

# The Power of Relatability: Analyzing Bhagat's Narrative

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**Abstract:** *Chetan Bhagat, born amidst the vibrant energy of New Delhi on April 22, 1974, is a name synonymous with contemporary Indian literature. This celebrated author, columnist, and motivational speaker has captured the hearts and minds of millions with his insightful and relatable portrayals of modern India*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Chetan Bhagat, born amidst the vibrant energy of New Delhi on April 22, 1974, is a name synonymous with contemporary Indian literature. This celebrated author, columnist, and motivational speaker has captured the hearts and minds of millions with his insightful and relatable portrayals of modern India.

Raised in a middle-class Punjabi family, Bhagat's journey began in the bustling hallways of The Army Public School in DhaulaKuan. His academic prowess led him to the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, where he honed his engineering skills, graduating in 1995. Not content with just one degree, he further pursued an MBA from the esteemed Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, where his brilliance earned him the title of "Best Outgoing Student" in 1997.

Bhagat's path seemed destined for the corporate world, and he excelled as an investment banker at Goldman Sachs and later as a vice president at Deutsche Bank in Hong Kong. However, beneath the sharp suits and financial acumen lay a burning passion for writing. This inner fire ignited his literary debut in 2004 with "Five Point Someone," a humorous and poignant tale of three IIT students navigating the pressures of academic life. The novel struck a chord with young Indians, catapulting Bhagat to literary stardom.

He continued to weave his magic with words, penning a series of bestselling novels including "One Night @ the Call Center," "The 3 Mistakes of My Life," "2 States," "Revolution 2020," and "Half Girlfriend." His narratives, characterized by their simple yet powerful prose and relatable characters, delve into the complexities of love, ambition, societal expectations, and the ever-evolving tapestry of Indian life. Many of these stories have been adapted into successful Bollywood films, further amplifying his reach and influence.

Bhagat's influence extends beyond fiction. As a regular columnist for leading Indian newspapers, he offers insightful commentary on politics, the economy, and social issues. His words resonate with a deep understanding of modern India, advocating for youth empowerment, education reform, and gender equality.

A gifted orator, Bhagat is a sought-after motivational speaker, captivating audiences of students and young professionals across India. Drawing from his own experiences, he inspires them to chase their dreams, embrace change, and overcome obstacles. His message of balancing ambition with passion resonates deeply, leaving a lasting impact.

Chetan Bhagat's evolution from a successful investment banker to a celebrated author and public figure is a testament to his multifaceted talents and unwavering commitment to capturing the essence of modern India. Through his novels, columns, and public engagements, he continues to inspire and influence millions, leaving an indelible mark on Indian society and its literary landscape. His work, a harmonious blend of simplicity and relatability, speaks to the soul of a nation, solidifying his position as one of India's most influential and beloved authors.

Chetan Bhagat is a popular Indian author known for his engaging stories about modern Indian youth. He uses a variety of techniques to make his novels relatable and interesting to a wide audience. Instead of using complex language, Bhagat writes in a simple and conversational style, often using humor and slang. This makes his books easy to

understand and enjoyable to read, almost like having a friend tell you a story. He also directly addresses the reader, creating a feeling of closeness and informality. To make his stories even more engaging, Bhagat uses different storytelling methods. Sometimes he tells the story in a straightforward way, like in "Two States" and "Half Girlfriend." Other times, he jumps between the past and present, like in "Five Point Someone" and "Revolution 2020," which adds depth and keeps the reader interested. He also uses flashbacks, modern communication like emails and texts, and even includes prologues and epilogues in his books.

By using these techniques, Bhagat makes his novels relatable and thought-provoking, capturing the attention of readers from all walks of life. He successfully portrays the lives and struggles of young Indians in a way that resonates with his audience.

### Characterisation

In Chetan Bhagat's novels character development stands out as a significant element, weaving relatable and authentic personas that mirror contemporary Indian society. Each of Bhagat's protagonists is a testament to his ability to blend realism with narrative, crafting characters that resonate deeply with readers.

"Five Point Someone" introduces us to Alok, Hari, and Ryan, three engineering students navigating the pressures of an elite institution. Alok's character, marked by his family's financial struggles, embodies the everyday challenges of the lower middle class. Hari the narrator provides a more balanced view, often acting as the mediator in conflicts. Ryan, with his questions about the rigid educational system, advocating for a more creative approach. Through their trials and triumphs, Bhagat sketches a vivid picture of youth grappling with academic and personal dilemmas, ultimately showing growth through their failures and camaraderie.

"One Night at the Call Centre" brings together a diverse group of call center employees, each facing personal crises. Shyam's insecurity about his career and love life, Priyanka's struggle with familial expectations, Esha's ambition clashing with reality, and Vroom's frustration with societal norms, all highlight different facets of modern urban life. Bhagat deftly develops these characters through their interactions and a shared turning point during a critical night, demonstrating personal growth and a collective resolve to change their lives.

Chetan Bhagat's "The Three Mistakes of My Life" and "Two States" explore the complexities of life, love, and friendship in contemporary India. "The Three Mistakes of My Life" follows three friends, Govind, Ishaan, and Omi, as they navigate their personal ambitions and societal challenges in Gujarat. Their contrasting personalities – Govind's practicality, Ishaan's passion for cricket, and Omi's religious devotion – create a dynamic backdrop for exploring themes of friendship, resilience, and the impact of socio-political events on their lives. "Two States," a semi-autobiographical tale, delves into the intricacies of an inter-caste relationship between Krish, a Punjabi boy, and Ananya, a Tamil girl. They face cultural clashes and family opposition, highlighting the challenges of bridging disparate traditions while balancing personal happiness with societal expectations. Both novels showcase Bhagat's signature style of relatable characters and simple language, offering insights into the nuances of love, friendship, and personal growth in the face of adversity.

"Revolution 2020" by Chetan Bhagat offers a compelling exploration of ambition, corruption, and personal growth within the framework of India's flawed education system. The novel revolves around the intertwined lives of Gopal, Raghav, and Aarti, three individuals grappling with moral dilemmas in their pursuit of success. Gopal's transformation from a vulnerable lower-middle-class boy to a corrupt educational entrepreneur highlights the ethical compromises often made in the pursuit of wealth and power. His journey contrasts sharply with Raghav's idealistic commitment to journalism, creating a dynamic tension between pragmatism and principle. Caught between these two contrasting figures, Aarti embodies the personal conflicts that arise from societal pressures and the desire for love and stability. Through their intertwined stories, Bhagat critiques the prevalence of corruption and the intense pressure-cooker environment of the Indian education system, while also exploring themes of love, friendship, and the struggle for personal growth amidst ethical challenges.

"Half Girlfriend" explores Madhav and Riya's relationship, focusing on Madhav's struggle with language barriers and societal expectations. Madhav's journey from a small-town boy to someone striving to fit into Delhi's elite circles showcases his persistence and growth. Riya's character, with her own set of complexities, evolves as she navigates her aspirations and personal battles. Bhagat's portrayal emphasizes emotional growth and the pursuit of self-worth.

Through these novels, Bhagat's characters often start with relatable flaws and ambitions, evolving through personal and societal challenges. His ability to depict realistic growth and the impact of socio-economic factors on individual lives makes his characters compelling and memorable. This development not only drives the narratives forward but also ensures that readers are invested in their journeys, reflecting the multifaceted nature of contemporary Indian life.

### Use of Stereotypes and Archetypes

Chetan Bhagat's novels frequently employ both stereotypes and archetypes to build his characters and advance his plots. While his use of stereotypes can sometimes reinforce conventional notions, he often does so to critique societal norms and highlight the realities of contemporary India.

Five Point Someone showcases three primary archetypes: the Rebel (Ryan), the Everyman (Hari), and the Struggler (Alok). Ryan, the archetypal Rebel, challenges the rigid educational system and often engages in unconventional activities. Hari, the Everyman, provides a relatable viewpoint as the story's narrator, navigating the pressures of academia with a more balanced perspective. Alok, embodying the Struggler archetype, represents the lower-middle-class student burdened with family responsibilities and financial struggles. Bhagat uses these archetypes to explore the shortcomings of the Indian educational system and the diverse student experiences within it.

One Night at the Call Centre features characters that align with recognizable stereotypes but are used to delve into deeper societal issues. Shyam, the underconfident and love-struck protagonist, represents the average urban Indian grappling with career and personal dilemmas. Priyanka's character, as the modern yet traditional woman, reflects the struggles of balancing family expectations with personal desires. Esha, the aspiring model, represents the stereotype of ambition clashing with societal constraints. Vroom, the disenchanting youth, and Radhika, the dutiful wife facing marital challenges, reflect common urban stereotypes. These characters collectively highlight the disillusionment and aspirations of India's urban youth.

The Three Mistakes of My Life employs archetypes like the Dreamer (Govind), the Passionate (Ishaan), and the Devout (Omi). Govind's ambition to succeed in business, Ishaan's passion for cricket, and Omi's religious inclinations illustrate different facets of Indian society. Bhagat uses these archetypes to comment on the intersection of personal dreams, religious tensions, and societal expectations, thereby providing a multifaceted view of modern India.

Two States presents the Lover (Krish) and the Modern Woman (Ananya). Krish, a Punjabi boy, and Ananya, a Tamil girl, navigate the complexities of an inter-caste relationship. Their characters, while built on cultural stereotypes, are used to critique and highlight the challenges of inter-cultural unions in India. Bhagat's portrayal underscores the deep-seated cultural prejudices and the resilience needed to overcome them.

Revolution 2020 introduces the Ambitious (Gopal), the Idealist (Raghav), and the Damsel in Distress (Aarti). Gopal's journey from poverty to corruption reflects the stereotypical narrative of ambition gone astray in a corrupt system. Raghav, the idealistic journalist, stands in stark contrast, representing integrity and the fight against corruption. Aarti's character, caught between the two, embodies the struggles of women navigating their aspirations amidst societal pressures. Bhagat uses these stereotypes to discuss the themes of corruption, ambition, and idealism in contemporary India.

Half Girlfriend features the Underdog (Madhav) and the Enigma (Riya). Madhav, a small-town boy, striving to fit into the elite circles of Delhi, represents the underdog narrative. Riya, the sophisticated, mysterious girl, embodies the unattainable dream. Their dynamic highlights the social divide and the struggle for acceptance and self-worth. Bhagat's use of these archetypes emphasizes the emotional journey and self-discovery in the face of societal expectations.

Through these novels, Bhagat's use of stereotypes and archetypes not only serves to create relatable characters but also to critique and reflect on the societal norms and issues prevalent in contemporary India. His characters, while often starting with stereotypical traits, undergo development that challenges these initial perceptions, thereby providing a deeper commentary on the complexities of Indian society.

### Plot structures

Chetan Bhagat's novels often feature compelling plot structures that engage readers through relatable characters, conflicts, and resolutions. Here's a look at the plot structures in some of his notable works:

**Five Point Someone** The plot of "Five Point Someone" revolves around three friends—Alok, Hari, and Ryan—who navigate the challenges of studying at an elite engineering college. The novel follows a non-linear structure with frequent flashbacks to illustrate the trio's escapades, struggles, and academic mishaps. The narrative is driven by their rebellion against the oppressive educational system, culminating in their near expulsion. It is both a tale of friendship and a critique of academic pressure, ending on a hopeful note as the characters learn valuable life lessons and strive for personal growth.

**One Night at the Call Centre** This novel employs a frame narrative, starting with a train journey where the protagonist recounts a transformative night at a call centre. The main plot unfolds over a single night, interspersed with backstories of the characters—Shyam, Priyanka, Esha, Vroom, Radhika, and Military Uncle. The plot structure heightens the urgency and tension as the characters confront personal crises, receive a mysterious call from God, and ultimately find the courage to change their lives. The resolution ties together their individual struggles with a collective decision to seek better futures.

**The Three Mistakes of My Life** "The Three Mistakes of My Life" is structured around the life of Govind and his two friends, Ishaan and Omi. The narrative is driven by Govind's reflections on his three major mistakes, leading to a climax involving personal loss and communal riots. The plot interweaves themes of ambition, friendship, and socio-political issues in Gujarat. The non-linear storytelling, with frequent flashbacks and introspective moments, adds depth to the characters and their journey towards redemption.

**Two States** Based on Bhagat's own life, "Two States" follows a straightforward, chronological structure detailing the love story of Krish and Ananya. The plot is driven by their efforts to reconcile their culturally diverse families in India. The narrative explores their relationship dynamics, cultural clashes, and the humorous yet poignant attempts to win over each other's parents. The resolution comes with the acceptance of their union by both families, highlighting the triumph of love over societal barriers.

**Revolution 2020** This novel features a dual narrative structure, alternating between the perspectives of Gopal and Raghav. The plot centers on their diverging paths—Gopal's descent into corruption and Raghav's idealistic fight against it. The love triangle involving Aarti adds emotional complexity. The climax builds on the tension between personal ambition and moral integrity, culminating in Gopal's eventual realization and sacrifice for the greater good. The dual narrative effectively contrasts the protagonists' choices and their impacts.

**Half Girlfriend** "Half Girlfriend" is structured around Madhav's pursuit of Riya and his struggle to fit into elite society despite language barriers. The plot progresses through key phases of their relationship, marked by separation and reconciliation. The narrative shifts between Madhav's perspective and letters from Riya, creating a layered understanding of their bond. The climax occurs in New York, where Madhav's persistence pays off, leading to a hopeful resolution as he and Riya finally unite. The story underscores themes of perseverance and self-discovery.

Overall, Bhagat's plot structures often blend humor, drama, and social commentary, making his stories accessible and engaging. His use of non-linear narratives, dual perspectives, and frame stories enhances the emotional depth and thematic richness of his novels, resonating with a broad audience. These techniques ensure that his characters and their journeys remain memorable and impactful, reflecting the complexities of modern Indian society.

### **Linear vs. Non-linear Narratives**

Chetan Bhagat's novels often explore the lives of India's modern youth through engaging and accessible narratives. His use of linear and non-linear storytelling techniques significantly shapes the reading experience and deepens the impact of his stories.

**Linear Narratives** Bhagat's *Two States* and *Half Girlfriend* primarily employ a linear narrative structure. This straightforward approach allows readers to follow the chronological progression of events and character development with ease.

In *Two States*, the story of Krish and Ananya's cross-cultural romance unfolds in a linear fashion, tracing their journey from their initial meeting at IIM Ahmedabad to their struggles in gaining familial acceptance. The linear structure reinforces the step-by-step process of cultural integration and personal growth, making the story relatable and engaging. *Half Girlfriend* also follows a linear path, chronicling Madhav's pursuit of Riya and his struggle to adapt to an English-speaking environment. This structure underscores Madhav's growth and perseverance, providing a clear and coherent

narrative that readers can easily follow. The linearity helps in showcasing the progression of Madhav's character and his evolving relationship with Riya.

**Non-linear Narratives** Bhagat's use of non-linear narratives, as seen in *Five Point Someone*, *One Night at the Call Centre*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, and *Revolution 2020*, adds complexity and depth to his storytelling.

In *Five Point Someone*, the narrative shifts between the present and past, reflecting on the experiences of three friends at an engineering college. This non-linear approach allows Bhagat to juxtapose their current predicaments with their past actions, highlighting the consequences of their choices and the evolution of their friendship.

*One Night at the Call Centre* employs a frame narrative where the protagonist recounts a transformative night to a stranger on a train. The story's main events unfold over a single night, interspersed with the characters' backstories and personal struggles. This structure creates a sense of urgency and tension, drawing readers into the characters' lives and their pivotal decisions.

*The Three Mistakes of My Life* uses flashbacks to unravel the story of Govind and his friends. The non-linear narrative, driven by Govind's reflections on his mistakes, allows Bhagat to explore themes of ambition, friendship, and socio-political tensions in a layered manner. The structure emphasizes the weight of past actions on the present, enriching the storytelling with introspective depth.

*Revolution 2020* alternates between the perspectives of Gopal and Raghav, providing a dual narrative that contrasts their moral trajectories. The shifts in time and viewpoint offer a comprehensive understanding of their characters and the socio-political landscape they navigate. This non-linear approach enhances the thematic exploration of corruption and idealism, making the story multifaceted and thought-provoking.

Overall, Bhagat's adept use of linear and non-linear narratives serves to highlight different aspects of his storytelling. Linear narratives in novels like *Two States* and *Half Girlfriend* offer clarity and a straightforward depiction of character growth and romantic journeys. In contrast, non-linear narratives in works like *Five Point Someone*, *One Night at the Call Centre*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, and *Revolution 2020* add depth and complexity, allowing for a richer exploration of themes and character development. Bhagat's versatile narrative techniques ensure that his novels remain engaging, relatable, and reflective of contemporary Indian society.

### Themes and motifs

Chetan Bhagat's novels are rich with themes and motifs that resonate deeply with readers, reflecting contemporary issues and universal human experiences. Here's a deep dive into some of the central themes and motifs across his works:

**Five Point Someone** The primary theme in "Five Point Someone" is the critique of the Indian educational system. Bhagat portrays the immense pressure on students and the detrimental effects of a rigid academic environment. Themes of friendship and personal growth are also central, as the protagonists navigate their college lives, learning the value of solidarity and resilience. The motif of rebellion against an oppressive system is a recurring element, as the characters challenge the status quo in pursuit of their own identities.

**One Night at the Call Centre** "One Night at the Call Centre" explores themes of disillusionment and existential crisis among urban youth. The characters grapple with professional dissatisfaction and personal struggles, reflecting the broader societal angst of a generation. The motif of a transformative night serves as a catalyst for change, with the mysterious call from God symbolizing hope and the possibility of a new beginning. Bhagat's use of humor and satire highlights the absurdities of corporate life and the search for meaning in a materialistic world.

**The Three Mistakes of My Life** This novel delves into themes of ambition, friendship, and communal tensions. Bhagat examines the impact of socio-political issues on individual lives, particularly in the context of Gujarat. The motif of mistakes and redemption runs throughout the narrative, with the protagonist reflecting on his errors and their consequences. Themes of personal growth and resilience are evident as the characters navigate their dreams and challenges, learning the importance of forgiveness and perseverance.

**Two States** "Two States" centers on themes of love and cultural integration. Bhagat addresses the challenges of inter-caste and inter-cultural relationships, highlighting the clash between tradition and modernity. The motif of familial acceptance and the struggle for mutual respect is prominent, as the protagonists work to bridge their cultural



differences. The narrative underscores the importance of love, understanding, and compromise in overcoming societal barriers.

Revolution 2020 In "Revolution 2020," themes of corruption, ambition, and idealism take center stage. Bhagat critiques the pervasive corruption in the education system and its impact on youth aspirations. The motif of a love triangle adds emotional complexity, with the characters' choices reflecting broader moral dilemmas. The novel's dual narrative structure highlights the contrast between personal gain and societal good, ultimately emphasizing the need for integrity and ethical responsibility.

Half Girlfriend This novel explores themes of love, self-discovery, and societal pressures. Bhagat delves into the struggles of a small-town boy trying to fit into an elite world, emphasizing the importance of language and communication. The motif of unrequited love and the pursuit of acceptance runs throughout the narrative, with the protagonist's journey symbolizing personal growth and resilience. Themes of perseverance and the impact of socio-economic backgrounds are central, reflecting the complexities of modern relationships.

Across these novels, Bhagat consistently addresses themes of societal expectations, personal identity, and the pursuit of dreams. His use of humor, satire, and relatable characters brings these themes to life, making his stories engaging and thought-provoking. The recurring motifs of rebellion, transformation, and redemption highlight the universal human experiences of struggle, growth, and hope. Through his narratives, Bhagat offers a mirror to contemporary Indian society, encouraging readers to reflect on their own lives and aspirations.

Love and relationships are central themes in Chetan Bhagat's novels, weaving through the narratives to explore the complexities of human connections against the backdrop of contemporary Indian society.

Five Point Someone In "Five Point Someone," love takes a youthful, almost rebellious form. The relationship between Hari and Neha highlights the challenges of young love amidst academic pressure and societal expectations. Their secret meetings and tender moments offer a respite from the harsh realities of their rigid educational environment. Bhagat portrays their love as a means of escape and self-discovery, demonstrating the power of personal connections in overcoming external challenges.

One Night at the Call Centre This novel delves into the romantic entanglements of six call centre employees. Shyam's unrequited love for Priyanka, who is engaged to another man, showcases the pain and complexity of love in a modern, fast-paced world. Esha's struggles with her career and self-worth reflect the impact of professional pressures on personal relationships. The relationships in this book are marked by a sense of longing and the search for fulfillment, reflecting the broader existential crises faced by the characters.

The Three Mistakes of My Life "The Three Mistakes of My Life" presents love intertwined with ambition and socio-political issues. Govind's love for Vidya, Ishaan's sister, is fraught with tension due to societal norms and personal ambitions. Their secret affair against the backdrop of communal unrest and personal failures highlights the fragility and resilience of love. Bhagat uses their relationship to explore themes of loyalty, sacrifice, and the pursuit of happiness amidst external turmoil.

Two States A semi-autobiographical tale, "Two States" centers on the love story of Krish and Ananya, who come from different cultural backgrounds. Their relationship navigates the complexities of inter-caste and inter-cultural love in India. Bhagat portrays their love as a force powerful enough to challenge deep-seated prejudices and familial opposition. The story emphasizes the importance of understanding, compromise, and mutual respect in building a lasting relationship, making a poignant commentary on the cultural diversity of India.

Revolution 2020 In "Revolution 2020," the love triangle between Gopal, Raghav, and Aarti adds emotional depth to the narrative. Gopal's unrequited love for Aarti and Raghav's idealistic commitment to societal change create a dynamic tension. Bhagat uses their relationships to highlight the moral dilemmas and personal sacrifices involved in the pursuit of success and integrity. Love, in this context, is portrayed as both a source of strength and a vulnerability, influencing the characters' decisions and paths.

Half Girlfriend "Half Girlfriend" explores the intricacies of love and social acceptance through the relationship between Madhav and Riya. Madhav's struggle to fit into an elite English-speaking world and his deep affection for Riya are central to the plot. Their relationship, marked by moments of connection and separation, reflects the challenges of bridging socio-economic divides. Bhagat portrays love as a transformative force that drives personal growth and resilience, emphasizing the importance of empathy and perseverance.

Overall, Bhagat's portrayal of love and relationships transcends mere romantic idealism, delving into the realities of contemporary Indian life. His characters navigate the complexities of love amidst societal pressures, cultural clashes, and personal ambitions, making his narratives both relatable and thought-provoking. Love, in Bhagat's novels, is a multifaceted journey of self-discovery, sacrifice, and emotional growth, resonating with readers who see reflections of their own experiences in his stories.

## II. CONCLUSION

Chetan Bhagat's narrative style is distinctive and deeply rooted in the contemporary Indian context, making his novels both relatable and engaging. Across his works, including *Five Point Someone*, *One Night at the Call Centre*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, *Two States*, *Revolution 2020*, and *Half Girlfriend*, Bhagat employs a blend of linear and non-linear storytelling techniques that enhance the emotional depth and accessibility of his narratives.

His use of linear narratives in novels like *Two States* and *Half Girlfriend* provides clear, chronological depictions of character growth and relationship dynamics, allowing readers to easily follow the progression of events. This straightforward approach emphasizes the cultural and emotional journeys of the protagonists, making their stories resonant and impactful.

Conversely, Bhagat's mastery of non-linear narratives is evident in works like *Five Point Someone*, *One Night at the Call Centre*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, and *Revolution 2020*. By interweaving past and present, Bhagat adds layers of complexity to his characters and themes, creating a richer, more textured reading experience. This technique allows him to delve into the consequences of the characters' actions, their personal growth, and the socio-political landscapes they navigate.

Bhagat's narrative style is also marked by his use of humor, satire, and relatable dialogue, which bring his characters and their struggles to life. His ability to address serious issues such as academic pressure, corruption, cultural integration, and socio-economic disparities through an accessible and often lighthearted lens makes his novels widely appealing.

Overall, Chetan Bhagat's narrative style is a unique blend of clarity and complexity, grounded in the realities of contemporary India. His novels not only entertain but also provoke thought and reflection, making him a significant voice in modern Indian literature. Whether through linear or non-linear storytelling, Bhagat's narratives consistently emphasize themes of love, ambition, societal challenges, and personal growth, resonating deeply with his readers.

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