

Portrayal of Modern Youth and their Triumph Over Life Issues in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

Dr. Santosh Prasad

Associate Professor & Head (Department of English) Sant Tukaram Mahavidhyalay, Kannad, (M.S.)
India

Abstract: Chetan Bhagat is a renowned Indian author who has gained immense popularity for his works that have a mass appeal. His novels often revolve around the lives of young adults in India and the issues they face in their personal and professional lives. Post modernism in Indian English Literature refers to the works of literature after 1980. Chetan Bhagat is an icon of new India and he has an enduring name in the ground of postmodern fiction. He has opened the floodgates for a new movement of Postmodernism in Indian Writing in English. He has portrayed the vision of modern Youth and their triumph over life issues in his novels. *Five Point Someone* is the portrayal of three IIT students named Hari Kumar, Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta who struggled to cope up with the grading system. The writer shows the loopholes and rotten education system. *One Night @ the Call Center* revolves around a group of six call center employees working at the Connation's call center in Gurgaon, Haryana, India. The theme of this novel is the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including questions about career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in postmodern India. The novel *Three Mistakes of My Life* ironically unfolds some of the bitter truths of human life which is now more influenced by passion rather than emotion and ambition. *Two States* is the story about a couple coming from two different states in India, who faces hardships in convincing their parents to approve of their marriage. *Revolution 2020* deals with a love triangle, corruption and a journey of self-discovery. The novel has addressed the issue of how private coaching institutions for courses like IIT JEE exploit aspiring engineering students.

Keywords: Post Modernism, Women's portrayal, globalization, inter-community marriages, and IIT.

INTRODUCTION

Chetan Bhagat was born on 22nd April, 1974 in New Delhi and is a living Indian author who has written six novels namely *Five Point Someone- What not to do at IIT* (2004), *One Night @ The Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States: The Story of*

My Marriage (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014) respectively and a collection of essays titled *What Young India Wants* (2012), and these are the works that have been selected for study.

Chetan Bhagat was raised in a Punjabi family in Delhi and studied at Army Public School (1978-1991), Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. He finished Mechanical Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi (1991-1995), and went on to study Business management at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad (1995-1997), where he was conferred the title of "The Best Outgoing Student". He found love with his classmate Anusha Suryanarayan during their student days at IIM and they later got married. The novel *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, is said to be a fictional representation of their love story. After Bhagat completed his education from IIT and IIM, he worked in a financial service company called Peregrine based in Hong-Kong. Unfortunately it closed down in six months but he continued to stay in Hong-Kong for eleven years, and was later employed at Goldman Sachs. His novels are mostly written in ordinary conversational English and his style of writing is lucid with linear narratives. The name of Chetan Bhagat is highly recognized today in the field of Indian English fiction. According to New York Times, he is "the biggest selling English language novelist in India's history" as his books have registered a sale of over a million copies. He has made a huge contribution to the world of entertainment through some of his novels which have been adapted into popular Bollywood movies. He has also made a contribution for big newspapers such as *The Times of India* and *Dainik Bhaskar*, where he writes as a columnist discussing and commenting on various social and national issues. Bhagat is listed by *Fast Company*, USA, as one of the world's "100 most creative people in business" and has also been

included in the Time magazine's list of "World's 100 Most Influential People" in the year 2010. Chetan Bhagat has been selected for study because his novels have successfully captured the life and popular culture of the modern Indian urban youth and the challenges that they experience in various aspects of their life including education, love, sex and marriage and career goals within the context of new liberalized India. However, Bhagat has captured the sense of conflict and anxieties that the aspirational youth of Indians feel over the changes that the middle-class social structure has undergone which include gender norms and power relations in the context of globalization like no other contemporary authors. In depicting the changing culture of modern India and its impact on the youth, he has raised certain questions which are not only timely but also relevant in the coming century as India continues to evolve and develop in this globalized world.

His first novel, *Five Point Someone*, is set between 1991 and 1995 at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, and the choice of subjects for his books by Chetan Bhagat is very significant. It's a story about the journey of three engineering students, Ryan Oberoi and Alok Gupta, the storyteller Hari. With the IITs' grading system, they fail to cope. Ryan is intelligent as well as an outspoken boy, while Hari and Alok are relatively introverted personalities. The front liners aren't that bright, and five GPA points are always safe, which is very low. Things are always getting worse for them, even though they are trying to improve their grades. While in this book, the grim side of some education systems, which is praised by the elite, is both directly and indirectly discussed, the focus is on the life of those modern youth in the institutions and the journey from feeling alone in the struggle, to finding the inner strength to do everything required to take control of their lives. When parents, teachers and the society label the five pointer students as losers. Chetan Bhagat has giving hope for the young minds of India that it is passion with the right attitude towards life, which will lead one to success.

Chetan Bhagat has portrayed the incidence of ragging in IIT in *Five Point Someone*. Senior students Baku and his friends take ragging of three newcomer students, Alok, Ryan and Hari. Hari told, "As per tradition, seniors rounded us up on the balcony for ragging at midnight. I was still rubbing my eyes as the

three of us stood to attention and three seniors faced us." (Bhagat 2) Baku the senior student brought empty coke bottles from his room and put them in position. Ryan abandoned his pin-up pose and jumped. He grabbed the two bottles and stamped hard on Baku's feet. "Get this bastard," Baku shrieked in agony. (Bhagat 5) Ryan's heroics save the two students, Hari and Alok from the ragging and they became good friends for all the four years of IIT. Their friendship became like bond faster than Fevicol. J. Naga Madhuri observes, "The novel also touches an important chord- the helplessness of the Professors to handle the brilliant students who can pose challenging questions based on their common sense. Prof. Dubey, Mechanical Engineering Department, mentions: "The definition of machine is simple. It is anything that reduces human effort. So the world around you and it is full of machines." (Bhagat 9) A student Ryan asks: "Sir what about a gym machine, like a bench press or something?" "That doesn't reduce human effort. In fact, it increases it." (Bhagat 10) Through this novel the writer intends to convey a social message that GPAs are not the ultimate factor to decide students' potential and creativity. To become a topper with 10.00 GPA is a great achievement but there is something more in lifewhich is yet to be achived i.e. commitment towards family, friends and our internal desires and goals. Also writer wants to give a message to parents that they should not force their children to do anything against their will. Prof. Cherian forced his son Samir to become an Iitian like him but his son Samir tried three times to get into IIT but felled to crack the entrance exam so he committed suicide. Prof. Cherian doesn't understand the fact that his son cannot handle physics, chemistry and maths. He has seen thousands of IIT students in his life, and cannot see why his own son cannot make it. The novel thus puts a lot of emphasis on rotted education system in India and it focus on the actual knowledge which the industry requires and not the GPAs grading system.

One Night @ the Call Centre is Chetan's second novel. It is a story about six people, three guys and three girls who works at the Connexions call centre. They are Military Uncle, Radhika, Esha, Priyanka, Varun Malhotra and Shyam Mehra. The book touches the nerve of India's call centre generation and presents a realistic picture of BPO life which is very tough as the employees have to work

daily at night shifts with the constant threat of downsizing hanging over their heads like Damocles' sword. It is a story of their pains, sorrows, ambitions, love life, personal trauma and the happiness they share together. Shyam is the team leader and has some ambitions but he lacks self-confidence both in personal and professional life. He is pretty confused in life, more so because of his frustrated love affair with Priyanka. Esha wants to become a model but she doesn't fulfill her dreams. She had slept with a designer to win a modelling contract. But the man later betrayed her by saying that Esha was too short to be a ramp model. Shyam and Varun wants to start their own website design company. Here Chetan Bhagat has shown the youths working in the call centre to earn some money but their dreams are different and they tried their best to achieve it.

The 3 Mistakes of My Life, is Chetan Bhagat's third novel. It is a story of three close friends- Ish (Ishan), Omi, and Govind (the narrator), all of whom come together to start a retail cricket goods shop. This novel explores the lives and passions of youth in an emerging Metro. Govind tells 3 mistakes of his life. His big ambitions led to what he calls the first mistake of his life. Govind, Ish and Omi begin a small sports goods business in the temple courtyard. After someday Govind books a new business premises at an upcoming mall at Navrangpura on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. However, his hopes are dashed by the earthquake. Govind starts giving Maths tuitions to Ishaan's younger sister, Vidya. Her parents wish her to join a medical college, though she wants to be a fashion designer. Blinded by young love and rising sexual passion, Govind commits what he calls the second mistake of his life: he has sexual relations with his best friend's sister. Govind's third mistake was he can't save Ali from the mob after the Godhra communal riots in Ahmedabad and he was badly injured but Ali undergoes an operation in London and Govind pays for the treatment.

The novel's message is that victory and defeat are parts of human life and we should never think of suicide. Ups are followed by downs but life never ends. Another message is that today's modern youth is not involved in cast and religious conflict. In fact he wants to fulfill his ambitions by hard work.

In 2 States, Chetan Bhagat negotiates the issue of inter-community marriages in context of the synthesis of culture and the solidarity of nations. It is a typical Indian love story of a Punjabi Boy, Krish Malhotra from Delhi and a Tamil Brahmin girl Ananya Swaminathan from Chennai. The novel tells us their struggle to marry over the jarring cultural and religious differences. Finally they convince their parents and got married.

Revolution 2020 is Bhagat's fifth novel on the rotten education system and corruption in public life. All the three principal characters have strong ambitions in life, and how they try to fulfill them constitutes a bigger part of the novel. Gopal seeks financial wealth and comfort in life. Raghav wants to bring social and political change in the country. Aarti aspires to become an air-hostess and fly like birds in the sky. Aarti is Gopal's girlfriend and love interest. Gopal starts his Engineering college with the help of MLA Shukla and Raghav starts his Newspaper to bring revolution in India.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the selected novels of Chetan Bhagat provide a glimpse into various aspects of life, ranging from love and relationships to social and economic issues. Through his unique style of storytelling, Bhagat offers insights into the challenges faced by young people in contemporary India, including the pressures of modern education, the impact of technology on relationships, and the struggles of the working class. Moreover, the novels analyzed in this study highlight the importance of personal growth, self-discovery, and perseverance in overcoming obstacles and achieving success. The characters in Bhagat's novels are relatable and reflect the aspirations and struggles of many young people in India today. Chetan Bhagat's novels serve as a mirror of Indian society, presenting both its strengths and weaknesses. His works provide a valuable contribution to Indian literature and offer a window into the complex realities of life in contemporary India.

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