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Narrative Technique and Style in Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone – What not to do at IIT*

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Abstract:

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the Indian fiction. He has written about modern Indian youths and their need in his novels. He says that novels are entertainment tools through which one can express his views and opinions about society and the youth. In the modern India human behavior changed into lust, greed, hypocrisy, and hatred and these are the major themes of Bhagat's novels. His novels are incomplete without humour, friendship, love, family conflicts and marriage. The background in which Chetan Bhagat has written novels is predominantly of the society in the post globalization era. His novels are based on day-to-day happenings in the Indian society so ultimately he has written the problems of Indian society in a humorous ways. He has handled the modern situation in proper manner. His characters easily get involved in friendship and love and suffer a lot. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern to the society in his novels ranging from romantic love story to a shocking condition of the Indian multiculturalism. Bhagat, in the novels describes about the Indian culture and trend using different narrative technique and style. This paper aims to study the narrative technique and style used in his *Five Point Someone- What Not to do at IIT*.

Keywords: Narrative Technique, Indian youths, multiculturalism, Indian culture.

Introduction

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian author, columnist, and speaker. He is the author of eight blockbuster novels, *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* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half*

Girlfriend (2014), *One Indian Girl* (2016) and *The Girl In Room 105* (2018) and two non-fictions, *What Young India Wants* (2012) and *Making India Awesome* (2015). All these books have best-seller since their release and some bollywood films like *3 idiots*, *Hello*, *Kai Po Che*, *2 States* and *Half Girlfriend* took inspiration from these novels. Chetan Bhagat is seen more as a youth icon than just an author. This IIT and IIM-A graduate is making India read like never before.

Any narrative as a technique of delineation has two overlapping aspects, one refers to content, or the assemblage of material and the nature of the connections implied. The other is rhetorical. It is the mode of presenting the narrative to the reader, or audience. So the art of narration pertains to two basic queries- 'what' and 'how'.

'What' part of narration discusses the various recurrent themes at length. In the present paper, a study is undertaken to elaborate in details the 'how' aspect of narrative technique. As the realm of narrative technique is quite vast and endless, an attempt is made to limit the study to the use of various modes like humour, simile, metaphor, irony, symbolism, personification, hyperbole, repetition etc. as found in the '*Five Point Someone*' of Chetan Bhagat.

Thus, humour is generally used by all the creative artists to provide a variety to the texture and also to relieve the atmosphere of tension and gloom. It helps the author to intersperse comic relief in an otherwise serious plot. Instances of humour abundantly abound in the novels of Chetan Bhagat. Most of them are available in '*Five Point Someone*'.

Seniors take juniors' ragging for enjoyment. Seniors force juniors to perform what they decide. In the novel, seniors want juniors to play with empty coke bottles. Ryan shows daring and opposes seniors. He "grabbed the two bottles and stamped hard on Baku's feet" (FPS, 5). This incident affects the seniors' habit of taking juniors' ragging.

In the classroom, some students always give proper attention towards blackboard and write notes. Narrator says that among the seventy students in their batch, one is very careful whose "head moving to and fro, mouth ajar; a timid sort" (FPS, 9). Bhagat here makes humorous comment on studious student.

Once Professor Dubey tells students a machine's definition that 'anything which reduces human effort'. Everybody except Ryan writes it. Ryan is in habit of not to accept anything blindly. He always acts differently in the classroom. He asks Professor, "Sir what about a gym machine, like a bench press or something" (FPS, 10). Creativeness in Ryan makes him not to accept the old and traditional definition told by Professor Dubey.

In IIT, students give more time to their study. Ryan is not serious about it and takes his friends for watching movie. Alok blames Ryan for wasting their time and says, “If we don’t study and others do, we are screwed” (FPS, 18). After listening to Alok, they start studying but suddenly a rodent comes in their room and Ryan again wastes their time. Ryan “removes his slippers, hoping to take aim and strike the rodent down” (FPS, 18). But the rodent dives under the bed. Ryan does not stop here and asks Alok, “You want me to kill them for you” (FPS, 18). After being requested by Alok, Ryan “opens the ApMech book and exhaled deep through his mouth” (FPS, 18).

Professor Sen takes students surprise test. These trios bunk classes, do not take notes, so get very less marks. Alok does not want to get noticed in the classroom. He says, “We are screwed. Let’s get screwed in silence at least” (FPS, 19). He places his head in his study position. Novelist shows poor condition of these friends in classroom.

Chetan Bhagat makes a lot of humour on everything that happens in the IIT college. After getting less score at surprise test Ryan and his friends go for a lunch at the hostel mess. Mess worker serves bhindi masala into Alok’s plate and “slammed two rotis on his stainless steel plate and ignored the rest of the semi-solid substances like dal, raita and pulao”. Hari says, “Ryan and I took everything; though everything tasted the same, we could at least have some variety of colors on our plate” (FPS, 21).

Professor Saxena teaches to final year students. He is good by nature and tries to know everything about the trios who face DISCO committee. He is one of the most senior Professors in Mechanical Engineering Branch. Talking about him Hari says, “He was a senior Professor and touted to be the next in line for head of the department if Cherman moved on to something else, retired or just died”.(FPS, 234).

Simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. The language of a novelist has to be different in order to be attractive and appealing. He has to employ different linguistic devices to maintain the interest of the readers in his work.

Senior students at the hostel take juniors’ ragging. Ryan, Hari and Alok along with other student are brought in front of the seniors who want juniors to be humiliated. All the seniors are tall and bulky. Among them Anurag looks “like a demon from cheap mythological TV shows-six feet tall, over a hundred kilos, dark, hairy and huge teeth that were ten years late meeting an

orthodontist” (FPS, 2). The novelist points out those seniors who with their power want to humiliate juniors.

Some people cannot control their anger. The novelist describes Ryan's character as having full daring. On the day of ragging, Ryan opposes the seniors from taking his ragging. But seniors are busy in fulfilling their evil desire by taking juniors' ragging. Ryan takes out two coke bottles, smashes them on parapet and waves the jagged ends in the air. The novelist describes Ryan's face while performing this act as scarlet “like a watermelon slice” (FPS, 5).

Hari and his friends attend their first lecture on the first day at IIT. The rooms at IIT are having amphitheatre shape. The instructor is in full uniform who applies three tablespoon of coconut oil, wears light blue shirt and has positioned three pen. The novelist makes a comment on him that he sits next to the blackboard “like a bloated beetle, watching us settle down, waiting for the huddled murmurs to cease” (FPS, 12). Bloated beetle means swollen insect of large order. The shape of the Professor is compared to that of an insect. In the same lecture, Professor gives them the syllabus of Manufacturing Processes subject. All the students are busy in looking at the syllabus “like herd” (FPS 12). The quite condition of the students is like cattle who can see but cannot do anything.

Hari and Ryan go for morning jogging. Ryan is a sport person so he can run without getting tired. Hari being obese, tires earlier and pants “like a trekker on Mount Everest without oxygen”(FPS, 21). Hari's fatness makes his physical condition like a trekker at mountain.

Smart people need not require good dress to look smart. Neha's car in the morning gives a little push to Hari who falls down on the ground. She looks beautiful though she is in nightdress. Hari compares Neha and Alok and says to Alok that he looks “like a terminally ill patient in his torn vest and pajamas” (FPS, 22).

Metaphor is a figure of speech, which makes an implicit, implied, or hidden comparison between two things that are unrelated but share some common characteristics. In other words, a resemblance of two contradictory or different objects is made based on a single or some common characteristics

Chetan Bhagat uses a metaphor ‘abandoned orphan’ in *Five Point Someone*. Ryan is handsome and intelligent student at IIT. He gets his entire education studying away from his house, as his parents do business at different places. They send him money and other things, but

are unable to give him their precious time. Ryan and his friends get low GPA in the first semester. Alok blames Ryan for his poor score and calls him an “abandoned orphan” (FPS, 67).

Alok does not like Ryan’s behavior as latter is interested in watching movie, playing games and eating at restaurant. At some extent, Ryan is responsible for trios’ less score in the first semester. Alok wants to study hard and for that, he decides to leave his friends. He calls Ryan that “he was just spoilt brat” (FPS, 64), who wants to do whatever he wants without caring his friends.

Repetition is a device to make the same claim twice in succession. This mode gives emphasis on the statement made. While describing the qualities of Professors in *Five Point Someone* Chetan Bhagat tells the readers about monopoly of Professors. Professor Dubey wants the students to listen him without asking the questions. He tells them, “Watch it son. In my class just watch it” (FPS, 11). By saying this, Professor creates terror among the students. The stress is given on the words ‘watch it’ to convey the meaning that one has to simply stare in the classroom.

Ryan stops his friends from mugging the notes all the time. According to him, education system at IIT does not inspire students for research work. He mocks at Indian students and India. His anger for education system at IIT compels him to mock at it. He says to Alok, “Yes sir, let us mug and cram. Otherwise, how will we become great engineers of this great country”(FPS, 18). Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. For instance, “smile” is a symbol of friendship. Similarly, the action of someone smiling at you may stand as a symbol of the feeling of affection, which that person has for you.

Chetan Bhagat gives symbolic meaning to his some characters. Professor Veera in *Five Point Someone* is a symbol of humanity who comes to meet Alok in the hospital with a box containing ‘Kaju – burfi’ and discloses the news of Ryan’s lube – project approval. Professor Veera sets an example before us that a teacher should encourage his students and motivate them a lot. A teacher has a missionary zeal and an angelic motive to recognize the latent talents in both achievers and underachievers and treat them humanely. Professor like Dubey sticks to old and traditional knowledge. He wants students to follow him. He says, “Watch it son. In my class just watch it” (FPS, 11). Ryan takes an inspiration from Professor Veera and starts research work in his lab. Professor Veera and Ryan are symbols of innovative teacher and student in the field of education.

Chetan Bhagat writes his novels in the first person. He tells the story through the characters of main protagonists. His first book *Five Point Someone* starts with

Well I have to start somewhere and what better than the day I joined the Indian Institute of Technology and met Ryan and Alok for first time; we had adjacent rooms on the second floor of the Kumaon hostel (FPS, 01).

Every writer has his own style of narrating events and situations. Some allow in flights of fancy and provide their description as an imaginary theme. There are novelists who furnish facts and who are very practical in presenting them. There are novelists who refer to the ancient legends to show similarity or offer contrast in their claims. It is to the credit of Chetan Bhagat that he employs all these devices to make his description not only life-like but also living.

Chetan Bhagat in all his novels uses Indian words related to food. These words are bhindi masala, samosas-chutney, idli-sambhar or rajma-chawal, rice, rotis, daal, gobi-aloo, mango chutney, raita and matar-paneer. By using these words writer wants readers to understand Indian culture. He also gives the line from the Hindi film song, “Ghar aaya mera pardeshi ...” (FPS, 54).

Bhagat combines many words in a sentence with hyphen, which brings closeness to separated words. Both, Hari and Neha drink vodka on the terrace of the college building. Later she pulls his mouth and wants to kiss him. He says, “Was she going to kiss? Or rather, was she-plus-two-glasses-of-vodka going to kiss me? (FPS, 112) Ryan wants to know Hari's relation with Neha and asks him if he kissed her. Hari says, “I have met her twenty times, but every time I get the push. She has like this under-the-elbow policy” (FPS, 80).

Conclusion:

Thus, Chetan Bhagat in his novel, *Five Point Someone* has tried to present the different narrative technique and style. He has used simile, metaphor, personification, repetition etc. In the novel the author has given stress on humour and other techniques. Ryan, Alok, Hari and Neha used figurative language. Bhagat is successful in making the reader happy. New readers who don't know the literary language can also enjoy the writing style of Chetan Bhagat. Bhagat has succeeded here in describing all the things in beautiful manner. He has also succeeded in keeping the readers stick to novel up to at the end.

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