



Review Paper

## Portrayal of Youth Society in Chetan Bhagat's Five Point Someone

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### ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian novelist, columnist and speaker. Bhagat is the writer of five bestselling novels, Five point someone, The 3 Mistakes of My life, One Night @ the call center, 2 States and What Young India Wants. Chetan Bhagat's Five Point Someone is one of the highest selling novels published in India and lingered on the best seller list since its release in 2004. The novel begins in a 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.. The paper attempts to throw some light on the aspects of post modernist thought process where the engineering youth tries to stand against the conventional system of imparting technical education and traditional way of evaluating the cognitive abilities of a student on the basis of CGPA.

**Key Words:** Post modernist thought, engineering youth, conventional system, cognitive abilities and CGPA.

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian writer, screenwriter, columnist, television celebrity and motivational spokesman, rejoiced for his novels about metropolitan middle class youths. Bhagat, an alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi and is seen further as a youth icon than as a writer. Time magazine named Chetan Bhagat as one of the Hundred Most Influential People in the World. Chetan Bhagat, an investment banker turned into a prolific writer and through his writings he always focused on youth, career and issues based on national development.

The *Five Point-Someone* created a strong foothold among the generation of youngsters, which had almost interest in novels and books. The novel is recounted by Hari, with some passages by his friends Ryan and Alok. It deals with the lives of the three friends, whose delight on making it to one of the best engineering colleges in India is quickly depressed by the rigidity

and monotony of the academic work. The novel pictures the numerous attempts by the trio to handle with and beat the system as well as Hari's fling with Neha who just happens to be the daughter of Prof. Cherian, the dominant head of the Mechanical Engineering Department of their college. It grabs some dark turns, mainly when it comes to the families of the protagonists. Most of the deed still, takes place inside the campus as the boys, led by the ever creative Ryan, normally mournful how the internationally praised IIT system has suppressed their creativity by forcing them to value grades more than anything else. Uninspiring teaching and numerous assignments add to their despair, though the boys do find a sympathizer in Prof. Veera, the new fluid mechanics professor.

Chetan Bhagat gives a spectacle of the apparent effects of ragging which is really quite common in engineering colleges all through this campus novel. The youths of Indian Institute of Technology together with

the three students Alok Gupta, Ryan Oberoi and Hari Kumar were called by the seniors up on the balcony for ragging at midnight. Incidents in the name of ragging creates a great psychological effect on the minds of students which may increase the suicidal attempts. Ryan, good looking and a hefty man revolted against the age old tradition of ragging and the senior – fresher discrimination. He has kept Hari and Alok from the coke bottles at the very first day and they turned into good friends for all the four years of IIT and even after that.

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" (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." (10) This is a clarion call for the teaching society to equip them to handle the cream students of institutions like IITs and encourage the students to think beyond the textbooks.

In college life romance is like a herald 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 youth 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 indulges in mischievous acts to overcome the shackles of poverty.

Presumably IITs are known as Centres 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:

You know guys, this whole IIT system is sick. Because, tell me, how many great engineers or scientists have come out of IIT? I mean that is supposed to be the best college in India, the best technology institute for a country of a billion. But has IIT ever invented anything? Or made any technical contribution to India? Over thirty years of IITs, yet, all it does is train some bring kids to work in multinationals. I mean look at MIT in the USA... What is wrong in the system... This system of relative grading and overburdening the students. I mean it kills the best fun years of your life. But it kills something else. Where is the room for original thought? Where is the time for creativity? It is not fair. (34-35)

Competition is so intense in IITs which has duly created lot of pressures among the students and one of the professors's made a remark at the end of his class:

Best of luck once again for your stay here. Remember, as your head of department Prof. Cherian says, the tough workload is by design, to keep you on your toes. And respect the grading system. You get bad grades, and I assure you – you get no job, no school and no future. If you do well, the world is your oyster. So, don't slip, not even once, or there will be no oyster, just slush. (11)

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. The three underperformers (Ryan, Alok and Hari) invent C2D (Cooperate to dominate) formula to save time and plan to share the assignments for the sake of fun. According to them today's examinations, quizzes, are hopeless.

Ryan, Hari and Alok are five pointers. They blame IIT system as sick and for it's not promoting the nation building, and for agitating the most intellectuals of the country. They articulate IIT do not care for their creativeness and original thinking. To revolt against this found norm, they planned paper stealing of Majors from Prof. Cherian's room and were trapped red handed. Finally a disciplinary action was taken against them and they were terminated for one semester. Alok jumped from Insti-roof but was fortunately saved with thirteen odd fractures. They have changed thereafter. All worked hard then more than fourteen hours a day, got extra grades and degrees in time.

The crux of the entire novel lies in the last part of the novel when Prof. Cherian, Head of the Engineering Department, addresses the convocation ceremony and congratulates the graduating students. During this moment he becomes quite emotional and narrates his own story. Prof. Cherian admitted that he called the three underachievers Hari, Ryan and Alok as students with low GPAs. Neha, his daughter disobeyed him but believed Hari Kumar and disclosed Sameer's letter to him. He adds:

And that is when I realized that GPAs make a good student, but not a good person. We judge people here by their GPA. If you are a nine, you are the best. If you are a five, you are useless. I used to despise the

low GPAs so much that when Ryan submitted a research proposal on lubricants, I judged it without even reading it. But these boys have something really promising. I saw the proposal the second time. I can tell you, any investor who invests in this will earn a rainbow. (261)

Through this novel the writer intends to convey a social message that GPAs are not the ultimate factor to decide students' potentialities and creativity. To become a topper with 10.00 GPA is a great achievement undoubtedly but there is something more in life which is yet to be achieved i.e. commitment towards family, friends and our internal desires and goals. 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.

The novel *Five Point Someone* pictures a slice of campus life across IITs in India. Bhagat gazes at campus life from all possible angles. Academics, romance, youthful mischief and misadventures fill the pages of the novel. The novelist takes a handful of IITians and through them he paints campus life in Delhi. This portrayal can lend itself to that of a larger canvas when one visualizes similar campus life across the world. The particular, that is, what takes place on the IIT Delhi premises, becomes the general. The narrative thus enables the reader to transcend the eco-cultural limits and move towards global contextualization of campus life. Chetan Bhagat very competently depicts his life story through this novel *Five Point Someone*.

Chetan Bhagat's writing style is tremendously informal. This may be referred to as modern English, but the idea is to write as people talk in college age.

Hence, no fancy language, no tough words that dismayed in a dictation, no set rules. However, it works, because it is the language of real people.

Thus, in *Five Point Someone* all the characters carry out some specific message and thus they represent the youth of emerging India.

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How to cite this article: Rajeswari P. Portrayal of youth society in Chetan Bhagat's five point someone. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2018; 5(7):76-79.

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