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**REPLICA OF CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SOCIETY IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S TWO
STATES: THE STORY OF MY MARRIAGE AND REVOLUTION 2020: LOVE CORRUPTION
AMBITION**

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ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most read fiction writers of Indian English literature. Though his fictions are romantic in nature, postmodern subjects like youth aspirations, love, sex, marriage, urban middle class sensibilities, and issues related to corruption, politics, education and their impact on the contemporary Indian society are recurrently reflected as thematic concerns in his fictions. So and also he depicted the urban and rural milieu of contemporary Indian society. All of the chief protagonists of his works are sensitive youth and they do not compromise with the prevalent situations of the society. The author has a mastery to convince the reader about the prevalent condition of society so that one can easily reproduce in mind, a clear cut image of contemporary Indian society. The present article is a sincere endeavor to present the detailed literary analysis of the select fictions of Chetan Bhagat keeping in mind how the contemporary Indian society has been replicated in the fictions.

Key Words:

Replica, Contemporary, Indian, Society, Fictions, Chetan Bhagat, Literary, Analysis

Introduction:

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most influential fiction writers of contemporary Indian English literature. He is the best story teller of the time. Bhagat has drawn a very different line to the traditional Indian fiction writing in English. He has produced such fictions as are easily digested by an average reader in a country like India having English as a second or a third language. Because of this, he has, to his credit, a huge class of readership all over India and abroad especially the youth. Millions of copies of his books are sold. It may not be wrong to say that he has nurtured the reading habit among the Indian youth in the era of smart phones and tablet technology. Postmodern subjects like youth aspirations, love, sex, marriage, urban middle class sensibilities, and issues related to corruption, politics, education and their impact on the contemporary Indian society are recurrently reflected thematic concerns in his fictions. In all his fictions, he has mostly depicted the contemporary urban social milieu of Indian society. The so called non-serious fictional works of Chetan Bhagat have stimulated a very serious sense of worry and accountability among the youth of India, towards India and its problems. Though the fictions of Chetan Bhagat are romantic in nature, contemporary Indian society and its major issues are the chief of the concerns of all his fictions. He has focused on the contemporary issues of middle class family in his fictional works. All of the chief protagonists of his works are sensitive youth and they do not compromise with the prevalent situations of society. Most of the characters are like caricatures that represent one or the other vice or virtue of the contemporary Indian society. The author has a mastery to convince the reader about the prevalent condition of society so that one can easily reproduce in mind, a clear cut image of contemporary Indian society. The present article is a sincere endeavor to present the detailed literary analysis of the select fictions of Chetan Bhagat keeping in mind how the contemporary Indian society has been replicated in the fictions.

Depiction of Contemporary Indian Society in 2 States: *The Story of My Marriage*

The novel, *2 States; The Story of My Marriage*, represents the realistic picture of contemporary Indian society. The writer has skillfully portrayed the actual picture of contemporary Indian society by depicting some of the very conspicuous middle class sensibilities of the present time, the multi-cultural conflicts between two different civilizations, and the difficulties of the modern generations while coping with the traditional social set up with the mindset of modern sensibilities and belief

system. The writer has also pointed out some of the corporate and public evils in the present fiction which in sum total echoes the realistic representation of contemporary Indian society.

The picture of the society which is depicted in the present novel, at the very first outlook, clearly focuses on the cultural clashes between the two different cultures; the North Indian culture and the South Indian culture. Both the civilizations have different traditions, customs, social rituals and ways of life. The people living in these two different cultures have unique ways of life and they generally do not accept or respect the other culture and its ways of life. There arises no issue when the two different cultures are not meeting anywhere, but as soon as they come together, it creates many differences, clashes and tension. All the diversities between the two different cultures like food habits, dress senses, language, social customs, ways of life, thinking and behavior patterns have been revealed in the present fiction in a detailed manner. The writer, in the present novel, has focused on some of the cultural clashes and the issues that arise out of it and its effects on the young generation of India. Also, the writer has disclosed some of the social evils of both the cultures. All these make the present fiction a perfect social documentary of contemporary Indian society.

The north Indian Punjabi society depicted in the novel seems to be a more dominating and status conscious society. People, depicted in novel, believe in show-off. The Punjabi people mentioned in present fiction are money minded. For them, money is more important than education, emotions, sentiments or social relations. They, as the novel reflects, hardly take care of others' self-respect. The interpersonal relations depicted in the novel are observed very much disturbed in the North Indian families. The best example is Krish's parents. Krish's father is a retired army man who is dominating and very strict in discipline. He always quarrels with his wife Kavita over small or big issues. Their conjugal life is a great failure. Krish's father mostly keeps himself out of the house. He hardly takes his food at home. The husband and wife live in great tension. They feel more relaxed and comfortable in isolation. Krish has also cut-off all the relations with his father ever since he quarreled and slapped his father on a family issue. Krish's father does not like the presence of Kavita's relatives in his house. He thinks that they always keep poisoning Kavita's ears against him. He openly insults such relatives if they come to his home. The small family of three members cannot live in peace and happiness. This can be considered the actuality of contemporary Indian modern society. One may find thousands of such families in contemporary Indian scenario which live in constant tension of some or the other kind within their families. The writer has rightly reproduced the domestic reality of the present Indian society.

Dowry is one of the constant causes of family and social tension depicted in the novel in the north Indian society. Krish's mother Kavita wants his son to get married in their community just because the bride would bring home a lot of dowry. For her, petrol pumps, cars, jewelry and other things are more important than the education of the bride or the happiness of his son. When Krish and his mother go to Pummy aunty's house with the marriage proposal of Krish and Dolly, she shows-off her six cars. She also talks about the petrol pumps to be distributed between the two daughters after marriage. Pummy aunty offers them imported dry fruits. She shows-off their family being modern also. Here the writer has depicted the reality of the middle class mentality of the people. Kavita is also very possessive of her son. She emotionally blackmails her son every time to convince her son to get married in her community to accomplish her intention of getting a high price of his son in the wedding market. The engagement and marriage ceremony which is depicted in the novel clearly reveal the actuality of the contemporary Indian society. The North Indian society depicted in the present fiction believes in showing off more than what they have. Krish's maternal uncle Rajji mama arranges his daughter Minti's engagement and the marriage ceremony at a five star hotel and for that he takes a loan. The decorations and the food arrangement he chooses is beyond his financial capacity. He also gifts his son-in-law a Hyundai Santro car. He feels proud when people say that, by doing all these, he has taken his family reputation high. In the midst of all, out of misunderstanding, when the in-law family asks for a Hyundai Accent car or the difference in cash, he finds himself in a critical situation. Dowry is still prevalent in the contemporary North Indian society in a different form. People still believes in giving precious gifts to the in-law families on the occasion of marriages or after too. The writer has depicted the dowry as a social evil in the novel in the best possible manner and very clearly exposes it as a great social menace of the contemporary Indian society.

The people in the Punjabi community, depicted in the novel, are very irresponsible in their use of language. They freely use humiliating words and even do not hesitate to pass racial comments in front of the people of other culture or community. They hardly take care of other people's self-respect. They are habituated to frequently use Punjabi usages like 'ji' at the end of every word like 'who knows-ji, Pummy-ji, Aunty-ji, no-ji, nothing-ji etc. Krish's mother Kavita and her relatives represent this reality of the North Indian people. They hardly compromise on their traditions and ways of life. They are very much fond of their food. They pass racial comments on the food and dress sense of other cultures. Even a highly educated character Mr. Anil Mathur, the head of City Bank, is not free from it. He has some cultural biases in his mind for the other culture and its people.

He, having all education and high position in the corporate world, keeps in mind some of the racial and cultural prejudices. Krish's south Indian boss Bala knows that Mr. Mathur gives special privileges to the North Indian people and he has some bias towards the south Indian people. The writer Chetan Bhagat has depicted the contemporary North Indian society with all its exclusive characteristics and social evils prevalent in the present social scenario with the best possible details.

The South Indian Tamil society and people depicted in the novel are comparatively gentle and decent. However, the writer has depicted certain exclusive actualities of the contemporary South Indian society also. The Tamilians, as depicted in the novel, are peace loving people. They do not like to talk needlessly in their own home. They love traditional music. They are also mentioned as very strict to their traditions and rituals. They give more importance to education than to money, but they are also very firm to their south Indian customs and traditions. For example, Ananya's parents like Krish because of his educational qualifications and his intellectual potential, but they are not easily convinced to get their daughter married in another community. They not only want their son-in-law to be educated, but also he should be a Tamil-Brahmin and an Iyer. At the beginning, they hate Krish as their daughter's boyfriend, because they think that such matters spoil their social reputation in their community. Ananya's mother scolds Ananya for kissing her boyfriend Krish in public because she thinks that such gestures are not good for their family reputation.

The south Indian Tamil society and the people depicted in the novel are very attached to their cultural and social traditions. They like to eat the south Indian food like Idli, Dosa, Upma and other recipes made of rice and coconut. They prefer to use banana leaves as dishes to take their meals. They prefer to wear the traditional south Indian clothes. They use their own language in day to day communication; especially they prefer to use Tamil language when the third person is non-Tamil. People use the south Indian accent frequently in their talk, like seri...seri for sorry... sorry, Illa...illa for oh...ho, vokay for OK and others. The Tamil people are depicted much decent in comparison to the Punjabi people. They hardly pass any racial or cultural comments on the other culture. They feel proud of being educated and they cannot bear any mannerless behavior which does not suit educated people. The hollowness of general knowledge irritates them a lot. When Krish and Ananya takes their families to visit Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad, Krish's mother does not know the history of Dandi March by Gandhi, so Ananya's mother immediately commented on the poor general knowledge of Krish's mother. The Tamil people, as depicted in the present novel, are easy to convince compared to the Punjabi people. Krish has to face less difficulty in convincing Ananya's

parents in comparison to his own parents. In spite of good education and all, the Tamil people are depicted in the novel as believers in the traditional Astrology and mesmerism. Ananya's mother calls a priest at home who gives her a pendant that would help Ananya to forget Krish. Along with education and social status, the Tamilians prefer to match horoscope before they finalize their children's marriages. Ananya's parents match horoscope of Harish with Ananya. The horoscopes are matched but Harish refuses to marry Ananya because she has already lost her virginity. In due course of story, Krish and Ananya succeed in convincing their parents for their marriages and finally their marriage is organized as per Tamil traditions. Here in the marriage hall, the relatives of Krish cannot keep themselves away from the cultural differences but everything is managed with mutual understanding.

Along with the cultural clashes and middle class sensibilities of the two different cultures, the writer has represented the issues and sensibilities of the third culture i.e. Modern Young Indian Culture. The food habits, dress sense, language, job selection, way of thinking, and behavior pattern, their moral, social and national value systems are quite dissimilar to that of the old generation. Krish and Ananya represent the modern segment of the contemporary Indian society. The young generation represented in the present fiction is completely away from all the cultural or regional biases. The young generation knows only one state, that is, India. They know only one culture that is Indian culture. Inter-caste marriage to them is neither a big issue nor the pre-marital relationship is a sin for them. They eat what they like, they drink what they like and they wear what they like. Ananya being a Tamil Brahmin by birth prefers to eat chicken, drink liquor and wear shorts. Krish is also a modern type of boy. He is against the kind of dowry prevalent in his community. The modern generation in the contemporary Indian society has its own different problems like studies, job interviews, good placement, good salary and tension free life. The modern generation prefers to live life without any restriction from the outer world. Ananya raises her voice against the bad quality of food served at the hostel mess. She cannot immediately tolerate the arrogance of the so called intellectual professors in her college. She prefers to freely move with her boyfriend, hand in hand in public places. She does not hesitate to smoke or ask for vodka at public places. She cannot understand the prevalent ban on drinking in the state of Gujarat which is the birth place of Gandhi who brought freedom to the country. Krish is also a free-at-will kind of character. The point of interest is that, in spite of all the individual liberty, they want to marry with the consent of their parents. They want their parents' smiling faces while they are getting married. They do not want to elope; rather they prefer to

convince their parents to give their consent for the marriage. They know that their parents are very traditional minded and culture conscious even though they do not go against their parents' wish. Here, the writer has taken a very appropriate chance to depict the inner characteristics of the modern young generation by highlighting the very quality of the young generation for changing the system rather than challenging the system.

The writer has pointed out certain other realities of contemporary Indian society in the present fiction. When Krish reaches Chennai, for the first time, a rickshaw driver tries to charge him with ten times more money as fare than what is due, considering him as a person from the other region. When Krish tries to protest, he calls some other rickshaw drivers and the matter starts crossing the limits. Finally, a Punjabi happens to interfere and settle the issue. The owner of the building in which Krish lives, imposes certain rules on his tenants like they would not eat non-veg, would not drink alcohol, or would not bring girls in his building. The policeman at the sea-beach catches Krish and Ananya kissing, he tries to charge them for making all these gesticulations in front of the police headquarters. He threatens to take them to the police station but the matter is sorted out with fifty rupees. When Krish goes to a government approved wine-shop to buy two bottle of wine, he is refused by the shop-keeper because of his age below twenty five, but the shop-keeper is convinced with ten rupees extra a bottle. Ananya's father is not given promotion due to the dirty office politics. He lives in a state of job-dissatisfaction and mental pressure of over burden of the work in the very last year before his retirement. Krish's father's pension proposal is rejected many times by sending the proposal back giving one or the other reason. Krish's father is struggling to earn money ever since he got retired from his army job. He tries many occupations but he does not become successful in any one. It gives lot of tension and frustration in his life. At the result of it, he cannot live happily with his family members. Krish's boss Bala does not have any extra skills to bring any good business to his bank. He manages to put the blame of financial loss of his bank on Krish through wrong means. Many investors have to suffer great loss due to corporate cunningness. These and other small and big issues depicted in the fiction represent the realistic picture of the contemporary Indian society. The writer Chetan Bhagat, in the present fiction, has portrayed a very realistic picture of the contemporary Indian society which is multi-cultural in nature. He, taking the help of a simple love story of a young boy and a girl of two different states, has critically pointed out some of the very serious issues of the contemporary Indian society in the best possible manner.

Portrayal of Contemporary Indian Society in *Revolution 2020: Love Corruption Ambition*

The portrayal of society depicted in *Revolution 2020* represents very accurate description of the contemporary Indian society as a whole. It is a society in which money is mightier than ethics and values of all kinds. It is a society where might is right. It is a society in which the powerful forces dominate the weaker people. It is a society in which moral values like truth and honesty are taking their last breath. It is a society in which a sort of social and moral disorder is prevalent all around. It is a society in which the survival of the fittest kind of situation has emerged. Creating fictional situations and incidents, the writer has revealed a realistic picture of the contemporary Indian society.

The story of the present novel takes place in the old city of Varanasi which is considered as a holy place for the Hindus for centuries together. The other names of the city are like Kashi or Banaras. It is the place which is taken as the gate way to salvation. Death in Kashi is taken as very much fortunate in Hindu belief system. The river Ganga passes through here, which is again considered the holiest among all the rivers in India. It is a belief in the Hindu religion that bathing in the holy water of the Ganga washes away all one's sins. Hindus all over the country and abroad come here to Varanasi every year with a strong religious conviction. In spite of all the religious and mythological significance of the city of Varanasi, the depiction which is observed in the novel *Revolution 2020* is enough to shock any outsider very badly. The writer seems to have very honestly described the realistic picture of the society. The '**Varanasi Model**' which can be imagined from the present novel, can be applied to every other city of India as more or less the actuality of urban milieu of contemporary India. Like Varanasi, the entire country has rich and prosperous history of human civilization, but the contemporary situation of Indian society hardly promises even a single aspect of it.

The three chief characters represent three different strata of contemporary Indian society. Gopal represents the poor class society, Raghav is from the well to do middle class society and Aarti belongs to the upper class background whose grandfather is the ex-CM of the state and her father is the District Magistrate in the city. Raghav's father is an engineer in GAIL. Gopal's father is a retrenched school teacher due to his failed health. His income is not enough for further treatment. Money is the constant issue in the family of Gopal. They also have family disputes about the inherited land. His father is also tired off the delay in the judiciary system. He wants his son Gopal to

study seriously and be an engineer, so that he can help his family. The hardships of Gopal and his father can be taken as the real representation of the poor class strata of contemporary Indian society. As students, Gopal, Aarti and Raghav study with a mental pressure. They fear of failure. They have parental pressure to score high enough to get admission to a good engineering institute. Gopal's father wants him to be an engineer at any cost. He is ready to use all his savings for that. The writer seems to have represented this very actuality of the contemporary Indian middle class mentality here, and the children have to study hard to reach high parental expectations. Such things lead them to a lot of mental disorder sometimes and the same leads to suicide also.

The writer has also taken the chance to criticise the city of Kota in Rajasthan for its coaching class culture. Kota is famous for various coaching classes that prepare thousands of students every year for entrance exams like AIEEE and IIT-JEE and many others. The chief protagonist Gopal goes to Kota for getting coaching as a repeater for engineering entrance test. The scared sector of education in contemporary India has become a profit earning business. In the name of best coaching and guidance, the middle class parents are exploited with their life long savings. This situation is not only true with the city of Kota but to all the smaller and bigger cities and towns of India. The coaching class culture has taken a complete hold of the education system. It has been a common tendency that, for better studies and higher ranks, coaching is a must. Hundreds of parents do innumerable adjustments in their family budget all over India for the extra coaching of their children. Many teachers are also observed associated with the coaching class culture. They are observed forcing their students to join their coaching classes or they threaten them with their poor results. Here, the author has become a very realist when he depicts this aspect of contemporary Indian society.

The privatization of the education sector has also been given a considerable space in the present fiction. The education sector of contemporary Indian society is in the wrong hands whose only aim is to earn more and more money out of it. The description of the career fair represents the actual picture of what is happening in the society. The people who have nothing to do with the education sector are jumping into the field of education with big investments. The writer has very sarcastically criticised such people in the novel. Those who are involved in sari business, liquor business, as well as the politicians and builders are taking interest in the educational field as they take it as *one time investment-life time profit* business. This reality of contemporary India cannot be denied in the present scenario.

The society represented in the present fiction is shown highly indulged in corruption of all kind. From small vendors to the big business men, from municipality to top ranked officers are depicted as involved in corrupt practices of all kinds. The shopkeepers of cremation material sell ordinary wood as sandalwood after spraying it with synthetic perfume, the ration shop owners do black marketing of all kind, LPG cylinders are sold illegally, and the RT Officers take bribes. All these corrupt practices are exposed by Raghav in his newspaper *Revolution 2020*. Shukla, the chief antagonist character is the sitting MLA of the local constituency. He is neck-deep indulged in corrupt practices of all kinds. He has made cores of rupees in the Ganga Action Plan in the name of cleaning the water of the river Ganga. He invests the wrongly amassed black money in various businesses and earns a lot more. Gopal, the main hero of the novel runs an engineering college which is established with Shukla's black money. Shukla is the silent partner of the college. For establishing the college, Gopal has bribed many officers from Varanasi Nagar Nigam to the AICTE inspection officers for getting approvals of all kinds. The revolutionary voice of truth and honesty is buried by such corrupt people. By presenting Raghav, the writer has pointed out how the corrupt people smother the voice raising against them. The press media which is considered the fourth pillar of Indian democracy is also not free from it. The media leaders maintain good terms with the powerful people. They do not hesitate to take bribes for printing favourable news. The depiction of the corrupt society in the present novel obviously mirrors the perfect picture of the contemporary Indian society. Presently, in India, it may be very hard to find a single government sector which is untouched by the poisonous sting of the evil serpent of corruption.

Gopal, Aarti and Raghav represent the ethos and sentiments of the younger generation of contemporary Indian society. They have high aspirations in life. Gopal wants to be a big man by earning plenty of money. Aarti wants to be an air hostess and travel around the world. Raghav is different from the other two. He dreams of bringing a revolution in the present unhealthy condition of the society. In the blind rush for earning money, Gopal becomes one of the most corrupted persons of the city. He earns a lot of money by compromising with certain values of life. His over ambitious mentality takes him to the height of so called success but he finds himself all alone. Aarti loves Raghav and she likes Gopal. Raghav cannot spare time for her due to his work for the national cause. Aarti grows physical intimacy with Gopal but she still believes that she has not cheated Raghav. The complex thinking and behaviour pattern of the youth of the contemporary India is reflected in the thinking and behaviour pattern of the young characters of the present novel.

Overall, the portrayal of the society, in the present novel, is an authentic description of the actual human society of contemporary India. The writer has very sharply drawn the realistic picture of the present society in the present fiction. All the observations and expressions, throughout the course of the story content, reflect on one or the other aspect of the contemporary Indian social set-up. Almost all the incidents in the novel seem real in the present context. All the characters and incidents represent the balanced typicality of the present Indian society. The contemporary India, depicted in the novel, is not much different from the outside real India. The reader is not confused with a utopian sort of world inside the fiction which can be exaggerated, rather it like a social document of contemporary Indian society.

Conclusion:

The literary creation of Chetan Bhagat has contemporary urban middle class society and its major issues as chief subject matter. He, along with entertaining the wide readership all over India, has uncovered the contemporary urban realities of contemporary society. The study of the common people and their problems has been the prime focus of his literary creations. This hypothesis can clearly be proved right by an intensive reading of the select novels of Bhagat. All in all, one can clearly have an overview of contemporary Indian society reflected in his fictions. One can take Bhagat's own words in support of the arguments that his fictions are a complete replica of contemporary Indian society as follow:

Indian society discriminates between the good English speakers and the not-so-good ones. English is the new caste system, complete with levels of proficiency translating to various levels to elitism. However, because I write in simple English, my books have managed to be a bridge between Indians who speaks English well and Indian who speak little English...My simple stories are set in contemporary India and reflect society as it is today. And that may be one reason why the west is no so interested in me. I write the actual reality of India, versus the exotic India westerners would rather read about. My characters are looking for jobs while falling in love. They are career oriented, ambitious and have modern values...

(Source Courtesy: Bhagat's comments posted on 17/7/2014 @ 12:46 pm on THE WORLD POST (www. Huffingtonpost.com) with the title *I Write About an India That the West is Not Interested*, shared on Facebook on 17 July, 2014@ 10:10 pm by Chetan Bhagat viewed on 18 July, 2014 @ 8:35 am.).

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