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A Study of Moral Values and Ethics in Chetan Bhagat's One Night @ the Call Center

^{*1}Dr. Prasad Dagwale and ²Anil Bhimraj Chindhe

^{*1} Research Guide, Padmashri Vikhe Patil College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Pravaranagar, Loni, Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, India.

² Research Scholar, Department of English, Sangamner Nagarpalika Arts, D. J. Malpani Commerce, & B. N. Sarda Science College (Autonomous), Sangamner, Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, India.

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Abstract

One Night at the Call Center (2005) by Chetan Bhagat is a moral critique of modern Indian culture that goes beyond a story about a job. The novel presents important ethical issues including love, loyalty, family responsibilities, corruption, self-respect, and the misuse of power through the hardships of six Gurgaon call center workers. God's sudden night intervention represents the necessity for people to relearn moral principles in the face of globalization and materialism. The paper aims to examine how Bhagat criticizes contemporary Indian society and highlights the significance of honesty, self-assurance, and integrity by examining the work through the lens of moral principles and ethics.

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Prasad Dagwale

Research Guide, Padmashri Vikhe Patil
College of Arts, Science and Commerce,
Pravaranagar, Loni, Ahilyanagar,
Maharashtra, India.

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Introduction

Indian English literature frequently reflects the cultural and moral conflicts of a nation that is modernizing quickly. Popular author Chetan Bhagat tackles the concerns of middle-class youth by combining realism, satire, and comedy. He depicts the challenges of six characters in One Night at the Call Center-Shyam, Priyanka, Vroom, Esha, Radhika, and Military Uncle-who are torn between their personal and professional insecurities. Their experience with God turns into a symbolic turning point that makes them reflect on their ethical duties and life choices.

Moral Values and Ethics in the Novel

As per the Hindu Philosophy the concept of ethics and human values are well explained in the Bhagavat Gita which promotes the view of 'righteous action' i.e., 'karma' or doing the right thing at the right time. It also asks the followers of Krishna or the readers to be courageous, take responsibility for their life and stand up for the truth by practicing 'Nishkama Karma.

In the post- modern world, there is a rift between religion, caste and the traditionalist mindset of parents. People just want to earn and hence lose interest in anything. The youth of India struggle with the situation, making their lives livable. This is due to politics, religion, casteism, racism, discrimination.

Today's youth are the privileged subjects of the postmodern because they are the first generation to live intensely in a changing world where media, culture, computers, and other emerging technologies are dramatically changing all aspects of life. This is a world where multimedia technology is changing the nature of work, education and everyday life.

As we live in a post-modern world. We are dependent on the technological world and education which promotes only technical skills and rational attitude, which makes the youth happy to live in the world of gadgets. Bhagat's novel is like a mirror to the world by instructing or guiding the youth. As we are in the contemporary world, youth give importance to aspirations, dreams, love, loss, fear of exams etc.

Chetan Bhagat is one such popular fiction writer whose novels have a strong under-tone of morality and ethics. Although its setting and characters are modern, they operate in a modern setting; Yet they reflect a strong belief in moral values and ethics that are timeless and relevant to all ages. His 'One Night @ the Call Center' is one such novel depicting the struggles of six characters Shyam, Priyanka, Varun, Isha, Radhika and Army Uncle and deals with the various personal and professional problems they faced and their success in solving them with the help of "Inner Voice". This novel reflects how these characters learn about the importance and relevance of moral values and ethics and how they actually put them into practice. Many contemporary writers have tried to portray the morality of modern man or the dilemma of success at any cost. One such novelist is Chetan Bhagat. His major works include: Five Point Someone, One Night @ the Call Center, Revolution 2020, and Three Mistakes of My Life etc. His novels are mainly youth oriented and deal with contemporary nuances prevailing in Indian society. One Night @ the Call Centre was published in 2005, and received both popular as well as critical acclaim. Through the novel, Chetan Bhagat paints a realistic and disillusioning picture of modern India. The novel is a saga of the struggle to survive in the urban jungle. As such, it serves as a proper and appropriate backdrop to examine these values and find their place in the present time.

The novel depicts the struggle of six characters Shyam, Priyanka, Varun, Isha, Radhika and Military Uncle to solve various personal and professional problems they face with the help of their "inner voice". The protagonist of the novel is Shyam. He is an employee at the call centre named 'Connexions' in Gurgaon. His call centre nickname is Sam Marcy and considers himself as the 'black sheep' of the family. While other members of the family have become doctors, engineers, he has to remain content with a call-centre job. His boss Mr. Bakshi takes advantage of him. Shyam loves Priyanka. Although Priyanka also reciprocates the feelings, eventually breaks up with him due to his incompetence and "too compromising" attitude. And Priyanka's mother considers him a 'loser'. Shyam's friend Varun is presented as a typical confused youth. He is fascinated by high-speed cars. His call centre name is Victor Mell. His parent's separation has made him depressed and insecure. He is attracted to Esha, the "hot chick" at the call centre. Esha is an upcoming model and due to her height, she could not participate in a beauty pageant. She had earlier made a 'compromise' by sleeping with a designer for a modelling contract and was extremely guilty about the misdeed. So, she inflicts pain by physically torturing her body. She also refuses to get into a relationship with Varun as she feels that this evil will connect with her. Another important character is Radhika, a married woman who takes care of her household, tends to her in-laws during the day and works at a call center at night. She feels betrayed and lost when she finds out that her husband is in love with someone else. The character of Military Uncle is small but equally important. He has left home due to an argument and misses his grandson very much. Thus, all the characters in the novel are facing one or the other crisis on a personal or professional level and are looking for a moral solution to their problems. The lives of all the six characters in the novel take a dramatic turn in one night when they receive a call from 'God'. This divine intervention or God's call is the main feature of the novel. It comes at a very crucial point in the lives of all the characters. When they are tired of all their problems. As

Radhika says, it is awful. Like what we did wrong? Why is our life in these pits? This is a universal question and a request to provide an ethical and right solution to one's problems. The author provides not only the characters of the novel but also the reader with a suitable and morally correct solution in the form of an appeal to God. This call serves as a ray of hope in the darkness of life. As Death stares at the characters, God calls them when Qualis has an accident. Shyam's cell phone starts to ring, and God introduces himself as, the little voice inside that wants to talk to you... the voice that tells you what you really want. In the novel God's call makes them capable persons and tells them that there are four qualities necessary to be successful They are: medium amount of intelligence, a bit of imagination, self- confidence and failure. Thus, God provides moral and practical solutions to their problems. He makes them realize their mistakes and guides them. Individuals do not need to look around to solve their problems because the solution is within us. You see, [I] have a contract with all human beings. You do your best and every now and then I will come behind to give you a push God inspires the group to such an extent that they all plan together to teach their boss a lesson, improve their personal lives, and get what they want in life. This way of life is actually ethical and follows the basic human values of what is right and wrong. The novel not only portrays the ideological crisis of the time but also offers practical and moral solutions to it with artistic excellence. Through the novel, Bhagat touches the pulse of the younger generation and also outlines the moral and religious path of action or 'Nishkam Karma' as described in the Bhagavad Gita. What God says in the novel can be considered as a brave attempt by Bhagat to restore faith in the fact that traditional ethics and values need not be sacrificed on the altar of success. So Bhagat tries to inculcate the concept of goodness and righteousness in today's generation through his novel. We can say that through God's call he has tried to give voice to our inner voice inside every human being and which constantly tries to show us the righteous path. And Bhagat tries to convey a positive message to the youth that one can live a moral and truthful life and still succeed by listening to the "inner voice".

Conclusion

One Night @ the Call Center by Chetan Bhagat is a moral parable for the contemporary Indian middle-class people. It is one of the popular novels of the writer. Bhagat highlights the significance of moral qualities like honesty, loyalty, courage, self-respect, and compassion through themes of marriage, family, women's problems, professional challenges, and personal crises. God's intervention acts as a reminder that morality is internal, shaped by moral strength and personal decisions, rather than external.

According to Bhagat, rediscovering moral principles is crucial for both individual happiness and social harmony when the world is dominated by technology, globalization, and materialism. In the end, the novel conveys to readers that the real answer to life's problems is to live an ethical life that is driven by integrity and self-assurance.

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