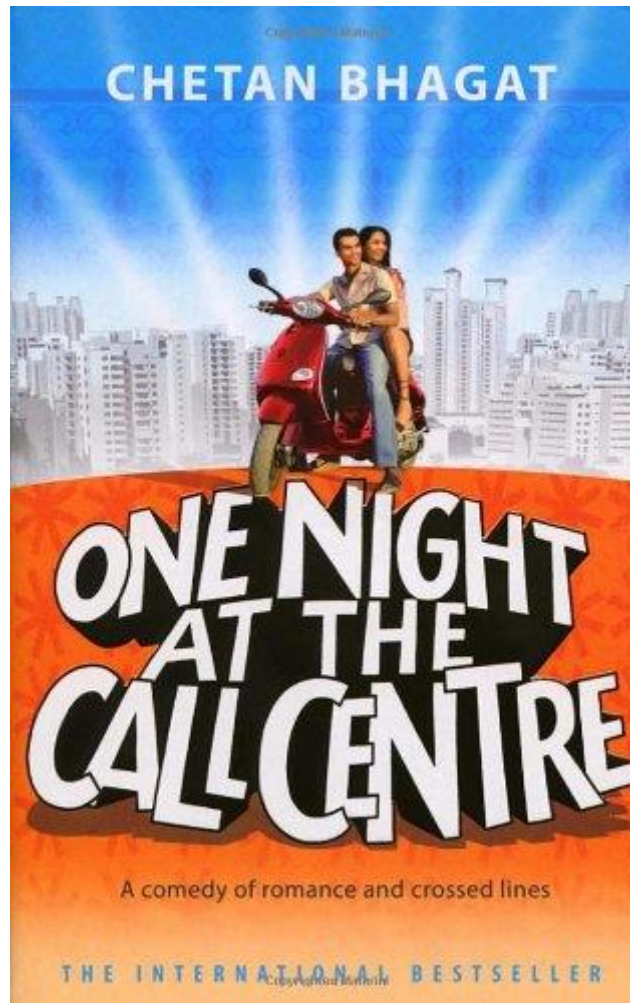


**Culture and Scenario of Present Day Young Metropolitans  
Portrayed in Chetan Bhagat's *One Night @ The Call Center***

**G. Ranjitha, M.A., M.Phil.**

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**Abstract**

Chetan Bhagat has been applauded and viewed as a versatile author by the youth at present India. He is a popular novelist who comments on Education, Society and Current Events. The paper entitled “Culture and Scenario of Present Day Young Metropolitans as Portrayed in Chetan Bhagat’s *One Night @ the Call Center*” focuses on vibrant truth about the problems faced by the present metropolitan youth in the life of technocrats at the Call Centers. The above-mentioned facts are discussed with reference to Chetan Bhagat’s *One Night @ the Call Center*. It presents the validity of friendship and creative thinking. Chetan Bhagat’s *One*

*Night @ the Call Center* portrays the struggles of six call center employees in Delhi and an incident that took place at one night had changed their lives. The call center employees are often fed up with busy schedule at sleepless nights and also in stress in order to take account of their familial issues. The main reason for the call center employees to work there is the better paid salary. The paper through the novel *One Night @ the Call Center* at the end confirms a reality that the inner call of the heart should be followed by an individual in order to be successful in this world. Thus, through the novel *One Night @ the Call Center*, Chetan Bhagat reflects the culture and issues of contemporary Indian Youth at work spot in the present scenario.

**Key words:** Chetan Bhagat, *One Night @ the Call Center*

### **Chetan Bhagat**

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most celebrated and famous fictional writers of the present era. He was born on April 24, 1974. His father was an Army man and his mother, a government employee. The major part of his education was done at Delhi. He studied in the Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi during the years 1978 to 1979. He obtained his B.Tech. from IIT, Delhi and completed his MBA from IIM, Ahmedabad. These two prestigious institutions helped him to construct a comprehensive idiom of the life of youth struggling against the situations that are responsible for perversions and sickness.

### **Exposing the Realities of Life of Youngsters**

Chetan Bhagat has changed the Indian English fiction and inaugurated a new era of Indian fiction to expose the realities of life of youngsters. His novels include *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @The Call Centre* (2005), *The Three Mistakes of My Life*(2008), *2 States : the Story of My Marriage*(2009), *Revolution 2020*(2010), *Half Girlfriend*(2014) *One Indian Girl*(2016). His novels got the credit of being the “bestsellers” since their release. He also writes for leading English and Hindi newspapers, focusing on the issues related to youth and national development.

All Chetan Bhagat’s novels released so far has a number associated with it: 5 in *Five Point Someone*, 1 in *One Night @The Call Centre*, 3 in *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, 2 in *2 States: the Story of My Marriage*, 2020 in *Revolution* (2020) half in *Half Girlfriend* and 1 in *One Indian Girl*. When asked about this numerology behind each novel, Chetan replied

**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:1 January 2017

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smartly that he was a banker. He could not get numbers out of his head. Chetan Bhagat's books were filled with charming love stories which are also with more lyrical tone. His novels have the description of external appearance of the characters. Bhagat's novels consist of handsome men and beautiful women.

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

*One Night @ the Call Center* is the second novel written by Chetan Bhagat. The novel revolves around a group of six call center employees working at Connexions call center in Gurgaon, Haryana, India. Chetan Bhagat has effectively portrayed the impact of globalization on Indian call centers in the novel. The novel takes place during one night, during which all of the leading characters confront some aspect of themselves on their lives they would like to change.

The novel is 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. The six characters include the protagonist Shyam, Priyanka, Vroom, Esha, Radhika and military uncle.

*One Night @ the Call Centre* is really a call to India and to the young people within it. It clearly portrays how globalization has affected the call centre employees in the name of raising economy. The novel deals with the problems of people working in the call center, which is the recent issue of today's world as the youth are largely fascinated by the kind of working system. All the characters in the novel work in the call center not out of interest but mainly because of the highly-paid salaries. The delusional thinking of sitting in an air-conditioned office and talking on the phone make fifteen thousand a month drive them to the call centers.

### **The Protagonist Shyam**

Shyam joins call center for more money, leaving bad company of politicized colleagues and his web designing service. Varun joins there leaving journalism. Priyanka joins to get financial support in order to do her B. Ed. Radhika joins to support her family. Military Uncle joins to have a compromise on his pension amount. Esha wants to be a model. She joins Connexions to have economic support. The reasons for being in the call center are

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different for each of them. They are working together in the same shift sharing same Qualis in WASG (Western Applications Strategic Group). All six major characters have a dark secret that keeps haunting them. The fact is that their dreams are crushed and also their ambitions are thwarted.

### **Different People by Nature**

All the six characters in the novel are different people by nature and their way of life is bound together for some reason. This novel is short, well composed and has some fine comic sentences. In order to handle the story which takes place at one night and to include some subjects and thrills, the author includes some flash back memory of the hero Shyam with his love Priyanka. Shyam loves Priyanka, who is now planning an arranged marriage with another guy. Vroom loves Esha, but Esha wants to be a model. Radhika is in an unhappy marriage with a demanding mother-in-law. Military uncle wants his family and his grandson back, who are settled in the U.S.

*One Night at the Call Center* is an interesting novel for several reasons altogether. The entire action of the novel takes place in one night. The night has some symbolic implications here. Throughout the night, Shyam, Vroom, Radhika, Esha, Priyanka and Military uncle are not in a state of peace and harmony. Throughout the night, they struggle hard and strive for betterment, satisfaction, contentment and settlement. There is panic and complete chaos in the night. The night also marks the beginning of new life of all the six characters of the novel.

### **Family Related Issues**

The family related issues are well focused in the novel. The women managing both household chores and work pressure is shown with the reference to the character of Radhika. Radhika, do the entire household for whole day and works for night shifts in “Connexions” without any complaint. Radhika is a conventional woman. Her husband, Anuj, always remains out of station for work. She expects only love from her husband, not anything else. But, she is always ignored by her husband. Radhika is the best example of a good housewife and smart customer care representative. She is an expert in handling kitchen and managing office promptly. She looks after her old mother-in-law but she is always tortured over by her

mother in law. She loves her husband very much and trusts him blindly. Below lines are the conversation between Shyam and Radhika, on their way to Connexions:

‘Nothing. Almost milk for mom-in-law. Took longer to crush the almonds,’ she said, leaning back exhausted in her seat. She had taken the middle seat. ‘Ask mom-in-law to make her own milk,’ I suggested. ‘C’mon Shyam,’ she said, ‘she’s so old, it is the least I can do, especially when her son is not here.’ ‘Yeah right,’ I shrugged. ‘Just that and cooking three meals a day and household chores and working all night and...’(ON@CC 20)

### **Esha Sing**

Esha Sing is a modern fashionable girl who has moved from Chandigarh to Delhi against her parents’ wishes. Esha wants to become a model. The call center job helps her to earn a regular income. During day time, she approaches agencies and tries to get modelling assignments. She has taken part in some low – key fashion shows in Delhi. She is always conscious of her stylish appearance. She adjusts her hair at least ten times a night. Her hair is light coloured and intensely curly towards at the end. This is the result of an expensive hairstyling job, which costs as much as a minor surgery. She avoids herself eating sweets as she breaks the tiniest piece possible with fingers. It is to maintain her low cut jeans figure. She hardly eats anything but jumps about asking for treats. Shyam notices Esha when she is adjusting her hair and he exclaims that how girls could always in care of their beauty and appearance:

I saw Esha adjusting her hair. She does it at least ten times a night. First she will remove the rubber band that’s tying up her hair and her hair will come loose. Then, she assembles it all together and ties it back again. (ON@CC 51)

### **Women in Chetan Bhagat Novels**

The women in Chetan Bhagat novels are totally engaged with their personal matters and also spend their maximum time on the useless things. Esha, who wants to become a successful model always spend time in grooming her hair, applying lips sticks and have interest towards wearing naval ring. The novel exposes filth of the modelling industry through Esha. Esha is assured with a modelling contract if she sleeps with a designer for a night. She offers herself but she could not get the contract. The man turns out an

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opportunistic as he betrays her telling that she cannot be a model due to short height. He compensates the in-bed-deed by sending her money. She repents the deed and is haunted by a sense of guilt. Whenever the guilty conscience inflicts her, she cuts her skin with sharp blade. She believes she can atone for her guilt by punishing herself. Vroom loves Esha but she does not accept his proposal due to guilty conscience. When he finds Esha is badly cursing herself for the filthy barren deed, he tries to console her. He offers to accept her for his love-sake that is quite capable to ward off her guilt.

### **God and His Mobile Phone**

Chetan Bhagat introduced God as a cosy friend with mobile phone. A phone call from God is an additional interesting element in the novel *One Night @ the Call Center*. The novel is different in an aspect that Chetan Bhagat has mentioned God using mobile phone. God gives them secrets of success to lead a happy life. God advises his friends-cum-devotees how to come out of the iron web of death. The phone call encourages the survivors to settle account with their boss. When a person finds no other way to come out of the death pit, he finally resorts to the arch power for the help. He listens to the fast beats of his heart. Then, he flashes back upon his wrong deeds. Such situation occurs to Shyam and his friends. All of them hang over the pit of death. With the fear of death, all struggles and all differences come to an end. The call from God on Shyam's phone surprises him.

Bhagat inputs the spiritual interlude in the novel. He tends to make the people firm and strategic in hard times. Actually, this is the call from the within of everyone. This is the call of their "will to do" or "will to live". Bhagat places the interlude to make each realize their actual purpose in life. God advises the people to attend "the inner call" (ON@CC 14), which is more important than many other calls a person attends in a day. This inner call is the call of vitality which is the ruling power of the universe. The divine voice asks the survivors to ponder over two things, one is "Think about what you really want" (ON@CC 15) and the other is "what you need to change in your life to get it" (ON@CC 16).

### **Resurrection of Life**

The novel ends on the note on resurrection of life in the Connexions. Each of the six characters gets the real consolation and starts life in different way. All of them, Shyam, Priyanka, Esha, Vroom, Radhika and Military Uncle become content with their future and

they would like to continue their desired life. Vroom and Shyam start their own website design company and they call it the “Blacksheep web Design Company”.

There is a partial objection that how could God call through phone. Chetan Bhagat himself has offered an alternative that Military Uncle, the senior most, talking to his juniors in their frightful condition. It is the Military Uncle, who advises to the young fellow call center workers in order to come over from the problems and to have a positive outlook on life.

The problems of young people in the society are the main focus and concern of the novelist. If the youth is denied success, they move towards drugs and suicide. The youth feel that they are not getting the support from their parents. Yet they are prepared to face family problems along with their day to day problems. The instrument of love is their better weapon to gain success. The novel gives the impression that the middle class family members suffer a lot in the society. This reflects the effect of the advent of globalization. The multiple proliferations of multinational companies and call centers have opened new avenues for the Indian youth of development.

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 **17:1 January 2017**

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