

Determination of Women Characters in the Novels of Chetan Bhagat

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best-selling novelists of the Indian fiction. He has written about modern Indian girls and their need in his novels. He says that novels are entertainment tools through which one can express his views and opinions about society and the youth. In the modern India human behavior changed into lust, greed, hypocrisy, and hatred and these are the major themes of Bhagat's novels. His female characters like Neha, Vidya, Priyanka, Ananya, and Aarti are dared in nature. His novels are incomplete without his female characters. The background in which Chetan Bhagat has written novels is predominantly of the society in the post globalization era. His novels are based on day-to-day happenings in the Indian society so ultimately he has written the problems of Indian society in a humorous ways. He has handled the modern situation in proper manner. His female characters easily get involved in friendship and love. He takes upon the sensitive issues which concern to the society in his novels ranging from romantic love story to a shocking condition of the Indian multiculturalism. Bhagat, in the novels describes about the female characters and their daring. This paper aims to study the determination of women characters in the novels of Chetan Bhagat.

Keywords: Self respect modernism, daring, decision makers.

Introduction

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian author, columnist, and speaker. He is the author of ten blockbuster novels, *Five Point Someone-What not to do at IIT* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014), *One Indian Girl* (2016), *The Girl In Room 105* (2018), *One Arranged Murder* (2020) and *400 Days* (2021) and three non-fictions, *What Young India Wants* (2012), *Making India Awesome* (2015) and *India Positive : New Essays and Selected Coloum* (2019). All these books have best-seller since their release and some bollywood films like *3 idiots*, *Hello*, *Kai Po Che*, *2 States* and *Half Girlfriend* took inspiration from these novels. Chetan

Bhagat is seen more as a youth icon than just an author. This IIT and IIM-A graduate is making India read like never before.

Characterization is a significant constituent of the novel, besides plot. The description of a person includes the notion that life may here be imitating the life of man on earth and that of a person described is larger than life. Fictional characters are rarely the reflections of living persons, though they have affinity with them. The writer chooses only those traits that strike him and are useful for his purpose. Real people enter the imagination of novelist, fuse with it and come out as different people. All the novels of Chetan Bhagat point out the problems of the young generation in conflicting manner. Bhagat's art of characterization and realization of a person differs from the tradition. His characters are not flat, they change and grow under the stress of circumstances and become different from what they were in the beginning. They are real, living, breathing human beings, full of vitality with human desires and weaknesses. He has an edge over other Indian novelists in English because most of his characters succeed in establishing socio cultural aspects of the era that he is trying to create in his novels.

Neha, the female character in the novel *Five Point Someone* is very important. Bhagat shows her character as one who does not live their life according to their wish. She cannot enjoy her life despite having all the facilities available in her house. She does fashion-designing course. Hari kumar, the protagonist of the novel, loves her at the first sight itself. Neha is impulsive, pretty, has a round face and attractive toes. Hari describes her beauty as:

Bare female skin on metal is enormously sexy. There as a dark red nail polish on her toe-nail, with one or two toes encircled in weird squiggly ringlets that only girls can justify wearing. I just wanted to keep looking at her feet...(FPS, 29).

Neha comes as a breath of fresh air in Hari's life -- which chiefly consists of studies, ragging and butter chicken. Hari meets Neha while jogging in the morning, when she knocks him over as she drives around in a bright red car. Family's strict environment keeps her away from friends. At the bookstore, she does not talk with Hari and behaves strangely. They do not meet very often but their rare meetings help them love each other gradually. She is a daughter of a strict father and lives under pressure of him. In the end of the story, she changes her mind and sacrifices her love because Hari Kumar gets a profession with a low salary. She makes her life comfortable by marrying a man of her father's choice. She follows her father's instruction. Priyanka is the prime woman character of the novel, *One Night @ the Call Center*. She is as beautiful as a rose and the hero Shyam loves her. Shyam and Priyanka are college mates and are now colleagues in the same BPO Connexions. She works at call center, as she wants to save money to fulfill her dream of opening the nursery school. She is interested in education and teaching field and also wishes to do B.Ed. course. Her mother is a traditional woman and wants her daughter to choose such a man as husband who is having a permanent job. She quarrels and makes arguments with her mother many times about the

selection of life partner. She is rebellious by nature as she says, “You know Vroom my mom and her obsession for an NRI match for her rebellious daughter” (ON@CC, 60). She represents the character from Indian society who can discard her love for the sake of her parent. Before the proposal of marriage with Ganesh, she along with Shyam visits many places in Delhi. She is a daring woman. In their second meeting at Havemore Restaurant, Pandara Road she teaches a lesson to a woman who curses her daughter-in-law for giving birth to two girls and demands more dowry from her parents. She asks job to old woman who says young girls don’t know how to speak with elders. Priyanka says:

The young girls know how to talk and behave. It is you old ones who need to be taught a lesson. These are your granddaughters and you are calling them curse? (ON@CC, 87).

She shows them her call center’s identity card and says that she is from CBI, women cell and if they harass her anymore then they will be put in a jail for three years. In their third meeting at 32nd Milestone Gurgaon Highway, she shows her boldness and makes sex with Shyam in the Qualis. She is health conscious and eats only those things, which are suitable for her life style. She says:

Pizzas are not healthy. I gain weight so fast if I have a lot of it, especially with my lifestyle. I hardly get time to exercise. On top of that, I just sit and work in a confined space (ON@CC, 95).

Priyanka represents Chetan Bhagat’s modern type female character who wants to enjoy her life before marriage and is not ready for marriage without properly knowing her future husband and for this, she makes argument with her mother. She gets disturbed and throws a ball at her monitor. She says to her group members:

Can you believe this? She wants me to get married next month. Next month!’ They bought me up for twenty-five years and now they can’t wait more than twenty-five days to get rid of me. What is with these people- am I such burden? (ON@CC, 134).

While speaking with God she says she wants to satisfy her parents and acts like a good daughter. In her words:

I want my mother to be happy. But I cannot kill myself for it. My mother needs to realize a family is a great support to have, but ultimately, she is responsible for her own happiness. My focus should be on my own life and what I want (ON@CC, 219).

Priyanka always wants to keep her mother happy and for that, she makes many efforts. At the same time, she behaves like the latest woman who is optimistic and opportunist. She regains Shyam’s love and distracts Ganesh when she comes to know that

latter is bald. Actually, she hates Ganesh not for his baldness but for his telling lie. She says Ganesh has cheated on her and at last she decides to marry Shyam.

Vidya, a female character from the novel, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, is a younger sister of Ishaan. She is very much loved by her brother who always tries to protect her. She is smart and fair. Govind, on seeing her beauty, says:

I noticed her thin arm. It was so fair you could see three veins running across. Her hand had deep lines, with an exceptionally long lifeline. Her fingers seemed long as they were so thin. She had applied a glittery silver-white nail polish only on the outer edge of the nail (3MML, 46).

She is weak in mathematics, so Ishaan tells her to take tuition from his friend, Govind. As she is younger to Ishaan, she always obeys his orders. On the first day of tuition class, Govind asks her, "Which areas of maths are you strong in?" She says, "I don't like maths much". Her frightfulness for maths can be seen from the following lines:

Between an electric shock or a maths test, I will choose the former. I heard some people have to walk two miles to get water in Rajasthan. I would trade my maths problems for that walk, everyday. Maths is the worst thing ever invented by man. What were they thinking? Language is too easy, so let's make up some creepy symbols and manipulate them to haunt every generation of kids. Who cares if sin theta is different from cos theta? Who wants to know the expansion of the sum of cubes? (3MML, 45)

Vidya is a rebel by heart and always dreams of getting free from the constraints of a typical middle-class family. She does not want to listen to the society and hates the attitude and system of middle-class family. She has an ambition to go to Mumbai, as she wants to do a course in PR (medicine). She always wants to become independent. She needs special training in mathematics, which she requires for her medical entrance exam in Mumbai. She is bold in attitude as she asks Govind for friendship and touches his hand. At the same time, she talks in rough language. She says to Govind, "You, Ish and Omi are really close. Like you have known each other since you were sperm"(3MML, 89). She is childish in nature as she wants Garima, her cousin to talk daily with her. She becomes angry if Garima doesn't call her. Govind loses his advance paid for shop in the earthquake, falls sick and is admitted in the hospital. Vidya goes to meet him with a handwritten card. She calls him a friend and passion guide. Her passionate poem for him is:

To my maths tutor/passion guide/sort-of-friend, I cannot fully understand your loss, but I can try. Sometimes life throws curve balls

and you question why. There may be no answers, but I assure time will heal the wound. Here is wishing a heartfelt get well soon (3MML, 112).

She is a talkative in nature. She asks Govind many questions when he returns from Australia. She puts her palm on his hand and wants to kiss him but he denies. She tells him not to worry about her age as she is going to complete eighteen years after two months only. In her words, “Two months and I will turn eighteen. Time to bring me another nice gift” (3MML,183). She wants to kiss him at any cost. She puts her fingers on his mouth and cups his face in her palm. She disguises as if mosquito kissed her. She opens her mouth and brings close to him. Her lips are eight millimeters apart from him and soon the gap reduces to zero. She is more interested in kissing and wants to progress more.

Ananya is vivacious and bold character in the novel, *2 States*. She comes from a typical, conventional, well-educated family. The whole family has a thirst for education. She is from a Tamil-Brahmin family in Chennai. She is a modern type of girl who in spite of taking birth in Brahmin’s family eats chicken and drinks beer. She is rebellious by nature. Her behavior, in the mess, in the beginning of the novel itself displays her rebellious nature. She quarrels with mess worker. An excerpt from the novel *2 States*:

What you want? The mess worker said in a heavy South Indian accent. ‘You calling rasam not rasam. You make face when you see my sambhar. I feed hundred people they no complain. And that is why you don’t improve . Maybe they should complain,’ she said (2S, 04).

Ananya is a beautiful girl and is tagged as the “best girl of the fresher batch”. More than thirteen students propose her. She meets Krish Malhotra, a protagonist of the novel, in the college canteen. She finds friendliness in him and makes him her best friend. She is emotional and cries instantly. In the class of economics, she cries when she does not give the answer to the question asked by Professor Chatterjee. She takes Krish’s help for solving problems and invites him at her room for study. She does not want to entangle in love relationship but Krish forces her to do it. She kisses him at his room when latter denies talking with her. She accepts Krish’s proposal of marriage. He asks her about her virginity. She tells Krish, “I told him if there is an entrance exam for virginity, you can be sure I won’t top it” (2S, 129). Ananya along with Krish goes to Delhi to win the heart of his mother. Initially she faces many problems in doing this. She tries to work with Krish’s mother but does not succeed. Krish’s father also does not give her proper response. She gets a chance to attend the marriage programme of Krish’s cousin, Minty. At the marriage programme, Bridegroom’s father is not ready for his son’s marriage, as they do not get the fixed car in the dowry. Ananya takes initiatives, calls Duke, the bridegroom and warns him. An excerpt from the novel shows her daring:

“What do you do Duke?” Ananya asked.

‘I am a software engineer’, he said.

‘How much do you make?’, Ananya said.

Duke kept quiet.

‘Tell me’, Ananya said in a loud voice.

‘Ten thousand a month’ he said in a heavy Punjabi accent.

‘Great I make twenty five thousand; still can you tell me what have you done to deserve a wedding like this? What have you done to deserve a car to be gifted to you?’

‘I, I am the b...boy’s side. Duke stammered.

‘So? Have you seen Minti? Ananya said.

Duke nodded.

‘You are having an arranged marriage. That is why you are getting girl like her. If you had to woo her, can you even in your dream to have a girlfriend like her?’

Duke kept quite as he shifted his largeness from one leg to other.

‘What?’ Ananya said.

‘This is too much’, Ananya said.

‘I am too much’, Ananya agreed and gave Duke a Bharatnatyam- style glare.

She spoke again.

‘Do you know what Minti’s parents had to go through this wedding for you? That car cost two and half year of your salary, Mr Duke! These two parties have thrown him into debt, now you want an Accent? It would be your accent, it will be what you managed to wrench out of a helpless father who didn’t want a drama at his daughter’s wedding to turn into a scandal’ (2S, 213).

Conclusion

Thus, Chetan Bhagat in his novels, *Five Point Someone*, *One Night @ The Call Center*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* and *2 States* has tried to present the different real female characters. He has tried to cover all the characters related with the modern society. The female characters like Neha, Vidya, Priyanka and Ananya represent the characters which we can find in our society. The determinations of the female characters are described in beautiful and realistic manners. Bhagat is successful in making the reader happy. New readers who don’t know the literary language can also enjoy the conversation between the characters. The author has succeeded here in describing all the things in beautiful manner. He has also succeeded in keeping the readers stick to novel up to at the end.

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