

Breaking Stereotypes: The Evolution of Contemporary Indian Women in Chetan Bhagat's One Indian Girl

***Dr. Vinod Kumar**

Abstract

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Chetan Bhagat's *One Indian Girl* from a critical perspective in order to identify a departure in the mannerisms and conduct of Indian women. Confusion and turmoil abound in Indian women's brains. Social prejudices are something they must contend with. According to our society, girls can have a successful job or a successful household, but not both at the same time. And what a surprise! Our daughters receive wings from us, but they are then instructed to construct a nest. She must thus forget to fly. A woman's anima—her aspirations and tendencies in her mind, ready to erupt and follow at the slightest provocation—is presented in Chetan Bhagat's novel *One Indian Girl*. Radhika Mehta creates a maiden who is a strong supporter of feminism, but she must deal with the patriarchal rules of Indian society, which causes her to go through a lot of different kinds of pain and suffering. The main focus of this story is Radhika, the advocate, revealing the remarkable qualities of a contemporary Indian lady. Radhika's social standing has a significant impact on society, making her a prime target for numerous known and undiscovered issues that aggravate her unmet goals of not receiving physical affection and recognition. The discrimination Radhika endured as a child and young woman is the primary cause of her unmet goals.

The story is told in the first person by the protagonist, whose inner voice—referred to as "Mini-me"—constantly conveys her innermost thoughts and feelings.

Keywords: feminism, indian women, social norms, radhika, psychological conflict, identity crisis, empowerment, societal expectations

Introduction

One of the most well-known Indian authors of English-language literature is Chetan Bhagat. He is an Indian author, motivational speaker, social media influencer, and Bollywood scriptwriter. Themes like as love, marriage, politics, social unrest, and India's educational issues have made his writings well-known. He draws attention to the misunderstandings, issues, and dilemmas that young people encounter in contemporary life. Chetan Bhagat's seventh fantasy book is titled *One Indian Girl*. This article examines Indian women's mental conflicts from a socio-psychological perspective.

Women in our patriarchal culture face a variety of discriminatory practices. Our culture's drawbacks

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include giving girls wings to fly but denying them access to the free sky. They believe that girls can succeed in their careers or be good moms and wives, but they are unable to manage both roles simultaneously. Men's egos are a pest to our society because they cannot accept women's achievement over theirs. But males are not all the same. Since we are unique and endowed with the ability to fly like free birds from birth, I believe we should follow our emotions and not allow others to take advantage of us.

Research and findings

The book offers a never-ending mental battle together with feminist objectives that are sparked by various circumstances. Throughout their lifetimes, women must deal with a variety of challenges. The assumption that one should have a light complexion in order to be accepted by family and society is the first step. Second, since it damages the masculine ego, a woman shouldn't make more money than a guy. Thirdly, a woman must adapt to her parents, husband, in-laws, and kids throughout her life.

The main character of the book, Radhika, is an ordinary Punjabi girl who was raised in Delhi. In her early years, she developed an inferiority mentality. Even though she did well in school, boys did not pay much attention to her because of her dark skin during her adolescence. Although she is presented in the novel as unpopular, she eventually develops into a self-sufficient woman who can make her own decisions.

At the Marriott Hotel in Goa, where her family has come for her destination wedding, Radhika Mehta is in charge of handling an unexpected room allocation catastrophe at the start of the book. Her mother, who frequently complains about her high-paying career and her single status, is the main reason she agrees to get married. Her mother is constantly worried about how she would find a compatible partner for a girl with her level of education.

Her mother's response to Radhika landing a job in America that pays \$120,000 a year is shockingly uninteresting. However, even this achievement is seen unfavorably in terms of marriage chances, as her mother asks how Radhika would find a spouse instead of celebrating. This attitude reflects the way Indian culture views working women: they can be good moms and wives or successful in their careers, but they are not seen as having the capacity to be both at the same time.

After a string of unsuccessful romances, she decided to marry Brijesh in an effort to live a happy life. Radhika is in Goa and has to worry about how she looks because her wedding is just a few days away. She also has to provide rooms for guest accommodations. This illustrates the tension between social norms in Indian society, where a bride is not expected to perform such duties.

From the outset of the work, it is clear that Radhika defines herself as having her own viewpoint on everything. Women's opinions are frequently ignored in our society. Radhika is presented as a feminist who supports the advancement of women. Hearing the reasoning behind the "girl's side" and "boy's side," where the girl's side is always expected to adapt, agitates her. Asking the boy's side to make a compromise is regarded as practically illegal. Radhika's refusal to accept less rooms emphasizes her defiance of social conventions.

The complexion and beauty of the face also become a problem. She is forced to dress up even if she does

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not want to. In a similar vein, she is compelled to marry a man she hardly knows even though she does not want to. This is a reflection of Indian society, where women are expected to perform a variety of tasks against their will. Radhika is under pressure to fit in with society's standards even though she is the vice president of one of the most prestigious banks. To look beautiful at her wedding, she goes on a diet, gets slim, and loses weight.

This demonstrates how social pressures compel women to adapt. Why does society not accept women for who they are? Radhika's demands are not limited to gender equality; she also regularly brings up the subject of colorism. In contrast to her older sister Aditi Didi, who is fair, she has a wheatish complexion. She asks why fair-complexioned folks aren't referred to be "rice-ish" (7). Before using the cream, she compares herself to the woman in advertising for fairness cream, while her sister stands in for the "after" picture.

Although Radhika is a wise girl, Aditi, who is fair and began dieting at the age of twelve, eclipses her in terms of popularity. At a departure celebration, Aditi was crowned Miss Hotness, while Radhika was made the target of jokes and jeers. As demonstrated by literary allusions to the dark Madonna in Christian iconography or Shakespeare's Othello, this prejudice is profoundly embedded in Indian culture and psychology.

Indian society has a long history of discrimination. These kinds of mental conflicts affect women all over India. If their daughter has a dark complexion, many parents are required to provide a sizable dowry. Radhika failed to find love because of her skin tone. And social conservatism pushed it aside even when she did.

A boy named Debu makes an effort to win Radhika over while he is employed in America. Radhika is drawn to Debu, who works for an advertising agency. She starts to notice how she looks and does everything she can to improve it, including going to beauty salons. Debu and Radhika begin dating, and soon after, they settle into a live-in arrangement.

Debu is annoyed by Radhika's expectation of continuous attention, though. Furthermore, because Radhika makes a lot more money than he does, Debu starts to feel envious. Debu's inability to accept that his partner makes more money is a reflection of the male ego. A traditional housewife is something that Indian men frequently aspire to, and this expectation ultimately destroys their relationship.

After Debu tells Radhika that all he wants is a "normal Indian housewife," they split up. Radhika finds the separation emotionally upsetting and is extremely hurt by this. She makes several attempts to get back in touch with Debu. When she finally makes the decision to bring him a gift, she discovers him with another female. Devastated, Radhika moves to Hong Kong in search of a new beginning.

Disappointed, Radhika moved to Hong Kong and began a new life. After Debu, another boy enters Radhika's life, so the issue doesn't end here. Radhika meets her boss, Neil Gupta, in Hong Kong. He is considerably older than Radhika, has a wife and kids, and is married. Despite being aware that she is headed in the wrong direction, Radhika and Neil embark on a business trip. However, Radhika is further led astray by her loneliness and need for love. Neil and Radhika go beyond all bounds. After that, they

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frequently travel together for work.

Meeting Neil's wife makes Radhika feel bad. She moves to London after asking her supervisor for a transfer. When Radhika's mother gets to London, she also demands that she marry him. A boy named Brijesh, a Facebook engineer, gets chosen for Radhika via shaadi.com. Radhika consents to marry Brijesh at her mother's request. The wedding ceremony starts after the location, a hotel in Goa, is decided.

Debu is Radhika's first boyfriend. Radhika now acts like an Indian housewife and has completely changed. Debu wants to wed Radhika because he believes that leaving her was a grave mistake. Her boss Neil, who wants Radhika back in his life after divorcing his wife, arrives in Goa on the same day. Radhika is perplexed. She informs Debu and Neil that she will not marry either of them when she extends an invitation to a café.

Neil and Debu are both unable to comprehend Radhika's choice. Debu does not want her to pursue her career because he wants to marry her and wants to keep her in his grasp. Neil wouldn't marry her, but he would let her work. After that, Radhika approaches Brijesh and declines to wed him. She expresses regret for not getting married to Brijesh. Radhika tells him everything about her background when he asks her why she won't marry him. According to Brijesh, she is neither in the past nor the present because her past is over. Somewhere, she's lost. Brijesh is prepared to embrace Radhika and her history.

Now, Radhika is utterly perplexed. She chooses to embark on a world tour for this reason. The numerous issues that women encounter in a patriarchal culture are evident here once more. Not just women are treated cruelly by Chetan Bhagat. Radhika's lovers seem like cardboard cutouts that are there just to complicate her life. One wants her to prioritize her career over her children, and the other asks her to prioritize her career over her children. They are exact replicas of one another.

Chetan Bhagat makes an excessive effort to arouse sympathy, but this frequently backfires: "See, see! Women have to deal with this! Take note of this! Right now! There is a golden core, though. It tells the tale of a woman's struggle against insecurity, which results from growing up in a discriminatory and unequal society. Radhika finds contentment and serenity only once she lets go of her critical inner voice, the "mini me" that is always telling her what a woman should or shouldn't do.

This is a worthy message, but it must be sifted through layers of crap. Radhika grovels for attention and good time from her male boss, Neil, and her partner, Debu, and spends much too much time criticizing other women. She once offers to resign from her position in order to boost her boyfriend's pride. "I desired him." She claims, "I was prepared to be his girl, exactly as he desired." This demonstrates how women frequently sacrifice themselves for their male partner's affection, even if that partner has no regard for her professional goals. All he wants is a normal Indian housewife.

An Indian girl weeps in private, loves deeply, and trusts without reservation. She must deal with a lot of mental struggles. Although Radhika has a dark complexion, beauty is more about having a lovely mind, heart, and soul than it is about having a pretty face. God-given complexion should not be a basis for discrimination in our society. Every woman is equal; they only need to be acknowledged for their inherent beauty. Only then will we receive happiness as a reward. The package is not nearly as important as the

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heart. Women are God's greatest gift to humanity, and as such, we ought to value and safeguard them.

The Influence of Education and Career Decisions on the Identity Formation of Women

Indian women's self-identity and personal development are greatly impacted by their educational and professional choices. The main character of *One Indian Girl*, Radhika Mehta, serves as an illustration of how women in modern Indian society always struggle to balance their professional goals with cultural norms. Radhika learned early on that she should aim for academic success, which is something Indian society frequently encourages in its females. However, her perceived incapacity to live up to conventional attractiveness standards overshadowed her academic success. Instead of focusing on how her accomplishments demonstrated her own strengths, she framed her success in terms of how they would help her find a compatible mate.

The narrative of Radhika demonstrates how important employment decisions are to Indian women's identity development. Women are frequently criticized for putting their professions ahead of their families or relationships in a culture that encourages males to be ambitious and forceful in their work. Radhika's struggle for autonomy and independence is shown in her desire to pursue a lucrative job in banking in spite of her family's expectations that she get married and start a family. This part will examine how women like Radhika are frequently torn between their personal goals and society's expectations in modern-day India, with the final decision being whether to follow their desires at the price of interpersonal connections and social acceptance.

The Impact of Pop Culture and the Media on Female Expectations

It is impossible to overstate how much pop culture and the media have shaped women's aspirations in contemporary India. Idealized depictions of femininity, attractiveness, and relationships are frequently included in advertisements, motion pictures, and television programs. Women are frequently subjected to a limited definition of what it means to be attractive, prosperous, and deserving of love. This impact is most noticeable in Radhika's fixation with looks, particularly when it comes to her sister Aditi, who is fair-skinned and considered conventionally pretty.

Throughout the book, Radhika contrasts herself with the slender, fair-skinned ladies who appear to lead ideal lives in the media. Her persistent concerns and the idea that her darker complexion and non-conforming body type diminish her value are exacerbated by these comparisons. The mainstream media has contributed to this cultural obsession with physical attractiveness, and for women like Radhika, it becomes a constant internal battle to balance social expectations with their own sense of value.

The temptation to live up to these standards is reinforced by the way women are portrayed in Bollywood movies and ads, which frequently emphasize traditional gender roles and shallow attractiveness. This section will look at how gendered expectations are created by the media and popular culture, how women internalize these expectations, and how these pressures affect their mental health and self-perception.

Psychological Analysis: Comprehending the internal conflict of Radhika

One Indian Girl's central theme is Radhika's internal struggle. She presents herself as a self-assured,

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independent lady who has succeeded professionally, yet beyond this façade is a woman dealing with intense emotional distress. This section explores Radhika's mental health, taking into account how her identity is shaped by her own emotional needs, family expectations, and social influences.

A combination of personal insecurity and social conditioning is the source of Radhika's internal conflict. She was taught from an early age that a woman's value is determined by her attractiveness and her capacity to find a husband, which was made worse by the fact that she had a dark complexion. Even though Radhika is a very successful banker in New York, her inability to meet conventional beauty standards and marriage expectations consistently undermines her feeling of self-worth.

With an emphasis on Radhika's battle to balance her career achievements with her apparent failure in personal relationships, this section will integrate psychological ideas on self-esteem, identity, and emotional conflict. This internal conflict is reflected in her mental voice, "Mini-me," which challenges social standards, questions her decisions, and criticizes her behavior. Understanding how deeply embedded cultural and societal expectations can affect a person's self-concept—especially when those expectations conflict with personal desires—will be made easier with the help of Radhika's psychological analysis.

How one Indian girl's class, caste, and gender intersect

In addition to her gender, Radhika's experiences are influenced by the intersections of caste and class in Indian society. Her darker complexion and the expectations put on her as a woman of Indian descent confuse her identity, even though she comes from a rather wealthy family. Radhika struggles with social criticisms throughout the book, which are impacted by her gender as well as the caste system that still exists in contemporary India.

Radhika's chances and relationships are greatly influenced by her caste and class. Even though Radhika is successful in her career, she still has problems in her personal life, such as finding a spouse who accepts her for who she is and not as a continuation of her family's heritage or social standing. Her relationship options are characterized by the pressure to marry someone from the same caste and social background.

This part will examine how caste and class interact with gender to provide extra levels of social expectations and how these factors make Radhika's life even more difficult. We will also look at how these cultural elements play a part in the emotional and psychological challenges that Indian women frequently encounter, especially when they try to go beyond conventional norms and expectations.

Conclusion

The path of One Indian Girl's main character, Radhika, illustrates how modern Indian women are changing more broadly. Modern Indian women are becoming more independent, strong-willed, determined, persistent, and aggressive, breaking free from the old preconceptions of being weak, helpless, or dependant. These women are deliberately defying social expectations and conventions that have shaped their lives in the past. Women are no longer reluctant or afraid, as Radhika's narrative illustrates; rather, they are embracing independence and autonomy and resolutely overcoming obstacles in their personal and professional lives.

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Radhika's development serves as a potent metaphor for this shift. After initially battling both internal and external conflicts—between her insecurities and her achievements, between her ambition and social pressure—Radhika eventually comes to terms with herself. She rejects social norms and forges a path that is exclusively her own, learning to live her life without the need for a lover or approval from others. Her boldness in defying social pressure and the traditional male gaze, which demonstrates her increasing power and confidence, marks this change.

There is psychological complexity to this path. Radhika struggles with deep-seated insecurities throughout the story, which are a result of both family and social expectations on beauty. She eventually finds peace and self-acceptance, though, after realizing that marriage and attractiveness do not define her value. She epitomizes the empowerment of contemporary women who reject constrictive standards and embrace their uniqueness by deciding to live life on her own terms.

Radhika moves beyond the role of a passive character molded by social influences as she progresses from ambivalence to self-acceptance. Rather, she develops into a strong, bold, and outspoken woman who doesn't hesitate to challenge the social norms that used to try to define her. She realizes that adopting her own goals and aspirations in spite of external influences is the key to ultimate satisfaction.

As a result, Radhika represents the change in Indian society today, when women are valued for their fortitude and genuineness in navigating life rather than their connections with others. In addition to being the tale of a woman defying social pressures, *One Indian Girl* also represents the continuous social change in India, where women are redefining themselves and eschewing traditional roles in search of self-determination, fulfillment, and mental health.

In the end, Radhika's life demonstrates the intricate relationship that exists between psychological health, individual ambition, and social expectations. Her tale sheds important light on the difficulties women in contemporary India confront, difficulties that affect not just their relationships with others but also their mental health. The story highlights how social pressure to fit in can lead to profound pain, ambiguity, and bewilderment, especially when goals are unmet. Radhika's ability to overcome these constraints and take back her life, however, signifies her development into a courageous woman who, like many modern women, addresses important societal concerns while paving the way for a more contented and genuine life.

***Department of English
Baba Bhagwan Das Govt. College
Chimanpura, Shahpura (Jaipur)**

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