

Image of Empowered Women in Contemporary Indian Social Spectrum

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat, the voice of India's rising entrepreneurial class always takes up theme for his books which sketches his image as a writer of new India. His novel published in 2016 *One Indian Girl* has portrayed the clear picture of empowered Indian woman of 21st century. He leads his speculation towards the need of hour regarding women in Indian. Having looked into the novel it can be concluded that the present novel is based on feminism. In India it is general acceptance, girls with fair complexion are liked and valued. No one cares of their virtues and qualities. Leading female character in the novel is Radhika Mehata, who has been an unwanted child in her family. Despite being sharp minded and extra genius in study has been deprived of love, affection and care. By dint of her caliber she makes a promising career in the Distressed Debt group of Goldman Sachs, an investment bank and has been vice-president too. Even her progress becomes the subject of worry to her mother as no man can be found easily, equal to her in status, to be her life partner. Chetan Bhagat has revealed his own view on empowered woman. Women are not to be oppressed and suppressed. even they can go with her choice/ preference on their own way. It is time when women can tear their stereotyped image. It does not matter she has been in relationship with someone, is bound to bend knee. If she observes her partner is not supportive in the name of tradition, she should not spoil her career getting married to that fellow. Many feminist novels deal with the women's struggle for their identity but show unhappy end with the failure of women to carve new identity. Unlike other feminist novels *One Indian Girl* ends with the bold and frank decision of Radhika Mehata rejecting the offer of her two lovers – Debashish and Neel Gupta putting the reason of her rejection. Her decision reflects the expectation of each girl to be supported and treated equally. They are not things; they are human being, so should be treated humanely. Man and woman need each other; they are complete with each other but in this completeness both are equal. Wings are to fly not to cut.

My attempt through paper is to penetrate the image of empowered women in contemporary Indian social spectrum. Through Radhika Mehata, Bhagat has revealed his own view and touches the expectation of the present society. He has described that women are not socially empowered yet in Indian society.

Keywords: Chetan Bhagat, individualism, self-assertion, uttamang, Indian sensibility

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Chetan Bhagat, best-selling author of India, has emerged as a voice of youth. He tried his hand in many fields but could not settle there. His instinct of creative thinking makes him perplexed and pushes him to show his caliber of genuine writing who evinces his consensus on multi-burning issues related to young ones of India. Whatever he has expounded in his novels is an expression of Indian youth of the present day. As Chetan Bhagat has been connected to IIT and IIM, he has successfully delved deep into the lives of aspirants. He depicts the aberration and challenges lying in the way of making their career and life successful and peaceful respectively. This way he has been the most likeable author of the young generation. His best six novels are- *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), and *Half Girlfriend* (2014) have been translated into over a dozen languages. His mostly novels are adopted in Bollywood films with slight change. In weaving the plots of the novels, he has focused on educational, political, economic, psychological and social constraints which hamper the progress of young people who are brimming with abilities and skills but bent on their knees before aberration. On these aspects Chetan Bhagat throws the adequate and sharp light from the perspective of young people. As far as the works of other Indian fiction writers are concerned, they are seen ending with the note of compromise on the female side. Unlike other Indian fiction writers, he ends his novels with bold and satisfying notes which touch the nerves of young Indians. As far as the present novel- *One Indian Girl* (2016) is concerned, it revolves around one Indian girl, different from average Indian girls in lots of ways. Bhagat's speculation paves the way for young Indians and new India, free from constraints which are hurdles in making new India. So, the focus is shifted from socialism to individualism. Everyone dreams, few dare.

Novel *One Indian Girl* revolves around a brilliant and reverberant female protagonist named Radhika Mehta, who represents the image of new girls of new India in new circumstances. Chetan Bhagat paints her character in the sharp light of individualism under which independence and self-reliance of the individual is advocated. Radhika belongs to an average family governed by social norms. Tradition-oriented Indian family is not seen advocating higher education for girls. For it makes family members' search tough to find suitable grooms. Related such concerns are reflected in the character of Radhika's mother. The novelist focuses on the growth and development of the country which will happen when the focus will be on the individual's aspirations. We should value the aspiration of individuals; they should be let free to struggle in the new horizon of their choice.

One Indian Girl exhibits the aspiration of Radhika Mehta, who is a fearless girl with a brain. She excels in her life competing her male rivals. She has expertise in drafting business deals, amalgamation and resurrection through sale of distressed assets. She serves the Distressed Debt Group of Goldman Sachs, an investment bank. Owing to her brilliant performance she is vice-president in the aforesaid bank and receives the handsome bonus. Despite it she is not liked by society

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in which her family lives in. On one hand her elder sister Aditi Catches much attention everywhere because of her fair complexion and on other hand she does not receive people's compliment as she is with dark complexion. She develops feeling of inferiority related to her external beauty. But among intellectual she carries a weight, and few can stand before her. So she determines to carve her identity in her profession and feels like her killing with works. She satiates her thirst for identity. But reader can her seeking love and affection at the stake of her career. Here she acts like a typical Indian girl who happily accepts her subjugation to her partner with no speculation on right and wrong. The novel opens with the wedding preparation of Radhika Mehta at Marriotte at Goa, through flashbacks story moves further. Chetan Bhagat manifests the hollowness of Indian social traditions and customs which never affirm the people's action who transgress the old established rules/ for Chetan Bhagat has been attached to IIM, IIT and banking can understand and realize the struggle of aspirants. These aspirants have power to change the entire scenario of the country. One should not care much of old established social convictions which are great aberration in the development's way of new India. Brain wins the battle and breaks the unwanted and unprofessional tradition and customs. Speculation on pros and cons of multi issues from new perspective should be promoted and admired. Definitely Radhika Mehta is different from most of Indian girls who are accustomed to hide the secret of their life. Unlike them she openly confesses her secret related to Debashish and Neel Gupta. She does not care what her declaration will bring to her family as well as to herself. Through this female protagonist Chetan Bhagat poses a genuine question whether girl in relationship with boys before marriage is acceptable in new Indian society like boys or should be compelled to lead a life of compromise. The indirect question is for readers, who are the makers of new India. If boys are acceptable in society with their all secret or open secrets why not girls. Her fear can be felt in her following lines, even though she shows her careless to society reaction:

Hi, I am Radhika Mehta and I am getting married this week. I am twenty-seven years old. I grew up in Delhi. I now work in London at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank. I am vice-president in the Distressed Debt Group. Thank you for reading my story. He is, ever let me warn you. You may not like me too much. One, I make a lot of money. Two I have an opinion on everything. There things don't really make me too likeable, do they? (2)

Chetan Bhagat being the voice of young Indian never fails to expound the weakness of individuals. He projects the characters in the novel as he wants. He does not care about what the people will say or how they will react. He projects the importance of empowered position which is more conspicuous than anything else. He reveals, there is no value of one's sacrifice in society in name of tradition. Country needs brain and brain lies in head, and head is known *uttamang*. So, *uttamang* can bring the revolution. Concept of new India cannot be perceived without new empowered image of woman as women are half population. If girls

get good education, will never permit other to make decision of their life. They are capable to think what is right and wrong for them. Chetan Bhagat affirms this empowered image of women with liberty and choice.

Chetan Bhagat has penetrated that in male- dominated society, no matter much change has occurred in our lives, but no change is perceptible in men's approach to women. Reason behind is stereotyped image of women is mostly liked in Indian society. To spend time with the girls with brain, men has no problem. They inspire and motivate them to fly high but cannot digest her superior position. They feel jealous and insulted. As accepting changed and empowered image is much hard to men. They don't want to hurt their ego. About the image of woman Mary Anne Fergusson says:

One peculiarity of the images of women throughout the history is that social stereotypes have been reinforced by archetype. Another way of putting this world be to say that in every age woman has been seen primarily as mother, wife, mistress and sex object- their roles in relationship to men. (4-5)

Both Debu and Neel in the life of Radhika make here realize that she is subjugated to men for her completeness and happiness. Debu throws her in the pool of dilemma when he manifests his desire to her of having a housewife, who cares to him as well as his children. Radhika comes to him giving up her job which confirms her image of successful and professional woman, for Debu. Although she surprises to know Debu's outlook and opinion upon marriage, she is ready to put her career secondary. Here, Indian sensibility oriented weak girl is seen. After being familiar with Debu's real character she steps back and listen her inner voice of a girl with a meaningful identity. She overcomes her emotional weakness which tarnishes the image of empowered girl. If her identity is separated from her, nothing is likeable in her personality. She projects the image of empowered Indian girl who does not care what people say. She is ready to face fury of Indian people which they will fling upon her. In the beginning of the novel, she clears her stand:

Hi, I am Radhika Mehta and I am getting married this week. I am twenty-seven years old. I grew up in Delhi. I now work in London, at Goldman Sachs, An Investment Bank. I am vice-president in the distressed Debt Group. Thank you for reading my story. however, let me warn you. You may not like me too much. One, I make a lot of money, two I have an opinion on everything, do they? (1)

Empowered image of girl is praised but socially not accepted in India. To close the chapter of Debu he drifts to another city where she encounters Neel Gupta, married man at her new office. He Takes her stern professional. He could not have seen soft heart and soft aspiration of an Indian girl with respect to family and motherhood. He has no issue regarding

her job and career. He considers her unfit for motherhood and family. His approach hurt her individuality. He was twenty years older but fills the vacuum in her illustrating his familial responsibility. His reaction jolts her, and she says, “Exactly. So, what am I doing with you?” (206). Her individuality embarks upon her and she moves to London parting her ways to Neel.

This shows even in this era women are considered source of physical pleasure, they don't value her desires, dreams and aspirations. These are false notions of society. Women should be imparted liberty and equality as men are holding. Third male is Brijesh arrives in her life as her would be life partner. Her accepting Brijesh would a compromise on Radhika's side which she cannot bear. That is why she speculates in that matter seriously and decides no one has right to intrude on her liberty.

Indian fiction in English is replete with the female voice raised against liberty and rights for women. Especially fiction of female writer's project, the challenges and aberration in way of independent and dependent women in family and society. Manju Kapur, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Anita Nair, Shashi Deshpande, Kamala Markandaya etc. have projected the pangs of women adjusting between family and society. How their life become hell in name of social traditions and convictions. Their works depicts their caliber, which is not valued by men in male-oriented society. In society what men do, are valued and women's, underestimated. Because of this, women are deprived of contributing in economic growth of the country and accept the subjugation to men. in name of marriage girls' legs are chained as they are destined to get married and look after children with no complaints. If we brood upon what men as a husband confers to wife food, shelter and cloth. When girls are independent and capable to manage all by dint of their own efforts, why they are forced to accept life of compromise. Where are liberty and rights for women. Compromise always comes in women's part, why? A one book, “The High Caste Hindu women” nature of arranged marriage is expounded this way. When the conjugal relation is brightened by mutual love, the happy wife has nothing to complain except the absence of freedom of thought and action, but since wives have never known from the beginning what freedom is, they are well content to remain in bandage” (Tharu & Lalitha, 247)

When we examine the character of Radhika Mehta, we find, Chetan Bhagat has projected her in such strong position where many men cannot stand before her in competition of her profession. Even Debu, her lover feels inferior. His male ego pushes him to part away from Radhika:

*'I want a simple life. I just want a simple Indian girls'
'I want to break up. I will move out'. (92)*

He directly reveals his liking for a conventional girl who will be available at the service of Debu and his family, 'I have an image of the wife I want the mother of the kinds I want. I am not judging you, but I think I want a housewife' (91), profession career oriented Radhika is not fit in that frame. It shows, men are entangled between tradition and modernity. In all spheres of life empowered women are accepted except social. Debu feels hurt when Radhika speaks with him loudly and fingers at him. He cannot tolerate and blames her to be so rude owing to her strong and better financial status. He taunts her, "You must be right, after all, you get the higher bonus, so what I know, yeah? (89). He does not care how his words hurt her. Image of new women immersed in the works of G.B. Shaw and later it is perceptible in the works of so many writers. This new image of woman has like ability but so many qualities too are further added to. Those are authenticity, contour, boldness, ebullience, frankness, vehement assertion and sadness. All these of gifts of women's education. Education instils confidence in people and teach how to revolt against exploitation. Chetan Bhagat weaving the plot of *One Indian Girl* uses private understanding not public. He projects her as an independent member of society and emphasizes the significance of individuality. Hence, Radhika is sometimes defiant, sometimes mainly assertion that she is only human and not promiscuous. When he decides not to marry even with Brijesh, manifests her preference to life free from established tradition and customs which put secondary. So, her action describes her individualistic action and she keeps right of selecting partner in her hands. she cannot let others govern her life.

Chetan Bhagat has penned the obstacles in the way of making career for girls. His individualistic outlook of the novelist has placed Radhika in the position when she asks question from, 'who will care of her happiness'. She is pseudo talented and derives pleasure in her works pressure too. She never thinks to give up the battle in name of stress and personal problems. She likes to move ahead for self-assertion rather than self-effacement. Like without meaningful identity is in vain. Any how she does not wish to lose her individualistic hold. Such empowered Indian girls should be accepted and honoured socially for their move for right of choice. Men and women should be treated equally as women grab all for those men are worshipped as husband.

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