

## **Post-Modern Sensibility In Chetan Bhagat's Fiction**

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### **Abstracts**

Postmodernism is a movement that emerged in cultural and literary phenomenon after World War II which covered a huge body of critical thinking. It brought the change in [philosophy](#), [the arts](#), [architecture](#), and [criticism](#). It was a departure from [modernism](#). Chetan Bhagat is an icon of Indian youth and 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. Most of his novels handle contemporary social issues. All his characters are constantly struggling either against individuals, against the social environment, or even against their inner selves. Disillusionment, alienation, loneliness, separation, anarchy, ambiguity, and paradox in modern life are the major themes of his novels. His fiction explores postmodern sensibility in which all the protagonists have been broken off from the spirituality and intellectuality in their day to day life.

Key Words: Modern, Postmodernism, Youth, Sensibility

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### **Introduction**

Chetan Bhagat is an eminent postmodern Indian writer born on 22nd April 1974. He has written many best-selling novels like, *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2005), *The Three Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), and *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014), and non-fiction *What Young India Wants* (2012) *One Indian Girl* (2016). Most of his novels are adopted in Bollywood movies. In his every work he has captured his deep concern about Indian youth and their problems and despairs, hopes and aspiration, etc. His work not only depicts the harsh reality of life but offers moral messages, spiritual guidance, and technical suggestions also. A Variety of youths with their ethos, aspirations, sentiments, and isolations in their life is the key concern of Bhagat's novel. He thinks that the novel is the perfect device not only to entertain but also to motivate

and inspire the youth of new India. His novels are nothing but the projection of postmodern sensibility.

## **Post-Modern Sensibility**

The term 'postmodern' comes into a philosophical lexicon with the publication of Jean-François Lyotard's *La Condition Postmoderne* in 1979 (English: *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1984). Since then it is widely used by various scholars to describe a set of critical, strategic, and rhetorical practices. Postmodern literature is a form of literature that 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. The term postmodernism is largely understood as a reaction against modernism. 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. Chetan Bhagat belongs to the new generation of writers of Indian writings in English who writes about a mass of people living in metropolitan settings, enjoying indefinite modern facilities and at the same time facing the pressure of hyper-fast, competition-oriented life at the same time.

## **Discussion**

Chetan Bhagat started his literary career with his first debut novel *Five Point Someone: What not to do at IIT!* (2004), after graduating from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (1995) and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (1997). His first novel set in the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, in the period 1991 to 1995. It is a story of three IITians, Hari Kumar, Ryan Oberoi, and Alok Gupta of the mechanical engineering

department who can't cope with the grading system of the IITs. Most of the story is narrated by Hari except some small passages by his friends Ryan and Alok, as well as Neha Cherian's letter who is Hari's girlfriend. Most of the action of the novel takes place inside the IIT campus as the boys, led by the ever-creative Ryan, frequently criticizing how the internationally famous IIT system has stifled their creative passion by compelling them to only value grades more than anything else. Traditional and uninspiring methods of teaching, uninteresting assignment, regular exams, GPA grading, and ragging leads them to lament on the education system. Ryan is the real mouthpiece of the author. He criticizes the current education system. He comments,

“This system of relative grading is overburdening for the students.

I mean it kills the best fun years of your life?

Where is the room for original thought and creativity? It is not fair.”

*(Five Point Someone)*

Thus, though the novel *Five Point someone* has a humorous tone, Chetan Bhagat has presented the darker sides of the IITians and tries to show the present's unfair means. He has portrayed the real picture of IITians and how they try to solve the difficulties and problems.

*One Night @ the Call Center* is Chetan Bhagat's second fictional work, published in the year 2005, revolves around only a group of six call center employees working at the Connexions call center in Gurgaon, Haryana, India. The entire action of the novel takes place in a single night. The Night from the title of the novel has so many symbolic interpretations itself. Shyam, Vroom, Radhika, Eash, Priyanka, and Military uncle strive about betterment, satisfaction, contentment, and settlement throughout the nights. Each of them has their problems that most of the common youth of India faces. Military Uncle is living away from

his son and wants to reestablish good relations with his son and daughter-in-law and spend the time with his grandson. Radhika's mother –in law bullies her by telling lies to her husband who is also deceiving her, though she loves him too much. Priyanka's mother burdens her for choosing well settled the life partner. Shyam and Vroom want to establish Website Company but as a sort of money, they can't. Eash wants to do a career in modeling but because of her height, she is less preferred. Though all the characters from the novel are struggling to fulfill their desires, they are uncertain about their goals and future. The fear of losing the job always lingers around them. Conversation among the agents shows the uncertainty of their jobs.

“Things are bad around here, my friend,” Vroom said.

“Bad news may be coming”

“What do you mean? Are they cutting the jobs?”

*(One Night @ the Call Center)*

Radhika says, “I need a job. Anuj and I need to save”

Priyanka says, “.....But I wanted to save money first.

Can't open my dream nursery school without cash”

A phone call from God is an innovative element used by Bhagat. The phone call encourages the agents to settle accounts with their boss. With the surprising call from God on Shyam's phone, Bhagat inputs the spiritual interlude in the novel. This is the call from the within of everyone. God says you receive a thousand calls every day but you can't hear your inner call which is more important to hear.

*The Three Mistakes of My Life* is the third novel by Chetan Bhagat, ironically projecting the bitter truth of human life which is more influenced by passion rather than

emotion and ambition. The novel portrays the passionate ambition of three growing boys – Govind Patel who is business minded, Ishaan who is fond of cricket, and Omi is more religious because of his parent's attachment to the city temple. So, business, cricket, and religion entwine the life of these three friends. The novel is based on real-life events. Govind Patel has narrated the story of the book. The novel encapsulates the real events like an earthquake on the Republic Day, the cricket match between India and Australia at Eden Garden in which India wins marginally. These depictions of real events in the novel give a more realistic touch. Three mistakes made by Govind are at the core of the novel. The investment of one lakh for a shop in a newly built mall which is ruined in the earthquake is Gopal's first mistake. Govind's love for Vidya, Ish's sister which collapses his friendship with Ish is his second mistake. His delay in making a specific move that could have saved Ali is Govind's third mistake. Sentiment, social message, romance, relations, life, riots, religion, natural calamities, and of course cricket are the key concerns of the book.

*2 States: The Story of My Marriage* is one more famous novel written by Chetan Bhagat, published in 2009. The subtitle of the novel *The Story of My Marriage* itself suggests that it is semi-autobiographical as it is loosely based on Bhagat's life. The novel raises the issue of inter-state and inter-caste marriage. It is the love story of Krish, a Punjabi boy from Delhi and Ananya, a beautiful Tamil girl from Chennai. Their friendship at IIM, Ahmedabad turns into love and they decide to get engaged after their employment. They try to convince their parents but they can't. But the story of the novel has proved that love has no boundaries of caste, creed, religion, culture, tradition, states, or countries. The novel ends with Ananya giving birth to twin boys. Bhagat says that the babies belong to neither Punjab nor Tamil Nadu but a state called 'India'. Bhagat makes it clear that these children will be identified only as Indians, not by the tag of any religion or state. He comments: —

“They will be Indian. They will be above all this nonsense.

If all young people marry outside their community,

It is good for the country. This is the greater purpose.”

(2 States, P-103)

The novel has unique content which entwines not only two states but also two traditions and culture. Bhagat wants to represent the people of the country only as Indians, not as caste, cultures, religions, and sates. He advises the youth that physical symmetry, education, financial position, and gender skills should be the criterion for fixing marriages and not the caste, creeds, culture, traditions, language, and states. He opines that one should hear his inner voice in decision making.

*Revolution 2020: Love, Corruption, Ambition* was published in 2011. Most of the novels by Chetan Bhagat have subtitles that are more suggestive and apt. In the same, the story of the novel is concerned with the love triangle of protagonists, corruption, and a journey of self-discovery. The book also depicts the exploitations of aspiring engineers at coaching institutes for IIT and JEE. How the parents of these students put their everything for these coaching so that their children can crack engineering and be successful in their life. *Revolution 2020* is a revolutionary of Chetan Bhagat. Chetan Bhagat uses figurative language to advise the youth that strong determination, sincere persistence, earnest attachment, courageous initiative, and ardent commitment are the key ingredients for securing success in life.

*Half Girlfriend* is the sixth novel written by Chetan Bhagat in 2014. It is a story of the sentiments and linguistic struggles of Madhav Jha, a rural background Bhojpuri-laced Hind speaking boy from Bihar who enrolls himself at the prestigious English –Medium St. Stephen’s College, New Delhi. He proposes Riya Somani, a high-class English speaking rich

Delhi girl who is not interested in a relationship but prefers to be his half girlfriend. Chetan Bhagat comments —

“Half-Girlfriend, to me, is a unique Indian phenomenon,  
where boys and girls are not clear about their relationship  
status with each other. A boy may think he is more than  
friends with the girl, but the girl is still not his girlfriend.  
Hence, I thought we needed a term like ‘Half girlfriend.’  
Because, in India, that is what most men get.”

For Chetan Bhagat, temporary failure in life has also meaning because it hides the secrets of success. *Half Girlfriend* is an interesting novel which not only motivates the youths to achieve success but also encourages them to be confident and rational during the pressing problems of the time.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, with the help of powerful words, Chetan Bhagat has portrayed the youth of new India. He has focused on the interest of the youth in the postmodern era. Alienation, anxieties, and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including questions about career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in postmodern India, and the relationship of the young Indian middle class are the key issues handled in his fiction. He has attempted to guide the enthusiasm and energies of the modern generation in the proper direction.

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