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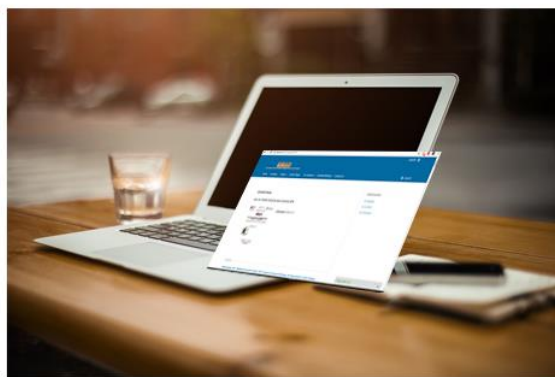
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Badiuzzaman Shaikh

NET Qualified

Research Scholar

TM Bhagalpur University

Bhagalpur, Bihar, India

E-mail: shaikh.rahul11@gmail.com

The Uber-modern Heroines in Chetan Bhagat's Fictions

Abstract

By taking into account all the seven best-selling novels produced so far by Chetan Bhagat — *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014) and *One Indian Girl* (2016) — this present paper aims to analyse in details how Bhagat's heroines in these novels are extraordinarily distinguished and masters of their own non-traditional will power. The very nomenclature of his heroines such as Vidya, Radhika, Aarti, Priyanka *et al* not only distinctly sounds modern but even in their thoughts, actions, points of view and indomitable rebelliousness against arbitrary patriarchy, their rationality, practicality and to some extent immorality, libertinism and hedonism they are incontrovertibly uber-modern. This paper also analyses whether Chetan Bhagat himself excoriates his heroines or exculpates them from their being accused of leading an unethical, self-indulgent and voluptuous life in a globalised world.

Key words: non-traditional, nomenclature, patriarchy, libertinism, hedonism, uber-modern, voluptuous, globalised.

Introduction

Unlike any other contemporaneous Indian English writers, Chetan Bhagat in his fictions creates some unique female figures who stand quite apart in the history of Indian English literature by dint of the fact that they —be it Ananya in *2States*, Radhika in *One Indian Girl*, Aarti in *Revolution 2020*, Riya in *Half Girlfriend* or Neha in *Five Point Someone* — are more feminist than subjugated to the male-dominated society, more iconoclastic than subservient to

the phallocentric social hierarchy, more uber-modern than acquiescently primitive in the traditional norms and beliefs. Unlike any other male-oriented writers, Chetan does never ignore women's self-realisations, self-experiences, aspirations and ambitions. On the contrary, their points of view are given paramount importance and consequently they enjoy the full freedom of speech. His heroines act beyond the cultural and social programming in Indian patriarchal ideology and behave quite rebelliously establishing their own ideology as ultramodern women of the occidental European world. What distinguishes Chetan's heroines more is the fact that their existence is not equal to easy submission to patriarchy, their femininity is not equal to mere domesticity and their biological gender is not synonymous with inert docility. They do not so simply conform to the traditional social set-up which has domineeringly been suppressing the physical, social, economical, intellectual, psychological and individual possibilities of women so long. As an unprecedented writer Bhagat is a genuine propagandist in favour of women empowerment and emancipation in an age when the Indian women are threatened from all aspects in life in a sexist society. As Arti Mishra and Dr. Anjali Srivastava so rightly observe:

Bhagat's added footage of his concern for women characters tells us the fact that steps towards women empowerment can be seen to be speeding up. Bhagat claims women empowerment as one of the positive effects of globalization; at the same time it is incontrovertible that his novels definitely give us cultural shocks which are an inevitable impact of globalization, modernization, and corporate exploitation.

(Mishra and Srivastava
355)

Bhagat's nonchalant heroines, in a word, are interesting, independent, bold and extraordinarily vocal in talking about their love relationships and sexuality and against any injustice of society since they bear a very ultramodern attitude towards life.

As far as women emancipation and empowerment, specifically in the field of economic stability, is concerned Chetan is highly solicitous about women's financial self-dependence. Every sensible person will realize that without economic upliftment a woman cannot develop her social condition and achieve her goal of self-realisation. In his seminal non-fiction

Making India Awesome Chetan has very distinctly elaborates the five ‘benefits’ of marrying a working woman — a woman of economic empowerment. According to Chetan Bhagat, not only a working woman can be helpful in financial security at home, but even she, being exposed to the outer world, brings back knowledge and information to the family to add to the quality of life. Further, he thinks, the children born and brought up by a working woman learn to be more independent and will do better than ‘mollycoddled children’. These working women have better life satisfaction and provide a man with more harmony in conjugal life. As he emphatically points out:

I’d like Indian men to have an open mind about choosing their life partners and revise their ‘ideal woman’ criteria. Having a traditional wife who cooks, cleans and is submissive might be nice. However, choosing a capable, independent and carrier-oriented woman can also bring enormous benefits. For instance, a man who marries a carrier woman gets a partner to discuss his own career with. A working woman may be able to relate better to organizational issues than a housewife. A spouse who understands office politics and can give you good advice can be an asset.

(*Making India Awesome* 128)

In his novels Chetan very vividly presents this empowerment of women through his intelligent, educated and highly independent-minded heroines.

Radhika, the protagonist in *One Indian Girl* shows the full economic empowerment of a modern woman living abroad. She grew up in Delhi, but the highly educated, an IIMA reputed and ambitious girl has jobs all over the world. First she worked in New York in Distressed Debt Group; then she went to Hong Kong to join another business branch of the same company. Finally she worked as a vice president at Goldman Sachs, an investment bank in London. And what makes her quite contradistinguished from other traditional Indian women is the fact that she amasses huge money in foreign currency. The money she earns is really enormous to make any one dizzy as Radhika expresses:

I felt dizzy. I pressed my feet hard on the floor to keep my balance. Two hundred and seventy thousand dollars, I repeated

the number in my head to absorb it. It converted to 1 crore and 50 lakh in rupees. *Stay calm, stay calm, stay calm*, I repeated to myself.

(One
Indian Girl 75)

In fact the issue of the difference in income between a man and a woman is the pivotal factor which controls the half of the book consisting of the ups and downs in the love relationship between Radhika and Debu. Their affair gets shattered because Debu feels insecure and cannot tolerate that his fiancée should earn more than him. Radhika's social marriage later too is often hampered since she earns more than the groom. She herself cannot accept that her would-be husband earns less than her:

Despite all my feminist learnings, I didn't want to be with someone who made so much lesser than me. *Why does a woman feel a man's income is more important than hers? Maybe because it is important to men, and very few men are secure enough to just let this issue be.*

(One
Indian Girl 221)

If Radhika has become such a rebellious and nonchalant, her mother Mrs. Mehta — a subjugated woman of the male-dominated society — thinks that it is only due to her economic independence.

In *One Night @ the Call Center* the educated and smart girls like Esha, Priyanka and Radhika work at a call centre. They work together at night, go to night club, and enjoy their life a lot. Esha has a dream to become a model too, and she lives in Delhi far away from her family and home. Aarti in *Revolution 2020* too is an intelligent girl who pursues her own dreams and desires to become an air-hostess. She has also her expectations and aspirations in life, so that she does not hesitate to work as a guest relation counsellor in a newly set-up hotel in Varanasi. All these heroines are also very much aware that if they want to fulfil their ambitions and lead a life of complete enjoyment and emancipation they must first of all be economically independent.

Chetan's heroines are all highly modern in a globalized world and they all fall in love with men and fight for gaining their love in a male-dominated society where most of the times their marriage consents are not given any significance at all. But Chetan's heroines are not to be subservient to the family imposition and traditional marriage system. In *2States* at Sabarmati Ashram Ananya declares her love for Krish to her Tamil parents, and immediately they are fired to accept the Punjabi boy as their son-in-law since they think that all Punjabis are uneducated and uncultured. But a globalized and rational girl like Ananya knows well that mere cultural and regional barriers should never ever serve as the impediments to true love. She therefore rebels against her conservative and prejudiced parents to gain her love. Further, Ananya is romantic, passionate and boisterous too to make love and express that love in fervent words:

Hello my Punjabi hunk,

Miss me? I do. Miss our cuddles, I miss our walks in campus, I miss studying together and then going for midnight chai, I miss running to my dorm every morning to brush my teeth, I miss eating pao-bhaji on the char rasta with you, I miss playing footsie in the library, I miss the glances we stole in class, I miss my bad grades and the tears afterwards that you wiped, I miss how you made me laugh, I miss how you played with my hair, I miss how you used to watch me put eye-liner, I miss ... oh, you get the drift, I miss you like hell.

(*2States* 73)

Half Girlfriend also tells a beautiful love-story of Riya and Madhav. Riya Somani is a rich girl from Delhi and likes Madhav who she met at St. Stephen College through basketball playing. But this self-respected girl is highly offended by the vulgar demand of Mdhav Jha, the rural Hindi speaking Vojpuri boy when he roghly utters, 'Deti hai to de, varna kat le' (P 75). Immediately she refutes him. Years later they meet again when Madhav comes to know that she is a divorcee. Though she still has regards for Madhav, being ashamed of how harshly she rejected him, she cannot express her love for him at this situation. She now fakes her lung cancer and decides to escape from the life of Madhav. But this modern girl in her

letter is quite emphatic and exuberant to express her deep and romantic love for Madhav in a heart-touching way:

I don't know why many things happened in my life, actually, so maybe this is all part of the crazy plan of God has for me. Marriage, divorce and disease, all within a span of tree years...

I asked you to stay back last night. I had no right to. I just felt greedy and selfish. I wanted more of your caring, while knowing I couldn't give you anything in return.

I know what I mean to you, and if I ask you to care without being able to reciprocate myself, you will. Hence, I decided to go. I won't make it harder for you than it needs to be...

So, no crying. No looking for me. No being a Devdas. You are such a good-looking and caring guy, you'll find a lovely girl. Someone who isn't a mess like me. Someone who will love you like you deserve to be loved.

I can't wait for tomorrow. You will rock the stage.

I want to end this letter by saying something I wanted to say to at least someone in this lifetime. So, here goes:

I love you, Madhav Jha. I absolutely, completely love you. And will do so to my last day.

(Half Girlfriend 189-191)

At the end of course the lovers get reunited at Cafe Wha, an old classic bar in New York through a series of adventurous incidents to indicate the victory not only of love but also of the young modern and romantic Indian girl.

The uber-modern heroine Radhika in *One Indian Girl* is another Chetan Bhagat's adroit creation who is also highly passionate and intensely romantic in making more than one psychosomatic love relations in her life. While working in New York this sensual and self-conscious girl has an amorous relation with Debu, a Bengali boy, and has all the tenderness,

excitement, bitterness, quarrels, passions and even sex in the love relation. Debu, who once used to encourage Radhika's feminism, now feels that for her extra work and excessive money-making tendency she will not be able to take care of her future kids and be a total failure in the conjugal life. Their relation gets an end when Debu declares that he wants a housewife and not a 'high-flying' girl. Radhika, the self-respected modern girl, immediately renounces both her fiancé and New York. She takes transfer to Hong Kong where she finds her second love in Neel Gupta, her boss who is almost two decades older than her and a married person with two children. She is involved with Neel both psychologically and physically. But when Neel also doubts her maternal feelings and of her feminine qualities by saying, "It's just I never thought of you as the maternal type. I don't know if you were even meant to be a mother" (P 209) Radhika becomes furious and slaps him straight. Now the self-respected girl puts an end to this relation too. But the feeling for Neel is so deep that this romantic girl often dredges up the old memory with Neel even after their break-up:

When you break up, it becomes a habit to remember everything about the man—with my second heartbreak I had learnt this much. Neel was a habit, a bad habit rather, almost an addiction. Like smoking, when you know it is bad for you but you can't seem to leave it. I also learnt that you don't get better at handling heartbreaks. They suck every single time, even though this time was marginally better since I had initiated the break-up. I battled the urge to email him, telling him I had reached the new place.

Why couldn't he mail me? Why couldn't he call? Well, how could he? I had threatened to expose him.

I missed his voice. I missed his eyes. I missed his touch. I missed all that he did to me, with me, in bed. *So what if he is married? He loves me, and love is what I need, right?*

(One Indian Girl

216)

In the wedding party of Radhika when both Debu and Neel arrive with their individual plans to elope with her she rejects both her exes. Not only that, she even cancels her own marriage

with Brijesh because of her auto-critical judgement that she deserves nobody. It has been a feature of her character throughout the novel that no external force can impose anything — especially love — upon this uber-modern highly educated and self-dependent girl. She agrees to marry Brijesh long after when she thinks that she is mentally and inwardly prepared to accept him.

One of the main themes in *Revolution 2020* is also love, and the love is evolved around the aspiring female figure Aarti. Aarti is a non-traditional girl who makes male friends and associates with them freely and frankly without coyness. She has deep friendship with both Gopal and Raghav in the heritage city of Varsanasi. Initially she spurns Gopal's love proposal but continues to mingle with him very intimately—hugs him, massages his palm, chats late night, takes care of him, rides together on the boat, consoles him when mentally tired. Yet when in the boat Gopal tries to make love with her and tries to kiss her, she recoils and rejects him by saying that she does not think of him 'that way'. Aarti, the practical-minded girl, actually ignores the love of a loser like Gopal in order to be involved with the genius Raghav who gets a good rank in AIEEE and JEE and aims to become an honest journalist . Eventually Gopal gets furious to about her intention and uses some abusive languages to Aarti. Though their friendship gets a temporary pause, after three months Aarti again invites him on her birthday. A modern girl with modern thinking Aarti, even though committed to Raghav, grows a love relationship with Gopal too. Her relation with Gopal is not restricted to verbal meeting alone, but she has sexual consummation with him too. Afterwards Aarti is caught between the two lovers and feels extremely guilty about her sleeping with Gopal. She realizes that she 'made a mistake' and that she should not have cheated on Raghav. Surprisingly in few days this sense of guilt and compunction subsides and she goes on meeting Gopal again. Aarti who is obviously a pragmatic and materialistic girl finally decides to accept Gopal as her life-partner since now he is a successful man and wants to abandon her former lover Raghav as, she thinks, he cannot amass money and has no bright future for his extreme honesty. Now this promiscuous girl expresses before Gopal all her frustration and fear with Raghav who has made her lonely and weird:

Raghav stresses me out. I want to support him. But he can't seem to get his act together. He rejected a tie-up with a newspaper for the sake of independence. How is he ever going to make money like this?

(*Revolution 2020* 220)

What we notice about this heroine of Chetan Bhagat is the fact that this girl is also not to be imposed upon by anything external. She does what her free will bids her to do. Towards the end of the novel when Gopal breaks her heart deliberately out of sheer honesty—generated by the innocence of Keshav—Aarti reunites with her first fiancé in a very practical manner without the least impression of lachrymatory feelings.

It is a characteristic feature of Chetan's novels that they are frequently replete with sexual involvements of the main characters and their detailed descriptions for some pages. If Chetan does so he not only does consider it to be a normal part of premarital love relationships in the globalized world, but even he glorifies sex, like D. H. Lawrence, quite unprecedentedly in Indian English writings. Suppression of sexuality in general, and in women in particular, is a *bête noire* to Chetan. As he expresses his views about the harms of repressed sex in his non-fiction very candidly:

With so many pejoratives, it is no surprise that most Indians keep their views about sex private. Else, they fear being branded characterless persons. Women have to be extra careful. A good Indian woman is supposed to be almost asexual, to be considered pure and chaste. Indian culture wants us to be sexual only in the institution of marriage, for purposes of procreation. Any deviation and you are a person of loose morals, harmful to yourself and society...

However, since we shun it so much, we have two major problems. One, repressed sexual desire often comes out in unsavoury ways. Two, we are unable to discuss or have a meaningful debate around any topic to do with sex.

Repressed sexual desire, for instance, is manifest in child sexual abuse, which is rampant in India. Apart from this, the many instances of molestation, the feeling of a lack of safety amongst our women, the brutal rape cases are all at least partly due to this repressed desire gone bad.

(*Making India Awesome* 85-86)

Although many critics have stringent objections to Chetan's glorification of sexuality since they think it paves the way to a pervert immoral and debauched society, Chetan believes that it is but a natural outcome of urbanization and modernization in a globalized world. And Chetan's views about sexuality are best carried forward by his uber-modern heroines. Almost all his heroines enjoy sex before marriage without the least scruples or procrastination in their conscience.

In *2 States* Ananya Swaminathan, the Tamil girl meets Krish, the Delhi boy in the IIT college, befriends with him in no time, studies together in the girls' dormitory at night, goes often to the boys' dormitory too, and has sex in a jiffy. Krish, of course, declares that he cannot study together because he is distracted by the charm of her physical beauty. So when Krish ignores Ananya she takes the initiative to come to the boys' hostel even at night. Krish opens his mind that he wants them to be a couple, and surprisingly even without accepting his proposal she begins to kiss him immediately. Like an expert in making physical love Ananya tells Krish not to keep mentioning about their kisses as he can expect no more kisses from her. But again quite surprisingly very soon they have sex in Ananya's room, and a modern and educated girl like Ananya talks about sex with her sex-partner in the most exuberant manner:

'This is my first time,' she said after we did it and pointed to her mother's picture on the wall. 'And if she finds out, she will flip.'

'We should cover these pictures when we do it. They freak me out,' I said, scanning her family members.

She laughed. 'Was this your first time?'

'I'd rather not talk about it,' I said.

'Did you have a girlfriend in IIT?' She sat up to wear her top.

I kept quiet.

'Did you have sex with a guy?' Ananya asked, eyebrows up.

'No', I screamed and sat up. 'Are you stupid? You, of all people, are asking me if I m gay.'

(2 States 26)

Neha, in *Five Point Someone*, too is another highly modern girl who is involved in sexual relationship with Hari through an extraordinary initiative from the part of the heroine. In her initiatives and expressions, passion and contentment in involving in sexual act she surpasses not only a traditional Indian girl but even a Western porn-star:

I curled up next to her and held her. She turned her face towards me, almost in reflex. We kissed, and then we kissed again. Then she held my hand and did something that she had never done before; she put it on her breast.

Wow, my hand went into a tizzy. What happened to this girl? Had she lost her mind? I certainly lost mine and forgot about Operation Pendulum.

My hand slid under her T-shirt and then clumsily under The Bra. Life would be so much better without hooks.

“Easy Tiger easy,” she said. I liked it that she called me Tiger.

She sat up to remove her T-shirt. And then the rest. I sat there transfixed, trying hard not to let my tongue hang loose and pant like a dog.

“Well Tiger, you are going to remove anything or not?” she said.

(*Five Point Someone* 168)

After her sexual consummation Neha expresses her utmost gratification and feels ‘so liberating’. This Western-minded heroine even goes so far as to ask for smoking from her sex-partner: “Oh yes, I have heard cigarettes are great after sex. Please get me one too” (P 169). If these heroines are so bold and nonchalant it is because the author wants the Indian women to behave equally like men, exert their power equally like men, and express their inner voice equally like men even in the matter of sex.

Priyanka in *One Night @ the Call Center* is also highly active and takes all the initiative to allure her boyfriend Shyam to have premarital sex with her. As we notice in the conversation between the lover and the beloved how this heroine is also a votary of carnal pleasure and sexual enjoyment:

‘So, you didn’t answer my question—have you made love in confined spaces?’ she said.

‘Priyanka, are you crazy or are you drunk?’

She unbuttoned the top few buttons of my shirt. ‘Both. Okay mister, the thing about confined spaces is that you have to cooperate. Now move your hands out of the way,’ she said.

We were quiet, apart from breathing.

She confirmed that the windows were shut and ordered me to remove my shirt. She took off her kurti first, and then slowly unhooked her bra.

(*One Night @ the Call Center* 95)

In *Revolution 2020* Aarti, the modern Indian girl is also no exception. Gopal, Aarti’s childhood friend plus the second love in her life does not miss the chance to get physically involved with her when they drink alcohol in a hotel room at watch movie. Gopal at first hesitates to come closer to her or even touch her passionately, but Aarti lifts a pillow, places it in Gopal’s lap and watches the movie, resting her head there. This modern bold and passionate girl knows well that it is morally ‘wrong’ to have sex with another man while maintaining a full time love relation with a specific man. But her internal sexual urge is so powerful that her external fake morality gets overpowered by it, and she gradually surrenders to Gopal cheating on her former boyfriend Raghav.

Radhika, the young, beautiful, intelligent and economically affluent girl in *One Indian Girl* exceeds all the Bhagatian heroines as far as modernity, hedonism, carnal urge and sexual *liaison* are concerned. For all these qualities she can best be compared to Cleopatra, one of

the most voluptuous and promiscuous of all Shakespearean heroines, and the same words as uttered by Enobarbus can well be applied to her too:

Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
Her infinite variety. Other women cloy
The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry
Where most she satisfies...

(Antony and Cleopatra Act ii, scene ii 142)

Radhika sleeps with more than one sexual partner and more than once she is involved in premarital sexual intercours. Radhika lives abroad—in New York, Hong Kong and London—and has a vast tour around the world from Berlin, Cairo, Beijing, Sidney to Peru, South America, Lima, Ollantaytambo and other European countries and imbibes in her all the new-fashioned and ultra-modern cultures of the European world. She can be realized as more a post-modern than a traditional Indian girl, more a voluptuous lady of the occidental world than a subdued and pious woman of the oriental culture. Quite alienated from her Indian family she is enormously free to do whatever she likes to do according to her own will. Sex comes in her life first in her own private chamber when she comes in contact with Debu, a Bengali boy in New York. At first she herself entices him with her tantalising short dress and agrees to his offer of foot massage. She enjoys every single tangle of pleasure in her boyfriend's sensual touch and gives a detailed and open description of sleeping with him. Her expression of the pleasure and enjoyment of sexual deed is quite rapturous and ecstatic too:

Every flick transported me to a state of extreme pleasure. *Why don't people do this all the time? Wow, why didn't anyone tell me sex feels so damn good?...*

Radhika Mehta, you are finally having sex, I said to myself and mentally high-fived myself. It felt like a major milestone in life, on par with getting into IIMA or scoring Goldman Sachs. Or Distressed debt. *Will that job be tough? Okay, why am I thinking about distressed debt when there is a man inside me?*

'You feel so amazing,' he said.

I was glad felt that way. As for me, I couldn't see what the big fuss was about sex...

I guess that didn't make me the shy and coy girl all Indian girls should be. Maybe it even made seem like a slut. However, I would rather be a spent and finished slut than a good but frustrated Indian girl.

(One Indian Girl 57-59)

This one special Indian girl Radhika is by far the boldest, most voluptuous and the most libertine of all the Bhagatian heroines.

Again, Chetan's heroines are uber-modern by dint of the fact that they are genuine rebels against the traditional sexist society. Chetan's heroines always revolt against all types of injustice and inequality between men and women in the patriarchal society, and they freely speak of social changes in all aspects. Chetan himself is against such arbitrary suppression of women and advocates in favour of women emancipation and self-realisation as we find in his non-fictions too:

...we have trapped our women. We think we care for them, but we suffocate them in the name of security, safety, morality, tradition or culture. We are not comfortable with an Indian woman expressing herself. A woman has to be a good daughter, sister or wife. It isn't enough for her to be just, well, herself. In some ways, women endure disguised slavery. In the civilized, developed world, where women have choices, they do not choose to live like this. Every girl in India deserves a journey of self-discovery like Rani.

*(Making India Awesome
131-132)*

That Chetan is highly concerned about the safety and individuality of women is also evident from his observation and declaration in another non-fiction:

Kids would be neglected and turn into drug addicts or psychopaths by age ten. Soon, all-male world leaders would lose their tempers at the slightest provocation and bomb the guts out

of each other's countries. In short, without women and their sanity, the world would perish.

Yet, look at how we Indians, a land of spiritual people, treat them. At an extreme, we abort girls before they are born, neglect their upbringing, torture them, molest them, sell them, rape them and honour-kill them. Of course, these criminal acts are performed by a tiny minority.

However, a majority of us are involved in lesser crimes. We judge our women, expect too much of them, don't give them space and suffocate their individuality.

(*What Young India Wants*
52-53)

Sometimes Chetan's modern-minded heroines are best spokespersons of his ideas and thoughts. Radhika Mehta, one of the author's spokeswomen of feminism, is vocal against all types of arbitrary sexist protocol prevalent in Indian society from the very beginning of the novel, *One Indian Girl*. Her notion of feminism is very conspicuous as she herself defines it before her would-be-husband Brijesh:

'Feminism is a movement that seeks to define, establish and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal and social rights for women. A feminist is someone who believes in this movement.'

(*One Indian Girl* 135)

From the division of guest rooms between the groom's side and the bride's side in her wedding ceremony in Goa to the prejudiced attitude towards earning money between a man and a woman, from taking marijuana to kissing, from selecting spouse to having sex Radhika speaks of equality and women rights.

Similarly Vidya in *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* is a typical Bhagatian heroine with all the nonchalance, independent mind, strong will and resolute rebelliousness to break the shackle

of the traditional norms and impositions in society. She goes to Mumbai, completes her career course and falls in love as well. Her thoughts, dressing and behaviour are all in keeping with the modernity of the changing world. Her views about parents originate from her ultra-modern and non-traditional rational reasoning:

‘Our parents are not innocent either. Weren’t we all conceived in a moment of passion?’

(*The 3 Mistakes of My Life* 103)

Priyanka, Esha and Radhika in *One Night @ the Call Center* are also chetan’s women figures with no traditional beliefs and conservative principles. They work together with the male co-workers at night and have their own individual ambitions and points of views. Priyanka, the heroine of the novel, is an intelligent, smart and practical-minded girl who leaves Shyam, her boyfriend only to marry an NRI as per her mom’s wish. Esha Singh is an aspiring girl who wants to fulfil her self-realisation by being a model. But she has her own self respect too. When she realizes that she was really cheated by the designer who had slept with her to give her an offer of becoming a model, she renounces her aspiration of becoming a model and continues to work at the call centre. Radhika Jha, another modern female figure in the same novel is also not without her dreams and ambitions. But this woman has a tremendous balance and adjustment between her job, sense of duty and family maintenance. She has her self-respect and will of independence, and therefore, she does not easily succumb to the injustice of the patriarchal society. When she finds her husband has an extra-marital affair with another woman, she immediately decides to divorce him and stay with Esha, her colleague and friend.

Conclusion

To conclude, although many readers and critics are very censorious to such defiant, nonchalant and hedonistic ultra-modern heroines of Chetan as they believe these heroines are harmful to the long-established traditional Indian cultures and morality, Chetan is very strongly inclined to propagandize the fact that if India has to progress and keep pace with the globalised world the out-dated norms and conservative ethics as well as the positions of women in society should also be changed according to the dynamic advancement of the entire world. As he emphatically declares: “It is time to reform our moral standards. Let people have fun in moderation. Let us accept human behaviour, rather than make the nation live a

lie”(*Making India Awesome* 91). And to him, we also ought not turn a blind eye to the indispensable role of women in making our society and the country really ‘awesome’: “It is time all this changes. If India has to move ahead, we have to optimize our resources, and women are half of our human resources”(*Making India Awesome* 134). In all his fictions Chetan Bhagat’s heroines are thus nonchalant, flamboyant, self-dependent, strong-willed and uber-modern to incarnate the non-traditional ideas and convictions of the author.

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