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## Postmodern Social Realism and Problems of Society in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

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### Abstract:

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular contemporary Indian English novelists whose works reflect the realities of post-liberalized Indian society. His novels portray the aspirations, anxieties, frustrations, and conflicts of the Indian middle class and youth. This paper examines the elements of postmodern social realism in Bhagat's fiction and analyses how his novels address social problems such as educational pressure, unemployment, corruption, cultural conflict, gender inequality, and identity crisis. Through simple language and relatable characters, Bhagat presents a realistic picture of changing Indian society in the age of globalization.

**Key words:** Indian society, aspirations, anxieties, frustrations, postmodern, social realism gender inequality, and identity crisis

## Introduction:

Indian English fiction in the twenty-first century has undergone remarkable transformation. Contemporary writers have shifted their focus from elite concerns to the everyday struggles of common people. Among these writers, Chetan Bhagat occupies a significant position because of his ability to connect literature with social reality. His novels primarily focus on middle-class youth, their dreams, failures, relationships, and conflicts within a rapidly changing society.

Bhagat's fiction reflects postmodern social realism because it combines realism with themes of fragmentation, cultural transition, globalization, and identity crisis. His works portray modern India after economic liberalization, where traditional values often clash with modern aspirations. Postmodern social realism refers to the representation of social reality in a fragmented and changing world shaped by globalization, technology, consumerism, and cultural shifts.

## Discussion and interpretation:

Bhagat's novels capture these transformations through ordinary characters and realistic situations. His fiction differs from traditional literary novels because he uses simple language, conversational style, humor, and urban settings. He portrays the confusion and insecurity of modern youth who struggle between personal desires and social expectations. Bhagat's novels represent the realities of urban India and the emotional condition of contemporary youth.

## Educational Pressure and Youth Crisis

One of the major social issues discussed in Bhagat's fiction is the defective education system. In *Five Point Someone*, the students of IIT experience severe academic pressure, competition, and fear of failure. The novel criticizes rote learning and the obsession with grades rather than creativity and innovation. The characters Ryan, Hari, and Alok symbolize different dimensions of student anxiety and middle-class expectations. Bhagat shows how educational institutions often ignore emotional well-being and individuality. This theme strongly connects with modern Indian students.

The popularity of the novel increased further after its adaptation into the film: which also questioned the rigid educational system. Globalization and Corporate Culture.

In *One Night @ the Call Center*, Bhagat presents the effects of globalization and corporate culture on Indian youth. The novel depicts the lives of call-center employees who work at night to serve foreign customers. Though they earn money and enjoy urban lifestyles, they suffer from stress, insecurity, and loss of identity.

Bhagat exposes the emotional emptiness created by consumerism and multinational corporate culture. The characters struggle with relationships, career dissatisfaction, and self-confidence. The novel reflects postmodern themes of alienation and fragmented identity in a globalized society.

## Cultural Conflict and Inter-Caste Marriage

In *2 States*, Bhagat addresses cultural diversity and inter-state marriage in India. The relationship between Krish, a Punjabi boy, and Ananya, a Tamil girl, reveals the social tensions between tradition and modernity.

The novel portrays how family honor, caste consciousness, language differences, and cultural pride create obstacles in personal relationships. Bhagat realistically depicts Indian parents' emotional attachment to social customs and regional identity. The novel suggests that love and mutual understanding can overcome cultural barriers, representing the changing mindset of modern Indian youth.

## Corruption and Social Inequality

Bhagat's *Revolution 2020* deals with corruption in education and politics. The novel exposes how educational institutions become business centers controlled by powerful politicians and corrupt administrators. The protagonist struggles between honesty and material success, reflecting the moral crisis of contemporary society. Bhagat demonstrates how unemployment, poverty, and lack of opportunities force young people toward unethical practices.

Similarly, *Half Girlfriend* discusses social inequality and linguistic hierarchy. Madhav, coming from a rural background, feels inferior because of his weak English-speaking ability. The novel highlights how language functions as a symbol of class privilege in modern India.

## Religion, Politics, and Communal Tension

In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, Bhagat combines personal friendship with political and communal conflicts. The novel is set against the backdrop of the Gujarat earthquake and communal riots. The friendship among Govind, Ishaan, and Omi represents the complexity of human relationships in a politically divided society. Bhagat portrays how religious extremism and political manipulation destroy social harmony and innocent lives.

The novel also reflects postmodern uncertainty where morality becomes unstable and individuals struggle to maintain humanity amid violence and hatred.

## Feminism and Women's Identity

Bhagat's novels also discuss women's changing roles in Indian society. Female characters such as Ananya, Vidya, Priyanka, and Riya represent educated and independent women who challenge traditional restrictions. However, critics argue that some female characters remain stereotypical or idealized. Even so, Bhagat attempts to present women as active participants in modern social transformation.

## Language and Popular Appeal

One of the major reasons for Bhagat's popularity is his simple and accessible language. He avoids complex literary techniques and uses conversational English mixed with Indian expressions. This style makes his novels popular among young readers and first-generation English learners. His fiction democratized Indian English literature by attracting readers from non-elite backgrounds. Many readers identify with his characters because they reflect ordinary life experiences.

## Conclusion:

Chetan Bhagat's novels represent the social realities of postmodern India. Through realistic narratives and relatable characters, he portrays the struggles of middle-class youth in a rapidly changing society. His fiction highlights important social issues such as educational pressure, corruption, globalization, cultural conflict, communal tension, and gender inequality.

Although critics often question his literary style, Bhagat's contribution to contemporary Indian fiction remains significant because he successfully connects literature with common readers and social reality. His novels act as mirrors of modern Indian society and document the emotional and cultural transformation of post-liberalized India.

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