

*deus ex machina In One Night @ The Call Center*

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**Abstract**

Chetan Bhagat, the most popular novelist among the Indian Writing in English novel lovers at present, has a charisma to reach the heart and psyche of readers with his novels. His characters can be met in all societies and communities and hence his writing bears the signature stamp of reality. Seven best seller novels fall into his account. His second novel 'One Night @ The Call Center' is a perfect representation of the cosmopolitan life style. All characters in the novel are trapped in the complex web of their personal and professional life. They find no way to get out of this. In such a situation, the Almighty comes to their rescue and arranges everything as they hope for. The writer does this with the help of *deus ex machina*. He takes the help of this device (perhaps he also finds no other way to come out of the complex situations of life).

**Keywords:** *deus ex machina*, Personal Crisis, Professional Crisis, Cosmopolitan life style

**Introduction**

The term *deus ex machina* means 'God out of the Machine' and since ages it is used in reference to the stage machinery. In the plays, an actor used to get lowered on the stage to solve the mortal problem with his divine powers. When the writer lacks his skills to get the story smooth going and finds no way to make up the things, he approaches this device and the problem is solved. Does the writer surrender for being not capable with his literary expertise? The fact cannot be denied that it is a negatively charged act by the author because whenever his literary art and intelligence is not adequate, *deus ex machina* comes in the scene.

Merriam Webster defines *deus ex machina*, "A person or thing (as in fiction or drama) that appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly and provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty."

We find William Shakespeare using this device of *deus ex machina* in his play *As You Like It*. By employing *deus ex machina* Shakespeare resolves problems and complications and successfully reaches merry ending. Here, a fortuitous and completely improbable event happens:

Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day  
Men of great worth resorted to this forest,  
Address'd a mighty power; which were on foot,  
In his own conduct, purposely to take  
His brother here and put him to the sword:  
And to the skirts of this wild wood he came;  
Where meeting with an old religious man,  
After some question with him, was converted  
His crown bequeathing to his banish'd brother,  
And all their lands restored to them again  
That were with him exiled. This to be true,  
I do engage my life.

Duke Frederick, the villain, meets an old religious man in the forest and suddenly decides to give up power and becomes peaceful. He is the one who throughout his life hated his brother the Duke Senior and many others, suddenly comes to peaceful terms and more importantly gives up power. It is something hard to digest but this could be possible because of divine intervention with the *deus ex machina*.

Chetan Bhagat too uses this device in his novel *One Night @ The Call Center* with a novelty. He has made use of this in such a way which is most suitable in the present world which has technologically prospered. To use this, he has taken the assistance of telecommunication. The telephone has always been an integral part in his novels: *Five Point Someone*, *The 3 Mistakes Of My Life*, *2 States: The Story Of My Marriage*, *Revolution 2020*. In all these novels telephone or cell phone has played a vital role in changing the course of action. In many novels, the use of telephone marks the climax in the story. The novel *One Night @ The Call Center* is not an exception to this. The use of *deus ex machina* has been the climax in the novel. The complex situations developed get soon resolved after this.

The novel *One Night @ The Call Center* exhibits the crisis. The novel has thrown light on numerous disturbing factors in the modern cosmopolitan Indian Society. Chetan Bhagat has skillfully interwoven the personal crisis with the professional one. The modern life has been full of crises. The unattached relationship among the family members, lack of emotional fulfillment at home, lack of job satisfaction and struggle for identity and individualism are the bitter realities of cosmopolitan life. As the novel begins, it is shadowed by the atmosphere of slow-down in business and fear for job insecurity among the employees in the Call Center office. This professional crisis is accompanied by the personal crisis. Shyam's affair with Priyanka is almost over and broken. He is striving to overcome the mental break down. Priyanka's mother is busy like a bee to marry her to an NRI against her wish. Esha's dream to be a model is completely shattered when she shares

bed with a forty-year old designer. Rejection for her forces her to an attempt of suicide. The Military Uncle suffers loneliness amidst the crowded world. His son and daughter-in-law make him to stay away from his loving grandson. Even in office, no one bothers to know his name and is called Military Uncle. Victor and Shyam develop a website together with their innovative ideas, but its credit is taken by their boss Mr. Bakshi. He does it since it is instrumental to accelerate the business of the company. The interwoven professional and personal crisis builds up pressure cooker like situation as the plot reaches the climax. Readers are reminded of some of the most disturbing moments of the modern Indian social life.

To overcome the mental pressure the Call Center executives go to a night club as a temporary solution to remain aloof from the disturbing events of the night and the life. When they are returning, their vehicle skids, crashes into a construction site and hangs precariously over a grid of iron rods. This is the climax in the novel with death staring at them. The rods begin to yield slowly. The situation becomes worse when they find to their horror that there is no network coverage available in their mobile phones barring them to go for any kind of help from the outside world. When there is no hope of survival and the six Call Center Executives are trapped by the Personal Crisis, Professional Crisis and Death Crisis, the writer takes the help of *deus ex machina* to take them out of the present difficult situation by means of telephone call from God. The use of this device by the writer is with help of technology. If vultures could discover their bodies, post death scenario looms large before all the six executives. At this moment Shyam's mobile phone rings in spite of the non-availability of network and the screen displays them that the caller is none other than God. The phone call is from God speaking in modern English. God converses with all the six and make them feel that they are not alone. He asks them to listen to their inner self to live happily. God promises them:

“Bye now. Remember, I am inside you when you need me.”

“I am with you. So, what are you afraid of?” these words of God filled in the positive energy in all of them. He speaks to all the six of them and suggests improving their life and also guides them to get the vehicle out of the construction site. The talk with the Almighty is so motivating that they decide to face their problems with utmost determination and reach the solution anyhow. After God instilled confidence into them, all the six employees saved themselves not only from death but also from professional and personal crises. Their job at the Call Center is saved. Vroom and Shyam open their own web designing company, Priyanka and Shyam get reunited, Radhika separates herself from her disloyal husband and starts sharing room with Esha who drops her modeling aspirations and works for an NGO along with the job in the Call Center and Military Uncle goes back to the USA where he lives happily with his family. And in this way, the intervention of God leads the story to a pleasing end.

## Conclusion

Deus ex Machina is often debatable. It is often criticized as a literary device where an implausible incident or character steps into the story to resolve the conflict for a happy conclusion. It can also be seen in the light of a poor plot. The writer does not have the proper plot, story and characterization to come out of the complex situation, so he takes the help of this device. Somehow, the writer wants to put an end to the story without putting much effort in it. It needs to be reviewed whether deus ex machina is a powerful weapon in the hands of an author or just a means for an End for End's Sake.

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