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ONE DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR

ON

DISABILITY, REPRESENTATION AND LITERATURE

held on 03 October 2019 and Organised by P.G. & Research Department
of English

S. T. HINDU COLLEGE, NAGERCOIL-2, Tamilnadu, India



Postmodern Projection Of Culture: A Study Of Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone:*

What Not To Do At IIT!

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ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is an idol 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. His name doesn't poise any awards list, but he is known to every college student in India. While the global literary dwell on the fiction of India's past, Chetan Bhagat has become India's well known writer by embracing the present culture. He manages to retain his sense of humor even though the topics those are actually harsh realities of life. His writing has revolutionized and mirrored the postmodern literature. According to him, the rationale of literature is to portray the society. His works have striking similarities with fables in offering moral messages, spiritual guidance and technical suggestions. The victories and defeats of the youth are the staple of Chetan's stories and the present paper is based on those issues only. This paper show cases and justifies the postmodern projection of culture by studying his fiction *Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT!*

KEYWORDS

Postmodern, culture, Reader involvement, contemporary elements, and real life situations.

Postmodernism is one of those words that remains on the tongue of everyone connected with literature. It describes a wide movement that is expanded in the late-20th century. The term postmodernism has been applied equally to the era following modernity,



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and to a multitude of movements within that era. Postmodern literature is a form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic and downright impossible plots, games, parody, paranoia, dark humor and authorial self-reference. Postmodern authors tend to refuse outright meanings in their stories and poems, novels and as an alternative, highlight and rejoice the option of multiple meanings, or a whole lack of meaning, inside a single literary work.

Chetan Bhagat is a representation of new India and he has an durable name in the ground of postmodern fiction. He has opened the floodgates for a new movement of Postmodernism in Indian Writing in English. Chetan Bhagat who is born on 22nd of April, 1974, is a distinguished Indian author, a prolific writer, a noted columnist, a well-known screenwriter, and a motivational speaker, recognized for his English-language dramedy novels about young urban middle-class Indians. Chetan Bhagat is a celebrity who is luminous in the postmodern Indian fiction which rotates round smiles and tears, hopes and despairs, fears and cheers, happiness and sorrow, aspiration 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 for *The Times of India* (in English) and *Dainik Bhaskar* (in Hindi). Beginning his writing career with *Five Point Someone*, a book that deals with fears and insecurities in the life of an IIT student, Chetan rose to eminence in a short span of time. Chetan's style of writing is uncomplicated, lucid and vivid with graphic narratives and linear narratives. Bhagat is considered a youth symbol rather than as just an author. With his dynamic and humorous way of depicting stories, he has brought the habit of reading in many young Indians. 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.

The key elements of Post Modernism are

- **Pastiche:** The choosing up of an assortment of ideas from previous writings and literary styles and combining them collectively to create new styles.
- **Intertextuality:** The recognition of previous literary works inside another literary work.



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- **Metafiction:** The task of writing about writing or making readers aware of the fictional elements as seen in the very fiction they're reading.
- **Temporal Distortion:** The utilization of non-linear timelines and description procedures in a story.
- **Minimalism:** The use of characters and events which are resolutely common and non-exclusional characters.
- **Maximalism:** Disorganized, lengthy, highly detailed writing.
- **Magical Realism:** The opening of impossible or unrealistic events into a narrative that is or else realistic.
- **Faction:** The mixing of authentic historical events with fictional events without evidently defining what is truthful and what is fictional.
- **Reader Involvement:** Often through direct address to the reader and the open acknowledgment of the fictional character of the events being described.

In the present novel Chetan Bhagat as a post modernist has highlighted his profound concern for the youth of today; i.e. the problems and despairs, hopes and aspirations of the youth. In spite of dealing with the unsympathetic realities of life his works administer to retain the pure sense of humour. His work has striking similarities with parables in projecting moral messages, divine guidance and technical suggestions. The key elements of most modernism are all present in this present novel.

Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT! is the debut novel by Chetan Bhagat, who is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. The novel is positioned in the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, in the period 1991 to 1995. It is about the engaging adventures of three mechanical engineering students, Hari Kumar, Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta, who are unable to cope with the grading system of the IITs. The book is narrated by Hari, with a little small passages by his friends Ryan and Alok, all along with a letter by Hari's girlfriend Neha Cherian. It deals with the lives of the three friends, whose elation on making it to one of the best engineering colleges in India is quickly deflated and diminished by the rigour and monotony of the academic work. Most of the book covers the numerous attempts by the trio to cope with to combat and to eliminate the



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system as well as Hari's fling with Neha who just happens to be the daughter of Prof. Cherian, the dictating head of the Mechanical Engineering Department of their college. While the nature of the novel is humorous, it catches some dark turns every now and then, particularly when it comes to the families of the protagonists.

Most of the action, however, takes place inside the campus as the boys, led by the ever creative Ryan, frequently lamenting how the internationally lauded IIT system has stifled their creative passion by compelling them to value grades more than anything else. Uninspiring teaching and uninteresting assignments augment their miserable condition, though the boys do find a sympathizer in Prof. Veera, the new fluid mechanics professor. The book does not deal with engineering neither does it have pointers on how to clear the entrances; but it does probe on the fact that no matter how hard getting into an IIT is, it is even harder to survive if your heart is not in it. His criticism of ragging in the most prestigious institutes of the nation, futile grading systems and fruitless vanity of the IITians is of full authenticity. Arvind Jadhav in his article asserts as:

Indian Youth Culture has not remained 'Indian' as such. Because of globalization in each and every domain youth culture also drastically changed. They changed their styles, interests, attitudes, perspectives, language, habits, and attraction to high speed and effective communication technology like Ryan's scooter. In an inevitable race Internet has become a powerful weapon to get any information with some clicks on the mouse anytime. As Knowledge is ever growing and never ending youth is ready to struggle a lot to be fit in the situation. (4)

It is a fascinating book depicting the hopes and aspirations of Hari, Alok and Ryan who are typical as well as strong individuals having different aims and ambitions and at the same time they also represent the broad community of the prestigious institutes of the nation. The freshers of Indian Institute of Technology including the three students Ryan Oberoi, Alok Gupta and Hari Kumar were called by the seniors up on the balcony for ragging at midnight. Baku and other senior students instructed them —Off with your clothes. Such kind of



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embarrassing incidents in the name of ragging produces a great psychological effect on the minds of students which may increase the suicidal attempts. Ryan, good looking and a hefty man revolted against the age old tradition of ragging and the senior – fresher discrimination. 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 a machine is simple. It is anything that reduces human effort. Anything. So, see the world around you and it is full of machines. (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. (10) The book endeavours to illuminate on the aspects of postmodernist thought process where the engineering youth tries to thwart the conventional pattern of imparting technical education and traditional way of evaluating the cognitive abilities of a student on the basis of Grade Points Average; that our structure of technical education has become a lifeless system, and needs revitalization and massive reformation is strikingly evident in this novel. Every student is bestowed with unique talent and GPA should not be the only parameter to measure their intelligence.

Chetan Bhagat through his novel *Five Point Someone* has indirectly conveyed a serious moral in a humorous tone that it is a wakeup call for the elite technical institutes to replace the traditional teaching technique with an innovative and systematic approach that nurtures and develops the latent abilities of the students to collect and assimilate information and to evaluate that information for appropriateness, accuracy, currency and reliability; that inspires their innate creativity by sharpening their soft skills and active abilities; and that teaches students how to learn efficiently and effectively. The emphasis should be laid on learning methods instead of knowledge accumulation and on the postmodern project of incorporating any tactful technique.

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