

ALIBERTARIAN OUTLOOK OF CHETAN BHAGAT

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Chetan Bhagat's love for liberty can be seen in the actions his characters make, in the scenes he realistically paints, in the word-pictures he genuinely draws and even in his blood. In his first novel, *Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT*, the trio –Hari, Alok and Ryan are true icons of liberty. They enjoy their life to the fullest. They enjoy even being called five pointers that is insulting for any student of IIT Delhi, but such are trivialities to them. Their concern lies specifically in the innovation of education system and the society as a whole. They believe in success comes to those who crave for practicability not for mugginess in life. According to them, bookish knowledge is of no use if it is not practice based. Chetan Bhagat's men and women both are undaunted; they are ready to take any risk for the sake of thrill and sensation in life. Hari doesn't bother his rustication from the college and risks daresome stealthy entry into the bedchamber of his HOD's daughter, Neha in the night. Radhika of *One Night @ the Call Centre* employs her free-instinct and instantly breaks live-and-die together relationship with her husband when she comes to know that he is infidel. Shyam and Vroom abandon their jobs for saving the jobs of hundreds of their colleagues and that is what a libertarian ever loves to do. In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, Omi fights against his own maternal uncle and his men to save the life of a Muslim boy Ali, the talent of the nation during the Godhra riots and dies for the great cause. Ananya advocates anti-dowry case in *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*. She wins the support of the youngsters from both sides: the bride's and the groom's and succeeds to persuade the groom to accept the bride on whatever dowry is gifted. Liberty is birth right of everyone. Some don't know it's meaning in actual and some know but don't know how to use it; but some limit it to their personal benefits. It is Chetan Bhagat who has not only advocated the spirit of liberty but also employed it for the innovation of the society in his novels. An attempt has been made here to present Chetan Bhagat, as a true libertarian who loves liberty for its sake and enjoys it in his all senses.

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A libertarian is ‘an advocate of the doctrine of free will’ (Merriam-Webster). He is ‘a person who upholds the principles of individual liberty esp. of thought and action’ (Merriam-Webster). In his novels, Chetan Bhagat exhibits uncurbed spirits of the young people of his nation. His approach is youth calling that calls up only youths and also helps to realize their innovative vision. In his first novel, *Five Point Someone*, his replicas Ryan, Alok and Hari fight against the patriarchal education system run by the old and obsolete rules made by the century old educationists. These mighty minds of the old used to believe in wisdom of the world come through self penance; the more one penances oneself, the wiser or more intelligent one becomes. The education system of IIT Delhi depicted in his book is adhered to the same patriarchal norms and codes of education. The students are so much overloaded with assignments, class tests, surprise quizzes and majors exams that they forget what the real meaning of the life is. Their hostel rooms appear to be like prison-cells wherein they are captivated and their only crime is that they chose to carry IIT tag. Ryan, the real mouth organ of Chetan Bhagat is the student of IIT Delhi. He criticizes the education system and calls up the spirits of the youths: “This system of relative grading and overburdening the students. I mean it kills the best fun years of your life. But it kills something else. Where is the room for original thought? Where is the time for creativity? It is not fair” (*Five Point Someone* 35) That is why that IIT, “the best technology institute for a country of a billion...ever invented anything? Or made any technical contribution to India” (34)? The writer proposes to spare sometime for the recharge of the mind and the body. Sport recharges the body and entertainment feeds the mind and the heart as well. Chetan Bhagat believes that the youths are the future of the country. No mind can ever do wonders unless it thinks untraditional. No one has the right to spoil the future of a boy who is not interested in learning the names of rivers and technical know-hows. The writer adds further if a blockage is put on the creativity of the student he can not innovate. There is a legend in every youth but we kill it in his childhood by suffocating his self.

The “decentralization of education” (40) is a must for the comprehensive development of the students. This will help them to be away from the habit of mugging and spare ample time for creative activities. To some extent, the parents are also responsible for making or marring the life of their children. They get prejudiced while taking big decisions of their (children) life. They impose extra burden of their expectations upon them and this hampers the mental and physical growth. This burden, sometimes forces them to commit suicide. Prof. Cherian’s son runs under the train and dies because he fails three attempts in the entrance exam to IIT. Every time, whenever he failed he was bitterly criticized and cursed too. His life could be saved if he was liberated to choose the study of his own choice. The teachers want their students to follow them blindly whether their logic is acceptable or not but they can not tolerate if any student dares to cross-question them. They compel the students to run in the mice race. It is the race wherein they have to mindlessly run “for four years, in every class, every assignment and every test” (101). The novelist advises the youths not to make race with others but with themselves if they want to succeed in life. This is what if one has a race with oneself; one can never be a loser even if one comes last in the race. Hence “The problem with the rat- race is only that even if you win, you’re still a rat” (tobeme.wordpress). So let them enjoy freedom and do what they want and wherefrom they want to start. Neha, the daughter of Prof. Cherian is strictly instructed not to talk to the IITians but she talks, befriends and makes physical relation with Hari. She feels suffocated in the reserved environment of the home. She wants someone with whom she could feel the wonders of life and enjoy the dainties of liberty. She finds such emancipator in Hari. Hence she obeys the command of her being for which she breaks all moral and social chains of the patriarchal society and enjoys her life to the fullest. Almost all students, whether they are IITians or others, believe in what their teachers teach them and that is all correct. There are a few, hardly one out of ten, who dare cross-question their teacher. Such a few ones are those who obey none but the command of the self and are not afraid of the consequence. They raise voice against the wrongs of the system. Ryan is one of such audaciously liberal activists. Prof Dubey defines machine: “Anything that reduces human effort” (*Five*

Point Someone 10). Thereupon Ryan retorts: “Sir, what about a gym machine....” (*Ibid*). Prof feels down and tries to wring the self of the boy: “Watch it son. In my class, just watch it” (11). This is totally wrong. Open communication leads to the liberty of thoughts which boosts up the mental growth of the students and adds to the efficiency level of the education system. Such are the innovative and reformative steps which the writer inspires in the youths for the renovation of the social, educational and political system.

In the viewpoint of the novelist, a libertarian is always straightforward in his approach to life. He listens to the voice of his soul which, he strongly believes in, is ever true. He may suffer a big loss but finally emerges out victorious. For instance all three friends meet ignominy at college campus. All the teachers as well as the students take them for nuts, idiots and losers only because they underperform in the exams and notch five points something. But like others they are not bloody muggers, they are freethinkers, true lovers of life, harbingers of innovative ideas, icons of liberty and precursors of the youth-calling-approach. They never lose confidence, work harder on the lube project and consequently their project is approved and they succeed to achieve big fame and name.

In *One Night @ The Call Center* the novelist introduces us with five advocates of individual liberty viz., Shyam, Vroom, Priyanka, Esha and Radhika. Radhika attends duty at the call center for 9 to 10 hours. Besides she works at home and attends all in-laws and pays especial care to her mother-in-law. Apart from all this, she puts up with the mean comments of her mother-in-law. Nonetheless, she turns deaf ear thinking that her mother-in-law is very old and of old thoughts. She follows the rites of Indian wifehood especially of a Hindu wifehood. She is made to believe Indian wife is bound to submit to the will of her in-laws. But today’s Indian wife knows the limits of her magnanimity. Like Indian wife, Radhika tolerates the torture upto a limit. When she finds out her husband, the source of her tolerance is not loyal to her, he loves some other girl she instantly sets herself free from hollow relationships of nuptiality and goes with Esha to Chandigarh for ever. This bold step taken by Radhika conveys a message to the youths – pay regards to the elders but simultaneously know the limit of your magnanimity. Vroom aka Varun Malhotra fights against the wrongs of the system and saves the lives of thousands of employees working in the Gurgaon call center, Connexions. He and his friend Shyam sacrifice their jobs for the happiness of other colleagues and are hailed out the true legends of liberty. They bear the burnt when their boss plagiarizes their project of the website designed for the western computers but stand for the survival of the workers when the company decides to pay off some of them during recession. They make a threat-plan which attracts huge calls from the Americans. And then they force the company to withdraw pay-offs. It is their self or the voice of the soul which empowers them to take toughest decision @ their career and this voice is presented as the voice of God in the novel. A libertarian follows and asks others to follow the four things to success:

One, a medium amount of intelligence, and two, a bit of imagination... The third thing you need for success is self-confidence... ‘The fourth ingredient is the most painful one. And it is something all of you still need to learn. Because it is often the most important thing,’ God said.

‘What?’ I said.

‘Failure,’ God said” (*One Night@ The Call Center* 221-222).

One loses self-confidence when one starts doubting one’s potentials: “Don’t be scared and you will get it back” (222). Priyanka raises voice against the wrongs inflicted by a mother-in-law over her daughter-in-law, a true Indian wife, mother of two daughters. Her only crime is that she could not bear a boy to them. Rebuking her daughter-in-law, the old lady comments: “Look at the girls of today: don’t know how to talk – look at her, eyes made up like a heroine” (87). Thereupon Priyanka retorts: “The young girls know how to talk and behave. It is you old ones who need to be taught a lesson. These are your granddaughters, and you are calling them curses” (*Ibid*)?

In the third novel, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* Chetan Bhagat acquaints us with three libertarians viz., Govind, Ishan and Omi. Ishan strongly believes in the virtues of humanity and loves the people of all community

equally. He saves the life of a Muslim boy, Ali because he thinks the boy is nation's pride, a promising future of Indian cricket team. Govind kicks declines the job offer from Indian Armed Forces because he can not let anyone tame his free will and starts his own business in partnership with his friends. Omi is a Brahmin boy whose father is a temple priest. He is traditionally bound to do the rituals of the temple while he is not at all interested in their hollowness. This does not mean that he is agnostic or atheist but he worships the supreme power in other form perhaps self. He enjoys the dainties of life, takes wine, watches movies and hankers after beautiful girls. He supports Ali against the communal grudge of his Mama. He saves his life at the cost of his own life. Vidya finds herself in the cage of extra parental concerns. Her parents want her to make career in the medical line but she plants her interest in the pursuit of Public Relations Programme. She carries out her will, gets a degree in PRP and wins over parental obsession. The writer believes: "Humanity wouldn't have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time" (*The 3 Mistakes of My Life* 103) and suggests the youths to act upon the call of their self. The writer criticizes politics @ religion too. When Mama asks Omi and Ishan to persuade the temple visitors to vote for his communist party and sedate them against the favour of the government to the Muslim community. Omi persuades but Ishan dissuades the proposal. This shakes the humanitarian spirits of Ishan and he nullifies Mama's sedative proposal and gets ready to vacate his shop. He evokes the youths to keep religion far away from politics if they are truly religious. He persuades both Hindus and Muslims to follow the reconciliatory behavior like that of the male chimpanzees who "fight violently with each other – for food, females, whatever. However, after the fight, they go through a strange ritual. They kiss each other, on the lips" (71).

Krish, the protagonist of *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* quits the marriage proposal from the very rich Punjabi family who were ready to purchase him for two petrol pumps and boxes of cash along with their beautiful daughter. And he marries Ananya, his batch-mate from IIM Ahmadabad – a South Indian from Chennai. He listens to the command of the self and shatters the age old tradition of Punjabi community – a marriageable boy/girl is bound to wed with the match of their parents' choice. This is their religious duty to repay the debt of parenthood'. But Krish does not leave the biggest decision of his life solely in the hands of the parents. He admits that everyone's opinion should be solicited in life's biggest decision. He could not repay the parental debt but by taking the decision of his own life, he certainly repays the debt of humanity. We are human beings first then we are sects, communities, religions and relations. Chetan Bhagat ignites the virtues of liberty in the youths. He calls them up to prefer human values to all other mundane things. They should develop libertarian out-look to judge values of the human beings. Guruji preaches Krish the ways to liberty or self-emancipation. A free man surrenders to the will of God. He finds void in the right to control anything in the world. Krish wants to control Ananya but fails and finds a sense when Guruji says: "Do you control your life? Your life depends on so many internal organs functioning right. You have no control on them" (*2 States* 169). Then how can one control others? The youths are suggested to surrender to the will of God. Once one surrenders to God, it is His sole responsibility to take one's care. One more thing dug out in the book is how to judge the status of the people. It is the comprehensive education not the riches by which the real status of the person can be evaluated. That is why the protagonist chooses to marry an inter-state and inter-caste Tamil girl for like him, Tamilians also "love educated people" (83).

This is the libertarian outlook of Chetan Bhagat which flows not only through all his novels but also through his blood vessels. He thinks freely, writes freely and believes in the freedom of self and that of others. He writes against the corrupt system and suggests how to purge its impurities.

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