

ASPECTS OF POSTMODERNISM IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S SELECTED NOVELS

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Abstract:

The main purpose of this research paper is to present that Chetan Bhagat is a renowned postmodernist writer. Because reading his novels, one may definitely encounter postmodernist aspects. However, he became a bestselling writer and also the voice of the young generation of 20th century society due to his postmodernist aspect. He mocked and criticized over basic things around us or in society such as education system, marriage institution and love. However, the term, 'Postmodernism' used to describe way of style of the art, music, literature, culture, philosophy and criticism in late 20th century and also a form of literature which is marked, both stylistically and ideologically, by a reliance on such literary conventions as fragmentation, paradox, unreliable narrators, parody and paranoia. Postmodern authors tend to reject outright meanings in their novels, stories and poems, and, instead, highlight and celebrate the possibility of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning.

Key words: reader involvement, contemporary elements, real life situation.

Introduction:

Chetan Bhagat emerged as a bestseller writer among the young generation in the society and also has an enduring name in the field of postmodern fiction. He opened the floodgates for a new movement of Postmodernism in Indian Writing in English. Even though no prestigious literary awards conferred to him still undoubtedly he labelled as a famous and popular writer among youngsters in Indian society. It is Chetan Bhagat who is embracing the present scenario of Indian society and trying to present through his works. Obviously, he succeeded in retaining his sense of humor despite the topics that are actually harsh realities of life. His writing has revolutionized and mirrored postmodern literature. According to him, the purpose of literature is to showcase society.

Chetan Bhagat wrote more than six fictions and two non-fictions respectively. He is not only exposed manners in Indian society but also highlight his profound concern for the youth of today; such as the problems and despairs, hopes and aspirations of the youth. Inspite of dealing with the unsympathetic realities of life his works administer to retain the pure sense of humor. His works have striking similarities with parables in projecting moral messages, divine guidance and technical suggestions. Yatri D. Dave in her insightful article, Culture of Consumerism as Reflected in Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Center*, focuses the trends and techniques of modern world. She examines that the novel deals with Consumerism which shows how to attract customers while selling their products.

'Five Point Someone' is a debut novel by Chetan Bhagat, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmadabad. The total



backdrop of the novel is set in the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, during the years 1991 and 1995. The whole concept of this novel is about the three mechanical engineering students, Hari Kumar, Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta, who are unable to cope with the grading system of the IITs owing to being used to the by hearting system. This book is narrated by Hari, along with his friends Ryan and Alok, as well as a letter by Hari's girlfriend Neha Cherian. Most of the situations in this book are covered with the innumerable deeds by the trio to cope up with the grading system as well as Hari's fling with Neha who just happens to be the daughter of Prof. Cherian, the domineering head of the Mechanical Engineering Department of their college. While the tone of the novel is humorous, it takes some dark turns every now and then, especially when it comes to the families of the protagonists.

Chetan Bhagat criticized ragging in the most prestigious institutes of the nation, futile grading systems and fruitless vanity of the IIT. 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. Baku and other senior students instructed them —Off with your clothes. Such kind of embarrassing incidents in the name of ragging produces a great psychological effect on the minds of students which may increase their suicidal attempts. Ryan, good looking and a hefty man revolted against the age old tradition of

ragging and the senior –fresher discrimination. 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. (P-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.(P-10).

Another very interesting and thrilling novel ‘*One Night @ the Call Center*’, came out in the year 2005, revolves around a group of six call center employees working at the Connexions 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 backdrop of the novel is at the call center, describing one of the events that occurred at night....it was night and there was a phone call from God. It is a romantic comedy set in an office where bored young Indians try to resolve the mindless inquiries of Midwestern American Technophobes. There are three main themes: ex-girlfriend, malicious-boss, and God.

The story deals with six friends who work in a Call center. Sam works right beside the girl who has just deceived him. 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. Military uncle always thinks about his family and his grand-children. Though he wanted to live with his son and daughter in law they won’t allow him to live together. All these characters are shown and narrated as suppressed characters due to their personal problems. Every one of them considers his or her problem as a storm in the tea-cup

Bhagat's third novel, ‘*Three Mistakes of My Life*’ focuses on passionate zeal in delineating hopes and aspiration as well as failure and frustration of his generation in a remarkable manner. The novel ironically unfolds some of the bitter truths of human life which

is now more influenced by passion rather than emotion and ambition. Chetan Bhagat is more vibrant in this novel because of his magnetic maturity and sharpening sensibility. It delineates the passionate ambition of three growing boys- Govind Patel, Ishaan and Omi.

The narrator of this novel is Govind who has an aptitude and penchant for business. Ishaan has passion for cricket while Omi is more concerned with religion because of his parents' attachment with the city temple. So, business, cricket and religion seem to govern the life of these growing people. Bhagat studies the characters of these three with ironic detachment because he never takes the sides of anyone. His characters are young, ambitious and passionate and have the same moral, social and religious dilemmas as many of the young Indians have today. The book is based on real life events. The book is loosely based on the three mistakes Govind made in his life. The earthquake of Gujarat ruining Govind's over one lakh investment for a shop in a newly built mall is his first mistake. Govind falls in love with Vidya when Ish discovers this and declares Govind as a traitor, their friendship is shattered and this is his second mistake. A split second delay by Govind in making a specific move which could have saved Ali from a hit is his third mistake. This novel depicts sentiment, romance, social message, business, life, relations, religion and of course cricket.

This book is a parable as it teaches one how one's dreams crash into fragments by unexpected events but with the support of people around, one can get back on track, focus and rebuild on achieving one's dreams. Vidya, Ishaan's sister, a teenager with her eyes on Govind, represents typically homely Indian girls losing their virginity to the so-called boys feeling shy and guilty after having physical intimacy with them just like Neha in *Five Point Someone* and similarly Vidya in this novel. Ali, a gifted batsman and the son of a local Muslim politician, plays a prominent part in the story. It's the story of how Govind, Ishaan and Omi come up with a sports store in their area and how they achieve success in it by clubbing it with Math's tuitions and cricket coaching classes.

Bhagat has portrayed his characters as decision makers. Other writers of the past have delineated their protagonists who are subjected to the will of their parents or their boss. Unlike other writers, Bhagat advises the youth not to follow every word of their parents and the boss blindly. Revolutionary spirit of Bhagat thus appears in his comment: —Humanity wouldn't have progressed if people listened to their parents all the time. (P-103)

His fourth novel, 'Two States' is the story about a couple coming from two different states in India, who face hardships in convincing their parents to approve of their marriage. The story begins in the IIM Ahmadabad 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, that is Citi Bank.

She is convinced that her biggest dream of singing at a big concert comes true; she sings along with S. P. Balasubrahmanyam & 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 ends 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 attachment 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.

Bhagat states that the twin boys belong to a state called 'India'; 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. 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 attempts to represent the people of the nation only as Indians not based on caste, religion or state etc. This is the only thing the novelist ventures to inform the youth of his country.

His fifth novel '**Revolution 2020: Love, Corruption, Ambition**' is a 2011 novel by Bhagat. This story 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. How parents put their hopes and desires on relying on these coaching institutions so that their children can crack professional tests and change the fortune of their family. The book unearths the stark reality of this coaching industry which thrives on scams, corruption and all kinds of criminal activities.

This book narrates the story of two friends alienated by their ambitions and passions yet attached by their love for the same girl. While Gopal, who has experienced the harsh realities of life due to poverty, aspires to become rich; his friend Raghav is a boy from a well-off yet simple Indian family who desires to revolutionize India by fighting against corruption. As they grow older, they get estranged from each other and are busy with their individual lives. But Aarti somehow ties them together by being their mutual friend. Both of them are in love with the same girl and this lends the book an aspect of romance.

Revolution 2020 stands for the revolutionary spirit of Chetan Bhagat. Raghav disregards the suggestion of his father to get admission in IIT, even though he was eligible for it. He determines his profession. He serves the downtrodden of his city by communicating their pains through the media to the responsible authorities. He emerges as a successful journalist. He continues to serve the wretched even after his printing press is destroyed. He writes the daily news on the papers and distributes them to the social activists. It was quite a challenging responsibility but he does not quit or resign from his service. However after seeing what Raghav has gone through due to the joint revenge taken by the MLA and Gopal himself yet sustaining his determination to bring the revolution, Gopal decides to change something on his

part and help his friend anonymously. He sacrifices Aarathi also for his sake. He stops the affair he has with Raghav's girlfriend Aarti despite his unconditional love for her. He also asks Dainik to hire Raghav back.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, it is concluded that Chetan Bhagat is not only distinguished writer but also renowned postmodernist writer in 20th century. He has successfully intermingled different colorful yarn of social, political and realistic elements about Indian society in his respective novels. Literary works of Chetan Bhagat manifested postmodernist aspects such as parody, paradox, unreliable narrators, often unrealistic plots and multiple meaning. He tends to reject outright meanings in their novels, and, instead, highlight and celebrate the possibility of multiple meanings, or a complete lack of meaning. His works have striking similarities with parables in projecting moral messages, divine guidance and technical suggestions.

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