



Chetan Bhagat's novel 'One Indian Girl'- A Portrayal of Modern Indian Girl

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Abstract: Chetan Bhagat is a writer who has definite ideas about social, political and economic values. In his novels, his latest novel 'One Indian Girl' (2016) has achieved wide ranging critical acclaim. Some reviewers have praised the novel as a psychological triumph. Some have seen it as a feminist piece other as a fraud on the progressive Indian woman. This paper seeks to examine how the novel is feminist in its plot and characterization. Chetan Bhagat has tried to portrait the old traditions of the society. He speaks about the mindsets of the old people, discriminations between woman and man. The main objective of his writing is to appreciate the liberty, rights and views of woman. This paper attempts a feministic reading of Chetan Bhagat's latest novel – 'One Indian Girl'. The Novel revolves around a female protagonist Radhika Mehta, an IIMA Product. We can say that this novel reveals the bitter truth of male supremacy and gender discrimination prevalent in Indian society.

Keywords: Wide – ranging, Psychological Triumph, Gender Discrimination, Feminism.

Chetan Bhagat is a modern Indian writer pre – occupied with the fluid patterns of post-colonial life. He has raised the problem of socio – political issues, gender – equality, questions of race, color and language. The one thing universally accepted about Chetan Bhagat is his special appeal to young professionals in various fields.

The feminist elements in this novel have been the subject of debate, The author himself agrees that the novel could be considered as 'feminist' but some reviewers feel that the piece is not feminist. There is a contrast built up between what Radhika Mehta actually is and what people the 'reader' would expect her to be. Radhika Mehta feel that the reader may not like her because of her three 'disqualifications'. She makes a lot of money; she has her own opinion on everything and finally she had boyfriends. Radhika Mehta is brilliant scholar. She works in an investment bank Goldman Sachs. Her professional efficiency gets her a good amount of salary. Feminism as a movement gained political importance in the twentieth century, making the culmination of two centuries struggle for cultural roles and socio – political rights. Feminism as a movement is about women living on equal terms with men. This research study is an attempt to explore gender influence in the novel One Indian Girl. The society plays a predominant role in changing the system old protocols and lays down the way of life women have to live. No fixed identity of women is shown in this novel. When the opportunity allows women are also in a position to decide equally to men. Through Radhika's mother, the author describes the false traditions of our society. Women are always been taught to be the adjusting one in every field of life. Through Radhika he wants to convey that people need to change their perspectives towards a woman. A girl is not supposed to have her opinion and must follow the rules that have been given by the society. If any girl is not following the rules is titled as shameless. We see that there is no restriction far boys regarding any opinion and any rules. That is the reason, Chetan Bhagat has titled the novel One Indian Girl not an Indian girl. The novel goes through ambition, career relations, love, heartbreak, marriage from the girl's point of view. In the end of the novel Radhika proves that she is not a girl who suffers rather she is a girl who chooses her own

destiny. One Indian Girl is based on the women of new modern era, where women hold equality. Chetan Bhagat has tried to talk about a lot of women's achievements, independent women being forced to choose between career and home. Mr. Sudarshan Mehta has two daughters – Aditi Mehta and Radhika Mehta. They went to school together in Delhi at Springdales, Pusa Road. Aditi is fair – complexioned but Radhika has dark complexion. Radhika Mehta topped her class at age twelve and won the Maths Olympiad at age thirteen. In school students either didn't notice her or made fun of hers. Hence, she stayed in the background with her books. After that a boy asked her out in front of the whole class. He gave her a red rose along with an Archies greeting card. She overwhelmed. That day she realized that she had only one thing going for her – academics. In class twelve she was the school topper. She ranked among the top five in Delhi. After getting job, her excitement about marriage can be seen on the back cover of the book.

“Hi, I am Radhika Mehta and I am getting Married this week.

“I work at Goldman Sachs, an Investment Bank.

Thank you for reading my story.

However, let me warn you, you may not like me too much Really make me too likeable, do they?”

Radhika's wedding in Mehta family is first destination wedding in Goa. But Radhika's mind is disturbed because of situation. Radhika is going to get married to Brijesh Gulati, an Intelligent and caring person working at Facebook, in San Francisco for whom Radhika has some good feelings. She earlier had relationships with Debashish Sen and Neel Gupta. Being fed up with Debu, Radhika wants to leave New York and move to Hongkong. In her new office she meets Neel Gupta, her boss's boss. During her business trip, she gets attracted towards Neel and had an affair with him. After a year of being in a relationship Radhika finds it difficult to have a future with Neel. As Neel is 20 years older than her and a married man with two children. After, breaking up with Neel, Radhika moves to Goldman Sachs London.

Radhika starts her life with a new beginning in London, but her mother as always, starts forcing her to get married. Radhika finally agrees and starts looking for groom on Shadi.com. She meets Brijesh Gulati and decides to tie a knot with him. After getting the news of Radhika's marriage Debu and Neel realize their mistake and wants to stop Radhika's marriage. Radhika gets confused between two ex-boy friends and one future husband. She calls all of them in the morning and turns down their proposal. Radhika makes an apology to everyone. Few months later she contacts Brijesh to meet her for coffee. They remeet again in San Francisco, where they make plan for future.

Radhika's mother visits her in Hong Kong and provides her a moral and emotional support. Radhika also wants to get married and be a mother and a wife. She asks Neel what may be the future of their relationship and also expresses her wish to have a family of her own, but Neel does not understand her and tells her that Radhika is not suitable for family women responsibilities. After hearing it, Radhika is upset. Once again, she wants to resign. Neel is a mature and a wise man. He tells Radhika that she is a valuable employee and the company doesn't want to lose her. Radhika transfers to London and continues her job. In the meantime, her mother found a groom named Brijesh for her. Radhika interacts with him and she gives her consent for marriage.

Radhika, a successful businesswoman is so devoted to her business. She has booked one of the expensive hotels of Goa for marriage ceremony. Her wedding is fixed and it will take place within a week. Just then both of her exfriend Debu and Neel come there. They want to marry Radhika but Radhika finds Brijesh a nice and genuine person.

Radhika, finally thinks over it a day before her wedding. She is so disturbed that she is unable to decide what she should do? She makes a phone call to both her exboy friends to tell them that she would marry neither of the two. Radhika clarifies that Debu did not want working woman. On the other hand, Neel wanted Radhika to fly high but rejected to offer her a family – which is a dream of every woman. She said, “Debu wanted me to be encaged. Neel allowed me to fly, but he did not offer me a nest. She defines the real definition of feminism to them that a woman wants to be a wife and a mother. So, on this ground, she cannot marry either Debu or Neel.

It is natural that human beings have some physical desires which need to be satisfied but there is a way for everything. Radhika was a sensible Girl who had topped in every class. Her sister was an average student with impressive look. The behavior and affairs of Radhika is not at all Indian. She has love, emotion, empathy – these things make her Indian – rest all are difficult to digest.

One Indian Girl – as it is signifying, the title of the book suggest that it is very interesting and seems to be related to feministic approach.

In an interview, Chetan said: All my earlier books were about a middle class Indian male character but in this book, I took the perspective. For the research I interviewed around 100 girls to know their strength.”

Chetan Bhagat has also touched the topic of feminism in his new book. “Feminism is very broad topic and I couldn’t have dealt with every portion of it in a limited page frame. So, I have covered the things I have seen in my life happening to determined independent woman.

Radhika worked in New York, had a boyfriend and went for a live-in relationship. But he did not want to marry her because he thinks about her that she is a professional girl and she cannot be a good wife. One Indian Girl fulfills a feministic approach.

We can see clearly feministic approach in these lines when Radhika is going to meet Gulati’s family in Jeans and T-Shirt and there is no jewelry in her neck. Her mother says, “Go change into salwar – kameez and wear a chain from my jewelry box. Radhika asks herself, “Why am I agreeing to this? I wondered even as I wore it. May be because I failed when I did things my way. All the women’s empowerment and feminism bullshit didn’t really take me anywhere, right? Maybe Kamala Bua and mom’s way was the right way.”

My parents wanted a son for their firstborn. When Aditi was born, they had to undo the damage as soon as possible. Hence my father decided to have another child. Sadly, for them, the second was also a girl which was me. They tried again twice; both times my mother had abortion because it was a girl.

Only in last few pages, we can see the real feminism in the book when Radhika ultimately takes control of all things. When we read the wedding scene of Radhika Mehta. Everyone was very happy and both families have decided to stay in Goa Marriot Hotel. All of Sudden, Goa’s C.M. came and organized an event. Hotel staff has reduced the no. of rooms booked by Mehta’s family.

At this Radhika suggested relocation for the boy’s side but everyone has denied and all the relatives said: that we have to compromise then Radhika said:

“Don’t use this girl’s side and boy’s side word with me again.

Her father replies, “Beta, there are norms. You do not understand. We have to keep them comfortable. Girl’s side is expected to adjust.” In India it is like a tradition to accept all the adjustment from a female side.

No marriage was held earlier in a new place, where no familiar family friends and relatives were. For the first time, she has made all the arrangements by own. We can see that her father Sudarshan has no role than being present in wedding place.

The novel rotates around ambition, career, relations, love – heartbreak, marriage from girl’s perspective.

We can see that Chetan Bhagat has tried to depict a typical matriarchal society and a society where not male child was born. Radhika says, “Mom go sit with Dad, please. I will sort this out. How could I the bride, so all this in the first place? (01)

Conclusion – Chetan Bhagat has written novels about young urban middle class Indians. His novel ‘One Indian Girl is his seventh fictional novel originally published in 2016. It is a heroine centric novel presenting the nuisance of feminism in Indian Contest. This paper aims to analyze One Indian Girl from a feminist point of view. This novel reveals the bitter truth of Male Supremacy and gender discrimination prevalent in Indian Society.

When we study ‘One Indian Girl’ we see that the love triangle of literature seems obsolete. The relationship among Debu, Neel and Radhika are near to a love triangle. It is a tale of female protagonist Radhika whose love relationship with these men prove the real truth of male supremacy and gender discrimination prevalent in the society.

In this regard Simone de Beauvoir says, “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”

In One Indian Girl no woman seems to be inferior to men but in the beginning, Radhika moved to New York, she decided to change herself to be expected by her fellow friends. It was the first time, she tasted whiskey. Though she was inferior to New York culture, she was ready to adapt to change herself.

Chetan Bhagat advocates James Harrison’s Warning: The Male sex May be dangerous to your health, through the characters Sudarshan, the father of Radhika and Neel Gupta, the husband of Kusum and father of two children. In these families, Males want to avoid to interfere when feminine gender plays dominant role. In One Indian Girl Sudarshan, the father of the Protagonist Radhika speaks less and his response is also limited. In following lines, we can see it.

Richa mami debated between the roles of obedient wife and offended aunt, and chose the former.

‘No need,’ My mother said ‘She does everything alone anyway.’

‘That, you should come,’ Aditi didi said. My father stood up.

‘Come, Aparna,’ my father said in his soft voice. My mother looked at everyone. With much reluctance, she stood up. (264)

In this way we can see that no fixed identity of women is shown in this novel. When the opportunity allows, women are also in a position to decide equally to men. Men is considered superior, independent and good decision maker but in this novel woman have equal rights to take decision in every field of life. Women are not inferior to men. Radhika is shown no passive sufferer but an active chooser in this novel.

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