

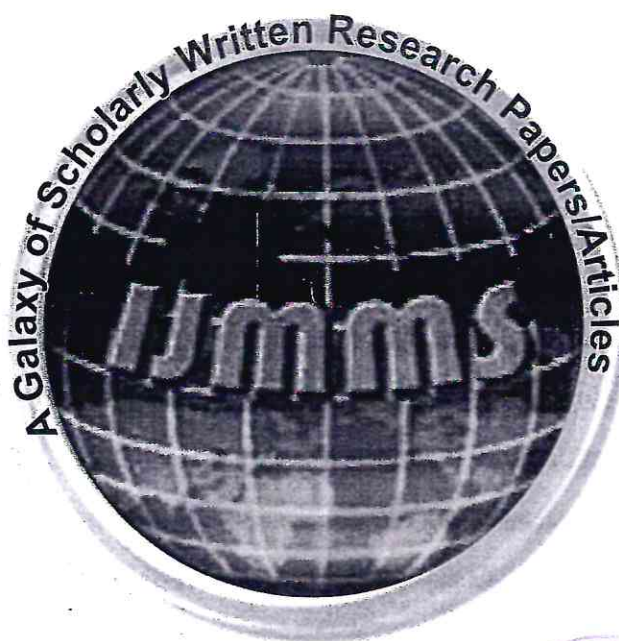
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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MULTIFACETED & MULTILINGUAL STUDIES**
UGC Approved Research Journal (Sr. 47674)

Volume V
Issue II

ISSN : 2394-207X (Print)
IMPACT FACTOR : 4.205

February 2018



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www.ijmms.in

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Globalization and Night Culture with Special Reference to Chetan Bhagat's One Night @ The Call Center

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Abstract:

The present paper is an honest attempt to examine One Night @ the Call Center by Chetan Bhagat in the context of globalization. In the postmodern and postcolonial era, the new advancement in communication and transportation technology has accelerated the speed of globalization. In the period of contemporary globalization, India has accepted the policy of globalization, liberalization and privatization. Due to the liberalization there is the rise of MNCs and BPO industries. In this situation many companies have accepted the 'twenty four by seven' working strategy for facing the challenges of globalization. Consequently the call centers, malls, theatres, dance bars, hotels, hospitals, banks etc remain open for twenty four hours. Thus the process of globalization has given birth to the night culture. This culture has its own pros and cons. Indian English writing today has shifted from local to global. It is in this sense that the writers like Chetan Bhagat have their literary responses to the effects of globalization. His much celebrated novel One Night @ The Call Center deals with night life and the challenges of working at a call center.

Keywords: globalization, night culture, call center, postmodernism, postcolonialism, liberalization, privatization etc.

In the postmodern and postcolonial era the new advancement in communication and transportation technology has accelerated the speed of globalization. In the period of contemporary globalization, India has accepted the policy of globalization, liberalization and privatization. Due to the liberalization there is the rise of MNCs and BPO industries. Such industries have given birth to the night culture in the era of modern globalization. The present paper tries to analyse Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ the Call Center* in the context of night culture and globalization.

Globalization: A Multidimensional Concept: Globalization is a multidimensional concept. It is the most debated and discussed term all over the world in the present century. It is the most controversial concept and therefore difficult to define exactly. Though it is basically an economical concept, it has social, political and cultural dimensions. With the help of modern communication and transportation technology, the world has become connected. Globalization is now "the fact that different cultures and economic systems around the world are becoming connected and similar to each other because of the influence of large multinational companies and improved communication" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). New information and communication technology has accelerated the speed of globalization in such a way that world has become a global village. It was Marshall McLuhan who for the first time defined the world as 'a global village'. Because of a lot of improvement in communication technology the world become connected, economically and socially. For him "the new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village". (McLuhan, 1962:31) Due to the electronic media the world is connected as never before. The borders of 'Time' and 'space' are vanished according to him.

Globalization : its Association with Human Life Aspects: The process of globalization has its effects on human life aspects. This process has an impact on economic, social and cultural life of people all over the world, directly or indirectly. These effects are both positive and negative. The various international organizations and institutions have been shaping the process of globalization. Such international institutions and agencies promote Neo-liberalism in the world of economy.

"General Agreements of Tariff and Trade (GATT) was an agreement for regulation the international trade, came into force in 1948. The purpose behind this agreement was to reduce the tariffs and other trade barriers. The GATT was replaced by World Trade



Organization in 1995. WTO is a more powerful organization that cheaply functions in supervising and liberalizing the international trade. The reducing the tariffs and other barriers on trade and the involvement of developing and less-developed nations into the international trade." (Paithniankar, 2006: 191)

WTO made countries to cut down the trade barriers for the free market economy. Besides the IMF, World Bank and FDI assist the nations for, the expansion of business and MNCs (multinational companies). MNCs have geographical flexibility, that is an ability to shift resources and operations between different locations on global scale. The Governments of different developing nations have accepted the global economic policies. People have started migrating from one nation to the other for better career opportunities.

Globalization and the Rise of Night Culture: The process of globalization has given birth to the night culture. In the era of modern globalization, so many industries and companies are open for twenty four hours. There is no difference between the day time and the night time. Consequently the call centers, malls, theatres, dance bars, hotels, hospitals, banks etc remain open for twenty four hours. Due to the liberalization there is the rise of MNCs and BPO industries. In this situation many companies have accepted the 'twenty four by seven' working strategy for facing the challenges of globalization. Economic globalization has given rise to BPO (Business Process Outsourcing). These industries have made the communication between the people of different nations possible. Such industries are based on new information and communication technology. The rapid development in the world economy has become possible with the help of new technology in the field of information and communication. The new information and communication technologies are frequently viewed as crucially linked with the contemporary globalization. In such situation India has already accepted the globalization, privatization and liberalization. The present Prime Minister after the discussion with the CEO of many International Companies, MNCs and with the Merchants tried to change or to make amendments Kamgar Law and the law about the shops, merchants etc. India has accepted the Night Market now. According to Rahi Bhide, a newspaper columnist, "Night life is an option given by Globalization. India has to accept it for economic growth." (Bhide, 2016)

Globalization and Indian English Literature: Globalization and literature are two different concepts, however they have some meeting points. In the postmodern and postcolonial world everything has come under the impact of globalization. Indian English Literature of the present century also has the impact of globalization. Literature is the mirror of society. It reflects the socio-political and cultural human aspects. In this sense today's literature has an association with globalization. It reflects the themes of globalization such as diaspora, multiculturalism, identity crisis and many more. Indian English Literature especially the novels have shifted their focus from local to global. The recent novel deals with multiple aspects of globalization.

"Flowing with globalisation, India is shining in nearly every prospect. But besides opportunities certain challenging issues regarding culture, tradition, and ethnicity are also rising in the recent decades of the 21st century due to globalisation. Hence, the modern Indian English Literature considers the trends that have emerged in Indian society by thematically focusing on the challenges faced by the Internationalised Indian lives." (Banu, 2016:01)

Chetan Bhagat : an emerging Indian English Writer in the era of Globalization: Chetan Bhagat (1974-) is considered as one the most popular Indian English writers today. There are



seven novels on his credit till date. *Five Point Someone*(2004), *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2005), *Three Mistakes of my Life* (2008), *Two States* (2009), *Revolution: 2020*(2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014) and *One Indian Girl*(2016). He has quitted his investment banking career and become a full time writer. His novels deal with the dreams, desires and dejections of the Indian Youth living in the era of modern globalization. He has caught the nerve of young readers. He knows very well how to make them read. He has a fine marketing strategy regarding his books. His understanding of young minds and engaging , entertaining and filmy writing style have made him the best seller.

One Night @The Call Center : A Novel Reflecting Globalization and Night Culture: *One Night @ The Call Center* is his second novel. After depicting the life of IIT college goers in his first novel, Chetan focuses the problems of the call center employees. He tells the purpose behind writing the novel in his prologue to *One Night @ The Call Center*.

While on his returning journey from IIT Kanpur, a girl meets him in the train and suggests to write about life of the people working in a call center.

‘It is a story about a call center.’

‘Really?’ I said. ‘Call centers as in business process outsourcing centers or BPOs?’

‘Yes, do you know anything about them?’

I thought about it. I did know about call centers, mostly from my cousins who worked there.

‘Yes, I know a little bit,’ I said. ‘Some 300,000 people work in the industry. They help US companies in the sales, service and maintenance of their operations. Usually younger people work there in night shifts. Quite interesting, actually.’

‘Just interesting? Have you ever thought of what all they have to face?’ (prologue:01).

Thus the novel deals with the problems of the call center employees in India who work for an American company. It seems to be an attractive career because of the handsome income but it has its side effects too. Chetan tries to deal with the same. The setting of the novel is ‘Connexions Call Center’ at Gurgaon, Haryana. The novel is a story about the both the personal and private life of the six call center employees including Shyam, the protagonist, Priyanka, his ex-girlfriend, Vroom, Esha, Radhika, his co-worker’s and friends and Military Uncle, the driver of their company vehicle. The central theme of the novel is the life of the Indian youth working in an international call center. It focuses the treatment of Indians by the Americans. The novel also shows Indian Empowerment in the global economy.

The Protagonist and other Characters : the Victims of Globalization: The call center employees have to face so many problems. The protagonist Shyam and his colleagues have become the victims of night culuter and globalization. They have to face all the harassment in the call center by their boss and the customers. Every one of them is facing some personal and official problem. Shyam the team leader has to take care of his boss Mr.Bakshi. Shyam has to face a sort of inferiority complex because of his boss. Shyam loves Priyanka who is disturbed by her would



be husband and his family. Vroom is shocked to learn that their boss has stolen his project and pretended his own. Besides he has delicate feelings of one way love for Esha. Radhika is frustrated as her mother -in- law tortures her and her husband has an extra marital affair. Esha wants to become a model but is being deceived by the modelling industry. The Military Uncle is facing loneliness as his son has settled in America. Thus every one of the call center employees has some problems. Their official life disturbs their private lives. In such situation there is always an uncertainty of job.

Due to the privatization there is no guaranty of their job security. If they fail to achieve the target given, they have to lose their jobs for sure. Shyam and his friend Vroom discuss:

'Things are bad around here, my friend,' Vroom said. 'Bad news may be coming.'

'What do you mean? Are they cutting jobs?' I asked, now a little worried and anxious, along with being frustrated. It's amazing how all these nasty emotions decide to visit me together.

'I'm trying to find out,' Vroom said, clicking open a window on his screen. 'The Western Computers account is really suffering. If we lose that account, the call center will sink.' (51)

They have to face the torture by their customers too. The American people think themselves superior to Indians. This happens due to the global economic politics. America as a superpower nation has its dominance all over the world. This happens due to India's acceptance of the privatization, liberalization and globalization in the postcolonial period. The talented young Indians have to work for the dominant nation. Therefore Vroom reacts,

"Why do some fat- ass, dim witted Americans get to act superior to us? Do you know why? I'll tell why [...] It is not because they are better people because they are smarter. They are head strong because their country is rich and ours is poor... There is the only damn reason. Because the losers who have run our country for the last fifty years could not do better than make India of the poorest countries on earth". (110-111).

The novel also deals with the issues of identity of the Indian employees working in an international call center. The Americans are not able to pronounce the Indian names therefore the employees have to change their names for the convenience of their customers while attending the call. For instance Shyam Mehra becomes 'Sam Merci', Varun Malhotra becomes 'Victor Mell', Esha Singh has to become 'Eliza Singer' and Radhika Jha is called 'Regina Jones'. Thus they have to live in a dual identity in their own nation.

The most significant side effect of globalization and night culture is the decline of moral values and local culture. The present novel depicts the metropolitan and westernized behavior of the postmodern Indian Youth. Including the protagonist all the characters in the novel are following the life style of the western nations. Establishing physical relationship before marriage has become a new trend of this generation. In this globalized world, moral ethics have no value before monetary gain, success and fame. Esha while running after her dream of modelling becomes ready to scarify her virginity. Shyam and Priyanka make love in car. These incidents in the novel show



the demoralized attitude of the new generation which is the very side effect of globalization. Sudhir Nikam one of his scholarly article rightly observes,

“Chetan Bhagat, by presenting a novel on a call center, raises questions about the pros and cons of this industry and those who are related to it. The novel shows that as a result of privatization policy, a very few industries give job security. This leads to the exploitation of the employees. The call centers have to adjust their time with the country they come to contact. In India, normally call centers have to work throughout the night to deal with the western customers.” (Nikam,2011)

Pros and Cons of Night Life: There are some benefits of night life such as the opportunity for young entrepreneurs. Women also have opportunity of employment in call centers, hospitals and IT sectors. This night culture of work is beneficial for the capital cities. However there are many side effects of the night life. There is the fear of losing the job or bankruptcy of any private sector or company. The biggest problem is the security of women employees.

“In the present global scenario women have entered all field despite various societal pressures. Thus with regard to night works, though there are guidelines provided by the highest court of the country, it is essential to ensure if the guidelines are carried out in reality. Further, it would be highly appreciable if steps are taken to curb the activities that may lead to harassment and also steps should be taken to ensure, that in each and every establishments women are safe and secure.”(Subhalakshmi,2012:04)

Thus the process of globalization, privatization and liberalization has given birth to night culture. One can not escape from globalization but can bring certain changes in it. At the end of the novel each of the characters tries to escape from the call center and to start some more meaningful life.

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