

Chetan Bhagat's One Indian Girl: The Novel Introducing Modern World to Young Indian Audience

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Abstract

The present research paper aims to bring out Chetan Bhagat's skill of presenting the modern world to young Indian readers along with the way he presented his characters. Chetan Bhagat is not someone who just wants to reflect the Indian youth's love for modernity but also someone who wants to analyze the problems that middle class Indian youth face. Chetan always gives priority to youngsters and motivates them to achieve greater. This is evident through the novel's protagonist Radhika's modern way of life. His novel One Indian Girl also deals with the misfortunes of the modern youth caused by the cultural conflicts.

This research papers attempts to cover the negative shades of the Traditional Indian society's hereditary customs affecting the choices of youth and sometimes lead to "anxieties and Insecurities". While discussing insecurities, this paper tries to analyze the cultural milieu that cause insecurity even to a modern girl like protagonist Radhika.

As an author Chetan Bhagat has an extraordinary ability in discussing very sensitive aspects of human relationships. Love, Expectations, frustrations, possessiveness, and speculations are the different aspects of human relationship well covered in this novel. The present paper explores Radhika's first suitor Debu's expectations that creates anxiety in her and his possessiveness to make her a housewife for life which affects her freedom and creates a fault between their relationship. Her relationship with Neel Gupta a married man with kids arouses speculations into her about the future and social recognition of that relationship.

This research paper commends Chetan Bhagat's amazing descriptions of the world cities Newyork, Hong Kong and London. Skyscrapers, Advanced beauty parlors, Star hotels and restaurants, and breath taking beautiful private owned Islands. Chetan Bhagat wants his readers to enjoy the beauty of each and every location the characters of the novel travel. So he not only gives importance to the characters and the plot but also gives equal importance to present the setting lively to the audience. With every description he brings the foreign locations before our eyes.

The present paper aims to cover the various themes discussed in this novel and commends the Endeavour of Chetan Bhagat who wants his audience to be aware of today's modern world.

Keywords: Youth Aspirations, Modern World, Cultural Conflicts, Anxieties and Insecurities, Male Domination, Descriptive Skill of Chetan Bhagat.

Introduction

The literature is a reflection of society. It replicates the society with its various aspects. One of the functions of literature is to make the society better. Literature echos the flaws of the society with the view to making society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also presents ideal human characters for the society to imitate. The writer in a literary piece designs the human life and actions in such a way

that they give certain message to the society for its betterment. As a writer is the product of his age, his writing is certainly affected by the attitudes, morale and the values of the society.

The post millennial literature especially novels well replicate the modern world. Chetan Bhagat's novels remarkably portray the modern world to young Indian audience. Chetan Bhagat was 'national famous' for his novels where the characters are young urban middle class Indians. He got many awards for his contribution to the post millennial literature focusing on Indian urban youth. He got world acclaim with his writings in various English journals all over India. Post millennial subjects like youth aspirations, love, sex, marriage, urban middle class sensibilities, issues related to the politics, education and their impact on the contemporary Indian society are recurrently reflected thematic concerns in his fictions.

Chetan Bhagat has a tendency to depict the contemporary society to the young Indian readers in all his novels. This research paper discusses how Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl* portrays the modern world to the young Indian audience. *One Indian Girl* was published in 2016. It was a novel about a young Indian girl named Radhika Mehtha, daughter of Sudharsan Mehtha a bank manager. Radhika is a modern girl with independent thinking.

Radhika Mehta belongs to a Punjabi family. She is a studious girl from her childhood. She topped her class at the age of twelve and won many academic competitions. Having good academic records she joins Sriram College of Commerce then she takes the CAT exam and joins IIMA, Ahmedabad. After finishing her MBA with IIMA, the overachiever Radhika gets a job offer of associate at a Distressed Debt Group Goldman Sachs, Newyork. The job paid her an annual compensation of 1,20,000 dollars.

In our modern days Destination Weddings became a new fashion of wedding celebrations for well settled families. The novel opens with Radhika's wedding arrangements in Goa. Radhika Engaged to Brijesh Gulati, a software engineer in San Francisco. She is busy with her Wedding arrangements in Goa. It is a Destination Wedding planned in Marriot Goa Property, a rich hotel in Goa. The Destination weddings are preferred by most of the Indian families now days. The wedding celebrations across India now days have Bachelor and Bachelorette Parties, Mehndhi and Sangeet functions. Of course, Radhika's wedding also has all these events. The family of Radhika, a well paid associate of Goldman Sachs wants the wedding to take place at a wonderful location in Goa with rich adorations.

It was a well planned wedding function. Bachelor parties as a part of wedding celebration is not common in all Indian wedding celebrations. Nowadays economically well settled families in India are adopting this western wedding events. The Bachelor party for Radhika's bridegroom Brijesh takes place at Club Cubana and the Bachelorette party for Radhika was arranged in a club called Love Passion Karma (LPK).

Here is a very interesting account of Radhika's Bachelorette party in this novel.

We were a group of fifteen girls. Suraj had also arranged two bouncers for us. We had a table in a semi-private area, with balloons and champagne bottles.

Nice job, Suraj, I thought.

'Some of the girls seem too young, madam,' the club owner told Aditi didi.

'Everyone is above eighteen,' didi said firmly.

'Some people in your group do look underage, ma'am,' he said.

'It's okay. Give them soft drinks. But get my sister drunk tonight.'

'No, didi,' I said in vain as the owner brought a round of tequila shots.

I had to take two. Jyoti asked for another round. Rajni, our neighbour's

daughter, wanted the music louder. Shruti, my childhood friend from school, wanted

Honey Singh songs. Saloni, Aditi didi's best friend, felt we should play drinking games until someone puked. There is nothing as crazy as fifteen Punjabi girls determined to go out of control.(34)

The above excerpt from the novel narrates the bachelorette party of Radhika. Aditi, the yelder sister of Radhika says to Suraj the event manager to make her sister Radhika get drunken that night. The party was full of drinks like Tequila, Champagnes and various types of soft drinks. All girls including the bride got crazy with the drinks.

The beauty of present day Goa is amazingly picturised by Chetan Bhagat. He paints the picture of Marriot hotel property with its amazing seaward gardens and pools. Radhika often interacts with her bridegroom Brijesh Gulati in Marriot. As a bridegroom he was curious enough to talk to Radhika often. Radhika enjoys his company and they share a lot about each other during their evening walk along the Marriot pool. While everything was moving in a fine way, Radhika receives a message from Debashish Sen, her ex-boyfriend.

Debu in his messages told Radhika,
 'For the past few months I have been thinking of you constantly.'
 'Only had the courage to text you now.'
 'I made the biggest mistake. I didn't value you.'
 'I love you.' (28)

Yes she had a relationship with Debashish Sen, an Ad agency employee in Newyork. Radhika tried to avoid him. She wants him to stop messaging her as she is in Goa for her wedding. Debu's break up with her before three years lead her to hate Debu forever.

In this novel Chetan Bhagat gives detailed account of the modern day Newyork. He gives minute details of each and every lane in Newyork. Goldman Sachs office, Restaurants, Flyovers in Newyork are beautifully portrayed by him. While reading this novel we can see the modern lifestyle in Newyork. Radhika meets Debu in Newyork where she was working as an associate in the distressed debt group Goldman Sachs. Debashish Senworking in BBDO an advertising agency on Madison Avenue was introduced to her in a party at W Hotel in Newyork. Radhika meets Debu there. Both of them became friends. Soon they get closer enough to become lovers. Radhika was attracted towards Debu by his feministic views of women. Debu used to tell her that woman can achieve anything and he encourages her when she has speculations about her career in Distressed Debt Business. In the course of time both got closer and took for a live-in-together relationship. Both of them enjoy their life together. Radhika also begins to shine in her career and earns high bonuses. Radhika gets a bonus of 1,50,000 dollars in addition to her salary of 1,20,000dollars. Radhika wants to share this surprise news to Debu at first. She also invites Debu for dinner to celebrate her bonus news . She plans for dinner in a Greek restaurant.

The modern world also witnesses cultural conflicts and Identity crisis. All these themes are well discussed by Chetan Bhagat in this novel. Cultural conflicts became an important cause for the insecurities of present day youth. Cultural conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when different cultural views and beliefs clash. Yes in this novel Radhika wants to continue her job even after marriage and support family. But Debu wants his wife to quit her job before marriage and remain in house for his children .These different views create conflict between the two. This is evident through their dinner conversation at a Greek restaurant.

When Radhika revealed the surprise of her bonus news to Debu, instead of praising her for achieving high bonushe simply replied her " Nice". Debu who talked a lot about feminism now fails to recognize Radhika's achievements and takes her bonus news very ordinarily.

Here is the conversation between Debu and Radhika at the Greek restaurant.

'My bonus for the year is...don't tell anyone, okay?'

‘Whom will I tell?’

‘A hundred and fifty.’

‘A hundred and fifty what?’ he said, sounding confused.

‘150,000 dollars.’

‘150,000 dollars?’ he repeated my words.

‘Yeah.’

‘You mean total compensation? You get 120 already, so thirty more bonus?’

‘No. One-fifty is the bonus. Total comp is 270.’

Debu’s mouth fell open. It stayed like that for a few seconds before he spoke again, one deliberate word at a time.

‘You made 270,000 dollars last year?’ he said. His big eyes seemed even bigger.

‘Yeah.’

‘Oh,’ he said in a low voice. ‘Holy fuck! These banks.’

‘Well, not everyone had this number. They told me it is one of the highest for associates of my level. I had a five rating.’

‘Nice,’ he said in a muted voice.(93)

The above conversation is a keyword to understand Debu’s mindset. It is clear that Debu was not much happy about her bonus. At the restaurant he was more interested on the menu card and tasting various dishes than listening to Radhika. From this conversation Chetan Bhagat reveals the inferiority complex of Debu who earns lesser than Radhika. His jealousy prevents him from praising her achievement.

The modern world opens a threshold for youth to achieve a lot. But it also poses difficulties and they are struggling to come out certain odds. Radhika, a dynamic young woman achieves a lot in banking and earns considerably. But her boy friend Debu could not accept the truth that she earns more than him.

In the course of time Radhika urges Debu to think about the future of their relationship. She asks Debu when will he marry her. It was because of her mother reiterating her about marriage. She is ready to see a bridegroom for her.

Radhika, a dynamic modern woman wants to be independent in her choices. She is firm in her decision to marry Debu. But Debu fears that his identity will be lost if he marries Radhika. It was because of the belief that wife should be inferior to her husband in certain things like Education, Job and economical position. This is evident for the fact that the present day youth are suffering from anxieties and insecurities.

‘Whatever, Debu! So stay here, fine. But quit complaining so much.’

‘I can’t even share and vent with you?’

‘You can. But at some point, do something about it. You don’t, Debu. You don’t do anything about us. You don’t do anything about the job you don’t like.’

‘What do you mean I don’t do anything about us?’

‘My mother calls me every week. She wants me to start looking at boys. I tell you every time she says that. Do you ever take the hint?’

He kept quiet. I had brought out all the touchy topics at one go.

‘You have seen how my career is going at the moment. If only it was okay, I would have thought about it.’

‘So do something about the career, Debu,’ I said. (104)

Commercialism became an important aspect of the modern world. Chean Bhagat in this novel defines how commercialism became inevitable in the finance sector. Radhika as a distressed debt group associate has duties of recovering the properties of indebted companies without concerning the future of the employees. Debu called her business as ‘Blatant Capitalism’ and he also fears that this type of job will harden her Character that she can’t even be a soft mother to her children at home. So Debu say she wants Radhika has to be in house all the time for their children. Radhika refuses to leave the job and tell him that she is ready to stay at house if needed. But Debu urges her to quit the job otherwise she can’t be a better wife to him and a good mother for his children. But Radhika refuses this and says him her job has nothing to do with her soft nature as mother. She went to her office on that day. While she was in an official meeting she received continuous messages from Debu. Debu announces his decision of breakup with her unexpectedly. Radhika cant bear this. And pleads him not to leave her. Radhika could not believe his break-up and became a drunkard after this. Radhika’s refusal to quit her job is the main reason for Debu’s break up with her. The woman of present world consider their job gives them social and economical empowerment. They believe that job gives them an identity which enables them to develop further in life.

While reading the novel I have an opinion that Debu’s male dominative ideas may kindled break-up between the two. Debu wants Radhika to be subservient to him.

After break up Radhika moves to Hong Kong and she is placed as a vice president of the distressed debt group Goldman Sachs. In Hong Kong Neel Gupta, an Indian is her boss’s boss and partner of the distressed debt group. Neel Gupta is a family man 20 years older than Radhika. He is a father of two kids and had a wife named Kusum. Neel Gupta is a kind mentor to her in Goldman office. Neel and Radhika were successful in finishing a distressed debt deal of El Casa seaplane and Resorts, a Philippines company which owns a lot of private islands in Philippines. Apart from their age both become good friends. They share a lot about each other. Marcos Sereno the owner of El-casa offers Neel and Radhika to stay in ‘Palwan Island’ in Philippines owned by him. In El Casa resort, Palwan Island Neel and Radhika celebrated their El-casa deal closure with drinks. In Palwan they got mesmerized by the beauty of the Island and shared a lot with each other. Radhika shares everything about her love and break- up with Debu. And Neel also shares her about his family. We have to say both of them became closer.

They became attracted towards each other and have sex. After Radhika woke up from sleep she realizes that she made a great mistake in her life. She feels worse on havingsex with Neel who is twenty years older than her and off-course , her boss too. She wakes up from the sand and goes to her room without informing Neel who was lying next to her. She cried bitterly that she made a major blunder in her life. She began to realize that her relationship Neel has no future. She thinks rationally that how Neel a married man with kids can give a secured life to her. Here we have to observe one thing. Though Debu felt insecure about his future and not firm in his relationship with her, she tried to marry him even by resigning her job. Paradoxically now Neel is ready to do anything for Radhika. But she refuses to continue her relationship with him because she feels insecure about her future with him. The insecurity in the young minds of Debu and Radhika about their future is linked with the ideas of traditional society in India.

Debu a Bengali and Radhika was a Punjabi girl . Both are Indians. Both were inherited some cultural instincts Indian society. Due to this Debu began to feel jealous on her. His inferiority complex disturbs him which resulted in his break up with Radhika. In Indian traditional society a husband has to be superior than his wife in every aspect. Because of this Debu dared to lose a good girl like Radhika.

And Radhika from the beginning itself expressed her belief on the Indian notion of marriage. Marriage in India from the ancient times is viewed as an institution which is inevitable in the life of every man and woman. It is an institution that provides security of future and status in the society for both men and women in India. Because of this she urged to Debu to marry her immediately.

In the end both Debu as well as Neel came to Radhika's Wedding in Goa. Debu tells her that he made a great mistake in his life by losing Radhika and asks her to swap the groom and cancel the wedding. Neel also tells her to cancel the wedding and marry him and move to Hong Kong. Radhika who gets stressed by her ex-boyfriends, rejects both Neel and Debu. Got messed up by the hassles she cancels the wedding and plans a tour world wide to free up her mind. In San Francisco she meets her groom Brijesh and gets closer with him. The novel ends with Radhika's perspective of her marriage with Brijesh in future.

As an author Chetan Bhagat wants his readers to have a live feeling of the places and events in his novels. Personally I was motivated to choose this title "Chetan Bhagat's 'One Indian Girl' the Novel Introducing Modern World to Young Indian Audience" because of his amazing descriptive skill. With his mind-blowing descriptions, he brings the persons and the places before our eyes. The New York, Hong Kong and the Beautiful islands in Philippines are well pictured in this novel. Here are some excerpts from this novel where we can admire his mind-blowing language... This is a description of Neel's wife ...

I guess more than anyone, I was the badly behaved one. I avoided eye contact with Kusum. I did manage a side-glance. She was slim, elegant and had a straight, upright posture. She was wearing a long black dress with a diamond necklace and matching earrings, the ones you see advertised outside the Cartier store in Hong Kong. I noticed a fat solitaire on her ring finger. Three carats, I guessed. (204)

Here Chetan Bhagat describes a Greek Restaurant ...

I booked Nerai, a highly rated Greek restaurant a ten-minute walk from the BBDO office. I sent Debu a message after making the reservation.

'Nerai, 55 East 54th St., 6.30.'

I left work at 5.30 p.m. I had to walk to the South Ferry station and take the '1' train to reach the restaurant. I decided to take a taxi instead. Heck, I deserved a twenty-dollar cab ride today. The yellow New York taxi took the FDR drive, a highway along the east side of Manhattan. The cab whisked me to 49th Street without a traffic signal. From there the taxi drove westwards towards Nerai's location.

I reached early and surveyed the restaurant at leisure; Greek paintings on white exposed-brick walls. I scanned the wine list and ordered a bottle of Greek red wine. (92)

And this is a description about the Marriott hotel in Goa

Palm trees along the Marriott pool swayed green in the breeze. The 5 p.m.

December sun lit up the hotel's cottages, casting gentle shadows everywhere. We went down the walking path, with the hotel to our left and the Arabian Sea to our right. I felt overdressed in my sunflower outfit as other hotel guests roamed around in shorts and vests.(25)

Chetan Bhagat's novel 'One Indian Girl' pictures the present world to young Indian Audience. Chetan Bhagat's mind blowing language and his amazing descriptions of persons and places go along the plot of this novel. I think it is a unique aspect of Chetan Bhagat's novels. This novel also discusses the cultural conflicts in the modern world and how people with different opinions have truce with each other. This is evident through the love affair and breakup between Debu and Radhika. The anxieties and insecurities became inevitable in the life of every youth in today's modern world. Traditional set of rules and ideas are the causes of insecurities in the life of youth since they differ from the modern way of life which youth aspire. This is evident through Debu's

idea of his wife. He forces Radhika to quit her job and remain a house wife. But Radhika, a dynamic modern woman refuses to do so. And Radhika's refusal to resume her relationship with Neel is also an example of her cultural instinct about marriage which tells her that her relationship with Neel who is twenty years older than her is an irrational relationship. Thus Chetan Bhagat also portrays anxieties and insecurities in the life of present world youth. The novel 'One Indian girl' makes the young readers to understand and comprehend today's modern world with its various aspects like youth aspirations, cultural conflicts and identity crisis. It also provides minute details of the world's important cities like Newyork, Hong Kong and London. Thus it empowers the readers with an exposure of the modern way of life in world cities. This novel is a precious one to young Indian audience which gives a vast knowledge of the present world and comprehends youth aspirations fighting odds to achieve greater things. Let me conclude this research paper by saying that this novel is a remarkable achievement of the author Chetan Bhagat.

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