



## Chetan Bhagat's Contribution And Position In Contemporary Indian English Literature

Md. Salahuddin

E-mail: aaryvart2013@gmail.com

Received- 23.02.2021, Revised- 27.02.2021, Accepted - 03.03.2021

**Abstract:** *Chetan Bhagat is one of the most read fiction writers in Indian writing in English. He has written six novels and one non-fiction in all. His books have been sold in millions. Postmodern subjects are the major thematic concerns of his fictions like youth aspirations, love, sex, marriage, corruption, politics, education and certain other issues related to urban middle class society. Most of his novels are adapted for various Bollywood movies.*

**Key words-** Postmodern subjects, concerns, youth aspirations.

Chetan Bhagat has written five fictions and one non-fiction. All of them are best sellers. His first book *Five Point Someone* was published in May 2004. Though it is a fiction in genre, he has depicted some of his personal experiences and observations of student life of his IIT days, which gives an autobiographical tone to the novel. The book was accepted and appreciated by people especially, the youth of India. It was adapted for Bollywood movie *3 Idiots* in the year 2009. However, it created many differences between the writer and the producer Raj Kumar Hirani on the issue of giving proper credit to the original writer. It was settled later, on the basis of inspired creativity of the script writer and the producer.

He continued writing and in the following year (2005) his second book *One Night @ a Call Centre* was published. The book has postmodern sensibilities like the plight and poignancy of the young generation of India working at a call center, at the center of the theme. The postmodern sensibilities of the urban milieu are at the central thematic concern in the present fiction. The book was adapted for the Bollywood movie *Hello* in the year 2008, starred by Salman Khan.

In the year 2008, his third book *The Three Mistakes of my life*, was published. The book has youth aspirations, love, career, cricket and politics as the main theme. The book was liked by an enormous community of readers and it established Chetan Bhagat as a rising star in the galaxy of the contemporary Indian writing in English. This book was also adapted for the Bollywood movie *Kai Po Chhe*, in the year 2013.

*Research Scholar- Radha Govind University, Ramgarh, (Jharkhand) India*

Corresponding Author

He wrote „*Two States; The Story of My Marriage*. in 2009 where the contemporary North and South Indian society with their customs and rituals and the un-concernedness of these two separate communities are depicted with an amusing style of storytelling with some autobiographical overtone. The novel was adapted for the Bollywood movie with the same name in the year 2014.

*Revolution 2020*, soon to be adapted for the Bollywood movie is his fifth fiction, is the story of a love triangle published in 2011. He wrote this book keeping Indian politics, corruption and the decomposing Indian education system and the voice of youth at the center of the subject matter.

In the year 2012, *What Young India Wants* was published. It is his first non-fiction book. It is a compilation of his articles and speeches that touches various issues of contemporary India.

As he writes at the beginning of the book, it is not only about the India of present but the India of his dream. (vii) Recently, in October, 2014, he published his latest fiction *Half Girlfriend* which is the story of a rural-boy and an urban-girl. Bhagat, for the first time, tries his pen (rather key-board) to depict the village milieu of the contemporary Indian society. The writer has focused on the issue of the growing craze for English and its effect on the life and career of the rural young generation that cannot speak English fluently. The modern youth aspirations and ambitions are realistically depicted in the fiction. Moreover, the writer has also focused on the compromising attitude of the youth of the modern India in fulfilling their high dreams. The writer, in a few days of the publication of the present book, was trapped in the controversy of plagiarism issue of stealing the plot of a book *Englishia Boli* by a Bihari scholar Dr. Birbal Jha. And also the royal family of the village Dumraon sent him a legal

ASVP PIF-8.005 /ASVS Reg. No. AZM 561/2013-14



notice for spoiling their image by depicting them in a negative manner.

**His Contribution to Indian English Literature-** Chetan Bhagat has written six fictions and one non-fiction in all till date. He has cultivated the genre of realistic popular fiction in contemporary postmodern Indian English Literature. His best contribution to India English literature arguably is that he has inspired the reading habit of the young generation of India. The fear of English as a second language, among the youth, to some extent, disappears after reading his books; such is his simple and lucid style of storytelling. His language is always simple and easy for an average youth of India. Generally, literary texts like the novel etc. are the monopoly of highly literate or intellectual people and an average reader of India dare not even open the pages of some of the so called serious literary texts as they fear of their limitation of understanding the second language. Chetan Bhagat's technique of writing is so reader- friendly that the readers feel more comfortable as the themes of his stories always cover love, politics, corruption, cricket, plight and pathos of the struggling youth, the urban hardship and social virtues and ills. So it arouses and sustains interest of the young reader. The simplicity of presentation has made many people read books written in English. He has touched the middle class social milieu with all the realities of life. The reader is convinced that what is there inside the book is a reflection of the outside world. No heavy philosophy of life, no gravity or complexity, no heavy lexicography, just pure entertainment and that is, in the words of R. J. Rees, one of the chief functions of literature.

**1.2. Exploring Chetan Bhagat's Position in Contemporary Indian English literature-** The position of Chetan Bhagat in Indian English Literature is still a debatable issue. Many critics and advocates of serious literature do not consider him as a serious novelist. By many critics he is placed in the group of popular literature or pulp literature writers whose literature is mostly sold at the railway stations, bus-stops and on streets at cheap rates. Chetan Bhagat is very successful as a writer of realistic fiction in the modern time. He writes for the common community of readers. His characters are from the middle class community of contemporary India. The stories of his fictions are based on the life and issues of the middle class people of contemporary India. Due to that, he is more popular among the readers of middle class population of India. He receives favour from large readership especially from the young readers. Chetan Bhagat himself accepts

many a times that he writes for the purpose of entertainment. Entertainment is always at a top priority in all his fictions. His style of presenting the content is so easy and straightforward that one can hardly find formal linguistic beauty and subtleness of content in any of his fictions. All these indicators can easily lead one to put him in the category of writers of popular or pulp fiction writers in Indian English literature. An understanding of the concept and characteristics of popular literature may definitely help one, for positioning Chetan Bhagat in Modern Indian English Literature.

**Popular Literature Versus Serious Literature-** A Glance At the simplest, what is not serious or artistic literature is all popular literature. However, critics are of the opinion that the word „Popular. here does not necessarily mean opposed to artistic literature or serious literature, rather it synonymously means successful literature, a kind of literature which is widely read for specific purposes. Popular literature does not mean bad literature; rather it is a kind of writing which is written in a lower category of language and other literary elements. Various forms of popular literature include popular fiction or Pulp fiction, action adventures, gothic, fairy tales, dystopia, young adult, autobiography, biography, travelogue and story books. Newspapers, periodicals and magazines, cookery books, books on childcare, literature for children, jokes books, books on motivation, spiritual knowledge books etc. which are read by a vast community of readers, can be considered in the category of popular literature. Engineering and medical books or science and technological books, or books for specific purposes like books on general knowledge, books for the preparation of competitive exams or entrance exams can be added to the list of popular literature in the modern time. The researcher believes that Periodical Essays of Richard Steel and Joseph



Addison can also be taken as a form of popular literature as such literature was widely read and discussed by the middle class people in coffee houses during the time. Victor E. Newburg in his book *Popular Literature: A History and Guide* traces the origin and development of popular literature in English to the beginning of the printing press in the year 1897. Popular literature was specifically printed for the people of the lower class community who could not afford expensive books of serious literature. Also their level of language skill was not much advanced. In the modern time, popular literature is also called paperback literature, or yellow page literature, as it is mostly printed on a low quality paper, or recycled paper. It is also called cheap literature as such literature is sold at a comparatively lower price. The wider readership of such a literature consists of low educated or low community of people. Popular literature is generally read for „Time Pass „purpose, mostly during long travels or in leisure time. Such a literature is generally sold at railway station book-stores, bus-stop book-stores, on the busy streets and highways or by the handcart pullers, peddlers and vendors at the university or college entrance gates, or some specific trade-expos, book fairs or at the corner of shopping malls or online shopping websites in recent times. Even some of the serious literature books are printed in paperback or produced on the pulp papers as cheaper version or say low price version. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica-

**“Popular literature today is produced either to be read by a literate audience or to be enacted on television or in the cinema; it is produced by writers who are members, however lowly, of an elite corps of professional literates. Thus, popular literature no longer springs from the people; it is handed to them. Their role is passive. At the best they are permitted a limited selectivity as consumers.”**

Generally popular literature differs from artistic literature in the sense that it has very short- lived. It can be considered as „Read and Throw. type of literature. To be brief, such a literature is not necessarily for the next generation but for the contemporary generation. The prime objective of such a literature is entertainment. It has not necessarily to do with the artistic way of writing a piece of literature. The language or the diction does not necessarily bear high seriousness. It has very low permanent value. It may attract or appeal to the present generation not necessarily to the generations to come. The nobilities of human life may not be found well expressed in the fictional world of popular literature. Popular fictions mostly aim at the middle class community as readers, so the characterization and thematic concerns are always associated

with the lower community of society. The prime objectives of popular literature writers are entertainment, grabbing public attention, or earning money. On the contrary, artistic literature is an everlasting sort of literature. In his article on the official website of The London School of Journalism, John Oldcastle (October 2000) has pointed out some of the basic characteristics of literary writing like artistic merits, creative genius, didactic purpose, creative and artistic intent, profundity of language and arty rhetoric and prosody, creative imagination, nobility of theme like life, love, war or death, and description of life as a whole expressing nobilities of mankind. One has to be very aware of the fact that the above exclusive characteristics of serious literature are not necessarily strictly followed in Popular Literature.

#### **The Editors of Encyclopaedia**

**Britannica write-** Popular literature includes those writings intended for the masses and those that find favour with large audiences. It can be distinguished from artistic literature in that it is designed primarily to entertain. Popular literature, unlike high literature, generally does not seek a high degree of formal beauty or subtlety and is not intended to endure. The growth of popular literature has paralleled the spread of literacy through education and has been facilitated by technical developments in printing. With the Industrial Revolution, works of literature which were previously produced for consumption by small, well-educated elites became accessible to large sections and even majorities of the members of a population. The boundary between artistic and popular literature is musky, with traffic between the two categories according to current public preference and later critical evaluation. While he was alive, Shakespeare could be thought of as a writer of popular literature, but he is now regarded as a creator of artistic literature.



**Conclusion-** Chetan Bhagat at a very young age has established his literary genius wonderfully. He has produced considerable literary output till his forties. He is, to some extent, successful in his aim of spreading awareness among the people, especially the youth of India, to see from close quarters what is happening in the country and how they can do their bit for the solution. He comes from an urban middle class background, so the issues of the urban middle class localities have been effectively represented in his fictions. The picture of contemporary India, with vividness of the problems it faces, is clearly reflected in his books. He has initiated a different line of writing fiction in Indian English literature through his unique sense of creativity and calibre. Criticism and controversy chase him like a cat behind a rat but he enjoys it fully and he, many a time, accepts that he is now used to such things. He is also very active on social-sites like Facebook and Twitter. He keeps on expressing his sentiments and points of views from time to time and millions of his followers like and comment on them. All these and others, give him a lot of intimacy and closeness with his wider community of readers. He keeps on trying out various platforms of entertainments like the reality T.V shows and advertisements that helps him earn both money and fame. To sum up, he is presently enjoying his heyday of success and popularity as a young writer in Indian English literature.

#### REFERENCES

1. Behera, Smruti, Ranjan. The Literary Style of Mulk Raj Anand in Indian Writing in English. Vol. III. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999. Print.
2. Bhagat, Chetan. What Young India Wants. New Delhi: Rupa Publication India Pvt. Ltd., 2009. Print.
3. Dhawan, Rajinder Kumar. The Fictional World of Arun Joshi. New Delhi: Classical Publishing Company, 1986. Print.
4. Forster, E. M. Aspects of Novel. London: Edward Arnold Publisher, 1927. Print.
5. Iyengar, Srinivas. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling Publication and private limited, 1985. Print.
6. Khatri, C. L. Bhabani Bhattacharya.s He Who Rides A Tiger: A Socio-Economic Perspective In Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2000. Print.
7. Melwani, Das, Murl. Themes in Indo-Anglian Literature. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1977. Print.
8. Naik, M. K. Dimensions of Indian English Literature. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1985. Print.
9. Rao, K. R. The Fiction of Raja Rao. Aurangabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1980. Print.
10. Singh, K. K. Studies in Modern Indian English Novels. Jaipur: Adi Publication. 2011. Print.
11. William, Walsh. R. K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation. New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1993. Print.

\*\*\*\*\*