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What Women Want Is ‘Equilibrium’: A Discourse of Gender-Crisis in Chetan Bhagat’s *One Indian Girl*

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Abstract:

‘What women want’ is not just a popular slogan but a mind alarming issue because most of the practices of the different cultures, traditions, communities, religious and societies are not providing any choices or options to one gender in the comparison to the other gender and it is a very obvious guess which gender is being victimized a lot. By introducing the female protagonist, Chetan Bhagat tries to unveil the contemporary uneven gender roles, gender biased social structure and inbuilt inherited sexist mindsets of Indians. Anti-feminism, sexism, misogyny and disequilibrium are so deeply rooted practices in the Indian societies that it has become the part of ‘being an Indian’ or so called ‘Indian-ness.’ This paper is an attempt to raise the issue of deep rooted anti-feminism in India and to seek equal human rights for women. Unlike his previous novels, this time writer pens a female as his protagonist, to raise bigger issues such as gender crisis, society versus feminist individualism, feminism, liberalism, misogyny, sexism and ultimately the most important humanism.

Keyword: Gender Crisis, Feminism, Gender Inequality, Sexism, Humanism.

Introduction:

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India said, “You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of women.” Indian women are making their names on the international platform like Kalpana Chawla, Sunita Williams, Saniya Nehwal, Indira Gandhi, Priyanka Chopra etc. but we also have so many uncountable and unknown names and unfamiliar faces which depict the truth about Indian women. With the help of this discourse, we will study the current condition of Women in India.

Considering all sexes and genders as one is our prime responsibility as a human being. Dividing these into different categories, classifications and comparisons will drag the society into various silent and violent offenses and criminal activities which will not only be illegitimate practices but it will also go against moral and ethical principles. Like many Gods and their names, people are also divided into many classifications based on various comparisons. All the problems in this world will fade if people believe in one God and in the same manner people should consider

themselves only as human and they should provide equal human rights to one another. In the Equality Now Tribute Address, Joss Whedon delivered a message on 15 May 2006, "Equality is not a concept. It's not something we should be striving for. It's a necessity. Equality is like gravity. We need it to stand on this earth as men and women, and the misogyny that is in every culture is not a true part of the human condition. It is life out of balance, and that imbalance is sucking something out of the soul of every man and woman who's confronted with it. We need equality Kinda now."¹ <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/josswhedonequalitynow.htm>

In the Vedic Period of ancient Indian societies, equal human rights were given to both of the girl child and a boy child. Most of the wives of Vedic Gurus were equally learned like their husbands and Most of the queens went to the war zone with their husbands. Worshiping enormous Goddesses like Saraswati, Durga, Kali, Aadishakti, etc. is itself a self-evident proof of a feminist society of ancient India. We encounter the similar concept by Kohli, S. (2017) that "there is Nama Karana Sanskar (naming ceremony) were conducted for girl children and there are instances of being performed for them. The position of the girl child seems to have deteriorated after the first millennia, especially in the north Indian states, due to a change in political equations. The reformists of the nineteenth century, however, advocated a ban on early marriage of girls, supported widow remarriage and opened schools for girls. The effort was continued more aggressively in the twentieth century with the support of Indian national congress leading the struggle for independence. In spite of all the efforts, gender equality has not been achieved and girls are discriminated in all the spheres of life."² Kohli, Sugandha. "Gender Inequality in India." Volume-III, Issue-IV. January 2017. 179. Moreover, in spite of the aforesaid living in the modern, technologically advanced and education oriented world, we become conventional, rigid and orthodox while practicing gender equality.

Chetan Bhagat wants to draw attention to this burning matter that challenges and pressure of 'being Indian girl' are even harder and crucial. His protagonist of the plot is Radhika Mehta, an independent and brave girl who knows how to learn from her own mistakes and how to live life on her own terms. The entire story revolves around the pursuit of her aspirations and her fortitude to overcome limitations against all odds.

'One Indian Girl' talks about the story of the daughter of SBI Branch Manager Sudarshan Mehta and homemaker Aparna Mehta's twenty-seven-year-old million dollar baby, Radhika Mehta, who is a vice president in the firm of an investment bank. The story starts from the venue of her marriage in Goa where she is all set to have an arranged marriage with Brijesh Gulati who works on Facebook. Uninvited, Debu and Neel Gupta, her exes show up there with their marriage proposals for her. Debu, who is now regretting his act of rejecting her, wants to marry her. On the other side, Neel is ready with his chartered plane to elope with the 'bride to be'. Earlier, she was not 'a marriage material type' for them.

With the development of the story, Radhika struggles to cope up with her two versions, ‘the perfect she’ as a daughter, sister, lover, bride to be and dedicated professional with sweet lies and on the other side her eternal critic ‘the Mini me’, her real self with bitter truths. The Mini Me is a voice of inner consciences with bare truths and only very few can dare to live with that. The title, ‘One Indian Girl’ is capable to mystify the readers as it is expected from the writer to be more realistic in approach because Indian society is harsher in reality than in fiction and mostly escape and denial is not that simple. Burning brides, female feticides, acid attack victims and honor killing victims are regular headlines. The author guides to resist this customary of suppressing females with the help of the climax of the novel which is uncommon and rebellious. Chetan clearly writes his viewpoint, ‘I don’t think anyone has to specifically call him or herself a feminist. If you are a fair person and want equal opportunities for all, that’s a start.’ Message of practicing equality in deeds not only in words is very simple but very difficult for the society to accept and to practice. Females don’t need a man to define them but conversely they need a man to support, to inspire, to understand and to help them to become a better individual and the best human being. Gender biased social structure is becoming a war zone for females no matter what age, color, height, caste, culture, tradition, religion, state or position they belong or acquire. Woman who takes control of their life and tries to take independent decisions are still facing lots of opposition from people around them. Speaking of Chetan’s new book, he tells that a lot of women will relate to ‘*One Indian Girl*’. “Young women are told that you can do anything in life. And they do... society does provide the opportunity... [but] while we do have the institutions for them to be successful, we don’t know what to do with successful women.” In this particular study, we will encounter various situations where protagonist feels helpless due to the culture of practicing gender discrimination by our societies where disequilibrium has become the major aspect of Indian culture. The main objective of the paper is to analyze the current status of gender crisis and to provide reasons and facts and lastly to suggest measures to reduce gender crisis in India.

1. Female against Feminism

The concept of feminism favors the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes but the major obstacle in achieving the goal is women who are against feminism intentionally or unintentionally. The Mini me of Chetan’s protagonist is right, ‘Some problems in the world seem to exist solely for women.’ Her inner voice analyses that ‘All the women’s empowerment and feminism bullshit didn’t really take me anywhere, right? Maybe Kamla Bua and mom’s way was the right way.’ A lack of support and encouragement will lead anyone to self-suspicion and ultimately to surrender. As Philip Goldberg is right about the negative role of women in women empowerment, “Women do consider their own sex inferior. And even when the facts give no support to this belief, they will persist in downgrading the competence-in particular, the intellectual and professional competence-of their fellow females.”³ It is a very surprising fact that not only men but also women are practicing gender crisis now and then. Radhika’s mother is the true example of those kinds of women. ‘Can you stop waving your feminism flag for a week?’

This is a wedding, not an NGO Activist venue,' this reply is given by Radhika's mother when Radhika tried to oppose her "girl's side" and "boy's side" logic in her wedding. A clash between mother and daughter where Radhika tries to raise this burning issue of gender biased emotional blackmailing kind of treatment and her mother is trying to suppress her voice by using words such as 'Protocol is protocol'.

Like every other Indian mother, Radhika's mother is also a true representation of typical Indian female who blindly wants to follow every protocol without applying logic or reason or without questioning them and tries to affect their offspring psychologically and emotionally to follow these oppressive protocols based on gender discrimination and sexism. Chetan Bhagat wants to dig this emotional blackmailing which is done by women who are knowingly or unknowingly against feminism. The question asked by Radhika's mother about her selection of dresses is objectionable, "You are going to meet the boy's side in jeans and T-shirt? Again another protocol to follow and pressure is given by none other than a mother who should not emotionally manipulate and diplomatically discourage her child but to support her in her fight for the right of gender equality. This is happening all over India where every girl is manipulated and diplomatically handled by her own near and dear ones to maintain this big gap of gender crisis. The writer is very much keen to unveil this hidden biased emotional manipulation which is practiced in India. Indian mothers can change the complete picture of discrimination based on gender in India but it's so painful to see that most of them are unwittingly or unknowingly practicing anti-feminism. Chetan raises a bigger issue of female foeticide as Radhika's mother herself wanted a son and for that, she went for two abortions which seem like a very unnoticeable and trivial act to do. Radhika's self assessment of her life is filled with gender biased decisions taken by her mother too. She raises question also on her existence in her judgment, "Sadly for them, the second was also a girl, which was me. It is rumored that they tried again twice; both times my mother had an abortion because it was a girl. Later Radhika's mother confessed this truth of not wanting a girl child after so many denials for this confrontation. According to S. Kohli, "Discrimination against females starts with their birth and continues through their lives. The gruesome evils of female foeticide and infanticide prove how brutal the world could be to women. An unborn girl child is aborted with the help of sex determination techniques. The data shows that despite the law in place *viz* Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 sex selective abortion is still on the rise. A girl child who is born is seen as a burden on her parents or family and not given equal treatment as boys of the same family ever since birth. She is not given proper nutritious food in some cases. As she grows, she is either denied the right to education and in some cases, her education is limited to the elementary level. Her health and well-being are not given due attention and concern. She is married at an early age and this puts an end to any possibilities of growth and a good life in most cases. The discrimination doesn't end here but continues with the expectations of giving birth to a boy. The vicious cycle of female discrimination starts here. Almost all women face some incidents of eve teasing; some are unfortunate to be assaulted sexually and raped."⁴

According to Naganahalli, Vidyadhar S. who defines the meaning of high tech sexism in the book *Education and Empowerment of Women in India*, “this has become the problem of the half of the world. Given a preference for boys over girls that many male-dominated societies have, gender crisis can manifest itself in the form of the parents wanting the newborn to be a boy rather than a girl. There was a time when this could be no more than a wish (a daydream or a nightmare, depending on one's perspective), but with the availability of modern techniques to determine the gender of the fetus, sex-selective abortion has become common in many countries. It is particularly prevalent in East Asia, in China and South Korea in particular, but also in Singapore and Taiwan, and it is beginning to emerge as a statistically significant phenomenon in India and South Asia as well. This is high-tech sexism.”⁵ The relevancy is observed in Indian societies where Lalitha Pawar, Bindu and Shashikala like notorious mother-in-laws are torturing their daughter-in-law for their personal gain and this never-ending envy is not only imaginary life stories to entertain viewers but also these stories are inspired by true events which are happening here and there and now and then. They are becoming the headlines of newspapers and televisions such as female feticide, burning brides, dowry, honor killing, acid attacks and sexist discrimination, declining sex-ratio, declining child sex ratio, abortion of the female fetus, etc. Prabir C. Bhattacharya also explored the similar perception, “This increase in female life expectancy should, in due course, be reflected in a lowering of the sex ratio. However, in recent years another upward influence on the sex ratio has emerged: selective abortions of female fetuses and the sex ratio of the population in the age group from birth to 6 years has registered a major increase from 103.95 in 1981 to 105.82 in 1991, to 107.87 in 2001 and 109.41 in 2011. So while the overall sex ratio declined between 2001 and 2011 from 107.18 to 106.38 (see Table 1), the sex ratio of the population aged 0- 6 has seen a significant increase.”⁶ As Gulimoto represents the same notion in his research finding that, “It has been estimated that there will be 30 to 40 million more men than women of marriageable age in China and India by 2020 as a result of sex-selective abortions. Many young men will face difficulties in finding brides. The possible consequences of a large number of men remaining unmarried have attracted a great deal of attention in both academic and popular discussions in recent years.”⁷ Women can play a very significant role in ripping off this discrimination but somehow all are not united at this point. Females are being one of the major causes either to silently support this uneven sexist practices or to silently tolerate all this to happen with them or with others. However, Alisa Melekhina one of the top female chess players in America also supports the notion and shared a quote which says that “Foremost, we need a paradigm shift in cultural attitudes towards gender stereotypes. Everyone—both men and women —needs to step outside of their comfort zone and analyze how these misconceptions are clouding our judgment on a subconscious level. Our strategic mindset should not be thwarted by having these misconceptions seep into our every-day interactions, create artificial divisions between the genders, or prescribe a path rooted in tradition over reason.”⁸ Only males should not be targeted to foster this malevolent practice but females are also practicing this consciously or unconsciously. Women is capable enough to change the customary structure of biased society if they educate, teach, counsel their offspring from home and make it a culture to nurture them with the teachings of equality in gender roles. Chetan Bhagat has

given this advice to all the ladies in his blog '*Five things women need to change about themselves*' on 13 March, 2013 that, "The first behavior that needs to end is the constant desire to judge other women. Women are hard on themselves. They are harder on each other. An overweight woman enters the room. Most women are thinking 'how fat is she?' A working mother misses a PTA meeting due to an office deadline, others think 'what a terrible mother she is'. A girl in a short skirt makes other women go 'Slut!' in their heads. A pretty woman's promotion makes other women wonder what she had been up to get the job. From an ill-fitting dress to a badly cooked dish, you are ready to judge others. This, despite knowing, you yourselves are not perfect. As a woman, it is tough enough is to survive in a male dominated world. Why be so hard on each other? Can you let each other breathe?"⁹

2. Beauty Dilemma and Gender biasness

"Aditi didi is fair complexioned. I am what they call wheatish in matrimonial ads (why don't they call white-skinned people rice-ish?) We look like the before-after pictures in a fairness cream ad; I'm before picture, of course," In spite of winning the Maths Olympiad, topping CBSE, cracking CAT for IIMA and becoming investment banker in top foreign MNC but what matters ultimately is your complexion and the size of the boobs..." The unethical comparisons were done by an average mind for marriage in which genetic coding is responsible. Why is this criterion for the female to compare them with the same species to please man? When it comes to women, their introduction starts with dividing them into categories of being beautiful or ugly, tall or short, fair, whitish or dark complexion etc. Men are accepted by the society as normal looking but not women. Even popular movie actresses are not debarred from this beauty phenomenon as *Slumdog Millionaire* actress Frieda Pinto is not desired by Indian film Industry because of her complexion. In an article *THE STAR INDIA DOESN'T WANT* published in *The Telegraph* India dated 1 November, 2011 in which, S. Ramachandran quotes that "there are other reasons India in general and Bollywood in particular are still to embrace Pinto. It's not just the success of Danny Boyle's film worldwide, but Pinto's looks too are deemed "international". Her skin tone can represent diverse ethnicities (and thus extend her market) but doesn't have the alabaster appeal that is popular in her home country which has seen the value of the fairness cream market cross Rs 2,200 crore."¹⁰ Vera Nazarian depicts about the same in '*The Perpetual Calendar of Inspiration*' that "A woman is human. She is not better, wiser, stronger, more intelligent, more creative, or more responsible than a man. Likewise, she is never less. Equality is a given."¹¹

'Looking beautiful' is the desired necessity for women and that's the compulsion for every woman to meet the criteria to find the suitable match. But the question arises that why men are debarred from this compulsion of looking physically suitable in figure, features, height, and complexion for winning female partners. By quoting 'The Beauty Myth' by Naomi Wolf in his book *One Indian Girl*, Mr. Bhagat wants to highlight this gender biased beauty comparisons and expectations for women which have spread in every society and in every culture. Debu says, "A

landmark feminist book. It talks about how women are culturally bullied into feeling conscious about their looks all the time,' I said. 'Really? Well, to a certain extent it's true,' I said. 'Yeah. Do men compare their physicality with their siblings so much?' 'I guess not.' At another time or place, like at one of our Friday dinners, I would have liked to engage in this intellectually stimulating conversation. Not now. I had other things on my mind. 'Exactly,' he said, 'she says it is a way for men to control women' Although Deb could not prove his words in actions when it comes to gender equality.

Beauty is now has become officially a feminist issue. Women of all colors and creeds are the target of this overly profitable market that gains profits from the deepest insecurities of women about their bodies and physical appearances. The female sense of "beauty" has been hijacked by multinational cosmetics companies and cosmetic hospitals. The findings of the study manifest, "The overall Beauty Business in India is growing phenomenally with the cosmetics market growing at 15-20% annually. The retail beauty and cosmetics market in India currently estimated at USD 950 million is pegged at USD 2.68 billion by the year 2020. In India, the beauty care market consists of salons, cosmetic treatment centers, and cosmetic products and is likely to become the main contributor to the growth of Indian wellness industry. Women contribute to over 85% of the Salon industry revenue, while men's hair is the next wave set to hit the Indian Salon Industry. The rising beauty concerns among both men and women are propelling the Indian cosmetics industry, which has witnessed a strong growth in the last few years."¹²

The time has come for women to come out from this phenomenon to change themselves for getting male attention because they don't need to change them as per a certain way prescribed by the multi mass media of beauty industry. Women can change this uneven beauty representation by rejecting all pre-defined definition and notion of 'looking beautiful' and by accepting themselves as the way they are and by focusing more on 'being beautiful'. Why women are asked to maintain themselves to look in a certain way? In our Indian culture, Females are told that they are supposed to look a certain way in order to look beautiful for male attentions. In contrast, they should be told that they are beautiful exactly in the same way as they are. Erin McKean's statement clearly unveils the concept of looking beautiful more than being beautiful, "You don't have to be pretty. You don't owe prettiness to anyone. Not to your boyfriend/spouse/partner, not to your co-workers, especially not to random men on the street. You don't owe it to your mother, you don't owe it to your children, you don't owe it to civilization in general. Prettiness is not a rent you pay for occupying a space marked 'female.'¹³

The amalgamation of Capitalism, industrialism, and materialism is also becoming a very severe combination for inflating this psychological phenomenon of looking a certain way because of its a billion dollar matter and who cares about nurturing and creating gender biased mindsets, anti-feminist practices, and sexist notions. Joseph Hansen warns about *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* in *Evelyn Reed* "Capitalism compels most women to use cosmetics. If

cosmetics make a woman look better, she tends to feel better and act more confidently. So where's the crime? To express personality through the choices of hairstyle, clothing, jewelry, makeup, and other decorative devices is an intrinsically human, not a class trait. Capitalism exploits and debases self-adornment and the hunger for beauty in its drive for profits, but it is vulgar and ignorant to equate this hunger with blind acceptance of capitalist standards of attractiveness."¹⁴ Women should work more on being more bold and beautiful rather than looking pretty. As Steve Craig narrates, "The "beauty dilemma" that "whether or not a woman should buy and use fashion and beauty products -- is not a trivial issue. Not only does the issue of sexual objectification remain, but pressures on women to become more "beautiful" have led many to courses of actions that can create health problems. Reactions to implants and body piercing, eating disorders, chemical reactions to cosmetics, the dangers involved in cosmetic surgeries, the overuse of diet pills, and the increased likelihood of cancer due to tanning are all well-documented side-effects of the quest for commercialized beauty. For those who study the mass media, the issue of feminine beauty represents a potent, yet largely unstudied force. Despite the gains of the women's movement, the notion of a particular consumerist standard of feminine beauty -- one that can only be achieved through the use of advertised products -- permeates most aspects of popular culture. From who will star in next seasons' sit-coms to what products are advertised in this month's Glamour, these images are a constant part of our lives. Further study and analysis are required to make both men and women aware of the forces at play."¹⁵ Focusing more on being beautiful for her rather than looking beautiful for the society can be the gateway to upgrade self-worth, self-respect, and self-acceptance in view of society.

3. Sexist Protocols and Gender Discrimination

Chetan's Radhika is the true representative of today's generation who is somewhat scrutinizing by preconceived notions and pre-judgemental tendencies of our male dominating society which is neither completely western nor completely Indian and that becomes the major hurdle to cross for Indian girls. Radhika tries hard to adapt herself and to pretend that she is that 'Perfect Indian Dream Girl' for her male counterparts as she herself admits, 'Of course, a lifetime of brainwashing to be a 'good Indian girl' would never allow me to do that.' While after her first meet with Debu, Radhika's fears the same dilemma, '*That's enough, Radhika, this is going into dangerous territory, I told myself. Deflect, change the topic, fast. You don't want to be judged as a slut on the first date.* See, this is what I do. When I am with a man, I behave like I am sitting for a test. Answer the question properly. Act naïve as if I don't understand his double meaning. Don't just be. Perform.... Isn't that what dates are? I said to myself. But then, what about gender equality?' Like Radhika's The Mini Me warns her, 'Be careful. Always give out a chaste good-Indian-girl vibe.' In the beginning of their association, Radhika thinks that Debu is not like any other typical Indian male who is not affected by those gender biased presumptions, preconceived notions, and pre-judgemental tendencies. "Why is there no user manual for how girls should live on this planet?" Radhika is fully aware of sexist protocols as she wants to take the next move with Debu but she

checks herself because taking the first move in love or lovemaking will portray her image as a very desperate girl that may project her as a characterless girl. The writer is unveiling these sexist protocols meant only for girls. Conversely, if a boy takes his first move, he will be considered as a daring dude in a similar matter. On the other hand, her parents also confine her in different gender roles, 'We feel bad taking money from our daughter.' 'Why? If I were your son it would be okay?' 'Yes. But you are not, no?.' 'So what? I am your child. Why can't I help improve your lifestyles?' 'With sons it is different. It's like your right.' 'Wake up. This is so wrong, what you did. Brijesh's parents will think what an uncultured and irresponsible girl they are getting. Who drinks like this?' my mother had said, shaking me non-stop. 'Even their son did. In fact, he puked and passed out at the club,' I'd said. 'He's a boy.' Even in my exhausted, hungover and sleepy state, my feminist antennae were up. I stared at my mother. 'So what if he is a boy?' I said. Clearly, the alcohol-induced confidence had not left me.'

In Indian Society, drinking habits of males are considered as one of the common traits adopted by them as being men but for a girl, it is a crime. Here the conversation between Radhika and her mother unveils the deep rooted sexist protocols is followed by us as a protocol in every home in India where people are practicing sexism as a part of their culture, social system, tradition and religious rituals. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, the award-winning novelist set out her dreams for a fairer world in her book *'We Should All Be Feminists'* during her hit TED talk in 2011, she claims that, "Culture does not make people. People make culture. If it is true that the full humanity of women is not our culture, then we can and must make it our culture."¹⁶

The sexist remarks and notions are always a vital part of the conversation where comparisons are made, expectations are partially distributed and responsibilities and liabilities are partially given with the belief that one gender is superior to other and Indian families are following every sexist protocol as a part of their culture. In his magic realism genre novel *Shame*, Salman Rushdie shows his aggression about this demeaning social misconduct, "Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honor and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well."¹⁷

Radhika rejects both the marriage proposals of Debu and Neel as she has become fed up with their anti feminist and sexist way of thinking. She replies to Debu and Neel, "Nice in theory. In real life, the girl throws a party for her guy's promotion but the guy cannot handle the girl's bonus.' 'Let me speak. You said to fly, but when I flew high, you wanted to clip my wings. Fly, as long as you fly beneath me, is it?' 'You didn't want me to have a nest.' 'Did you realize that perhaps I did not want to fool around? Perhaps equal rights mean giving women the same rights, not the same things? Equal rights to get what they want, rather than equal rights to the same things men want.' Not only in his novel but apart from the fiction, on the occasion of International women's day Chetan writes about it in one of his blogs, "Dear Ladies, Happy Women's Day! A lot is said on how men should change for us to respect our women better. Here are some: Men need to see

women as people, not objects. Men should realize and truly believe women are as talented, capable as men, and sometimes even more so. Men should not discriminate in the work place or at home. Men have to respect boundaries and make sure their words do not make women feel uncomfortable. Men have to respect women's choices – in what they wear, where they want to go and at what time. Men should never use force or intimidation towards women.”¹⁸

4. Matrimonial Process and Gender Disparity

The matrimonial process is filled with sexism where a large number of societies are following this belief that one sex (usually the male) is naturally superior to the other (mostly female) and should dominate most important areas of life such as social, filial, economic, political, financial, professional etc. Online matrimonial profiles are filled with gender biases. Radhika's profile is showing its clear picture which includes lines like, 'Hi, I am a young, slim, quite fair, Punjabi Khatri girl aged 26, 5'4" tall. I am currently working in London, but flexible to move anywhere with my husband. I am family minded. I can cook North Indian cuisine quite well. I have one elder sister who is already married and well-settled in Delhi. My parents have no other liabilities. My father retired from a respected position in State Bank of India and my mother is a housewife. We are well off and can do a high-status wedding and don't mind staying in a joint family.' Radhika's mother concern depicts the uneven structure of gender biased society, 'If they see a girl who is too independent-minded, too qualified, doing too well, they get scared.' When Radhika tells her salary amount to one of the prospect matches, he clearly denies going ahead, 'Nothing. . . Okay, I will tell you. This is not going to work. Your salary is too high.' 'How can you get too high a salary?' 'I mean for me. I mean compared to me.'

Chetan unveils the naked truth about the matrimonial process in India and abroad for female counterparts, "One, the boy had to be rich. Second, well, there was no second criterion really." Marriage is everything for Indians as they think of it as the final stage of settling down. For a boy, the only criteria is to be financially secure. Conversely, The never ending list is prepared for girls such as not only good in education, job and house hold work but also her age, complexion, physique, height and features, conservative as well as modern, family oriented, religious, virgin, pious etc and ultimately for the purpose of finding a suitable match. Like Radhika's sister explained it to her that "There's a right time for a girl to marry. Don't delay it...The younger the better. Especially for someone like you, I guess she meant for someone as nerdy as me or as wheatish as me or someone whose breasts were not the size of footballs, as Punjabi men prefer." Comparisons are not finished yet. If a boy earns a lot of money, it is like a pride for the family but when a girl is earning a lot of money, it becomes a matter of taking worry for finding an equally eligible partner for her. Her telephonic conversation with her mother explained it all. "Forty-eight lakh rupees a year, four lakhs a month, mom,' I told her on the phone. I heard nothing in response. Most likely she had fainted. My father had never crossed a third of this amount in his twenty-five-year career with the State Bank of India."

Are you there, mom? How will I ever find a boy for you?who wants to marry a girl who earns so much? If the boy earns less, he won't consider you. If he earns more, why would he marry a working girl?' The prime concern of every Indian or NRI parent for their highly uneducated, talented or paid girl child is to find a good groom of their choice. 'One study in the 80's (Balagopal, 1987) addressed these issues with Asian Indian women in the U.S and found that marital dyads were largely arranged within patriarchal norms and traditional gender role expectations.'¹⁹

Radhika's mother depicts the true picture of today's scenario, 'It is already hard to get a boy for you. You are too successful, beta.' 'So? Don't you need a man? Every woman does.' 'There is an age, beta. You get the best matches then. After that, a girl's appeal declines. You are twenty-six already.' The question is why every woman needs a man to complete herself when she is complete in her own way like a man. Why these continual orthodoxies are being favored by people in India. A naked truth and harsh reality presented by the writer in a very casual manner which affects lives of girls a lot. An ultimate completion as a girl is to find a suitable boy for a marriage. Indian girls are being suppressed a lot due to these cruel comparisons and unequal measures to judge one gender superior to another. Chetan Bhagat also talks about a dreadful system of dowry which became the sole reason for burning brides. "I guess, considering this a country where in-laws burn brides, they did seem like nice people." In India, it is very easy for a man to find a match.

5. Marriage and Antifeminism

This is a huge debating question that after marriage why only female have to do all the adjustments, sacrifices and compromises for the sake of family as it seems the responsibility of both the parents to be accountable for their domestic liabilities and family oriented responsibilities. As observed by Archana Jain in *GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES AND MARITAL SATISFACTION AMONG ASIAN INDIAN COUPLES LIVING IN THE XPLORATORY STUDY* that "in the Western world marriage has seen a shift from being a rite of passage that marked adulthood and helped organize social life to a partnership centered on two equal people who are bound by love. Marriages are still being arranged by families and follow patriarchal gender roles."²⁰

Who has done this division? Especially when females are also now handling their professional responsibilities like men nowadays. Debu who previously acknowledged Radhika's success and guts prefer to leave her for the same reason when it comes to marriage and post marriage responsibilities. At the beginning of their affair, Radhika was very impressed with Debu's nature 'to acknowledge a woman's smartness.' He impressed her by saying that 'women are better negotiators.' He continued, 'It's all these bullshit men spread. To scare women out of a role or position. Fact is, men are shit-scared of talented women like you.... 'Congratulations. To my talented friend Radhika, who will kick ass at distressed debt and show the men how it is done,' he

said.' Very quickly he changes his own words about women empowerment and doubts his lady love for being potential mother material.

'So I am thinking. I don't know. I had this idea of what the mother of my kids would be like.' 'So are you going to keep working like this or leave work once you have kids?' 'Let's see. I am not. Okay, I like you. I love you. But I want my kids' mother to be at home for them.' 'Maybe I will be. If needed.' 'See, you are not sure. You have this hi-fi mega-paying job.' 'I don't think I can do this. Really, I can't.' Debu's expectation is the representation of most of the marriageable bachelors of India. He further continues, '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.' '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.' I visualized a future home. I would like my wife to be there for me and my kids.' 'Oh, so you want to work and I stay at home?' 'You make more money. I should quit my job, right, not the high-flying you?'

Radhika's question is right, 'but why do I have to choose one of the two?' This is happening all over the world not only in India that why only mother is meant to do all the sacrifices for the sake of the family and for the sake of the future of children. It is very obvious for people to think in this manner that for the sake of marriage girl should leave their job for marriage if required and after child birth only she should be the one to fulfill all the domestic roles and responsibilities and to do all the sacrifices as a birth giver of the children. It seems that a mother or a female owes all the responsibilities biologically and society will not ask for her choices and preferences. Debu who is the true representative of this infected and inherited mentality is having this gender disparity which is not allowing Radhika to remain equal like him for marriage and after marriage. These expectations are very obvious for people in society because they grow in this. Later When Radhika asks about Debu's views on Feminism, he confesses this by saying, 'My feminism didn't go anywhere. My masculinity did. I told you, I felt insecure. How can my girl make three times as much as I do?' The biggest hindrance is nurturing this masculinity in such a way which teaches men to disrespect, oppress and suppress femininity. On the other hand, Neel has his own reasons not to commit, 'We have our work. We have love. We have excitement. We have a friendship. We don't have the predictability and monotony of a married couple.' 'I thought you were career-minded.' '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.' Why this words like 'marriage material' are meant for women.

These post marriages related high expectations are meant to suppress women physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, financially in society because they are not getting equal support from their male counterparts and from the society which is structured in such a way that it imposes high expectations from women in every phase of life. Ms. Puja Yadav unveils the current scenario of gender biasness through her article '*India has Highest Number of Over-Educated, Over-Qualified Housewives in the World*' which published in INDIAN NEWS TALKS on July 28, 2017

that “now days married Indian women have achieved a lot. They have left the secure domain of their home and have plunged themselves in the battlefield of life with the armour of talent to protect them, as they hold the highest degrees with an impressive marks. They have successfully fought against social restrictions, emotional ties, religious boundaries and cultural clutches. Women can now be seen working on par with men in every field. According to recent research it is found that 87% of our women feel stressed out most of the time. And in research it is found that number of married women are more.”²¹ To overcome this barrier, all women as a mother, wife, friend, and daughter should teach their sons, husbands, and brothers to be always ready for discharging equal responsibilities beyond the boundaries of sexes and genders.

6. Sex and Sexism:

In this novel, Chetan himself could not follow feminism while elaborating Radhika’s first encounter with intercourse, he focuses on female anatomy. Using phrases like ‘grabbed my breasts,’ ‘kissed my nipples,’ ‘kissed my caller bone,’ ‘kissed my chin and then my lips,’ ‘his hands on my thighs,’ ‘touched between my legs,’ ‘there is a man in me.’ Writer himself should balance it by mentioning male anatomy.

In today’s society, women are constantly over-sexualized and objectified when it comes to print or electronic media or glamour industry. Our fashionable modern culture has malformed into a hyper sexualized society where glamorizes the sexual objectification of women in numerous ways are practiced and that is mostly about in breasts and bras, dirty talks, oral sex etc. It is unacceptable the sexualization of women leads our society to various crimes against women. It is time to see this objectification as a serious issue of gender crisis and rethink about the portrayal of women through various mass media.

We are living in that society where men have every right to judge women. Radhika’s fear during sex highlights the heights of the presence of plague like gender biases.

“Wow, you are wet,’ he said. I wasn’t just wet. I was soaked. The good girl in me wondered if he would judge me for it.....Good. I guess that didn’t make me the shy and coy girl all Indian girls should be. Maybe it even made me seem like a slut. However, I would rather be a spent and finished slut than a good but frustrated Indian girl.” It is a very bold comment by the female protagonist of Chetan Bhagat but also shouting loudly about sexual oppressions done to the female for the sake of their unique identity i.e., their gender. Due to this oppression of the society, females face a lot of problems such as lack of awareness and knowledge about sexual education, high ratio of sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, blocked communication in all sexual activities and with sexual partners, abortion, adopting or parenting or family planning pregnancy, unsafe abortions, sexually transmitted infection (STI), HIV/AIDS, and sexual violence, the rates of which are already increasing at a disturbing rate. Bhattacharya, Prabir C. spreads light on it, “The

broad picture is that the major problem of sex-selective abortions is to be found in the northern-western region of India (mainly in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan). These states are also ones which, in general, have higher female than male mortality during childhood. The explanations for these regional differences have usually been in terms of differing cultural and social traditions.”²²

As cited in Indian J Psychiatry. Titled 'Adolescent sex education in India: Current perspectives', we find the ratio of female active participation is very less due to this growing gender biased culture present in Indian Societies no matter which religion or caste they belong. "The complex emotional state in which youth find themselves in, stigma surrounding matters of a sexual nature in the Indian society and widespread gender crisis faced makes it increasingly challenging for adolescents to attain the knowledge they need. Through what is termed "family life education" (FLE), we can hope to teach the roles and responsibilities of males and females toward each other in all relationships in familial and social contexts, thus endowing the knowledge necessary to maintain sexual health as they navigate through the vulnerabilities of life."²³

According to Heather Corinna, "Addresses cultural inequalities of sex and gender which affect sexuality, such as the effects of commodifying women's bodies, the glorification of sexual violence, objectification, other minorities and sexuality in the media, economic divides, the greater sexual burdens some groups bear, the greater rates of sexual abuse and rape among some groups, as well as the detrimental effects of patriarchy upon men, male sexuality, identity and relationships. Acknowledges the reality of sexual and other interpersonal abuse and violence and works to counter and prevent those abuses among all sexes and genders, as well as recognizing that many women have survived these abuses and that this needs be a consideration with sexuality education and understanding of human sexuality."²⁴ Due to the gender based inequalities present in our society, women face a lot of difficulties throughout their lives and even during sex such as virginity protocols, being a good sexual object to satisfy her man during sex, how to make a man happy, younger girl for elder man.

7. Professionalism and Gender Biasness

A conversation between Radhika and Debu clearly indicates the presence of deeply rooted gender biases present in the mindset of young Indian lads when it comes to choosing between career and marriage. Debu wants a good hike and promotion so that he can be a director and ready to postpone his planning of marriage with Radhika. Even he does not want to commit or engage with her formally. "It's my job. I am waiting for this promotion.' 'It's supposed to come through next month.' 'Yeah, but you never know. It's crazy. Two of my peers told my boss I don't deserve the promotion. Advertising is dog-eat-dog. I am so stressed.' 'Well, that's terrible. But how is this relevant when it comes to us?' 'I want to be a senior creative director. Get a raise. A few more accounts. I want to be a little more solid at work before thinking about marriage. I want to focus on

my career, not get distracted.’ ‘I am not asking you to marry me next week.’ ‘I just. . . Okay, fine, I want to get past this promotion. Win a couple more accounts. I will be ready to take the next step then.”

When Debu comes to know about Radhika’s hike, in place of admiring her, he starts comparing himself to her. She questions herself, “Why to compare?” I smiled. ‘That I had the highest bonus among the associates.’ ‘That’s nice, baby. I mean, I can’t even imagine that kind of money. You know, I barely reached an 80,000 compensation even after the promotion.’ Why does he have to tell me his salary now? I already know it.” She was eagerly waiting for her praise but admiring, motivating and parsing a girl is a tough job for Indian men. Radhika’s Mini me says, “Mr. Debashish Sen, I do other things besides pick restaurants. Like make a ton of money for a girl my age. Heck, I make a lot of money for anyone any age. I also got a top rating in my reviews. Can you at least praise me a little for it? Mini me of Radhika who is actually the inner self of Chetan is definitely right about one thing. “Why am I so keen for his praise? I have earned that bonus. Jon, one of the most senior partners at Goldman Sachs, has recognized my work. Still, I want Debu to also acknowledge it. Why? Why do we girls have this defect? Why do we need our men to praise and validate us in order for us to feel accomplished? Debu’s neutral reaction towards Radhika’s success leads her to hide her accomplishments from him. This conversation reveals the dual standard of Indian men when it comes to work, career, and profession.

Conclusion

As a result of this discourse, all these existing issues can be resolved if we take into an account ourselves as human and only human beings whose prime concern is to not only save humanity but also to believe in humanism in a practical manner. These context oriented differences based on religion, caste, creed, gender, appearances, complexions, beliefs, cultures are creating a huge gulf among human beings and stopping them from practice humanity. Chetan attacks it right with the help of his character Brijesh, ‘I think all human beings should have equal rights. It’s not men versus women, it’s human versus human. Feminist is a wrong term. It should be humanist. The right question is “Are you a humanist?” Well, everyone should be.’ The main gateway is to think beyond sex and gender.

Overall findings of this article manifest that Radhika’s Mini me is right, ‘It’s your life, Radhika, take control of it....No, the one who thinks you deserve to be happy.’ It also shows what women want is to take control over their lives. They want to flutter high without strings which are controlled by others. They do not want others to give them the option to choose. They actually want is the practice not to give them any pressure to choose because they deserve all. Chetan’s message is clear ‘You know what women really want? We don’t want to choose. We want to fly and we also want a beautiful nest. We want both. Do male birds tell female birds to choose? “Hey honey, choose. Either fly or sit in the nest.’ Radhika has rejected all the three men of her life

because she wants to take control of her life and she does not want to choose as per their given options. Chetan himself quotes once that, "Empower your women. The Future Is Female."²⁵ *Hillary Clinton's remark fits here which unveils the hidden*, "Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all." The conclusive theme of the article fundamentally explores what women want is the gender equality, feminism, humanism and last not the least the treatment of equilibrium.

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