

Post Modern Aspects in the Works of Chetan Bhagat

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ABSTRACT

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 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, within a single literary work. Postmodern Literature also often rejects the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' forms of art and Literature, as well as the distinctions between different genres and forms of writing and storytelling. Post modernism in Indian English Literature Refers to the works of Literature after 1980. If Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) Marks Modernism, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* (1981) And Nissim Ezekiel's *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). Chetan Bhagat is an icon 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 grace any awards list, but he is familiar 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. He manages to retain his sense of humor even though the topics that are actually harsh realities of life. His writing has revolutionized and mirrored the postmodern Literature. According to him, the purpose of Literature is to showcase the society. This paper show cases and justifies how Chetan Bhagat is considered to be the postmodernist writer which is clearly documented by his own works.

Key words: Reader involvement, contemporary elements, real life situations. **Key elements of Post Modernism:**

INTRODUCTION

Pastiche: The picking up of various ideas from previous writings and literary styles and combining them together to create new styles.

Intertextuality: The acknowledgment of previous literary works within another literary work.

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 use of non-linear timelines and narrative techniques in a story.

Minimalism: The use of characters and events which are decidedly common and non-exceptional characters.

Maximalism: Disorganized, lengthy, highly detailed writing.

Magical Realism: The introduction of impossible or unrealistic events into a narrative that is otherwise realistic.

Faction: The mixing of actual historical events with fictional events without clearly defining what is factual and what is fictional.



Reader Involvement: Often through direct address to the reader and the open acknowledgment of the fictional nature of the events being described.

Chetan Bhagat as Post modernist:

As on date he has compiled six fictions and two non-fictions and in fact in every work he 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 humor. His works have striking similarities with parables in projecting moral messages, divine guidance and technical suggestions. Along with that his works can better be defined as postmodern projection of parables due to the above reasons. The victories and defeats of the youth are common aspects of Chetan's stories with respect to the present generation and era. Hence, the present paper is based on those issues only. 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.

Chetan Bhagat (born 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 luminary in the post modern 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 youth of new India.

Chetan's style of writing is simple, lucid and vivid with graphic descriptions and linear narratives. Most of the protagonists in his novels are named after Lord Krishna such as Shyam, Krishna, Hari, Govind and Madhav. Bhagat is considered a youth icon rather than being just an author. With his vigorous and humorous way of depicting stories, he has encouraged 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.

Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT ! Is the debut novel by Chetan Bhagat, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. 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 byhearting system. This book is narrated by Hari, along with his friends Ryan and Alok, as well as a letter by Hari's girlfriend Neha Cheria. 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. Cheria, 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's criticism of ragging in the most prestigious institutes of the nation, futile grading systems as well as fruitless vanity of the IITians is of full authenticity in this book. 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. 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.(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).

One Night @ the Call Center:

Chetan Bhagat's second fictional work One Night @ the Call Center, published 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 his grandchildren. 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.

In course of a time, a phone call from God to preach them on high spirit and motivation to lead a happy life. Infact it is an innovation in this of Chetan Bhagat. 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 Bhagat inputs the spiritual interlude in the novel.

Three Mistakes of My Life

Bhagat focusses on 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. Chetan Bhagat is more vibrant in this novel because of his magnetic maturity and sharpening sensibility. The 3 mistakes of My Life delineate 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 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.

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)

Two States:

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, that is Citi Bank. She is convinced as 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 Swamina than 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.

Revolution 2020:

Revolution 2020: Love, Corruption, Ambition is a 2011 novel by Bhagat. This story deals with 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 hope and desires on relying 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 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. Things slowly improve for Raghav financially as he can now work on his articles, while Gopal is shown to slowly become a better person. Although in the end we see Gopal is alone and prefers to be isolated, he is indeed rich and successful as he wanted to be and Raghav who is now married to Aarti and almost the MLA sees his dream of bringing about change as well. Chetan Bhagat uses metaphorical language to suggest that strong determination, sincere persistence, earnest attachment, courageous initiative and ardent commitment are the key ingredients for securing success in life.

What Young India Wants:

Apart from the six novels Chetan Bhagat has two non fictional works to his credit. What Young India Wants which is published in 2012 analyses in clear, simple prose and with great insight some of the complex issues facing postmodern India, as well as offers solutions to make our country better. In his latest non fictional work, Making India Awesome, published in 2015 he analyses using simple language and concepts, and provides inspired solutions to the country's most intractable problems—poverty, unemployment, corruption, violence against women, communal violence, religious fundamentalism, illiteracy and more. Bhagat has introduced some unique trends in the Indian English Literature. He has focused the interest of the youth. He has attempted to guide their invigorating enthusiasms and energies into proper direction. His works display the aspiration and ambition of the youth. They are epicureans in nature. Therefore, they take life for pleasure. Bhagat takes life for enjoyment not for repression. That is why Ryan suggests his friends a plan how to keep away from the cynicism of the teachers and enjoy the prime days of the life at the institute.. Bhagat also puts emphasis on the empowerment of women. His woman characters believe in an absolute freedom, pure liberty and self-identity.

Half Girl Friend:

Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend, published in 2014, reveals the sentiments and linguistic struggles of a backward rural Bhojpuri-laced Hindi speaking boy from Bihar as he enrolls himself at the prestigious English-medium St. Stephen's College, New Delhi, and falls in love with a high class English speaking rich Delhi girl, Riya Somani. The girl, not really interested in a relationship, agrees to be his —half girlfriend.

The story begins with Madhav Jha, a boy from Dumraon, Bihar. At the very beginning, his troubles commence after he entered St. Stephens because he is from a village, his English was quite bad. But his Being a good basketball player, Madhav Jha manages to get admission through his sports quota. The rich and beautiful Riya Somani, a girl from Delhi, is also selected through the sports quota. Madhav and Riya become close friends due to their association with



basketball. A year later, Riya marries her childhood friend Rohan and settles in London where Rohan has a big business. Finding Delhi unbearable on grounds of losing Riya, Madhav decides to settle in his hometown and help his mother, Rani Sahiba with her school. Seeing the condition of the school – no proper classes or toilets – Madhav decides to meet local MLA Ojha for financial help, but the MLA is of no help. An opportunity comes when Ojha informs him of Bill Gates' visit to some schools in Bihar. Madhav tries his best to convince Gates to fund his school's' development, but in order to do so he has to deliver a speech, preferably in English. In the course of his struggle, he comes across Riya, who is a divorcee. Riya assists him prepare the speech. They are successful in their objective of fundraising, but, after the speech, Riya leaves a letter for him which discloses that she has lung cancer. With three months left to live, Riya leaves for New York to become a singer, a dream she wanted to pursue. After three years, it is revealed from Riya's journals that she is alive. Madhav goes in search of her in New York. After three months he finds her in a bar, working as a singer. They get married soon after. The book ends as the author visits the rural school in Dumraon three and a half years later; he discovers that it is being run successfully by Madhav and Riya, who now have a son, Shyam. *Half Girlfriend* is an interesting novel which not only motivates the youth to achieve success but also encourages them to be confident and rational whenever they are faced with pressing problems of time. For Chetan Bhagat, temporary failure in life has also a meaning because it hides the secrets of success. Madhav's advice to his son, —Don't quit. It will happen one day (P-260) bears the suggestion that failures are the pillars of success. He has warned the youth to be sensitive, alert, wise and discerning in their words and deeds; the accomplished action and the said speech cannot be undone and unsaid. Madhav is repentant and remorseful for his uncouth, un courteous words and harsh, unjust treatment meted out to Riya. His wish has an aura of sincerity: —I wished I had a time machine to undo my actions.....I only wanted it to un-say that sentence. I had said it in a combined state of horniness, bravado and stupidity. Well, it is also the state in which men are most of the time (P- 79) According to Bhagat, money is not the be-all and end-all of life. Life involves things much greater than money. Respect is one among them. One can earn respect if one lives with dignity and when he lives for others.

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