

A STUDY OF SOCIAL CRITICISM IN THE NOVELS OF CHETAN BHAGAT

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary society, social issues and power dynamics are the primary foci of social critique, a subfield of professional and academic criticism. Numerous disciplines, including sociology, economics, politics, and philosophy, are involved in social criticism's scholarly output. It is also associated with a certain geographical culture. Education, marriage, family, cultural awareness, and other personal and societal concerns are explored in Chetan Bhagat's works. These are the fundamental concerns of any community. These variables that have an effect on society have been discussed in this chapter. Social critique of modern society cannot be imagined apart from education and culture; nonetheless, these two aspects of modern society—education and cultural consciousness—will be addressed independently in the next chapters. Consequently, this chapter's focuses on societal change is warranted, as societal changes both sow the seeds of criticism and provide the groundwork for progress. We are all well-aware that criticism represents society and that change represents nature. A civilization can't come into being without criticism. Critique gives birth to society.

KEYWORDS: Social Criticism, Chetan Bhagat, contemporary society, modern society.

INTRODUCTION

People are said to have attained a more civilized state as a result of their literary and artistic achievements. Their interactions with one another and with society are diverse, as are the manner in which they behave. The changes that have taken place in different parts of the world are also shown by them. Changes in the last several decades have been so quick and enormous that they now affect the public's awareness and understanding to a much larger extent than in the past, when they affected a lesser percentage of the population more subtly. That is why it is critical to have a firm grasp of religion, politics, sociology, economics, and the environment. These situations mirror literature and society as a whole.

Literature makes it easier to analyze a particular period and place's culture since literature portrays all aspects of life, including culture, whether implicitly or overtly, and every individual, family, group, community, state, and country has its own culture. What guys want is a culturally determined component. It promotes emotional and mental health. This could change from one person to another, from one town to another, from one city to another, etc. As it changes to fit the times, precise prediction becomes difficult. Our culture determines not just what we dress and how we talk, but also what we eat, what we play, what we strive for, and the values we hold dear. Society is shaped by culture. According to the Principle of Sociology, it is said. Changes to natural processes are a result of many human activities, including increased education, industrialization, rapid urbanization, and economic development. All of these factors have a role in how our society is evolving and modernizing culturally. The conventional structure and moral level of our society are impacted by these systemic influences. The study focuses on how all of these items are generated and used, as stated in Culture and Society, "a society. Judged in terms of all its making and using" (p.155). It also includes numerous human behaviors and their relationships with the method.

The evolutionary technique, cultural approach, structural approach, Marxist approach, and integrated approach are some of the ways that social growth and changes may be evaluated. Any culture, whether it be ancient or modern, simple or sophisticated, agrarian or industrial, can never remain still. Because we are rational creatures, we have a natural tendency to either accept or reject aspects of other cultures. As a result of a domino effect, societal change in rural areas happens more slowly than in urban centers. In shaping our society, social transformation variables are vital. The most important factors that cause society to evolve include factors like population, modernity, technology, culture, biology, ideology, schooling, and economics. Institutional changes are complicated and brought about by all of these interconnected factors.

A low mortality rate, migration, and reproduction make up demography. Factors such as low levels of education, high rates of child marriage, remarriage after a widow's death, polygamy, the desire to have a son, insufficient access to contraception, etc., contribute to a rapidly expanding population. There are positive and negative impacts of these cultural traits on our society. A growing population necessitates advancements in technology. Poverty, unemployment, child labor, crime, beggary, female-feticide, and an uneven sex ratio are only

a few of the problems that arise with a growing population and lower living conditions. Biological changes play an essential part in the evolution of civilization. A number of problems, such as poverty, food insecurity, and health difficulties, are invited by this rapid increase. Uneven growth is the outcome of these problems.

In opposition to the norms, customs, beliefs, and values of traditional society, modernism sparked a revolutionary movement. Judgment, military, police administration, neo-elite, social mobilization, media exposure, moral slackness, technological and economic progress, a shift in general attitudes, standards, and values, changes in structure and norms, a new nationalist spirit, etc. are all gifts of modernism. Inequality, exploitation, injustice, traditionalism, and the like are all seen as roadblocks to modernism's progress. Modern men are receptive to new experiences at all times, but they can also be rather manipulative and calculated. In every facet of life, modernism has left its mark. From the ground up, modernism has changed the ways of life, customs, and habits of individuals in contemporary society. The books show how these influences cause a shift in norms and structures when seen in this light.

In order to achieve inclusive social growth, the three most important facets of society—family, marriage, and education—operate and react upon each other. All the features that define these groups—individuals, communities, and organizations—and India's larger society operate within an environment that includes all these features, which change internally and as a result of interaction with comparable aspects in other societies. Without a doubt, Indian culture has been profoundly influenced by the freedom struggle, the desire to build a welfare state since independence, the socialist practices within our democracy, and our initial resistance to globalization and the market economy until 1991, after which we took a different tack. As the Indian novel in English has tracked the course of social development in relation to the times, it is anticipated that novels written and published during the age of privatization, globalization, and liberalization would depict the social change of this country. In his stories about a globalized Indian society, Chetan Bhagat explores how themes like education, marriage, and family help readers make sense of the nuanced social and cultural shifts taking place and how these factors impact people's values and perspectives.

Contemporary Education:

The book *Five Point Someone* examines the grading system in higher education through the eyes of three class mates at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi. The story follows them as they face challenges, overcome them, and get ready to live prosperous lives, all while failing to live up to the institution's expectations. The grading system has to be revised since the world has evolved and so have the instructors at the school or institution.

An examination of taunting and bullying is included early in the book. This, along with an inflexible approach to instruction right from the start, is what led Ryan to liken the institution to a jail. This week has flown by, and there are still more classes, assignments, and examinations to come. You mean this whole thing is a life? It seems to me like a jail. Yes, that is hellhole. (Chapters 13–14 of *Five Points Someone*) They are always burdened by the grading system's weight. An excellent character summary of the grading system is Just so you stay on your toes, the heavy workload is intentional. Also, be considerate of the grading method. Your future is bleak—no employment, no school, and a failing grade—I promise you. If you succeed, doors will open for you. So be careful not to slide even once; else, you won't get an oyster, only slush. (*FivePoint Someone*, page eleven)

Since Ryan's argument cuts out the best years of a person's life, it is a devastating indictment on India's current higher education system. Something else is killed by it. Where does one find room to be creative? Where can we find a chance to be creative? Everything is ruined.

Through Ryan, Chetan Bhagat makes the point that the IIT system is everything that it seems to be: a mouse race. The whole four years of school are like a mindless rush through each and every lesson, assignment, and exam. Professors will be scoring your performance every 10 steps in this race. You will fall behind if you are the kind of mouse that stops to chat with other runners, deliberate about your life goals, or hold on to negative experiences.(On page 101 of *Five Point Someone*)

The book mostly dwells on the bad features of the Indian education system, namely how it prioritizes grades, marks, scores, and placement above creativity and innovation. An excellent analysis of "the flaws of the current education system of IIT grade point averages" is provided in the book. They feel parental pressure and the need to follow their dreams (*Friendship and Creativity*, p.2).

Civilizing and elevating human beings within society is the ultimate goal of education. Education, in the view of Prof. Cherian, is paramount, whereas human life is of little value. Consequently, he continues to put pressure on his son Samir to attend an IIT, but Samir is rejected and ultimately takes his own life. At the story's conclusion, Cherian makes an open confession that reveals the thinking of middle-class parents, as mentioned:

My kid must attend IIT, I thought. It was important to me that he continue the distinguished intellectual legacy of my family... However, my inflated sense of self-importance was the real culprit. Even though he detested math, my son aspired to become a lawyer. Like the others in my class, I shoved him. I made his life a living misery when he was first denied admission. I made his life even more miserable when he failed again. On the third attempt, he was unsuccessful. I was the reason he took his own life. Page 262–263. (Five Point Someone”)

Contemporary Marriage

Chetan Bhagat delves into the modern Indian marriage and how it differs greatly from the traditional Indian marriage in many ways. The impact of India's political and economic climate on marriage is a recurring theme in his works. Narrator Hari Kumar, along with classmates Ryon Oberoi and Alok Gupta, face challenges with the marking system at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Five Point Five Someone. But in due time, they adapt, start paying close attention in class, and succeed—or almost succeed—in their endeavors. The faculty at the esteemed university have come to a consensus on the necessity to overhaul the current grading system. Although it plays a supporting role, marriage is essential to the plot. The parents of Ryan Oberoi, Alok, Hari, and Prof. Cherian were all traditionally wed before the story began. The story revolves on the idea of a marriage between Hari and Neha.

Upon meeting, Hari and Neha are instantly smitten. He pays Hari a visit and has sexual relations with her before they are married when she is told her mother is not around. I rolled up close to her and hugged her," Hari says. Almost reflexively, she shifted her gaze to meet mine. We kissed again and again. Her next move, still clutching my hand, was completely out of character: she placed it on her breast. (Page 170 of Five Ppoint Someone). A girl named Neha and her boyfriend have intercourse in her flat before they are married, representing a different generation's viewpoint. A scholar commented on this event, saying, "Bhagat arranges her bed for Hari to accommodate his partner at his professor's home." It is indeed

cause for celebration. Furthermore, he shows that a girl's libido develops at a faster rate than a boy's. Page 23 of *Loss of Virginity* Some have even gone so far as to say that Bhagat's female protagonists are more dynamic and engaging than his male protagonists. Rather than being the product of mad, animalistic desire, this premarital connection is the result of deliberate thought. It embodies the fresh perspectives and carelessness of the younger generation. She finds fulfillment in loving and losing her virginity. In contrast, Hari says, "That was quite... amazing" (*Five Point Someone*, p. 171), displaying a lack of enthusiasm and joy. "Thanks, I liked it too...lying naked with a drunk man in his viva." Neha is considerably quieter now, and she compliments. Page 171 of *Five Point Someone*. It would probably be considered unethical from a conservative point of view. Although the elder generation strongly dislikes this trend, it is popular among the younger generation. Since Bhagat's novels were published, there has been an upsurge in the number of cases of honour killing. (*Loss of Virginity*, p. 24) Some individuals refrain from reading Bhagat's novels. This unsavory turn of events is entirely Bhagat's fault, according to Neha. They think Bhagat writes cheaply popular novels just so they can sell more of them, which is almost true but not quite right because Bhagat isn't entirely to blame for the current trend and the praise.

"I want to introduce Hari to Dad as soon as he obtains a job," Neha says, revealing that she is a beautiful, intelligent young woman who plans to marry Hari. At least Hari would have something going for her, even though Dad would still lose it. At the moment, I'd say he's not doing too well. (P.136, *FivePoint Someone*).But Professor Cherian, her father, despises him.

Contemporary Indian Family

Chetan Bhagat's novels portray modern Indian families. Every one of Bhagat's homes is structurally and functionally different from the average Indian family. The urban households portrayed in his works are shaped and impacted by the sociopolitical-economic realities of modern Indian society. The 2004 film *Five Point Someone* follows the antics of three college students at the famous Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi: Hari, Alok, and Ryan. The book shows how the complex grading system at IIT works and how some students succeed while others fail to understand it. While their families play a supporting role, the story revolves around their individual lives during these setbacks. By glimpsing these families here and there, the reader is able to get a sense of the dynamics within each, how the family is

structured, and whether or not family functions are present. All of these qualities are most prominently displayed by Hari's girlfriend Neha. She is one of the story's four main characters. The four main characters all come from middle-class to upper-class urban families. The narrator, Hari, appears to have the finest relationship with his family. Despite his father's (a Colonel in the Indian Army) obsession with discipline, he shows that he loves his parents.

However, a careful reading of the text reveals that this is not the case, as he does not tell his parents about his failures at IIT nor about his lover. This familial sharing and emotional support is replaced with the emotional support he receives from his friends Alok and Ryan. This also applies to Alok and Ryan. Neha, his girlfriend, provides the most essential and significant amount of emotional support, as is typical for this type of novel. Neha also discusses such facts of her life with her father, which influence their relationship. She narrates to Hari the circumstances surrounding her brother's suicide.

Ryan is financially secure. His parents' business in the foreign country where they reside is successful. Being their only son, he never experienced financial hardship. However, this has a cost. Since his childhood, Ryan has lived in a hostel. Friends have always been his true family. Since he has spent the majority of his life in hostels, he has mastered the art of establishing acquaintances that can serve as a substitute family. This also explains why he is so composed despite his poor academic performance and disciplinary punishment. Ryan's suggestion to boost the efficiency of the carburetor has been authorized as a project towards the completion of his engineering degree. Alok comes from a family in the lower middle class. His father is bedridden. His mother, who is a teacher, ends up spending half her salary on his father's medicine. Alok is acutely aware of his responsibilities to his family. His parents and sister are counting on him to get a well-paying job after IIT, to arrange a dowry for his sister, to provide better medical care for his father, and to provide respite for his mother, who is already getting old.

Alok comes from a family of the lower middle class. His father is confined to bed. His mother, a teacher, spends half of her earnings on her husband's medications. Alok is acutely aware of his responsibilities to his family. His parents and sister are banking upon him who,

they expect, would get a well-paid job after IIT, would arrange dowry for his sister, better medical care for his father and give respite to his mother who has already started getting old.

Neha's father is a professor at IIT Delhi, while her mother is a homemaker. Due to her father's approach to life-preoccupation with academics and adherence to the code of success in terms of pay-package or position-she remains emotionally estranged from him despite never being under duress. He hounded her brother, who desired to become a writer, to the point where he committed suicide. She forms a friendship with Hari and discovers a safe space to express her emotions and sentiments.

Bhagat explores the history of the conventional family structure through Hari, Ryan, Alok, and Neha. All of these individuals have gone to IIT to pursue advanced degrees, yet they do not limit themselves to the current body of academic knowledge. The family provides proper care and meets all of their educational demands. They are more conscious of the need to create a family atmosphere even outside the home. Modern parents, such as the families of Alok and Neha, think that money can help maintain relationships. In contrast, this truth has no bearing on the current family structure, and Bhagat shares the same perspective. Thus, contemporary novelists accurately portray the shifting understanding of family function. It is the changing sociopolitical-economic conditions of modern India that form the psychology of today's youth and provide them with the opportunity to think in a new way. However, family is never the primary subject of Chetan Bhagat's novels, yet its shifting pattern can be observed in all of them. The story explores the higher education grading system. The CGPA system detracts from their study objectives. At the conclusion of the story, the teaching members of this prestigious university realize that this grading system must be altered to keep up with the times.

In the novel, there are four families: Prof. Cherian's, Ryan Oberoi's, Alok Gupta's, and Hari Kumar's. These nucleus families represent the evolving structure of this social institution. Due to their busy lifestyle, Ryan's parents are unable to provide him with affection and attention, which pushes him to seek it elsewhere. This strategy results in a reduction in their emotional attachment, thus they are unable to form emotional bonds with their solitary offspring. This self-centered attitude of his parents has a big influence on his personal life. His parents presented him with a check for Christmas, as did everyone else in Europe. Ryan

wasn't a Christian and didn't care about Christmas, but he loved the cheque and cashed it, gaining a scooter in the process. He has resided in hostels since his youth. Therefore, living in a hostel deprives him of parental affection. Now, he is accustomed to this way of life. Therefore, he rarely recalls them in his daily life and responds to their letters infrequently. The absence of parent-child attachment reveals a particular component of society and reflects the paradigm of westernized society in which everything is based on material considerations. Its impact can be seen in his disclosure of his emotionless view. He says: I don't love my parents... I don't know why. I mean, I went to boarding school when I was six. Of course, like every kid, I hated it and cried when they left me. But then, it was at boarding school that I got everything. I excelled in school, was noticed in sports, learned how to have fun and live well, and met my best friends. So, somewhere down the line, I don't miss them anymore. I just kind of outgrew them. Sure, we meet at vacation time and they send letters, cash, and everything else, but... (Five Point Someone,p.38-39)

Association with his friends fills this parental void and provides him a social and emotional support. He considers his friends to be his family and his closest companions, for me my friends are everything. They are my family. Mom and Dad are nice, but I don't love them the way I love my friends. I mean, I don't love them, but I love my friends. "(Five Point Someone,p.39). Later, after struggling with the public education system, Ryan expresses his profound faith in the newly formed family-like relationship among his buddies, "I will not give up my friends for this system." (Five Point Someone. 101). Clearly, deeper changes are happening in every part of the family's life. This also suggests that the brother, sister, and son's separation from their biological family will change how they see the world and act in it.

Alok hails from a conventional nuclear family as well. His mother, a school teacher, is the only one who supports the entire family financially because his father is sick. Alok believes that the families of his friends are doing better than his own. But he is well mindful of his responsibilities to his family, "You don't realize that I have obligations. I have to work hard to provide for my family. My father's medication is paid for with half of my mother's salary. In the past five years, she has not purchased a new sari for herself. Moreover, my sister must get married. "Everyone is counting on me. And you guys don't understand" (Five Point Someone .66).

IIT Delhi professor Prof. Cherian's wife is a stay-at mom home. He prefers only the ten pointers and favours education above life and family (CGPA). He naturally expects his son to succeed in IIT, so when he falls short of his goals, Cherian causes him to feel stressed out and eventually kills himself. Neha, his daughter, constantly admires her father and blames him for her brother's passing. This tragedy causes Hari to doubt the new system of family values, and he muses, "Cherian must have loved his son very much, despite driving him insane enough to commit himself. Do all parents love their kids?" (Five Point someone, p.242).

Hari, Alok, and Ryan are close friends who share both happy and sad times. They are the perfect family because of their way of life and sense of community. They assist Alok in every way-financially, socially, psychologically, and morally-when he falls from the IIT building, breaks his bone, and needs to be hospitalized. They give Hari all the positive support he needs when he falls in love with Neha. In the age of young people's mobility, joining prestigious educational institutions and later working in remote locations, the narrative aids in creating a new type of familial bond. They are able to create a familial bond and atmosphere even outside of the home in their respective lives thanks to their shared love and care. By putting India's traditional family structure up against globalization and the rise of a commercialized world, this narrative trend shows how young people think today and shows that India's traditional family structure is likely to change.

CONCLUSION

Modern Indian literary giant Chetan Bhagat has long dealt with a wide range of social, cultural, and political topics in his writings. It is clear that Bhagat's stories not only represent modern culture but also provide a way to examine and think about the changing dynamics of consciousness as we consider the potential future applications of these subjects. From a political perspective, Bhagat explores the intricacies of Indian democracy in his writings, drawing attention to topics like electoral politics, corruption, and the difficulties ordinary citizens have while trying to navigate the bureaucratic system. A more open and responsible government is something that readers may work toward in the future by increasing their own political awareness. Intergenerational conflicts, gender dynamics, and the complexities of interpersonal relationships are only a few examples of the wide range of social topics that

appear often throughout Bhagat's work. As a kind of cultural criticism, these stories encourage readers to think critically about accepted standards and conventional wisdom. In the long run, this might lead to a more equitable and welcoming society as people work to overcome deep-seated biases and increase their capacity for empathy. Bhagat adds to the continuing conversation on identity and heritage by delving into cultural themes like as regional inequities, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the effects of globalization. A more complex appreciation of cultural variety and a concerted attempt to maintain cultural authenticity in the face of fast social and economic transformations are part of the path forward.

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