



A Reflection of Inner Indentation in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

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Abstract

Literature works like an E.C.G. and every ionization and deionization of waves depict the heartbeat of contemporary society. It's a transparent medium for every culture and plays a major role in depicting the depth of human psyche, which sometime is reflected in writer's impartial effort in a work or other time is portrayed in the glimpses of own self that comes spontaneously in his masterpiece. A literary masterpiece is considered as perfect amalgamation of the waves that passes through human head and heart. And when emotions are overpowered, a writer's self dominates in his work. As Ronald Barthes refers in his essay, "The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of author." (The Death of the Author, p. 148). Chetan Bhagat is a penned down novelist, columnist, script writer and motivational speaker of great success. This youth icon is openly admitting his works with an inherent touch of his self. His Five Point Someone (2004), One Night @ The Call Center (2005), Three mistakes of my life (2005), Two states: The story of my marriage (2009), Revolution 2020 are the perfect examples of it.

Keywords: Autobiographical, tribulations, intermingled, acknowledgements, reconciliation.

Introduction

The below lines of Alexander Pope show that study of man's nature is the most complex phenomenon of this universe. **Know then thyself, presume not God to scan / the proper study of mankind is man (Essay on Man, p. 201)** It is the reason that man has always been the center of art and literature. Explicitly or implicitly, literature of all the times has been a comment on the life and nature of man. Whole period of civilization and art appear to be entirely integrated into some basic concepts of man which may have changed from time to time, according to the change in social environment and the drastic changes in cultural values. But after that man has always been the main interest of writers of all times of history. Writers of every era described its self provocatively in their work of art and literature. When a writer comes alive in his work, autobiographical elements prevail in his masterpiece. The word autobiographical is divided into three fragments Auto+bio+graphical. Auto means what comes automatically; without any effort, bio means related to biological existence of a man and graphically means presented clearly like a graph. The simple and combined meaning of autobiographical is, the elements which are related to writer's personal life and shows its existence automatically in a work and are deeply rooted in his work. Longfellow is quite well when he defines that autobiographical elements are "a product of firsthand experience" (*Truman's Specific Series*, p. 633).

Autobiographical elements are not like the new milk teeth of a baby but they are having long historical background. From Anglo Saxon to the contemporary one there always has been a trend of autobiographical elements. Writers are of the same blood and flash as are of common human being. So how can they always stand impartial? Even the great father of English, Chaucer was not untouched by this trend. He also depicted his own self in the story



of Melibeus in his book *The Canterbury Tales*. From Chaucerian age (late 14th Century) to the age of Dryden, from the age of pope to the Romantic period and from the Victorian age to the modern age, the clouds of autobiographical elements were prevailed everywhere. Though it's a fact, in some ages there was heavy rain and in other only drizzle was caught yet its presence can be noticed in every age. *David Copperfield*, the best ink of Charles Dickens is also loaded with same elements. Its Dickens's veiled autobiography. "The pen which wrote David Copperfield", says Hugh Walker "was often dipped in his own blood." (*A History of English Literature*, p. 209). David Copperfield and his experiences are the experiences of Dickens himself through all the trials and tribulations of his conquered life. One other novelist is worthy to mention here, D.H. Lawrence – a diamond from mining areas. *Sons and Lovers* is bearing many characters, places and incidents from his personal life. Paul Morel becomes spokesperson of Lawrence when he shows the portrait sheet of relationship between mother and son. A quote is sufficient here, "She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. She wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her (*Sons and Lovers*, p. 420).

Virginia Woolf, a psychoanalyst and a path breaking novelist presented herself in her non fictional book *A Room of one's own*. So, it's a long track of presenting his own self through literary works. Chetan bhagat, a land mark in the contemporary Indian scene, a living legend of today has also adopted this technique and mingled himself with his characters to provide them a touch of life.

The face is surprisingly unlined and the eyes are piercing- observing the world and storing away silent notes from it. This is the first impression of Chetan bhagat. Although he has not declared himself like Amrita Pritam - "I am the blood sister of wind, water and wine" (*Amrita Pritam -A Living Legend*, p. 5). He presented the wind and wine of contemporary society with his own salted water. According to him, novels are entertainment tools through which he expresses his views and opinions about society and the youth. Bhagat feels his best stories are, "those drawn from his own life and experiences." (*Hindustan Times*). This middle class, ordinary person started his journey from Delhi and proceed to catch his flight to IIT and became the best outgoing student of IIM Ahmadabad. Though he went to Hong Kong along with his family and worked as an investment banker with Goldman Sachs for eleven years yet his heart was beating in India. A Golden Pen was waiting for him. He came back, started writing and penned down five outstanding novels of current themes.

Inner Indentation in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

Chetan Bhagat's first novel *Five Point Someone* (2004) hit the market with great success. This very first venture took him to the peaks of fame and Popularity. The book depicts the story of three IITians who consider themselves to be below average than all the other students in IIT. This book at first hand won the society young Achiever's Award and Publisher's Recognition Award. The story was adopted by Rajkumar Hirani and he directed the movie *Three Idiots*. Chetan Bhagat was short listed into world's 100 most Influential people for the year 2010 by The Times magazine. The complete Title of the book "*Five Point Someone- what not to do at IIT*", itself shows that it's a story focused on IIT, the very soft corner of writer himself. The author himself is a victim of IIT and he has watched it with all pros and cons. So, the factual description is from his personal experiences.

The book is set in Delhi and does take into account the happening places of the city and even talks about the entry of CNN via the much-famed Iraq war. The inclusion of these real-life events and hanging joints gives are authentic appeal to the novel. It's a first-person narration of Hari, to tell the story of three boys dashing Ryan Oberoi, geeky Alok Gupta and



nervous Hari Kumar who are from different backgrounds. The story begins with the entry of these three boys in one of the most prestigious institutes of India, IIT Delhi. However, the very first night turns out to be a nightmare, as they are subjected to humiliating ragging by some pervert seniors but the incident brings out the good human in Ryan and he slaps the seniors to protect Alok and Hari from being subjected to gross abuse. The first night incident ensures that the three boys became Chaddi-buddies for the rest of their life. The three boys were brilliant students in their schools and worked hard to gain entry into IIT, but indifferent attitude of professors, severe load of assignments and mindless cramming, with plain emphasis to get good grades play havoc with their nerves and before they could even realize it, they are declared as under-performers- “*the five pointers*”. They are counted in backbenchers and be evaporated into oblivion. How do these boys survive the onslaught of nutty professors, dissuade the charm of vodka, grass and girls and whether they would indeed be able to grab a job- the sole criteria of a successful IITian is wonderfully narrated in this marvelous piece of art. It seems as if writer is living his IITian life with all these characters. Ryan is somewhat an example of Bhagat’s own thinking when he says- “let us draw a line. We can study two-three hours a day, but do other stuff, say sports, have you guys ever played squash? or taken part in events- debates, scrabble and stuff, an odd movie or something sometimes” (*Five Point Some One*, p. 40). In real life, in an interview Bhagat also claimed the same- “it’s ok, bunk a few classes, scoring low in couple of papers, goof up a few interviews, take leave from work, enjoy with your friends, fall in love, little fights with your loved ones. We are people, not programmed devices” (*Chetan Bhagat Symbiosis*).

Chetan Bhagat’s next novel *One Night @ The Call Center* (2005) is a strange story where writer himself met a young girl on an overnight train journey. It was a long and boring journey so to pass the time that girl offered to tell him a story. But she put a condition that he must take it into his second book. Chetan hesitated and asked her to tell content of the story. The girl said that the story was about six people working in a call center and living in different complicated situations. Suddenly one night, they got a phone call from God. But writer is not agreeing with this conception of a call from God. He wants something realistic and so they decided to show the situation with an accident and at the crucial time every one realized the futility of life. At that time, they got the solution to come out of their tragic flaws. This is the out frame of story but while reading the acknowledgements of the book it becomes clear that it is really the creation of writer’s own mind. Boss at the call center, Bakshi is a character from his real life as he accepts- “my one particular ex-boss. My life when I worked for him was living hell and was probably the worst phase of my life” (*One Night at the Call Centre*, p. XII). On the other hand, three women Esha, Priyanka and Radhika are somewhat the versions of his own mates as he describes- “on the same note, I want to thank all the women who rejected me. Without them I would not have known the pain of rejection” (ibid). So, this story is really a tale from writer’s own experiences and can’t be declared a photocopy. It’s well mixed with imagination and raised high with factual descriptions.

Three mistakes of my life (2005) come at third level in the hierarchy of Chetan Bhagat’s five novels. It combines three of the most potent influencers of Indian society-politics, religion and cricket. The novel reveals the story of three friends – Govind, Omi, and Ishaan who are glued together through their lives’ ups and downs. A young boy of Ahmadabad dreams of starting a business i.e., Govind the central character. The story revolves around the three mistakes done by him and the dirty politics around him. To accommodate each other’s passion all of the three friends opened a cricket shop. Ishaan wanted to flourish Ali as a cricketer, on the other hand Govind wanted to make money for his



business. Everyone had a different purpose Omi wanted to stand with his mama in his political motives. Ali just wanted to be with his friends. How they attain their aims and how complications are solved out is the story of this novel. Present work is about the Indian youth brigade and their thoughts, attitudes and actions. Bhagat's own philosophy is reflected in every character of this story. His secular and broadmindedness reflected through Ish's character. The flavor of entrepreneurial spirit is shown through Govind and lastly it is Omi's character that paints the picture of great upheaval. A selfish being at last leads towards a great sacrifice. Writer here plays a vital role himself when he triggers reconciliation; trigger the dormant friendship between Ish and Govind, rekindle the love between Govind and Vidya and above all he makes Govind love his own life once again and gain the "spark". Govind here reflects here Chetan Bhagat philosophy "Before we become one with world, we have to become one with ourselves" (*Becoming One with the World*). Never say die spirit of Chetan is reflected in all the characters.

Two States: The Story of my Marriage (2009) is also an autobiographical tale about an inter caste love marriage. This is a simple yet complicated love story of a Punjabi-Delhi boy Krish and a Tamil Brahmin girl Ananya. They are from two different states of India deeply in love and want to get married. For the sake of tradition their relationship was not accepted by their parents. To convert their love story into a marriage they cracked every nut. It is easy to fight and rebel but it is much difficult to convince. It's really a witty tale of writer's own marriage. In real life, Chetan Bhagat and Anusha were both the students of IIMA and the Communities mentioned were the same as in the Novel. The places where the incidents of the novel took places were of writer's own acknowledgement -Delhi and Ahmadabad. About this book his own comment is noteworthy here- "2 states....is the story of my marriage and I have dedicated the book to my in-laws. I think this is the first time any Indian writer has dedicated a book to his in-laws" (*Chetan Bhagat's Autobiographical Tale Released*). Writer has clearly accepted the autobiographical base and coloring in this novel.

According to him- "The more personal the book, the more unusual and funnier becomes for me. People relate to it better because they know me, my wife, twin boys and how I left my job as an investment banker to writer" (ibid). Even Chetan's speech at Pune well reflects the philosophy of Krish- "life is a tough race. It is a marathon or whatever. No, from what I have seen so far, life is one of those races in nursery school where you have to run with a marble in a spoon kept in your mouth. If the marble falls there is no point coming first. Same is with life, where relationships are the marbles. Your striving is only worth it if there is harmony in your life. Else, you may achieve the success but this spark, this feeling of being excited and alive, will start to die" (*Speeches*). So, it's really a story of today where youngistan conflict with oldistan is clearly depicted. So, the customs here may be uniquely Indian but the story is universal in appeal.

The recent magic from the Pen of Chetan Bhagat is *Revolution 2020*. It is a story of three child hood friends – poor and ambitious Gopal, rich and idealistic Raghav and a modern girl Arti. The story seems through two cities basically holy city Varanasi and Kota. About the selection of cities Chetan Bhagat clears his views, "I felt a special connection to the city when I visited it. It is one of our oldest city and people there now have modern aspirations. I thought the contrast would be interesting. The city also has a lot of character" (*Revolution 2020*, p. 13). Thus, the character facts and places used in the story are from the personal experiences of writer's own life. Gopal wants to be rich but when he fails to get admission in IIT he adopted the path of corruption. On the other hand, Raghav is an idealist and his dream is to become a journalist. At some points, both the friends are standing against each other.



But at last, Gopal realizes his mistake and he leave Arti to Raghav. They get married and Gopal devoted himself to college. There is a famous quote “losers don’t get things easily. Marks, ranks and girls- Nothing is easy for us. A few jabs at the heart are better than a complete nervous breakdown” (*Revolution 2020*, p. 70). which shows his deep evaluating nature. Chetan Bhagat’s own view love, corruption, ambitions well reflected everywhere. He himself is so against of corruption that he has written many times Sonia Gandhi about it and his views have discussed in Parliament also. He personally is not in favor of taking challenges as is Raghav: “if challenges could always be overcome, they would cease to be challenge” (*Speeches*). In this way this youth icon has clearly hinted his attitude: “But if being a youth icon means believing in yourself, people’s right to choose, fighting for justice, chasing excellence and making the most out of life, then maybe you have come to the right place” (*Chetan Bhagat Symbiosis*). In *Revolution 2020*, Raghav reflects the same self of writer and becomes his spokesperson.

A pillow of feathers bursts open and hundreds of them fall out in a shower of colors. There are feathers and more feathers. Flying in their multitudes. Gathering them together is a hopeless exercise. Much like is trying to fathom Chetan Bhagat. He every time comes out with a unique color and bears the faces of different characters as Ryan in *Five Point Someone*, Hari in *One Night at a Call Centre*, Krish in *2 States: The Story of my Marriage* and Raghav in *Revolution 2020*. At the Core of Kernel, it is evident that autobiographical elements prevail everywhere in every novel of Chetan Bhagat. He is all pervasive, sometime apparently and other time speaks through the tongue of other characters. Bhagat is not a dry intellectualist he is a lively being and walks on the bare ground of reality. He believes in the freedom of expression. In Jaipur literary festival, he clearly declared like an ordinary folk, “If anybody has been paid to throw a shoe at me, I will give a nice shot at it” (*The Tribune*). This earth grounded and quite realistic genius has generated the same ideology in his characters. His works are like cool breeze from a shady groove which provides comfort in this hot age of Industrialization and throat cutting competition. He claims- “Even I can write such stuff. My books are given to patients in hospitals because they don’t cause any stress” (ibid). A rough tough and quite an easy atmosphere is created by Ryan in his first novel and represented the writer’s philosophy in most convincing way. There is no glimpse of any search or quest in Chetan Bhagat like Robin Sharma in *The Secret letters of the Monk who sold his Ferrari*. He is not having any heavy Philosophy of life but seems a satisfied man whose motto is “Don’t be serious, be sincere!” (*Chetan Bhagat Symbiosis*).

Chetan Bhagat’s novels are so much inspired from his personal ways that every title of his novels bears a number- *Five Point Someone*, *One Night at a Call Centre*, *Three Mistakes of My life*, *Two states: The story of my marriage* and *Revolution 2020* and his reply to this question is also very humors. He said that he was a banker; he couldn’t get numbers out of his head. In a speech given at the orientation program for the new batch of MBA students at Pune, his straight forward suggestion is quite noteworthy- “Never ever make any compromise love yourself first and then others” (*Chetan Bhagat Symbiosis*). Raghav with the same philosophy of life touched the prime and authenticated the concept. In nut shell Chetan Bhagat, in dealing the characters from his magic pen is near Emerson’s statement- “The roots of all things are in Man” (*Democratic Humanism and American Literature*, p. 42). Therefore, he portrayed the fragments of his self in every protagonist of his novels.

Conclusion

Chetan Bhagat's novels deeply replicate his personal life with autobiographical sketches seen in every of his works. Through the lives of IIT college students in *Five Point*



Someone, BPO or call center personnel in *One Night @ the Call Center*, or characters having societal pressures in *Two States* and *Revolution 2020*, Bhagat tells out his own life into fiction. His works are marked as an easy-going, relatable narrative with style and colourful characters by supplying life's struggles with a hint of humor. In due course, Bhagat's novels offer a natural perspective of life in the current Indian society.

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