

# **FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

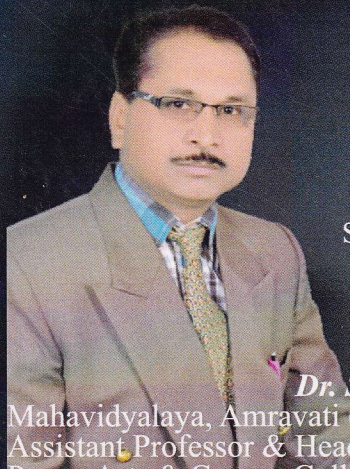
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## Preface

The basis for this book stemmed from my passion to understand 'Feminist Perspectives in literature'. Feminism focuses on the theory of patriarchy as a system of power that organizes society into a complex of relationships based on the assertion of male supremacy. In light of this theory, the oppression and marginalization of women is thus shaped not only by gender but by other factors such as race and class. The term feminism encompasses various social movements, from the late-nineteenth-century women's rights movement to the mid-twentieth-century women's movement in Europe and the United States, as well as referring to theories that identify and critique injustices against women. Feminism is said to be the movement to end women's oppression. A core connotation of "feminism" is thus a commitment to revealing and eliminating sexist oppression.

With the above intention, each chapter has discussed different aspects of 'Feminist Perspectives' through the lens of a particular discipline. The journey of all the contributions of this book has been very time consuming. The passion of all the contributors in writing each of the chosen topics was an actual reflection of how they seemed to be an expert in each of their area of interest. The purpose of each one of them was to bring possible solutions for eradicating the women's oppression and that can focus on the betterment of our society through a solution-based and right-based approach.

**Dr. Sunil S. Bidwaik**

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all the spheres in comparison to men and hence have retarded their progress and development for all these years.

Our world has witnessed women performing great roles as leaders, administrators and entrepreneurs. These great women personalities have indeed given enough proof that they are in all the possible ways equal to men. Thus it clearly indicates that today's world needs both men and women to work together in making this world a better place rather than gender bias approach which have been followed for centuries. Our motives and meaning of life, contentment and success have indeed undergone a drastic change. Today it needs both men and women to work together as equals or complementary to each other to make this world complete. It calls out to all of us in understanding and redefining the role of women in every aspect of life without which the real growth and progress of human civilization would be incomplete.

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## REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S NOVELS

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Realistic representation of contemporary Indian society is the chief feature of Indian writing in English, particularly fictional writing. The fictional works of Post-Independence Indian writers in English, like Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Tharoor, Vikas Swarup, Chetan Bhagat, Aravind Adiga, to mention the few, echoes the reality in the existent Indian society. They have depicted the problems, difficulties and sufferings of the poor section of the society and their struggle to break the age old traditions to fulfill their dreams and aspirations to live the life of freedom and dignity. They have also exposed how the cyber setup of the modern world has changed the lifestyle, mindset and outlook of the modern Indian youths. The writings of Chetan Bhagat, popularly known as the writer of the youths, reflect the contemporary society on the one hand and are replete with authentic and bold representation of the youths with their problems, dreams and aspirations on the other.

Chetan Bhagat, a celebrated name in the brigade of new generation writers of post-Independence fiction in Indian English literature, has six fictions and three non-fiction books to his credit till date. Bhagat also writes opened columns for leading newspapers. All of his novels are best sellers and most of them are adapted for Bollywood movies. All his six fictions realistically represent the contemporary Indian society and some of the very acute issues faced by the people. As a result Bhagat has been stamped as a writer of realistic fiction in the modern time.

In his fictional world Bhagat has boldly exposed the faulty higher education system in India, corruption, the anxieties and insecurities of the rising Indian middle class, including questions

about career, inadequacy, sex, marriage, family conflicts in a changing India, lost love, thwarted ambitions, absence of family affection, pressures of a patriarchal set up, and the work environment of a globalized office. Bhagat has also exposed the myth of the modeling and recorded the sexual audacity of the woman protagonist. The present paper is an attempt to critically evaluate the representation of female characters in the novels of Chetan Bhagat.

Women in Bhagat's novels have their own ideology and way of living. They are no more timid and hesitant in expressing their desires and aspirations. They are the women of modern India. Through his women characters Bhagat shows that their position has changed considerably. Their status is much improved than it was decades ago. Their position is equal to that of men, socially, economically, educationally, politically and legally. His women protagonists enjoy have the right to receive education, inherit and own property and participate in public life.

The place of action of Bhagat's novels is set in the hustle and bustle of Metropolitan Indian cities. He highlights that with the growing urbanization and globalization, a number of opportunities have opened up all around. The women there want to be economically independent. They seek employment anywhere and remain free individuals. His characters are social rebels and his female protagonists remind us of the female characters of G. B. Shaw for their vitality viz. Natural female instinct.

Patriarchal approach presented difference between man and woman, men as superior and women as inferior. Keeping aside the patriarchal spectacle Bhagat has presented men and women equal to one another. He asserts that the global atmosphere has removed all barriers like class, caste, religion, gender, etc. He advocates that even belittled women should be given their due place and respect. With their own intellect and abilities, his women protagonists are seen working shoulder to shoulder with men. In *One Night @ the Call Centre* (2005), Bhagat's second novel, the number of men and women working in call centers is equal. His Women find no problem in the timings of work and choose to work in night shifts. They earn their own living and make career choices. It is realistically presented through Esha, woman protagonist in *One Night @ the Call Centre*.

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novel. She resides in Delhi leaving her home in order to make her modeling dream come true.

Bhagat's women enjoy equal status with men even in case of marriages. They are shown asserting their own opinions and choices regarding life partner. In the old era, a marriageable boy/girl, particularly a girl was bound to marry the match of their parents' choice and that was regarded as their religious duty to repay the debt of parenthood. Bhagat shows his women protagonist breaking this age old tradition. Priyanka, another woman protagonist again in *One Night @ the Call Centre*, makes her own choice in case of marriage quite contrary to her parents' expectations. In *2 States* (2009), Bhagat's fifth novel, Ananya tries to convince her parents till the end in order to marry her lover Krish. This makes Bhagat's writing, undoubtedly, more feminine than masculine. He gives voice and shows his concerns more to his ladies than to his heroes. Like Shakespeare, he has created better heroines than heroes. Bhagat's added concern for women characters can be taken as his stand that the steps towards women empowerment should speed up. Bhagat claims women empowerment as one of the positive effects of globalization.

Bhagat's treatment of love distinguishes him from his contemporaries. In his opinion love, the very essence of livelihood is not at all emotional issue. In his fiction the attitude of youths towards love, marriage, and sex is quite casual. Love is an instinctual feeling and the young generation feels the vibrations of it every now and then. However, the way they propose it and carry out love has definitely changed. In his fictions, there are love proposals and rejections of but everything is taken quite healthily or say in a matter-of-fact way. Vroom in *One Night @ the Call Centre* loves Esha, and proposes to her three to four times. She however, keeps rejecting him all these times. Even though it is so, they work together and maintain quite a healthy friendship. Shyam and Priyanka, in the same novel, have been in relation ever since their college time. When they think that they should break up, they formally come together and put a break to their relationship. Ultimately, when everything has been settled down, they come together and decide to marry. Through this Bhagat shows the readers the changed relation equations of modern time. Shyam develops a casual love relationship with another girl at the call center. A marriage proposal of an NRI working with Microsoft entertains Priyanka's fancy for the time being but when she learns

about the baldness of the guy, her affection turns once again towards Shyam. In *2 States* Bhagat depicts love between Krish and Ananya in a different way. At IIM Ahmedabad, Krish start studying with Ananya in her room. Krish is unable to concentrate on his studies, as he is distracted by Ananya's looks. One day he tells her about their love-life gets started quite surprisingly.

Bhagat's women protagonists are trendy and externally modern. He has shown them more willing, confident and courageous. Bhagat is the first writer among his contemporaries who has delineated woman as the hunter. The women are the chaser and the men are the chased in his novels. In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* (2008), Bhagat's third novel, Vidya chases Govind. He responds to Omi thus, "I didn't hit on her. She hit upon me." [Pp. 11] Vidya has haunted him and he is the hunted.

Bhagat's women use all tactics to serve the female instinct. They come out as the icon of vitality and bravery for the young women. His women take initiative in the courtship. They steer the courtship until it converts into the commitment of living togetherness. Bhagat, on the other hand, has shown his male protagonists making all attempts to avoid the snoop of the women's charms. When they fail to exorcise vitality of the counterparts, they become passive in the game. They neither expel nor receive the stimulus. Things happen to them naturally. Govind is a passive participant in the amorous pursuit. In *Revolution 2020* (2011) Bhagat's fifth novel, both Aarti and Gopal come closer to each other, cross the limits of friendship and come too close and become one, at the hotel room. In spite of having fiancée, Aarti indulge in Physical relation with Gopal in spite of knowing that the happening is wrong.

In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life* Govind and Vidya indulge in sex every now and then and keep their accounts of physical relationship update for the ready reference. Bhagat's youths look at sex as a but-obvious thing in love. That is why they indulge in sex every now and then.

Bhagat has successfully tried to describe the opinion of the youth about love and pre-marital sex. For him the activity of sex is as common as smoking or taking a sip of wine. In Bhagat's opinion sex is not a crime if it is committed with common consent. Bhagat is the creator of a new society where sex will not be seen like a taboo but like a common source of pleasure like smoking & Commerce College, Deshbandhu (Wardha) Dist.- Gadchiroli

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cigarette or sipping wine which can be enjoyed by the party anytime anywhere. Bhagat has been vehemently criticized on the issue of open sex. The critics need to see Bhagat as a producer and propagator of modern and western thoughts and ideas. Through his writing he has tried to explore the mentality of today's youths. The ideas of the youths in today's cyber world are far different from their forefathers. Naturally his writing fails to stand on the expectations of the older generations. So his novels may give the readers with traditional patriarchal outlook cultural shocks who fail to understand that the changes in the carnal desires on the part of the modern youth are an inevitable impact of globalization, modernization, and corporate world.

To sum up, Chetan Bhagat has sincerely worked in representing the ground reality of the contemporary scenario of the present middle class society, particularly of the youths, in his novels written till date. His women protagonists belong to modern globalized India. They are truly modern in their ideas and outlook, no more timid and hesitant. They share shoulders with their counterparts anywhere and anytime. They are not the puppets in the hands of their parents. Unlike their foremothers they want to live and enjoy their lives as per their aspirations. They break the social protocol man ever chases woman. Their attitude towards sex is not laden with guilt. They look at sex as a way of expressing their love for their partner. Bhagat has taken a step ahead to create a new society where women can live freely and do everything freely. He is a realist and writes what he feels right.

#### References:

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Traditionally, right from the ancient days, India was a male-dominated culture. Indian women were covered with many black, slack layers of prejudice, convention, ignorance and indifference in literature as well as in life. They were inanimate objects, who followed five paces behind their men, they had to be gentle, patient, gracious, and for generations together. Bengali women were hidden behind the barred windows of half dark rooms, spending centuries in washing clothes, kneading dough and murmuring verses from "The Bhagavad-Gita and The Ramayana" in the dim light of sooty lamps (Neeru, 2008). The Indian woman today is no longer a Damayanti, she is a Draupadi or a damius or a Mora or a candid Joan of Arc. Social reformers, Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and political revolutionaries like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru lent her a new dimension, gave her a new direction.

Much of the world's literature has been dominated by a canon that nearly dismissed women's writing more than two centuries ago. The counter-canon that have emerged as the result of this exclusion have helped to establish women's writing in mainstream culture, but still in some ways fail to acknowledge women's literature coming from non-white countries. This essay is an attempt to highlight some of the works produced by women in India over the ages. Although India has a history of ancient civilizations such as the Harappa and Mohenjodaro, and of matrilineal societies in the south, no written records of women's literary prowess exists predating the 19th century BC. The

