

**VISION OF INDIAN YOUTHS IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S FIVE POINT SOMEONE**

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ABSTRACT

Postmillennial has a furious competitive world in every sphere of life like sports, jobs, politics and especially in the field of education. If student needs to prove his or her talents, he must prove his potential in science and technology. These are the key factors to success. Postmillennial Indian English novelists are mostly young. It has one of the largest youth populations in the world. The youth show strong passion, motivation and will power. This makes them the most precious human resource. It helps in the economic, cultural and political development of a nation. They are responsible for change, advancement and innovation which lie on their shoulders. They can raise or ruin the society. Some great Indian English novelists are vividly portraying Indian youth in a normal way. But, Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*, deals with the revolutionary change in the entire scenario and indirectly conveyed a serious message in a humorous way. It is a wakeup call for elite technical institutions to uphold the innovative teaching style.

Keywords: *Education Under Microscope, Pre-Marital Sex, GPA, Campus Setting, Ragging Drug Sessions, Teaching Style, Examination Loathing.*

Citation:

APA Parameswari, V.N. (2018). Vision of Indian Youths in Chetan Bhagat's Five Point Someone. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature-JOELL*, 5(1), 211-217.

MLA Parameswari, V.Nithiya. "Vision of Indian Youths in Chetan Bhagat's Five Point Someone" *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature JOELL*, Vol.5, no.1, 2018, pp.211-217.

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Postmillennial Indian English Fiction has grown rich with the proliferation of various sub-genres. Campus novel is one of the significant sub-genres which have enriched postmillennial fiction. In recent times, considerable progress has been made in India in the field of campus novels. Postmillennial Indian English novelists are products of a sharply changing society that is undergoing marked transformation under the impact of media, cyber culture and raging globalization. Postmillennial novels concentrate on the problems of contemporary youth. These problems are emotional, cultural and familial. They assess the present situation by looking back at the past.

Perumpilavil Madhvamenon Nityanandan's was the first campus novelists in Indian Writing in English. He was a mechanical engineer in training. He was the technical director of his own company. His *The Long Long Days* (1960), is a youth centred novel. It focuses on various aspects of college life as portrayed in the novel. In some way it is similar to Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*. According to the critic, Janice Rossen points out in her book, *The University in Modern Fiction* (1993) that the primary issue that these novels engage is the interplay between fiction and fact" (qtd. in. Kaplan). It is similar to Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*.

Youth-based campus novels are found in various literatures like American, British, Canadian, Indian and English novels. Mary Mc Carthy's *The Groves of Academy* (1952), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* (1828), Irving Stone's *Pageant of Youth* (1933), Robert Gessner's *Youth is the Time* (1945), David Lodge's *Changing place* (1975), Max Beerbohm's *Zuleika Dobson* (1911), Robertson David's *The Rebel Angels* (1981), R.K. Narayan's *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and Prabhanjan's *Kagitha Manidargal* (1995) deal with a comic or satiric vision, in which the action is set within the enclosed world of university. It also highlights the youths' contribution and follies of an academic life.

One of the most prominent Indian English novelists is R.K. Narayan. His *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) can just be considered as novels that sowed the seeds for contemporary novelists becoming aware of the campus location, rather than as full-fledged campus

novels. Indian English fiction has a number of campus novels, especially at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* (2004) has paved way for the development of the sub-genre of campus novels in India. Soon many Indian writers belonging to varied disciplines started penning down their experiences in the most renowned universities and colleges of India such as IITs, IIMs, and JNU began being featured as campus locations. Some other writers are following in the footsteps of Bhagat's popular fiction writers and unleashed their potential by creating youth based campus stories.

A few prominent works worthy of mention include Tushar Raheja's *Anything for You Ma'am: The Love Story of an IITian* (2006), Soma Das's *Something of a MockTale* (2007), Amitabha Bagchi's *Above Average* (2007), Harishdeep's *Jolly's You Desire: A Journey Through IIM* (2007), Mainak Dhar's *The Funda of Mix-ology* (2008), Neeraj Chhibba's *Zero Percentile: Missed IIT, Kissed Russia* (2009), and Sachinn Garg's *A Sunny Shady Life* (2009). These works are youth centric and came up with fresh subjects that revolved around the college life that included campus love-affairs, student politics, joys and sorrows of friendship, drug and booze sessions, examination phobias, placement dreams, monotony of classroom studies and grade system. This sub genre of campus novel has made a remarkable contribution in the progress of the Postmillennial Indian English fiction of the recent times.

Representation of youth-orientated novels with themes on friendship, love, campus premises, education and professors' attitudes. Friendship is one of the predominant parts in their day-to-day life. Friends are more important than the career for youth. Soma Das's *Sumthing of a Mocktale* (2007) in Kaya, Ragini and Shubhra, Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone* (2004) in Hari, Ryan and Alok, Abhijit Bhaduri's *Mediocre But Arrogant* (2012) in Abbey, Rusty and Pappu, Anirban Bose's *Bombay Rains Bombay Girls* (2015) in Adi, Harsha, Rajeev, Pheru, Sam and Toshi, Anirban Mukherjee's *Love, A Rather Bad Idea* (2010) in Samar, Pranav, Skimpy and Jiya and Harshdeep Jolly's *Everything You Desire* (2007) in Tushar, Dipendu, Harsh, Divya and Priya are some of the examples where they come across true bonds of friendships. Love is an omnipotent emotion that



makes its presence relevant in the youth life. Both idealistic and practical approach to love surface quite efficiently in the narration of youth based novels. Hari's feelings for Neha in *Five Point Someone*, Kaya's feelings for Abhimannu in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Adi's feelings for Isha in *Bombay Rains Bombay Girls*, Samar's feelings for Jiya in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea*, Tejas' love for Shreya in *Anything for You Ma'am* are some of the instances where they can witness the power of this sincere feeling of encourage, energize and enlighten the vision and mission of the concerned characters.

Majority of the action takes place in the campus premises. It consists of classrooms, hostels, canteen, laboratory, food joints adjoining to the campus and the sprawling campus spots. Campus presents opportunity to the characters to mingle with people belonging to different regions and background. These are the places where they study, gossip, revel, pain, passion and break down under various circumstances. Student's life evolves to face the challenges of life that awaits them beyond the campus premises. Parasathy Rocks and Ganga Dhaba in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Sasi in *Five Point Someone*, The Central Canteen in *Bombay Rains Bombay Girls*, Rambhai's Cafeteria in Prashant John's *Second Degree* (2007), MOJOS in Durjoy Datta's *Of Course I Love You* (2009), Athica and CCD in *Everything You Desire* and Timpoo's Dhaba in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea* are the significant places which the characters frequently visit during the course of action in the novels. These young lads after seeking admission in an IIT were destined to share the four years of the course duration with other students there, both contemporaries and seniors, and who belonged to different backgrounds and regions.

Education can be considered to be a major importance in young lives. Nowadays, education system lays an excessive emphasis on the grades, marks and scores and lacks innovation and creativity. It is a system that humiliates students and crushes original thinking. Some professors display attitudes that are archetypal, authoritative, dominating, monotonous, rigid and sceptical characters. Professor Cherian in *Five Point Someone*, Professor Chatto in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, Dr.Gomke in *Bombay Rains Bombay Girls*, overenthusiastic Professor Bichitra Roy

in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Crazy Panther in Neeraj Pahlajani and Ritesh Sharma's *Joker in the Pack* (2007) and Professor Shankar in *Everything You Desire* are some of the typical educators who remain fossilized with their follies and reserved teaching techniques. Among these typical professors are found Prof. Veera in *Five Point Someone* and Father Hathaway in *Mediocre But Arrogant* who are both dynamic and charismatic. They are the hope of students and emblem of sound and learned educators.

Five Point Someone is a very interesting with the numerous events to shows how the three friends to cope with the rigid and lifeless system of education in one of the most reputed technological institutions of India. It depicted an exact picture of the IIT cultures and exposes many follies and foibles of the present education system of India. It reflects glimpses of the contemporary Indian education society and its major issues. Though, the issues of education system are one of the chief thematic concerns in the novel. The major ingredient of the novel depicts representing Indian youth by contemporary Indian education and its problems.

Chetan Bhagat's debut novel is *Five Point Someone-What not to do at IIT*. It was released in 2004 by Rupa Publication. The novel puts education under microscope. It is one of the highest selling to recognize the emergence of a new brand of Indian fiction in English. It revolves around the lives of the educated, urban, English-speaking elite youths. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern today's youth deplorable condition of the present educational system. He has faithfully recorded the academic pressures on students at prestigious institutes like IIT. The novel began with a mysterious prologue in which Hari informs the readers that his Alok limbs were motionless, just like his father's right side. Many queries aroused in the minds of the readers like 1. Who is the narrator? 2. Who are Alok and Ryan? 3. What is the relationship between narrator and Alok? 4. What happened to Alok after being injured severely? and 5. what happened to Alok's father after his paralysed? These questions spark the readers' mind to read more. This is how Chetan Bhagat uses the technique of flash back to



make the storyline gripping. Ryan and Hari were in ambulance with Alok who got thirteen fractures.

Chapter one starts with Bhagat showing an apt example of how screwed up the Indian education system is. Screwed education system is rigid and conventional. It is crushing the creativity and genuineness of the creative minds of the students. Bhagat presents glimpses of the ugly effects of ragging system which is a part of India's elite colleges and universities. Ryan was obviously the sharpest of the three. One of the seniors scolded Ryan, Hari, and Alok. He says, "You bloody freshers, dozing away? Rascals, who will give an introduction?" (FPS 3). All of them gave introduction to seniors. After the introduction Baku and other senior students instructed them to remove their clothes. This type of discomfoting incidents in the name of ragging creates a great emotional and psychological effect on the minds of students which may lead to suicidal attempts. Their seniors order them to take off their clothes. Hari and Alok submit to their humiliation but Ryan is different. He controlled his anger for a while but then he hits back with full of courage. A brave new student, Ryan revolts against the age old tradition of ragging and the senior – fresher discrimination.

Thus, Ryan rescues Hari and Alok from the ragging on the very first day. After that, they become good friends forever. This is the beginning event of strong bonding among them. Ryan becomes the hero in the eyes of his friends and Alok and Hari were deciding to follow him. This panic of ragging incident contributes to strengthening their personal friendship.

Bhagat depicts the next remarkable incident in the same chapter. The rigidity is clearly observed in the very first lecture of Manufacturing Processes by Professor Dubey, from Mechanical Engineering Department while illustrating the concept of machine:

The definition of a machine is simple. It is anything that reduces human effort... Sir, what about a gym machine, like a bench press or something? Ryan interrupted the bonhomie... That does not reduce human effort. In fact, it increases it.

The class felt silent again... Are you saying that I am wrong? No sir, I'm just... Watch it son. In my class, just watch it... (FPS 10-11).

These lines reveal Ryan's protest against modern education system. Firstly, when Hari cannot reply to his question he comments that the standard of the students keeps falling every year. They hope the same level of intelligence from every student which they attain after teaching many years. When Ryan counter-questions to his definition his ego is hurt. This event is enough to understand the rigidity of the traditional mind set of teachers that cannot accept any thought provoking comments by the students.

Bhagat shows a real description of the students' life at IIT. Students' followed strict schedule. Every day from eight to five, they were locked in the eight stored institute building with lectures, tutorials and labs. The next few hours of the evening were spent in the library or in their rooms as they prepared reports and finished assignments. "Each subject had two minor test, one major and three surprise quizzes; seven tests for six courses meant forty-two tests per semester, mathematically speaking" (FPS 12). These are the lines clearly reveals how students unrest and uncontrolled stress lead to addictions. They had been smoking cigarette, vodka and other drugs. They also used to go to movies for relief and refreshment.

Bhagat constructs the three different types of attitudes through the three main characters who represent today's young Indians. Hari gives introduction to his friends Ryan and Alok. Ryan is the representative figure of young generation. He is smart, stylish, sporty, carefree, confident, outspoken and athletic. He is the one who looks at things in a different perspective. He reveals the bitter truth of IIT life. He is the leader of his group of three. He loves engineering but hates the system. He believes that the system does not encourage original ideas, rather makes engineers who have mugged up theoretical aspects. He is a heroic character though he is not the hero of the novel. His parents run a pottery business and financially they were settled. They had been writing a letter to Ryan once in a week or month. But he did not reply to them even once. He loves his



friends more than he loves his parents. Throughout his schooling he has been staying in the hostel where he spends most of his time with his friends. When Ryan wanted to be with his parents, they never allowed him to stay with them. He was brought up in the hostel when he longed for the family atmosphere. His parents never realized that and were focused only on making money. They had been sending money to him. Parents of this kind are in plenty in our midst.

Alok is a fat, little selfish, sensitive ungainly looking guy. He comes from a poor economic background whose father was a painter and even Alok himself had thoughts of becoming an artist. But, unfortunately his father has become bed-ridden because of an accident and his right side of the body gets paralyzed. His mother works as a biology teacher. It was very difficult for her to afford even a normal life since a large amount has been spent for Alok's father's medicines. So, he changed his ambition and studied hard to get IIT seat. Through Alok, Bhagat focuses on the poverty-stricken families in our country and also underscores the dowry problems. How Alok's sisters marriage gets postponed by the groom's side every time for want of money. There are many Alok's in our country who struggles to come up in life. Hari reflects the mind of the young generation. Like today's young generation, he believes in the enjoyment of life. He is a flat and not as good looking. He resembles the author's own life experiences at IIT. His father is an army officer and maintained rules and regulation in the family. So, he is a guy who could never take any decision in his life. He is the hero of the novel but he is an unheroic nature. Hari narrates most of the story, but interspersed in his account are chapters in the voice of some of the other characters his two friends and the girl he gets involved with giving a bit more insight into their characters.

Ryan is a free bird in the cage of IIT. He is the one who realizes the pointlessness of the education system in which students sacrifice their days of youth in their pursuit of getting good grades by working for days and nights. He expresses his disappointment in the following words, "I think this is jail. It really is. Damn jail... Working away like moronic drones until midnight. ManPro yesterday, ApMech day before,

Quanto today...it never ends" (FPS 14). He is really fed up with such routine. He told his friend that this is not life and feels that he lives in jail. He plans to go for movie and insists his classmates to join him. After their return, they come to know about the strong rumour of the surprise test of Applied Mechanics. The three friends are shocked to get the news. Ryan's mocking sigh of the present education system: "they should now start cramming otherwise they cannot become the great engineers of the nation" (FPS 18). The next day, Prof. Sen declares in front of the class, "Time for some fun. Here is a quickie quiz of multiple choice questions...and the quiz was as much a surprise as snow in Siberia" (FPS 19). When they look at the marks Hari scores 5, Alok 7 and Ryan 3 out of 20. According to assessment these guys' score is low so Alok becomes really upset. This whole incident is the satire on the education system of the nation. The conflict starts between Ryan and Alok as the whole idea of watching a movie drags them to perform bed in the surprise test. IIT students are struggling with tight routine, pressure of tests at any time, cramming up answers, tasteless food and difference opinions among the friends.

Then, Ryan, Alok and Hari discussed about the quality of present system of IIT, "IIT ever invented anything? Or made any technical contribution to India. Dosen't it contributes in making engineers?" (FPS 34). So, Ryan decides to break their monotonous life. He gave idea to his friends and also explains, "We just draw the line. A day of classes, then three hours a day of studies and rest is our time. A kind of decentralization of education" (FPS 40). Bhagat opines that decentralization of education is must for complete development of the students. Students should spend as much time in pursuing co-curricular activities as on their course work.

Venkat has no friends in the institution. Hari says, "Nobody in Kumaon talked to Venkat; given a choice he wouldn't talk to himself. He had a good GPA and everything, but he was hardly a human" (FPS 65). His routine is crystal clearly depicted in the novel. He woke up at four in the morning to mug four hours before classes. Every evening he read three hours in the library after lectures. Then after dinner, he studied on his bed for another couple of hours until he went to sleep. He is the representative of



nerds who have lost their humanity in the rat-race of scoring marks. Grades are more important for him than anything else in the world. He did not allow Alok of his group member to go to his ill-father because his visit to his home will affect their group assignment. He says, "Alok, this is too much. I mean, I have to study for ten hours a day to keep my GPA. The least I can expect is to count on my group partners" (FPS 91). He refuses to manage the group assignment for Alok. This incident clearly reveals how the concept of humanity in such a cut throat competition. Later, the shouting sound came out from Venkat's room. Immediately, Ryan and Hari eavesdropped on the entire conversation. They saved Alok from Venkat. Though this event aptly fixed the proverb in the context, "Friend in need and is friend indeed."

One day, Ryan has conducted a party for only five pointers including seniors. They call IIT system a rat race where quest for innovation and knowledge comes next to the obsession of balancing the grade system. Ryan compares life with the mice theory. He has an unsatisfied attitude about educational system and he wants to beat the system. Thus, Ryan gives ideas to his friends. They adopted the practice of C2D and to oppose the unfair system of IIT. After studying hard Ryan, Hari and Alok secured very low marks that are five points something. That's why they arranged a plane known as C2D refer to Operate to Dominate. They divided the work among themselves and each attending only a third of the classes, but sharing their notes and everything for those classes with others. The three underperformers Ryan, Alok and Hari create C2D formula to save time and plan to share the assignments for the sake of fun. They say that today's exams, quizzes and GPA are useless. They are all five pointers. They blame IIT system as bad and 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. Through this event shows the humorous account of the typical scam technology that helps to reduce the tension of the campus.

Later, Prof. Veera supports Ryan for his experiments with various substance mixtures to check lubricant efficiency in a scooter engine. He

even tries to get institute's permission for Ryan to the use the lab. He gets some contribution from Prof. Veera motivates Ryan which leads him to work with sincerity. His friends are surprised to observe him working like never before. He prepares an eighteen page proposal on lube project which is research in itself. His lube project that he has prepared after hundreds of hours spent in the lab is rejected by Prof. Cherian only because of Ryan's low grades displayed on the title page of the proposal. Student's competence is evaluated by the grades he scores in exam by merely mugging the syllabus books.

The outside calls from the campus go via control room in the campus. Immediately, a little red bulb lights up in control room when somebody calls outside. When Alok calls his home at midnight from Cherian's office and the operator listened the conversation. Immediately, he identifies that it is not Prof. Cherian but a mother who is reciting a sad tale to her son. The guards quickly trapped to catch them. Hari takes vodka at viva on Ryan's advice. When Ryan gives the idea to steal the major question papers, he agrees to do it. The trio's have different motives for stealing the paper. Hari wants to steal the papers because he wants to impress Cherian so that he wants to marry her daughter. Alok wants to get good marks in exam and Ryan just wants to his set of adventure. Their plan is ruined and got one semester suspension. As an effect Alok commit suicide by jumping from six floors in institute roof. Hari and Neha had been pre-marital sex with each other. Through, these incident projects all the things a student should not do at college are showcased in a clear-cut manner.

After getting suspended for a semester, they realize their mistake and become sincere in the final semester. Prof. Veera makes request to Prof. Cherian for forgiving the boys. But it is only when Prof. Cherian knows that his son has committed suicide not being able to clear the entrance examination of IIT and fulfill his father's dream does he understand the pain of the students and then he forgives them. And in this way they are forgiven and the absence of the semester is recorded as absence due to research project. They also get some lab credits.



They start working on Prof. Veera's lube project for eight hours a day. Their hard work and sincerity help them to pass out like normal students. Cherian's mind changes after knowing that the death of his son, Samir who was not an accident but a suicide. He too helps them to pass out like normal students. At the end of the novel, Ryan works with Prof. Veera, Alok got job in Delhi, and Hari went to Bombay to perform his responsibilities of the home. These three characters produce great impact on society as they represent the actual picture of faulty educational system.

Five Point Someone, not only explores the pessimistic side, but also the optimistic side of contemporary Indian society. It shows one side of the students face pressure and another one succeeds. If one student finds the situation stressful, another finds it hilarious. Thus, it has a balanced approach. But, it is not just a remarkable work about IIT and projects the real life of IIT. Bhagat's own story is a reflection of the hunger that drives the young India of his novels. Ryan is the real representative of Bhagat. He criticizes the education system and calls up the spirits of the youth. He believes that youths are the future of the nation, pillar of the society and progress of the nation. His fiction is for the young, of the young and by the young.

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