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Chapter – 3

Speaking from Inside Out: Views of Authors on People, Processes
and Place of Higher Education

Education fosters the development of an individual and the world at large. There is an increase in the number of higher educational institutions in India in recent times. Indians are getting equipped with an optimistic, multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary approach towards education. On the contrary, parents’ outlook towards acquiring higher education by their children is generally one-dimensional. Gaining higher education is equated with better financial prospects rather than the overall development of students. This concept is predominantly Indian as Prashant John writes in Second Degree,

Vedic Dharma views human life as a journey through four logical and sequential stages starting at Brähmacharya ashrama in childhood culminating in the Sanyasaashrama in old age. This doctrine has particularly influenced the way education has evolved in India. Parents encourage their sons and daughters to finish all “studying” at one go and then “settle down”. Studying after getting married or after working for several years was an alien concept-practised “saat samundar paar” and not suited for “we the peepul”. (Prologue)
To study, earn and retire seem to be the motto of the Indian middle class which has been preached and practiced by them since a long period of time. Students’ perseverance and hard work enable them to experience an altogether a new life at some of the renowned higher educational institutions in India. The authors, Ritesh Sharma and Neeraj Pahlajani, in *Joker in the Pack*, write about the association of happiness and pride with a person’s scoring high marks in exams. The win wasn’t easy for the protagonist Shekhar Verma. Sheer determination, perseverance and thorough preparation transformed his personality as well.

Shekhar Verma feels the change in the attitude of the people around him when he scores very well in the XII standard exams.

The efforts paid off, at least in terms of percentage scored, and at the end of class XII, I had come to be respected throughout my extended family as a ‘qualified man.’ My parents swelled with pride at family functions, and I thought it had been worth it, though I now wore spectacles and had forgotten how to play the hook shot. The extras started making an example out of me for their children but some of them also remarked that I was not the ‘chirpy young fellow’ I used to be. (17)

Many a time, students decide their career depending upon its prospects rather than their aptitude for it. Elders, media and friends make a remarkable contribution towards selecting a career for students. Students are considered by their parents as too young to take any substantial decisions in life and are always ready to be the navigator of their children’s life. This is noticed in the case of Shekhar Verma in *Joker in the Pack*. 
With a 91 percent in Class XII commerce, I let go of the time tested Eco (H) or B. Com (H) courses in reputed colleges, choosing instead to go the Information Technology (IT) way. The newly floated B.I.T. (Bachelor of Information Technology) course in Delhi University (DU) seemed to offer better prospects at the time, with the IT boom occupying maximum airtime in the conversation among middle-class parents on their way to the office in chartered buses. I thus accepted the advice of the extras, and Shekhar Verma was all set to join the hotter career path of the times—Information Technology. (17)

Securing admission in an advanced educational institution livens up the spirit of students as they prepare to ride high and far during their tenure in the college. They experience mixed emotions tinged with both enthusiasm and tension as they get ready to undertake the challenge with the hope of excelling in whatever they do. The perks of advanced education are undoubtedly interesting, exciting and benefiting. Harsh expresses his joy of getting admission in IIM in Everything You Desire.

There was a mixture of excitement, nervousness, anticipation and fear. The lows were the thought of being away from home, friends and all the excitement of Delhi. However, the highs more than made up for it. The sense of achievement of having secured admission to the Indian Institute of Management; the excitement of being able to become a part of the prestigious institution which the corporate love and media rave about, and which increases your prestige in society and among friend was an exhilarating thought. (4)

Students seek higher education with an aim of achievement in their personal and professional fronts. Their pursuit sharpens their skills and abilities to meet the
desired goals in their lives. The experiences that encompass them help them in realizing their potential and lead them in securing a better future for themselves. Higher education enriches the experiences and enhances the chances of development and success for students who in turn would contribute to the development of nation and humanity.

3.1. **Facets of Education**

Once registered in higher educational institutions, students come in terms with reality and develop a vision to realize their dreams. Contemporary Indian English campus novels under study focus on the processes that take place in the world of academics and also highlight the significance of campus and its effect on students. The writers of the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study present the overall aspects of higher education by encompassing vivid facets of education.

3.1.1. **Learning Environment**

Psychology asserts that heredity and environment contribute to the holistic development of students. Higher educational institutions in India provide such an environment to their students that lure them well at the very onset of their academic journey. A good ambiance plays a vital role in imparting and gaining enriching teaching-learning experiences. In an educational process, a major concern of both students and parents is the place of study. The contemporary Indian English campus novels under study give an elaborate description of some of the magnanimous educational institutions in India like IIM, IIT, JNU, Bombay University, MIJ and Delhi University.
Harsh is very much excited to start his course in IIM. He is extremely impressed and delighted when he enters the gates of IIM Bangalore in *Everything You Desire*.

As I got a first glimpse of the enormous and majestic entrance to what was going to be ‘home’ for two years, I was overwhelmed; it was a dream come true. I was about to enter an IIM! ...The first thing that struck me about the place was the huge trees lined up on either side of the road, the calmness and the serenity of the place. (5)

The vast open spaces, thick vegetation and dense tree areas dotting the campus area gave the feeling of living in a forest resort! The campus spread over 100 acres was huge and you could get lost in its vastness. (13)

Vastness of campus, apt geographical location and remarkable infrastructure do matter a lot to every student and parent for seeking admission in higher educational institutions. Abhijit Bhaduri in *Mediocre But Arrogant* subtly describes the Management Institute of Jamshedpur (MIJ) when Abbey visits it for the first time.

Despite its unglamorous name, MIJ had an impressive campus, a fancy library and a state of the art auditorium where we held our annual one-act-play festival. In the administrative block were the dean’s office, the classrooms, and above them, a large chapel….In fact, back in those days in 1982, all the buildings of MIJ were rather, ummm…utilitarian. (4)

Infrastructure that dates back in ancient times often elevates the idea of the place that provides a genuine, great and good education. Grant Medical College of
Mumbai also has its own significance as mentioned by Anirban Bose in *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*.

Established by the British in 1845 to introduce western medicine in India, Grant Medical College is one of the oldest institutions in the country. Its campus, spread over a few square miles in the heart of Bombay, reflects a lot of its history—from the distinguished buildings that are the Anatomy and Physiology schools, to the fort-like hospital with its empty gun turrets and crumbling wooden staircases. Dates etched on the stone façade commemorate important incidents in the life of the 150-year-old institution. Years of expansion have led to the grounds being remodeled, landscaped, structured and restructured again and again. (41)

These places promise adequate amenities like the mess, canteen, cafeteria, computer centre, sprawling lawns, photo-copy centres and so on. Campus premises seem properly equipped to meet the academic and personal demands of students. Once on the campus, students also find their way out to the adjoining food joints and places of their recreation which are in plenty outside the campus premises. Thus, they get sufficient space to explore, entertain and educate as per their desires.

### 3.1.2. Multidisciplinary Perspective

At its conceptual stage, campus novels were penned down only by the authors belonging to the English department. As time progressed, the monopoly of the authors of the English department was broken and people hailing from vivid disciplines of study started taking interest in writing campus novels.
The contemporary Indian English campus novels under study also promote an interdisciplinary perspective. Graduates from any stream having an appropriate aptitude and attitude can appear for the entrance test, group discussions and viva to secure admission in IIM. In *Everything You Desire*, Harsh encounters such a student community.

I was looking forward to the eclectic group of people I was going to meet. Nearly every state was represented on the campus; there were people with varied educational backgrounds—engineers, chartered accountants, economics graduates, literature graduates and others, though engineers were in a majority. There were many freshers with no previous experience and few with plenty of years of experience in the corporate world. These people were going to be my batch mates for the next two years and some with whom strong bonds of friendship will outlive those two years. (2)

One of the many advantages that higher education offers is the selection of the subjects of choice. Students select courses to study according to their interest and aptitude. Contemporary Indian English campus novels under study also provide lots of information to its reader by displaying the plethora of courses that one can undertake.

Soma Das in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* informs about one such course CSODR i.e. Centre for Study of Obstacles in the Development of Regions which involves a diverse study relating to health, economics, psychology, finance, statistics, geography, languages and more.
Values do not take a setback in the world of finance and business. In order to establish a balance between the righteousness and the materialistic world, values are also instilled in students for their focused and sumptuous development. Corporate Ethics is also taught to the management students to balance the financial and ethical dimensions. In *Everything You Desire* Harsh talks about a course, Tracking Creative Boundaries. This is clearly a course with a difference.

Each session had Professor Narayan bringing in a guest from the world of arts—theatre, music, writing or dance. The artist shared his experiences and even gave performances. Till now we had interacted with writers, documentary film producers and painters. One of the writers, we had met had an interesting background – he spent some time at IIM Ahmedabad, leaving it midway to pursue his passion for writing. He was the one who chose to follow his heart, rather than do what would be better in the eyes of society. Today’s session was, however, going to be extra special. We had the famous actress Nadia Das coming for the class, which was to begin with a dance performance in the auditorium. (195)

The vividness in courses enables students to comprehend their passion and fulfill their requirements.

### 3.1.3. Students’ Outlook on Teachers

Teachers’ scrutiny by their students is an inevitable aspect of a teaching-learning process. Students’ opinions about their teachers are remarkably depicted in the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study. Very few teachers are able to stand firm and famous in their students’ jurisdiction. Most of them have to
bear the criticism levelled at them by their students. Prashant John in *Second Degree* writes about the general conviction regarding the teachers.

Faculty at IIM-A is impressive, to say the least. Without exception, all of them have published several papers in international journals, consulted for the best companies in India and abroad and generally are smashing good at what they do. And once a person reaches that level of achievement, you don’t spar with others, especially your students. In most sessions, I could well imagine the Professor laughing his head off at the silly discussions happening and the desperate attempts to get face time. You don’t mess with faculty and mostly they are above all the petty attempts we came up with to score brownie points.

(134)

Prof Cherian and Prof Dubey in *Five Point Someone* have a remarkable hold over students not because of their being popular among them. Students actually dread them for their punitive approach. Their approach is authoritative and non-dynamic. On the contrary, Prof Veera appreciates creativity over rote learning among students. Students attribute his amiability to the fact of his gaining education in a foreign land. Ryan, who is critical about all the teachers, adores Prof Veera.

“Perfect, thanks Ryan. By the way, was it you who wrote the impact of lubricant efficiency on scooter fuel consumption in your last term paper?”

“Well, yes sir.”

“Is it true you actually test the data on your scooter?”

“Yes, I did. Not accurately though.”
“I like that,” Prof Veera said, looking at the nine-pointers who were busy taking frantic notes like trained parrots. “I really like that.” (85)

Professor Chattopadhyay, generally addressed as Chatto by students, in Mediocre But Arrogant comes across as a self-possessed teacher who thinks high about his credentials and wants his students to borrow his thesis to study that too just for nine days. Then there is the pipe-smoking Professor Chandran with his large build and beard, both of which slowed him down immensely. Father Joe Beez, Professor Suri and Professor Ranganathan are also not spared by their students.

Professor Ranganathan was a sucker for quotes from foreign journals. So for his exams, many of us would write our own stuff and then pass it off as a quote from Harvard Business Review and the like. It is one of the life’s little ironies that some dude makes an absolutely inane statement in a magazine and it gets highlighted, while you could have said the same—well almost the same—thing a million times over but nobody gave a damn. (199)

Father Hathaway, popularly known as Haathi by his students, has a charismatic personality. Abbey in Mediocre But Arrogant writes about Prof. Haathi,

Everyone professed only undiluted admiration and respect for him, including the students who had received lousy grades in his classes. (9)

Tejas is able to dupe Prof. P.P. Sidhu in Anything for You Ma’am in order to go to Chennai but when towards the end of the novel he receives a helping hand from Prof. P.P. Sidhu, his views about him change.
After all, a Professor ceases to be a Professor outside the four walls of his college. Just like a policeman ceases to be a policeman after his beat is over. Society teaches us well to play these dual roles, my friend. A Professor he might be, but when not delivering a lecture, when not marking papers, he becomes just another human being—a father, a husband, and a friend. He is a normal human being now—a normal man who listens to music, reads novels, likes to joke; a man vulnerable to emotions, love, sympathy. (210)

Kaya in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* is in no mood to let go of any of her teachers. All the teachers as described by her are stereotypes, ridiculous and unconcerned. Be it Prof. Bichitra Roy, Prof. Birendra Bahuguna or Prof. Bhanumati Sahu. All the teachers are criticized by Kaya and her friends throughout the course of the novel. For Prof Sahu, Kaya says,

Neither his knowledge permitted him to teach us, nor did he ever bother to prepare for the classes. Like lovers, we quietly, without words, reached an agreement. An unspoken MoU was signed. He gave good grades to everyone and we were not to open our mouth on our misgivings about him. (14)

Some teachers who esteem themselves very high fail to acknowledge the mediocrity of others especially of their students. They do not hesitate to criticize and insult them whenever they get a chance to do so. Prof. Shanker in *Everything You Desire* doesn’t mind humiliating his students anytime as he is very hard to please. Harsh writes about him, “His stern looks and large moustache aided his ‘strict’ Professor image.” (25)
Professor George who takes Organizational Behaviour is taken for granted by students. Harsh describes him as, “The bearded Professor George, with his very soft voice, was all that one needed to doze off.” (32)

In *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*, Dr. Gomke is much disliked by her students. Her overall personality is censured by her students. Adi goes on to tell about her,

She was a specimen old-fashioned propriety….A curved pinched nose, scant eyebrows artificially darkened by the liberal use of eyeliner and narrow lips on a pale white wrinkled face conveyed a distinct aura of inapproachability. (44-45)

Dr. Gomke, firmly entrenched in the Anatomy division for twenty-eight years was not blessed with patience. Unmarried and unattached, her life revolved around teaching Anatomy and running the department—a commitment that automatically authorized a gargantuan demand for respect. (47)

It is generally a common perception to rate one’s intelligence on the basis of the marks and grades one score. Average or low-grade scorers are considered as mediocre irrespective of their creativity or genius that they possess in some other areas. Their talent in other fields does not add to their scoring in mark sheets. Teachers rate students’ capabilities as per the grades they receive. They are concerned with grades and not with creative thinking or originality. When Alok and Hari go to submit Ryan’s project proposal, they fear its rejection as Ryan’s grades are written on it.

“You think Ryan will get the project?” Alok said, sitting pillion.
“I think so. His proposal alone is eighty pages, which I think is a project in itself. And I mean, it is original work.”

“Yes, but you know he has to put a cover sheet on the proposal.”

“So?”

“The cover sheet carries the student’s name and GPA. You think they’ll fund a five-point something?”

“Why not? They’ll read the proposal and decide.”

“They are Profs,” Alok said, “and you know how they think.” (121-122)

For securing good marks, students go to an extent of bribing their teachers. Teachers also accept favours sometimes to seek attention and respect. Prashant John in Second Degree mentions about students bribing their teachers by inviting them on a meal. When Prasad gets confused and anxious about the correctness of the data that Berrywala, Prashant and he had collected, he thinks of drawing the information from the respective teacher by inviting him for dinner. This is a very usual practice employed by the students to impress their teachers.

“Why don’t we call the Professor and ask if there is something wrong with the data?”

“No way, you can’t ask that—that’s like the worst thing to do. He will automatically deduct a grade if you do that,” pipped Berrywala, not even looking up from his laptop where he was still trying to make sense of the data.

“Puttar, there are subtle ways of doing this—just watch,” smirked Prasad.
Heading out to the campus intercom, he dialed the Professor’s home number.

The phone was picked up on the fifth ring.

“Hello, may I speak to the Professor?”

“Who is speaking?” asked a pretty irritated voice at the other end.

“This is Prasad from . . .”

“Yes, what do you want?”

“I wanted to invite the Professor for dinner at my place today. Just wanted to check if he is available.”

After a long silence at the other end, the gruff voice continued, “This is the ninth tea and dinner invitation I am turning down today. There is nothing wrong with the data. Make suitable assumptions and submit your report.” And the line went dead. (88-89)

Teachers are aware of the varied ways adopted by their students to seek undue advantages. Sometimes they do enjoy this attention and this attitude is not missed by the students as they try to grab every opportunity to impress their teachers.

3.1.4. Teachers’ Teaching Methods

All the teachers of the prominent colleges mentioned in the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study teach at the graduate and postgraduate levels. They are well qualified and possess many credentials to be proud of. Their teaching experience goes beyond two to three decades, for some even more and they continue to stand tall and impart knowledge to many a generation to come. In most of
the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, teachers are censured due to their uninteresting teaching methods or for their eccentric habits.

Most of the teachers adopt the lecture method which is teacher-oriented and students have to just pay attention. With no or minimal participation in the ongoing activity in the class, students tend to find faults with their teachers and finally pass their verdict on those teachers which in turn is carried forward from seniors to juniors down the coming years.

Prof Shanker in *Everything You Desire* believes in not wasting any time and without any interruption wants to continue his lecture for one and a half hour. Even in the very first lecture, he doesn’t show any interest in students and goes on straight to teaching Marketing.

Professor Shanker, after rebuking the class on not having any sense of punctuality, was explaining the concepts of Marketing. No introduction, no welcome speech—he went on straight to his lecture. Within minutes we were trying to understand the difference between sales concept, marketing concept and so on. There were feeble attempts as CP. ‘CP’ or class participation is a tool in the hands of the Professors to make sure that the class is awake- how successful this is can be debated. Basically, Professors allocate a certain percentage of marks for the course to class participation, hoping this will encourage meaningful class discussion. Professor Shanker clearly wasn’t impressed with the class interventions. (25)

Some teachers restrain change and refuse to advance with time. They are not dynamic and feel that what they teach is the best and their teaching method is
unchallenging and perfect. In the age of PowerPoint presentations, Professor Shaker uses the overhead projector. He uses the same slides prepared years ago to teach students for many more years to come.

Professor Shanker, without showing any emotions, switched on the overhead projector and took out the lecture slides for the day. In an age, when Powerpoint presentations were the order of the day, Professor Shanker still believed in using his transparencies and making extensive use of the good, old blackboard. (32)

Being in the teaching profession for many years, some teachers become overconfident and adopt the ways which do not require them to give in their best. They acquire the skills of conducting classes in a stipulated period of time without any conscience of the development of their students. Harshdeep Jolly in *Everything You Desire* also talks about the teachers who do not come prepared for the class. Some waste time in making students discuss any particular project for most of the lecture and give little input whether relevant or not towards the end of the lecture. Harsh observes,

In the third term, the Strategy class was clearly the most boring one possible. The Strategy Professor’s soft voice made it worse. One could barely hear him beyond the second row and even if one could, you could barely hear him beyond the second row and even if one could, you couldn’t really gather what was happening. For the first one hour, he would leave us to discuss the case amongst ourselves in our project groups. We would be discussing a lot more beyond strategy! When he would finally analyze the case in the last few minutes, his ideas would simply fly off on a tangent. Besides, the last few
minutes see your attention diverting to the wall clock rather than the Professor.

(136)

Students are scared to doze off in the classes of the strict teachers but take liberty with the ones who don’t mind. During one of the group presentations in Professor George’s class in Everything You Desire, students ask Professor George to switch off the lights in order to see the PowerPoint presentation well. When the lights are put on after the presentation, Professor George finds more than half of the class sleeping away to glory. He becomes angry and warns the students about not continuing with the open book exams in his subject henceforth. Anyhow, students pacify him and the open book exams in his subject continue.

Students enjoy the lectures of those teachers who know their subject matter well and above all have great tactics of presentation. This happens in Prof. Manhar Dey’s class in Everything You Desire.

Professor Manohar Dey was a young Professor, must be in his early thirties and had a Law degree from the Harvard Law School. He had spent quite some time in the U.S. and this was made evident by his strong American accent. “Guys and Girls. Welcome to Business Law or B-Law if you please. Are we ready to rock?” he asked jumping all over the classroom. “Yes, Sir” came the loud response. “Hey, let’s have a round of introductions. I will begin with mine” Professor Dey started off giving details of his background. Then we all gave our brief introduction. “Great. So, let’s start by understanding why we should have this subject in a Business school….The one and a half hours seemed to pass by easily with him. (90-91)
Apart from allotting assignments, group discussion sessions and presentations to students, teachers also impart practical knowledge to them by taking them on educational tours. Professor P.P. Sidhu in *Anything for You Ma’am* is in charge of taking students of the mechanical department on an industrial tour. In *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, Professor Bichitra Roy and Professor Bhanumati Sahu take the students to a village where they go to conduct a survey on the problems faced by the farmers. Such excursion brings students close to the realities of life.

3.1.5. Students and Studies

The contemporary Indian English campus novels under study are written by the ex-students and carry students’ perspectives towards people, processes and places. Attitudes and activities of the students are observed elaborately. In some of the novels, even teachers do have a share in talking about their students.

In *Five Point Someone* Professor Dubey’s disgust regarding the deteriorating levels of students is often revealed and he feels that the admission criteria of the college are just not strict enough.

Students secure admission in recognized and elite educational institutions after going through a rigorous turmoil of clearing entrance test, group discussion and viva. Most of the students enroll themselves in varied courses at these institutions with a view of a better and prosperous life thereafter. Himanshu in *Everything You Desire* is one such committed student who knows what he wants in life and is also aware of the ways of achieving it. He keeps on advising the protagonist Harsh to keep a check on his activities and grades in order to attain the dream of his life.
Likewise, Samar in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea* finds a guiding angel in Agni who keeps saying, “Crack your grades, bugger. It’s a goddamn race boy, quit walking.” (135)

Rusty is senior in age. He has sound practical knowledge and experience. He does his best to motivate Abbey in *Mediocre But Arrogant* and is successful in seeping self-confidence in Abbey. Abbey acknowledges this,

Rusty taught me that in life, self-confidence is half the battle won. I was not going to be a passive traveler anymore. I would be in charge of my life. Rusty had done it all for me. He had briefed me about the intricacies of the corporate world. He taught me all the right jargon. He showed me how to tie a double knot tie so that it no longer looked like something the cat brought in. He conducted mock interview sessions for me. Above all, he showed me how to write bestsellers. These usually float under the term ‘biodata’. (211)

Sometimes students adopt a practical rather than a sincere approach to sustain them in the rat race for scoring good grades. Gaining good grades is the ultimate aim of the students and they do not mind trying to flatter their teachers for the same. This strategy of students is well observed in the novel *Sumthing of a Mocktale*. Kaya states that seniors teach them the ways to deal with professors.

For their academic accomplishment they had a readymade recipe from Senior Maa Gos for which essential ingredients included –2 tablespoon of praise for Prof., 3 tablespoon of laughing at the PJs that Profs crack, 3 tablespoon of letting the Prof. know about your parent’s dream about you doing well in JNU,
2 tsp of tears (strictly two tsp as an overdose can spoil the taste) and 2 tablespoon of charity at Prof’s home, garnished by a selfless smile. (20)

Kaya gets to understand her teachers while pursuing her post-graduation. She also describes the methods that one can adapt to secure admission in JNU for the M. Phil. Programme.

JNU is like a large Indian joint family household, full of customs and rituals. One of those is after clearing the written exam of M.Phil entrance. If you are in in-house (read JNU) student already, you must pay a visit to the temporary deities in their temples (read Profs in their cabins) with a face so humble that it should speak for itself. It should reflect ‘Take me in your sharan (shelter) God, I have come here with a lot of hope. Grant me my wish and become my guide. Save me in the interview board, my lord and I will be your slave for the rest of my days in JNU. (200)

Cheating in examinations is also one of the features that students of the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study display quite efficiently. Kaya and Adhbhut do it unabashedly in Sumthing of a Mocktale.

Adhbhut was sitting next to me. After I went through my question paper I didn’t know what to do, so I was helplessly looking here and there. That was when my eyes scanned Adhbhut’s paper. His paper had all the four questions I had prepared but he seemed glum. I quietly showed him my paper and suddenly his eyes lit up with greed. We didn’t waste time and exchanged our question papers. (39)
In *Everything You Desire*, Professor Bandopadhya is taken for granted by his students. He is known for jumping all over the class and laughing at every small thing rather than teaching Microeconomics. Once he declares to give a multiple choice questions exam. This comes as a surprise to the students and they request him to allow it to be an open book exam. Those who didn’t bring their books were allowed to share the book with their partners. Nothing more is expected by the students on such a convenient occasion.

Professor Bandopadhya thought for a moment and then said “Ok. Take out your books.”

“But, I don’t have one” shouted Dipendu. “Neither do I.” said Karan. Soon there were some twenty people who were without the Economics text.

“Ok. Share it with your neighbour,” he said.

This meant that there could be more than just sharing textbooks! Naturally, the paper turned out to be easy for all as it turned into a test of ‘neighbourly cooperation’. (48)

Active participation of students is mandatory in class. This is called CP or class participation on which students are graded. Prashant John in *Second Degree* explains the CP process quite elaborately.

**CP:** Class Participation—aka yakking in class. On paper, this is supposed to be a student’s contribution to meaningful discussions in the classroom. But in the mad race for grades, various strategies to get face time are used.
**Arbit CP:** short for Arbitrary CP. The person in question says something at random which would have nothing to do with the current topic being discussed.

**Desperate CP:** used by students toward the fag end of the term when they realize that a significant percentage of their grade is going up in smoke since they haven’t said anything in the class. Common techniques involving reading random statements from the case material already provided and repeating what the Professor would have just said with ‘I agree sir’ added at the end.

**Offline CP:** a new devious technique developed in the family residence of PGPX students. This involved doing CP in front of a Professor by inviting him for dinner. Two hours of exclusive CP time in front of a Professor stuffed silly with *Aloo-Do-Pyaza*! The technique was particularly effective in visiting faculties who were always searching for decent food and were unsuspecting victims of this viciously deceptive trap. (The Lingo Buster)

Teamwork is given significant importance in colleges. Students at the junior level are divided into groups by their teachers. At the senior level, students enjoy the liberty of selecting team members of their choice. Some benefit while working in a group whereas some just pretend to work and walk away with their share of group grades. Prashant John writes about it in *Second Degree*.

During an MBA, study groups often rapidly transform from pools of supportive learning to hyper-competitive rivals….Engineers and CAs were equally distributed among the groups and the list circulated by the programme office in advance. Most of the people in the batch didn’t know what to do with
the group list they got along with the welcome kit and what was created with the best of intentions, soon morphed into something very different….Boundaries were drawn, group grades were fought over and secrecy and espionage tactics were established that would put intelligence agencies of most countries at shame….Some of the hopefuls grudgingly participated in their allocated study groups hoping to get the best while giving as little away as possible. (71)

Each subject has a credit assigned to various components viz. assignments, examinations, quizzes, presentations and class participation. The ultimate goal of students is to achieve maximum grades and they do their best in every possible way. Students became active in class as professor’s R. A. i.e. research assistant would be taking note of class participation. Prashant John in Second Degree observes this,

Over the next few weeks capabilities, we didn’t know existed, within us came forth. Ego-massaging reached new heights. Quoting incomprehensible terms from papers the Professor had published, became de facto CP. The Professor’s world seemed to be divided into two halves- those who were “learned” and read her papers, and those who didn’t. (140)

Learning by heart is a common method adopted by students to score well. This age-old method is considered to be the best by parents and teachers since the formative years of students. Comprehensibility suffers the most due to this practice. Prashant John in Second Degree reveals Prasad’s capacity of rote memorization which is quite short-lived.
His photographic memory ensured that he was able to regurgitate facts and figures effortlessly. The only catch was that this snapshot was short-lived. An hour after the exam, Prasad would have no clue about anything in the subject. We had to start teaching him the basics all over again in the second term.

Prasad’s photographic memory once fails to support him rationally. On seeing him sulk after the examination, his friends ask him the reason as they were overjoyed to receive the same question in the test which they had solved together. Prasad was overjoyed too but while solving the case instead of writing the name of the company the Professor had asked for, he writes the name of the company he had practiced with his friends. Thus, he messes up the paper.

In his excitement at seeing the exact copy of the sum Berrywala had solved, he had forgotten to check what company name the Professor had used in the question paper.

Prasad had written the entire three hour-forty page solution using the name of the company in the old case Berrywala had solved for us! (113)

Procuring notes from the seniors is considered to be more important than attending the lectures. Some of the students remain secretive about their notes, while most of them share their notes generously as they can empathize with the sorry plight of their friends and classmates. This mutual sufferance binds them in harmony. Kaya and Ragini in Sumthing of a Mocktale hunt for notes to gain good grades.

Another GBM (General Body Meeting) charted out our first strategy—beg for notes. With Shubhra least bothered about the exams, it had to be Ragini and
me who went from door-to-door begging for notes and crammed whatever bits and pieces of answer that our classmates threw at us like grand favours. (31-32)

For the obvious reason of not spoiling their image among their teachers, most of the students avoid contacting the teachers. They fear that the wrong image would levy harshly on their grades. Pinaki is a student in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* who doesn’t follow this general understanding. He makes sure that teachers avoid him instead of him avoiding the teachers. Kaya talks about him,

Flowers in Pinaki’s shirt were in full bloom. He had made a mark i.e. he had been noticed by most of the teachers mainly for the following reasons-

(a) He asked questions in every class so Profs did not want to irk him for the fear that his questions might grow more complicated.

(b) He had not changed his flowery shirt for 16 days in a row so Profs did not have problems recognizing him. (11-12)

Completion of assignment in time is a task both tedious and mandatory. Students have to work on assignments allotted to them in various subjects whether in a group or individually. In *Second Degree*, Prashant John informs about the assignments that were to be prepared in groups.

One of the biggest challenges each weekend was the planning of assignments for the week ahead. After the famous bonding or lack of it over the first meeting, each study group settles into whatever mechanism they thought worked best. Typically, each Saturday evening, study groups met in their syndis and got down to distributing the workload among them or at least
dumped it on whoever was willing to take it. Then the first set of assignments due on Monday would get underway. (82)

Unable to cope with the challenging force of the academics, some of the students pay their juniors to complete their assignments. This is what Kaya does in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*.

I have fixed up two juniors to finish up my pending assignments for Centre. They charge Rs. 30 per assignment and Rs. 100 per term paper. But what do you expect out of undergrads in French? Only if someone could just go and sit for me in those end sems also. (177)

In the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, the psychological concepts of social facilitation and social loafing are observed in the interaction among the students. Social facilitation means to receive a benefit in the company of others. Group study is the best example of this. Students who have found a common thread of friendship among themselves prefer to study in a group and help one another in coping with the challenges they face in dealing with different subjects. Social loafing, on the other hand, means that a person exerts less effort to achieve a goal when s/he works in a group. Dipendu’s outburst against Sumit while conversing with Harsh in *Everything You Desire* justifies the concept of social loafing.

“I can’t have so many free riders in the group.”

“And pray tell me what makes you think that everyone else in the group is a free rider?” I asked.
“I know that is what is going to happen. You and I working and others enjoying. This is a crucial term. I can’t afford to put all my energy on one subject. You will have to take a call—either Sumit is in or we make another group.”(182)

As mentioned in the Second Degree by Prashant John, additional amenities are provided to the students who are married. Accommodations are provided to them where they live with their family. Such senior students are referred to as ‘uncles’ by their classmates who are quite junior to them in age. Apparently, at home, the wives of senior students play an active role in supporting their husbands in their academic rigmarole. They provide a much required helping hand in the completion of assignments, photocopying of relevant study materials, inviting the professors for meals to carry out their vested interest and keeping a track about the rigorous academic schedule of their husbands. They are efficient over caring wives and doting mothers.

3.1.6. DISCO (Disciplinary Committee)

The disciplinary committee is set in IIT to decide the fate of those students who break the rules and regulations laid down by the institutions. It is dreaded by every student. In Five Point Someone, when Hari, Ryan and Alok are caught in Professor Cherian’s office while stealing the ‘Indem Majors Paper’ prepared by Professor Cherian, they wished for any other form of punishment rather than facing the disciplinary committee. Professor Cherian presents them in front of the Dean the next day. Hari talks about this humiliating incident.

“What are your names?” The Dean said.

“Ryan Oberoi, same,” Ryan said.

“And you think you are too smart?” the Dean said.

“No, sir. That is why we wanted the paper, sir,” Ryan said.

Slap! The Dean slapped Ryan right across the face. I don’t blame him, Ryan could have chosen a better time to make a wisecrack.

Slap! Slap! Before I realized what was happening, the Dean deposited a slap on Alok and me as well.

God, I tell you, it was humiliating. Profs, security guards and Cherian all staring at us while our faces turned red on the left. But we kept quiet. I secretly hoped they would all slap us and get it out of their system. Heck, they would trash us senseless as long as that was the only punishment. Please don’t do a Disco and screw with our career. (193-194)

This humiliation does not stop in the four walls of a room. Teachers make sure that others too come to know about it by displaying a notice about their Disco so that others would be careful about their behaviour and this helps in maintaining the overall discipline in the college and campus premises.

“This is to inform that there will be a Disciplinary Committee meeting starting at 10:00 pm tonight in the Mechanical Engineering Department Conference Room. The agenda of the meeting is to decide the course of action for alleged
disciplinary breaches by Hari Kumar (Kumaon), Alok Gupta (Kumaon) and Ryan Oberai (Kumaon) on April 11.” (195)

Unlike its name, Disco in IIT is an experience from which every student would wish to stay away. Chetan Bhagat in his narration lightens the concept of Disco. Hari goes on to describe the irony about Disco and also about its name and significance in IIT.

The IIT Disco is about as far away from dancing as it can get. Here the lighting is dull, the room dead silent and almost everyone elderly. Around ten Profs sat around a semi-circular table, while the accused students were bang in the centre. Profs fire questions at students from all directions, the location placing us at a minimum distance to each one of them. It is essentially a more efficient design of a courtroom. (203)

However, Prof Veera saves them from expulsion. He makes all the three his research assistants who would work in his laboratories. They are made to appear for more courses in their last semester. Anyhow, they all are saved and finally manage to pass and get their degrees.

Samar, Pranav and Skimmyp in Love, A Rather Bad Idea also face the threat of Disco but are fortunate enough not to face its severe repercussions as Skimmyp’s mother who is also a well-known writer is able to convince the principal from not taking the drastic step. The principal, who is an ardent fan of Skimmyp’s mothers’ novels, calms down fast. They are not left scot free but given the punishment of a hundred hours of community service. This undoubtedly is better than expulsion.
3.1.7. Examinations and Grading

The fun and frolic of the ongoing academic life are contradicted during the time of examination. People and even the environment seem to become severe and serious. Students experience tension at its peak during the time of their examinations. Emphasizing its worth Prashant John writes in Second Degree.

The campus itself offers dismally little in ways of distractions. The whole place is optimized for one thing—studying! (97)

Prashant John and his friends face the same stress and strain. He further describes the examination scenario,

Over the next couple of days, the mood on campus changed dramatically. Almost everyone stopped fooling around and the focus changed to actually getting one’s fundamentals in the myriad of subjects to clear. The sections done so far were already gone and done with and there was a slim chance to ever getting around to studying them again. The only hope was to get a firm grasp on the concepts covered in the few remaining sessions and try to scrape through the exams…Study groups started burning the midnight oil and so did the tea stall chap. Food and tea were now available all night. Simply put, the entire campus was an overdrive for exam time. (108)

Abbey in Mediocre But Arrogant also feels that the pressure of academics is really hard to bear. It is almost like a killing. There seems to be no respite from term papers, quizzes and presentations.
Kaya in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* also experiences the pressure of exams. “I study and howl, study and howl and study. I live in the most inhuman conditions. I study to sleep and sleep to study.” (184)

Harsh in *Everything You Desire*, also gets affected and alters his routine by giving into the examination fever.

The mess would stay open till 3 am when nearly the entire batch would be there to catch the last cup of tea and coffee, which would act as an antidote to sleep and give them those few precious hours of extra studying time. I also stayed awake till 3, a record for me during my examination in my lifetime on earth; but since everyone was up late studying, I somehow felt guilty sleeping. …Many would, in fact, do a night-out and sleep only after exams ended for the day. But I was not the kind to do a night out before an exam. Dipendu happened to be in the ‘Night out” category and I had the additional duty of banging his door to wake him up after his characteristic one hour sleep from 7 to 8! It wasn’t an easy task, requiring literally pushing and throwing him out of the bet at times! (57)

Students are observed, judged and graded according to their performance in written examinations whether subjective or objective, viva, class presentation, quiz and assignments.

CGPA known as Cumulative Grade Point Average is the established mechanism to calculate grades that makes a profound distinction among the students as toppers, commoners and tail-enders. Most of the protagonists and their friends get
satisfied by being the commoners. Harshdeep Jolly writes about its importance in *Everything You Desire*.

The fourth term is one of the most important terms for nearly everyone on campus. The root of this lies in the fact that for campus placements, the cumulative GPA (or CGPA as it is known) of the first four terms is considered. With three terms gone, it’s the last chance to do whatever one wants to with that all important figure called the CGPA. Everyone tries to put in their best—the top 10 want to retain their slot, those a little below 3.5 want to break that exclusive barrier (*I fell in that category*), those below 3 want to make the cut above that. So everyone, well almost everyone wants to put in that last CGPA fight. (179-180)

Hari, Ryan and Alok in *Five Point Someone* never reach on the higher scale of grading and acquire average grades of five throughout their course of study in IIT. This mediocrity doesn’t dishearten them. Referring to the wonderful friendship they share and their mutual indulgence in all the activities of virtues or vice make them happy to feel and declare when they secure their degrees, “We’re not just five-point somethings anymore, we are five-point somebodies.” (255)

Students’ over-enthusiasm is witnessed during class participation or CP. Everyone wants to be heard not because they have something substantial or relevant to say on the topic that is discussed but because they know that they are being observed by their teachers as well as their assistants who give them grades depending upon their efforts in the class participation.
Prashant John in *Second Degree* is helped by his friends Berrywala and Prasad in order to participate well in the ongoing discussion in the class.

I was given special instructions for participating in class. I was to gargle with salt water each day before coming to the class to open my vocal cords. Berrywala felt that if he couldn’t hear me in a tiny room the first day, there was no way I was going to out-shout the entire rabble-rousing bunch in class. Prasad suggested I start singing Sa-Re-Ga-Ma in the mornings to increase my volume—a suggestion that I shot down categorically. I was taken to busy restaurants and made to yell for the waiter for no particular reason at all. And then I was made to call out to autos going on the opposite side of the road just to practice. In short, every moment my team members were with me, they were making me scream and shout – all in the name of CP. (132)

The duration and type of examination are decided by the teachers. They often threaten students with surprise quiz. Even the new students are not spared and they get such surprises right from the first day of their college till the end of the course. In *Second Degree*, Professor gets angry with the futile attempts of students at establishing correlations and punishes them with a quiz. Prashant John mentions the quiz.

Slowly the Professor descended down the steps into the well clutching the pile of printouts and started to speak in a slow deliberate tone. “Each and every one of these assignments is bullshit. It’s nothing but creative nonsense and a stupid attempt at establishing correlations.” …With that, he collected all the assignment papers and walked out of the class while giving a curt nod to the RA. The RA obediently stood up and handed out quiz papers.
Intra Class Pop-Quiz! Punishment for bull shitting in this B-school was quick and severe! (94-95)

In Mediocre But Arrogant Prof Chatto wants to know the caliber of students and so he challenges his students by giving them a quiz in the very first class of their course.

You must be all expaarts in the basic statistical concepts. So we weell start off by doing a small review queez on the concepts of Mean, Median ad Mode. You maast have dunn those for yeaaars now. So let aaas staart the queez. (27)

When Prof Chatto declares the marks obtained by the students in the quiz that he had taken, it turns out to be a very humiliating experience for the students. As Abbey mentions,

I have arranged the marks in ascending order. So the laytaar your paypaar ees the baytaar your maarks are. The parson who scored the least in my queez is Joyonto Ganguly. He scored 0.86 followed closely by Horpal Singh who got 1.38….In a moment, the mood of the class became one of the total fear Chatto evoked for the rest of our stay in MIJ. The slaughter continued—I got 2.73.2.73 out of 10? What a nut case, giving marks in decimals. ‘Couldn’t you have rounded them off, you weirdo?’ The top of the heap was Sethu. He had scored an unbelievable 9.8, which forever established him as the brain of the class. (29-30)

Some teachers like Prof George in Everything You Desire and Prof Birendra Bahuguna in Sumthing of a Mocktale offer open book exams to their students. It may sound good but it’s not at all easy as Harsh in Everything You Desire remarks,
“Marketing was anyway going to be an open book examination, but that only meant that it was going to be tougher to score.” (82)

Kaya too in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* expresses her views on the open book examination.

With entire syllabus covered and no choice in questions, this open question system was more of a trap to force students to prepare everything. (31)

Samar in *Joker in the Pack* also talks about the open book examinations at IIM. He writes,

The good thing about being in an IIM is you are not expected to rote too much. In most subjects, Professors are confident enough to let you carry books into the exam hall (‘open-book’ exam), and may you have all the luck in trying to find similar questions in the book to answer the ones in the exams. Truth was, the questions tested concepts and not formulae, so there was no way one could get by without knowing the subject thoroughly, and there is a limit to the usage of a book in a timed exam. (110)

The duration of examination in every subject is decided by the teachers of the respective subjects. The duration ranges from two to four hours as per the questions asked by the teachers. Prof Arora in *Everything You Desire* sets a four and a half hour question paper on a case study. Harsh complains about the length of the paper set by Professor Srinivasan.

Easy it may or may not have been, a marathon paper it sure was. The first thing which jolted everyone was the duration of the paper—four hours! Was
there a competition going on for the lengthiest paper among all the Professors?

(82)

3.1.8. Mentors and Mentees

Usually, the relationship between seniors and juniors at college is considered more to be contradictory than complimentary. This general outlook gets a new dimension in the novel Everything You Desire by Harshdeep Jolly. The novel is about the journey of Harsh and his friends through the two years at IIM Bangalore. In this institution, seniors play the role of mentors and the juniors their mentees. Juniors are informed about their mentors through the list displayed on the notice board. Harsh, Deepak and Tushar discuss it,

“By the way, did you check out the list of mentors on the notice board? Harsh and I have the same mentors,” informed Tushar.

“I didn’t see the list. Who are they?” I asked.

“Two guys called Vinay and Ravi. We are supposed to meet them at a mutually convenient time.”

“Is he the same Vinay whom we met at the pre-admit IIMB party? He was busy giving gyaan to one and all,” I asked recalling the event.

“Yes, he’s the one,” spoke Tushar. (13-14)

Juniors address their mentors as sir and in return they make them acquainted with the surrounding environment, education system and also about their teachers.
The mentors caution their mentees about some of the teachers. Vinay and Ravi who are the mentors do their duty at their best. As Harsh writes,

“So, guys all set for classes tomorrow?” asked Vinay loudly and in a patronizing tone.

“Yes, sir. Where are you two coming from?” I asked.

“Nothing much, Ravi had to do some shopping, so we went to the Jayanagar market.”

“So, what classes do you have tomorrow?” asked Ravi.

“Marketing, Accounting and one more,” answered Tushar.

“They have Shanky for Marketing,” said Vinay smiling.

“Oh! Our sympathies.” added Ravi.

“Seriously, how bad or strict can this marketing Professor be?” I wondered aloud. “Don’t worry. It will take you less than a fortnight to figure that out,” said Vinay. (22)

This relationship between the mentors and mentees is favourable as it helps in breaking the ice between the seniors and juniors and also it helps the juniors to feel at ease in a new environment. Communication gap subsides and new avenues of interaction open where both the mentors and their mentees exchange hopes, fears, problems and also solutions related to their stay in hostel or studies in college. It is an IIM tradition that mentors treat their mentees with lunch to welcome them and make
them familiar with the norms of the campus. In Golden Peacock restaurant Vinay and Ravi do the same. As Harsh mentions,

It was also time for some fundas on how to enjoy and survive the two years on campus….We also got some fundas on the summer placements, which would be a pretty crucial part of our stay here. “But remember at end of the day, everyone gets a good summers and life goes on. So don’t worry about it yet,” said Ravi not wanting to turn the afternoon heavy for us. “More than anything else, enjoy the two years here and make friends. That will make the experience really worthwhile. You will definitely miss the life here once you are out in the corporate world,” added Vinay. (38)

At the end of the year, mentees treat their mentors with a meal and bid them farewell with the best wishes of a happy and successful life. Those who were mentees in the first year become mentors in the consecutive year. Harsh talks about his mentee Rajan and one other student whom he mentors along with Dipendu. They found them quite different than they themselves were in the first year as mentees.

Our mentees were finally assigned. One of them was Rajan, a fresh Delhi University grad whose inquisitiveness was unparalleled. “So, why did you take a G block? Why did you take the first floor? Why not second? How come you are neighbours?” All his questions would come in one breath. “Oh my God! You ask so many questions!” exclaimed Dipendu. Another mentee was a Chartered Account from Mumbai. “Hey! I’ll use your help in solving all my doubts in the Financial Statements course, which I have taken this term,” Dipendu told our CA mentee. “In fact, you can help me with my assignments,”
he said with a broad smile on his face. I laughed “I thought you loved Finance. I don’t think you need our mentee’s help.” (181)

3.1.9. **Co-curricular Activities**

Holistic development is the major objective of any education system that can be obtained through the advancement in both the curricular as well as co-curricular activities. Prashant John writes about the convictions of IIM in *Second Degree*.

Learning was a “continuous” process here and so was the evaluation. There was a heavy leaning towards working in teams but we would all be expected to pull our weight individually. We were supposedly here to get a great education and not run after jobs. The faculty members encouraged us to take part in co-curricular activities and not just pore over textbooks but time management was essential since there was much work to be done every day. (35)

In *Everything You Desire*, Harsh talks about the event called Aarambh which is organized for the new batch every year.

*Aarambh* was an event which gave the new batch each year, an opportunity to showcase its talent through skits, musical performances, dances or just about anything. The event was attended by all students and faculty. (34)

Every fortnight a party is arranged at L-Square where all the students can sing, dance and relax. This party is organized in all the IIMs. Unmad is also a co-curricular activity that’s organized in the novel *Everything You Desire*. T-nite is organized in *Jocker in the Pack*. The celebration of days provides a welcome break to the students.
In *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*, students, amidst all the tension of studying anatomy, are excited about celebrating the rose day. Anirban Bose describes this excitement.

Despite the academic environs, most of the discussion in the dissection hall centered on the upcoming events in the class. As a result, the next big event—‘Rose Day/Traditional Day’—an incongruous amalgam of two distinctly puerile celebrations, dominated the buzz. On this day, the entire class dressed in traditional clothing and gifted roses to one another, messages being conveyed in the colour of the roses. Red signified love, orange meant friendship (bordering on love) while white stood for the plain platonic kind. Although no one had ever figured out the roots of this celebration, it provided great service to the occasion, would be spurred on to declare their feelings. (116-117)

‘Rendevous’ is the annual cultural festival of IIT Delhi as mentioned in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea* and ‘Vista’ is the annual management festival as celebrated in the novel *Everything You Desire*. In this novel, the student community has developed its own internal campus website called ‘Spidi’ which serves as the complete information source for all the activities on campus. Every student’s profile is made. This makes it possible to know about the birthday of every student. On their respective birthdays, each and every student is taken to the L-Square arena where the cake is cut and smeared on their faces as well the birthday boy gets the birthday ‘Hoosh’.

In IIMs, students get to enjoy only three national holidays in India. Harsh and his friends feel lucky to find that Diwali falls on a Saturday. The cultural committee organizes the Diwali Celebrations and everyone is excited about it to celebrate it with
full fun and fervor. Hostels are decorated by the students and the best-decorated hostel takes away the winning prize. Harsh talks about this enthusiasm,

> It was nice to have the whole IIM community, irrespective of region, religion, caste or creed come together to celebrate the festival of lights. It was like a mini-India enjoying the festivities together as we celebrated late into the night. (121)

Harsh enjoys his sojourn at IIM for two years and feels that,

> Life at IIM keeps you on your toes—be it academics, the extracurrics, the ‘night life’, the festivities or just networking with your batchmates. (176)

### 3.1.10. Gender Perspective

As compared to males, not many women writers pen down their experiences in the sub-genre of campus novels. Among the ten contemporary Indian English campus novels under study, Soma Das has written *Sumthing of a Mocktale* wherein the protagonists and majority of the pivotal characters are females. Maanvi Ahuja has co-authored *Of Course I Love You..!* with Durjoy Dutta. The women characters are less in the novels dealing with the courses in MIJ, IIT and IIM as portrayed in the novels under study for this research. Women characters are founds more in the courses related to humanities and medicine as observed in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* and *Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls*. Both positive and negative aspects of women characterization are portrayed in these novels. Perceiving the positive aspects, women are developing, empowering, open-minded, dynamic, intelligent, confident, determined and very serious about their careers. Neha in *Five Point Someone* is Prof Cherian’s daughter. She is a fashion designer, free-willed and has the courage to go
against her father’s will and be in a relationship with Hari who is disliked by Prof Cherian. Keya and Ayesha are the prominent women characters in Mediocre But Arrogant. They study at MIJ, are career oriented and eventually, they are able to secure good jobs. Shreya in Anything for You, Ma’am is the love interest of the protagonist Tejas for whom he misses his educational tour and travels to Chennai to meet her. Nothing much is discussed about Shreya expects her being extremely beautiful and a true beloved. The writer of Sumthing of a Mocktale is Soma Das and all the significant characters in the novel are females. Kaya steps into JNU to discover an unofficial dress code of kurta-chappal-jhola and a mini-India that fast arranges itself into regional subgroups. The misfits like Kaya, Shubhra and Ragini create a cosmopolitan corner with others. Together they embark on a roller-coaster ride to experience JNU’s trivia, geography, psychology, ideology and more. Enroute, they measure the Bong club’s oomph; spend nights at Ganga dhaba, the official pre-dating spot; discover the secret of drinkers, dopers and lovers in Parthasarathy Rocks; grapple with Ragini’s eccentric love-chase; stumble into misadventures of behenjis turned hip; accidentally expose an ugly truth regarding the female feticide during the floriculture survey; solve the climatic puzzle of Kaya’s surreal love-story and feel the surrounding maddening preparation for IAS. Life comes full circle in JNU for Kaya, Shubhra and Ragini as they introspect their transformation from carefree, fun-filled youngsters to grown-up students; naivete to maturity, juvenile hearts to socially conscious conscience. Kaya’s experience at the graduation and post graduation levels inspire her to gain an advanced degree in research. Divya and Priya in Everything You Desire, have their share of fun and relationship at IIM but they are also successful in securing astounding job opportunities abroad. In Joker in the Pack, diverse career choice becomes eminent in break up between Anoushka and the protagonist Shekhar.
Verma. Anoushka is clear about her choices and gives priority to her career than the relationship. It is evident as Shekhar mentions,

I had come to believe that my relationship with Anoushka was perfect and both of us had harboured similar notions on the charm and eternity of first love. But our diverging career paths and highly uncomfortable surroundings were making us think otherwise. I was also beginning to realize that when it came to relationships, it was beyond a single person to go about adapting and turn the relationship around…I thought of Anoushka’s increasing coldness and my increasing anger and frustration and felt that probably I needed to let go. (99)

Richa is Shekhar’s friend. She is friendly, caring and career-oriented. She succeeds in getting a job offered by a famous investment banking firm. In Of Course I Love You...!, Avantika, Vernita and Smriti are the important female characters. At the beginning of the novel, Smriti plays the role of Deb’s love interest but when she fails to grant him physical favours he gets annoyed and moves on. Vernita is Deb’s classmate who believes in enjoying life but not letting go of vital career aspects. Avantika, the lead female protagonist has diverse shades. She became a drug addict and an alcoholic. She went to the rehabilitation camp and to retain normalcy she became a disciple of Sri Guru. She is both adventurous and mysterious. She becomes a writer and is successful in getting her novel published. She even helps her boyfriend Deb to pursue his career and also gets him a job at her office as her subordinate. Isha’s character in Bombay Rains, Bombay Girls is not delineated elaborately. She is bright and beautiful. She studies medicine and is in love with Adi who is the male protagonist in the novel. In some instances in the novel, the contradictory condition of women in India can be observed. In Mumbai College, the girls pursuing medicine are
confident and free-willed but when the prominent male characters travel through some interior parts of India observe the disparaging condition of women. During their travel by train, Adi, Pheru, Sam, Rajeev and Harsha come across a terrified female with a child. She was evading her husband and going to Bhilai to her parents. Observing her in this situation, Rajeev speaks about the ill condition of women in India.

‘I’m just stating the facts, man,’ replied Rajeev. ‘It doesn’t matter what I feel…the status of women in India is still second class. And of married women…third class. A married woman with a child who has run away from home…no class. You think she’ll be lucky if her parents take her back. You cannot deny that her future is not going to be a rosy ‘lived-happily-ever-after’ even if you choose to believe in it.’ (342)

Women characters are perceived by the male protagonist’s opinions and judgment. Hence their views about the women are opinionated and sometimes biased. Priya in Second Degree inspires Prashant to join IIMA. Sweety and Bongo are the other women characters who are portrayed quite narrowly by the writer. They are presented as intellectuals but with having vested interests. Bongo talks about being philanthropic and is always eager to pursue a career choice where she could be helpful to society. However, she grabs the wonderful opportunity to work abroad in the corporate sector. Sweety uses her female charm to get her work done. Prashant writes about her behaviour when the first quiz was announced.

Sweety had rushed into her room and had quickly formulated her attack strategy. She picked up the textbook, a blank notebook, the campus phone directory, and stick of her best lipstick. Before most of the others had even
reached their rooms, she was heading off in the opposite direction towards the cabins of the teaching assistants. While expertly applying her lipstick with one hand, she flipped the pages of the telephone directory in search of a TA who could give her the list of formulae to use. The technique had paid rich dividends in her engineering days, and men were always men. Damsels in distress with good makeup and on the verge of tears always got emergency help. No quiz had yet been designed that a good shade of red couldn’t crack.

(53)

Jiya in *Love, A Rather Bad Idea*, is a charming girl who at the beginning of the novel is the centre of attention among the boys. Samar observes,

Jiya was quite a piece of work. Tall, slender and with curly hair which forever kept flirting with her face…Jiya was the uncontested heartthrob of the entire institute. Even so, Skimpy was by far her biggest fan and made no bone out of his unrequited love for her. The days she would wear a sleeveless for her classes, general attendance would go up. Students would actually scamper in half through the lectures, woken up and rushed by frantic messages about Jiya’s attire that would reach them in their hostel room. (9)

Jiya becomes Samar’s girlfriend. She coaxes him and also guides him through his thick and thin. Apart from being beautiful, she is very intelligent and becomes the most favourite contestant for the college elections.

The women candidates are very few in number in IITs. This is observed in the contemporary Indian English campus novels under study. In recent times, to meet this imbalance Joint Admission Board (JAB) of the IITs has taken a significant decision.
As per the news published on June 2, 2017 - Hindustan Times, New Delhi, “In order to address the decline of women candidates at the premier engineering institutions of the country, the Indian Institutes of Technology have decided to admit more women from the 2018 academic session… The board approved a quota of supernumerary (over and above the actual intake) seats for women in a phased manner, reaching up to 20% by 2026… The 20% supernumerary seats — which will be implemented in a phased manner —will be filled by women candidates who have qualified Joint Engineering Entrance (Advanced). Also, they should be in the top 20 percentile in their respective board exams. This will however not affect the existing number of seats for male candidates as the supernumerary seats will be additional seats reserved for female candidates. At present only 8% of IIT students are women. The IIMs too witnessed a three-year low of gender diversity in 2016 despite ongoing efforts. The supernumerary quota will start at 14% from 2018. It has also been decided that seats vacated by women will be filled by other women.” Hopefully, this would encourage more women to aspire a brilliant career by studying in IIT and IIM.

3.1.11. Student Exchange Programme

The student exchange programme is a significant part of the course, though not mandatory but obviously quite uplifting. Dipendu in Everything You Desire, raves about his experience abroad to Harsh,

Dipendu had returned from his exchange term just two days back and couldn’t stop raving about how cool life was at UCLA. “It’s a totally different world out there. People are more practical and there is less focus on grades.” “I guess that also could be because of the substantial work experience that those guys have when they enter a business school,” I opined. “True. The best part is the
diversity of the batch. People from different countries, different educational backgrounds and different occupations are there. One of my classmates in the Risk Management class was an NGO worker from Uganda and another had worked with the California State Fire Department. That kind of diversity adds to the overall experience.” I nodded my head in agreement. (204)

The exchange programme enables the interested students usually a third of the batch to go abroad for a term to study in a partner school. Harsh talks about its process and importance,

The application process involved a statement of purpose, an interview and of course importance was given to the grades we got till date. (132)

Not only do the students from India get an experience to study in the foreign locales for a scheduled time period, but also the students from abroad come to India for their internship or to complete a term. Thus, the exposure and experience that the students at IIM gain are quite versatile and significant.

3.1.12. A Promising Future

Almost all the higher educational institutions, promise a very prominent and successful future to its students. Shekhar Verma in Joker in the Pack agrees with this and writes about his experience during the two years at IIM Bangalore.

In light of these astounding numbers, I felt like I had been a Joker in the Pack. Amongst such distinguished aces and kings, I had been the wild card who had fit into different combinations as required and got the best deals possible for himself. Had I graduated a couple of years earlier or ever prior to that, I would
have barely managed to sneak into an FMCC job going on to sell soaps and colas happily ever after. Or probably would have joined the IT bandwagon providing offshoring services to Fortune 500 clients. But purely by virtue of graduating at a time when the economy was on an upswing, I was now living a dream I couldn’t even weave before getting into IIMB. (189)

By sharpening their skills and raising their potentials, higher education develops confidence in students to face and cope with the challenges of life head-on. Prof Haathi’s letter to Abbey at the end of the novel Mediocre But Arrogant, reveals the real meaning of education and the values taught at MIJ.

Dear Abbey,

As you step into the world of work, you are bringing to it the freshness of ideas and the power to change things. And yet, there is the danger that all too soon you will forget why you came to a place like MIJ. No, you were not here to understand the corporate sector or the intricate theories of management. You came here to understand yourself and your strengths. To believe how easy it is for you to make a difference. That is the purpose of higher education. To instill in you the belief that you can make the world a better place.

Whenever you feel unhappy about something around you, remember, you have the capability within to improve it. So whether you choose to change it or choose to walk away and just complain—you have made a choice….You have had the education that will tell you what to do and how to do it. But it is only your heart that will tell you why you ought to….Too many people give up the
opportunity because they do not believe they can change things. I do hope this education has given you that belief within.

Never underestimate your ability to make a difference.

Nihil Ultra—Nothing is Beyond.

Truly,

Ed Hathaway (309-310)

3.1.13. Convocation – The Final Bow

The coveted dreams are realized on the day of convocation. Besides taking the convocation pledge of being better citizens and to serve the country with all their honesty through the knowledge gained, students feel proud to hold the ambitious degree in their hands for which they struggled and worked very hard. It’s the time to bid adieu to the campus preserving the bitter-sweet memories of the campus with them forever.

In *Five Point Someone*, although Hari and Ryan miss to attend their convocation ceremony, they get the feeling of winners at the completion of their academic course. This satisfying feeling emerges in words of Hari,

*Last day, Alok’s words resonated in my mind. Man, how we had waited for this to get over. And finally, it had. Maybe not in style, maybe not with standing ovations or medals, but in our pajamas and eating paranthas at a street-side vendor, we had made it. Yes, the three of us were IIT graduates.*
Not the ones that would make it to the cover of *Time magazine*, but at least we could be called survivors. (268)

This elevated feeling is also experienced by Harsh in *Everything You Desire*.

Soon, the open air auditorium was full. There were parents, friends, even relatives and of course the juniors filling up every inch of space available. The chief guest (the MD of a large Indian corporate house) soon arrived escorted by the institute director. As everyone settled, the convocation procession began, led by the PGP chairperson. The ceremony was simple yet elegant and soon, I found myself receiving my MBA degree (To be technically correct, it’s actual Postgraduate program in management diploma!). As one after another everyone in the batch got their degrees, it was a moment of pride for the students and of course parents and relatives. We had achieved one of the most sought after qualifications in the country after a lot of hard work –the IIM MBA. (245)

### 3.2. Conclusion

Contemporary Indian English campus novels under study aptly display and discuss the perks, excitement, confusion, conflict, stress, pressure and rejuvenation of students while studying in some of the elite educational institutions in India. Besides providing a vast and spectacular arena, these educational institutions focus on fostering students with ample of skilled aptitude and constructive attitude that would enable them to contribute noteworthy development and achievement in their personal, familial, societal, national and global stature. Careful study of the contemporary Indian English Campus novels under study also focuses on the ultimate wish of many of the bright students to settle abroad for a better future. This is a challenge to the
education system and the government to provide a satiable environment and opportunities for its youth in order to make them stay back and strive hard and smart with happiness for the development of their country.