

**RAISING THE ROOF OF THE METROPOLITAN YOUTH CULTURE OF INDIA AND
SOME OF THEIR ISSUES: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO *FIVE POINT
SOMEONE* BY CHETAN BHAGAT**

Ch. Sreenivasa Rao

Assistant Professor of English,
GMR Institute of Technology,
RAJAM, Srikakulam
Andhra Pradesh.

Chetan Bhagat is born in Delhi and he is an emerging author in Indian English Literature. Bhagat seems to be an innovative architect in Literature. Chetan Bhagat is the contemporary of Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amitav Ghosh and finds a ready market for the Indian English Literature.

Chetan Bhagat's novels mostly deal with the Indian youth/educated youth of the twentieth century. Seen more as the voice of a creation than just an author, he is making India read like never before. He writes mostly about India as an Indian. He writes about each facet of India like its culture, its problems, and its language and depicts the life of young generation. The traditional Indian society is in a state of metamorphosis. The old practices and ethnicity have not given way to new and hence creates conflict in the life of the characters in the works of Chetan Bhagat. Chetan Bhagat exhibits uncurbed spirits of the young people of his nation and he depicts it with the help of the characters in his novels. His approach is youth calling that calls up only youths and also helps to apprehend their innovative vision for the upliftment of the social evil in the society and to have a glorious world.

The incredible success of Chetan Bhagat as a novelist is a miracle of rare apparatus. The credit goes to his management skills, mushrooming of thousands of new private engineering colleges necessitating his mastery over simple past tense, his validation of immoral instinctive human acts in garb of new age realism.

His five novels "*Five Point Someone*", "*The Three Mistakes of My Llife*" and "*One Night @ the Call Centre*", "*Two States of my Marriage Life*" and "*Revolution 2020*" have adventure, romance, background music, expert comments on social, political and education systems. This writing style is now predictable as one of the important innovations taking place in the field of novel writing. Chetan Bhagat has been defining the literary taste of burgeoning book lovers since the publication of his first novel "*Five Point Someone*" in the year 2004.

In the same light, the first novel of the author deals with dilemma of today's engineering students in India who get into the country's top University, only to rebel against the stultifying atmosphere of academic competition. The novelist has, clearly portrayed ragging, hostel life, work pressure from the higher authority, increasing suicide cases, a great criticism on education system in India following internationally landed IIT system that has stifled students resourcefulness by forcing them to value grades more than anything else; uninspiring teaching and numerous assignments adding to their woes, while still making time to enjoy one's youth. The novel very realistically describes the present scenario while revealing the fact that in India young people had begun to have far more options than their parents, but their choices remain circumscribed by traditional education system, and overbearingly high expectations.

In his first novel, *Five Point Someone*, his replicas Ryan, Alok and Hari fight against the patriarchal education system run by the old and obsolete rules made by the century old

educationists. These potent minds of the old used to believe in wisdom of the world come through self sacrament; the more one penances oneself, the wiser or more intelligent one becomes. The education system of IIT Delhi depicted in his book is adhered to the same patriarchal norms and codes of education. The students are so much congested with assignments, class tests, surprise quizzes and majors exams that they forget what the real meaning of the life are. Their hostel rooms appear to be like prison-cells wherein they are fascinated and their only crime is that they chose to carry IIT tag.

Chetan Bhagat believes that the youth are the future of the country. No mind can ever do wonders unless it thinks unconventional. No one has the right to blemish the future of a boy who is not interested in learning the names of rivers and technical know-how's. The writer adds further if an obstacle is put on the initiative of the student he cannot innovate. There is a phenomenon in every youth but we kill it in his childhood by disgusting his self.

The “decentralization of education” (FPS: 40) is a must for the comprehensive expansion of the students. This will help them to be away from the habit of attack and do without abundant time for creative activities. To some point, the parents are also conscientious for making or marring the life of their children. They enforce extra saddle of their expectations upon them and this hampers the mental and physical growth. Cherian's son runs under the train and dies because he fails three attempts in the entrance exam to IIT. Every time, whenever he failed he was acrimoniously criticized and cursed too. His life could be saved if he was liberated to choose the study of his own choice.

Teachers want their students to follow them blindly whether their logic is acceptable or not but they cannot tolerate if any student dares to cross-question them. They compel the students to run in the mice race. It is the race wherein they have to mindlessly run “for four years, in every class, every assignment and every test” (FPS: 101). The novelist advises the youths not to make race with others but with themselves if they want to succeed in life.

Chetan Bhagat's characters seem to follow their writer's motto, ‘Don't be serious, and be sincere.’ The social milieu as depicted in the novels of Chetan Bhagat is predominantly of the society in the post globalization era. The social scenario is alarming with the crumbling of the value system and utter mystification due to lack of clarification of values with context to the new challenges. The astounding communication technology which today encircles the globe seldom uses its tremendous potential to spread global values and foster a more caring Compassionate consciousness. Hence Chetan Bhagat stresses the importance of redefining the social values.

‘*Five Point Someone*’ is the first novel of Chetan Bhagat released in 2004, and is being broadly 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 naked. 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. 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*’ focuses the narrative about 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 she is 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 uncertain about his father and handover Sameer's secret suicide-letter to his boyfriend Hari. Alok's mom is a teacher but shown too much over-romantic and helpless.

'*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 accessory with each other to have a fun and impassiveness with study and Hari's proper mad for Neha and Alok's worries of family responsibilities. 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. And the novel depicts clearly the culture of the youth in the present day society.

All characters share the same inhabited multi-ethnic background. Alok represents a ever flustered lower class family in "*Five Point Someone*", the striving friends Neha and Hari ever struggle to exploit every occasion to gain some corporeal delight out of their friendship- the girl in alleged reason of an antidote to her dear departed brother who is the victim of the cruel education system and, of course, the viciousness of inconsiderate career oriented attitude of his father Prof. Cherian.

"With the pace of an autobiographical account, the characters are simple people with whom one can identify with almost instantaneously. Needless to say this pocket friendly tome is a lucid and clear account of a young wordsmith who succeeded in making this book a must read for the fun of it."- Time of India newspaper.

Ryan is easy go lucky kind of fellow with the sound financial backdrop and he manages to thumb down studies at the important institute and compel to do the same to his new friends. The amazing pace of *Five Point Someone* with successive logical showcasing of the events keep the reader spell bound, with the condition of the author that "This book will not help youngest into IIT." (*FPS: 1*) the hard work that involves into securing admission in an IIT has been described in funny way.

"I think half the trees in the world are felled to make up the IIT entrance exam guides[...]. All we would say as advice is, if you can lock yourself in a room with books for two years and throws away the key, you can probably make it here. (*FPS: Pp. 1-2*)

Soon after the sensible advice, the author describes the hard core reality of every higher educational institution of India- the social evil- a crime namely —Ragging.

"Another demon grinned at us, slapping his bare stomach every few seconds. There seemed to be no choice so we surrendered every item of our clothing, shivering at the unholy glee in Baku's face as he walked by each other of us, checking us out and grinning".(*FPS: P. 320*)

Choosing the IIT element was itself half an execution. The IIT factor helped a lot initially. Mouth talk spread like a wild fire that the book "*Five Point Someone*" is all about the dark secrets of IIT life. However, the pragmatic convincing story of previous meritorious students Alok, Hari and Ryan who mess their quiz in IIT and from then turn up their lives struggling to maintain their grades. Apart from the routine way of securing good marks which is

given the term mugging, the unheroic hero Ryan tries some other eccentric way to upgrade the grades of trio that is, Hari, Ryan and Alok. Disgusted with the IIT system, Ryan gives vent to his dissatisfaction:

“And this IIT system is nothing but a mice race. It is not a rat race, mind you, as rats sound somewhat shrewd and clever. So it is not about that. It is about mindlessly running a race for four years, in every assignment and every test. It is a race where professor judge you every ten steps, with a GPA stamped on you every semester. Professor who have no idea what science and learning are about. Yes, that is what I think of the Professors. I mean, what have IITs given to this country? Name one invention in last three decades. (FPS: P. 101)

Ryan, the unheroic male lead of the novel devices a system to crack the tricky examination questions and for the completion of the assignment; he gives it an striking title: “The C2D Plan” that is “co-operating to dominate.” (FPS: P. 107)

The plan is like a war cry against the elite education system that is nothing but the process of driving a set of prejudices down one’s throat. The observation on the conventional process of learning in “*Five Point Someone*” reminds and warns, at the same time, that education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught. According to this novel, the IIT system extracts the most promising years of one’s life from the country’s best minds thereby it suppresses talent and individual spirit. The evaluation of the students on the basis of draconian GPA system is faulty and it spreads malice among the fellow students. The faculty is heartless and Professors don’t care for the taught. As far as the contribution to the country is concerned the premier institute has done nothing for the sake of nation in the form of contributing it any path breaking research or invention.

The adoration of unruliness makes “*Five Point Someone*”, a silly piece of masterpiece. Kabul is famous for its horses but it doesn’t really mean that one cannot get donkeys there. But one does not look for donkeys in Kabul so is the case with IITs as one does not look for duffers like leading male leads of “*Five Point Someone*” in IITs.

The way *Five Point Someone* is narrated is splendid with witty humor and required spice laced throughout the book. Ryan is carefree, Alok is careful and Hari is balanced with imbalanced thoughts. There is a stunning and charming young lady Neha who acts as an item to the plot. Introducing her as the daughter of Professor Cherian gave enough scope to bring in drama of trauma. Emotions are also worked out well by bringing in plot of Neha’s brother who commits suicide upon not meeting his father’s expectations of getting into IIT. It is a fun ride and becomes nostalgic on many occasions. Then there is the milieu of IIT and tough system and hard professors, who have been targeted by the author every now and then. Prof. Cherian is the quintessence of the most serious and sincere kind of professors in IITs as he himself was a perfect 10 points grader, he devoted his entire life to the cause of education. And of course people like him are the foundation stone in making IIT a brand. But the negative aspect of the strictness of the kind results in the loss of exceptional kind that the men like Prof. Cherian does not even know for long, like the suicide of his son Samir.

By writing “*Five Point Someone*”, Chetan Bhagat has undoubtedly, touched a nerve with young Indian readers and acquired almost cult status while detailing what not to do at IIT which is the sub title of the novel. The critics may think of his works as literature in making but he has become the need of the new generation readers. He compels the tender mind and heart of his

reader to follow their instinct. His first novel “*Five Point Some One*” has no plot at all. Even if one tries to locate one it is so insubstantial that one can knock it down with a string of hair.

So one reads about a ragging incident right at the beginning that one thinks will build up into something, but doesn’t. Then one reads about a classroom happening which one thinks will act as an antecedent to something more substantial, but doesn’t. Then split of Alok and Ryan takes place and the reader wonders if it will have any impact on the story, but it doesn’t. Then the reader just gives up locating the plot. So the question is how a fiction did so well with such a deliberate lack of plot. The answer may be it banks on our defenselessness to reminiscence. At more than one point in this book the reader will sigh contemplatively and stare through the pages into past and get lost in the memories of experiences. The general feeling of concern among the students in general with regards to IIT is the most levelheaded rendering by the author making the book a resounding success.

Alok is the exact converse of Ryan, with a family to sustain and source of income. Hari, by his own admission, is somewhere between the two. Prof. Cherian is a bad professor who topped all his courses during his undergraduate years and somehow cannot even seem to smile. Add in general Indian good girl in Neha and a flash back with a suicide note the reader begins to wonder if Chetan Bhagat is truly bad at it or if he really could not be bothered. After all a story teller needs characters if he has a story to tell which he did not.

Chetan Bhagat touches the emotional chord of young generation. The emotionally agitated young people dominate the bulk of his fiction. Their failure and frustration are not unknown to anyone. And when the beaten track is not followed, the pressure of expectations can even provoke a young chap to commit suicide as Sameer does in “*Five Point Someone*”. He writes to his sister about his letting down his father,

“Well Neha, he sees the students who make it but he doesn’t see the hundreds of thousands who don’t make it---- what can I do? Keep trying until I die? Or simply die? (FPS.P. 168)

Suicides, which is an act of crime is a prevailing feature in the novels of Chetan Bhagat. When the heaviness cooker like situation prevails the people unswervingly affected from it have a preference to end their lives, in place of facing the challenges of life.

Conclusion

It is because of globalization in each and every domain youth-culture also considerably changed. They changed their styles, interests, attitudes, perspectives, language, habits, and attraction to high speed and effective communication technology like Ryan’s scooter. In a foreseeable race Internet has become a powerful weapon to get any in sequence 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.

We found the creamy-layer youth selected by Chetan Bhagat. The youth from Indian remote places have no much awareness of all these transformations. They are yet fighting incessantly for their limited needs with inadequate means. Illiteracy rate is very high in remote places where youth are far from prime education still. Situation of youth in tribal areas of India is worse 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 abuse. So, we may say that, Chetan Bhagat has succeeded to raise the roof nothing but the Metropolitan youth culture of India and some of their issues.

References

Bhagat, Chetan. *Five Point Someone*, New Delhi: Rupa & Company, 2004.
Time of India newspaper.
<http://www.headlinesindia.com>