

Joker in the Pack: A Campus Novel

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ABSTRACT

This genre was firmly established and began to develop slowly and gradually in the fifties. During this time, a number of universities came into existence and this scenario provided appropriate scene or material for solving political and social problems of contemporary British society. This genre was popular in 1950s and 1970s it reached a stage which can be called a typical novel sub-genre. Campus novel had a distinct quality of satiric humour which often extended to farce. Campus Novel is set in academic base and subject matter or a material of novels are based on academia. It is said that the campus novel is a small subgenre but is very famous in modern fiction. It has developed in the different countries as per its cultural background. This genre is called variedly. In England it is called University Novel and teacher is the centre. In the England's campus novel students are viewed from the teacher's point of view. In America this genre called Campus Novel or College Novel. Here teacher is not in the centre of the novel. It based on the different issue or problems related to the campus life. The novel of Ritesh Sharma and Neeraj Pahlajani – *Joker in the Pack* is evaluated as a campus novel on the bases of these parameters: 1) Campus novel is set on academic base and its subject matter or a material is based on academia. 2) Main action of the novel is set in and or around the campus. Campus novel satirize stereotypes and careless behaviour in professionals in education field. 3) It is usually comic or satirical. It describes the lifestyle of students or professors or persons who are related to academia. 4) Love affairs, friendship and relationship between colleagues form important aspect of campus novel.

In the fifties, this genre was firmly established and began to develop slowly and gradually. During this time, a number of universities came into existence and this scenario provided appropriate scene or material for solving political and social problems of contemporary British society. Educational norms and cultural values were assessed in the universities. This genre was popular in 1950s and 1970s it reached a stage which can be called a typical novel sub-genre. Campus novel had a distinct quality of satiric humour which often extended to farce. This genre has changed according to the changes in society and universities.

Campus Novel is also known as 'Academic Novel'. But most critics believe that "Academic Novel" is perhaps more inclusive, but 'campus novel' is more expressive of the unity of place which characterizes the genre" (Shridevi Origin 2). Campus novels satirize professional stereotypes and careless behaviour in a profession; especially in the educational field. The theme of the novels is more or less the same also discuss the various trends of education. This genre emerged after the Second World War and it is comic in its nature and it is established in the real or fictional university atmosphere. The word 'campus' was first used to give information about a particular urban space at the college of New Jersey during the initial years of the eighteenth century. Some colleges of America later used the word for an individual field at their institution. The meaning of this word expanded in the twentieth century and it includes the entire institutional vicinity.

Normally, the main character of the campus novel revolves around professors or students and the subject matter of it is about college or university happenings and narrator of the

story is located in or around the college or university. Even though the plots of the campus novel are completely different and have various functions. Sometimes the plots of campus novel reveal criticism of real world; the dark side of the university campus as described in the famous novel *Dog*. Another novel, *Nice* depicts the struggle between the values of the academicians and values of business and industries. The novel is a worth read for all the people from the society. The plot of the Der campus also includes the theme of sexual harassment. In the campus fiction, cannot see two basic plots: "The one concerns the disruption of a closed world, and the gradual return of order and regularity to it, while the other concerns the passage through this close world of character who must in the end be allowed to escape its gravitational pull" (Showalter 3).

Campus novel was considered as belonging to comic tradition at the beginning. Strong and healthy farce was used in the campus novel. The setting of it was pastoral. The entertaining element in the plot of the early campus novel was the clever use of tricks to cheat. It is said that the "the campus novel presented civilized entertainment rather than catharsis to the reader" (Shridevi Campus Novel 18). There was development of new plots in the campus novel with the arrival of women to the colleges and universities. It is shown clearly in the amalgamation of gender and sexuality as a topic in the campus novels. The plot of academic novels on one hand showed the freedom from prudish society and described the unjust dissimilarity of women to men depending upon when the novels were written. Insertion of class and race conflicts in the plot of campus novel can be seen.

It is said that the campus novel is a small subgenre but is very famous in modern fiction. It has developed in the different countries as per its cultural background. This genre is called variedly. In England it is called University Novel and teacher is the centre. In the England's campus novel students are viewed from the teacher's point of view. In America this genre called Campus Novel or College Novel. Here teacher is not in the centre of the novel. It based on the different issue or problems related to the campus life.

Parameters of campus novel

- Campus novel is set on academic base and its subject matter or a material is based on academia. Main action of the novel is set in and or around the campus.
- Campus novel satirize stereotypes and careless behaviour in professionals in education field. It is usually comic or satirical.
- It describes the lifestyle of students or professors or persons who are related to academia.
- Love affairs, friendship and relationship between colleagues form important aspect of campus novel.

Joker in the Pack a campus novel

The novel *Joker in the Pack* is about student life in an ordinary college in Delhi University and the life in the best institute of management in India. This novel paints a realistic picture of the manner in which students have to work hard to get success in their life. A person cannot reach where he wants to without hard work. There is no option of hard work. Students' mentality about their study as well as co curriculum activities is presented in the novel. The novel revolves around the middle class student Shekhar in an educational institution and description of the consequences and its impact on his life. This novel focuses on the life style, attitudes and behavior of the students of modern India.

The novel is about Shekhar's life in the different institutes. He is completed his bachelor from Delhi university. During BIT he enjoys and not focuses on study. He falls in love with Anoushka. Both decide for further study. Shekhar take admission in IIMB and she takes admission in IIT Bombay. In IIM he has a very busy schedule and because of it his break up with Anoushka. Students have to do lot of work during first week of the semester. There also does some extra work like preparing resume for summer internship. The important aspect of the plot is placement for summer internship. The process begins. He is selected on Day Two in Britannia for his summer internship. Shekhar has a project of the sweet-salt biscuits under Vivek during internship. Shekhar visits some places of UP and West Bengal for project. He faces so many difficulties during his internship. He gets PPO from the company at the end of internship. He goes back to the campus for the fourth term. In fourth and fifth term, he enjoys with his friends and not focuses on study. He works hard to get good CG and also manages to excel in extracurricular activities in first three terms. Shekhar gets the job in BAH company on Day Zero in the placement at the end of the novel.

- Campus novel is set on academic base and its subject matter or material is based on academia. Main action of the novel is set in and or around the campus.

The novel *Joker in the Pack* is set on two different campus. The first part of the novel is sets on BIT College of Delhi University and second part of the novel is set on the IIM Bangalore. The first part of the novel describes Shekhar's study in ordinary college. The different pathetic situations are described by Shekhar in the novel like: does not attain the class, throws a chair from one corner to other for five rupees bat, prepares a chit and bluffing during exam, passes the exam with WIN system etc. The second part of the novel is about IIM Bangalore. Shekhar works hard and takes admission in IIMB. He has a very difficult days of the first week, ragging is a part of tradition, there is a tradition of pet name, different clubs, selection of different subjects in each sem., placement for summer internship, final placement of senior students and final placement of Shekhar's batch, also study the subject like to know the self, etc. incidents describe in the novel. It shows that *Joker in the Pack* is set on academic base and subject matter or a material of it is based on academia. Main action of the novel is set in and or around the campus.

- Campus novel satirizes stereotype and careless behaviour in professional job and realistic facts of education field. It is usually comic or satirical.

The present novel satirizes on the present education system and the pressure of student during board exam. It indicates in the very first chapter. Shekhar is in standard ten. All extra people ask him about his preparation and give advice. Shekhar is bored to hear one sentence again and again. He cannot play properly. Satire is on the university policy to give permission to such college which is not proper for particular course. Shekhar takes admission in such a college which does not look like college. Because it has only four rooms, faculties don't have enough knowledge, outdated computer, students of this college bluffing and cheating during exam and clear exam. Satire on students of the present time because they just do BIT to do. Give the more importance to other activity than study etc.

- It described the lifestyle of students or professors or persons who are related to academia.

In the *Joker in the Pack* describes the life style of students. Shekhar is the protagonist of the novel. He is very intelligent student. He gets very good marks and gets admission in the BIT. But the college is not as per his capacity. So his interest on study is disappears. He just enjoys the college by visiting uncle's shop, look outside the window and does not concentrate on study, play cricket during lab session. He even does not buy book till his final exam. He clears exam with the help of WIN Scheme. First four term grades are counted in the IIMB so student work very hard. Shekhar doesn't get time to take bath in the first week in IIM. They just enjoy in last two terms. Read novel in running lecture, enjoy music and drink at night with friends or wing mate, watching movie etc. They do not have even time to sleep properly during

the different events. Shekhar faces many difficulties during the placement and summer internship. Student of IIM have very tough life in the first four terms and very free in the last two terms. Author describes the student life in the novel.

- Love affairs, friendship and relationship between colleagues form an important aspect of campus novel.

One of the most prominent features of the campus novel is love affair. In the *Joker in the pack* describes the love affair of Shekhar and Anoushka. Both are classmate in BIT in Delhi University. They have project of data construction in the third sem. Shekhar and Anoushka is a team mate in this project. Anoushka is interested only in study and Shekhar is interested in all the activities except study. Both come close to each other during this project. Shekhar and Anoushka decide to go for movie during the vacation of third Sem. After movie, Shekhar proposes her. She gives a reply with half acceptance or rejection. He once again proposes her after sometime. She accepts his proposal. Both enjoy their golden day. Shekhar and Anoushka want to marry to each other. But their good chemistry comes to an end during his MBA. Chummi falls in love with Vani Kapoor in IIM. But later she informs that she is in love from last five years. So Chummi's heart breaks down. Shekhar has a feeling for Nandita at the end of the novel but does not fulfil his desire.

Friendship is described in the both part of the novel. Shekhar has so many friends in the first part of the novel because he just enjoy the college days doesn't focuses on study, watching birds in uncle's shop. He has a very good friend name Rajan during this time. He is from college admin staff. He helps Shekhar during exam. He gives information about to stop the WIN Scheme. He also helps Shekhar to bluff during exam. He put present even though Shekhar and

Anoushka don't attend the class. Also describes about friendship in the second part of the novel. Thoku is good in economics. He does his all work and also teaches ECO to Shekhar. Champak supports Shekhar in GD during summer internship placement even though he has a chance to speak. Chummi is elected member of Placecom. He sets Shekhar in control room activity which is the heart of placement process. Shekhar gets idea about the placement. Shekhar sees the resume of senior batch as well as his batch with the help of Chummi. Shekhar, Chummi, Champak and Thoku are good friends. They enjoy very much during last two terms in IIMB. All friends support each other. All friends get the job on Day Zero placement.

Conclusion

This genre was popular in 1950s and 1970s it reached a stage which can be called a typical novel sub-genre. Campus novel had a distinct quality of satiric humour which often extended to farce. Campus Novel is set in academic base and subject matter or a material of novels are based on academia. It is said that the campus novel is a small subgenre but is very famous in modern fiction. It has developed in the different countries as per its cultural background. The novel of Ritesh Sharma and Neeraj Pahlajani – *Joker in the Pack* is evaluated as a campus novel on the bases of these parameters: 1) Campus novel is set on academic base and its subject matter or a material is based on academia. 2) Main action of the novel is set in and or around the campus. Campus novel satirize stereotypes and careless behaviour in professionals in education field. 3) It is usually comic or satirical. It describes the lifestyle of students or professors or persons who are related to academia. 4) Love affairs, friendship and relationship between colleagues form important aspect of campus novel. *Joker in the pack* is a campus novel. This can be proved through the parameters of campus novel.

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