

## **LOVE, LOGIC, AND CRIME: A PSYCHO-SOCIAL READING OF ARRANGED MARRIAGE IN *ONE ARRANGED MURDER***

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### **Abstract:**

One Arranged Murder by Chetan Bhagat presents a compelling blend of romance, crime, and social commentary, rooted in contemporary Indian society. The novel, a sequel to *The Girl in Room 105*, revolves around the murder of Perna, a woman engaged in an arranged marriage, and the investigation led by amateur detectives Keshav and Saurabh. This paper explores how Bhagat uses the narrative of a murder mystery to critically examine the institution of arranged marriage, societal expectations, gender roles, and the psychological conflicts embedded within modern relationships. By analyzing character motivations, narrative structure, and thematic concerns, the study highlights how love, logic, and societal pressure intersect in shaping human decisions. The novel not only critiques traditional practices but also exposes the fragility of relationships governed by external norms. Ultimately, this paper argues that Bhagat transforms a seemingly simple crime story into a layered exploration of contemporary Indian identity, where rationality confronts emotional vulnerability and social constructs.

**Keywords:** Psychological Conflict, Gender Roles, Social Pressure, Modern Relationships

### **Introduction**

Contemporary Indian fiction has increasingly engaged with the complexities of modern relationships, particularly in the context of changing cultural values. Among

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popular writers, Chetan Bhagat has emerged as a significant voice who blends accessible storytelling with pressing social issues. His novel *One Arranged Murder* stands as a noteworthy example of this approach, combining elements of detective fiction with a critical examination of arranged marriage, one of the most enduring institutions in Indian society.

Arranged marriage, traditionally viewed as a stable and culturally sanctioned union, has undergone transformation in the modern era. While it continues to hold social legitimacy, it often intersects with individual desires, autonomy, and emotional compatibility. Bhagat situates his narrative within this tension, presenting a murder that occurs within the framework of an arranged engagement. The death of Perna, the bride-to-be, becomes the central mystery that drives the plot, but it also serves as a metaphor for the hidden fractures within socially constructed relationships. The protagonists, Keshav and Saurabh, represent contrasting approaches to life, logic versus emotion, rationality versus impulsiveness. Their investigation into the murder not only uncovers clues about the crime but also reveals deeper truths about human relationships, societal expectations, and the psychological pressures faced by individuals.

Through their journey, the novel raises critical questions: Can relationships built on societal approval sustain emotional truth? What happens when personal desires conflict with cultural norms? How do individuals negotiate identity within the constraints of tradition?

This paper aims to analyze the novel as a socio-psychological text that goes beyond its surface-level narrative. It examines how Bhagat uses the genre of crime fiction to explore themes of love, betrayal, and societal pressure. By focusing on character development, thematic elements, and narrative strategies, the study seeks to demonstrate that *One Arranged Murder* is not merely a popular thriller but a significant commentary on contemporary Indian life.

The narrative of *One Arranged Murder* unfolds within a framework that intertwines personal relationships with a criminal investigation, allowing the author to explore the psychological and social dimensions of arranged marriage. At the center of the story lies the character of Perna, whose death becomes both a literal

and symbolic rupture. Her engagement to Keshav, seemingly a conventional arranged match, masks underlying tensions that gradually come to light through the investigative process. The murder itself acts as a narrative device that exposes the complexities hidden beneath socially sanctioned relationships.

One of the most significant aspects of the novel is its portrayal of arranged marriage not as a monolithic institution but as a site of negotiation between tradition and modernity. Bhagat presents arranged marriage as evolving, often incorporating elements of choice and compatibility, yet still deeply influenced by family expectations and societal norms. Keshav's relationship with Perna exemplifies this duality. While the match is arranged, there is an attempt to build emotional intimacy. However, the relationship is marked by uncertainty and a lack of genuine understanding, suggesting that structural approval does not necessarily guarantee emotional fulfillment.

The character of Keshav is particularly crucial in understanding the psychological undercurrents of the narrative. His inclination towards logic and rational thinking shapes his approach to both relationships and the investigation. He attempts to apply analytical reasoning to emotional situations, often struggling to reconcile his need for certainty with the unpredictability of human behavior. This tension reflects a broader theme in the novel—the inadequacy of logic in navigating the complexities of love and relationships. Keshav's journey becomes one of self-discovery, as he learns to confront his emotional vulnerabilities and question his assumptions about compatibility and trust.

In contrast, Saurabh represents a more intuitive and emotionally driven perspective. His approach to the investigation is less structured but more empathetic, allowing him to perceive nuances that escape Keshav's analytical framework. The dynamic between the two characters creates a balanced narrative, highlighting the interplay between logic and emotion. This duality is essential to the novel's exploration of human relationships, suggesting that neither rationality nor emotion alone is sufficient to fully understand the complexities of love and betrayal.

The theme of societal pressure is intricately woven into the narrative, influencing character decisions and shaping the trajectory of the plot. The

expectations surrounding marriage, particularly for women, are depicted as both restrictive and pervasive. Prerna's situation reflects the pressures faced by individuals to conform to societal norms, even at the cost of personal happiness. Her inability to fully assert her desires or communicate her inner conflicts underscores the limitations imposed by cultural expectations. The novel subtly critiques these constraints, suggesting that the idealization of arranged marriage often overlooks the individual's emotional reality.

Gender roles play a significant role in shaping the narrative, particularly in the depiction of female characters. While Prerna's character is central to the plot, her voice is largely mediated through the perspectives of others, reflecting the marginalization of women within traditional structures. At the same time, the novel hints at the emerging agency of women in contemporary society, as they navigate the tensions between autonomy and expectation. This dual representation highlights the transitional nature of Indian society, where traditional norms coexist with evolving notions of individuality and freedom.

The investigation itself serves as a metaphorical journey into the hidden aspects of human relationships. Each clue uncovered by Keshav and Saurabh reveals not only information about the crime but also insights into the characters' motivations and emotional states. The process of solving the murder becomes a means of unraveling the complexities of love, trust, and deception. Bhagat effectively uses the conventions of detective fiction to maintain suspense while simultaneously engaging with deeper thematic concerns.

Another important dimension of the novel is its exploration of truth and perception. The characters' understanding of events is often shaped by their biases and assumptions, leading to misinterpretations and false conclusions. This theme is particularly relevant in the context of relationships, where individuals construct narratives based on limited information. The gradual revelation of the truth challenges these perceptions, emphasizing the importance of communication and self-awareness. The novel suggests that misunderstandings and unspoken emotions can have profound consequences, ultimately contributing to the breakdown of relationships. The interplay between love and betrayal is central to the narrative, reflecting the fragile nature of human connections. Bhagat portrays love not as an idealized emotion

but as a complex and often contradictory experience. The relationships in the novel are marked by uncertainty, insecurity, and hidden agendas, highlighting the challenges of building trust in a society shaped by external expectations. The murder, in this context, becomes an extreme manifestation of these tensions, symbolizing the destructive potential of unresolved conflicts.

Furthermore, the novel engages with the theme of identity, particularly in relation to societal roles. The characters are constantly negotiating their sense of self within the constraints of cultural norms. Keshav's identity as a logical thinker is challenged by his emotional experiences, while Prerna's identity is shaped by her role as a prospective bride. The tension between individual desires and social expectations creates a sense of dissonance, reflecting the broader struggles faced by individuals in contemporary society.

Bhagat's narrative style contributes significantly to the impact of the novel. His use of simple language and conversational tone makes the story accessible to a wide audience, while the incorporation of humor and suspense keeps readers engaged. At the same time, the underlying themes add depth to the narrative, encouraging readers to reflect on the social and psychological dimensions of the story. This combination of entertainment and social commentary is a hallmark of Bhagat's writing, allowing him to address serious issues within a popular framework.

The urban setting of the novel further enhances its relevance, providing a backdrop that reflects the changing dynamics of Indian society. The characters inhabit a world where traditional values intersect with modern lifestyles, creating a complex environment in which relationships are constantly evolving. The depiction of urban life highlights the influence of globalization and technological advancement on social practices, including marriage. This context underscores the need to re-evaluate traditional institutions in light of contemporary realities. The novel presents a nuanced critique of arranged marriage, acknowledging its cultural significance while questioning its limitations. Bhagat does not reject the institution outright but rather emphasizes the importance of emotional compatibility, communication, and individual agency. The narrative suggests that relationships cannot be sustained solely on the basis of social approval; they require genuine understanding and mutual respect.

## **Conclusion**

*One Arranged Murder* by Chetan Bhagat transcends the boundaries of conventional crime fiction to offer a profound exploration of contemporary Indian relationships. Through the lens of a murder investigation, the novel examines the complexities of arranged marriage, societal expectations, and psychological conflict. The interplay between logic and emotion, as represented by the protagonists, underscores the challenges of navigating relationships in a rapidly changing society. The study reveals that Bhagat uses the narrative not only to entertain but also to provoke critical reflection on the nature of love, trust, and social conformity. The depiction of characters struggling to reconcile personal desires with cultural norms highlights the need for greater awareness and communication in relationships. The novel ultimately advocates for a more balanced approach to marriage, one that values both tradition and individual autonomy.

In conclusion, *One Arranged Murder* serves as a significant cultural text that captures the evolving dynamics of Indian society. Its exploration of psychological and social themes makes it relevant not only as a work of fiction but also as a subject of academic inquiry. By integrating elements of crime, romance, and social critique, Bhagat creates a narrative that resonates with contemporary readers while offering valuable insights into the human condition.

### **How to Cite this article?**

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