

## DEPICTION OF YOUTH CULTURE IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S NOVELS

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#### Abstract

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian author, columnist and speaker. Bhagat is the author of five But selling novels, *Five point someone*, *One Night @ the call center*, *The 3 mistakes of My life*, *2 States* and *What Young India Wants*. Chetan Bhagat's debut Novel *Five Point Someone-* is one of the highest selling English Novels published in India and remained on the best seller list until now since its release in 2004. The novel begins in a unique way where the author takes the liberty of sharing his opinion. *One Night @ the call center* first published in 2005. The novel revolves around the group of six call center employees working at the connexions call center in Gurgaon, Hariyana. *The 3 Mistakes of My life* was published in may 2008 and had an initial print run of 420,000. The Novel follows The story about a couple coming from two different states in /India, who face hardships in convincing their parents to approve of their marriage and is his fourth book. *What Young India wants* is the only non-fiction book by Chetan Bhagat, author of five novels. It is a compilation of his speeches and essays. It has various topics ranging from Indian society, Indian politics and young Indians.

#### Introduction

Chetan Bhagat writes about how India can be a progressive society in the future. He talks about the rampant corruption in India and how society should change to rid it. The central theme of his novels is central to his dream of a free and forward thinking India. The book revolves around Bhagat's thoughts and innovations on how to improve the Indian Economy through social reforms. Chetan Bhagat's debut Novel *Five point someone-* what not to do at IIT! Is one of the highest selling English novels published in India and reminded on the best seller last since its release in 2004. The novel begins in an unique way where the author takes the liberty of sharing his opinion that the book is not a guide on how to get into IIT, but it cite examples of how screwed up our college years can get if we don't think straight. *One Night @ call center* was the second best selling novel from the award winning author after *Five point Someone*. The story take a dramatic and decisive turn through a literal dew's examine, when the characters receive a phone call from God. *The 3 Mistakes of My life* is the third best seller novel by Chetan Bhagat. The novel follows the story of three friends and is based in the city of Ahmedabad in western India. *2 states* The story of My Marriage is his fourth book after *Five Point Someone*, *One Night @ the call center* and *The Three Mistakes of My Life*. He wrote this novel after quitting his job as an Investment banker. It is the story about a couple coming from two different states in India, who face hardships in convincing their parents to approve of their marriage. *What young India wants*

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### **The Setting of the Novels**

#### **“Five Point Someone”**

Five Point Someone focused the friendship of the prominent characters of the novel: Hari, Ryan and Alok. It is of this trio’s screwing the grades at the big time because of their over attachment with each other to have a fun and detachment from studies. In college life romance is like a harbinger which conveys the message of love in the tender hearts. The romanticism evoked with the love affair of Hari and Neha, the daughter of Prof. Cherian is noteworthy. Hari gets ready to do anything for his lady love Neha. Hostel life is all about friends, alienation from families, smoking cigars, drinking vodka and listening to Pink Floyd. Commitment to relationship overrules the fresh admitted undergraduates to such an extent that they are ready to do anything for earning name and fame. Ryan Oberoi always prioritizes his friends more than his parents. Alok , a resident of Rohini Colony, Delhi is a sincere guy but he too gets ready with Ryan and Hari in mischievous acts to overcome the shackles of poverty.

Ostensibly IITs are known as Centers of Excellence but the institute could not succeed to win laurels for the country by making significant technical contributions. The grading system to assess the students’ performance has not only overburdened the students but also spoiled their originality. The limitations of the IIT system was intricately brought out by the remarks of Ryan Oberoi in a get together party. Hari Kumar, Alok Gupta and Ryan Oberoi joined Indian Institute of Technology with good All India Rankings but gave lot of preferences to fun and friends instead of focusing on majors, quizzes and assignments. The consequences were inevitable that they became underachievers. Their GPA (Grade Point Average) came to the bottom line.

Hari, Ryan and Alok had a dream to join Indian Institute of Technology which they fulfilled by taking admission into it but they screwed up for not taking the grading system seriously. As a result it landed them down to many unforeseen troubles and they had to remain satisfied with the little achievement they could manage with the support and encouragement of some well wishers like Prof.Veera. Chetan Bhagat wrote the novel ‘Five Point Someone’ in a mild note and in some areas it has given an alarming call for the pedagogues to come out of their traditional text book theories and meet up the challenges posed by the intelligent students.

Another most striking feature is that the whole background is set in an engineering institution where an engineering student should be encouraged to present his/her concepts in a creative way so that he can have hands-on experience only then a country can advance both technically and economically. Each and every student is bestowed with unique qualities and CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) should not be the criteria to ascertain

their future prospects. One who is a five pointer in college may reach the pinnacle of his career and set an example for all those who are striving to achieve success. The trio suffers ridicule of the teachers as well as the classmates. However, they avow to reform the patriarchal system of education. They dislike the teaching method, which is as old as the college itself. The students are asked to mug the subjects in order to score good grades. Bhagat puts emphasis on the observational teaching and hints towards a post modern thought of incorporating a technique called 'learning by doing'. He believes this technique must help the students in getting rid of mugging. It must support them to apprehend the things in a natural way.

The observational technique makes the students to observe the things minutely and find out solution in the objects. After all, if they fail to make it out, they are invited to discuss the same with the teachers and other classmates. At last, the student finds answer to his query. Nonetheless, such method is a good for nothing in the big sci-fi institute. Bhagat grieves for the sterile dogmatism of the education system. He finds the professors bigotry not to allow any prolific change in the system. Bhagat is straightforward in his approach to life. He listens to the voice of his soul, which he strongly believes in, is ever true. The man listening to the inner voice may suffer a big loss but finally emerges out victorious. For instance, all three friends suffer ignominy at college campus. All the teachers as well as the students take them for nuts, idiots and losers only because they under perform in the exams and notch five points something. But like others they are not muggers, they are freethinkers, true lovers of life, harbingers of innovative ideas, icons of liberty and precursors of the youth-calling-approach.

Thus, the novel finally puts lot of emphasis on oft-quoted phrase 'Human Resource Development' which is one of the objectives of technical institutes. The technical institutes should develop the technical skills, key competencies and enhance the organizational performance of an individual. A resourceful and skilled employee can enliven the achievement of an organization where he or she is a part and for these the technical institutes should motivate the budding technocrats to think beyond the textbooks.

#### **"One Night @ the Call Center"**

This is a frame story which recounts a train journey from Kanpur to Delhi. During the journey, the narrating author meets a beautiful girl. The girl offers to tell the author a story on the condition that he has to make it his second book. After a lot of hesitation, the author agrees.

The story is about six people working in a call center. One night they got a phone-call from god within the story, which comprises the bulk of the book, relates the events that happen one night at a call center. Told through the eyes of the protagonist, Shyam, it is a story of almost lost love, thwarted ambitions, absence of family affection, pressures of a patriarchal set up, an insight on the lifestyle of youth of this country and the work environment of a globalized office. Shyam loves but has lost Priyanka, who is now planning

an arranged marriage with another; Vroom loves Esha. Esha wants to be a model, Radhika is in an unhappy marriage with a demanding mother-in-law, and military uncle wants to talk to his grandson; they all hate Bakshi, their cruel and somehow sadist boss. Claimed to be based on a true story, the author chooses Shyam Mehra (alias Sam Marcy) as the narrator and protagonist, who is one among the six call center employees featured.

A phone call from God is one of the salient features in the novel. In order to cheer themselves up, all the lead characters of the novel decide to go and enjoy at a night club. After enjoying for a while, they leave for office. While returning, they face a life-threatening situation when their Quails crashes into a construction site hanging over a mesh of iron construction rods. As the rods began to yield slowly, they start to panic. They are unable to call for help as there is no mobile phone network at that place, but Shyam's mobile phone starts ringing.

The phone call is from God, who speaks modern English. He speaks to all of them and gives them suggestions to improve their life, and advises them on how to get their vehicle out of the construction site. The conversation with God motivates the group to such an extent that they get ready to face their problems with utmost determination and motivation. Meanwhile Vroom and Shyam hatch a plan to throw Bakshi out of the call center and prevent the closing of Connexions call center, whose employees are to be downsized radically. When they emerge from danger, they have clear-cut goals in their mind. On returning to the call center, they carry out their plans with dexterity.

The themes involve the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including questions about career, inadequacy, marriage, family conflicts in a changing India, and the relationship of the young Indian middle class to both executives and ordinary clients whom they serve in the United States. There is an aspect of self-help in the book as the author invites readers to identify aspects of themselves and their lives that make them angry and that they would like to change

#### **“The 3 Mistakes of My Life”**

Govind jaat Patel is an ordinary guy with whom anybody can relate. He has very few desires but he is obsessed with the desires he covets. His main ambition is to become a businessman as he thinks that being a Gujarati, business is in his blood. His best friends are Omi and Ish (Ishaan). Govind is doubtful or noncommittal about something. His father has abandoned him and his mother runs a small business. He makes extra income by giving math's tuitions. He continues these tuitions even after starting the cricket shop business. He is the narrator of this story and the one who makes the titular "Three Mistakes". During the course of the story he falls in love with Vidya, Ishaan's younger sister for whom he is a private tutor. Govind is the one who looks after the financial part of the business as he has good business sense and mathematical skills.

Ishaan is a big cricket freak and also a patriot at heart. Ishaan has been the best cricketer in his locality and school. He suggests the name of their business as "Team India

Cricket Shop". He helps Govind's business by organizing daily cricket coaching camps. He has a younger sister, Vidya, about whom he is quite protective. When he discovers that a boy named Ali is a very talented batsman, he decides to go any length to give Ali proper training. Ishaan usually looks after day-to-day shop activities as he has genuine interest in anything cricket-related.

Omi is the son of the Hindu priest of the local temple. His family enjoys great respect among the people. Through Omi's parents and maternal uncle (who own few shops as a part of the temple trust property), they readily get a place to start their business. He is a rather dumb boy and has not many dreams, but likes to concentrate on having a healthy body. However, he resents growing up and being a saint like his father. He is a religious person and eventually takes active part in his maternal uncle's religious politics. He is however confused about his religious views which are mainly influenced by Bittoo Mama.

Vidya is Ishan's younger sister. She is a rebel at heart and dreams to break free from the constraints of a typical middle-class family and society, to go to Mumbai, do a course in PR and become independent. She however despises math's which is required for her medical entrance exams. Hence, Ish asks Govind to take her mathematics tuition. However, in between their tuition they fall in love which is kept a secret from everyone. Only Omi figures out the relationship Govind and Vidya share and also reminds Govind about the consequences of Ish finding out about the love birds. Ali is One of the students in Ish's coaching classes and a great batsman because of a rare gift of nature.

However, he doesn't play too much cricket as he gets tired After 3 or 4 Balls and enjoys playing marbles. He is a Muslim boy and respects Ish like a Guru. He too, like Ishaan is patriotic at heart. He denies the offer of Australian scholarship and wants to play in the Indian side.

Bittoo Mama is the maternal uncle of Omi. Mama runs the trust of the temple and agrees to rent the place to the three friends for the Cricket Shop business. He is an active member of a Hindu political Party. He follows the preaching's of Parekh-ji, a political-cum-spiritual leader and has complete faith in him. He has locked his horns with Ali's father who belongs to the Secular Party. He has a son Dhiraj. Mama is not fond of Govind as he is an agnostic. He is the main antagonist of the story. Govind's mom is Gujarati woman. She wants her son to pursue a degree in Engineering. She runs a home-made food business. She cares about Govind a lot and supports him well through his hardships and struggles. Ali's Father is a devout Muslim and works for a secular party. He is a very kind-hearted person who wants Ali to take his education seriously despite his mediocre financial condition. He treats the three friends very well when they go to visit Ali in his house. Overall he is a good person. Fred Li is an Australian Cricket Team member and a fast bowler. He invites the three friends and Ali to Sydney when they travel to Goa to see India-Australia One Day International and meet him in the stands. He spots talent in Ali and wants to help him getting a chance to be trained in his academy in Australia. Loosely based on Brett Lee.

### The Three Mistakes

Mistake 1- Govind had paid a huge advance for opening a store in Navrangpura shopping mall even though his friends tried to stop him from doing so. (also gave too much importance to his shop in the mall, and forgot to care about the lives lost in the earthquake)

Mistake 2- He fell in love with Vidya and had slept with her.

Mistake 3- He waited a split second and dived too late to save Ali because of his own selfishness. Ali's wrist was destroyed.

The 3 mistakes of my Life (TTMOML) follows the story of Govind Patel, a Mathematician and businessman. With two wonderful best friends; Omi and Ishaan by his side, Govind's aim is to start up his own Cricket and tuition business. A location set, money borrowed from Omi's mama (uncle) and supplies fixed, Govind feels confident with his next move. However, his dream isn't that easy to reach. Few inches away, the three friends gradually face financial struggles, experience the world the dirty politics, discover religion and meet some very special people along the way.

The book is exactly like Kai Po Che, yet with so much more detail, a few extra scenes and a slightly different ending. Verbally, Chetan Bhagat brings this authentic story to life, where his writing skills are profoundly engaging. Based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Bhagat describes the setting as such a fine and beautiful place, thus complimenting our colorful visuals. Likewise, his direct tone of fully telling us Govind's story without leaving out the detail is definitely one of the highlights of the tale. The initial epilogue of TTMOML is simply incredible. The honest story of how this book came about and how Chetan met Govind through a shocking email, which now is translated as a novel and a Film is mesmerizing. The epilogue lured me in immediately where the last few words are unforgettable.

Chetan Bhagat brings Govind's character to life. Due to knowledge of Kai Po Che, I was expecting the book to be similar, where I already knew the characters and demographics. However, the book ran ahead by providing so much more detail, features and giving each person a true persona. The book literally speaks to us through Govind's perspective, not only allowing us realistically to hear the story, but also giving the audience a seat on his journey. We truly empathize and believe in Govind's struggle and surely his passion for his goal. This idea of chasing your dream where Govind is literally placed right at the bottom yet gradually climbs the ladder is outstanding.

The social issues covered throughout TTMOML give us some scope about the current Indian Climate. This ongoing war between Hindu's and Muslim's continuing to battle, where visually the underground fights are captured. A moment in the book, where tension arises and fatal decisions have to be made, compels the drama. We're so focused into the scene that we forget we are reading a book. The abrupt aggression, hatred and competition are described perfectly, where equality is out of the question. Indeed, Chetan Bhagat does not persuade us to join one religion. In fact his balance between both Hindu's and Muslims are

idyllically valid. We see both the pros and cons of both religions, where the Muslims are not only shown through a negative light. This which is covered by Ali's father, whom has real dialogue with such a meaning and truthful verdict. In contrary, Omi's Mama is far too engrossed into politics and wanting to gain revenge. He sees past the innocence and becomes melded in this war, where his anger and power take control of him. Surely there are several people like mama in India whom exist and that are what makes this book so real. By portraying his sly and cunning persona, we are swayed to believe how low these people will stoop for a precious vote.

Ali is a perfect addition to *TTMOML*. Ali's gift of being able to play cricket at such a high level is outstanding. From slums, Ishaan notices Ali's talent, challenges him and fights so hard to fulfill his dreams. Ishaan not only is a true cricket genius, but a good friend. Even though his first love is cricket, he stands by Govind and Omi throughout. Ishaan can see his own reflection through Ali, where his belief is emphasized. The way he believes in Ali regardless of Ali being Muslim is a nice twist. Govind and Ishaan see past this whole conjured up religious differences and alliance with Ali truly for his talented soul. Yet, Omi seems to be following his mama, where Politics drive him on the wrong track.

Overall, *The 3 mistakes of my Life* is a beautiful book about three real friends and a journey through life. Govind, Ishaan and Omi's unconditional friendship is profoundly engaging to read. We're introduced to this true friendship whereby together they work hard to fulfill their dreams. Through plight and struggle they stay by each other and see past the negatives. Money is an overall issue, yet they continue to build their shop and gain contacts. Ishaan's sister, Vidya sparks the romance with Govind, which is neither cliché nor heavily focused upon. The tale is narrated through the right pace and each character is superbly described. This is definitely one of my favorite books all time by an acclaimed writer. A story which fully takes us on a journey. A journey which proves reality. Whereby, the prologue sums up a beautiful ending.

#### **"2 States: The Story of My Marriage"**

This Story is partly autobiographical. The story is about a couple, Krish and Ananya, who hail from two different states of India, Punjab and Tamil Nadu respectively, who are deeply in love and want to get married.

The story begins in the IIM Ahmedabad mess hall, where Krish, a Punjabi boy from Delhi sights a beautiful girl, Ananya, a Tamilian from Chennai, quarreling with the mess staff about the food. Ananya was tagged as the "Best girl of the fresher batch". They become friends within a few days and decide to study together every night. In the meantime, they become romantically involved. They both get jobs, and have serious plans for their wedding. At first Krish tries to convince his girlfriend Ananya's parents and at last convinces them by helping Ananya's father to do his first PowerPoint Presentation, her brother, Manju, by giving him tuition and later convinces her mom by asking her to sing in a concert organized by Krish's office, i.e. CitiBank (Yes bank in the adapted film). She is

convinced as her biggest dream of singing at a big concert comes true. She sings along with S. P. Balasubrahmaniam and Hariharan. Then they try to convince Krish's mom. But the problem is Krish's mother's relatives who don't quite like this. They say that Krish should not marry a Tamilian but end up agreeing with them when Ananya tries to help one of Krish's cousins to get married and succeeds to do so.

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 ends as Ananya's parents find something fishy between Krish's mom and him. Ananya's family end 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 well. They really do very hard to convince each other's parents and finally make it. It 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. They say that the babies belong to a state called 'India'; with a thought to end inequality.

Thus in conclusion *2 States* is a story about Krish and Ananya. They are from two different states of India, deeply in love and want to get married. Of course, their parents don't agree. To convert their love story into a love marriage, the couple have a tough battle in front of them. For it is easy to fight and rebel, but it is much harder to convince. Will they make it?

#### **“What Young India Wants”**

While reading Chetan Bhagat's first non-fiction book *What Young India Wants*, I came across the positive and constructive thoughts of the author to resolving ever troubling problems of India as a nation. This nicely packaged book carries CB's articles, published in news papers on multiple issues ranging from education, poverty, corruption, politics and student suicide. But, this book as a whole, gives a whole new perspective to the readers for all these problems. On completing the book, I could figure out the reason why CB took first ten pages of the book to share his journey with readers. Chetan must have done this to say his reader, “Chill my friends I am like you. So it's all okay if you have not scored three more marks to get the admission in a prestigious college. There are more other things to do than following ‘*Me Too*’ attitude when it comes to education and career.” And, his sincere appeal resonates well from his articles.

The book is divided in three sections: our society, politics and youth. In the end, there are two short stories and author's note on the great Indian dream. So, if you can read all the articles one by one then two short stories at will feel like a dessert after a great meal. And the book ends with a personal note of author to his readers. It has articles over education, women-empowerment, political accountability, Indian - American comparison, FDI in retail and Anna Hazare. Chetan has managed to keep his point pragmatic and approachable in all these articles. The good thing is this that all the articles are in conversational tone and stands far away from intellectual cries. They end up asking

questions from the readers. In my opinion, it will be good if one write ones opinion after reading each article.

The language of the book is ultra simple. I wonder if Chetan can write sincere and thought provoking articles in such a simple English then why regular newspapers carry those not easily understandable opinions. But that is another case. The language of all the articles is simple and the readers with basic knowledge of English language can comprehend them. Including this, the author has asked its readers to read and share their opinions. According to Bhagat today's young India wants a good life, a good job and romance -- "meri naukri, meri chokri".

"The youth want to first fulfill their own needs and only after that are they willing to support a certain cause. Today's youth wants a good well-paying job ('naukri') and a nice girlfriend ('chokri') in a decent urban city. I don't think there's anything wrong with that but what is important is to earn that living honestly, with integrity and excellence and without compromising the core values that build our society," Bhagat said. The book, says Chetan Bhagat elucidates a new category of people, which has emerged in the country. "In India we have separate categories if someone wants to be good or be an honest person, then they have to be poor. All activists have to be poor and if you are rich then you are bad. But I don't think that's the way forward for this country. "Becoming rich by unfair means is bad but you can also create wealth by hard work, innovation by creativity that should be celebrates that is my ethos and I think young India wants that kind of message. The answer is very simplistic and that is good," says Bhagat.

### Conclusion

I add this paragraph in my reviews when I sincerely like any book. And, I truly loved the way author has talked about all the difficult issues of India. The first thing I found that author didn't make his argument on popular cliches like *Netas* are culprits - hang them all. On the contrary, he has asked all his readers to make their little bits to change the nation. His approach is quite pragmatic. And, there is a Chetan Bhagat's speech titled as Sparks...this is one plus of this book. I mean it is so much good that I would love to share with the readers of my blog. But I think there will be some copyrighting rules that prohibit such sharing. Still, I will try to ask the author for the same.

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