

# Depiction of Youth and Culture in Chetan Bhagat's Selected Novels

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## ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is not only a symbol of new India but also an imperishable name in the arena of postmodern fiction. He has written six fictions and two non-fictions and almost in every work he has captured his deep concern about the youth today i.e. the problems and despairs, hopes and aspirations of the youth. In spite of dealing with the harsh realities of life his works manage to retain the sense of pure humour. His works have striking similarities with parables in offering moral messages, spiritual guidance and technical suggestions; his works can better be defined as postmodern projection of parables. The victories and defeats of the youth are the staple of Chetan's stories and the present paper is based on those issues only.

Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in the English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is a literature which is a combination of Indian literature and Indian literature written in English. It

contributed to the common pool of world writing in English. Indian writings in English are a product of the historical encounter between the two cultures – Indian and the western—for about one hundred and ninety years.

**Keywords:** *Chetan Bhagat, Fiction, Non Fiction, Postmodern, Parable, Message.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

A parable is a simple narrative that illustrates and elaborates a universal truth. A parable often involves a character who encounters a moral dilemma or one who makes a wrong decision and then suffers the unintended consequences. The salient feature of the parable is the presence of a subtext suggesting how a person should behave or what he should believe. Apart from providing guidance and suggestions for proper conduct in one's life, parables frequently use metaphorical language which allows people to discuss difficult or complex ideas in an easier way. Parables manifest an abstract argument by means of employing a concrete narrative which is easy to understand. Chetan Bhagat's fictions and non fictions notably justify the above narrated explanation of a parable. Chetan Bhagat is a distinguished Indian author, a prolific writer, a noted columnist, a well-known screenwriter, and a motivational speaker, recognized for his English-language dreamed novels about young urban middle-class Indians. Chetan Bhagat is a luminary who is luminous in the postmodern Indian fiction which revolves round hopes and despairs, smiles and tears, fears and cheers, happiness and sorrow, ambition and tribulation, love and separation of the youths of new India. A celebrated public intellectual, Bhagat also writes columns about the youth, career development and current affairs. Chetan Bhagat rose to eminence in a short span of time. His style of writing is simple, lucid and vivid with graphic descriptions and linear narratives. According to him, novels are perfect devices for both inspiration and entertainment and through which he disseminates his views and opinion about society and youth.

## II. DISCUSSION

### ISSUES RAISED IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S SELECTED NOVELS

#### “FIVE POINT SOMEONE”:

Chetan Bhagat's first novel “Five Point Someone”....’ is not to help people who aspire to get into the IIT, or even help those who are already there to pass out successfully. Far from it, it discusses a very significant problem of the youth today – why do students at elite institutes sacrifice their youth for the sake of a successful adulthood. One may generally feel that graduates from India's prestigious technology universities get good jobs, make great money and are eagerly sought-after marriage partners. But according to Chetan Bhagat's charming debut novel ‘Five Point Someone....’ they end up in a Faustian bargain i.e. either they commit suicide or they spoil their career as well as their lives. ‘Five Point Someone....’ is about a guy, Hari, and his two friends, who consider themselves the underdogs because they have five point something, grade point averages (GPAs) and their (mis) adventures in the four years they spend at IIT. It is about their constant struggle to beat a system which judges everyone by their GPA, and which, they feel, suppresses the creativity of a person. So they set out to make the most of extra-curricular college life, by devising schemes which will help them to maintain their five point something averages with just two or three hours of study a day. The resulting free time is spent in boyish adventures, be it playing squash, roaming the city or trying to woo the professor's daughter. In short, all that

they should not do at IIT. But the one thought nagging them all is, will they make it?

The book, besides having a humorous appeal, also deals with the fears and insecurities of the students in one of the country's top institutions. Its description of the lives of the students in IIT or other higher-education institutions such as IIM or NID rings true. It could be Harvard, except for the regional flavor of the locales. IIT provides the backdrop against which the story unfolds, but it could just as well have been any other elite institution – elite in terms of the aspirations of its students but eclectic in terms of their social, cultural and economic backgrounds.

The author delves into the minds of the students, their motivations and aspirations in the competitive atmosphere of IIT. The personal lives of the characters are also beautifully interwoven into the narrative. The protagonist's involvement with his professor's daughter forms the love angle of the plot, and their love life accounts for more than a few laughs. The fact that her father is the kind of person no underperformer wants to meet, only adds to the drama. Sentimentality is left low-key, but not underplayed while portraying the warmth of friendship or bonds of attachment.

The book dispels the commonly held notion that IITians generally “have it made”. The reader gets to know that life at IIT is totally performance-oriented, with never ending notes, assignments, lectures etc. it is also a subtle take on the GPA system, which kills the students' originality. But, in the end, the characters realize that it is precisely this drudgery that makes IITians what they are. The narrative is interspersed with wonderfully funny incidents, like when Hari sneaks into the professor's house in the middle of the night to wish his daughter a happy birthday, or when he appears for a viva after downing half a bottle of vodka to “boost his confidence”. The language used is original and the dialogue fresh and youthful. The casual, easy-flowing style makes for easy

reading and credit goes to Chetan Bhagat for removing the mask of intellectualism with which the IITs are associated. The everyday realities have been so well webbed that it does not take you to a wonderland, but rather moves you smoothly towards realities that are pleasant and fun-filled. Credit ought to be given to this young author for his grasp of the human psyche. He knew well enough that there would be a great readership for the book, if not for nothing else, simply because it breaks many myths.

#### **“ONE NIGHT @ THE CALL CENTER”:**

“One Night @ the Call Center” revolves the story of a group of six call center employees working at the Connexions call center in Gurgaon, Haryana, India. The themes involve the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including questions about career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in postmodern India, and the relationship of the young Indian middle class to both executives and ordinary clients whom they serve in the United States. The novel has a prologue, in which the author- Chetan Bhagat comes across a beautiful woman on a train-trip. She offers to tell him a story but she will do so only on one condition that he uses it for his next book. It is set at a call center, describing the events of a single night shift....and she warns him (as well as the readers) to expect at least one unusual occurrence: “it was the night....it was the night there was a phone call from God.” “One Night @ the Call” Center is a romantic comedy set in an office where bored young Indians try to resolve the mindless inquiries of Midwestern American Technophobes. The story is a comedy of romance and crossed lines. There are three main themes: ex-girlfriend, bad boss, and God. The story deals with six friends who are selling home appliances to the US from a call center in India. Each one has an issue with love. Call agent Sam works right beside the girl who has just deceived him. He is dating someone he can't stand just to get over her. Esha is just short of becoming a model; two inches, to be precise. Vroom wants to change the world. Radhika is trying to manage her mother-in-law and hold down her job.

A phone call from God is an innovative element in his work. No novelist has presented God using mobile phone to guide his devotees in the crisis. Herein God advises his friends-cum-devotees how to escape from the iron web of death. The phone call encourages the survivors to settle account with their boss. With the surprising call from God on Shyam's phone Chetan Bhagat inputs the spiritual interlude in the novel. He tends to make the people steady and strategic in hard times. Actually, this is the call from the within of everyone. This is the call of their “will to do” or “will to live”. Shyam acts upon the call of his inner being and becomes the revolutionist. He with the help of his friend Varun blackmails his boss to cancel the layoffs. Eventually, he starts his own website developing company in collaboration with his friend Varun. Thus, he proves his capability and makes himself worthy of his ladylove's ambition.

Bhagat seems to intensify the same passionate zeal in delineating hopes and aspiration as well as failure and frustration of his generation in a remarkable manner in his third novel “The 3 Mistakes of My Life”. The novel ironically unfolds some of the bitter truths of human life which is now more influenced by passion rather than emotion and ambition.

#### **“THE THREE MISTAKES OF MY LIFE”:**

This book is a good come back by Chetan Bhagat after” One Night @ the Call Centre”. The story involves some of the major headlines of early 2000 like the Gujarat earthquake, India- Australia test series, and the 9/11 and

not to forget the Godhra train mishap. Apart from cricket, business and religion it also has the mesmerizing love story between Govind and Vidya. A must read for all Chetan Bhagat's fan. The Novel deals with recent incidents a well humour. The book has fiction (If reader thinks' that its about Chetan Bhagat's life then its not. It is sentiment, romance, social message, business, life, relations, and religion and of course Cricket. The unique thing in this book is that Chetan Bhagat has addressed a sensitive issue in the most sensible way possible. He has presented the facts, narrated a story in a neutral way. It's the story about three friends Omi, Govind and Isha. The story is presented through Govind's eyes and it's his three mistakes of life that are presented along. Govind is a true Gujarati, interested in coming up on his own in life, through business. Ish is an avid cricket player whose passion lies in playing, teaching and watching cricket. Omi is a priest's son who doesn't have any ambition of his own and just moves along with his two friends. The journey of these simple people in life, how their lives get affected by the worst disasters in Gujarat's history is portrayed in a simple yet efficient way by Chetan Bhagat. This book also teaches you how your dreams crash into pieces by unexpected events but how with support from people around, you gets back on track, focus and rebuild your dreams.

This novel especially comes at a time when people only want to come up with excuses to show or feel how different they are rather than see the common aspects and bring oneness which can keep us together and achieve our common goal of growth, peace and prosperity. The language is simple, it connects well with the youth of India, the narration has improved, and all in all Chetan Bhagat has improved in all the departments of writing a book. He has again proved that to be a best novelist you don't need fabulous vocabulary or you don't need awesome critics review, all you need is a thread to connect to the plain minds of people. Truly his best book ever. To sum up it can be said here that this book too has the same type of narrative storytelling, the homely Indian

girls trying to lose their virginity and the so called boys felling shy and guilty after having sex with them.....Neha in "Five Point Someone" and Vidya in "3 mistakes of my life"..., well there are many people out there and each person's life is a different best-seller on its own. But it's only a handful who actually sits down to write it boldly and get it published. No matter what the ulterior motives are. Chetan Bhagat writes in his simple, charming vocabulary with the lingo of typical Indian youth- with his homework done he has again published a good book; and got his work out there in the market. No doubt the book is good, and induces curiosity. It can be said that Overall it's a good book. Chetan Bhagat has been clever by stating 3mistakes and you keep flipping the pages for knowing the other two as the 1st mistake you'll come to know quite soon. It's a book with nice ingredients of real events and fiction perfectly cooked for a delicious dish. No mistake in giving it a read.

### III. STATES

The Story of My Marriage, Chetan Bhagat disapproves the social and linguistic differences in the people belonging to different states and also their discrimination on the basis of their colour, face, dress, language and manners . Loosely based on Chetan Bhagat's own life.

It 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. The story begins in the IIM Ahmedabad mess hall, where Krish, a Punjabi

boy from Delhi catches sight of a beautiful girl, Ananya, a Tamilian from Chennai. They become friends within a few days and get romantically involved. After their employment they make serious plans for their engagement. At first Krish tries to convince Ananya's parents by helping Ananya's father to do his first PowerPoint Presentation, her brother, Manju, by giving him IIT tuition and later convinces her mom by asking her to sing in a concert organized by Krish's office, i.e. Citi Bank. She is convinced as her biggest dream of singing at a big concert comes true; she sings along with S. P. Balasubrahmaniam and Hariharan. Then they try to convince Krish's mom. But the problem appears when his mother's relatives reject the idea of their engagement. They opine that Krish should not marry a Tamilian but end up agreeing with them when Ananya tries to help one of Krish's cousins to get married and succeeds to do so. Krish has had a strong hatred for his father. He neither shares his feelings nor keeps a harmonious bonding with him. Now as they have convinced both their parents they now try to introduce each other's parents. They go to Goa. But this dream of theirs shatters as Ananya's parents smell something suspicious between Krish's mom and him. Ananya's family ends up deciding that Krish and Ananya will not marry each other. But, at last, Krish's father, who was like an enemy for Krish, helps Krish and Ananya to get married as he convinces Ananya's family successfully. Now Krish realizes his father's love for him. The novel is narrated in a first person point of view in a humorous tone, often taking digs at both Tamil and Punjabi cultures. The novel ends with Ananya giving birth to twin boys. He says that the babies belong to a state called 'India'; Chetan Bhagat makes it clear that his children will be identified only as Indians not by the tag of any religion or state.

He comments: "They will be Indian. They will be above all this nonsense. If all young people marry outside their community, it is good for the country. This is the greater purpose." (P-103)

The novel records the supreme spirit of nationalism. It is based on the social and amorous endeavours of two main characters – Ananya Swaminathan and Krish Malhotra. The novel is unique in its content, which attempts to unite not only two states but also two traditions and cultures. It endeavors to represent the people of the nation only as Indians not as castes, religions, states etc. This is the only thing the novelist ventures to inform the youth of his country. He advises the youth to fix marriage on the criteria: physical symmetry, education, and financial position and gender skills. He suggests one should find in one's match four things. First, the match should be almost equal in physical properties. They should be sufficiently educated. Their financial position should be considerably profound and they should be adept in their gender jobs i.e. the boy should know how to manage family expenses and a girl should know how to properly keep the house. Chetan Bhagat advises the youths to follow their heart; knowing what they want and sticking to their decision is most important.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Chetan Bhagat's Novel has laid bare various social issues pertaining to young generation ranging from love marriage, generation gap, dowry & other many social issues and all. Some time it provides solution of these problems. He has emerged as a realistic writer with objective opinion but leaves his readers to contemplate the prospective solutions of the problems they are grappling with. The narrative technique, language selection, episode selection and cinematographic treatment of the subject content are par excellence while reading novels or watching movies based on it readers get lost in it.

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