



## ***One Indian Girl: The Novel of Individual Manifestation***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Chetan Bhagat portrays human relationship in relation of political, social and economic values. He has a definite way of presenting social fabric of the society. Adopting definite way of writing has earned him wide range of audience in the country especially the young ones finding him the authentic presenter of their aspiration. He writes what is demanded by the youth of the country making them feel what is happening around them in contemporary times and how they have to maintain the balance in such situations. His novel One Indian Girl is a good novel portraying new picture of Indian women in modern times and under new circumstances. Some people look at this novel from feministic while as manifestation of individuality can be fully witnessed in the life of the protagonist as well.*

**Key Words:** *Contemporary times, Feminism, Human relations, Individuality. Modernization*

Chetan Bhagat is a novelist of modern India. He portrays such issues in his writing that are very close to modern generation. He writes on multiple issues i.e. the faulty education system, communal and racial society, problems of Indian youth and so on. Therefore, he has been called in *Indian Today* as a symbol of new India.

Chetan Bhagat was born on 22 April 1974 in Delhi, the capital of India, in a middle class Punjabi family. His father was in army and his mother was an employee in a government department. He got his early education in Delhi. First he joined an Army Public School at Dhaula Kuan from 1978 to 1991. His keen interest in science helped him to go for IIT exams. He cracked the IIT examination by securing a good rank to get into Indian Institute of Technology (IIT Delhi) for Mechanical Engineering in 1991. It was a turning point in his life. His admission at IIT Delhi helped him to look for better life. In studies he didn't make so much progress. The experiences at IIT Delhi helped him to write his first novel *Five Point Someone*. Then at IIM Ahmadabad pursuing MBA he did a lot progress in his studies. There he also met a south Indian girl with whom he fell in love and later love affair converted into marriage. The marriage with the girl named Anusha Suryanarayan supplied him the plot for his novel,



2 States: *The Story of My Marriage*. Since then he has been writing different novels portraying multiple aspects of contemporary Indian society.

Individualism is an ideology that gives more importance on the moral worth of an individual to promote his goals and interests through his own inclinations with no external coercion. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2000) defines individualism as "The quality of being different from other people and doing things in your own way"(661). Individualists believe on the principle of independence and self reliance advocating the individual should be given more preference over social group and state. It does not want any external restrictions upon individual's interests by society. The individualist attempts to learn and discover what his or her own interests are on a personal basis without following the interests of a social structure. He follows multiple philosophies based on his personal interests that he finds useful.

People in India felt themselves in the same scenario in post modern era striving to break away from established traditions and customs. There are different writers in India trying to portray things in realistic manner bringing forth anger and frustration of people against the system where in there is no scope for liberty and individuality. Chetan Bhagat is one of the writers winning laurels of people for being true representative of their feelings and aspirations. His writing is the symbol of liberal society with no limitation on imagination, creativity and innovation inspiring people to follow the basic principle of live and let live. Bhagat's protagonists follow life in their own way showing their anger against the system that conspires to defeat them in their endeavors. Ryan, Oberai, Vroom, Ishan and Krish are men of their own individuality refusing to make compromises that may win them laurels but hurt their souls.

The novel *One Indian Girl* follows the same tradition of his other novels where the protagonist follows her life not taking care of what others think and say to her. She pursues her goals independently. She is different from common Indian girls living her life not following the dictates of society and system. She is guided by her own voice even though that is against the rules of society.

In the beginning it is seen that the protagonist Radhika Mehta is hitched with Brijesh according to her parents' aspirations and it is viewed as a forced compromise with system. But in the end it can be seen that the protagonist after weighing the pros and cons of her relations with the three men decides to accept the offer of Brijesh Gulati to be her life partner. In this way she appears to be more individualistic acting the way she believes right and suitable for her.

Radhika Mehta does not care what the society thinks of her because she confesses everything what has she done in her life. The back cover of the book has the following extract:

Hi, I am Radhika Mehta and I am getting married this week.

I work at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank. 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.

Three, I have had a boyfriend before. Okay, maybe two.

Now if I was a guy, you would be okay with all of this. But since I am a girl, these three things don't really make me too likeable, do they? (Back Cover)

The nature of Radhika seems very open. She does not scare to disclose the secrets of her life. There is a contrast built up between what the reader would expect Radhika Mehta to be what actually she is. She believes people may not like her because of the three disqualifications. She earns money much more than what average boys can make and she has her ideology. In manner of competition she performs better than boys letting them feel embarrassing. She through her nature questions how far such a girl is more likeable if she has boyish attributes. As the novel itself suggests a question of the likability on part of the protagonist.

From professional point of view Radhika Mehta is very brilliant having expertise in drafting business deals, liquidations, amalgamation and resurrections through sale of distressed assets. She works at the Distressed Debt group of Goldman Sachs, an investment bank and she is very popular with bosses and colleagues. Due to her professional efficiency she gets handsome salary and generous incentives.

As for as her pre-marital affair is concerned Radhika is an utter failure. Both of her relations are unsuccessful due to different circumstances leading her to undergo frustration at different stages. Debu is unable to acknowledge her professional success and higher earnings. He feels uneasy to lead his future life with her. He expects women to domestic roles like child bearing and rearing, hospitality and consolation. What he wishes is a mother- figure and an outlet for his sexual urges. He does not accept an intellectually equal and outperformer as a wife. But Radhika still tries to patch up with him and all such attempts prove miserably failure. It is fully seen in the following statement of Debu:

'I am being calm, okay? But I have an image of the wife I want. The mother of the kids I want. I am not judging you, but I think I want a housewife'.

'What?' I said. My fork almost fell out of my hands.

'It's what I have seen growing up. I go to work, make the money. Wife takes care of the home. Simple needs happy family'.

'What are you talking about, Debu? Didn't you say women could achieve anything today? Didn't you encourage me when I had to apply for distressed debt?'



‘I did. I still admire you. I respect all women who achieve big things. I think it is great ...’

‘But you can’t be with them?’

‘I don’t know. Maybe not. Maybe I could. But you made me think about marriage and I did. I visualized a future home. I would like my wife to be there for me and my kids’. (99)

The fact of the broken relationship is that Debu is scared of having a wife with brains and practical efficiency. So he slowly runs away from her and does not agree to listen to her offers of leaving her job and settling down as Mrs Debu. By this Radhika Mehta is compelled to bury her past throwing her cell phone over the Brooklyn Bridge and she now starts living her life in different city where she come into a contact with a married man namely Neel Gupta at her new office. With Neel she has different issues as he considers her as a hundred percent professional unfit for motherhood and family life. This affects her individuality as the following episode portrays it clearly:

‘What do you want, Radhika?’ Neel said.

I kept silent.

‘A future? I am twenty years older’, he said.

‘You said age doesn’t matter in love. Didn’t you?’

‘I am married. I have kids. So much baggage.’

‘Exactly. So what am I doing with you?’

‘Aren’t you happy with just what we have?’ Neel said. He seemed to be genuinely confused.

‘Would you be? If you were in my place?’ I asked, looking him squarely in the eye.

‘We have our work. We have love. We have excitement. We have friendship. We don’t have the predictability and monotony of a married couple’.

‘You make marriage sound so bad. You are married. The whole world gets married’.

‘Clarify this for me. Do you want to get married? Or are you feeling stressed only because your mother wants you to get married soon?’



‘Eventually I do want to, Neel. How could you think I won’t? I want marriage, kids, family’.

‘Really?’

‘What do you mean, really? I do. I want Sunday IKEA trips with my husband and a whole bunch of kids. I want to wipe my kids’ messy faces when I feed them. I want to bake cookies for them. Yes, yes I do’.

‘Really, Radhika?’ Neel said. He looked at me gobsmacked, as if I had revealed my secret desire to join the ISIS.

‘Yeah. Why?’

‘I thought you were career-minded’.

‘Excuse me? What is that supposed to mean?’ I said my voice ice-cold.

(206-207)

Discouraged by the attitude of Neel Gupta Radhika feels insulted so she moves to London parting her ways with Neel. In London she gets a marriage proposal from Brijesh and finally that is accepted by her. It is a destination wedding in picturesque Goa where Radhika Mehta has a unique experience. The two previous lovers follow her there with offers of marriage. Debu tells he is her first love claiming he is unable to find his suitable life partner. On other hand Neel has divorced his wife to get Radhika as his new life partner. Brijesh on the other hand is ready to accept her for what she is. After evaluation she decides not to marry any one of them. She becomes ready to live her future life lonely not letting anyone to change her thinking. At last she decides to contact Brijesh again and proposes him for marriage.

Radhika is different from all the Indian girls. The Indian girls are believed to be submissive and obedient following the established tradition and customs. But Radhika seems breaking the established traditions without caring what people will say to her. She does not like to keep secrets and brings them before the public. That is why the author has titled the novel *One Indian Girl* and not an Indian girl.

The novel successfully exposes the false notions of society and through the character of Radhika the novelist has portrayed how she has not been allowed to follow dreams in her own way. The novelist shows that she cannot be taken in by male hypocrisy. Though some of her actions may look aberrant, she never loses her individualistic roots that encourages her to choose her life partner, Brijesh, independently.

Thus the novel is a faithful record of individualism and it is reflected how the protagonist Radhika is in search of the fulfillment of her true self and she succeeds in her quest. Her success in the end has beautifully proved

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that she is no passive sufferer but an active chooser. Therefore, the individualistic outlook of Chetan Bhagat flows not only through all his novels but also through his blood vessels..

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