



## Indian Society, Politics and Youth in Chetan Bhagat's *What Young India Wants*

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### ABSTRACT

*What Young India Wants* is based on Bhagat's wide experience, which he imbibed through the various journeys to different parts of the world. This non-fiction consists of three sections. This non-fiction renders a precise realistic world of Indian Society, Politics, and Youth. The author debates much about the corrupt India more than its positives. Indians, sometimes, use to undermine the Western values by blaming it as materialistic. Bhagat is optimistic about the Indian society and hopes for a change at least gradually.

### INTRODUCTION

*What Young India Wants* is the first non-fictional work of Chetan Bhagat. It is a compilation of the author's essays and speeches. Though Bhagat shares a love hate readership among the Indian motley multitude, he has a bandwagon set of audience to blow his trumpet. The former NRI does not have all praise for his motherland and her sons in this piece. His *What Young India Wants* renders a precise realistic world of Indian Society, Politics, and Youth. He does debate much about the corrupt India more than its positives. He furnishes a labyrinth spreading through various branches such as Culture, Politics, Governance, Education, Job Opportunities, Upper Middle Class Families, Freedom to Live and Love, and Youth.

*What Young India Wants* is based on Bhagat's wide experience, which he imbibed through the various journeys to different parts of the world. The author manifests the cult, common behavior, of Indian society, politics and youth. This non-fiction consists of three sections. The first section "Our Society" deals with religion, casteism, terrorism and corruption. The second segment brings forth the political issues, government policies and scams under the title "Politics". The final part is

targeted towards the country's major population – Youth. This part takes up the issues as educational pressures of pupils, importance of English, and the communication shudder between the urban and rural students. Almost all these collected essays and newspaper columns ooze out the frustration of the author as well as the every Indian citizen.

### INDIAN SOCIETY

Bhagat begins the first part “Our Society” by stating that “for any lasting change to happen in our country, society has to change in terms of its attitude, behaviour, and values”(2). In fact, he brings to the fore, the words of Mahatma Gandhi “Be the change that you wish to see in the world.” The onus of the blame is not put on politicians alone but also on the society because Bhagat refrains that politicians reflect our society. For him, Culture is not only about food, arts and traditions but it is how people aim to live their lives. At this juncture, the author draws a comparison between the Indian and the American societies. The great Indian society normally thinks of “personal values such as family, religion and respect for elders” (3) where as its counterpart drives on the values of “wealth, competition, individualism and religion” (3). Next the author puts forth a series of interrogation on the Indian society by addressing

Do we value wealth or education? Do we value democracy, where people have a greater say in how they are governed, or do we believe in power in the hands of a select few to whom the laws don't apply? Do we value honesty or do we value getting job done any how? Do we believe in frugality or do we want to show off our wealth? Do we value our local communities or do we value being part of India? ... Indias within India (5)

Though all these issues have no easy answers, the author converges on a positive note that “ours is a society that understands goodness” (5).

In “Being Rich, Being Good”, Bhagat compares the values of Indian and American Societies. He accuses that the Indian system pays importance to money minded individuals, where as the American protocols safeguard the system. To change this cult, society has to change. Bhagat is optimistic about the Indian society and hopes for a change at least gradually. For the changes to be brought in the society, people have to accept the shortcomings and have to eradicate the rut.

Indians, sometimes, use to undermine the Western values by blaming it as materialistic. Bhagat accepts this notion and even tags it as “greedy”. He sketches the reasons for blooming wealth of Americans. They have created a system which is connected with “hard work, innovation, talent and enterprise” (8). Even though, they

have so many flaws, Americans are protective of their system. For them “it is the cause [that] makes sense and needs support” (4). In the case of Indians, the individuals gain currency over the sense. Bhagat accuses that Indians value dynasty more than honesty. Lack of merit based system troubles Indian democracy and it kills innovation. On the other hand, Westerners, the innovators rule the world. Their imagination takes them to the new vistas of innovation and fetches fortunate wealth.

#### **ABSENCE OF POLITICAL VISION**

In the second section of the book, “Politics”, Bhagat over turns the leaf by discussing dynasty politics, politicians of modern era, neutral view of Lokpal Bill agitation, civil society and land. He brings forth the argument that every citizen of the country has to pay attention to politics, so that democracy can get shape by better hands. The absence of political vision haunts the Nation and its people by dragging them into a woeful state. It is a “jigsaw puzzle” to understand the Indian political nexus.

In “Don’t Let Them Divide and Rule Anymore”, Bhagat traces the lineage of divide and rule system. The minorities in the country are lured easily for the vote bank. The interest of nation is ruled out in favour of religious back ground. Even after so many decades minority communities remain oppressed. Poverty does not know religion and to be sad is that “90 percent of Indians cannot afford fresh fruit because of inflation, it isn’t just one community that feels the pinch” (59) but the over all. Valid laws must be amended in order to cut off discrimination and cultural fanaticism. People have to break the shackles of confined thoughts and should stop hating other religions.

#### **YOUTH: A DEPRECIATED POPULACE**

The final section “Youth” tries to engage the youngsters in a vibrant voice. Bhagat begins this section by saying “India is the Youth” (97) because the majority of the population is below the age limit of thirty five. But the sad thing is that they are “under-represented” (97). In India youth provide chance for change. The young Indian contingent is prone to ideas and willing to accept the change. The plight of the Indian youth lies in getting good education and a job. Bhagat discusses the Indian education system and feels empathy for the young people. This section consists of some attractive titles as “Letter to Bapu from Generation Next”, “Open Letter to Sonia Gandhi from Young India”, and “The Bootlegging of Education” and explores various perspectives.

In “India’s Democratic Princes”, Bhagat brings out the reasons for the impasse in progress of the nation. The absence of political mechanism with a proper vision is the primary cause of the failure. India, on most occasions, selects unqualified leaders for running the country. Indians have become stereotyped and make emotional decisions. Often a vote becomes an expression of love to caste, religion rather than accrediting its true validity. People forget that a vote changes the destiny of the

nation. Major national parties in India depend on film stars and charismatic personalities to fill in the ballot boxes. Indian public is mesmerized by the charm of cinematic stardom and loses its value by choosing the wrong men for the right job. Bhagat also identifies that in India there is no single institution like Georgetown University of US to train students for political career. Political parties seem to be apathetic in inducting young bloods in their zone. Lineage history occupies the power in India. The pedigree problem becomes a venomous sting to a deserved candidate who wants to enter into the politics for a good cause of the Nation.

### CONCLUSION

The epistolary episode “Letter to Bapu from Generation Next on His Birthday” documents the current Indian governance. It is in the form of a letter written to Gandhiji by the Younger Generation. The sacrifice of Mahatma’s life seems to be valueless. Bhagat expresses his frustration by saying that “India, for which you gave your life, is still far from free” (127). Gandhi may not feel proud for the things happening in India. Even after sixty plus years of independence, the country is ranked among the poor nations on earth. The younger generation wishes that Gandhi could come down one day and find solutions for the problems. The young brigades of India are determined to wage war against the rampant corruption. “With our purpose blessed, enemy identified and youth united, we could take the first steps towards the new revolution...If we can be inspired to do that, we can say we have not forgotten you and understand the meaning of your birthday (130). The country awaits a vision from the young Indians.

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