

## Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* ----A Portrayal of a modern Indian Girl 's change in attitude towards life

**Mrs. K.Umakiran**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Kakatiya Government College, Hanamkonda, Warangal Dist, Telangana

### **Abstract:**

Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* is the story of Radhika Mehta, a vice-president at Goldman Sachs in London. It is a good place to note most of Radhika's story told in three extensive flashbacks framed between a prologue and an epilogue. Every one is excited, as Radhika's wedding in Mehta family is first destination wedding in Goa. But Radhika's mind is in an undisclosed mess, because of the situation she is in where she doesn't have the slightest clue what exactly is going to happen. The solution for the chaos is not straightforward. 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. Both of them planned to marry her but to certain reasons, marriage could not take place. Each time she feels disappointed and leaves the place where she was working. In the end, when she was about to marry Brijesh, other two persons arrive to marry her. She feels frustrated and cancels the marriage and goes on world tour to find out what she really likes. At last, she meets Brijesh in San Francisco and asks him to come to Arjit Singh concert with her. He agrees and both of them start laughing in the end.

**Keywords:** Feminism, *Fifty shades of Grey*, *Indian Girl*, fiction, Bollywood moves, human relations.

### **Introduction**

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most reputed popular fiction writers in contemporary post-modern Indian English Literature. So far Chetan Bhagat has authored six fictions and one non-fiction. They are *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night@ the Call Centre* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), and *Half Girlfriend* (2014). Non-fiction is *What Young India Wants* (2012). Few bestselling novels are made into successful Bollywood movies. All his novels are sold in millions. His characters in the novels are portrayed realistically. The plots of his novels reflect contemporary society. Thus, his characters and plots connect to the young readers emotionally and also arouse reader's interest in the novel.

Author for the first time has written *One Indian Girl* novel in a feministic perspective. In an interview, Chetan Bhagat said: "All my earlier books were about a middle class Indian male character but in this book I took the perspective of a modern Indian Girl and wrote from a female perspective. To write this novel, I interviewed around 100 girls to know their aspirations, strengths and pains".

Is it written in feministic perspective totally, somehow I don't agree. Feminism talks about gender equality, liberty and freedom for all. Here in this novel only in the end, protagonist will take life into her hands. Radhika, in all here earlier relationships with men, experiences male chauvinism, insecurity of men and exploitation of her.

In this novel writer puts female character as his protagonist. He raises critical issues such as gender equality, prejudiced Indian customs and traditions, feminism, society verses individualism, liberation and humanism.

The novel starts with the wedding scene of the protagonist Radhika Mehta in Marriot hotel in Goa. Radhika is going to get married to Brijesh Gulati, who works in Face book in USA. Radhika works in distressed debt department of Goldman Sachs. She earns fat salary.

Unexpectedly her ex-boyfriends Debu and Neel arrive in the hotel. Both of them regret breaking relationships with her. And they propose to marry her. Radhika rejects marriage proposals of Debu and Neel, she tells Brijesh too that she wants to cancel the marriage and wishes to go on world tour. This act shows modern girls attitude towards marriage and tradition. Here author takes you to flashback to New York and Hong Kong.

Radhika maintains a live in relationships with Debu in New York. He rejects her because she earns more than him. She gets dejected and plans to resign her job. But, somehow gets transferred to Hong Kong. There in the office she gets into intimate relationship with her boss Neel Gupta. He is

twice her age, married and has two children. On her business trips she shares bed with him. She wishes to get married with him and have family. When she asks Neel to get married, he says Radhika is good for career and not suitable for family. Again, she gets discarded and plans to resign her job. But, on the advice of Neel she gets transferred to London. After much persuasion by her mother, she agrees to get arranged marriage. She finds Brijesh Gulati on Shadi.com. She speaks to him on Skype and agrees to get married in Marriot hotel, Goa.

Author skilfully directs the pace of the book. The narration switches rapidly from the present to the past and to the present effortlessly. The book is of 280 pages, readers will not get bored even once. Interesting part of the book is its climax--- it is totally unpredictable and gives the reader a big surprise.

Radhika is supposed to be envoy of modern educated and career oriented Indian women. In this novel, Bagath deals with various women issues like envy of women's success by men, Debu feels insecure because of Radhika's earning. Men use women but when asked to get married Neel says that Radhika is suitable for career but not useful for family and have kids. Bagath portrays male chauvinism, Indian culture and tradition in the novel explicitly. He also portrays liberal attitude of women and innocence.

Unexpectedly Goa's CM arrives in the hotel to attend an event. Therefore, hotel staff is forced to lessen the number of rooms allotted to the Mehta family. At this, Radhika suggests to reallocate rooms to

Boy's side. But, Mehta family members disagree with her.

During the discussion Radhika says "Don't use this Girls side and Boys side logic with me again. I don't like it." Usually in India, Girls side adjusts and provides all conveniences to Boys side. Here the author tries to give female perspective and assertiveness for gender equality from Radhika's point of view. Author portrays Indian culture and tradition practiced even in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In another instance, Radhika's mother goes to Hong Kong and pesters her to get married.

We all know that human beings have physical desires which need to be satisfied, but there should be an ethical way to do it. Radhika is an intelligent girl, who topped every class she studied. On the other hand, her sister was an average student with impressive looks and had fan following. She got married at appropriate age and bore children. Why does Radhika has this peculiar behaviour then? Was she jealous of her sister's life? What she wants to prove? Does she want to show that she is no less than Aditi?

When her success was celebrated in her office, she aspired to introduce Debu to her colleagues. Why? She wanted to show that girls with average looks can also have boyfriends. Chetan Bhagat explicitly mentions these aspects of female mentality openly and vividly in his stories. In this novel, Bhagat seems have crossed the limits of morality, ethicality, values and decency. Instead of plot's demand, author seems to have incorporated intimate scenes in the story to exhibit his creative writing skills. We don't understand why a mature and wise

man like Neel was kneeling before Radhika for love and marriage? It is beyond anybody's guess. What made him to divorce his wife?

And not only that, Radhika, even though having an affair with Debu and Neel is enjoying smoking joints with Brijesh at a resort in Goa. It shows care free attitude of today's modern girl. Author depicts the change in the attitude of modern Indian girls. Instead of being subservient to men and culture, Radhika exhibits rebellious attitude. Do Indian girls behave like Radhika? She gets involved with two different men before her marriage and abruptly steps back on her marriage day with Brijesh. Not all Indian girls behave like Radhika, but there is change in the attitude of Modern girls working in corporate houses in India and abroad. They are no more bound by gender inequality, age old traditions and culture which discriminates women from men. Title of the novel is apt calling it *One Indian Girl*, as all Indian Girls don't have this attitude.

Chetan Bhagat might have been inspired by E.L James's "Fifty Shades of Grey" as his bold revelation of the intercourse between Debu and Radhika is depicted in the novel. It is not only romantic but also erotic and sensuous to a large extent. The scene narration reflects like anatomy class for the reader.

The novel revolves around ambition, career, relationships, love-heart break and marriage from the girls' perspective. The description of the theme is so striking that reader can read till the last Para of the novel.

Entire plot of the novel also moves around Radhika's journey to search for her true inner self; at the same time she is trying firmly to satisfy everyone's expectations around her.

Her ethnic outlook in sari, chain, and nose pin and hair bun depicts her incessant struggle to meet all the social expectations of the society beyond her personal aspirations. "Why only me, every time" this question torments her frequently when her lovers rejects her. Radhika argues with her mother and her lovers about the reasons for her plight. Her bent head and innocent stare beamed towards others gives readers the deeper insight of her urge for gender equality, basic human rights and indiscriminating human freedom. This red chunari around her seems like a marriage trap to cage an independent bird with wings to fly.

Not only Chetan Bagath has launched the characters naturally but also evolved them independently. All the characters traits can be seen in real life in our society. It shows universal nature of Indian story-telling and gets connected with the readers easily. Now-a-days there is tremendous change in Indian women's thinking. They are highly educated, mobile, career oriented, earning on par with men, takes challenges equally on par with men. All these traits are shown in female protagonist of the novel by the author.

Bagath used conversational style of writing. So that high English language skills are not required to read the novel. He embedded Hindi songs to make the plot local and titillate the readers. This novel brings out

women's issues and modern views from women's perspective.

The plot is very interesting, but has many intricacies. Though the plot has many twists and turns in the end they all connect well. Today's women may like to read this novel as Radhika reflects present generation women's aspirations and thinking.

This novel reflects modern thinking of the youngsters. To days youth has liberated themselves from traditional yoke and culture of India. Thanks to education, exposure to international media and global experience. No more they are bound by gender inequality. Where men are seen superior to women. Modern successful Indian women who are getting educated abroad and travelling around the globe to work in multi-national organisations are definitely getting influenced by global culture and thus they are more likely may not respect age old, gender in equal and out dated Indian culture.

Marriage in India is no more seen as pious. Divorces are increasing day by day. People have become more individual centric rather than accommodative as a family. Now-a-days, in elite society more divorces are seen than ever before. People are getting married more than once, because tolerance level has come down. But, if we look by population wise, it is still miniscule. Chetan Bhagat in this novel "One Indian Girl" has portrayed the changing culture and thinking of modern girls. Latest surveys done by reputed Magazines among the youth on perceptions of youth on Indian culture are revealing that modern youth are no more bound by tradition and culture. Especially, girls have become mobile, liberated, empowered and

feministic in their outlook. Satisfying physical desires are no more seen as virtues by the youth.

Now-a-days, does parents have any control over their daughters. It is a big question. Till daughters are dependent they may listen to their parents. Once they complete their education and start their own career, daughters may become independent. They may like to lead a care free life. Today's women are more career oriented. Chetan Bhagath interviewed over hundred girls before writing this novel. He captured changing views of modern girl and depicted them in this novel.

Generally, Indian parents do not give undue liberty to their daughters. They usually are possessive of their daughters. Indian parents feel responsible towards their daughters throughout their life. But, once daughters complete their education and start their career, they become independent and lead a carefree life.

Writers tries to target modern, liberated and independent youngster who believes in "live and let others live" as they have the capacity to handle the so called pressure of "being Indian".

Bhagat wants to convey that pressure of being a girl is tougher than a boy in Indian society. As parents and society puts extra behavioural restrictions on a girl. Radhika Mehta gives least importance to those societal mores and leads a carefree life. She learns from her own experiences and lives on her own terms. She dares to cancel marriage with Brijesh to utter surprise of near and dear once and goes on world tour.

Bhagath portrays highly educated, modern, liberated and independent woman who are self-motivated and career oriented. Protagonist Radhika Mehta is an independent girl working in a multi-national organisation, travelling around the world as part of her job. Earning exorbitant salary.

Writer portrays stereotype characters in the novel which are truly Indian in nature. In the name of "Custom Protocol", Indians do emotional blackmailing on pre-judge mental tendencies, deceptive tactics and wrong assumptions. Readers can easily match scenes of the novel in real life with personal experiences as we are part of Indian society.

Interestingly, writer in this novel explores feminism from different angles. Radhika's mother high lights anti-feminism issues with the help of her humour and witty comments in every possible way.

Readers can easily connect themselves with this One Indian Girl who is leading an independent and carefree life abroad but on the contrary she is fighting hard with oppressive male dominated Indian society for equality.

By reading this novel, reader will get an idea that we should not get carried over by society's morals, ethics and values. We should lead a life which satisfies us in every way. Because of impact of media we can observe tremendous change in the attitude of modern girls. They want to enjoy every facet of life; Radhika is representative of modern girl's attitude towards life.

Writer uses first person narration, evokes our emotions to read Radhika's mind and empathise with her. She tries to realize her



aspirations against all odds. Though she was let down several times by her lovers, she is resilient enough to bounce back and resume her work professionally.

Radhika's inner voice "Mini me" expresses her grievances with her life. Her inner voice helps us in understanding her. Readers get captivated with the plot and characters because of "Mini me". Because of mess present in her life, Radhika is unable to understand herself.

### Conclusion

One Indian Girl is dedicated to all Indian girls especially to those who dare to dream and live life on their own terms. We should be answerable to our conscious and not justify unnecessarily to anyone. One should not compromise with our personality or likes and dislikes to satisfy others. We should lead life the way we like. We should uphold our individuality. This is the moral of the story and message of Chetan Bagath to every Indian girl.

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