



## Approach to Negative Psychology in Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat

Nitish Kumar<sup>1\*</sup>  
Dr Amita Agarwal<sup>2</sup>

ORCID 0000-0002-1956-7408

Research Scholar, C.C.S. University, Meerut, UP 250005 India

**\*Corresponding Author:** Nitish Kumar<sup>1</sup>, [nitish9997118009@gmail.com](mailto:nitish9997118009@gmail.com)  
Research Scholar, C.C.S. University, Meerut, UP 250005 India

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor and Head, Department of English, M.L. and J.N.K. Girls College Saharanpur—247001, UP, India

### Abstract

**Aim:** *This paper shows that Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat have condemned the negative values such as greed, ego, lechery, lack of self-control, possessiveness, hopelessness, emptiness, indolence, theft, lust for power etc. in their novels. They have described the sufferings of people who have no clear positive vision in life. Sindi, Billy Biswas, Aftab, Som Bhaskar, Ratan Rathore, Ryan, Alok, Hari, Boss Bakshi, Vidya, Govind, Bittoo Mama, Gopal, Aarti, Radhika, Madhav etc. suffer a lot whenever they are under the control of their earthly passions and materialistic ambitions.*

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

**Outcome:** *Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat don't deny the disadvantages of negative psychology and appreciate the positive psychology like C.R. Snyder and Shane J. Lopez.*

**Conclusion and Suggestion:** *Like Buddha, the novelists accept that change is the law of Nature. Time changes and things also change with time. Yet they ask people to attach importance to hope, wisdom, learning, prudence, hope, hard work, humility, integrity, persistence etc. as men/women can make progress even in the age of cut-throat competition.*

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Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat analyzed the wide gap between negative psychology and positive psychology and ask the readers to neglect the dictates of the former and follow the suggestions of the latter in life. In his novels Arun Joshi paints people like Sindi, Billy Biswas, Som Bhasker, Gargi, Ratan Rathore, Tuula, Brigadier etc. who generally fail to share their thoughts with their friends and relations and hence talk to their own conscience. While talking to their real self they feel safe and often don't need any special words for that conversation. On so many occasions they feel hurt in the complex worldly situations and as a result seek isolation. They feel forced to keep their ideas to themselves. For

example, in *The Foreigner* Sindi can't share the tale of his love affairs with June with anybody and often feels himself guilty for that. Even Babu can't share his longings with anybody as Sheila is far away from him and there is generation gap between him and his father. In *The Apprentice* Ratan Rathore has his own inner tensions as he is conscious of the fact that he is earning money with foul means and yet fails to share his secret with his wife and mother. He does not have any friend to share his dilemma — What to do and what not to do? This confusion continues to exist in his mind as he can't share his mental agony with the Brigadier too. Naturally he feels forced to keep his problems to himself and eventually suffers loneliness on the mental level though he has been living with his wife for months. At the same time, he does not know that his wife has been offering prayers to God for getting a son. Since she does not share her obsession with Ratan, she also feels forced to confine her desire to herself only. People like Ryan, Alok, Hari, Neha, Vroom, Shyam, Priyanka, Govind Patel, Omi, Ishan, Radhika, Riya, Madhav etc. have the same problem on many occasions and consequently suffer at the mental level.

In *One Indian Girl* Radhika is apparently happy as she is working in a prestigious company Goldman Sachs New York and is getting handsome salary plus bonus regularly. She enjoys the company of Debu in her apartment and they enjoy sexually without any restriction. However, her mental peace is disturbed by her Mom who asks her regularly to search a suitable match for herself as every woman needs a man in her life. Her problem originates immediately as she has a man in her life for months and yet fails to reveal his details to her Mom. When she asks Debu to marry her, her agony increases further as he turns down her proposal because she is not going to be a 'caring mother' of his future children. Her agony reaches its climax when she reaches his room with a ring and finds him enjoying sex with another girl. So, she finds herself tense as she has resigned her job for him. New York is no more worth living for her as she feels herself lonely,

desolate, dormant, dull, dark and gloomy. This is the moment when she is totally alone with her mind — None to share her grief with. Since her arrival in New York, she has been highly conscious of her self-dignity and now she finds herself responsible for her disaster. All her fanciful world is shattered by the ego of Debu as he has used her for his personal sexual pleasures.

Here the author shows the difference between love and lust. The same story repeats in her life in Hong Kong when she feels herself intimate with Neel Gupta. In spite of being a married man, he freely enjoys sex with her. She has met his wife and children in the mall and yet fails to take precautions due to her thoughtlessness. On the beach she allows him to have sexual affair with herself as she forgets her self-dignity. Again, she can't share her relations with Neel Gupta with her Mom. As Mom asks her again and again for marriage, she searches the Youngman Brijesh from San Francisco and decides to marry him. Arranged marriage is scheduled to materialize in Marriott Hotel, Goa. Even before marriage she enjoys drinking whisky and beer and smoking weeds with him. Here she shares her past with two love adventures with him and he approves the same.

When she is in Goa with the final programme of marriage with Brijesh, she feels tense with the arrival of Debu and Neel Gupta. Debu asks her to cancel her marriage with Brijesh as the former feels sorry for his past rude conduct with her in New York. He claims to be the first love in her life. Then Neel Gupta meets her after giving divorce to his worthy wife for her sake. A chartered plane is ready to carry her off to Hong Kong and she has to elope with him without bothering for any responsibility. Due to her wisdom and prudence, she overpowers her confusion and tension and asks Debu to leave the hotel immediately. She can't forgive him due to his ego and unethical conduct in New York. Then she asks Neel Gupta to leave her as she can't trust such a wavering man who has not been sincere to his virtuous wife. How can she expect him to be sincere to her in future? Finally, she tells Brijesh that she can't marry him as she wants to 'find

herself'. This is really disgusting for Mehtas and Gulathis as they feel insulted due to this negative approach of Radhika. There is no limit to the agony of her parents now as they find fault with her ego and misconduct. Perhaps her rank has made her proud of herself! in spite of being in the company of Aditi and cousins, she fails to share her grief with anyone and confines her agony to herself only. After having visited a few countries, she meets Brijesh in San Francisco and helps him in his new project so that he may settle his independent business. Once again Radhika finds herself alone, sad and gloomy. There is no boy-friend in her life now.

Here the artist analyzes her subconscious mind as many thoughts come to her mind from past and present. Most of the time, she feels confused due to so many impressions about Debu, Neel, Neel's wife, Radhika's Mom, Aditi, Marriott Hotel, Goa, Brijesh etc. Of course, she feels forced to have long discussion with her conscience only. During this long journey she has none to share her grief. Is she not to be blamed for rejecting Brijesh as her life-partner?

Here the artist penetrates into her negative psychology as she does not compromise with social code. Why did she arrange her marriage function in Goa if she hated the concept of marriage? Why did she not marry Brijesh if she wanted to lead married life? Actually, her mind and soul fail to show her the right path and as a result she suffers. She failed to come out of her dark and gloomy thoughts as she lacks self-confidence. Once again, she finds herself alone in her office of Goldman Sachs. Lord Krishna tells Arjuna:

For the most part we are unaware of the Self in us because our attention is engaged by objects we like or dislike. We must get away from them, to become aware of the Divine in us. If we do not realize the pointlessness, the irrelevance and the squalor of our ordinary life, the true Self becomes the enemy of the ordinary life.

The Universal Self and the personal Self are not antagonistic to each other. (B 189)

In the novel *The Foreigner* Sindi fails to adjust with the economic policies of Mr. Khemka as the former hates exploitation of laborers. Due to his keen interest in detachment and liberation he fails to develop interest in his financial status. He is advised by Mr. Khemka to develop social relations with officers so that he may succeed in getting several approvals for the Khemka Group of Industries. Sindi shares his agony with his conscience and admits:

With measured paternalness he told me that to move up in India one needed good contacts and that such contacts could not be developed without a proper social life. I told him politely that I was not interested in moving up. A proper social life therefore was not quite necessary to me. (F 42)

On the contrary Sheila can be ranked with Radhika as both of them are interested in a life of official dignity and financial progress. As Radhika enjoys the company's work, Sheila controls the companies of her father. Of course, she is shocked to listen the following statement of Sindi about Babu: "Your father loved him like a factory. Babu was a pawn in your father's hand with no will or life of his own ..." (F 51). Arun Joshi reveals the mental agony of Sindi as he survives in his dark world without any intimate:

Somebody had begotten me without a purpose and so far, I had lived without a purpose, unless you could call the search for peace a purpose. Perhaps I felt like that because I was a foreigner in America. But then, what difference would it have made if I had lived in Kenya or India or any other place for that matter! It seemed to me that I would still be a foreigner. (F 55)

Due to his ethical approach Sindi fails to understand the fact that two account books are maintained in the Industries of Khemka — One contains the

real records of income and expenses. But the second one shows fake accounts of low income and large expenses to evade income tax. Mr. Khemka hates the word Proletariat. Arun Joshi illustrates the gap between the proletariats and the bourgeois:

"Proletariat?" I said slightly puzzled.

"What has the proletariat to do with this business here. Anyhow, aren't most of us working here proletarians?"

"You are petty bourgeois." The way he said, I half expected him to spit in my face. He took a deep breath and sat very straight in his chair.

"India is working towards a new age. Mr. Oberoi," he said grandly.

"An age in which each man will be equal to another."

"Of course," I said politely.

"That is precisely where you're wrong. There is never a beginning. Nor is there an end. There is no end to suffering, no end to the struggle between good and evil." (F 38-39)

The above conversation confirms the fact that capitalism had strengthened itself in India after 20 years of Independence. Similarly, capitalism did not allow socialist tendencies to grow in U.S.A. In *The Foreigner* and *One Indian Girl* Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat describe the socio-economic efforts of capitalism. There is a basic difference between Sindi and Radhika. Sindi fails to reach any final conclusions about God, eternal soul, the aim of life, the difference between finite and the infinite etc. because there is no saint to guide him. On the contrary Radhika is preoccupied with her official work and has no time to ask herself — Who am I? What is the basic aim of human life? etc.

In *The Last Labyrinth* Som Bhaskar fails to understand the difference between love and lust. He ignores his beloved wife though she loves him. But he feels physically attracted towards Anuradha on account of lust. She asks him to

return to his wife as she understands the realities of Lal-Haveli. Love of Aftab for Anuradha is based on sexual attraction.

In *Half-girlfriend* Chetan Bhagat explains this difference between love and lust. Riya and Madhav feel attracted towards each other after a few meetings in St. Stephen's College. But Madhav feels obsession for her as he finds himself in the grip of passion. She visits his hostel room twice to relax and not to enjoy sex with him. Actually, Madhav misunderstands the conduct of Riya though she possesses wonderful self-control. She has no mind to enjoy sex with Madhav as she has not taken any decision about her life-partner. On the contrary Madhav does not think beyond sexual pleasures. Here the author asserts with Riya's conduct that pure love can be gained with good means and no hypocrisy is required for that. Pure love is the union of two hearts who have no material expectation from each other. It is the union of soul and mind when the beloved seeks the union with the lover. As Shakespeare illustrates in the sonnet *True Love*, 'Love is not time's fool' (TL) and does not depend upon earthly considerations of money, physical beauty and changing social situations.

After Riya's marriage with Rohan, Madhav feels her absence too much but remains helpless. After passing B.A. and rejecting the offer of service in Bank, he returns to his village Dumraon and helps his mother in managing Royal School meant for poor village children. When he comes to know about the proposed visit of Bill Gates, he feels tense. He is told by Madam Samantha that the requirements of the school have got to be presented to Bill Gates and his team with the medium of a speech of ten minutes in English. In spite of being the product of St. Stephen's College, he doesn't have the capability to speak in English and hence joins the coaching center in Patna. Here he meets Riya all of a sudden as she has been divorced by Rohan and she has joined Nestle Company to promote company's yogurt in Bihar. Soon they become friends again and she even visits Dumraon village to observe the status of Royal School. However, she remains



self-confident and gives him tips to improve his English. Once again Madhav wishes to kiss her and hug her passionately. But she does not allow him to cross the limits of decency and after his speech is over, she leaves the village, her apartment of Patna, gets her money converted in dollars, gets visa for U.S.A. and leaves for New York with the false information that she is a cancer patient and has only three months to survive. At this stage Madhav's love for Riya has matured and he searches for her in many hospitals where patients get treatment for cancer. Finally, he realizes with the bank's information of conversion of her balance in dollars that she has left for New York as it was the passion of her life to become a singer in a bar in New York.

After thorough search for two months Madhav ultimately meets her as Riya singing in the bar. Their love is no more a mere physical passion and both get united as husband and wife in Bihar and start working for the education of children of Dumraon Royal School. After two years they get a son and feel satisfied with the improvements of school education. Here they establish a basketball court also for the physical fitness of students. So, pure lover Madhav gets united with his beloved Riya.

In *The Three Mistakes of My Life* Vidya's love for Govind is just the hunger of body and she fails to realize the purity of love. Since the very beginning she has negative approach towards life and education. Again and again, Govind tells her that she has only one hour to learn Maths. but she talks of worldly affairs instead of Maths. As time passes, she becomes a victimizer and Govind feels himself to be a victim of her love-tricks. Of course, he can't be forgiven for enjoying sex with her nine times and he tells Omi that he has been blackmailed emotionally by her and his fault is that he could not control his sexual passion. Had she not taken the lead, he would not have enjoyed sexual intercourse with her. Both of them had to suffer for their passion and she is sent to Bombay to join a P.R. Course and Govind continues to sell stationery and books on his shop. Had

they been pure lovers, they would have married each other. Friends of Govind fail to appreciate his interest in Vidya though her consoling sentences are very affective. Negative psychology of Vidya proves fatal for both — Govind as well as Vidya. They don't share their emotion with family members and friends and Govind ultimately makes an attempt to commit suicide.

In the novel *Five Points Someone* Chetan Bhagat does not hide the negative psychology of his people such as Alok, Hari, Neha, Venkat, Prof. Cherian, etc. though these people have their merits too. For example, Alok fails to concentrate properly upon his studies and regular assignments. Every time he is worried of his family's problems and the sickness of father is the greatest source of his mental agony. His mother regularly reminds him of his responsibility towards the family. He is asked to think of the marriage of his growing sister. As ill luck would have it, he joins the company of Ryan and Hari. Ryan is highly impressive when he asks them to be original in their approach to life. He believes that students should have new thoughts in their subjects so that they may contribute to the prosperity of the country. He laments the fact that I.I.T. has not yet produced any Nobel Prize winner to the world. It is sad I.I.T. Professors don't attend world conferences and never write research papers on their subject. It is sad that they don't have command on their subject. It is sad that they have been teaching the same traditional papers in Mechanical Engineering. Long back Prof. Cherian got ten points out of ten. But then he has written no books to confirm his command of the subject.

Due to his negative psychology Ryan asks Hari and Alok to play games every evening as only bookish knowledge is not enough. After buying scooty, he takes them to Connaught Place frequently to watch movies. He blames Alok for mugging each subject instead of learning it. His worst plan is to take them to the roof of I.I.T. building and make them enjoy Vodka and intoxicating cigarettes. This conception of life is highly unethical and unjustified. Then he arranges the

meeting of friends with the purpose to organize C2D i.e., cooperation to dominate. It means that he wants to topple the existing pattern of education so that all authority of administration is controlled by students. Then he asks Hari to climb the room of Neha to wish her happy birthday on the night of 3rd November. When Prof. Cherian finds that there is somebody in the roof of Neha, he shouts — 'Who is there'? Ryan replies — 'Your father'. Then he suggests that he should have replied — 'Your son-in-law with his friends'. (FPS 132) Such conduct is not expected from decent students of any college and university. Students are sent to I.I.T. to study for their bright future and not to waste time seeing films, drinking Vodka, smoking cigarettes and insulting Professors. After all every I.I.T. has its reputation in the academic world at international level and system can't be changed overnight due to the suggestions of careless students like Ryan.

Hari plans to be in the good books of Prof. Cherian and studies Index with full devotion. Neha has promised him to speak high of him to her father if he secures 10 out of 10 points. Due to his lack of self-confidence, he trembles just before his viva-voce and Ryan make him drink Vodka to collect self-confidence. How disgusting and nasty? Prof. Cherian failed to tolerate this nonsense and asks Hari to leave the lab. Hari does not have the capability to face any oral test during his stay in I.I.T. and cuts a sorry figure every time. Due to his negative psychology Alok jumps from the roof of I.I.T. building to commit suicide. This is all due to their perverted thinking and negative approach to life. Samir, son of Prof. Cherian, also commits suicide as he is unable to qualify for admission in I.I.T.

Examination is regarded as the best tool of evaluating the merit of students and they are expected to secure good points with hard labor. In *India Positive* and *What Young India* wants Chetan Bhagat advises students to devote themselves to studies and study the best books on each subject as there is no alternative of hard

labor. Due to negative psychology Ryan proposes Hari and Alok to steal the question-paper on Index from the office of Prof. Cherian and Hari and Alok join the plan. Just they don't want to take any risk and yet fail to oppose him. Is this the way to succeed in examination? Eventually Ryan, Hari and Alok are caught red-handed while stealing the question-paper and then DISCO suspends their one semester and the Dean slaps them with sneer. Where does their negative psychology lead them to? Is there any limit to their humiliation for six months? Now nobody is willing to talk to them. Had Prof. Veera not sympathized with them in their rainy days, the situation would have been critical for Hari and Alok. Hari hails from the family of army officer and his father would have been rough with him if he had known all this. Alok's family too would have been shocked if the parents had known this.

Hari does not have grand character as he enjoys watching movies, drinking Vodka and smoking cigarettes. Then he enjoys meeting Neha to satisfy his lust for sexual pleasure. He even creates her interest in Vodka and cigarettes. Finally, he enjoys sex with her. Due to Ryan's plan, he gets the duplicate keys prepared with Neha's help. Is there any moral in his character? Why does he not raise his voice against the suggestions of Ryan? Is it enough to sympathize with Neha on the issue of her brother's death? Is it proper to take her to the isolated forest for fun? The Dean and Prof. Cherian aptly remark that the standard of education is falling down regularly in I.I.T.

C. R. Synder and Shane J. Lopez has asserted the positive 'human strengths' in *Positive Psychology* and illustrated ethical values as hope, knowledge, wisdom, prudence, temperance, persistence, creativity, virtue, love for learning, curiosity, courage, integrity self-control, humility, love for justice etc. Arun Joshi and Chetan Bhagat assert the value with these positive values in their novels and ask the readers to get rid of violence, hopelessness, unwisdom, thoughtlessness, greed, lust for power, lechery, desolation, emptiness, indolence,

dishonesty, intolerance, self-indulgence, etc. so that they may lead a decent life. A minute study of their novels confirms this fact. In *The Foreigner* Arun Joshi condemns lechery, exploitation of man by man, gap between Haves and Have-Nots and wavering nature of Sindi. In *The Apprentice* he satirizes the corrupt means that Ratan Rathore adopts to earn money. In *The Last Labyrinth* he exposes the greed of Som Bhasker. In *The City and The River*, he illustrates the demerits of democratic set up and the emergency rule as imposed upon India by Indira Gandhi. Similarly, Chetan Bhagat describes the corrupt education in I.I.T. and asserts the need of originality of thought. In *One Night @ Call Center*, he points out the evils of corporate life and asks the readers to have nationalism for bright image of India at the world level. In *Half-girlfriend* he depicts the need of pure love between lover and the beloved and draws the attention of government authorities towards backwardness of Bihar. In *2 States* he wants intimate relations among people of different states and accepts the theory of unity in diversity. In *Revolution 2020* he expects healthy changes in socio-political and eco-cultural system of India with the help of wise and prudent students. So, like R.N. Tagore, they understand the existing mixture of good and evil forces in the system of the country and yet hope for the bright future of India with positive approach to life. Negative vision is bound to lead us to our doom.

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### Nitish Kumar

Nitish Kumar (M.A., NET) is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Hindu College Moradabad and also pursuing Ph.D. from C.C.S. University Meerut.

### Dr Amita Agarwal

Dr Amita Agarwal is Associate Professor and Head in the Department of English, M.L. and J.N.K. Girls College Saharanpur—247001, UP, India