

CONTEMPORARY DATING CULTURE OF THE YOUTH IN INDIA IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S ONE INDIAN GIRL

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Abstract

India is a country with principles based on traditional ideologies and moral concepts, but they are rarely incorporated into modern living styles. Getting physical with the opposite sex, fun friendship, dating, emotional exploitations, mutual exploitation, lust, sex before marriage, sex with other men or women does not form a structure of Indian culture or tradition. But Bhagat's characters exhibit such emotional packages as a part of their modern living to encourage cultural degradation and modern cultural revolution. Chetan Bhagat has focused the limelight in the modern culture and travels by highlighting his life and the existence of other people whom he has encountered and understood through his literary works. Bhagat in *One Indian Girl* reveals the life and attitude of an Indian girl, Radhika, who is extremely intelligent, her annual compensation is equal to forty-eight lakh rupees a year. Her dating experience begins in New York where her beauty was appreciated and accepted. This paper explores the changes in the modern Indian culture that was inculcated in the society by the invaded dating culture.

Key Words : Dating culture, India and dating, One Indian Girl, Chetan Bhagat.

Contemporary Indian social and cultural norms also keep changing, which is because of certain inevitable inclusions like, the western cultural influence, change in lifestyle, immigration, lack of traditional knowledge, physical attraction or satisfaction, intentions to break the existing norms or to create bondage between one sex and the other. Chetan Bhagat has focused the limelight in the modern culture and travels by highlighting his life and the existence of other people whom he has encountered and understood through his literary works. As an Indian, he fictionalizes the contemporary society of India, by highlights the Indian culture, its problems, its language, and depicts the life of the younger generation. His novels focus on the contemporary urban issues, the quality of private coaching centres, student's suicide, unfulfilled ambition, and

rampant corruption. He also deals with the urban cities and their problems, inter-caste marriages, the attractions of professional jobs and making career choices. This paper explores the changes in the modern Indian culture that was inculcated in the society by the invaded dating culture.

The term modern refers to the characteristics of present and recent time, which does not talk about the past or the traditional cultures. Indian culture relay on thousands of distinct and unique cultures of different, regions, religions, and communities. Its culture is an amalgamation of several diverse cultures such as religion, philosophy, cuisine, dress, languages, dance, music, architecture, and movies. Notions of culture and history are hard to be grasped in the complex and vast country like India. Even in the age of globalisation, India remains a unique treasure trove of creativity. It upholds its diverse cultures, languages and religion to preserve traditional excellence

In a conservative country like India love before marriage or love outside marriage is considered as a taboo. These problems arise due to the objection for love marriages, cross religion love, status problems and economical differences. There are suicides and honour killings due to the disagreement over accepting love. Going on a date is always a secret with Indian parents.

Dating is an effective system to develop a family in foreign cultures, but Indian culture has a long system of arranged marriage in India. Indians have alienation towards dating culture. In the 1800s dating occurred in private places. People did not go on dates rather they met. These dates occurred in the privacy of a family porch or parlour. The concept of dating began at the turn of the 20th century to select a suitable match for marriage, which heavily relied on factors such as financial and social status. The modern living style of young adults exposes them to more potential dating partners, which alters the basic objective of getting a life partner to the concept of fun. There were a cultural change and the change in the cultural formation that instigated the cultural shift, which is described by Jodi O'Brien's in the book, *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*, she writes;

Different institutions were becoming more prominent in the lives of young men and women, such as school, college, and workplaces, which exposed them to a large pool of potential dating partners. As a result, the purpose of dating was primarily to have fun, not

to find a marriage partner. However, couples would form after several dates if they were interested in having more exclusive relationships. (n.pag.)

Dating is prominently linked with fun activities in youth, but it is linked with other institutions like marriage and family. When talking about the rules to be followed in dating Kira Cochrane in her article “ Should I Follow any Rules?” says that, “And the only rule is that there are no rules”(n.pag.). It is a difficult task to assign rules either as each one follows their emotional path while dealing with personal matters.

Dating culture in India has its own way, which begins with contact with two families through phones, Whatsapp, FB or emails. Than they see each other. It is heavenly influenced by the custom of arranged marriages which requires little dating, although there is a strong indication of this institution is changing. At the same time, love marriages are becoming more accepted as India becomes more intertwined with the rest of the world. In India, most of the dates happen during the day because parents do not allow going out at night, but things are different if they stay away from their parents.

Bhagat in *One Indian Girl* reveals the life and attitude of an Indian girl, Radhika, who is extremely intelligent to be recruited at Goldman Sachs in New York. It was one of the highly paid jobs with annual compensation of 120,000 dollars, which is equal to forty-eight lakh rupees a year. Her dating experience begins in New York where her beauty was appreciated and accepted. In India, she compares herself with her sister and creates an inferiority complex within herself and kept herself behind the screen and always in relation with her books. When she migrated to New York, she got the friendship of Debu, who grew up in Kolkata and he went to SRCC in Delhi, where Radhika also did her masters but both of them did not get the opportunity to meet each other, in their college but they got a chance to meet each other in New York. When little wine spill on her legs, he offered her a tissue and even in that darkness she noticed him looking at her legs. At the end of the day, he informs her that he knows good places where they get Chinese food, which is her favourite. Her heart begins to beat fast. She questions herself whether this is a date. “Is this what people call a date?” (*OIG* 37) She wanted to ask for clarification. Different thoughts darted across her head. She feels that he is too forward and develops confusion whether she would look too cheap and desperate if she agrees to his invitation. She also thinks that “Will he think I am a slut? Why there is no user manual for how

girls should live on this planet?” (*OIG* 37). It was difficult for her to say okay. The effort she took me to say that okay felt like lifting seven heavy suitcases.

Next time when she go on a date she makes it sure to wax her body. She was lying down in her underwear, she had come to completely bare to a funky, “‘high-tech meets comfy chic’ waxing studio on 68th street and Madison” (*OIG* 40). The cold wax hurts her more but she does it for its long-lasting results. Her hair clung to the white strip of cloth, which is six inches long and two inches wide to give her a hard feeling as if her Armageddon coming out. She also imagines herself to be in the Middle East, where, “they punish women with lashes if they do something awful like driving a car, offering men their opinions or something totally immoral like exposing their elbows in public” (*OIG* 40). Catherin, the fifty-year-old waxing lady finished her legs from the front and flipped her around. She felt like a fish being scaled before dinner. After waxing, Catherine asked whether she would like to have a

Brazilian?. . . it took me a second to figure out what she meant. Then I realized the embarrassment and pain involved . . .

Do girls do it? I said.

Everyone honey. The boys don’t like them bushes anymore. (*OIG* 40-41)

She undergoes the painful Brazilian waxing and she says to herself that she is not doing this for Debu but, she does that for herself. She picks a military green lace dress from the Gap, that ended well above her knees to expose enough legs. Debu enjoys his time with Radhika, at the same time she also enjoys the pleasure of getting attention from the Indian guys in the restaurant staring at her legs. Debu had spent only a minimal amount on her date and exclaims that “I didn’t realize you could be a cheap date” (*OIG* 45). She got excited on the word date from him. “Date. He used the word date. I am on a date. I felt thrilled at the prospect of being on a date” (*OIG* 45). Within one month they have been to several dates, to movies, baseball game and the Broadway musicals. She had started liking New York and Debu but it was not romantic, yet she has many questions about Debu’s behaviour. She wanted him to make a move so that she could make a boyfriend for herself. She wonders whether she would ever have a boyfriend for herself.

Radhika develops a physical attraction towards Debu. Radhika feels Debu's curly hair, beard and smile more adorable every time. She gazed at his lips and thought why they have not kissed each other. She expects compliments about her beauty from him, some times she even felt that he is partially blind. But when he admires her taste in clothes and comments her hot look, her soul literally danced within herself. When he says that she has a nice figure, she actually screams in exhilaration within herself. "Which part, which part? I wanted to scream in excitement. Do you like my waist? Booms? Ass?" (OIG 52). Her positivity towards his comment gives him the courage to appreciate her whole body. She feels happy that he spoke about her beautiful legs because she has already has spent 100 dollars to completely bare it. It was Radhika who squeezed his warm hand, she did not want to leave it that way because she fears that it would be signal for him. So she leaves his hand. Debu holds her hand when they were crossing the traffic signal and he did not release her hand afterwards. When they reached the hotel he makes excuses to take him into her room, as if he wishes to see the photograph of her pretty sister. Radhika takes the initial steps to seduce Debu. She takes her feet up on the bed as her short dress inched up a little further, that makes Debu lose his chain of thoughts. Radhika understands her ways to control men. Their advancement in mutual sexual encouragement ends up in sexual intercourse between the two. Thus their dating culture develops to a sexual relationship.

Dating in a foreign country is encouraged by both Radhika and Debu as they live away from their parents, their lonely life serves as a mutual friendship. Radhika likes him, but they have not made any clarifications about their future relationship. They come close to each other and their physical attraction leads to share their sexual intimacy, which develops into a living together partners. Innovation of modern trend into the modern life of two Indians creates more pain when Debu informs his interest in marrying a woman who is interested to be a house wife, when Radhika pressurizes him to marry her. This proves that Debu's interest is not to develop a permanent relationship with Radhika, but he considers her just like a sexual partner. On the other hand, Radhika seeks for a permanent relationship. There misunderstandings, and pain is caused by the modern cultural changes.

Conventional Indian culture keeps young girls away from boys. Even Indian marriages are fixed by the parents, where Indian women do not have the right to choose their own life

partner. Modern culture and civilization document a different culture that provides ample opportunity and scopes for committing sexual or moral mistakes. During olden days parents kept watch over their young children and made sure to maintain a gap between the different sexes. The process of gender socialization begins when children develop a gender identity, by an age of seven a child gets their complete realization of their sexes. At that point, children begin to actively select or observe from the environment the behaviour that they see as consistent with their gender. The basic idea is that once a girl sees herself and others as gendered, she gets self-motivated to engage in feminine behaviour and to model herself on other people she identifies as women in her environment. S L Ben in the research article, "Gender Schema Theory and it's Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-Aschematic Children in a Gender-Schematic Society," says that;

As every parent, teacher, and developmental psychologist knows, male and female children become "masculine" and "feminine," respectively, at a very early age. By the time they are four or five, for example, girls and boys have typically come to prefer activities defined by the culture as appropriate for their sex and also to prefer same-sex peers. The acquisition of sex-appropriate preferences, skills, personality attributes, behaviors, and self-concepts is typically referred to within psychology as the process of sex typing. (n.pag.)

Dating culture does not belong to Indian culture, but it is a western culture that crept into the Indian society. It is considered as a taboo in the conservative country like India. It is a culture that is still emerging in India, where it is way behind western countries. In olden days the Indian society had some definite rules and regulations for everyone in a family. The man as the father and head of the family would be the bread earner of the family, the woman or the mother would join hands with her man to take care of all the family members in the family. Men, as a father or son has education, complete freedom and exposure to the outside world, on the other hand, woman as mother or daughter has no freedom for education, she is expected to follow the footsteps of her mother and expected to learn cooking and household chores. Beginning of the 21st century brought education by the Indian government. The increase in women literary rate gave them a white-collared job and an equal pay scale that of man. The younger generation carried the values of education and equal freedom but it forgot to give importance to the

traditional values that walked each human beings in the moral and disciplined path for centuries in the past.

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