

ONE INDIAN GIRL: REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM

Amol Vasantrao Musale, Research Scholar, R.T.M. Nagpur University & Assistant Professor, Dept. of Humanities, SCET, Nagpur

Dr. Sunil Kumar Navin, Research Supervisor & Associate Professor, Department of English, Nabira Mahavidyalaya Katol

Abstract:

Chetan Bhagat, the most popular novelist among the Indian novel lovers at present, has the charisma to reach the heart and psyche of the readers. His characters can be met in all societies and communities and hence his writing bears the signature stamp of the reality. Seven best seller novels fall into his account. The first six novels put forward male characters as protagonists while the recent one, One Indian Girl depicts a female. Though it is written in the context of feminism, the fact cannot be denied that this feminist approach is accompanied with Liberalism and Individualism. It deals with: What do women expect from the society? And why are they denied what they deserve? The novel, One Indian Girl, presents the inner mind of an Indian Girl who has to fight for everything against the age old traditions and orthodox thinking. The novel has been studied in the light of feminism.

Keywords: *Liberalism, Individual Identity, Equality, Feminism, Humanism.*

Introduction

The concept of liberation of women is western in origin. This issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century. Oxford English Dictionary defines Feminism: "The advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes" This issue is broadly applicable to the Indian context as well. The illogical and irrational observation can be noticed in Indian society about how differently girls and boys are treated. As a matter of fact, men and women are treated unequally. The partial treatment can be noticed in behavior, language, approach and attitude. If a girl dares to go out during the night, they are immediately snubbed and discouraged. On the contrary, if a boy does the same, it is considered as an adventurous and encouraging act which is applauded. If a girl wants to travel alone, she is advised to be careful; whereas the boy thinks it his privilege. The girls are considered liabilities and the boys assets for family. On humanitarian ground, it is difficult to justify.

The novels of Chetan Bhagat are the perfect epitome of Indian social realism. They deal with love, sex, marriage, ambition, corruption, politics, education and their impact on the Indian society. That's why, Bhagat is held as the Youth Icon. He gives the medium to the youth to speak their mind. He has endeavoured to raise many issues in his writings so that the attention of the readers may be drawn to these issues which will let them know the real conditions in which they are living. It brought a sense of worry and accountability among the youth. Everyone finds the issues raised in the novels arising from their own life or someone close to them. The episodes in the novels are the episodes from common life. All the protagonists in his novels are sensitive youths who do not want to live with the predominant crooked situations of society. They want to change the situations and for that they are even ready to against the age old customs, traditions and beliefs. They are optimistic and revolutionary in thoughts and actions. They raise their voice against education system which demotes creativity, age old cultural differences, the problem of corruption, the problem of unemployment, serious identity crisis among the young generation, unhealthy customs and traditions in Indian society, unequal treatment to a girl child, etc. The characters in

the novels are the replica representing the enlightened or darkened contemporary Indian society.

As the Oxford English Dictionary defines Feminism as advocacy of women's rights on the ground of equality of the sexes, Chetan Bhagat advocates for the same equality through his novel, *One Indian Girl*. This novel is totally different from the other five novels. In his first five novels, we find males are the protagonist, whereas in *One Indian Girl* a FEMALE is central character. She represents all Indian girls who have a plethora of questions towards irrational approach. This irrational approach is the unequal treatment; they are meted out to on the basis of sex. The protagonist Radhika Mehata, a Vice President in the Distressed Debt Group at Goldman Sachs, is the voice of all suppressed women. The back cover of the novel highlights:

“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.

Three I have a boyfriend before. Okay, may be two.

Now if it was a guy, you would be okay with all this.

But since I am a girl, these three things don't really make me too likeable, do they?”

A girl is usually underrated in the family as well as in society. In case of Radhika, this is watered by her mother. In the novel, it is predominantly seen that it is her mother who frequently reminds her that she is a girl and not a boy. She does not even hesitate to say in front of Radhika, “You will judge me, so no point telling you. You don't know what it is like to be without son.” During the Destination wedding ceremonies, her mother continually reminds her that they are girls' side and therefore they are born to adjust. As she says, “Beta, these are norms. You don't understand. We have to keep them comfortable. Girls' side is expected to adjust.”

The novel not only advocates Feminism, it stands out for Liberalism and Humanism. The society needs to liberate from aged old rusted thinking. It is not the blame to be put on the men's side alone because women also can be seen supporting this which doesn't seem to be logical at all. Radhika's mother and sister can be seen deeply rooted in the age old thinking and traditions. They are ever ready to justify that the society should be dominated by males. Two different categories of thinking can be seen among the women: the one rationally justifying that the girls should be underrated to boys and another with rational thinking demanding the equal treatment. Is it difficult to be a girl or is it more difficult to be an Indian girl? Being an Indian girl is harder because she is not even allowed to think out of the box of orthodox psyche or she herself doesn't want to think out of the box. An Indian girl is always seen struggling for her individual identity. She wants to free herself from the borrowed identity of father or husband. Radhika wants to have her own identity. For this Individual Identity she is left with no option but to fight with the orthodox thinking of her own family members. When she takes higher education and earns a lot, her parents are worried that she will not get the groom. This means that her parents think that a husband should earn more than a wife. When Radhika starts looking for groom, many do not accept her just because she earns more than them. The qualities which are strength for boys, those qualities become weakness for Radhika. She wants her to be known by her achievements. She wants to live her life on her terms and conditions because she thinks that it is her own life. Every individual has a thought process to think about them. Every individual has his/her own pattern of thinking and living which must not be denied. He/ she has the right to question everything and that's what he/ she wants. All the time justification is not required.

Identity crisis among the youth is well notable in many novels of Chetan Bhagat. Everyone is struggling for identity. The young boys and girls can be seen striving for Individualism and Liberalism. Arti in *Revolution 2020* is the daughter of the District Magistrate D.M. Pradhan who belongs to one of the richest and most respected families in Varanasi. She wants to be an Air Hostess, but her parents do not allow her to be so. Unwillingly, she enrolls for some other course at University. Still, her dream for

hospitality makes her work in a hotel. Her salary is less than her pocket money but it is not the question of earning money, rather it is doing something which she likes most. She wants her own identity. Though she does not earn much, she is happy.

Conclusion:

“Mini-Me” in Radhika is always giving strength to her. The Mini-Me, the inner voice is not the inner voice of Radhika alone, it's the voice of every Indian woman. Some women give it free way to grow and form and some suppress it within and then the same is transferred to the next generation. This “Mini-Me” is present in everyone. The battle is always going on in mind of everyone. Some win, some surrender. This immaterial thinking affect the material things in life. Bhagat emphasizes the liberty of women. This liberty shows to think, to do, to judge and to justify. His women characters like Radhika have belief in “an absolute, a perfect, a pure and a noble freedom”. 3

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