depend upon private sector industries for consumer goods as well as employment opportunities.

Exposition

The working of capitalism has been explained by Chetan Bhagat in *One Indian Girl*. Radhika joins Goldman Sachs (Where the author himself worked after taking M.B.A. degree) and works for removing the distresses, of companies that are losing their reputation in the world market. When the sales of goods go down the directors of the company feel worried. Due to economic losses the prestige of the company is badly affected and the result is that the value of the shares of the company goes down in the market. During such critical economic period the company fails to sell new shares in the market and all plans for expansion of the company fail. Second, the company's top executives start searching jobs in other progressive companies for future. In the absence of senior

and experienced executives, the plans of the company are adversely affected. At such times the distressed company fails to face economic competition in the world market. Then the banks do not encourage such companies due to fear of losing their capital.

In *One Indian Girl* Radhika works for the reestablishment and revival of such sinking companies and analyzes the causes of their economic disaster. Due to her sharp understanding of economic factors that govern the industry, she has her own practical suggestions with which the company can survive in spite of all economic hurdles. Since her suggestions prove fruitful for the sinking companies Goldman Sachs gets huge remuneration and Radhika gets huge amount as bonus. All other officers working as her colleagues feel surprised with her technique of work. All her presentations on such miserable companies are eye openers and hence admirable. She is really practical in her suggestions and does not depend merely on hypothesis. Many American and British distressed companies have already been saved by her so far. While working in the New York office, she can prepare plans for the distressed companies of China and at the same time make proposals for new Real Estate Company to be established in a Chinese town. Most of the work will be planned by her and the same plan can be implemented by Hong King Office of Goldman Sachs.

However, Debu fails to appreciate her plan of Real Estate business as a Chinese Company is actually facing crisis in Shenzhen. Due to her practical approach she does not find any wisdom in running a ruined company further. Debu asks her to pay attention to the workers that work there. But she does not care for the miseries of these would-be-unemployed workers. Radhika tells Debu

‘Is this a Bengali Communism Thing? Bengalis love communism, right?’

‘I don’t know. It just feels wrong. What are you doing to make money?’

‘I am not doing anything wrong. We are doing what is legally possible and trying to generate maximum value.’

‘To make some rich Goldman Sachs partners even richer? What about the workers in the factory?’

‘Debu! Goldman Sachs has not created trouble for the workers. The company management screwed up, borrowed too much money, ran their business badly,

and went bankrupt. Hence the workers suffered. We are simply there to clean up the mess’.

‘Like vultures ... (OIG 93)

It is none of her business to take care of the future of a sinking company. Now Debu expresses his sympathy for Chinese labourers and frankly blames her for their miserable fate. She calls it his ‘Bengali Communism’ as such things are not bothered in present age of cut-throat competition. She is hard-hearted here as she knows how to protect the interests of Goldman Sachs. In the cruel world of expansion of capitalism, many labourers have to struggle hard for existence. At times some of them shift to other companies. Some others remain unemployed for years as they are trained for specific skilled jobs $\frac{3}{4}$ the skills not required in other companies. This idea has been referred in *Five Points Someone* when Prof. Cherian explained the theory of Inden and recommends that the preparing the shirt ought to be divided among five labourers for speedy work. But Ryan turns it down with the assertion that no single labourer will master the skill of making a shirt.

So, the methods of production in corporate world often prove to be harmful for the labourers. The conditions of industries have greatly changed in the last ten years due to computerized machines that need fewer people than before. As all the complicated functions are performed by computers/Robots, the need of labourers has minimized and unemployment is growing in U.S.A., U.K., Japan, Germany, China, India, Indonesia, France, Australia etc. The capitalists borrow money from the banks for instaling new automatic machines and do not want to depend upon manual workers. That way they escape from the threat of labour unions too. Then machines need power and not manual energy. One engineer can handle ten cotton spinning machines at a time. Due to large number of new engineers coming out of engineering colleges every year, it has become possible to hire the new employees on little salary.

This is the reason that in *Five Points Someone* Ryan asserts the need of original ideas and innovative skills. Karl Marx gave the theory of thesis, anti-thesis and then synthesis in 1840. Similarly the new computerized machines are likely to be replaced by Robots and machines controlled by Artificial Intelligence techniques. Then the engineers with innovative skills will survive definitely as the value of new ideas will ever remain fresh. New machines based on new technology will ever be produced in future and there is no need to worry so long as new scientists invent new skills. For this Professors of engineering colleges

have to work hard and emphasize the need of development and research. Chetan Bhagat gave this theory in 2004 and this fact is valid even today.

As a humanist Chetan Bhagat supports the cause of labourers in *One Indian Girl* but fails to follow all the communist theories of Karl Marx, Lenin and Stalin. He knows that capitalists want to pay most minimum wages to the labourers. At the same time the labourers wish to work for minimum hours and yet be paid maximum wages. But the artist asserts the need of learning new technical skills for present and the future industrial structure. A lot of things have already changed in the last few years in the industrial world and nobody can check this trend of change in future. Yet people have got to be ready for this change. For example, Swaminathan, the father of Ananya and Manager of Bank of Baroda, finds a lot of problems in preparing his bank documents according to need of new system. Computers were introduced in Banks and Post Offices more than fifteen years ago. Due to his cooperative nature Krish helps Swaminathan and solves his problems soon. The stage has come when officers and subordinate staff members totally depend upon digital banking. This is the change that Chetan Bhagat asserts in *Five Points Someone, One Indian Girl and 2 States*.

Human beings are the same but their tensions are caused now due to their ignorance of new technical skills. In *One Night @ Call Centres* Vroom and Shyam feel no problem working on the internet and hence there is no tension for them. Boss Bakshi works on the websites and hence remains connected with Latin Boston Head Office. Here Chetan Bhagat, the staunch devotee of God, asserts that the people ought to accept the working of all powerful God. God is the creator of all technology and reveals His secrets through His chosen people. Vroom, Shyam, Driver, Major, Radhika, Esha and Priyanka fails to understand any means to escape from the tragedy and there is no limit to their tension. Car is at the top of a pit 50' deep and death is certain if the car loses its balance. But God appears before them and promises to help them if they pay attention to four virtues $\frac{3}{4}$ imagination, intelligence, self-confidence and patience in times of failure. As they promise to obey His suggestion, they are saved in no time. So, human beings must have positive approach to life and condemn negative approach to life for a prosperous future. All the six decide to change their approach to life for brave new world. Here Chetan Bhagat mixes scientific realism with moral realism.

While working with John Ang, Peter Wu and Neel Gupta in Hong King, she gets the file of a hotel-cum-resort company regarding their heavy losses in

Philippines. Other files of fifty miserable companies are also lying on the table of Radhika. Money of banks was really involved in these companies and the capitalists didn't want to lose their reputation in the stock market. Finally Neel and Radhika decided to visit Philippines so that they may see the original files of this company ³/₄ El Casa Seaplane and Resorts. They realized that cyclone shattered the backbone of this company and if help is not rendered immediately, it may collapse any time. As Palwan is one of the most beautiful islands in the world, Radhika felt excited about this visit. After having long discussions with the administrative officers of the company Radhika understood the fact that cyclone is to be blamed for its misery. Marcos Saleno was very humble and hospitable towards them and Radhika made up her mind about the causes and affects of the whole misery. After she solved this riddle, she got wonderful bonus for this project and there was no limit to her joy. The author ironically says that distress of companies is the source of income for Goldman Sachs.

In *What Young India Wants* and *India Positive* he refers to the serious problem of unemployment and suggests certain practical means to solve it. He asks the young people to ask one question from themselves ³/₄ What can I do for the country? Unfortunately they depend upon the government for the solution of their economic problems. He makes it clear in *India Positive* that one man, one group and even one political party can't solve all socio-economic problems of one arab and thirty-five crore people. So, people have to work and cooperate with each other and depend upon their own resources and can secure bank loans for their projects. He presents the practical aspect of this solution in *The Three Mistakes of My Life* in which Govind Patel plans for establishing a shop for selling sports' goods in Ahmedabad. He asks his friends Omi and Ishan to join him. Soon they establish the sports' shop in the temple complex. Omi's parents hope that he would become a priest of the temple after his father. But he hates this job. Ishan is a good cricketer and enjoys coaching cricket skills to the young boys.

Govind Patel is good in Maths. and hence he starts earning money with tuitions of Maths. As his mother has been abandoned by his father for some other lady, he enjoys full freedom. Yet he feels himself responsible to his mother at every stage and helps her in Khakra business.

After the establishment of the sports' shop all three friends enjoy their work. With the blessings of God they start earning some profits too. Govind is rather in a better position as his mother earns some money from business. His tuition work also proves helpful at this stage. The important aspect of their life is

that they enjoy selling sports' goods and plan for the expansion of their business. As Govind is expert in Maths. he books a shop in the up-coming Mall for the wholesale business of goods. But Nature proves fatal to him and the whole Mall building collapses due to earthquake. Now there is no limit to his agony as he has lost one lac rupees. Dr. Verma and Vidya console him at this critical time as he does not have family responsibilities to share now. Secondly, Vidya tells him that time will heal his wound. The fortunate part is that he was not present in the shop when the building collapsed. This argument of Vidya gives him solace and he starts enjoying his salesmanship again. She writes a few consoling poetic lines to him :

... I cannot fully understand your loss, but I can try.
Sometimes life throws curve balls, and you question
why.
There may be no answers, but I assure you time heats
the wound ... (3ML 112)

As a realist Chetan Bhagat is fully conscious of the fact that losses are a part of business. Things are not always smooth in the life of a business man. As Govind understands this fact, he adjusts himself with the new sad situation. As situations change in the personal life his wholesale dealer Govind Pandit, sells him many items on cheap rates. Then he hires a godown to manage the growing business and helps Ali in his mission. Unfortunately he had to pay a heavy price for enjoying sex with Vidya.

Towards the middle of the novel *Five Points Someone* Chetan Bhagat refers to the downfall of Iraq as American President sends troops to overthrow Sultan Saddam. This is not a mere political affair as the oil tanks of Iraq control the oil price in the world to great extent. With the murder of Sultan Saddam, there was chaos in Iraq and the people of Iraq failed to take revenge from powerful America. Here the author refers to students like Alok and Venket who supports America without any solid reason. As a matter of fact the I.I.T. students expect a lot of scholarships and jobs from U.S. government after taking B. Tech. degree. If America loses the war with Iraq, the results will be bad for American economy. If America faces economic crisis, all scholarships to foreign students will be stopped definitely. As good luck would have it, America won against Iraq and I.I.T. students felt satisfied with the results of war. Many economic factors influence society on a wide scale and Chetan Bhagat observes them with his sharp eyes.

In *Five Points Someone* the artist describes the wide gap between Alok and Ryan. Alok belongs to a very poor family and remains dull and dormant due to his sick father. There is a regular fear of heart attack for his father. His mother is an ordinary Biology teacher and fails to manage the family with her meagre income. His sister is growing young and the bridegroom needs good dowry. Ryan and Hari visit his family in the beginning of the novel and observe the miserable condition of his house. At the same time they find themselves helpless as their pocket money is limited. As Alok talks of his family 'problems; all the time, Venkat loses all sympathy for him. Yet Hari feels sad about the whole family situation of Alok. Ironically Alok continues to enjoy drinking Vodka and smoking cigarettes with Ryan and Hari. How could he join their company for drinks? How he dared to join Hari in latter's adventurous step to climb up the room of Neha just to wish her happy birth day? Why did he make phone call to his sad mother from the office of Prof. Cherian? This foolish step of Alok puts them in a dangerous and pitiable situation. Had Prof. Veera not guided them, they would have wasted one more year with all humiliation in I.I.T. campus. As a matter of fact Alok is not shrewd like Ryan. He can't learn subjects with required speed. Just he depends upon mugging up the new chapters of Mechanical Engineering where innovative thoughts and grasping powers are really required. Every subject has its depth and every engineering student, like students of Business Management, Law, Medicine etc., needs to study the subjects deeply and minutely. Patience and self-confidence are required for higher studies and Alok and Hari lack it. How can ordinary engineering students make their career with studies of three hours a day? Is it not foolish to decide to study for one hour only? After all, parents have sent them to the temple of learning with high expectation and not to drink Vodka and flirt with girls.

How can Ryan be regarded on ideal student hero by other students of engineering college? Why does he advise Hari to have two sips of Vodka before going to face viva-voce before Prof. Cherian? Such steps are intolerable even in ordinary colleges and it shows the mental debauchery of Ryan and Hari. If Prof. Cherian feels disgusted with this scene, he is fully justified. How can he forgive these three students for stealing question paper from his office? Is it not bad precedence for other students? How do they deserve any leniency from DISCO authorities? Had Neha not been involved in this issue by Hari, the decision of DISCO would have been very severe. Poverty of Alok does not allow him to smoke cigarettes and drink Vodka. Poverty does not allow him to join the nasty plan of Ryan to steal question paper. It is really disgusting on their part as they

don't want to obey any rules and regulations of I.I.T. which has produced several successful engineers. How can one agree with Ryan ³/₄ None of the products of I.I.T. is a Nobel Prize winner? Nobody has contributed any new idea for the eradication of poverty from the country. Due to his arguments the gates of I.I.T.s can't be closed forever. Innovative ideas strike a genius like James Watt, Galileo, Benjamin Franklin, Marconi, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Ramanujam, Bertrand Russell, C.V. Raman, A.P.J. Kalam etc. in the twinkling of an eye and then the scientist elaborates his idea, shares with his friends and then confirms the result with experiments in the lab. The new idea comes to one's head all of a sudden without any scheduled date and time.

In one of his essays Francis Bacon asserted that adversity inspires a poor person to discover virtue and prosperous people discover vices. In *Five Points Someone* this saying has been proved wrong as rich Ryan concentrates on new ideas, creativity and research and poor Alok studies traditional subjects in a traditional manner. How disgusting? Chetan Bhagat accepts certain drawbacks in the education system of India as many class students fail to communicate with others in English. Some students are fortunate to be the products of good convent schools as their parents also studied there. In *What Young India Wants* he advocates the necessity of having good communicating skills for success in life. (WYIW 23) Good communication skills are important steps to be taken by all the students. Good atmosphere, qualified teachers, Internet facilities, quiz tests, assignments, seminars, motivational lectures, monthly conferences etc. are essential parts of college education.

Conclusion

The theme of the novel *Revolution 2020* creates a little thrill in the mind of the readers and they hope to get the picture of a new political revolution in 2020 on the pattern of Renaissance Movement, French Revolution, American Declaration of Right, Industrial Revolution etc. But Chetan Bhagat just means socio-economic 'changes' in Indian society with the help of right means and decent education. Here he does not create turmoil in India society with the speeches of great leaders like M.K. Gandhi, Pt. J.L. Nehru, Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya, C.R. Das, Chandra Shekhar, Motilal Nehru etc. No political manifesto is given to the people by political parties as he does not involve any political parties in this process of change. He does not appreciate communal bloodshed as mentioned in the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life*. He condemns the communal approach of Bittoo Mama who distributes Trisuls in the Hindu community in the name of Hindu Chetna. Ultimately communal differences

break out in the whole of Gujrat when Kar Sevaks return to Gujrat from Ayodhya and the Sabarmati Express is attacked by the opponents. A lot of people get killed due to communal prejudices. Many people get injured and the normal peaceful atmosphere of the whole state is disturbed willingly by anti-social elements. Chetan Bhagat does not approve such violent activities in the name of religion and supports the view that all religious people should follow peaceful means to offer prayers to God.

In *Five Points Someone* Alok's mother is going to arrange the marriage of her daughter with a young man and the marriage does not materialize due to shortage of money for dowry. When Ryan comes to know from Alok that would-be-bridgroom is demanding dowry, he does not approve the conception of dowry at all ^¾ How will a person love his wife when he is demanding money in marriage? Secondly, his sister can marry later on when somebody is ready to marry her without dowry. In *One Night @ Call Center* the author refers to the bitter fact that Priyanka is getting married with NRI Ganesh after a month. Her mother is going to apply for a loan for the grandeur of reception to be organized in a five-star hotel. Shyam and Priyanka fail to understand this logic ^¾ Why to borrow money from the bank for marriage dinner and pay off instalments for many years?

In the novel *The Three Mistakes of My Life* Ishan, Omi and Govind take Ali to Australia for one week's extensive training in cricket skills. Here Ali enjoys playing cricket with some super Australian cricketers. Towards the end of training he is asked by the authorities of Australian Cricket Board to fill up two forms ^¾ first he has to become an Australian citizen and secondly, he will play cricket in future on behalf of Australia and not India. But Ali does not accept these two proposals as he is satisfied as a citizen of poor India and does not want to get Australian citizenship for material gains. If God desires him to be a good cricketer, he can play in test matches on behalf of India too. So, Chetan Bhagat advocates Indianness of Ali though he hails from an ordinary Indian family. Yet he loves his nation from the depth of heart. He does not compromise with the authorities of Australian Cricket Board just for financial help.

In *Revolution 2020* poor situations don't shatter the nerves of Raghav though Gopal compromises with the dishonest Shukla ji to establish Ganga Tech. Engineering College, for making his blank money as white money. As a result Raghav is forced to resign his job as a journalist from *Dainik*. But he does not lose his courage and vigour and established a newspaper *Revolution 2020* having

only two pages. He again exposes all the scams in which Shukla ji has manipulated money for personal gains. Now the goons of Shukla ji destroy the newly established office of Raghav. This gives temporary satisfaction to the false ego of Gopal and Shukla ji as they become vindictive towards Raghav. As Gopal wants to satisfy his ego, he visits Raghav's devastated office. But alas! His love for his old friend overpowers him and he starts having sympathy for him. Now he requests the editor of *Dainik* to reappoint Raghav and it is done. Secondly, he feels that Raghav is the right man to win the coming election because he understands the miseries of the poor people. This is conversion in Gopal's character.

Thus, Chetan Bhagat observes the socio-economic conditions of urban and rural India of 21st century. He does not feel satisfied with India as it is and has an inner urge to change it for a better tomorrow. As a supporter of democracy he approves the working of Election Commission that makes the concepts of fair elections possible now. Secondly, he wants the smooth running of Indian Parliament so that bills may be resolved sooner without any unhealthy deadlocks. Thirdly, he supports secularism as communalism has proved to be a devil. Fourthly, he is a great advocate of democratic socialism. Like Gandhi ji, he asserts that good means should be adopted to achieve good ends.

References

- 1 Bhgat, Chetan *The Three Mistakes of My Life* New Delhi : Rupa Publications Pvt, Ltd. 2008.
- 2 Bhgat, Chetan *One Indian Girl* New Delhi : Rupa Publications Pvt, Ltd. 2016.
- 3 Grant, Damian *Realism* London : Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1978.
- 4 www.chetanbhagat.com