

Realism of Contemporary Society: A Mirror to Predominant Practices

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ABSTRACT--Beyond the shadow of the doubt it is well established fact that every society, regardless of the time, has its imperfections. Literature, being mirror to the society, depicts the realism of the society and paints the representation of the events in a matter of fact evading any kind of embellishment or glorification offering commentary of the contemporary society. Where many of the people are least concerned about the prevailing practices, some shoulder the responsibility of looking them straight in the eye and aspire to delineate them in a satirical way. . Chetan Bhagat, a well known author who holds the opinion that the young generation is on the verge of demolition, pens down about the youth, their ambitions and problems, their hardships, the tales of their success and failures, dowry system and generation gap. Youth of today are trapped in shackles of demons i.e. drinking, smoking, pre martial sex and illegal business. The present paper is an honest attempt to highlight **realism** of present-day society through the fictions of Chetan Bhagat.

Key Words--society, realism, social Realism, youth, prevailing practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature that depicts the true picture of the society, that enriches the necessary competences of life, that irrigates the desert of life, a device to project human psyche in realistic way, has been rightly considered “The mirror of Life.” Since time memorial the authors have been depicting the ills, sacraments, traditions and costumes of life through the different genres of literature.

Antole France defines the purpose of literature “The duty of literature is to note what counts and to light up what is suited to the light. If it ceases to choose and to love, it becomes like a woman who gives herself without preference.”

Life, for some, is a bed of roses but the people who don't have even a single straw of happiness in life are not less in number. It is literature that soothes agility of mind that satisfies a person with ideal fulfillment. Life is what literature is all about.

Chetan Bhagat, “The Charles Dickens of India”, a man who is reigning over the hearts of millions, the voice of youth, who pens down the present world atmosphere with great excellence, is an immortal name in contemporary fiction writing. He is acknowledged for his portrayal of reality in contemporary society especially in India. He firmly advocates that the sole purpose of literature is to mirror the society and by means of his literary works he is instigating change in a enormous portion of India, that is, needless to say, comparatively

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more pleasing. His novels revolve round youth and their struggle to achieve the desired name and fame and in this quest they devalue the social values, their culture and sacraments.

Chetan Bhagat carries the opinion that youth of India aspires to possess good luxurious life style, a job with handsome income and romance of their dreams. He says that youth, before anything else, want to quench their own needs and afterwards this only they think of supporting a particular cause. But they don't know that they have to face the hard reality that India still remains unchanged.

Even the present technical era owns the populace who are extremely narrow on the ground of caste and religion, who are lunatic for their communal beliefs. Bygone are the days when telephones and cars were part of luxurious life and were hardly afforded. Though the time has taken new apparel of change, the people have not been intelligent to expand the old mindset.

II. DISCUSSION

Whenever Chetan Bhagat portrays the different colour of human emotions on the canvass of his novels, it comes off with the real picture of contemporary society. He depicted his thoughts in the way which includes numerous subjects be it life life at call centre, corruption, system prevailing in education sector,, inter community marriages and all that can capture the mind of all generation.

In this era of cut-throat competition, nothing is untouched with corruption and so is with education system as well. Chetan Bhagat presents the darker sides of IITians, the hurdles of their life, the pressure of scoring more grades, futile grading system and system of ragging in his first ever novel "Five Point Someone". Through narration of character of Hari Kumar (the storyteller), Alok Gupta and Ryan Oberoi, he focuses on particular system of education where students are instructed to swot up the subjects for the sake of securing more and more grades. The trios are the students of that system where professor don't allow any change in system, but the three are not muggers. In fact they are the harbingers of innovative ideas, precursors of youth calling approach, and icons of liberty. Unlike the other writers, he advises his characters to listen the voice of their heart. He suggests his characters. His novel is a satire on those professors who can't satisfy the queries of star students. As stated by Prof. Dubey the machine can be defined as anything which lessens the efforts of human. In this way, the world is full of machines.

Hearing this a student named Rayan asks: Sir what about a gym machine, like a bench mark or something? That doesn't reduce human efforts. In fact it increases it."

All the three protagonists propagates their voice against archaic education system and starts to shrink their classes as they feel their priorities should be to cultivate the qualities required by corporate. Howsoever a person is expert in bookish knowledge until or unless he doesn't know how to implement that he can't come off with flying colours in life and here all degrees and bookish knowledge ends in smoke. It is defective education system that makes the students overburdened with the pressure of securing high grades and here it plays a great role in killing their instincts of originality.

Rayan speaks about the limitations of IIT in a get together: You know guys, this whole IIT system is sick. Because, tell me how many great engineers and scientist have come out of IIT? I mean that is supposed to be the best college in India, the best technology institute for a country of billions. But has IIT ever invented anything?

Or made any technical contribution to India? Over thirty years of IIT, yet, all it does to train some bring kids to work in multinationals. I mean look at MIT in the USA... What is wrong in the system... This system of relative grading and overburdening the system? I mean it kills the best fun years of yours of your life. But it kills something else. Where is the room for original thoughts? Where is the time for creativity? It is not fair.”

Trios are part of that system where students’ potentials are judged by the grades that they secure. The higher grades, the brighter students they will be considered.

The extreme pressure on the students can be seen when a professor remarked at the end of his class: “Best of luck once again for your stay here. Remember, as your head of the department Prof. Cherian says, the tough workload is by design, to keep you on your toes. And respect the grading system. You get bad grades, and I assure you- you get no job, no school and no future. If you do well, the world is your oyster. So don’t slip, not even once, or there will be no oyster, just slush.”

Through this novel Chetan Bhagat makes a plea to educationalists not to evaluate students’ potentialities by GPAS. GPA, no doubt means a lot but something is there like commitments towards family, friends, internal desires and goals that have to be achieved by utmost efforts. He requests the educators to come out of their cocoon of old-fashioned text books and make themselves competent enough to cope up with queries of intellectual students. Each and every student is conferred with some exclusive qualities. One who is five pointers in the college can reach at the zenith of success. Technical colleges are in great need of developing necessary competences, technical skills and innovations to make them fit to provide the desired success to their stake holders.

How many laws have been made to prohibit the ragging system but in one way or the other it is still in existence as we see in Bhagat’s “Five Point Someone”. Here we find glimpse of ragging when all the three leading role are called by their seniors for the above stated reasons. Their seniors instruct them to “Off with your clothes.” They are least bother about that such an embarrassing incident can create a great psychological effect that can even lead to suicidal attempt.

In India where male domination is acknowledged in all walks of life, where men have the liberty of doing whatever they want to do, where rules and regulations are obligatory only for women, sex is almost a personal property or a fundamental right of men. It is common mentality that woman is only an object which can be used any time in any way to fulfill his desire. Being superior to everything, religion, whether it’s Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity and so on, can’t bear unmarried men and women cohabiting. Only the married couples have the license of performing it. Pre – Marital Sex is “morally wrong” and against “the tenets of every religion.”

Being the contemporary writer, Chetan Bhagat does not hesitate in glorifying the pre marital sex that has become very common observable fact in present society. His characters, whether they are male or female openly agree to take it as a genuine need for the betterment of society. He hits at two-facedness of Indians in his blog. He opines that whenever someone brings up the topic, we try our best either to change the topic or to avoid it. Even we can’t hesitate to hate the above stated person.

He gives the reference of Vedas in this context. Sex has been described in an unambiguous way in Upanishad.

His women are not shilly-shally in breaking the virginity knot without a single straw of consideration of social rites and rituals. Bhagat is of opinion that women are on same level on which men are and have equal right

to demand sex. For him love and sex are inseparable, in fact two facets of single coin, and two sides of a sheet. He introduces sex in almost all his novels in such an effective way that it looks like the need of the story, a very indispensable and unavoidable element. He shows the demand of sex is comparatively more dominant in girls. In “Five Point Someone” Neha, the heroine of the novel celebrates her virginity loss on the day which is a date of her brother’s suicide, when her mother has gone to “that temple by the tracks” (164) to lament for her son and her father “is less than a kilometer away in his office.”(169).

Bhagat narrates the scene of her virginity loss in her house when Hari comes for operation Pendulam as the majors are less than a week away so trio are in quest in finding the keys to questions as early as possible because the sooner they get, the better they can perform. Plans to meet Neha. She gives consent to his proposal “Come exactly at 11:30, I will leave the door open.”

On reaching there he breaks the ice, saying “ So I thought meeting you would be a good luck for the exams and sits by her side.”

The protagonist pushes him back on the bed “ I know what you pine for. My body not me.”(165) and gives him a kiss. He says, “We kissed, and then we kissed again. Then she held my hand and did something that she had never done before; she put it on her breast.” After satisfying herself, Neha very boldly expresses her satisfaction and liking by extending thanks.

Her word “Thanks” indicates how frantic she might have been for it. As a man, thirsty for a long time, feels content when someone quenches his thirst, so is with Neha. She expresses her sincere gratitude towards Hari for gratifying and quenching her long pined thirst. Through the character of Neha of “Five Point Someone” and Vidya of “ Three Mistake of My Life” , he becomes successful in portraying the picture of Indian girls striving to lose their virginity and how so called boys feel guilty of having sex with them.

Annanya of “2 States” does not have any problem in sharing room with Krish and this finally gives ample opportunities to both of them to go for pre marital sex. She initiates by kissing him. After having sex she asks him whether it is his first time or he has already experience it with someone else. According to Bhagat Boring books are responsible for this.

After so many years of Independence, Indians are still bound with the shackles of narrow mindedness as they can’t accept anything crossing the so called boundaries of caste, creed and religion. The burning issue of Inter-Caste or Inter- Communal Marriage is handled effectively in “Two States Story of My Marriage” where parents of Krish and Annanya give more preference to society and rituals. The happiness of their children is secondary for them. This is a story of two youngsters who are in love but they hail to different cultures and this makes their stars against them.

Chetan Bhagat writes: “Love Marriage around the world is simple. Boy loves girl, girl loves boy, and they get married. But in India it’s not that simple. Boy loves girl, girl loves boy. Boy’s family has to love girl and girl’s family has to love boy. Boy’s family has to love girl’s family and girls’ family has to love boy’s family.” (2 States)

It is the country where parents are still having the remote control of their children’s happiness. Krish Malhotra, a Punjabi boy and Annanya Swamiragnathan, Tamilian both meet for the very first time in IIM Ahmadabad mess. In a very short span of time they come closer and make up their mind to live and study

together and go for physical pleasure. They both get a good job and they set their mindset to get married and put their efforts to get their parents' consent. According to Chetan Bhagat "however independent you are, getting married without parents' approval is not good for relationship. No doubt parents' protesting against children marrying outside caste or religion is archaic today, still there are some honour- killing incidents in the recent times." (2 States)

For finding a suitable match requirements vary from person to person, from caste to caste and from religion to religion but what should be given the highest preference are the four criteria stated by Bhagat himself : The match should be of physical symmetry, both should be well educated, the financial situation should be profound and they should be at home in their gender jobs i.e. a boy should know how to meet family expenses and a girl should be proficient enough to keep the family appropriately.

The protagonist Krish put his sincere efforts to change the conservative mentality of his and Annanya's parents who are of opinion that Inter-caste can bring only one thing for them and that is denouncement in society. He helps Annanya's father when he is anxious as he doesn't know how to computerize the ledgers and how to make power point slides. Annanya's mother is blessed with a sweet voice but it is unfortunate enough that she can't get the platform to exhibit her talent. He touches her mother by arranging her performance with big carnatic singers S.P.Balasubramanum and Hariharan Annanya's brother Manjunathan comes off with flying colours in the IIT entrance test by dint of Krish's guidance. All these efforts bring sweet result for him. The compassion of his heart and dexterity of his mind win the heart of Annanya's family. Through the delineation of Krish and Annanya's characters, he presents an example for the youth of India to not to choose the spouse on the conservative and illogical bases. What should be the foundation of happy married life is true love only that can fetch true happiness in life and once it is achieved, caste and religion should be put on back burner. Inter-Caste and Inter- Religion marriage serve as a guiding light for social impartiality.

Dowry system, the very prominent and high flying issue of Indian society, get the exposure in "Two States" when Krish's mother insists him by saying that he should decide to marry a girl since her father owns six petrol pumps to his credit and the family is rich. But here we also get a quick look of changed mentality of youth who are not in favour of either giving or taking dowry. When Annanya goes to witness the marriage ceremony of Krish's cousin, she notices that bride groom is ready to break the knot of marriage on the ground dowry. She shows him the mirror of reality by discussing about the losses he will gain after saying no to bride. It is enough for him to realize his mistake and apologies for above stated reason. When Annanya faces the same situation in her life as on every meeting with Annanya's family, his mother boasts about her culture so called richness and tries to humiliate her parents, she refuses to marry Krish.

The complex relationship of parents and their children is also highlighted by Chetan Bhagat. He paints a picturesque description of present scenario where senile as well as juveniles are too much indulged in their own created world to give their time to their concerned one. Krish has an affair with a professor's daughter and wants his dad to go and set the situation in his favour. But in place of doing something good for him, he accuses his mother and even gives her slap on her face, which he often does with her. This is enough reason for Krish to lose his temper and he involves himself in hot talks with his father.

Krish says "I slapped her once, twice then I rolled my hand into a fist and punched her face. My father went into a state of shock, he couldn't fight back. He didn't expect this; all my childhood I merely suffered his

dominance..... it was reaction to two decade of abuse..... I punched his head until he collapsed on the floor.....My mother sat on the bed, fighting back her emotions. We looked each other. We were a family, but pretty much as screwed up as they come..... I looked at my father and vowed never to speak to him again.” (p.167)

But when Krish arranges a meeting of families in Goa, Krish mother verbally explodes and due to that Krish comes on the verge of losing his ladylove as she can't bear Krish mother's humiliating remark for her parents. Here another side of his father's personality comes in front of the readers. Knowing all this his father goes to Chennai to have a word with Annanya's family and does enough to help his only son for getting his love back.

We are living in that society where all the sectors whether political, social and educational are having the stains of corruption on them. In Revolution 2020, the three pillars of story, Gopal, a middle class boy, dreams of becoming rich Raghav, a boy of well to do family has a dream of bringing change in society and Aarthi who hails to rich and political background wants to prove herself as a air hostess. All the three are the representatives of their categories. This novel shows how corruption is prevalent in the education institution where people are greasing their palm at every nook and corner and how the people with adequate land are eligible to open educational institutes. Chetan Bhagat shows how parents shove the opinions which they feel to be right on their children without considering what children thinks about that and here the parents play a chief role in wasting the valuable time of their children. Raghav father wants him to take admission in IIT but Raghav, in spite of being eligible for IIT, disregards his father as he has keen desire to be journalist and to explore the corruption of the society. He begins with the pamphlet called “Revolution 2020”. A fluorescent pink A-3 sheet with has a masthead like a newspaper. A letter from the editor, headlined “Because enough is enough”

“What do you say about a society whose top leaders are the biggest crooks? What do you do in a system where almost anyone is corrupt? India has suffered enough. From childhood we are told India is a poor country, why? There are countries in the world where an average person makes more than fifty times that an average Indian makes fifty times? Are their people fifty times more capable than us? Does an Indian farmer not work hard? Does an Indian student not study? Do we not want to do well? Why, why are we then doomed to be poor (p: 205)” This has to be checked. “We have to clean the system...It could take Ten years. I call it Revolution 2020, the movement that finally shakes the muck of India...When India will get justice and the guilty will be punished. And it will all begin in Varanasi” (p: 206).

With the aid of this weapon, he starts to create terror in the mind of besmirched people. He dares to bring to light the real face of MLA who swindles money in the name of project. “MLA makes the money by making Holy River filthy! Said the lead line. 25 crores sanctioned for Dimanpura sewage treatment plant. MLA pockets 20 crores... Built at a cost of 25 crores, the plant remained dysfunctional for years. When finally made operational, it never cleaned the water” (p: 234-235).

How politicians use their influence to get consent for the agricultural land into technical colleges, is also well depicted by Chetan Bhagat when protagonist Raghav defaces Shukla ji who wants to use influence and to change farming and undeveloped land into Ganga Technical College. He brings demotion to the name and fame of political leaders with whose support, Gopal establishes the college. This makes him realize that these sort of things don't go and get life time happiness. Gopal makes Raghav realizes that he will be able to perform his task

of making society corruption free if he has some political support with him. Now Raghav joins hand with Aarthi, daughter of politician. Gopal firmly is of opinion that Raghav will be the role model for the future generations.

Here Chetan Bhagat becomes triumphant in conveying the message that how a single individual with strong will power can bring a change into system and can make some difference. To get success, he should be a man of action. Howsoever trials and tribulations come on his path but his success is sure. If all follow fair means, one day we will have a better nation, a nation that is free from corruption, free from bribery and free from frauds

III. CONCLUSION

By the depiction of diverse characters of his narratives, Chetan Bhagat presents the true picture of contemporary society. The problems, aspirations and the compelling issues of youth are raised by him. His works are replica of fictional tales followed by some of the related and flaming concerns of our society. Bhagat enthralls youth to eliminate sterile rigidity of the social system.

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