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A STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING OF CAMARADERIE AND STIMULATION IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

The genre of campus novel concentrates on academics and academic life in a university setting where the main action is set in and around the campus of a university. The campus novels in different ways emulate academic life and academics by exhibiting a comprehensive and often paradoxical portrait of Academia. At times it portrays the world of Academia as conceited, vain and impermeable to the outside world, and at other times as a microcosm for society. The objectives of such novels range from complete derision of the academic world, to social and political critique or critical scrutiny of the role of Academia. The authors of campus novels write not only for the academic readers, but also for the non-academics, wishing to be lucid to general public as well. These novels are therefore highly readable, full of amusement, hilarity and humanity. Campus fiction vacillates between pragmatism and experiment and that is why it is concerned with the fastidious realism, on the one hand, and the comic mode of fiction assimilating elements of parody and farce, on the other hand. Campus novels make use of several styles and narrative modes like satiric, absurdist, romanticized, meta-fictional, self-reflective as well as satirical devices and literary techniques like wit, epigram, sarcasm, repartee, allusion, tone and irony to bring out the satire in campus novels. From the point of view of Aristotle, one of the first literary critics, the basic devices that entertain the reader are conflict, peripeteia, and series of cause and effect. That is why the pattern of binary opposition forms the principal structure of the stories of the campus novels. It also functions as the specific or idiosyncratic device which the authors use to entertain and surprise readers. The engaging, and at the same time intellectual reading of campus novels has made this genre immensely popular world-wide.

KEYWORDS: Tales of Camaraderie, Conflicts, Indian English Campus Novels, popular world-wide, campus novels

INTRODUCTION

Students, teachers and parents are the triumvirs under the scrutiny of the readers in the contemporary Indian English campus

novels. Their interaction, whether cordial or conflicting, keep the course of action thriving and throbbing. The flow of varied emotions among the characters, in the

miniature society, helps us comprehend their personalities minutely and meticulously. In Merriam-Webster Dictionary 'camaraderie' is defined as, "A feeling of good friendship among the people in a group." Camaraderie is goodwill, light-hearted rapport and mutual trust experienced among people who spend a lot of time together and share their experiences with one another. In the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, the major characters come in contact with one another under various situations and their contact and communication build up circumstantial or permanent bonding among them.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CAMARADERIE IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH CAMPUS NOVELS

Several factors comprise collectively which influence as well as stimulate the sense of camaraderie among the characters in the contemporary Indian English campus novels. These factors facilitate better understanding and bonding among the characters. Their camaraderie enables them to gather wonderful memories that they could cherish for a long time. The contemporary Indian English campus novels under study exhibit the tales of camaraderie in a very captivating manner.

1. Proximity

The campus is a small world with boundaries and thus the people residing in it come in close proximity to one another. By living in the same room of the hostel, studying in the same class, by visiting various sites inside and at the adjoining joints of the campus, the characters often

end up developing strong and lasting bonds of friendship among themselves. Hari, Ryan and Alok in *Five Point Someone*, Abbey, Rusty and Pappu in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, Tejas and Rishabh in *Anything for You Ma'am*, Kaya, Shubhra and Ragini in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Harsh, Tushar, Dipendu, Divya and Priya in *Everything You Desire*, Shekhar, Anoushka and Gautam in *Joker in the Pack*, Adi, Pheru, Harsha, Rajiv, Sam and Toshi in *Bombay Rains*, Bombay Girls, Deb, Vernita and Shrey in *Of Course I Love You..!* Prashant, Varun, Berrywala, Daddu and Prasad in *Second Degree*, Samar, Pranav, Skimpy and Jiya in *Love*, *A Rather Bad Idea* are the prominent characters who remain loyal to one another in the times of whether fritz and frenzy or cool and cordial.

2. The Similarity of Interests

The limited, but in no way insignificant, years spent by students in campus influence bonding among them by working together on projects, assignments, preparation for examinations, quizzes, cultural and co-curricular activities or even by following the trends in vogue. Harshdeep Jolly, in his novel *Everything You Desire* mentions many events including both curricular and cultural ones like Aarambh, Unmaad, welcome party, Lsquare parties conducted every fortnight by students on the campus and Vista Annual management functions which prove to be truly functional in the bonding of characters in the novel. Creative bonding between teachers and students is well displayed in the characters of Prof. Veera and Ryan in *Five Point Someone*. Ryan's dynamic views on the education

system make him an unappreciated and a disobedient student among the other faculty members who are reluctant to change and advocate the age-old teachercentric methods. Prof. Veera, on the other hand, is open to change and accepts the relevant changes which occur in the teaching-learning processes. Thus, he is a favourite among students. Ryan finds a sympathetic person in Prof. Veera who understands his innovative and creative zeal. Ryan ends up working as a research assistant for Prof. Veera. Prof. P. P. Siddhu in Anything for You Ma'am is quite stubborn and unfriendly with his students while in college. In Chennai, he is very friendly, understanding and cordial with Tejas when he comes to know about Tejas' purpose of missing the educational tour for the sake of meeting his lady love Shreya.

3. Common Complaints

Students who enroll themselves in different courses at IIT, IIM, JNU, Bombay University and other universities often avail hostel facilities provided by the universities. Once away from the comfort zones of their homes, they start making attempts of adjustment and depend upon their interactive skills to establish their own stance among others and also to get acceptance of others. New and vivid experiences help them find a voice that speaks their thoughts and feelings. Majority of students share common issues, thus they are able to find not only the audience but also companions. In spite of having seemingly systematic arrangements and fixed menus at the campus canteen, students voice their dislike towards the food served at

the campus canteen. This attitude leads them to venture about nearby food joints which are famous in one or the other way. In Five Point Someone, Hari, Ryan and Alok visit Susi's. Susi's was a ramshackle, illegal roadside establishment right outside the IIT hostel gates. Using tents and stools, the alfresco dining menu included paranthas, lemonade and cigarettes. At two rupees each, the butter paranthas were a bargain, even by student standards. Proprietor Sasi knew the quality of food in the mess and did a voluminous business serving dozens of students each day from every hostel. (35) Seniors do their best in guiding the juniors and in doing so they pass on their take on the faculty members as well. Seniors warn the juniors about the strict and reserved faculty members and also provide them with guidance in order to deal effectively with their teachers. In Mediocre But Arrogant, Abbey gets to know about Professor Tathagato Chattopadhyay, better popular as Prof. Chatto, from his seniors. Seniors make Abbey and his friends apprehensive about the Professor.

4. Spirit of Adventure

Worldly wisdom says 'birds of the same feathers flock together.' Away from home and stressed by the system, characters in the campus novels develop a spirit of adventure, which often turns ugly. The contemporary Indian English campus novels break the perspective and notion of the common people about all the students studying in the elite and reputed educational institutions of being just highly intellectuals, disciplined and obedient. Some of the protagonists and the other characters in these campus novels

do not mind breaking the rules and indulge in the activities that evoke in them a sense of freedom and individuality. Faculty members make sure to warn students against any act of indiscipline or poor performance in academics, as Father Hathaway does in *Mediocre But Arrogant*. In MIJ Campus, three Ds can get you expelled—Drinks, Drugs, Dames. You could also get thrown out if you got three Ds in academic of course. (202) In spite of warnings, some students do not completely abide by the advice. Liquor party is quite prominent among students and they also bunk classes. Soma Das in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* talks about a place called the Parthasarathy Rocks—a beautiful scenic place named in honour of the first ViceChancellor of JNU. The place absolutely bears a different connotation among the JNU junta. If Ganga Dhaba is the official pre-dating destination of JNU, Parthasarathy Rocks (PSR) is undoubtedly the official dating spot. Once couples sign the agreement of love, they most definitely visit the love shrine of PSR and, with the blessing of Lord PS proceed on the path of love. (51)

5. C2D: Cooperate to Dominate

Most of the students work very hard to get themselves admitted in educational institutions like IIM, IIT and other institutions of great repute and honour. Shekar Verma too, the protagonist of *Joker in the Pack* is able to secure admission in IIM to realize his dreams, “One day I too would be larger than life icon.” (14) In pursuit of accomplishing a big dream, students get admitted in the reputed institutions but soon they become aware of

the academic pressure which they alone could not partake. Hence, they come up with the theory of C2D which means cooperate to dominate. Ryan in *Five Point Someone* talks about the essence of C2D theory prevalent in IIT.

Cooperate to Dominate. The IIT system is unfair because:

1. It suppresses talent and individual spirit.
2. It extracts the best years of one’s life from the country’s brightest minds.
3. It judges you with Draconian GPA system that destroys relationships.
4. The Profs don’t care for the students.
5. IITs have hardly contributed to the country. (107-108)

Ryan is very critical about the overall education system as he feels that individual’s talent and real capabilities are curbed instead of elevating them by giving them space to justify their own self in being creative and inventive. Having strong notions about the system, Ryan adopts the modus operandi that enables him and his friends to live and enjoy their lives without getting crushed under the pressures of the academic processes. Ryan also puts up the points in front of Hari and Alok in which the C2D theory functions. He comes up with this theory in order to share the burden among the three friends. In this way, they can enjoy their life in college along with their studies.

1. All assignments to be shared- one person will do each assignment by turn. The others will simply copy it. Saves time, saves duplication of effort.



2. We will divide up the course responsibilities. For instance, if there are six courses in the semester, we will take care of only two each. One must attend all classes that one is responsible for but can skip all others, (note: Ryan gets all Prof Veera courses). In each class you attend for your course – take copious notes. The rest will merely copy them.

3. We share lab experiment observations.

4. Our friendship is above GPAs. With all the new spare time, we live our lives to the fullest.

5. We combine our hostel rooms into one living unit—one common bedroom, one study room and one fun party room.

6. We split the cost of vodka regardless of how many drinks each person has had. (108) Ryan is of the view that through this C2D theory, they can have good domination over their grades, image and career.

6. Compliance

Once admitted in the university, students in order to comply and adhere to the set standards adopt the ongoing trend. Compliance is the most common strategy adopted by the students to adapt well with their surroundings. In this way, they do not feel isolated and the odd one out. Kaya, in Sumthing of a Mocktale, feels the same. Welcome to this crispy cottony handloom world of JNU. This place where it doesn't matter where you hail from, which fashion statements you made earlier.....whether you wore chiffon salwar kameez, DKNY tank tops, nylon shirts with tiny mango motif prints over terycot trousers. This is the end of all diversities. No one really knows what forces of standardization operate here,

people consciously or subconsciously shed their individual tastes and preferences and submit to the great JNU tradition. Fab India in Vasant Kunj has strategically located its outlet. Over and above the cotton unisex kurtas and ethnic chappals, the jhola is the final stamp of a JNUite. Those who don't adhere to the above rule themselves feel alienated. (1-2)

7. Feeling of Love

Although academics surface the major themes of all the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, the theme of love proves to be a breather amidst the cut-throat competition for grades, elections and other curricular as well as cocurricular activities. Love relationships presented in these novels are sweet, fragile, complicated, confusing and sometimes fake. Relationships continue but sometimes the partners keep on changing. The tenure of these relationships is also limited so that we cannot swear by them for their authenticity and eternity. Among the ten primary sources only one novel, Anything for You Ma'am revolves majorly around the theme of love, not forsaking the academics of course. The author Tushar Raheja cleverly weaves the incidents of academic life around the love story of the protagonists Tejas and Shreya. The national daily 'The Pioneer' complimented Tushar Raheja for the same. 'Raheja writes a touching book about a young lover's story...that engrosses the reader, with its high speed rather hilarious turn of events... Amidst all the chaos are the sweet love moments... be it their date or their telephonic conversation... It is the story of a boy-next-door, which any

youngster can relate to. Raheja moves back and forth in time, reminding of ace writers like Virginia Woolf and Amitav Ghosh...’ (Review)

Tejas’ journey of love, which meant bunking the educational tour and indulging in all the activities strictly prohibited by the institution, finally reaches its destination when he meets Sherya in Chennai. There are some instances of love relationships which leave us with a hope of unison in the future. The characters are mature and very much aware of their priorities and goals in life. Abbey and Keya in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, Hari and Neha in *Five Point Someone*, Samar and Jiya in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea*, Adi and Isha in *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*, Deb and Avantika in *Of Course, I Love You..!*, Harsh and Divya in *Everything You Desire* and Prashant and Priya in *Second Degree* are the lovers who seem to promise to remain a couple post their college days. Among these, there are instances found in the case of Shekhar and Anoushka in *Joker in the Pack* and Kaya and Abhimanyu in *Sumthing of a Mocktail*, where love transcends into oblivion leaving no traces of hope and anticipation in their love relationship. Such relationships are trivial and temporary.

8. Parental Support

In most of the contemporary Indian English campus novel under study, parents are not supportive, indifferent and even oblivious towards the conflicts and tensions that their children undergo. Various factors such as age gap, new education system, new nomenclature make it difficult for parents to understand their children. Moreover, if they

take an active interest they are seen as interfering. Only in *Second Degree*, Prashant John is happy to converse with his mother who loves him unconditionally. No expectations, no conditions. Mom just wanted me back home – to loiter around on the sofa, to hog like a pig, read comics in bed and on the dinner table. She didn’t judge me by grades or marks. She didn’t even care whether I was in IIM or not. It hadn’t mattered to her when I got in, it didn’t ruffle her when I told her I was last in the class and it didn’t bother her when I told her I might flunk a couple of courses this term. “There are always remedial examinations,” she said on the phone when we had talked. “Life isn’t decided by one examination, is it?” (168)

STIMULATION OF CONFLICTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH CAMPUS NOVELS

The feeling of camaraderie and mutual cooperation is aptly juxtaposed with conflicts and arguments faced by the characters in the campus novels. Characters often find themselves in a state of serious incompatibility, struggle or clash and being at variance with other characters or with the prominent educational system.

1. Ragging

Ragging is a brutal form of entertainment which is obtained at the cost of humiliation, shame and injured self-esteem of others. Though ragging is against the law, some of the seniors do not refrain from enjoying their share of entertainment. Every fresher dreads undergoing this humiliating treatment. In the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, ragging

is mostly done in the students' hostel especially during the night time. In *Five Point Someone*, Chetan Bhagat describes the ragging scene with a tinge of humour. Hari, Ryan and Alok are at the scrutiny of their seniors whom they address as 'sir'. As per tradition, seniors rounded us up on the balcony for ragging at midnight. I was still rubbing my eyes as the three of us stood to attention and three seniors faced us. A senior named Anurag leaned against a wall. Another senior, to my nervous eye, looked like a demon from cheap mythological TV shows—six feet tall, over a hundred kilos, dark, hairy, and huge teeth that were ten years late meeting an orthodontist. Although he inspired terror, he spoke little and was busy providing background for the boss, Baku, a lungiclad human toothpick, and just as smelly is my guess. (2) Willingly or reluctantly, the first year students have to go through this uncalled ritual of the higher educational institutions. Their pain of humiliation is taken as per their take on the experience at an individual level. Though most of the students dread ragging, it seems like a customary ritual that every newcomer has to observe.

2. Campus Politics

Campus politics form an integral part of the contemporary Indian English campus novels. Students fight out for gaining various positions ranging from class representative (CR) to general secretary (GS) along with the other significant posts like the cultural secretary, hostel secretary, alumni secretary, placement secretary and so on. Many a time, an obsession to achieve a particular position reflects the negative

personality aspects of the characters. The contenders fight for leadership, for position and for power. For them winning the election is very much important as it would establish them as persons to look up to and even fear.

In *Love, A Rather Bad Idea*, the protagonist, Samar gets quite obsessed about winning the G-Sec election.

His life had been going on rather well the past few days. His election campaign was on track, it was getting amply clear with every passing day that the battle would be more for the margin of victory than the victory itself. He had visibly felt a surge in his brand following across the institute, a feeling nothing less than euphoric, intoxicating. People he had never met in his life would greet him, try and make conversation with him at coffee shops, classrooms and even at places outside the institute, like Timpoos dhaba. Samar was beginning to understand why rock stars felt the way they did. (134)

Samar's obsession for winning the G-Sec election against his best friend Pranav became so severe that he didn't mind harming Pranav with the help of Yadav and Tejbhai. Eventually, Samar comes to his senses and during the last phase of the election campaign, he gives up his candidature. His political ambition alienated him from his friends and lady love whom he wins over finally. In *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*, Anirban Bose focuses on the racial issue that surfaces during the CR elections. This can be observed in the outburst of Sam.

Sam suddenly snorted with anger. 'Minorityism? Is that what you call it,

Rajeev?’ he shouted. ‘Hmm, let’s see...Do you know why I lost the first election for the Class Representative’s post? Huh? Do you ...? I lost it because Manish and his gang spread the word about how I wasn’t a true Maharashtrian. I was born and brought up in Pune. I learned Marathi in school and can speak and write better Marathi than all of you. I burst crackers with the friends in my neighbourhood during Diwali, and they’d come over to our house to have cake at Easter. And yet, when the time comes to choose, I am not Maharashtrian?’ (425)

3. Feeling of Jealousy

The feeling of pride automatically seeps in when one gets admission in a college of general repute and marked distinction. Parents feel elated and blessed by their children getting into such institutions. They become the talk of the town and neighbours’ envy. Sometimes it becomes difficult for the students to handle such kind of pressure. During their social visits, they are considered as role models for the younger generation and often asked to share their experiences in college and also to give guidance regarding the preparation for securing admission in these educational institutions. Often the apprehensive attitude of neighbours changes to positivity and appreciation. Sometimes even their friends cannot accept their success in a cordial manner. When Samar, in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea*, gets admission in IIT, his parents are overjoyed but his friends Kittu and Inder, who were once cordial and friendly, react differently and in an unfriendly manner when Samar goes to meet them.

Come, show us what IIT teaches you. Let’s see if the IIT chap can beat the Chandigarh de badshahs in bowling. ...”Couldn’t be better guru,” Kittu gave a wide smile to Samar. ‘I am managing the entire north operations of dad’s computer business. You won’t believe the kind of scale I am managing nowadays. I am even thinking of branching out into gaming. Let’s see. Maybe I will employ a few IITians to run my show, huh?’ (173-174)

4. Confusion in Relationships

Human relationships at times become quite confusing and complicated especially in the matter of love when one does not realize what one really wants. Abbey, in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, gets confused because of his mixed feelings towards two girls at the same time.

Two terms in *MIJ* did a strange thing to me. I found myself becoming very competitive, as far as getting Ayesha’s attention was concerned. My correspondence with Priya also began to get more and more infrequent. (167)

Love interest tends to keep on changing according to the time and circumstances. Many a time the characters of the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study are unsure about their feelings. The confidence through which they decide their career choices seems to be missing when it comes to selecting a partner for a romantic relationship. Here, it looks like the brain enjoys the supremacy over the heart. Abbey is indecisive about his feeling and even towards the end of the novel his confusion prevails.

Seeing Keya at the station left me with a wave of emotions and questions. My head reeled. Ayesha knew what I was going through. She came and sat next to me. For a change, she did not say anything. She just looked at me, quietly squeezed my hand and then left me alone. (309)

Durjoy Dutta and Maanvi Ahuja reveal the confused state of the protagonist Deb in the title of the novel, which reads as 'Of Course, I Love You..! Till I Find Someone better....' Deb doesn't want to commit to anybody and seeks comfort by indulging in the temporary relationships. After all, it is easier to love a busy, open to everything, smart girl rather than loving somebody you love. (12) Deb only wants to involve in a casual relationship with girls. He does not believe to commit himself in any relationship. He dictates his own terms and wants to enjoy his free space and individuality. As he says, People around me wanted love, care and long conversations for whatever that meant. I just had to find somebody to love. Or at least somebody I would not hate after the first few weeks. (2) To be happy and happening, Deb enters into a casual relationship with Smriti. However, his belief in love completely changes and tables turn when he meets Avantika and realizes,

She was the only one I ever loved and it took me 8 years after I hit puberty to find her. I was to keep her till the next 80. (158) In Love, A Rather Bad Idea, Jiya is Skimpy's girlfriend at the beginning of the novel but when it ends she becomes the love interest of the protagonist Samar. Tushar, in Everything You Desire, already has a

girlfriend named Sarika before he enters IIM. Then he gets attracted to Priya who in turn is Sarika's friend. Tushar breaks up with Sarika and tries to woo Priya. Consequently, Priya too starts taking interest in Tushar. Thus, the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study also display love relationships which are fragile, fake and fickle.

5. Students versus Teachers

Teachers and students are the main stakeholders of the teaching-learning process. Gone are the utopian days when students obediently followed the command of their teachers willingly or unwillingly. Nowadays, students are techno-savvy and well informed. The education system has become student oriented. Students often question the authority of their teachers. There is no general disrespect for the teachers but they are perceived as humans with flaws. Ryan's outburst in Five Point Someone justifies this. And this IIT system is nothing but a mice race. It is not a rat race, mind you, as rats sound somewhat shrewd and clever. So, it is not about that. It is mindlessly running a race for four years, in every class, every assignment and every test. It is a race where Profs judge you every ten steps, with a GPA stamped on you every semester. Profs who have no idea what science and learning are about. Yes, that is what I think of the Profs. (101) When Prof. Dubey explains the class about the definition of a machine as anything that reduces human efforts, entire class rejoices at his simplicity of explanation and then active interaction is carried on. At that time, Ryan

asks Prof. Dubey a question that dumbstruck him.

CONCLUSION

The English word 'campus' is drawn from the Latin word campus which means 'field'. The usage of 'campus' to refer to college or university is an American invention. It entered British English only in the late 1950s. The earliest mention of the word 'campus' in The Oxford English Dictionary applying to a British University was in 1958. If we trace the origin of the campus novel it could be observed that the English university novels appeared in the nineteenth century itself. Anthony Trollope's comic masterpiece *Barchester Towers* (1857) could be cited as its prime example. The existence of campus novel as an independent genre was the result of the great expansion of university education in the 1960s. The period after the World-War II saw a rapid growth in the number of universities. This expansion created opportunity for professional writers returning from war to join these universities. Also, the emergence of the Redbrick University created an opportunity for the students from lower social classes to get admissions in universities, thereby ending the supremacy of the Oxford's and Cambridge's influence upon English society and culture. Like other literary genres, the campus novel has also undergone various thematic changes. The early campus novel was characterized by comic convention. The setting of these novels was pastoral, portraying a small world free from the tumult of modern urban life. Also the clash between the socially inferior and superior was the plot of the

early campus novels. But over the period of time, as the universities changed, so did the tone of the campus novel. Instead of the robust farce and humour of the early campus novels, the tone now was angry and discrediting. Michael Frayn's *The Trick of It* published in 1989 is a perfect example of this trend. Another change in the tendency in the later campus novel is to regard campuses as being bleak, portraying them as a world of perversion, deceit, of plagiarism, patronage and personal advantage. Malcolm Bradbury's second novel *Stepping Westward* (1965) is a perfect indicator of the symptoms of this evolution. The genre has, in the recent years crossed over the boundaries of the Anglo-American World. Some outstanding campus novels written outside the Anglo-American literary world have drawn both critical claim and popularity for the authors. Robertson Davies's *The Rebel Angels* (1983) and Jeffrey Moore's *The Red Rose Chain* (2000) are Canadian campus novels; J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) is a South African campus novel and Michael Wilding's *Academia Nuts* (2002) is an Australian campus novel. The novel is distinct in the sense that Cowasjee has unfurled a tragic theme in a facetious manner and has pertinently made use of black humor to illustrate this. In fact satire and irony are very much parts of Cowasjee's humour and the novel is widely appreciated for its academic satire. *Goodbye to Elsa* is experimental in the sense that it examines the peculiarities of academia in three different campuses namely - National Defence Academy in India, The Leeds in England and The College of Liberal Arts in

Erigon, Canada. In fact the depiction of the Defence Academy has been a novel endeavour in the whole of Indian English Literature. The novel is noticed because of its frank treatment of the various aspects of campus life.

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