

**YOUTH IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S *REVOLUTION 2020* AND  
*HALF GIRLFRIEND***

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Indian Writing in English has come a long way from its beginning of the days of the British Raj to the present day. Though the Indian writings in English have appeared in four major forms – Poetry, Drama, Prose and Fiction, and Criticism – it is the Indian English novel that gained momentum in the world literature. It is primarily a phenomenon that arose as a consequence of the colonial encounter in India. The pre-independence novels are generally monochromatic dealing with the movement against political subjugation or economic exploitation. But during post-independence period, novelists opened new horizons by adopting new themes and techniques in their writings. Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, popularly known as ‘the Big three’, an epithet coined by William Walsh, are the most significant writers who laid the foundation and solidly contributed to the growth of Indian English novel. Later writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, and others appeared on the literary scene and brought so many changes by discussing various literal and social aspects through their works.

Chetan Bhagat, like other novelists, depicts the real-life pictures in his novels. He has won much acclaim among the Indian youth as he writes about the youth and specifically for the youth. He opines that youth is the real instrument to change the future of our country. His writings explore the emergence of new India from the cross currents of globalization and westernization. His novels deal with the dreams and aspirations of the Indian youth and their struggles in the era of globalization. They see echoes of their lives in his stories of campus life, call centers, communal violence, marriage, and love. They are a perfect mouthpiece for Indian youth. As a result, he is considered as a youth icon and a torch bearer for an unafraid generation.

Born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1974 in Delhi to a Punjabi family, Chetan Bhagat is a novelist, columnist, and speaker. He studied in reputed engineering colleges like Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, and Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmadabad. He fell in love with his IIM Ahmadabad classmate Anusha and eventually married her. Today, He is the author

of six bestselling novels such as *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution2020* (2011), and *Half Girlfriend* (2014). Besides these, he has also written a collection of essays entitled *What Young India Wants* (2012). Out of six novels, four have inspired the Bollywood directors to make films. *The New York Times* cited him as “the biggest selling English language novelist in India’s history,”<sup>1</sup> and *Time* magazine named him as “one of the 100 most influential people in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

*Five Point Someone: What Not to do at IIT*, Chetan Bhagat’s debut novel deals with dilemma of today’s engineering students in India who get into the country’s top university like IIT. The novel is a clarion call to many young students who simply mug up the answers, with a view to scoring top marks in the examination, and win the degrees without having any intention to learn something new and show their ability and creativity. *One Night @ the Call Center* is about six young people who work at a call center and also about their dreams, hallucinations, and nightmares. Its main plot involves “the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, questions about their career, marriage, family conflicts, the lack of financial growth for right people, and the relationship of the young Indian middle class to client whom they serve in the USA.”<sup>3</sup> *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, told through the eyes of the protagonist, is a story of Indian young generation of this modern world who face unexpected love, thwarted ambitions, absence of family affection, pressures of a patriarchal set up, and the work environment of a globalized office. *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* is the story of a young man and lady from two different states of India who fall in love with each other and decide to get married. The novel examines various social issues pertaining to young generation ranging from love marriage, generation gap, and dowry. Not only he discusses the social values, but also tries to offer a solution to those problems.

*Revolution 2020* concerns itself with corruption and a journey to self-discovery. It addresses the issue of how private institutions exploit the young aspiring engineering students in the name of coaching. It examines how the parents in the present generation send their wards to coaching centers thinking that their children must crack engineering and other professional tests like IIT JEE, AIEEE and change their fortune. The novel also focusses on the stark realities of the coaching centers which stand on scams, corruption, and other kinds of criminal activities.

The novel is about three young minds, their aspirations and dreams. They try to achieve success and fulfil what they dream in their lives. Gopal is the narrator and the son of a poor school teacher while Raghav is a brilliant student who hails from a well-to-do family. Gopal wants to become rich in his life whereas Raghav wants to become a journalist and bring a reformation in the society. Aarti comes from a rich and political family. She would like to become an airhostess in her life. All the three characters grow up together with their own dreams and problems. They struggle and fulfil their ambitions.

Gopal represents the modern youth who become a scapegoat in fulfilling the dreams of their parents. He is raised by his father as he has lost his mother at an early age. Though he is an average student since his schooldays, he appears for JEE and AIEEE exams. When he fails in

the exams, his father compels and admits him in a coaching center in Kota, the so-called capital of coaching classes. In order to pay the fee, his father spends all his savings and raises many loans. Gopal fails in his second attempt as his concentration is distracted by the love between Aarti and Raghav. He in his vengeful quest to show Aarti that he is better than Raghav chooses corruption as an aid to become a successful person. With the help of MLA Shukla he starts Ganga Tech, an engineering college on his father's disputed land. With a view to building new college he bribes the corrupt politicians, bureaucrats, and regulators, during various stages of planning and construction of the college.

Meanwhile, Raghav, finishes his engineering studies and becomes a reporter in Dainik, a reputed Hindi newspaper. He publishes an article regarding Gopal's college on the day of its inauguration in which he accuses Shukla of corruption. Shukla becomes enrage, uses his political power and influences the Editor of that paper to sack Raghav. Immediately he starts his own newsletter with a title Revolution 2020. He publishes an article exposing Shukla's scam in purifying the sacred River Ganga. He even proves with proper evidences that Shukla is a corrupt politician. As a result, Shukla is forced to resign.

Raghav continues his quest to expose corrupt leaders who are the root causes for India's poor economic background. In the process, Gopal and Raghav become rivals as Gopal is doing the exact opposite of what Raghav sees is ideal. But Raghav retains the uncrunching spirit, sustains his strong determination, and tries to bring revolution. The spirit of Raghav brings a transformation in Gopal who decides to change himself and help his friend anonymously. Gopal sacrifices his love for the sake of Raghav. He, with his power, influences the Editor to hire Raghav again. Due to his rejoining in the newspaper, Raghav's financial conditions too improve. Then Raghav starts working on his articles and marries Aarti, the daughter of the District Magistrate and the grand-daughter of former Chief Minister. He contests in the elections with a great expectation to become MLA and dreams of bringing change in the society. He fights for the rights of the people, fights against the corrupt system.

Thus, through these two characters, Chetan Bhagat tries to convey a message as he feels that the present youth are chasing unwarranted goals without much thought. He opines that if India has to change the youth should develop enough courage and take initiative to uproot corruption from the society. He strongly believes that the revolution has begun and the youth must not extinguish the fire and contribute their bit to the great revolution. Gopals have done their part and Raghavs have started the march and it is the turn of the present youth to extend their support and be the architects of new India.

*Half Girlfriend* is a novel that may be ascribed to the young generation in general and the Delhi connect in particular. It appeals to the Indian metropolitan crowd and the stereotypes of Delhi women and Bihari men. The story line beautifully highlights some of the social problems like the class disparity of Indian society, regional differences, false pride of high society, and a corrupt politician. Through this novel, Chetan Bhagat wants to prove the point that a country bumpkin from the worst state in India can end up with a very rich, very beautiful, very 'modern' girl from the most sophisticated college in Delhi.

It is the story of two teenagers with different lifestyle. Madhav Jha is a Bihari boy while Riya Somani is a Delhi girl. Madhav belongs to middle class family and Riya is from higher class. Both of them are good basketball players. They meet in a basketball court at St. Stephen's college during selections. Soon, they become close friends due to their association with basketball. Madhav falls in love with Riya and proposes her. But she rejects him as she thinks that they are just friends. Then one day, she comes out with a unique idea by asking him to be his half-girlfriend. Desperate to get physical with Riya, he demands to get physical with her. Offended by his obscene ultimatum, she parts company with him and warns him not to talk to her any more. Madhav feels unbearable to live in Delhi without her. He leaves for his hometown and helps his mother in running the school. Seeing the improper condition of the school, he makes it a point to meet Ojha, the local MLA, for financial support. When he doesn't encourage he departs in utter disillusionment. But an opportunity comes when Ojha informs him of Bill Gates' visit to some schools in Bihar. Madhav thinks of meeting Gates and convince him in giving funds for the development of the school. In order to do so he has to prepare a speech, preferably in English. In the course of his struggle, Madhav meets Riya, a divorcee now. He becomes successful in fund raising with the help of Riya. After the speech, Riya once again leaves him, leaving a letter for him which says that she is suffering lung cancer. He goes to New York in search of her and finds her in a bar working as a singer. In the end, they marry and run the school successfully.

Like the protagonists in some of his novels, Madhav, in *Half Girlfriend* suffers from a lack of self-esteem. He hails from Bihar, the impoverished and the most reviled of Indian states. Bihari boys are closet chauvinists who freak out when denied sex, and hurl choice, crass abuse in Bhojpuri. Madhav's lack of fluency in English prevents him from lending in with the crowd in a cosmopolitan New Delhi, where he falls in love with a city-bred Delhi girls who are all beautiful, fair and wear modern clothes. Through this character, Bhagat manages to convey to the young Indians how they may fail to speak with others and also fail to get the things done if their language and powers of expressions are not good.

Riya, another most important character in the novel, is an embodiment of independent new woman. She comes from an aristocratic family and wants to become a bar singer. She behaves like a good Indian woman by rejecting the proposal made by Madhav. She is a basketball player and takes firm decisions in her life. She never depends on and takes the help of her family in achieving what she wants. She marries her childhood friend Rohan and settles in London. When differences arise between them, she gives divorce and returns to India and helps Madhav in preparing a speech which Madhav wants to speak to Bill Gates to seek funds to run his school. But in the end, she once again leaves Madhav only to fulfil her dream of becoming a singer. She goes to New York and joins as a singer in a bar. Throughout the novel she tries to establish her identity, fights against the patriarchal society, and emerges as a modern woman.

To conclude, one may say that Chetan Bhagat focussed the interests of Indian youth in all his novels. Through his writings he just asks the youth to listen to the voice of their heart. He even conveys a message to the youth that a bad thing is to be turned down and a good thing is to

be accepted whether it comes from an intellectual or from a layman. He, in his novels, has written about their aspiration and attempted to guide them into proper direction. His novels portray “the ambitions of youth mixed with fears and tinged with tears.”<sup>4</sup> His characters believe in the dictum that success comes to those who crave for practicability but not for mugginess in life. His female characters emerge as a new women and lay stress on the liberty in their lives. They believe in “an absolute, a perfect, a pure and a noble freedom.”<sup>5</sup> Hence, it is no exaggeration to call him as a youth icon than as an author.

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