



Literature and Social Transition in Contemporary India: A Critical Study of Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat

G V Narmatha¹, Dr. M. Praveena²

¹Research Scholar, Annamacharya University, New Boyanapalli, Rajampet, Andhra Pradesh, India.

²Assistant Professor, Annamacharya University, Rajampet, Andhra Pradesh, India.

OPEN ACCESS

Article Citation:

G V Narmatha¹, Dr. M. Praveena², "Literature and Social Transition in Contemporary India: A Critical Study of Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat", International Journal of Recent Trends in Multidisciplinary Research, September-October 2026, Vol 6(05), 58-62.



©2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. Published by 5th Dimension Research Publication

Abstract: Literature has always acted both as a catalyst for social change and as a mirror reflecting the realities of society. Rapid urbanization, globalization, and socioeconomic mobility have significantly influenced traditional value systems and cultural norms in modern society. Literature plays an important role not only in reflecting culture but also in shaping people's lifestyles and bringing about cultural transformation. Since time immemorial, literature has influenced society and has therefore been a powerful tool for both constructive and transformative change. Embracing this potential, Chetan Bhagat has contributed to Indian English literature with the aim of bringing positive and constructive change in society, especially among the youth. Thus, this paper critically analyses a select works of Chetan Bhagat to investigate how popular Indian English fiction in portraying the societal shifts. The study focuses on how novels like *Five Point Someone*, *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, and *One Indian Girl* depict issues such as gender roles, inter-cultural relationships, educational pressure, and young aspirations. This study also emphasizes how Bhagat's stories capture the transitional stage of Indian culture when traditional structures collide with contemporary beliefs by utilizing sociological and feminist viewpoints. The study makes the proceeding that, in post-liberalization India, popular fiction is important for documenting and shaping the changing social identities.

Keywords: Social Transition, Popular Fiction, Gender Roles, Globalization, Indian English Literature, Chetan Bhagat.

1. Introduction

Literature and the social context in which it is generated have always been tightly related. Social realities serve as a source of inspiration for writers, whose works often depict the conflicts, changes, and hopes that exist inside a society. A period of tremendous economic growth, globalization, technical advancement, and cross-cultural engagement began in India from 1991 with the country's economic liberalization. Traditional social structures were significantly interrupted by these developments, which also had an impact on a number of aspects of daily life, such as gender relations, education, professional options, and marital patterns.

In response to these changes, Indian English literature has looked at how people have responded to this transforming environment. Because of his large readership and emphasis on the lives of young, urban Indians, Chetan Bhagat holds a special place among contemporary writers. His books are important cultural texts for interpreting contemporary social dynamics since they tackle issues like women's independence, intercultural relationships, career competition, and academic pressure.

Despite being classified as a writer of commercial fiction, Bhagat's writings depict the reality that a large percentage of the Indian population, especially the urban middle class, must deal with. His books are well-liked by young readers, which suggests that his stories speak to their real-life situations. As a result, analysing his fiction in light of societal change could shed light on the changing values and goals of modern Indian society.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the representation of social transition in contemporary Indian society as portrayed in the selected novels of

Literature and Social Transition in Contemporary India: A Critical Study of Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat

Chetan Bhagat.

- To analyse the impact of globalization and modernization on youth aspirations as reflected in *Five Point Someone*.
- To explore the transformation of cultural values and marriage patterns depicted in *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*.
- To study the changing role of women and the emergence of female independence in contemporary Indian society through *One Indian Girl*.

3. Review of Literature

The connection between literature and social transformation has been acknowledged by academics. Eagleton (2008) asserts that literary works frequently mirror societal ideological frameworks and cultural conflicts. In a similar perspective, Damrosch (2003) highlights how literature transcends cultural barriers and serves as a medium for the negotiation of social concepts and identities. The impact of industrialization and globalization on literary issues is highlighted in studies of current Indian English fiction. Many contemporary Indian novels, according to scholars, tackle topics including urbanization, young ambitions, gender equality, and cultural hybridity. Singh (2018) notes that middle-class aspirations for career achievement in a cutthroat global economy are often depicted in post-liberalization Indian fiction.

The portrayal of youth identity in contemporary Indian storytelling has been studied by other academics, among them Kaur (2019) is one, he notes that modern books frequently include teenage protagonists confronting modern individualistic aspirations with traditional familial obligations. These stories highlight the identity difficulties and psychological strain that young people face in a society that is changing quickly. Despite these debates, popular fiction authors whose works are widely read have received comparatively little scholarly attention. While their economic success, Bhagat's novels are sometimes written off as oversimplified stories rather than being examined as representations of societal change. By analysing Bhagat's writings from a sociological and feminist perspective in order to comprehend how they depict societal transition, this essay aims to close this gap.

4. Research Gap

The analysis of popular fiction as a reliable source for comprehending social transformation has received comparatively little attention, despite the fact that many studies have examined themes of globalization and cultural identity in Indian English literature. Traditionally, canonical authors whose works are regarded as ideologically or stylistically advanced have been the focus of academic critique. However, well-known authors like Chetan Bhagat have a far wider readership and hence have a big influence on public opinion. His books tackle topics like gender equality, intercultural relationships, job competition, and academic stress that are particularly pertinent to young readers. Scholarly analysis of his work is still scarce, given its cultural significance. By analysing Bhagat's fiction as a cultural record that captures the changing socioeconomic realities of post-liberalization India, this study aims to close this gap. The study shows how popular narratives can offer insightful information about current social change by fusing sociological and feminist viewpoints.

5. Research Methodology

This study follows a qualitative and analytical research methodology to examine the representation of social transition in the selected novels of Chetan Bhagat. The research is primarily based on textual analysis, focusing on themes such as youth aspirations, educational pressure, cultural diversity, and gender roles portrayed in contemporary Indian society.

The primary sources for this study include the novels *Five Point Someone*, *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, and *One Indian Girl*. These texts are examined to understand how the author portrays the evolving socio-cultural conditions of post-liberalization India.

The secondary sources consist of open-access scholarly journal articles, books, and research papers related to contemporary Indian English fiction, social transformation, and cultural studies. These sources provide theoretical support and contextual understanding for the analysis.

The study utilises sociological and feminist approaches to analyse the selected texts. The sociological approach helps in studying the representation of changing social structures, educational systems, and cultural values, while the feminist perspective is used to explore the transformation of gender roles and the depiction of women's identity in modern society.

Through close reading and thematic analysis, the research aims to demonstrate how popular fiction reflects and interprets the social realities and transitions occurring in contemporary India.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a multidisciplinary theoretical framework to examine the representation of social transition in the selected novels of Chetan Bhagat.

Sociological Approach

Literary works are seen as products of the social contexts in which they are produced by the sociological approach to literature. This viewpoint holds that novels frequently depict societal class hierarchies, cultural disputes, and ideological shifts. The experiences of middle-class youth coping with academic competitiveness, professional demands, and shifting social ideals are portrayed in Bhagat's works. These stories shed light on the challenges experienced by young people trying to succeed in contemporary India.

Feminist Perspective

Feminist criticism looks at how gender roles and power dynamics are portrayed in literature. Women in modern India are defying traditional gender roles by pursuing higher education and professional occupations at an increasing rate. Later works by Bhagat, especially *One Indian Girl*, include female heroines who challenge social norms surrounding marriage and household responsibilities. By examining these stories from a feminist perspective, it is possible to see how gender relations have changed in contemporary Indian society.

7. Analysis and Discussion

Education System and Youth Identity

In *Five Point Someone*, Bhagat critiques the rigid structure of the Indian education system which emphasizes rote learning over creativity and innovation. The novel highlights the psychological stress faced by students and reflects the growing demand for educational reform in contemporary India. It portrays the transition from collective expectations to individual aspirations among youth.

On the first day of college an elderly Prof. Dubey defines the machine as a tool whichever reduces the human effort. Ryan asks him how it is related to the gym machine.

Dubey says “Watch it, Son. In my class, just watch it” (FPS pp11).

Which indirectly shows in the old education system, there is no scope for thinking creativity or to expose it in the classroom that leads to innovation.

In the same novel Chetan has mentioned about education system transition that is happening in the contemporary period where creative thinking and research is encouraged through the young Professor Veera’s character.

Prof. Veera when he came to teach the class for the first time, he doesn’t just concentrate on nine pointers in the first bench, he did encourage other rows particularly the last row where Ryan and Hari were sitting in most hiding place so as not to be visible to the professors. He calls Ryan by his name and asks him a question to answer, being aware that five pointer Ryan knows it. He asks Ryan to write it on board for the class. When Ryan made it, he appreciates and inquire about his answer in the last term paper.

“Perfect, thanks Ryan. By the way, was it you who wrote the impact of lubricant efficiency on scooter fuel consumption in your last term paper?”

“Well, yes sir”

“Is it true you actually tested the data on your scooter?”

“Yes, I did sir. Not accurately though”

“I like that” Prof. Veera said, looking at the nine pointers who were busy taking frantic notes like trained parrots. “I really like that”. (FPS, pp85)

Chetan has portrayed collective expectations and youth aspirations beautifully through Ryan character. Society expects him to do a routine high paid job but his aspiration is to create and innovate something related fluid mechanics. As an encouragement Prof. Veera offers a research job to Ryan after his unsuccessful trials of getting into software, to be his Research Assistant with a pay.

In the novel Prof. Dubey is an example encouraging rote learning over creativity and innovation. Young Prof. Veera is an example for a changes education system which encourages student’s creativity and innovation.

Ryan’s character is an ideal student character facing psychological stress due to rote learning style pervaded in education system particularly in IIT education. Being a grownup student he worries about discouragement in creativity and innovation. he also worries this so called high graded IIT institutions have very less innovations in its credit rather than its reputation due to its old style of education system.

“This place has let me down. This isn’t exactly the cutting edge of science and technology as they describe themselves.” (FPS, pp25)

Changing Marriage Patterns and Cultural Integration

The novel *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* explores the complexities of inter-cultural marriage in a society that is deeply rooted in regional traditions. The narrative illustrates how globalization and urbanization have contributed to the acceptance of inter-caste and inter-regional relationships, thereby indicating a shift from traditional matrimonial practices to modern individual choice.

In the novel *2 States- The Story of My Marriage* Chetan has mentioned about inter-state marriage which were rare in olden days. In this story he portrayed the hurdles in inter-state marriages which paved their way because of improved female education system. Love between Ananya and Krish started when they were in IIM Ahmedabad doing MBA. Ananya is from an orthodox Tamil brahmin family. Krish is from Punjabi family. Their both families vary in almost everything like food habits, mentality, customs, education background, career, language etc. In Krish family silence is maintained only to pay condolence. In Ananya family they remain almost silent at home, their conversation will be only in phrases. Punjabi’s marriages are in pompous with lot of expenditure and in lot of enjoyment whereas Tamil brahmin marriages are conducted in simple and elegant tradition with lot of love.

In this way both families varied a lot because they are from two different states of multi-cultured India. Despite all these differences their marriage becomes successful because of love between them and patience to make their families to accept each

Literature and Social Transition in Contemporary India: A Critical Study of Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat

other. Here Chetan has showed the transition of marriage customs that prevailed in olden ages to modern inter-state or Inter-caste marriage, as a possible concept by showing the solution that we are all Indians.

“You are from two different states, right? So, what will be their state?” The nurse said and chuckled.

“They will be from the state called India,” I said. (2 States, pp269)

Ananya gives birth to twin boys. Nurse asked Krish what would be the kids state as the couple is from two different states. Here Chetan has showed an unquestioning solution to the sensitive problem that they would be from the state India.

Gender Roles and Female Empowerment

Bhagat's One Indian Girl increasingly focus on the experiences of women in contemporary society. One Indian Girl presents the story of Radhika, a successful investment banker who struggles to balance professional achievement with societal expectations of marriage. The protagonist faces criticism for prioritizing her career and financial independence over traditional domestic roles.

“Why can't you be like your sister”. (One Indian Girl, pp224)

“It is a fact Aditi's marriage happened so quickly. She has a whiter skin, which helps. But she also has a good attitude. You should have an even better attitude”.

“This money and international job have gone to your head. You are not even a girl anymore.”

Radhika's mother repeatedly says this statement comparing Radhika to her elder daughter who got married early immediately after she became major and she looks pretty beautiful in her white skin. Here she criticises Radhika about her wheatish skin tone as well as her rejection of getting married for her career. Her mother character is voice of society that knocks Radhika and her family for not getting married early as any other Indian girl.

Through the protagonist's reflections, the novel highlights the challenges faced by modern women attempting to assert their individuality within a patriarchal social structure. Despite professional success, women often encounter pressure to conform to conventional ideals of femininity and marriage.

The narrative also explores issues such as workplace discrimination, emotional independence, and identity formation.

“Solly, I thought La-dhika-san you'll settle. How can lady do distressed debt?” Arai continued to laugh. His minions also grinned, taking their boss's cue. (One Indian Girl, pp166)

Arai Sugimura is the head of the Distressed Debt Group at Metropolitan Bank of Tokyo. Arai and his team came from Japan to co-invest with Neel's group in China. He thinks that Radhika as secretary and asks her to fill the tea cups. Even after knowing she is not the secretary but a manager, he mocks her that no lady can do such management jobs. By presenting a female character who questions these norms, the novel reflects the ongoing transition toward greater gender equality in urban India. Although societal expectations remain influential, the growing presence of educated and economically independent women indicates a gradual transformation of gender relations.

8. Conclusion

Popular fiction might be a useful tool for comprehending societal change in modern India, according to an analysis of a few of Chetan Bhagat's works. Bhagat's stories depict the experiences of people navigating a quickly changing social environment through themes of education, multicultural relationships, gender roles, and youth aspirations.

The conflicts between traditional traditions and contemporary aspirations that define post-liberalization Indian society are shown in his works. Couples navigate cultural differences in their relationships, women challenge patriarchal expectations in their quest of professional achievement, and students struggle with scholastic pressure while pursuing creative freedom.

While being classified as commercial literature, Bhagat's novels provide important insights into the social and psychological lives of the urban middle class. His stories capture the hopes and fears of a generation undergoing fast social mobility by using familiar people and modern locations.

As a result, popular fiction shouldn't be written off as only amusement. Rather, it need to be acknowledged as a cultural asset that represents changes in society and adds to conversations about modernity, equality, and identity. Future studies should look more closely at how readers' impressions of societal change and cultural values in contemporary India are influenced by popular literature.

References

Primary Sources

1. Bhagat, C. (2004). Five point someone. Rupa Publications.
2. Bhagat, C. (2009). 2 states: The story of my marriage. Rupa Publications.
3. Bhagat, C. (2016). One Indian girl. Rupa Publications.

Books

4. Damrosch, D. (2003). What is world literature? Princeton University Press.
5. Eagleton, T. (2008). Literary theory: An introduction (2nd ed.). Blackwell Publishing.

Scholarly Articles

6. Kaur, P. (2019). Representation of youth aspirations in contemporary Indian English novels. Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Literature and Social Transition in Contemporary India: A Critical Study of Select Novels of Chetan Bhagat

7. Singh, R., & Singh, P. (2025). Writing style and characters of Chetan Bhagat. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology*, 5(2), 138–143.
8. Mishra, A., & Reddy, R. S. (2017). Literary analysis of writing styles and themes in the novels of Chetan Bhagat. *SMART Moves Journal IJELLH*, 5(3).
9. Yellaiah, P. (2024). Modernization and convergence of youth in Five Point Someone. *International Journal of Research*, 11(8), 15–20.
10. Lakshmi, A. V. R. (2018). The emergence of Chetan Bhagat in contemporary Indian English fiction. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature*.
11. Savase, B. S., & Mane, S. S. (2025). The impact of literature in social change with reference to select Indian authors. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 13(2), 145–150.
12. Altun, M. (2023). Literature and social change: Exploring the transformative power of words. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies*, 10(3), 386–391. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23918/ijsses.v10i3p386>
13. Singh, R. (2018). Social change and Indian English fiction: A study of post-liberalization literature. *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*.
14. A. Baboo, S. R. Mishra and S. Dash, "An Improvised Diabetes Prediction System Using Hybrid Ensemble Approach," 2024 IEEE 11th Uttar Pradesh Section International Conference on Electrical, Electronics and Computer Engineering (UPCON), Lucknow, India, 2024, pp. 1-6, doi: 10.1109/UPCON62832.2024.10983076.
15. A. Baboo, S. Prasad Patro and S. Dash, "A Deep Learning Approach for Enhancing Cardiovascular Disease Prediction Using ECG Data," 2024 2nd International Conference on Signal Processing, Communication, Power and Embedded System (SCOPEs), Paralakhemundi Campus, Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha., India, 2024, pp. 1-5, doi: 10.1109/SCOPEs64467.2024.10990827.
16. S. Ranjan Mishra, S. Dash and L. Rath, "Effective Diabetes Mellitus Prediction Using a Hybrid Ensemble Machine Learning Model with Iot," 2024 International Conference on Integrated Intelligence and Communication Systems (ICIICS), Kalaburagi, India, 2024, pp. 1-8, doi: 10.1109/ICIICS63763.2024.10859778.
17. V. S. K. Chaitanya, D. Rakesh, S. Dash, B. K. Sahoo, S. Padhy and M. Nayak, "Tomato Leaf Disease Detection using Neural Networks," 2022 International Conference on Machine Learning, Computer Systems and Security (MLCSS), Bhubaneswar, India, 2022, pp. 53-58, doi: 10.1109/MLCSS57186.2022.00018.
18. R. Hota, S. Dash, S. Mishra, S. Pradhan, P. K. Pattnaik and G. Pradhan, "Prediction and Diagnosis of Thoracic Diseases using Rough Set and Machine Learning," 2023 10th International Conference on Computing for Sustainable Global Development (INDIACom), New Delhi, India, 2023, pp. 206-213.
19. S. Mohanty, J. Mishra, S. K. Mohapatra, S. Dash, S. Padhy and S. K. Das, "Generating Higher Order Mutants using PSO with Levy Flight(LFPSO) Algorithm," 2022 International Conference on Machine Learning, Computer Systems and Security (MLCSS), Bhubaneswar, India, 2022, pp. 75-79, doi: 10.1109/MLCSS57186.2022.00022. IEEE
20. Dash S., Das R.K., Guha S., Bhagat S.N., Behera G.K. (2021) An Interactive Machine Learning Approach for Brain Tumor MRI Segmentation. In: Das S., Mohanty M.N. (eds) *Advances in Intelligent Computing and Communication. Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, vol 202. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0695-3_38
21. Mohanty, S., Gantayat, P. K., Dash, S., Mishra, B. P., & Barik, S. C. (2021). Liver Disease Prediction Using Machine Learning Algorithm. In *Data Engineering and Intelligent Computing: Proceedings of ICICC 2020* (pp. 589-596). Springer Singapore. doi:10.1007/978-981-16-0171-2
22. S. Dutta, S. Dash, and A. Mitra, "A Model of Socially Connected Things for Emotion Detection," in 2020 International Conference on Computer Science, Engineering and Applications (ICCSEA), Mar. 2020, pp. 1–3, doi: 10.1109/ICCSEA49143.2020.9132887. <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9132887>
23. Dash, S., & Das, R. K. (2020). An implementation of neural network approach for recognition of handwritten Odia text. In *Advances in Intelligent Computing and Communication: Proceedings of ICAC 2019* (pp. 94-99). Springer Singapore. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-15-2774-6_12