



“One Indian Girl” by Chetan Bhagat – A Portrayal of a Successful Modern Girl or a Bitter Criticism of Indian Values –A Study

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ABSTRACT

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 and not pushed down, by law or by culture, into a subservient role. Post-independence Indian society has witnessed massive mobilization in work field. The constitutional provision of equal rights and privileges for women with men, the five-year plans stressing the vocational and occupational bias in women's education and the modern technological innovations helped in a big way for the professional development of women. Empowering the woman within this context, goes to subvert the western notion of the third world woman. Chetan Bhagat is seen more as a youth icon than just an author. Chetan also writes opened columns for leading newspapers, focusing on youth and national development. His characters are social rebels and his female protagonists remind us of the female characters of G. B. Shaw for their vitality viz. Natural female instinct. The place of action of his novels is set in the hustle and bustle of Metropolitan Indian cities. With the growing urbanization and globalization, a number of opportunities have opened up all around. Men and women are no more seen through the old spectacle which marksmen as superior and women as inferior. In this global atmosphere, so far belittled women are given their due place and respect. With their own intellect and abilities, they are seen to be working shoulder to shoulder with men.

Keywords: *Feminism, culmination, mobilization, empower, subvert, protagonist, spectacle*

INTRODUCTION:

Indian fiction written in English has been impressive and has attracted attention widely. With the passage of time, it has witnessed a rapid change, from being deeply affected by the Raj to being Vernacular. It is, therefore, very important to know and realize such changes taken place in every field of Indian life and society and for that a brief history of Indian English Fiction might be one of the best media of its expression. These changes from socialism to individualism, from sharing to winning and from spiritualism to materialism reveal a various, reflections of change from tradition to modernity in Indian society. Though this is a natural process as history changes with the passage of time and it is noticed that people are continuously losing their inner happiness and self-control inspite of having material comforts. And, therefore, it reveals an amazing range of subject matter with social perspective. There is no second opinion about it that Chetan Bhagat writes in a very gripping manner. The plot is quite intricate still interlinked at times. After reading his eighth book – An Indian Girl, I made out that Chetan Bhagat is quite closely concerned with sharing stories out of banking line, IIMS, IIT's and all that. The chief attention of the story is satisfaction of physical desires, no matter what level one may stoop to and no matter any distinction or clear thinking to be maintained to make sure who is going to be your partner who will be

sharing a bed with you. Firstly a Bengali boy Debu – a worker in an advertisement company. When Debu learns that Radhika is earning way far better than him, he starts feeling insecure, leaves her in-between and runs away. It was partially due to Radhika's insistence to make-up his mind for marrying her and chiefly because of a set-back to the male ego how can a female surpass him in monetary gains and especially at that time when they may get married – though a farfetched dream, still, at least Radhika was thinking so. Debu and Radhika, being the youngsters of an advanced era and that too in a foreign land, who were living together in relationship before/without getting married. Debu could never ever expect his girl friend to have gone beyond his expectations of earning money and this was something that he could not digest and, so, ditches her.

A TWIST IN THE STORY:

Radhika, now heartbroken plans to quit her job, once again dejected by Debu, re-thinks and continues her job at another branch of the same organization in another country. From New York, she is transferred to Hong Kong. Here she comes across Neel, the partner in the company and the boss of her immediate boss. The circumstances bring Neel and Radhika closer on professional grounds. Radhika is an efficient and valued worker. With her dedication and diligence, she wins Neel's heart and also wins an opportunity to work on special projects. Radhika, a frustrated soul, puts all her energy in focusing on her work and then, though having flown in emotions, she makes love with Neel – an elderly person, who is approximately two decades older than her. What makes her do that?...is a big question.

Thereafter, the things get settled and it becomes a regular practice that Neel and Radhika visit places on official grounds for business purpose, of course, and make love during their stay together on these business trips. Later on, Neel even begins visiting her home as well, though they had a kind of understanding not to reveal their relationship, but now, perhaps both of them were not much bothered for keeping it a secret any longer. How can it be? On the other hand Radhika's mother is consistently pestering her to get married. The poor mother never realizes that her daughter was involved with a Bengali boy and now she has surrendered herself to her boss. Radhika is very much aware that Neel is married and a father of two children. She happens to run into his family as well - though by chance. Then how could her

conscience allow her to let Neel enter her personal zone? Was she insane or deprived of Physical satisfaction?...a hundred million dollar question.

PARENTAL SUPPORT – A TRUE FLAVOR OF INDIANNESS

Her mother visits her in Hong Kong and provides her a moral and emotional support. By now Radhika has also learned that she needs to get married and be a mother, a wife and a homemaker. 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 she is not family woman stuff, rather she is suitable for Banking related projects and tasks. Radhika feels bad and is upset and she no longer allows Neel to be at her home or be with her. Once again the things get tough and she wants to resign. Neel is a mature and a wise fellow. He tells Radhika that she is a valuable employee and that the company cannot afford to lose her. He shows her a way out to overcome the problem of meeting and facing Neel. He suggests her to transfer to London and to continue her job. Radhika agrees and moves to London. In the mean time her mother has found a groom - Brijesh for her. Radhika interacts with him on skype and, is kind of impressed. This is followed by her further interactions and a private meeting with him resulting into her consent for marriage.

RADHIKA – A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSWOMAN

Radhika being a business tycoon now, is minting million dollars a year and lacs a month, wants to live her dream of theme based marriage in one of the costliest hotels of Goa. Her wedding date fixed to take place within a week. Just then both of her ex-boyfriends Debu and Neel come there out of the blue and keep imploring that they will handle the situation once the latter (Radhika) gives her consent to marry either of the two instead of Brijesh. Now Radhika is in a fix. She goes to talk to Debu to tell him how she is helpless and cannot listen to his request now as he got too late to open up. Likewise she goes to Neel to show her inability to marry him now. Neel has realized that his equation with his wife Kusum is not appropriate. He took a legal divorce with certain adjustments of kids. He thought it to be a crime to lose a wife like Radhika. A big confusion, rather a mess of things in Radhika's mind. She has had a

quality time with Brijesh as well and she found him to be a nice and a genuine person.

RADHIKA – THE NEMESIS

Finally she thinks over it a day before her wedding what she has to do and makes a phone call to both of her ex-boyfriends to tell them that she would marry neither of the two. She tells them both, where they had gone wrong. She clarified that Debu did not want her to fly high, even though he pretended to and often showed that he wanted to offer similar rights to women; but also expected his wife to be a homemaker. Neel on the other hand 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 engaged, 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 on the top of everything. But along with this, she wants to be herself as well. So, on these grounds she cannot marry either Debu or Neel. She firmly asks them to leave and there will be no more discussion. She goes to Brijesh’s family after opening up her mind to the latter that she cannot marry him. Brijesh is quite upset. He tries to make her understand that he has nothing to do with the past life of Radhika but she is adamant. An emotional breakdown of Radhika’s mother can be seen here.

THE PURGATION OF THE PROTAGONIST (RADHIKA)

After a number of months roll by, Radhika chats with Brijesh and persuades him for a meeting. She is now on world-tour in order to deviate her mind and in the course of her journey she meets Brijesh. She feels sorry for what she did but Brijesh believes in “Let’s bygones be bygones.” Both of them plan to attend a concert and the story ends here. The question arises why Radhika refused marrying Brijesh when she had turned down Debu and Neel? Was it due to her state of mind that she was not stable? Or was it difficult for her to forget her past altogether? Or she wanted to be in live-in relationship with Brijesh now?

RECOMMENDATIONS

When will the author learn to quit his obsession of writing about IIM’s, IIT’s and love and sex only. There are so many other issues as well which can be taken up for a novel. Another thing, was there a dearth

of god and suitable girls for Debu that he became a completely transformed person, realized his mistake and got ready to marry Radhika when she was about to be married with someone else. He leaves everything aside and flies down to India!

CONCLUSION

It’s perfectly fine 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 for ever topped in every class. Her sister on the other hand was an average student with impressive looks and lot of fan following. She got married at a marriageable age and was blessed with children. What was wrong with Radhika then? Was she jealous of these achievements of her sister? Did she want to cross limits to prove that she was no less than Aditi?

At the time of her success being celebrated in her office, why she wanted to introduce her boyfriend Debu to her colleagues? Was it that she wanted to brag that girls with average looks like her can also have boyfriends? Why Chetan Bhagat highlights this aspect of females so openly and vividly in his stories? This novel seems to have crossed the limits of ethics, values and decency. The way love-making scenes have been described, one can make out, perhaps the author wanted to show his creative writing skills or merely a portrayal of an intimate scene in the story. What was that Mr. Neel the partner of a world class company kneels down to beg for love and consent for marriage?...something beyond comprehension.

The other chap Neel, has he gone nuts?...being a family man, an elderly man to radhika, what makes him divorce his wife and leave his children in a total chaos. He has been shown to be wise, mature and sensible man. What happens to such a rational man? His wits have gone wool gathering? And on the top of that – Radhika, even though had an affair with Debu and Neel, is enjoying smoking joints with Brijesh at Anjuna resorts, Goa. What does she think herself to be?...Helen of Troy? Or Cleopatra of Egypt? Or else Venus of Rome? The whole story is a total mess and has been left unfinished. There is no genuine climax to the story. It lets number of questions crop up in the minds of the readers. The title of the story goes with the wind. Do Indian girls behave like Radhika? Getting involved with two men in two different set-ups and finally bringing a disgrace to the family by stepping back exactly the same day when marriage is to take place? In what sense is Radhikas an Indian

girl? yes, it seems right as soon as good and positive things are associated and shared about Indian girls like – to top the institution, to get short-listed in world class company and to make handsome money. But the other negative things seem to be out of place. Something is lacking/missing. Had the story ended at a happy note that after coming back from the concert Radhika implores Brijesh to marry her and they actually get married then perhaps it would have been far better. The behavior of Radhika is not at all Indian. She has love, emotions, empathy – these all things make her Indian, rest all are difficult to digest.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Is this story an example on modern thinking of the youth?

Does CB want to convey how the meaning of marriage – a holy / pious school of thought, is changing these days?

Are physical desires more important than reality?if yes, then why there's a repentance later on?

Is it because of too much pressure of the parents? Or else due to physical beauty of Aditi or may be favouritism by parents...Radhika crosses her limits?

Does Radhika portray the dual or better to say multi-personality character? With parents/ colleagues/ Debu/ Neel/ Brijesh...she behaves differently?

Does story conclude that the parents should give an undue liberty to their daughters?

Towards the end she regains her senses to decide why Debu is not a right pick...because he wants her to be confined within four walls of the house and take care of the kids and family.

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