

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHETAN BHAGAT NOVELS, ONE NIGHT @ THE CALL CENTER AND ONE INDIAN GIRL IN THE BACKDROP OF INDIA'S ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION

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Abstract:

India liberalised its economic policies in 1991. It was one of the greatest economic reform of post independent India. India abolished the industrial licensing system and opened its economy to the private sector. Economic liberalisation resulted into reduction of trade duties, increased FDI flows and boosted the India's trade with other countries, which provided further impetus to Globalisation. Chetan Bhagat was born in 1974, his father was an Army man and his mother was a scientist in Indian Agriculture Research Institute. He completed his higher education in post liberalised India. He graduated from IIT Delhi in 1995 and passed out from IIM Ahmedabad in 1997. Chetan Bhagat education at IIM Ahmedabad in post liberalised era definitely have an effect on his novels. Liberalised economic thought have an impact on the settings, characters and landscape of his novels. Due to liberalised policy of Indian Government, foreign multinational companies were able to set up their call centers in India. Chetan Bhagat's 'One night @ the call center' novel is a story of six persons working at a call center. Call center in India, it is the symbol of India's liberalised economic policies. The theme of the novel involves the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, their career and family conflict in post liberalised India, and the relationship of young Indian middle class to both executives and ordinary clients to whom they serve in the United States. In post liberalised India, Economic growth increased due to economic reforms which result into increase in per capita income of Indians. Indians got more disposable income in their hands to spend. Due to increase in disposable income more and more Indian entered into middle class from lower middle class and decrease in below poverty line people. So the main characters of Chetan Bhagat novels depicted the urban middle class youth of economic liberalised India and landscape settings further limited to urban areas.

Key words: Economic Liberalisation, middle class, youth, women empowerment

Introduction: Chetan Bhagat is the prominent author of post liberalised India. His novels are famous among Indian youth. Landscape of his novels depicts the urbanized environment settings. Characters of his novels are mainly from educated urban middle class social milieu. His novels are mainly focus on the issues of urban middle class youth, conflicts in their relationships, issue of their career and marriage. Post liberalised India focused on women empowerment, and provided career opportunities for the Indian women which made them financially independent. Female characters of his novels are educated, career oriented and financially independent.

Chetan Bhagat Biography in Brief: Chetan Bhagat was born in New Delhi in a Punjabi family. His father was an army officer and mother was a scientist in agriculture department. He studied in the Army Public School New Delhi. After that, he studied Mechanical Engineering at Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. Then he joined Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad for master of business administration degree course. In 1998, he got married to his IIM, Ahmedabad fellow student, Anusha Suryanarayana. He worked as an investment banker with Goldman Sachs in Hong Kong. In 2009, he left his banking job to pursue his full time writing career.

One Night @ the Call Center novel in the backdrop of India's Economic Liberalisation: One Night @ the Call Center was the second novel of Chetan Bhagat and published in 2005. It was the story of six people working

at Connexion call center in Gurugram, Haryana. It was written in post economic liberalised India. So it was having the following elements related to economic liberalised thought and post liberalised social milieu of India.

Landscape Setting: Landscape of novel was shown in form of call center in the satellite town Gurugram, Haryana. Gurugram city was developed in post liberalised India due to its proximity to India's national capital, Delhi. Call centers developed in India due to India opened its economy to world, post 1991 economic reforms. Due to these reforms foreign direct investment (FDI) encouraged by Indian Government in different sectors. Due to increased FDI flows, opened economic policies and availability of English speaking educated urban Indian youth in form of human resource, call centers proliferated in post liberalised India.

Use of Gadgets of Post Economic Liberalised World: Main feature of this novel is when characters of the novel received a phone call from God. For having fun, all the main characters of the novel decided to go and enjoy at a night club. After enjoying for a while, they left for the office. While returning, they faced a dangerous situation when their car banged into a construction site and hanging over a mesh of iron construction rods. As the rods began to yield slowly, they started to panic. They were unable to call for help as there was no mobile phone network at that place, but Shyam's mobile phone started ringing. The phone call was from God, who spoke modern English. He spoke to all of them and gave them suggestions to improve their life and advised them on how to get their vehicle out of the construction site. The conversation with God motivated the group to such an extent that they got ready to face their problems with utmost determination and motivation.

Here God did not use any proclamation by angels or any other medium to convey His feelings or wish but used the post liberalised communication device that is mobile phone. God talked to characters of the novel through mobile phone, advised them and boosted their morale. Due to economic liberalisation and subsequent economic reforms, mobile tele communication sector flourished in India. Opened and proactive economic policies resulted in healthy competition between different tele communication private players like Airtel, Idea, Reliance, Tata and Jio which in turn benefited the subscribers. Chetan Bhagat wanted to connect to techno savvy educated urban youth of India so he used modern telecommunication device in the form of cell phone even to convey the message of God.

Use of Middle Class Youth as main characters of the novel: Economic liberalisation resulted in increased in number of middle class people in India. Chetan Bhagat used these educated urban middle class persons as main characters of his novel. In the novel 'One Night @ the Call Center' depicted characters belongs to urban middle class social milieu. The protagonist of the novel was 26 years old Shyam Mehra (Sam Mercy). He was the boyfriend of Priyanka and they had a break up in their relationship but united at last. Varun Malhotra and Esha were the other main characters of the novel. Varun was loving high speed cars, he had crush for Esha. Esha wanted to become a model. Shyam, Varun, Esha and Priyanka belonged to educated urban middle class youth of post liberalised India. Due to economic reforms and surge economic growth rate, employment opportunities amplified in India. These opportunities made our middle class youth ambitious to get their dream job and pursue their dream career. The youth characters in the novel also wanted to move to higher echelons of economic and social milieu, so they dissatisfied from their current job. Economic growth in post liberalised era resulted into decrease in below poverty line people, a large number Indian moved to the echelons of middle class social order. These middle class youth were educated, ambitious, techno savvy and aware regarding their rights. So Chetan Bhagat depicted the educated urban middle class youth as the protagonist of the novel.

One Indian Girl novel in the backdrop of India's Economic Liberalisation: 'One Indian Girl' was the story of a middle class Indian girl Radhika Mehta who studied hard and joined IIM-Ahmedabad. She got job at distressed debt group of Goldman Sachs, the Investment Bank. She introduced herself by saying that one, I make a lot of money. Two, I have an opinion on everything. Three, I have had a boyfriend before. Now if I were a guy, you would be cool with it. Since I am a girl, these things do not make me likeable. Novel is about individualistic educated girl which made multiple relationships and exploited by many men.

Education and employment opportunities in Post Liberalised India: Post liberalised India provided education and employment opportunities not only for men but also in similar way to the women. Protagonist of the novel Radhika studied in IIM-Ahmedabad, due to economic reforms a large number of urban youth attracted toward business schools, Radhika was also one of them. Education and employment opportunities amplified in this period due surge in economic growth of India.

Empowerment of urban middle class women: Era of post economic reforms in India empowered the urban middle class women. Radhika was educated middle class girl. She was provided with open environment and

more opportunities to learn in comparison with the girls of previous decades. Economic reforms resulted in higher economic growth of India and Indian got more disposable income which they utilised to uplift their living standards and for the education of their children. Economic opportunities of the period helped the educated girls to become financially independent. Financial independence helped these educated urban middle class girls to get a level playing field with their counterparts. Now these girls can choose their life partner. Job at an investment bank provided the financial independence for Radhika. This financial independence granted her rights and bargaining power to choose the husband of her choice.

Increase in Materialism Fervour and decline in Indian Values: Economic liberalised thought definitely improved the living standard of Indian middle class. Economic growth during this period provided more opportunities to Indian youth and made them more ambitious. So they became materialistic and judged relationship from the lens of profit and loss. In this era of careerism and materialistic fervour, ethics and values definitely took back seat. Radhika protagonist of the novel, portraying urban educated youth of India which became highly ambitious, materialistic and not hesitating to have sexual relationships to rise high on their career ladder. She had sexual relationship with her boyfriend Debu and her boss Neel Gupta who was even twenty year older than her. During this era of materialism and bodily freedom, Indian values compromised which was advocating the prohibition of sexual relationship before marriage and disapproved sexual relationship for seer materialistic fervour.

Depiction of Economic Educational Institutions and MNC's: In this era of liberalisation, globalisation and privatisation, Indian Institute of Management's (IIM's) got prominence and protagonist of the novel Radhika also educated from IIM-Ahmedabad. During this period India opened up its economy and many others countries also carried out economic reforms. Due to these reforms, it was become easy for the companies to do business and operate from more than one country, more and more multinational companies (MNC's) established during this period or widen their area of operations. In this novel, we have Goldman Sachs multinational company where Radhika worked, opened it offices in many countries of world.

Due to Globalisation novels portraying many countries of world: Globalisation is the result of multiple economic reforms carried out by many countries of this world, these reforms were instigated, guided, regulated and encouraged by IMF, World Bank and other prominent global economic institutions. Due to globalisation, it become easy to travel, trade and work in foreign countries. In this novel also, Chetan Bhagat depicted multiple locations across globe. Radhika in the novel lived, travelled and worked in many cities of this world. She initially lived and study in Delhi, then she moved to Ahmedabad to study in IIM-Ahmedabad. Radhika got job in Goldman Sachs, New York. In New York, she fell in relationship with Debu and had first sexual experience with Debu. Then she transferred to the Goldman Sachs office in Hong Kong where she met her boss Neel Gupta who was twenty years older than her. They went to Pangulasian Island Resort, Philippines where they just after the deal closing celebration dinner soaked in quite a few drinks and had sexual pleasure. Radhika equated sexual experience with Debu a boat and sex with her boss Neel Gupta a luxury cruise. After the strained relationship with her boss Neel Gupta, she applied for resignation but agreed to transfer to Goldman Sachs London office. She engaged with Brijesh and planned a theme wedding at Goa. Globalisation shrinks the whole world to tiny village, where people travelled across countries like they were travelling within the country. In the novel, Radhika travelled across many countries of the world.

Cutting boundaries of Castes, Regionalism and Communalism: Economic liberalisation and globalisation empowered the educated urban youth to cut the narrow boundaries of caste, region and religion. In corporate world, the boundaries of caste and region had narrowed down. Due to globalisation Indian youth travelled throughout world for job opportunities, so Indian distinctions of caste and region had no takers in this post liberalised world. Inter caste marriages are a new normal in the corporate world. Economic reforms promoted and emulated the culture of MNC's which declined the age old boundaries of castes, regionalism and communalism.

Conclusion: India's economic liberalisation affected the Indian society in multifaceted ways. It provided multiple career opportunities for educated urban youth and lifted the living standards of Indian folks. In this era of economic reforms, literary landscapes also transformed by liberalisation and globalisation. In the above discussed novels of Chetan Bhagat literary landscape limited to urban areas and protagonists of the novels belonged to middle class social milieu. Economic reforms provided impetus to urbanisation and proliferation of middle class persons. Symbols of economic liberalisation like Call Centers depicted in the novel 'One night @ the Call Center'. Many multinational companies established in India in the last three decades. Chetan Bhagat

portrayed the employees of these companies as main characters of the novel 'One Indian Girl'. These reforms empowered the urban educated girls and they became financial independent due to surge in employment opportunities and amplified educational prospects. Economic reforms provided further impetus to globalisation, due to which travelling, job prospects across the globe became new normal.

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