

From Pure Aesthetics to Sensory Gratification: Shifting Paradigm of Aesthetic Pleasure in Indian Popular Campus Fiction

Harpreet Kaur 

Amandeep Rana 

J.C. DAV College Dasuya, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India.

Received: 17-01-2022 **Revised:** 19-06-2022 **Accepted:** 21-06-2022

Abstract

This paper explores the shifting paradigm of ‘aesthetic pleasure’ in the field of popular literature with an emergence of cultural studies in Literary Theory. It focuses on the concept of pleasure as a significant measure in analyzing the origin and development of Indian popular campus fiction as a distinct genre. It examines how the concept of ‘pleasure’ has shifted from a purely aesthetic appreciation of the values of truth, beauty and goodness to the contemporary aspects of hedonistic and somatic pleasures in the works of popular arts. The paper also sheds light on various theories, propounded by different cultural critics like Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and Leo Lowenthal to analyze the ways the cultural industry has incorporated the values of enjoyment and entertainment into the aesthetic appreciation of pleasure, offering the emotional engagement of readers in these popular texts.

Keywords

Aesthetics, pleasure, cultural industry, popular fiction, Indian campus novel, genre.

From Pure Aesthetics to Sensory Gratification: Shifting Paradigm of Aesthetic Pleasure in Indian Popular Campus Fiction

Harpreet Kaur

Amandeep Rana

The concept of pleasure is considered of great importance as it concerns the philosophy of art and aesthetics. In a wide spectrum, it can be studied as a positive stimulus and an evaluation that enhances the degree of action in a certain activity. Before jumping into any philosophical inquiry, it is important to define the concept and construct an idea of how it has emerged and developed in the long histories of arts and literature. Pleasure has been defined by different thinkers in numerous ways. The Collins English Dictionary denotes pleasure, in its general sense, as “an activity, experience or aspect of something that you find very enjoyable or satisfying”. In the field of literature, the term has different connotations. Jeffery de Leo puts: “How the readers prefer happy endings in their fiction; they find this denouement more pleasurable” (2). Reber et al., in their study, have analyzed that the positive aesthetic response, which is assumed to enhance the evaluation of the object, is theoretically conceived as aesthetic pleasure, i.e., a “pleasurable subjective experience that is directed towards an object and not mediated by intervening reasoning” (365).

There are certain activities in our daily lives, as perceived by philosophers, which when performed are pleasant. They claimed that the person performing these activities must have some degree of ability to find a certain pleasure in them. Marcia Eaton has counted various pleasurable activities and distinguished them into two different groups—those which provide physical pleasure i.e., making love, eating chocolate, playing tennis, etc., and those which provide mental pleasure such as reading *War and Peace*, looking at a sunset and so on. She has also explained how many attempts were made by

philosophers to further distinguish among various kinds of mental pleasures that consequently, headed towards the emergence of the concept of 'aesthetic pleasure' (482). Ladelle McWhorter, in her study, has also defined many forms of mental pleasure, such as pleasure in intellectual production, certain creative pleasures, pleasure in assemblage, pleasure in something new, or in exposing evil (Frenkel 175). The present paper aims at investigating how this effect of pleasure functions in Indian popular campus fiction with reference to Chetan Bhagat's *Five Point Someone*, Abhijit Bhaduri's *Mediocre But Arrogant*, Amitabh Bagchi's *Above Average* and Soma Das' *Sumthing of a Mocktale*.

Pleasure, as an aesthetic discourse, has its historical roots in Plato and Aristotle. Platonist thinkers have viewed art as metaphysician and moralist as "they analyzed the realm of value by looking chiefly to its ideal embodiment" (Kaplan 351) while Hegel, Nietzsche and Dewey have concerned with the general views on man and the world he lives in (Tracy 44). Aristotle treated art and aesthetic pleasure under two main headings. The first is 'emotional' pleasure, which he discussed in relation to his famous doctrine of 'Catharsis' in his *Poetics*. The second is 'intellectual' pleasure, which he treated as more scientific as it "imposes upon the presented data a satisfactory system of his own construction" (Tracy 46). In its modern considerations, this concept is widely recognized in its relation to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and has been generally labeled as 'disinterested pleasure', an experience "unmediated by cognition" (McMohan 1). Kant has introduced the idea of pleasure in his term "sensus communis" which means a pleasure exhibited through shared feelings or communicability of feelings without any mediation of a concept. Thus, he establishes the aesthetic sense of pleasure as being objective as well as autonomous. In his *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals and Critique of Practical Reason*, he has, further, defined it as an intentional and formal state of mind, and detached it from being a mere "sensation, an atomic brute, 'material' element of experience" as he has stated pleasure as a "feeling, not a sensation" (Zuckert 239). Hence, Kant has aimed to justify aesthetic pleasure as being more intellectual rather than mere sensual and vulgar possession. Mohan Matthen has emphasized the mind's role in contemplating certain pleasure in works of art which he termed as *f-pleasure* (facilitate) as it "promotes and optimizes a difficult and *costly* activity; in aesthetic engagement, the activity in question is object-directed mental engagement" (10).

In the field of fiction, generally, pleasure is concerned with the reading process based on certain properties such as form, content and language, which tend to engage the reader intellectually and emotionally in gradually unfolding the action of the story, consequently arousing in them certain feelings of pleasure. Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle mark pleasure as inexpressible. They have analyzed the nature of pleasure in literature by analyzing Katherine Mansfield's story "Bliss" and exploring the ways through which it affirms different pleasures—the pleasure of being alive, the pleasure of identification, of irony, suspense and social satire—in its readers. They claim that pleasure is preconceived in the form of language as "the experience of pleasure is an experience of words, a pleasure in words, even as it points towards a sense of pleasure that is inexpressible, beyond words" (260).

Since the 1980s, with the emergence of popular literature and cultural studies, the concept of pleasure has changed its connotation by being embedded into socio-cultural phenomena. There have been various theories, developed by reception critics, to undermine the social nature of pleasure. In popular culture, it has always been linked to mass culture and popular entertainment, to fiction, escapism and emotion (Klaus and Connor 1). This is the factor that assures readers' motivation and commitment to become a part of popular culture. Simon Firth analyzes the idea of pleasure in popular culture as socially-embedded as it "is not just a psychological effect but refers to a set of experiences rooted in the social relations of the production" (503). Moreover, contemporary cultural theorists have denied the ideas of anonymity as well as purity of art while focusing on various other dimensions such as social, political and emotional ones. Pierre Bourdieu, in his theoretical founding, has attacked the notion of 'pure aesthetic', and argued that the very idea of aesthetic is fundamentally related to the social as well as historical processes that produced the western art industry. As Eaton reacts to Kantian concept of contextual aesthetics:

'Pure', and conceptless, valueless uses of beauty are rare. It has certainly been a mistake for aestheticians to take this sense of beauty as the paradigmatic aesthetic concept . . . Many, I would wager most, aesthetic terms are 'impure'—they reflect, even require, beliefs and values: sincere, suspenseful, sentimental, shallow, sensitive, sexy, sensual, salacious, sordid, sobering, sustainable, skilful . . . and that, of course, scratches the surface of s-words. (13)

She argues that it is not possible to incorporate a moral value or something beautiful to create an aesthetic effect in a work of art. Similarly, the impact of pleasure does not just come by introducing something extraordinary. Instead, it arises with what entertains the readers the most.

Popular culture has become a multi-faceted aspect to determine a variety of ways people choose and enjoy different kinds of pleasures, which have been offered to them by popular media. Mercer, for example, calls “‘entertainment, comic, laughter, enjoyment’ the ‘accomplices’ of pleasure” (qtd. in Klaus and Connor 412) to which he has added various synonymous concepts such as leisure, motivation, enthusiasm and gratification. In psychoanalysis, pleasure is related with the satisfaction of needs and relief of tension; for Bourdieu, Foucault and Barthes, pleasure is sensual and related to lust, desire and bliss (Klaus and Connor 412). The texts of popular literature, while being the products of contemporary capitalistic industry, tend to focus on the ideals of entertainment and pleasure as “entertainment provides alternatives to capitalism which will be provided by capitalism” itself (Klaus and Connor 413). They acquire their signification in popular media forms by embedding themselves into socio-cultural situations. Hence, they reflect a shift in the dimension of pure and disinterested aesthetic pleasure to what is called hedonistic pleasure and sensory gratification. They arouse the readers’ senses by incorporating somatic elements to involve readers in them without any mental or intellectual effort. Nell Wasserstorm, in his review of Laura Frost’s book, studies Laura’s explorations how the modernists, including James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, D.H. Lawrence, and Aldous Huxley challenged, the passive and automatic pleasures associated with vernacular or popular literature, and how, through deliberate literary devices, they “mitigate[ed] against a reader enjoying them too easily or too much” (87). The modernist writers “by offering thrilling and powerful innovations” demand their readers to not only “tolerate, but embrace discomfort, confusion, and hard cognitive labour” (87). On the other side, popular texts, by rendering sensual experiences such as “smell, tickling and orgasm” (87), provide a source of sensory pleasure and gratification to its readers.

Popular fiction is all-pervasive and dynamic in its way of affecting or invoking the feeling of pleasure among its readers. Pleasure can be studied as an effective tool to understand popular fiction as “a matter of textual categorization and mobilization of information about the world” (Frow 1633). Ronit Frenkel, in her study, has explored the

possibilities of labeling ‘chick-lit’, a popular genre, as a ‘genre of pleasure’. She has implemented Ann Cvetkovich’s theory of ‘ephemeral archive’ which is defined as “an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feeling and emotions, which are encoded not only in the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception (7). She has also analyzed how these ‘structures of affect’ serve as an important aspect in building public cultures. Whereas Cvetkovich has used this theory for analyzing the concept of trauma, Frankel has deployed it in her analysis of ‘pleasure’ as a ‘structure of affect’ in the popular fiction genre ‘chick-lit’. She has viewed pleasure as “both highly individualized and generally applicable concept, making it an innovative tool to use, especially in relation to popular fiction” (175). Lovell has proposed a similar notion ‘structure of feeling’, originally derived from Raymond Williams, for the analysis of pleasure in popular fictional studies, as “complemented by the notion of ‘structure of sensibility’, which could also be identified and described in class terms [...] raise questions about the historically established properties of aesthetic form, and how these class properties are established and maintained” (Klaus and Connor 413). Hence, this provides an opportunity to study the changing dimension of aesthetic pleasure in Indian popular campus fiction in light of the characteristics of popular fiction mentioned above.

Pleasure as an Aesthetic in Indian Popular Campus Fiction

Contemporary Indian popular campus fiction gained huge popularity in the first decade of the 21st century with the publication of Chetan Bhagat’s best-selling novel *Five Points Someone*, and gradually established itself as a distinct ‘genre’. Popular texts are often classified and analyzed as genre fiction, such as detective, romance, horror, inspirational, science-fiction, historical, and mystery novels rather than individual texts. Unlike ‘literary fiction, which is regarded as self-contained, enclosed and completed by the author’s apparent uniqueness, rather than as part of a shared and broad-based species of writing” (Gelder 40), the texts of popular fiction are considered necessary to put into one or the other genre to get recognized by the target audience. The formula of the Indian popular campus fiction as a genre is defined primarily by its settings in top Indian academic institutes or campuses, where all the actions and events of the novels take place. The texts feature the young students as protagonists, away from home on some residential campuses, with themes based on the experiences through their educational journey at institutes, their adventures, friendships, love affairs, fears and anxieties of

examinations, their relationships with their teachers and friends, and finally their transformations into mature and responsible adults by achieving some placements and jobs in their concerned fields. This formula is visible or identifiable in almost all the contemporary texts with Indian academic institutes as their setting. These texts are great page-turners, with simple and gripping plots, that anticipates the reader's interest with cleverly used literary techniques, hence, providing readers with pleasurable experiences and satisfaction, as James Harold remarks that they are strongly "plot-driven, and are tied to (more or less) standard emotional responses to the event on the plot" (2011).

Indian popular campus fiction has marked a transitional appeal by providing easy as well as an immediate pleasure to its readers. Although initially, the genre did not achieve due respect by literary critics for its lack of aesthetic appeal, it cannot be denied that these texts have global recognition for their focus on reading for pleasure by a huge audience. This is evident in one of the confessions by a popular fiction reader, which Pinsker Sandforth has put into his study: "I am such a sucker for academic novels, despite their penchant for cardboard characters and predictable turns of plot" (184). The texts incorporate numerous elements, such as expected and promising plots, simple narration, happy endings, and sensual imagery, which aid in making the reading process more pleasurable for selective audiences. They are also perceived as a blend of various social, cultural, political and emotional aspects of contemporary Indian society with Western lifestyles and patterns, which are ironically highlighted by the authors in the texts. Such elements provide pleasurable experiences to the readers as they seek interest "in the subject-matter, or the craft of a text, in its consumption or its construction, in finding familiarity or something new in popular fiction" (Frenkel 177). Arend Flick, in his review of Thomas J. Roberts' *An Aesthetics of Junk Fiction*, states that Roberts in his book rejects the hoary explanation of reading pulp fiction as a need for escape or mindless pleasure, rather he argues that "Pulp fiction's appeal stems partly from its capacity to immerse us in the newspaper reality of our time in ways that serious fiction (as Tom Wolfe has recently complained) rarely tried to do it" (1990), thus, provides an exotic experience to the readers who enjoy reading about their world.

Another way of looking at aesthetic 'pleasure' in Indian popular campus fiction is through very common pursuits of everyday life of its major characters and their highly imaginative and experienced thought patterns. The texts make the readers confront an exotic fictional world of freedom by using awesome words. The title of the first chapter

of *Something of a Mocktale*, “A Whole New World” is an example of it. It is further explored as the narrator begins:

Welcome to this crispy cottony handloom world of JNU.

This is a place where it doesn't matter where you hail from, which fashion statements you made earlier.....whether you wore chiffon salwar kameez, DKNY tank tops, nylon shirts with tiny mango motif prints over terycot trousers. This is the end of all diversities. (1)

The characters are represented as enjoying their freedom away from their homes in the happening world of campuses as Arindam, the protagonist in Bagchi's *Above Average*, says “It was our first encounter with freedom, this dizzying flurry that was our first year at IIT, our irreversible entry into an academic world” (76). The texts are produced in a very commercial manner with disclaimers that assure pleasure to the readers, as Kaplan argues “What we are fed is not only predigested but also attractively packaged” (361). Soma Das' artistic “Claims” in the very beginning section serves as a good example of it:

Letter to my reader —

Read the book if you have ever led a campus life, if you are living it now or will live one in the future. If you are the *bindaas* type, you will relate; if you are the bookworm type, you will know what you are missing. Read it if you ever desired to know openly or secretly, the unofficial unedited account, if you believe in books that talk. Read this if you want to live life one degree fuller, if you want to have serious ‘FUN’.

[...] and before you embark on this journey to Fun Island, you are requested to take off your thinking caps and reasoning hats.

The element of love is treated as a fundamental aspect of creating pleasure and both the idealistic as well as practical approaches to love have been portrayed in the Indian popular campus fiction: “Is there a season of love? Does love have a germination, flowering, maturing, and ripening cycle like a fruit or flower? And why do the trips, excursions, and study tours form the fertile ground for love to bloom? Ok, too many of them now, the research questions” (Das 97). Moreover, the campuses have also been utilized by the authors as spaces encouraging pair bonding by providing opportunities and favorable situations in the form of dance-clubs, fests and other recreational activities: “The white-panelled basement [...] impressively large and entirely airconditioned space; and there were my own classmates with expressions of worry and fatigue or boredom on their faces. Some would sit in pairs—relationships forged in this always cool room

would last long after the room itself was no more than a memory” (Bagchi 197). This love-relationships forge the major part of the texts as most of the events in the stories revolve around them. Kaya in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* also highlights how if a girl or a boy is regularly noticed at GD, it gives “clear signs of a ‘falling in love syndrome’ . . . However if two individuals in most cases, of the opposite sex, evaporate from the scene at the same time, then you can safely infer that two . . . culminated into an affair and hence shifted from noisy hotspot to a quite love spot or boyfriend’s hostel room” (45). Hence, the above-mentioned statements exemplify how the educational campuses serve as idealistic or imaginary spaces for fulfilling the romantic desires of young adults.

Kaplan, while differentiating the pleasure perceived between literary and popular art, describes that whereas literary art gives us “pleasure in its apprehension, popular art gives pleasure only in encouraging the pretense that we are pleased [...] the difference is that between masturbation and a mature love that reaches outside the self” (362). This very attitude is quite evident in the selected texts that highlight the temporality as well as the practicality of most of the love relationships blooming among young adults within the territories of campuses. The characters do not share any depth, loyalty and truthfulness towards their couple which somewhere imparts a very wrong message to the readers. For example, Abbey, the protagonist in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, experiences the notion of love with different women. In his journey of MIJ, he first gets involved with Ayesha to whom he refers as “A hot-hoochi mama [...] unanimously the toast of our batch” (141). Later, when he starts dating Kaya, another girl from a neighboring college, he reveals that he does not love Ayesha, but he enjoys her company because of her manipulative behavior as Alps, a girl in the same batch, confirms: “Thad female, aanh [...] she is some sort of maneater. Dainnjerruss!” (171). When questioned about his confused state of mind by Fundu, a friend and guide for Abbey, as he always finds him as a right choice for confessing because of his passion and training to be a priest, he responds: “What commitment, Fundu? ... Nobody given a damn ... I don’t. Even I am not committed to myself. What does a word like that mean in a place like MIJ? ” (249). Later, while his discussion about choosing a life partner with his friend Kapil, Abbey reveals: “Kapil, there is a world of a difference between what you look for in a wife and what you look for in a girlfriend. She is not girlfriend material, yaar. A girl has to be either cool or hot. Priya is neither. Priya is not my type” (111). This perplexed situation of Abbey reflects the realistic attitude of Indian society behind the romantic and

imaginative thought patterns. The similar attitude towards love is also depicted in *Sumthing of a Mocktale*, where Keya explains how “these lovebirds in their peak experiences must have carved out their own names. As their love tenure ended, they went ahead got married to more convenient partners” (57).

Indian popular campus fiction demonstrates contemporary social conditions vividly. Most of the settings in the selected novels are play-grounds, hostel rooms, bars, restaurants, and several other community places. The depiction of characters as young adult students with average intelligence, their attitudes and the situations tend to be more relatable to and familiar with what is commonly observed on Indian campuses. The texts do not only depict the incidents and scenes that take place within the territories of the campuses but also highlight various societal issues like poverty, dowry, female foeticide, and suicide. Hari, in *Five Point Someone*, ironically describes Alok’s household: “For a poor family, Alok’s family ate quite well [...] rice, rotis, daal, gobhi, mango chutney, raita [...] I guess that explained the corpulence running in the family” (122). The element of pleasure is constructed by providing an ironic treatment to every serious problem and situation in the social discourse. Although the representation of prevalent forms of culture by adding the element of fiction, serves as a source of meaning as well as entertainment in the texts, the moral insights in the texts seem quite enigmatic as they are far from any insight into what is good or evil in the society. The texts of popular culture “neither suppress nor celebrate the unsocial self [...] it tries to do both and the ensuing tension seems to be a part of the specific gratification and ‘entertainment’ it provides” (Fluck 55).

Critical theories by cultural critics such as Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Herbert Marcuse have criticized the ways through which popular artwork, the product of contemporary late-capitalistic society, tends to become more a commodity and less an art, which provides sensory gratification and false fulfillment to the ever-widening demands of the masses. Leo Lowenthal writes:

There is considerable agreement that all media are estranged from values and offer nothing but entertainment and distraction- that, ultimately, they expedite flight from an unbearable reality [...] false fulfillment of wish dreams, like wealth, adventure, passionate love, power, and sensationalism in general. (qtd. in Kelton 46)

The selected texts depict deteriorating societal, moral and ethical values such as “Sikhs are not supposed to smoke” (Bagchi 77) and how students violate the stereotypes attached to respective social and religious ideologies: “Three or four Sikhs we had in the hostel only one of them still had his turban and beard” (Bagchi 76). The characters in the texts are frequently depicted as consuming drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes. In *Five Points Someone*, Hari, Alok and Ryan used the institution roof for drinking and smoking cigarettes at night. The texts also reflect how students tend to violate strict rules and regulations of educational institutions. One such evidence can be seen in *Mediocre But Arrogant*, when Father Hathaway warns the students about the strict behavioral conduct as “any student who gets three Ds or two Fs at any time during the two years will have to leave the institute [...] the three Ds are banned from the boys' hostel. No Drinks, no drugs, and no dames” (63), and how the students manipulate these warnings as “all it means is don't make an ass of yourself after you drink. Drink secretly in your room and never sing loudly . . . when you want to have a wild booze party, go to Dadu's and freak out [...] Hathi's law does not apply there” (63). This is also woven into the storyline of *Five Points Someone*: “Alok sat quietly, picking his nose and sipping his vodka [...] It is amazing how habit immunizes you”, although he had bad grades, a miserable home and loser friends but “at least he had the joy of picking dirt out of his nose in the company of his friends” (137)

The aesthetic rigor in literary fiction demands from its readers heightened attention and seriousness to obtain a pure and intellectual pleasure that comes from contemplating something intellectually. A novel “gives pleasure by engaging the mind: we enjoy its narrative in the context of its themes, its moral stance, its form, the style and articulateness of its presentation” (Matthen 15). Popular amusements such as texts, movies and other mass-media elements, in the contemporary scenario, are “stigmatized due to their delusive and shallow nature, asking nothing of their audience and promoting enjoyment for enjoyment's sake” (Wasserstorm 87). The texts of popular fiction can be rightly described as an illustration of a fantasy world. They are escapist in nature as “they can produce a kind of narcosis, a state of insensibility arresting thought and feeling as well as action—in a word, a trance” (Kaplan 360). In her popular feminist romance studies, Janice Radway identifies fantasy, as a driving force of reader's motivation: “A way for its reader to reduce tension resulting from their life as caretakers since the escape into a fantasy enables the women to symbolically gratify specific needs that are not met

in real life” (Klaus & Connor 418). The selected texts illustrate such hidden sensual desires through the thoughts and actions of characters. Abbey reveals how during male booze-sessions, they use to sing their favourite ‘Diana’s Song’:

Diana, Diana show me your legs
Diana, Diana show me your legs
Diana, Diana show me your legs
A foot above your knee.
Rich girl rides a limousine
Poor girl rides a truck
The only ride that Diana gets
Is when she is having a F... (Bhaduri 71)

This is also reflected in Hari’s remark about Alok, when he excitedly informs Ryan of the major’s result by shaking his shoulder: “THEY’RE OUT! . . . ‘as if India had won the World Cup or nude women were rolling on the grass outside’” (Bhagat 60). Therefore, in the popular texts, the element of pleasure is primarily “concerned with the social consciousness of media as a source of entertainment and is thereby connected with social problematic of ‘taste’ and of pleasure” (Corner 268), which is observable in the light of theories developed by cultural critics.

Adorno has explored certain ways through which the popular ‘cultural industry’ attributes immediate interest and pleasurable appeal to the artistic works rather than sublimating and aestheticizing them. It plays a major role in fabricating modern life as it “produced needs which were not true, distributing easy satisfactions backed up by hedonist ideals, and it only claimed to offer aesthetic delights although the fact was that there was no real aesthetics at stake here. It was only resonance of produced needs and products designed to fulfill these fabricated needs that produced a feeling of consolidation” (Kovalčik 24). The success of the best-selling Indian authors lies in their potential to maximize their readership by doing justice to their tastes and providing them with certain gratifications. They seek no critical reviews or appreciation. In one of his interviews with the New York Times, Bhagat confesses: “The book critics, they all hate me” (Greenlees 2008). Bhaduri, also expresses how in the present time there is a great need for writers to stay updated and connected with readers’ needs and desires and put their best efforts to gratify them instead of investing in any other thing. He states:

Kolaveri Di was the song of the year. Who talks of it today? Each post bubbles up and surfaces to a certain extent. Understand deeper human needs. Some understand it as online and some as offline conversations. Building a personal brand is a lifetime journey. It is about how you change yourself by understanding others. How you can adapt to the world. Adapt to technology and build human connections, is my advice. (Bhaduri 2020)

Readers also find popular fiction texts as great page-turners—woven with graspable plots and deliberately insisted on escape from the harsh realities of the world. About Chetan Bhagat's best-seller, reviewer and columnist Devangshu Datta writes: "One interesting factor — pre ...Call Centre, the concept of reading simply for pleasure and fluency didn't exist. The average aspirational middle-class kid would have been discouraged from wasting time reading 'story books'" (Forbes India 2009). These fabricated needs and desires have paralyzed the contemporary post-modernist society and made it dependent on them to survive. It has also become a medium to not only provide the masses with easy and accessible pleasures but also manipulated them with false enlightenment to reinforce the system.

Conclusion

The paper explored the articulation of the changing dimension of aesthetic pleasure in Indian popular campus fiction by analyzing some selected texts from the genre. The study highlights the ways, in which 'pleasure aesthetic' has been systematically employed in different contexts in popular texts. Kant's philosophy of "pure aesthetics" and "disinterested pleasure" has undergone various changes in the arena of popular literature by shifting its focus from the 'feelings' to 'sensations'. Contemporary developments in the field of arts and literature have simultaneously detached from the pre-defined aesthetic values of art as being beautiful and disinterested in what is marked as everyday aesthetics. Hence, the texts of popular campus fiction in India occupy the element of pleasure to falsely depict the sugar-coated realities of contemporary society and ensure the reader's engagement in the unfolding of events. The artistic productions of the culture industry are executed through its artworks, the reflections of a different sphere of contemporary popular culture. The changing patterns of popular culture provide an insightful treatment of this topical area of research and therefore, establish an understanding of how this mass-produced culture and commercialization drive the system to meet its own design.

Works Cited

- Bagchi, Amitabh. *Above Average*. Harper Collins, 2007.
- Bennett, Andrew, and Nicholas Royle. *Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. 3rd ed., Pearson, 2004.
- Bhaduri, Abhijit. *Mediocre But Arrogant*. Harper Collins, 2005.
- Bhaduri, Abhijit. "Personal Branding Interview". Interview by Anisus K Verghese. *Forbes*, 23 June 2020, www.anisu.com/2020/06/23/personal-branding-interview-abhijit-bhaduri-linked-in-must-know-author-one-of-indias-most-intelligent-globalist-forbes-no-1-hr-influencer-on-social-media/
- Bhagat, Chetan. *Five Point Someone: What Not to Do at IIT*. Rupa, 2004.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 46, 1987, pp. 201-10. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/431276>
- Corner, John. "Meaning, Genre and Context: The Problematics of "Public Knowledge" in the New Audience Studies." *Mass Media and Society*, edited by James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, Arnold, 1991, pp. 267–84.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Duke UP, 2003.
- Das, Soma. *Something of a Mocktale*. Shrishti Publications, 2007.
- Di Leo, Jeffrey R. "Pleasure in the End." *American Book Review*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2008, p. 2. *Project MUSE*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/abr.2008.0025>
- Greenlees, Donald. "An Investment Banker Finds Fame Off the Books". *The New York Times*, 26 Mar. 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/books/26bhagat.html
- Eaton, M. Marcia. "Aesthetic Pleasure and Pain." *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, vol. 31, no. 4, Summer 1973, pp. 481-85. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/i217822
- Eaton, M. Marcia. "Kantian and Contextual Beauty." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* vol. 57, no. 1, Winter 1999, pp. 11-15. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/432059
- Flick, Arend "Pop, Pulp and Hypocrisy: AN AESTHETICS OF JUNK FICTION" by Thomas J. Roberts. *U of Georgia P*, 1999, p. 284, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-07-29-bk-1270-story.html Accessed 15 Sep. 2019

- Fluck, Winfried. "Fiction and Fictionality in Popular Culture: Some Observations on the Aesthetics of Popular Culture." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 21, no. 4, Spring 1988, pp. 49-62. WILEY, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0022-3840.1988.00049.x>
- Forbes India. "The Writers' Community on Chetan Bhagat". *Magazine Extra*, 23 Dec. 2009, www.forbesindia.com/interview/magazine-extra/the-writers'-community-on-chetan-bhagat/8462/1
- Frenkel, Ronit. "Pleasure as genre: popular fiction, South African chick-lit and Nthikeng Mohlele's Pleasure." *Feminist Theory*, vol. 20, no. 2, Feb. 2019, pp. 171-84. SAGE, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1464700119831537>
- Frith, Simon. "Music for Pleasure." *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*, vol. 3, 1982, pp. 493-503. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/931284
- Frow, John. "'Reproducibles, Rubrics and Everything You Need': Genre Theory Today." *PMLA*, vol. 122, no. 5, Oct. 2007, pp. 1626-34. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25501811
- Gelder, Ken. *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a New Field*. Routledge, 2004.
- Harold, James. "Literature, Genre Fiction, and Standards of Criticism." *Non-site Issues*, no. 3, Oct. 2011, <https://nonsite.org/literature-genre-fiction-and-standards-of-criticism/> Accessed 10 Aug. 2019.
- Kaplan, Abraham. "The Aesthetics of Popular Arts." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 24, no. 3, Spring 1966, pp. 351-64. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/427970
- Kelton, Cobb. "Reconsidering the Status of Popular Culture in Tillich's Theology of Culture." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 63, no. 1, Spring 1995, pp. 53-84. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/146515
- Klaus, Elisabeth, and Connor O'Barbara. "Pleasure and Meaningful Discourse: An Overview of Research Issues." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, Dec. 2000, pp. 411-28. SAGE, <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F136787790000300304>
- Kovalčik, Jozef, and Max Ryyänen. *Aesthetics of Popular Culture*. Slovart Publishing, 2014.
- Matthen, Mohan. "The Pleasure of Art." *Australian Philosophical Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, Mar. 2017, pp. 6-28. PHILPAPERS, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24740500.2017.1287034>

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man*. Beacon Press, 1964.

McWhorter, Ladelle. "Pleasure in Atrocity." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2016, pp. 104-44. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsp.2016.0000>

Reber, Rolf, et.al. "Processing Fluency and Aesthetic Pleasure: Is Beauty in the Perceiver's Processing Experience?" *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 8, Nov. 2004, pp. 364–82. https://doi.org/10.1207%2Fs15327957pspr0804_3

Sanford, Pinsker. "Postmodernist Theory and the Academic Novel's Latest Turn." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 111, no.1, Winter 2003, pp. 183-91. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27549316

Tracy, L.H. "Aristotle on Aesthetic Pleasure." *Classical Philology*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1946, pp. 43-46. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/459158

Wasserstorm, Nell. "The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and Its Discontents by Laura Frost." *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, Winter 2014, pp. 87-90. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/i24616747

Zuckert, Rachel. "A New Look at Kant's Theory of Pleasure." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 60, no. 3, Summer 2002, pp. 239-52. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1520032

The Author:

Harpreet Kaur

Research Scholar, J.C. DAV College Dasuya, Panjab University, Chandigarh, India.

Email: hkaurbodal@gmail.com

Dr. Amandeep Rana

Dr. Amandeep Rana is working as Head of Post Graduate Department of English at JC DAV College Dasuya in Punjab, affiliated to Panjab University Chandigarh. He has a teaching experience of fifteen years and has published articles in various books and journals of repute. He has also edited a book on RK Narayan.

Email: amanrana.hp@gmail.com