



## **Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat: Moral Version of Their Art**

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### **Abstract**

**Aim:** *The paper analyzes that Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat wrote novels with the mission to change the contemporary socio-political and economic scenario as they fail to compromise with the contemporary corrupt situations. As artists, they take risks in their careers and call a spade a spade.*

**Methodology and Approach:** *The study is based on the novels of Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat. The post-colonial approach is used here to analyze texts.*

**Outcome:** *The major tools of the novelists are irony and satire. Like Addison and Steele, they taught moral lessons with practical examples. Due to their positive approach to life, they attach importance to virtue, truthfulness, humility,*

*creativity, righteousness, gratitude, leadership, bravery, mental courage, etc., and condemn lechery, sensuality, greed, violence, ego, excessive obsession, lust for power, lust for beauty, anger, gluttony, dishonesty, dishonest means, corrupt ways, etc. Nobody can doubt their zeal for social reform.*

**Conclusion and Suggestion:** *The research paper concludes with the quotes and the principles of The Bhagwadgita as liberation, detachment, regular work, renunciation, etc. are important for us too.*

**Keywords:** Misappropriation, Marxist, Extinction, federalism, vindictiveness, self-illumination, temperance, and persistence.

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Despite their interest in the studies of Business Management, industrial growth, banking, etc., Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat studied *The Bhagwadgita* to seek the solution to many socioeconomic and political problems of the country. Here they analyzed the confusion of Arjuna as he was supposed to use his weapons against his teacher and cousins to protect Dharma. Lord Krishna explains to him the theory of Karma i.e. it is his duty to work regularly without expecting any results. The methods of work have got to be ethical for the permanent victory of good against evil. After all, the Kauravas had adopted wicked means to capture their share of the kingdom, and Duryodhan and Dushasan had insulted Draupadi in the open court. They had manipulated the game of chess to take away all the royal

benefits from the Pandavas. Lord Krishna explained to him the path of true knowledge and yoga, so essential for a warrior of lofty stature.

Then Lord Krishna told him the actual meaning of renunciation and liberation because everybody should keep himself detached from the world of Maya and illusion. All human beings are strangers on earth as this is not their permanent home. They have come from above and have to return to the divine soul. Arjuna needn't worry about earthly death as the soul is immortal. He has already died several times and will die later on in other births too. The cycle of death and birth ever goes on.

Then Lord Krishna explained to him the relationship between God and the world. Lord Krishna, being the incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is the sole creator of all animate and inanimate creatures and things. All the five elements air, water, fire, sky, and the earth have a motion with His orders. God is, was, and will be – it has got to be accepted by all human beings. The concept of cosmic evolution is a little complex and yet to be accepted by Arjuna. As an infant continues to evolve with time – he becomes a child, then a young man, then a middle-aged man, then an old man, and finally dies. So many seeds grow as small plants, evolve as trees, give fruits and finally fall. The process of evolution goes on like the process of creation, preservation, and destruction. He must accept the theory that the 'Lord is more than His creation'. (B 237)

All the saints in *The Upanishads*, *the Bhagwadgita* accept that it is essential to know the divine work process of God. Meditation helps the devotees to a great extent to get divine light. However, it is essential to know the difference between body and soul. The body is a victim of decay and death but the soul is not. It is the soul that gets divine light. It is with the help of the soul that a person realizes the mystery of all aspects of life such as birth, death, causes of suffering, cause-and-effect relationships, etc. Let Arjuna accept the mystery of the 'Tree of

Life' which is always blossoming. The difference between good and evil will ever exist due to the presence of a sense of possessiveness, ego, violent nature, rashness, anxiety, greed, illusions, anger, gluttony, sensual instincts, jealousy, perverted love, etc.

Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat are real devotees of God and don't doubt His supreme powers of creation, preservation, and destruction (of evils). For example, in *One Night @ Call Center* Vroom, Shyam, Major Uncle, Driver, Esha, Priyanka, Radhika, etc. are on the verge of death as their car skids off the top of a pit 50 feet deep. They are bound to die if the balance of the car is disturbed even for a few moments. Here God appears with His network and promises to help them if they promise to attach importance to 'imagination, intelligence, self-confidence and patience in times of failures'. Like other thinkers, Chetan Bhagat accepts the theory – God helps His devotees in times of crisis.

In *2 States* Krish offers prayer to God and requests Him to get him appointed in Citibank. God is prepared to help him if the latter remains truthful and sincere in his promises made to Ananya. Without losing any time he meets her and promises to marry her as planned earlier. This is how Chetan Bhagat, like Arun Joshi, expresses his faith in the generosity of God.

When Ananya is far away from Krish, he feels desolation due to her absence. Quite often he feels disturbed mentally as her father Swaminathan wants to arrange her marriage with Tamil Youngman Harish. In such hours of anxiety and emptiness, he seeks the blessings of Guruji in his ashram. Guruji listens to his tale of agony and suggests he 'surrender to God'. God takes care of His devotees when they surrender wholeheartedly to Him. Similarly, Gargi surrenders herself to God to get peace of mind and soul.

As a follower of Lord Krishna, Krish obeys this dictation of Guruji and is ultimately united with Ananya. Like a broad-minded young man, he is above

narrow communal feelings and rises above regionalism too. Here Chetan Bhagat accepts that the network of God is global working and everyone has to obey His orders throughout the world 24x7. Of course, God does not tolerate hatred, ego, violence, possessiveness, racial prejudices, ego, lust for power, lust for sexual pleasures, and immoral conduct and Chetan Bhagat does not approve sexual adventures of Krish and Ananya before marriage. Secondly, their liking for alcohol can't be justified on moral grounds. No Hindu culture permits this immoral conduct in any situation. In *One Night @ Call Center* Priyanka and Shyam enjoy sex during the dating period and the author does not approve of this. Shyam feels jealous of Priyanka's ecstasy when she is going to marry Ganesh, N.R.I. from the U.S.A. But his jealousy is not approved by the author. Since there has been a break-up between them, Shyam has nothing to do with her now.

As supporters of the theory of art for the sake of morality, Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat follow and advocate Gandhian principles of truth, non-violence, non-possessiveness, trusteeship system, cottage industries, the relation of noble means and noble ends, etc. They rise above the prejudices against the Dalits and remain ever-prepared to grant equal rights to all Indian citizens without considerations of caste, color, and creed. Sindi, Romi, Tuaala, Meena, Ratan Rathore, Hari, Shyam, Govind Patel, Raghav, Madhav, etc. appreciate Gandhianism throughout their life. In *2 States* Kavita ji, Krish, Ananya, and her parents visit the Sabarmati Ashram where Gandhi lived in his old age and yet guided the volunteers of the Indian Congress whenever they needed his help. All these people feel impressed with the fact that Gandhi ji spiritualized politics. In this novel, Krish and Ananya refer briefly to the Dandi March of Gandhi ji. Like Gandhi ji, the characters of Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat are prepared to grant equal rights to women.

As a follower of Gandhi ji Arun Joshi does not approve of illicit sexual affairs between Sindi and June and then between Babu and June. What is the result of such sexual passions? Sindi returns to India and joins the Khemka Group of industries and June's expectations remain unfulfilled. Then Babu enjoys sex with her regularly and ultimately decides to marry her. Due to his lack of courage, he fails to do so as he does not hope to get the permission of his father for this marriage. Quite often he seeks the help of Sheila in this affair but in vain! June becomes pregnant and dies of an abortion. Babu dies in an accident. With the help of June's sexual affairs with Sindi and Babu, Arun Joshi condemns the people who engage themselves in unethical deeds and then suffer. Kama is an essential part of life as procreation is possible with sexual relations between husband and wife and this is graceful through marriage and not otherwise. The author aptly believes that illegal sexual affairs will create chaos in society and hence he satirizes Sindi, June, and Babu for illicit sexual affairs. The importance of chastity can't be neglected.

Similarly, Billy Biswas, the hero of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a man of loose character and forgets his sincere wife Meena for Bilasia. While living among the primitive people he develops physical relations with Malaysia and they have two children (though no marriage ceremony takes place). Such extra-marital relations destroy social discipline and can't be justified in any way. The fact is that Billy Biswas left their job at Delhi University to analyze the problems, rituals, traditions, and patterns of life of primitive people and also the scheduled tribes. But no report is submitted by him to the government of India as he does not concentrate on observations and never records his findings for reaching conclusions. All his plan of research work in this field proves to be utopian and impractical and hence satirized by Arun Joshi. Had Billy Biswas been wise and prudent, he would have taken bold steps for improving the life of

miserable primitive people. He might have recommended to the government for providing education to them but alas! He does not perform his duties towards Meena, Romi, and the underprivileged backward people. Thought, without action, is real mental debauchery and Billy Biswas is a victim of this vice.

Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat are great supporters of a democratic form of government and ardently wish that fundamental rights should be given to all sections of society. Let the people enjoy the benefits of equality, liberty, education, religion, justice, etc. so that they may develop their personalities. In *India Positive* Chetan Bhagat frankly satirizes the blind imitators of Narendra Modi and at the same time finds many decent changes in India due to the new economic plans introduced after 2014. Steps have been taken to provide free gas cylinders to nearly seven crore poor people. A lot of houses have been built for poor and ignorant citizens. Ujjawala Yojna has electrified many houses in remote areas. Better benefits have been given to the soldiers. Aayushman Yojna has proved helpful to the poor masses as they get free medical treatment for their diseases in various hospitals. Many subsidiaries are directly transferred to the bank account of farmers. Many other schemes have been launched for the welfare of farmers in the last four years. Chetan Bhagat admires these schemes in *India positively* as he is a supporter of Directive Principles of State Policy.

Similarly, Arun Joshi was a supporter of the rights of laborers who worked in the industries of Khemka Group. He wanted that the laborers ought to get proper wages for their work and exploitation of every kind must be stopped at every cost. But Sheila and Mr. Khemka don't pay attention to the social welfare schemes for laborers and wish to get maximum profits from their industries. Yet Sindi remains the supporter of the interests of laborers. In *The Apprentice* Arun Joshi is worried about the widows who have lost their husbands in the war against China (1962). A lot of families are ruined due to this Indo-China war and Ratan

could not continue his higher studies due to the death of his father. Arun Joshi paints a touching picture of a soldiers' colony where the poverty of war widows can be observed easily. No sincere efforts were made by C.D.A. department to manage proper pensions for the widows. There was no vigor and zeal in the heart of defeated soldiers as none came forward to sympathize with them in days of emptiness and nothingness. Pt. Nehru felt cheated as he never expected any attack upon India from China. The economic resources of the country were limited and properly required weapons could not be purchased for the defense of the nation. Even at such a critical time Ratan Rathore earned money with foul means and took bribes for getting the bills passed by the authorities. Ultimately he is arrested for the misappropriation of funds and he had to suffer for his foul deeds. Despite being a Marxist Arun Joshi does not appreciate this imperialism of China.

Ratan Rathore indeed suffered a lot of agonies after the death of his father. He reached Delhi to search for a job for himself. Just he has two hundred rupees with him and he finds himself helpless in this city of glamor and splendor. Wherever he goes, he gets negative replies. Yet he continues to struggle for a job. His mother always taught him the importance of money. He feels physically weak and exhausted due to hunger and anxiety. He can't depend upon anybody for support these days. Finally, he gets the job of a clerk in the Central Defense Department on a small salary. Now there is no limit to his expectations though salary does not permit him to lead a lavish life. He regularly gets the shock as many employees will be retrenched as soon as the war ends. But the Rehabilitation Department was established by the government just after the war and he was transferred to this new department. He feels anxiety about marriage and soon gets married. But he wishes to have a decent standard of living and hence accepts bribes. The author does not justify the theory – 'Ends justify the

means and eventually he is arrested due to several allegations. Poverty does not allow a person to make money by foul means.

In *2 States* Chetan Bhagat also exposes the people who accept bribes. Here he refers to the political movement that Gandhiji started for Swaraj. There he refers to the partition of India (1947) in the name of Islam. A lot of Hindus and Muslims were killed in this tragedy.

In *Five Points Someone* he refers to the invasion of the U.S.A. upon Iraq and the brutal murder of Sultan Saddam. The students of I.I.T. support the policies of the U.S.A. as this government grants many scholarships to engineering students. Still, they have hopes of getting jobs in U.S. Companies. On the contrary, they expect nothing from Iraq. They don't express any sympathy for the people of Iraq who got killed in this war. So, both artists have political consciousness and they mix ethical realism with political realism.

In *The City and the River* Arun Joshi points out the demerits of democracy with special reference to India as the members of a family wish to be in power for generations. Here the Grand Master admires the contribution of the family to the nation. Ironically he says that the future of the country depends upon the sacrifices of this family. The elections are contested in vain as only the Grand Master is to be the Prime Minister of the nation. Arun Joshi criticizes the imposition of emergency (1975) in the country when all fundamental rights of the people were withdrawn. Even the judicial system was interfered with by Congress authorities. Liberty of expression was taken away and editors of newspapers were arrested along with the leaders of opposition parties. Indira Gandhi declared a 20 points program in the national interest and nobody could dare to raise his voice against her. The emergency rule continued for 19 months and then general elections were declared by her. Like Khushwant Singh, Namita Gokhale, Githa

Hariharan, etc., Arun Joshi satirizes this step of Indira Gandhi. Other vices of democracy have also been exposed by him in his novels.

Similarly, Chetan Bhagat is a bold democrat and supports the concepts of fundamental rights, impartial judiciary, secularism, federal structure of government, Directive Principles of State Policy, fair elections, education for all, liberty to all political parties, the importance of public opinion, etc. In *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, he criticizes Bittoo Mama who distributes Trishuls in Gujrat in the name of Hindu Jagran. Parekhji remains a guiding force for the volunteers of Shiv Sena. These two leaders make Hindus feel that Hinduism is in danger of extinction and only the Shiv Sena Party can defend them in times of violence and communal violence. Ali and his father Prof. Naseer speak in favor of secularism. Chetan Bhagat, like Shashi Tharoor, asks the people to be conscious of the differences between real secularism and fake secularism. Many times communal violence spreads in the towns due to fanatics and fundamentalists. Bittoo Mama, Dhiraj, and Omi get killed in the communal violence of Gujarat and Govind Patel finds himself broken-hearted, dull, and morose. Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir controversy created chaos in the country for nearly four months in 1992 and the issue of Ram Mandir was resolved on 17<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2019 by the Supreme Court of India. So, both artists condemn communalism and support broad-minded secularism.

With the medium of their art, Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat assert that bold and brave human beings face the various problems of their life and don't cry sitting on the threshold of their house. The question is – Who is the man who does not have problems? The kings had to fight great battles to protect their boundaries from their enemies. The Prime Ministers and the Presidents have to convince the voters to get their votes after every five years. If the particular minister does not obey the rules of party discipline he is ousted from the party. The members of the

opposition parties always create problems for the ruling party (as mentioned in *The City and The River* and *The Three Mistakes of My Life*). Hence, both artists ask people to be bold, courageous, hard, tough, wise, prudent and hopeful so as to overcome the problems of life. The clouds are a source of hope for the farmers as their prosperity depends upon the showers of rain. But the hawk flies higher than the clouds and defeats the clouds in speed.

So, the struggle between the wise and the foolish people, between the brave and the cowards, between the rational and the irrational, the intelligent and the dull people, etc. ever continues. But then, people like Ryan, Ali, Ishan, Shyam, Vroom, Priyanka, Radhika, Krish, Ananya, Gopal, Aarti, Raghav, etc. win against the struggles of life. Just they make wise plans to face the future and have the intelligence to find the difference between wisdom and unwisdom. In his motivational speeches, Chetan Bhagat boldly asks young men and women not to run to escape from the contemporary problems created by unemployment, poverty, defective economic planning, etc. but to face the situations in which they find themselves stuck. God will come to help them. The sea is not always cool without waves and tides and yet a man like Santiago (*The Old Man And The Sea*) knows how to struggle for the fish after the struggle of two days and two nights – 'Nobody knows when luck comes. A man should be ready when luck comes. (OMS)

In each novel, they discuss and analyze the physical and mental powers of their people against the storms of life. For example, in *One Indian Girl*, Radhika is made conscious of the lack of physical beauty at an early age. Yet she continues to read the best books for her future career and always tops the merit list. After passing their M.B.A. from Ahmedabad she joins to solve the complex economic distresses of big companies. Every file is a new challenge for her. She analyzes the complicated problems of industries that are going to collapse finally. Yet she

studies the ways to make them survive in the age of global competition and finally succeeds. In New York, she works hard and gets promoted with a huge bonus. Yet she feels hurt when Debu does not join the party in her honor. She feels hurt when Debu is not prepared to accept her proposal of marriage and regards her as 'an uncaring woman'. Out of dejection she resigns from her job, buys a costly ring from the market, and reaches their apartment of Debu to convince him of marriage. Here she is shocked to find him enjoying sex with another girl. It is too much for her and she gets herself transferred to Hong Kong and bids farewell to Debu as well as New York. By this time she has learned the skill to survive in this world of wicked people like Debu. The same things happen to her in Hong Kong and she leaves Neel Gupta due to his vindictive nature.

In *Positive Psychology* C.R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez explore the basis of human strength in a logical manner and admire people for their virtuous conduct and prudent nature. They analyze the positive approach of people who follow the path of 'wisdom, creativity, broad-mindedness, perspective, persistence, good character, hope, love of learning, integrity, humanity, generosity and possess social intelligence' (PP 19-20). They attach due importance to 'justice, social responsibility, fairness, leadership, temperance, humility, self-control, appreciate excellence, feel gratitude, possess future-mindedness, and 'life is beautiful' for them. Due to their faith in life, God, and the eternal soul, they follow the path of spirituality like R.W. Emerson and R.N. Tagore. Their vitality is all the time surprising as they don't compromise with vices for short-term gains. They know how to get rid of 'mental illness', dementia, and neurosis and think of social reconstruction. (PP 19-20)

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* Arun Joshi introduces Tuala as a specimen of positive psychology because she follows the path of detachment and liberation. She has come to India from Sweden as she hates the materialistic

world. She concentrates on simple living and high thinking and lives with most minimum things. She feels shocked when Billy Biswas is missing. She feels sympathy for miserable Meena and finds herself unable to help her. Of course, she fails to appreciate the irresponsible conduct of Billy Biswas.

In *The Last Labyrinth* Gargi isolates herself from Som Bhaskar and Aftab and leaves Varanasi and reaches the lap of the Himalayas to seek peace and liberation. Som Bhaskar fails to admire her approach to life. Yet Gargi is the embodiment of patience, and self-illumination whereas Som Bhaskar represents self-preservation.

But Chetan Bhagat does not create characters like Tula, and Gargi and his people are men/women of this real world of complexities. Except for Gurj ji (2 *States*), none of them isolates himself/herself from the world of struggles.

In *Half-girlfriend* Chetan Bhagat illustrates the validity of knowledge, wisdom, creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and broad perspective through the Madhav-Riya love story. Madhav has come to St. Stephen's College to seek admission to B.A. As the Professors of the Admission Committee fail to appreciate his ignorance of English communication skills, they are in a fix – What to do in his case? As he has applied for admission to the sports quota, he is finally selected. As an expert player of basketball, he comes closer to Riya due to humility and perspective. Despite being the 'Prince' of Dumraon, he leads a simple life in the college and the hostel. Due to his persistence, he continues to play basketball for many months. Despite his weak English he continues to study Sociology as his main subject. Nobody can doubt his integrity of character and broad-mindedness. Due to his creativity, he advises Riya on the tricks of winning basketball matches. While visiting Riya's palatial house he feels impressed with her richness and high standard of living and yet continues to meet her on an equal level. Due to her noble nature, Riya does not have any ego about

her richness. Of course, she possesses wonderful self-control and does not allow Madhav to enjoy sex with her at any cost. She feels offended when he tells her: 'Deti hai to dey Verna kat ley'. (H 75) This unethical statement of Madhav is intolerable to her. Soon Madhav realizes his folly and wishes to be forgiven by her for his absurdity. Yet they don't talk for weeks after that.

Madhav feels heartbroken when she gets married to Rohan and leaves the college. Of course, he misses her every day in class and on the court. As he does not join the bank job on a high salary, he returns to Dumraon to help his mother in managing Dumraon Royal School. He is positive in life as he does not work here for the money. Like other citizens, he is fed up with the shattered roads and rotten education system of Bihar. He takes the firm decision to do the best he can. With the help of two teachers and a worthy mother, he teaches the poor Bihar children who can't afford any fees. They have no money to buy decent books. No uniforms, no communication skills, no games, no computers, no toilets? Yet Mahadev plans to improve the academic standard of students with limited means.

It is said that there is a silver lining amid dark clouds. He is told by the basic education authorities and Madam Samantha that American capitalist and philanthropist Bill Gates is going to visit a few selected schools in Bihar after a few months. He has to make a speech before them and present the requirements of the school so that academic improvements may be suggested and presented before Bill Gates and his team. But he has to make the speech in English and this creates tension for him. While taking coaching in spoken English Skills in Patna he meets Riya and tells her his immediate problem. Due to her intellectual positive strength, she helps him with his project and all her suggestions are valid even today. Here she is highly creative and of course humanitarian in her approach toward the poor students of Dumraon. With her persistent labor of a few weeks, Mahadev makes a touching speech before Bill Gates and the Royal School gets 12

computers and more than 20 thousand dollars as the first grant for the upliftment of the school. Toward the end of the novel, the author mentions the fact that this school made tremendous success due to the positive approach of Rani Sahiba, Mahadev, Riya, Bill Gates, and two other teachers.

Thus, Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat want to change the corrupt socio-economic and political Indian scenario with a positive approach. Both of them are highly creative, hopeful, wise, and prudent. Due to their sharp sense of observation and wise experiences, they successfully portrayed probable people with their miseries and misfortunes. Yet he asserted the need for integrity, persistence, love of learning, optimism, qualities of noble citizenship, and playfulness in life. Their major characters face the challenges of life with vigor and zeal.

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