

Identity Crisis in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat 'Two States' and 'Half Girlfriend'

Abstract

Great and real literature has the ability to transform and sow the seeds of courage and build knowledge. The new millennium is fraught with challenges and we can ill-afford to live in our own comfort zones. The humanity is facing various issues in context to culture, morality, gender equality; values of relations due to globalization. Import and export of the beliefs etc are becoming so gross that sometimes it gives birth to identity crisis. Identity crisis is a grave thought which means being not clear about a person's kind or what he or she wants to be. Through this paper, an attempt is made to explore the identification of character's spirits. The novels of Bhagat explore various cultural, traditional and religious beliefs. It is to analyze various phases of the Indian Society through the characterization.

Keywords: Identity crisis, Globalization, Gender Equality, Culture.

Introduction

Engrossed with Globalization, India is prospering and shining in nearly every prospect. Alongwith the opportunities, if we concentrate upon certain challenging issues regarding culture, tradition and ethnicity, such issues are strongly rising in the present scenario due to Globalization. Hence, the modern India English literature considers the trends that have emerged in Indian society. Literature has been a witness of society through their lively characters. The variety of characters resembles the substantial values of humanity in the form of realistic and imaginative forms of characters. In the modern times, it has received a new identity in the form of real social beings. The modern authors don't seem to bind their curiosity and realism concept to the formalistic aptitude of creating their characters in the literature. Indian English Novel has been passing through the same renaissance of portrayal of real presentation of human characters.

Aim of the Study

Chetan Bhagat is the Jack of all trades. An IITian, MBA from IIM banker, writer, speaker and a columnist. He is a multi-talented, accomplished artist. He is a motivational writer who now writes for change. He is a 'youth' icon'. The paper back king touches a nerve with the young Indian reader. He touches certain sensitive issues with immaculate adroit. Chetan Bhagat is a top-notch writer who comes with wonderful innovative ideas. He shows identity crisis in his novels through the characters. His characters belong to different castes, cultures and creeds. His characters exhibit their religion through their acts and various expressive statements.

Review of Literature

According to Gemzoe's view, "In prose fiction, modernism may be characterized as some kind of reaction against the conventions of realist narrative. This reaction can be more or less radical, ranging from the partial dismissal of certain devices to the complete rejection of exciting, entertaining plot, the interesting character, and the recognizable environment."

Henceforth, it is visible how an individual possess both the shelves in oneself only. At one hand, an individual is most sensible and on the other hand is most silly kind as well. To quote from the novel-

"The world's most sensible person and the biggest idiot both stay within us. The worst part is, you can't even tell who is who."

—(Two States)

Characters that populate his novels, preoccupations they have, ambitions they nurse and obstacles they encounter are all endearingly those of today's real-life India, says Ajit Balakrishnan.

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The Novel -Two States

Chetan Bhagat's theme is simple, rooted in middle class sensibilities and the ordinariness of life. There is a dowry scene expressed where a bride's father keeps his pagdi at the in-laws' feet, which gives an impression of adding up of a filmy flavour to it. As it's a kind of auto biographical story, we need to accept it in its real status. It has been derived from Chetan's personal life i.e. his own marriage. We can observe the role of identity of character in these lines—

"The Tamilians are referred as 'those black people' by various north Indian characters a dozen times. There's no malice in Chetan's description, but it does start to war after a point."

Chetan alludes here to the excessive sense of decorum and protocol ingrained in many South Indians. He points out at several idiosyncrasies of the community. It's being done out of a genuine feeling of amusement rather than to poke fun. When it comes to observations of these two communities Chetan displays his natural flair as a writer. "Jealousy is a rather enjoyable emotion to watch." The biggest plus lies here in the choice of narrator – which happens to be Chetan himself as Krish. He comes across as level headed, sharp witted and genuinely nice so that even when the action starts to slacken, you remain interested in the twists and turns of his life.

It is the story where it has been shown that how much difficult it is to prove one's identity to the other family for the acceptance. As it is the demand of Indian culture, apart from girl and the boy loving each other, it is must that the girl's family has to love boy and vice versa.

This novel is all about two people meeting and getting into relationship from two different states of India, Punjab and Tamil Nadu respectively. Often taking digs at both Tamil and Punjabi cultures, the novel ends with Ananya giving birth to twin boys. Now the million dollar question arises about the identity of the babies. In a broad perspective this question is answered by saying that the babies belong to a state called 'India'. 'Two States', revolves around the quest of identity throughout; the characters keep proving one another's culture, beliefs and standards to be better than the other's. For example- Chetan's humour gets unleashed in full force, as he talks about various Tamilians he finds puzzling. Through Krish and Ananya, Bhagat show the quest to justify their religion and due to modernity, or education how they handle it in real. Undoubtedly, the author puts all efforts to show the good point of every religion.

The Novel – Half Girl Friend

Chetan's central character in 'Half Girlfriend' is a never-say-die spirited youth named Madhav Jha. He is determined and throughout the novel display for his identity expected of a young exuberant youth. He may not be a role model in terms of sexual desires and instincts but as far as his determination and never-give up attitude is concerned, he is a role model. All human beings have a shade of grey and white. So has Madhav. Madhav belonged to a rural area of Bihar. Generally, the youth of today lacks clarity of aim and vision or what they are going to do in life.

We find the forces of identity crisis. "Half Girlfriend, to me, is a unique Indian phenomenon, where boys and girls are not clear about their relationship status with each other."

In this novel too, life style of two different state Delhi and Bihar is prominently visible. The heroine of the play Riya belong to Delhi and the hero of the play Madhav belong to a rural area of Bihar. Both try to justify their identity and role in the society. Somehow silently the identity of themselves is hiding but surprisingly visible to each other. They are undoubtedly aware of each other's life style, way of carrying themselves, way of communication, way of understanding things in their own manner etc. which talks comprehensively about their identity. In the beginning, it was a relationship which wasn't open to even Riya and Madhav. It was silent Riya's and scared Madhav's relationship. Madhav was scared because of his poor English and Riya was silent because of her own commitments being made on behalf of her family members. Madhav was true to love Riya, but Riya wanted just friendship. Madhav being provoked by his friends, keeping his real self away behaves in an absurd manner with Riya. This ruins the situation as one shall always be in oneself. The real good point of a human being lies in keeping one's own identity alive to achieve anything come what may. The spirit of Madhav's qualities didn't close, didn't go quite, when he gets an opportunity to prove his identity through his real self without any artificial face being put on by him. Its true that Madhav is guided and helped by Riya in learning English but he wins over by his natural self, he conquers one of his biggest demons. Madhav's effort to find Riya was heroic. It showed his real character. Madhav's little effort proof that he wants to show his own identity.

Madhav motivates himself to be amazing to proof his existence that he can do all the things which were impossible in past for him. All his friends seek their career in different lucrative fields but Madhav followed his heart of going after his girlfriend and serving the poor not for idealistic reasons but because of his instinct. He has a faith in himself. That is how he creates his own identity. He is not a part of retrace and cut throat competition of today. He chooses a different career and bravely overcomes all odds to come out victorious. He patiently waits for good things to happen. He does not lose hope. All problems have a solution and shall never be afraid of any. We have to proof our existence.

Conclusion

One of the dominant thinkers of the new millennium, Chetan Bhagat's writings has created a new philosophy for a modernized young India. Young characters, lively and extremely fair description of the characters. The reader is able to frame a real picture of the character very comfortably due to the simple and easy language being used by the author. The characters in these novels are portrayed in such a way that their identity is found in crisis. They strive to maintain their existence be it because of education, language, state or caste. One needs to be identified by certain strong traits of his or her personality, if it is missing somehow; it is being struggled by the

respective character for; in these novels by Chetan Bhagat. Donald Greenless quotes that, "Chetan Bhagat might not be another Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy, but he has authentic claims to being one of the voices of a generation of middle class Indian (New York Times)."

Thus, the general instincts of Chetan's writing and especially characterization are inspiring and motivational.

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