

Representing Metropolitan Youth Culture: An assessment of Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* and *One Night @ the Call Center*

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Chetan Bhagat born in Delhi -the metropolitan city and the capital of India- is an emerging author in Indian English Literature. The Army Public School, Delhi prepared him up to XII to get into Indian Institute of Technology (IIT-D) for Mechanical Engineering and then to be an M.B.A. from Indian Institute of Management (IIM-A). Though having degrees from cutting-age-tech IIT, Delhi and most reputed B-School IIM-Ahemadabad, Bhagat seems to be an innovative architect in Literature.

Chetan Bhagat has explored youth culture and their issues in 'Five Point Someone' and 'One Night @ the Call Centre'. Hari; in the first novel and Shyam; in the second novel revealed their imperfections. In both novels he depicted youth's world, their culture, challenges, problems, addictions, parties, fast foods, fashions, tastes, interests, attitudes, relationships, love, expectations, responsibilities, nationalism, rebelliousness, stress and their various complexes. In addition, we found college-life-culture, sick education system, stressful exams and GPA, canteen-chats, movie-goings, ragging and fresher-senior classification. In novels we see identity crisis, youths' unrest, their alienation, chaos, their ambitions, and their broadened views.

Both the novels have autobiographical elements. The writer has keen interest in 'yoga', which reflected as a unique and spiritual theme. When we think of novels, they give the same message. The biblical concept '*Believe in Thyself*' is there in first novel. It questions whether high grades are important than other aspects of life. 'One Night @ the Call Center' also made us to meditate on concept like '*Inner Call*' and links it with phone call majestically.

'Five Point Someone' is the first novel released in 2004, is being widely read and topped as India's national bestseller till date. It is the story about three students i.e. Hari, Ryan and Alok who secured their places to get into IIT. At the very first day, late at night, seniors called them for ragging. Bakhu and other seniors asked them to be dress-less. Though half-sleepy and with much fear, they followed the instructions of seniors. Ryan, good-looking and having a stout body rebelled against their age-old ragging psychology and senior-fresher discrimination. He has saved Hari and Alok from the coke bottles at the very first day and they became a good friends for all the four years of IIT and then.

'Five Point Someone' focused the friendship of Hari, Ryan and Alok; the prominent characters of the novel. The romanticism evoked with the love affair of Hari and Neha; the daughter of Prof. Cherian and the heroine of the novel. Neha is the only female character developed in the novel. As in the male-dominated society of India, females are marginalized in whole IIT with exception of Neha and some other names like Alok's mother. We find the lady never in IIT classes, in labs and library, in and around the institute, in four years of their studies.

Even all the names of Professors are also complete masculine. Neha is not free from his father Prof. Cherian, Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. That is why, she is doubtful about his father and handover Sameer's secret suicide-letter to his boyfriend Hari. Alok's mom is a teacher but shown too much sentimental and helpless. She is edu-cultured but always worries about her daughter of 'marriageable-age' and burdens Alok. She has also shown as a faithful nurse of paralyzed husband.

'Five Point Someone' is the story about college-life-culture and can happen anywhere not necessarily in IIT. It is not a book about how to get into IIT and survive there. It is of this trio's screwing the grades at the big time because of their attachment with each other to have a fun and detachment with study and Hari's becoming mad for Neha and Alok's worries of family responsibilities.

As story starts with IIT's admission, we reveal the youth's endeavors right from entrances to different courses at different levels in different fields in country and abroad. We see their hostel life and their alienation from their families which can be bearable for students like Ryan who has been living thoroughly through hostels from the age of six not to Hari-Alok-like students. In the colleges *Friends* become the part and parcel of their life and their biggest property. We also observe eccentrics of youth; everyone wants name and fame and ready to do anything anytime. Hari gets ready to do anything for his love-heart Neha. Neha gets ready to cheat his father and break his vow with Sameer ; her late brother. Ryan always sees nothing more than his friends, not even his parents. Alok belongs to lower middle class of Rohini colony, Delhi is a sincere but gets ready to accompany Ryan and Hari even in their bad ideas to overcome his problems and to get a rid of poverty.

They (three underperformers) invent *C2D* (cooperate to dominate) formula to save the time copying each other and sharing the papers to have a lot of fun. According to them today's exams, quizzes, GPA (Grade Point Average) are useless. They blame IIT system as sick and for it's' not contributing to nation building, and for churning the most intellectuals of the country. They say IIT do not care for their creativity and original thinking. To rebel against this, they planned to paper theft of Majors from Prof. Cherian's room (at 9th floor of Insti-building) and caught red handed. They have been terminated for one semester. Alok jumped from Insti-roof but fortunately saved after thirteen odd fractures. They have changed thereafter. All worked hard then more than fourteen hours a day, got extra grades and degrees in time. One more example of their eccentrics we see before the operation pendulum of paper-theft, Hari reaches in Neha's room to give a surprising gift on her birthday at midnight with Ryan and Alok, an indirect-hit to Prof. Cherian.

Professors' attitudes and parental expectations are also to be taken into consideration. Prof. Veera is different from other Professors who love creativity of Ryan though he was five pointers and gave him an opportunity as RA (Research Assistant) of him. He also tried to save all trios from their termination. After Alok's fatal accident, he came to meet trio with *Kaju-Barfi* and the news of Ryan's Lube-project approval. It shows humanity unlike other Profs who never thought of students. The underperformers like Hari, Ryan and Alok (scored five point something) are also human and should have treated them humanely. They also have right to live. Prof. Cherian -ten pointer- has lost his own son Sameer because of his wrong attitude and

superego. Sameer wants to be a lawyer but he can't. Neha also spoilt because of his overstress. Hari, though five pointer, came drinking a vodaka to his viva, because of his fear, thinking that he can't stand in front of Cherian without it. Prof. Cherian revealed his fault at the end, he confessed on occasion of convocation.

Most important thing here focused is how student's unrest and uncontrolled stress lead to addictions. They begin smoking cigarette, then Vodaka and other drugs. They also use go to movies to get relief. It is really thought provoking. It is the age of total chaos.

Having the great success to 'Five points someone', his second masterpiece 'One Night @ the Call Center' came out in Oct, 2005. It is the story about six people working in the call center, set in one night. It is the story about ex-girlfriend (Priyanka) and ex-boyfriend (Shyam) who interrupted with Shefali (semi-girlfriend of Shyam) and Ganesh (intended husband of Priyanka), but unite again in the end of the novel.

It can be treated as the sequel to 'Five Points Someone' on the ground of ideas not of story; because most of the ideas are developed progressively in second novel. It is again the novel about youth-culture. It is also set in Delhi like former novel with view broadened from individuality to family-matters. Chetan Bhagat moulds his conventional Hari-Neha love story to liberal Priyanka's rejection Shyam story. Priyanka is shown mature than Neha; who accepts Hari blindly. In most literary works of art, we see male rejecting woman, and here the inverse condition. As there is competition and rat race at education in the first novel, we find the same in the later novel but at the workplace. As trio in 'Five Points Someone' blame professors and rebel against system, all the voice agents in 'One Night @ the Call Center' i.e. Shyam, Varun, Priyanka, Esha, Radhika except Military Uncle rebel against bad boss Bakshi to punish him.

No doubt, 'One Night @ the Call Center' is based on BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) industries where we find the 24/7 culture and '1x2 x3 formula' which means they pay double salary to a single to get worked thrice. With the novel 'One Night @ the Call Center' BPO has come into literature (fiction). Call Center industry is currently growing sector and Chetan Bhagat tried to explore this call center world and its' culture.

'One Night @ the Call Center' starts with every agent's running for catching Qualis to reach in time for night shift. Everyone changed his own identity lives pseudo-life with a great patience and high stress. Shyam becomes Sam for more money and joins 'Connexions' (name of the call center), leaving bad company of politicized colleagues and his web designing service, Varun turns into Vroom leaving journalism, Priyanka was already working there. Radhika (a married woman) and Military Uncle also join to support their families. The reasons were different of them but working together in the same shift sharing same Qualis in WASG (WESTERN APPLICATIONS STRATEGIC GROUP).

The novel is about the youth's dreams, their hallucinations, and their nightmares. Shyam is a day-dreamer always been thinking of his past days spent with ex-girlfriend who had rejected him because her mother never wants Shyam as Priyanka's husband and also because of their struggle in relationship. Priyanka dreams her intended husband Ganesh. He earns a lot in America, cheats Priyanka. Vroom reveals the truth from the online information through Internet

with the help of Shyam. Vroom's idea worked to unite Shyam and Priyanka at last. Ganesh's dream of marrying Priyanka remained unfulfilled as Esha's who wants to be a model. She slept with a man who rejects her as a model causing less height. At the end she gave up the dream.

The main plot deals with Bakshi -a manager- of these six agents has always sucks them with his management tips and technical jargons. He also dreams to go to Boston on promotion showing website, actually developed by Shyam and Vroom, on his name. Again he once sends an disgusting mail to Esha which revealed by Vroom in Bakshi's absence at his PC. In mail Bakshi offers Esha an exclusion from 'right-sizing' (to be more productive with high efficiency and high technique). For all that reasons one day all agents go in Bakshi's room, behave rudely with him, hit him by whatever and ask him to leave 'Connexions'. Bakshi do all things as directed, offer salary to agents of their demand and left.

All the issues related to families are also focused in the novel. Radhika, for instance, do the entire household for whole day and works for night shifts in 'Connexions' without any complaint. Radhika was only daughter of her parents gets married with college-friend has always been neglected by men and women of in-laws. Priyanka is liberal. Not only she rejects Shyam and Ganesh for different reasons also chaps against Vroom's face. Once she also made one old lady to respect her daughter-in-law. Radhika is conventional, her husband always remain out of station for work that she expect only love not else from him. The controversial relation of women has shown trough Priyanka and her mom. They never respect each other.

CONCLUSION:

Though Cetan Bhagat has chosen Delhi as a setting for both of his novels, which is similar to other metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, etc. 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.

The first novel focuses male characters while later novel female characters. Bhagat talked about different gender perspectives: how women think differently from men of the some concepts, how Priyanka, Radhika and Esha gossip differently from Ryan, Hari, Shyam, and Vroom discuss boldly on love, life and sex. Women are interested in their 'in-purse-things' and spends maximum time of a day unlike men. Metropolitan youth culture has been being transformed as a 'mix-culture' / 'globe-culture'. They have been sharing their feeling with their friends from different countries, trying to solve queries, expressing through blogs of their interests. Thus, the Metropolitan youth transcended boundaries of one culture, society, region, religion, language, etc. I can explain the today's Metropolitan youth culture as something like; *an Indian boy with an American girlfriend eating Chinese in an Australian University seeing Bollywood film on German-made television having an African actor, Russian actress and Japanese producer.*

I found Chetan Bhagat representing nothing about remote India, the rural youth and their issues in these novels. We found the creamy-layer youth selected by Chetan Bhagat, though having different social background, have equal opportunities to them in education & jobs for example: the youth of former novel **study in IIT** and youth in later novel **work in call center**.

The youth from Indian remote places have no much awareness of all these transformations. They are yet fighting ceaselessly for their limited needs with limited means. Illiteracy rate is very high in remote places where youth are far from primary education still. Situation of youth in tribal areas of India is worst than that, as they have been living in primordial stage, really a jungle life. Again he has not dealt with all the gender issues. Issues like woman's security in home and at workplaces have been emphasized along with their socio-economical, psychological and sexual exploitation.

So, we may say, Chetan Bhagat has succeeded to reveal nothing but the Metropolitan youth culture of India and some of their issues.

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