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Gender identity in Chetan Bhagat's Novels

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Abstract

The voice of youth, Chetan Bhagat, is a prolific writer who has seen every phenomenon that occurs in and around the nation. Since he is a contemporary author, metropolitan settings, individuals, and their issues are central to his stories. He highlights the conflicts that women experience in their families and in society, as well as the fears, hopes, and pains of young people. It appears that he wishes to restore gender equality through his writings. He is a fervent supporter of gender equality, giving both sexes equal chances to develop. He wrote numerous novels that are still blockbusters today while keeping all of these elements in mind. The topics that Chetan Bhagat primarily addresses include freedom, equality, corruption, ambition, education, politics, and, most importantly, the importance of acting on your instincts right away. The topics will be examined in the context of gender and how Chetan Bhagat's works masterfully address it.

Keywords: Gender identity, Chetan Bhagat's novels, contemporary author, metropolitan

Introduction

American and British psychiatrists and other medical professionals who treated intersex and transsexual patients were the first to distinguish between sex and gender in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, the term "gender" has been used more and more to differentiate between socially and culturally determined gender and biological sex. Many people who wish to eliminate the distinctions of socially constructed gender have been hoisting the flag of equality in recent decades. Nature created biological differences to meet societal needs and facilitate reproduction, but some power-hungry individuals exploited these differences to draw a line between the sexes, which grew so wide over time that it was nearly impossible to close. To close this gap, a large number of feminists have come forward and are demonstrating against discrimination based on gender. Inequality, apathy, and exploitation of a specific sex are the primary reasons of these rallies. Both men and women are expected to behave in certain ways by society, and defying these expectations can lead to problems.

Gender

The term "gender" describes the social and cultural differences that come with being male or female. Early in the 1970s, the term "gender" gained popularity in feminist

literature and in literary and social discussions. Although gender is a hotly debated notion, it is more often a source of discomfort than consensus. Gender, to put it simply, is the distinction between men and women; it represents the idea of what a woman can do as a woman and what a man can do as a man. It is a socially constructed analytical category that illustrates the biological distinctions between men and women as well as how their behavior is portrayed as either masculine or feminine. Judith Butler asserts that because gender is culturally produced, it is neither a byproduct of sex nor as seemingly set as sex. Thus, the differentiation that allows for gender as a multiple interpretation of sex already has the potential to challenge the unity of the subject.

Whether they are gender specific or gender prejudiced, people are always discussing gender roles, gender gaps, and related topics. According to www.encyclopedia.com, "the term gender has been used for centuries as a euphemism for sex, but never before in the sense of social or psychological counterpart to biological sex." Every known society has what Gayle Rubin refers to as a "sex/gender system," "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions may be"

(Rubin, 1975:165) ^[1]. Rubin made this claim in her essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex."

According to certain theorists, the distinctions between men and women also contribute to their variations in mental and physical characteristics. They suggest that men are superior to women in both mental and physical strength. As a result, they regard women as inferior to men and males as superior. Through the patriarchal system, this subjugation and suppression has been carried out methodically for generations. Beauvoir argues how the man's function as the breadwinner elevates him due to gender disparities in society. It places him in a position of authority within the family and society. At its core, civilization was male. In her 1970 book *The Dialectics of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone makes the argument that patriarchy takes advantage of women's innate vulnerability to procreation. The biological family invariably oppresses both women and children. Women and children will be set free and granted full freedom by the socialist feminist revolution. "Technology will eliminate domestic and other drudgery, leaving everyone free to do work which is intrinsically rewarding," she suggests. As a result, gender needs to be viewed as a socially constructed and commonly accepted concept that serves as the foundation for the distinctions between men and women. In general, gender refers to the expectations society has of us as girls, boys, women, and men regarding our thoughts and behaviours. It is our status as men and women in terms of biology, society, and law.

Gender Role: A gender role is a set of social standards that specify what kinds of actions are typically deemed suitable, acceptable, or desirable for an individual based on their perceived or actual sex.

The 'gender role' which an individual adopts – 'manly' or 'womanly' – according to the standards of his culture, is oddly enough almost wholly learned, and little if at all built in: in fact, the gender role learned by the age of two years is for most individuals almost irreversible, even if it runs counter to the physical sex of the subject (Comfort 1963: 42) ^[2].

During his research on intersex people, John Money initially used the phrase "gender role" in 1955 to refer to the ways in which these people express their identity as male or female when there is no obvious biological assignment. It serves as a symbol for everything that a person says or does to reveal that they are a boy, man, girl, or woman, appropriately.

They begin this socialization process at a young age, influenced by their parents, the outside world (such as television, magazines, and other media), society, family, religion, and culture. Early on, children readily adopt gender-appropriate conduct and shun behavior that is deemed offensive. Through socialization, we learn appropriate behavior as we mature and carry out the roles that are often associated with our biological sex. These roles are predicated on socially constructed norms, or standards. According to these gender roles, males are strong, independent, active, and powerful, while women are weak, reliant, docile, and subservient. Socialization from birth is the first step in role learning. As a result, we see that men

outweigh women in fields like politics, the military, and law enforcement. In contrast, women are more likely than men to work in care-related fields including social work, childcare, and healthcare. As girls are given dolls, kitchen toys, soft toys, and other items, while guys are given guns, trucks, and machinery, games also teach children about gender roles. Gender role traits are gradually developed by society and differ significantly between cultures and socioeconomic classes. However, gender roles exist in every culture, with expectations for how men and women, boys and girls, should act, dress, and appear. Gender roles and what is considered masculine and feminine are determined by culture. However, it is evident that gender roles are evolving in response to societal demands. The 21st century has seen a change in gender roles because to a number of variables, including media, education, and new family structures. Additionally, fathers are taking on a greater role in raising their children rather than the mother alone. Several nations, notably the UK, Canada, and Sweden, seem to exhibit this propensity. According to Donnalyn Pompper, "men no longer own breadwinning identities and, like women, their bodies are objectified in mass media images" (wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender) is a result of gender equality, which makes gender roles less clear.

Gender Identity: On November 21, 1966, a news statement announcing the opening of a new transsexual clinic at The Johns Hopkins Hospital used the term gender identity for the first time. It quickly made its way into the vernacular after being widely reported in the media. There are doctrinal differences in the definitions of gender and gender identity. "Sex is what you are biologically; gender is what you become socially; gender identity is your own sense or conviction of maleness or femaleness; and gender role is the cultural stereotype of what is masculine and feminine," according to popularized and scientifically debased usage (wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender). In essence, society has arbitrary norms based on a person's sex that dictate how they should perform their function within the framework of society. Anyone who deviates from these established standards must deal with the resentful responses of society. A person's gender identity is unrelated to their biological status. A male may perceive himself as possessing feminine traits (which are, of course, socially acceptable from generation to generation) or vice versa. It is a person's perception of themselves as either male or female based on their engagement with either gender role. It should be mentioned that terms like gender role and gender identity did not exist prior to World War II. Stoller distinguished between "gender role" and "gender identity" to suggest that a person's inner and exterior lives may be significantly at odds or incompatible. Gender identification, according to him, is a form of non-identify with one's sexual nature:

Gender identity starts with the knowledge and awareness, whether conscious or unconscious, that one sex and not the other, though as one develops, gender identity becomes much more complicated, so that, for example, one may sense himself as not only a male but a masculine man or an effeminate man or even as a man fantasies being a woman (Stoller, 1968:10) ^[3].

One's identity is shaped by their appearance, behavior, clothes, and self-expression, which usually starts when they are two or three years old. Some people believe that their gender identity does not correspond with their biological sex; these people are referred to as transgender if they identify with the role that contradicts their biological sex. As opposed to actual biological traits, a person's self-perception of being male or female is identical. However, there are situations where a person feels little or no relationship between gender and sex. For instance, in transsexualism, the affected individual feels that they should be of the opposite sex even if their biological sexual features are clear-cut and distinct. These transgender individuals assume a different sex because they have a deep emotional and psychological bond with the opposite of their own sex. Transsexuals are transgendered people who want to change their bodies through medical procedures including hormone therapy and surgery. "They may also be referred to as female-to-male (FTM) or male-to-female (MTF)." Williams (2013) ^[4], p. 259. However, because of their gender identification, transgender and transsexual people encounter intolerance. Both physiological and social elements contribute to the early development of a chore identity, which is subsequently enlarged and altered by social circumstances as the child grows up. Gender identity is not fixed at birth.

Gender: Etymology and Usage

The Middle English word "gender" is derived from the Latin word "genus," which can mean "kind," "sort," or "type." It is related to the Greek root "gen-" (to produce), and it can be found in the words "genre" (kind, kind), "genesis," and "oxygen" in modern French. It serves as a verb to indicate the verb "to breed." The definition of the word relates to this grammar-related sense, according to Henry Watson Fowler in 1926: "Gender...is a grammatical term only." Talking about people who are either masculine or feminine, that is, of the male or female sex, is either a mistake or a form of humor that depends on the situation. To grasp what gender means, let's look at a few definitions.

Gender refers to the array of socially constructed roles and relationships, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, relative power and influence that society ascribes to the two sexes on a differential basis. Whereas biological sex is determined by genetic and anatomical characteristics, gender is an acquired identity that is learned, changes over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to the relationship between them.

This definition encompasses all facets of gender and the variables that affect it. "Gender refers to the economic, social, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female at a particular point in time (World Health Organization, 2001) ^[5], transforming health systems: gender and rights in reproductive health," according to the World Health Organization. According to the WHO, gender refers to the socially constructed roles that a particular culture views as appropriate for men and women, whereas sex refers to the biological and

physiological characteristics that distinguish men and women. Therefore, whilst gender is researched under the humanities and social sciences, sex can be examined under the biological category. On the other hand, certain definitions of sex also shed light on how people generally view sex and what scholars understand it to imply. The biological traits that categorize people as male or female are referred to as "sex." These biological traits tend to distinguish humans as men and females, even though they are not mutually exclusive because some people have both. Reproductive. According to a different definition, "Sex in humans is not a purely dichotomous variable." Additionally, it is not continuously continuous. Many people are significantly intersexual, some to the extent that they have both types of external genitalia, or that a person with male genitalia develops breasts, and so forth (Geertz, 1983: 81) ^[6]. "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all," according to twentieth-century American feminist Judith Butler (Butler, 1990: 346) ^[7]. She holds a different opinion than the previous critics, who believed that gender and sex were interchangeable rather than distinct. "Sex is what culture makes when it genders my body, not gender, which is what culture made out of my body's sex" (Wilchins, 2006: 30). Gender usage in academia has grown significantly in the second half of the 20th century, surpassing the use of the word "sex" in the humanities. Since 1950, gender has been used more and more in academic writing and public conversation to describe a person's projected or surface-level masculinity or femininity. Everybody is classified as either male or female in societies that typically use a binary gender system. In certain cultures, a third gender function is recognized as eunuch, known as "hijras" in India and "two spirit" persons in America. Gender "is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices as well as practices of daily life," Teresa de Lauretis went so far as to remark (Teresa, 2002: 714) ^[8].

In her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), feminist theorists such as Mary Wollstonecraft emphasized the issue of gender inequality and contended that women should fight against societal perceptions of their inferiority and work to define their own identities and roles. She goes on to say that:

Minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement, the books of instructions, written by man of genius have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions; and that, in the true style of 'Mohametanism', they are treated as a kind of subordinate beings, and not as a part of human species (Wollstonecraft, 1792: 135).

Another significant author who studied women's issues is Virginia Woolf. She claims that the ideal of the "angel in the house" and the "ideology of womanhood" cage female writers. She believes that only until women attain social and economic equality with men will these barriers be lifted. In addition, a variety of female critics wrote about the

twentieth-century inequalities facing women. Kate Millett distinguishes between "sex" and "gender" in her 1970 book *Sexual Politics*. Millett asserts that while "gender" is culturally, socially, and psychologically produced through sex-role stereotypes and historical conditioning, "sex is determined biologically" (Krishnaswamy, 2001: 75-76). She contends that the perpetuation of sex role images is the fault of both men and women. She identifies the primary culprit as the submissive status of women and the oppressive role of men. The term "gender" in gender studies refers to suggested cultural and social constructs of masculinity and femininity. To concentrate on cultural differences, gender in this context obviously ignores signs of biological differences. This arose from a variety of sources, including the theories of psychotherapist Jacques Lacan in sociology during the 1950s, the work of French psychoanalysts like Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, and American feminists like Judith Butler. Many scholars, including many feminists, believe that sex is purely biological and unrelated to social or cultural constructions, while sociologists typically view gender as a social construct. For gender studies, Jacquetta Newman asserts that cultural expectations for men and women are directly related to their biology, despite the fact that gender is socially constructed and sex is established by biology. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend the fundamental distinction between gender and sex.

Sense of Equality

Freedom is not something that those who deny it to others deserve for themselves. Abraham Lincoln Quotes from www.goodreads.com Socialists have noted that developed nations are the ones that practice gender equality the most. The wealth of the nations' financial resources could be the cause of this. Since India is a developing nation, the gender equality ratio is likewise rising quickly. Gender equality is an indication of a developed country. Regardless of gender, it is a state where resources and opportunities are equally accessible. UNISEF's position and perspective on gender equality

It is necessary to mobilize both sexes and provide them with equal access to opportunities in order to bring them into the mainstream. Gender equality includes

Gender equality implies equal rights and opportunities regardless of gender. It involves changing how the sexes relate to each other and bringing about a redistribution of power, resources and caregiver responsibilities between men and women. It means mutual respect, and freedom from gender-based violence and harassment. Gender equality is contingent on the realization of women's sexual and reproductive rights, including respect for women's freedom of choice and self-determination. Gender equality is based on respect for human rights and the inherent value of all individuals regardless of gender, social or ethnic background, including indigenous status, religion and belief, disability, age and sexual orientation (Gender Equality & Empowerment, 2010-2013: 13).

According to the constitution, discrimination against women is prohibited on all grounds. It has pledged equal rights and

opportunities for all of the country's residents. The patriarchal social structure, which is primarily designed to oppress women, exhibits partiality between two socially formed genders and gender roles in spite of these provisions. However, gender discrimination does not exist in the world that Chetan Bhagat envisions. At every stage of life, they gain from equality. In general, Chetan Bhagat's stories are situated in urban areas, where people have greater access to all kinds of vibrant resources. It is often said that Chetan Bhagat's writings represent the voice of youth, yet when discussing young, gender bias rarely comes to mind. In addition to advocating for gender equality, he also demonstrates these same values in his own life. While his wife works, he stays at home to care for his twin boys because he is a full-time writer. Previously, only women were allowed to raise children, but as times and demands change, so do people.

Speaking to himself, Hari admits that he was taken aback by Neha's request, saying, "I thought she was a nice girl." Drinking is not a habit of nice girls (111). It occurs to him because men are unable to comprehend a woman's drinking behavior. Boys are expected to drink at work or college; those who don't are referred to as "black sheep." Boys believe that drinking is a brave act; it symbolizes celebration, enjoyment, boldness, and a drink that unites buddies. When Alok returns to his room, Ryan, Hari, and a few other pals have fun in the hostel room. They brought snacks and alcohol, and posters of naked women taken from US porn magazines were used to decorate the walls. The students' ability to consume alcohol in college residence halls is a serious concern. The author also reveals the realities of living in a hostel. While not all, many of the children follow suit.

All six of the call centre employees share a taxi that they use to get to work every day, according to *One Night @ the Call Center*. They collaborate, share, and resolve one another's issues. The primary plot of Priyanka and Shyam is paralleled by two love stories in which Vroom tries to win Esha over. Following the Quails event, they all go out to disco and have drinks there. Their spirit of equality was always present but begins to shine brighter as their minds are enlightened.

Three friends are the focus of *3 Mistakes of My Life*, and Vidya plays a significant role in the book as well. Despite their respective passions, Govind, Ishaan, and Omi do not give in to alcohol. They own a business close to the temple, although they usually like non-vegetarian food whenever they can, of course eliminating Omi. On the evening of her birthday, Vidya, a fearless girl who had not yet reached the age of eighteen, was excited to get her virginity back in her terrace house. She likes Govind's company and wants to enjoy it like a free bird. They go out and wander and eat while posing as book buyers. It's normal for someone who is under control to be yearning to get free; Neha was no exception. The truth is that both the male and female characters want to experience all that comes their way, but they don't want to harm their parents. They desire to abandon the tyranny of parental authority and experience life to the fullest, disobeying all rules. Everything these kids do is done in secret. The author also makes the strong argument that, despite biological differences, there is no boundary separating the sexes and that their demands are the

same.

With a feeling of equality, 2States also portrays Krish and Ananya's wonderful time at IIMA in Ahmedabad. For a short time, neither of these main characters lets us think. Whether it was drinking, wandering, or meeting in the hotel dorms, Ananya did everything Krish did. Instead, she takes the initiative on all fronts. Being a Tamil Brahmin, Ananya and Krish go to a restaurant at the start of the book and eat tandoori chicken. When she asked, "Do you have beer?" the waiter was appalled. Bhagat (2009) ^[10], p. 6. After studying in Ananya's room, Krish quickly developed a male inclination and began to try to take advantage of her when she wore shorts. However, Ananya's silence was broken by the wings of equality and feminism when Krish visited her room and read,

Ananya rejects gender-based discrimination and persuasively advocates for equal rights in terms of decision-making and attire. The fact that women in India are not able to make decisions is quite pitiful. Typically, a male, not a woman, is the head of the family. But this isn't the end. When Ananya visits Krish's building, they both consume beer and chicken in a vegetarian establishment. It's frightening to read how blatantly people break the rules and take pleasure in it. It makes sense for a guy to protest to the kind of freedom that women enjoy, yet to our amazement, neither Chetan Bhagat's heroes nor any other man do. It appears that they too secretly enjoy it, and they continue to offer non-vegetarian food, beer, wine, vodka, cigarettes, and it's not all over.

Gopal, Raghav, and Aarti are the three main protagonists of *Revolution 2020*, a story about love, ambition, and corruption. Raghav comes from a good family, Aarti is the daughter of the District Magistrate, and Gopal was a poor boy. They all attended the same school and took the same course. Best friends Gopal and Aarti frequently took boat excursions at Varanasi's Assi Ghat. Although they loved each other's company, his obsession with Raghav stemmed from his closeness to Aarti. When Aarti and Raghav started dating, Gopal was greatly annoyed by their regular get-togethers and excursions. In this book, Chetan Bhagat masterfully illustrates the strength of masculine and the delicateness of the feminine. Throughout the book, Aarti maintained her feminine charm, beauty, delicacy, and tenderness despite not being as strong as Ananya or Vidya. She does not invent the concepts of equality, freedom, or women's rights. Ironically, she would rather be in the constant protection of someone; this must be because she was raised in a political and bureaucratic household. How would she understand what scarcity is and what it means to be poor if she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth? Her parents forbade her from leaving her village because she was a girl and their only daughter, which prevented her from pursuing her ambition of becoming an air hostess.

Many girls encounter the disadvantage of being a girl in the workplace. There, the idea of gender equality only exists on paper, so she became a receptionist at the Ramda Hotel. She was still unable to stop drinking and engaging in premarital affairs. At her job, Gopal and Aarti share a glass of wine and make love. There aren't many instances in the book *Half Girlfriend* where the sense of equality is expressed, such as when Madhav and Riya play basketball together and spend much of their time together at college. Even Riya goes

fearlessly by herself to Madhav's rez (home). Although Madhav acts like a total drunk on the streets of New York after the wine hits him hard, Riya never demands that anyone drink wine. Before they start dating, Riya and Madhav celebrate their long-awaited union by having drinks together. Readers are plagued by the subject of why the male and female characters drink continuously before they unite; if it is not love, it is merely a need like a wild animal, or it may have been done while intoxicated by wine. It should not be accepted if the author views equality in this manner. In terms of education, decision-making, property rights, and incomes, it is beneficial. It's okay to wander around, hang out, have sex, and have fun, but drinking won't get you anything positive or a position where you can bring guys back, which might lead to the demise of an entire generation.

Most young people only drink because it's trendy, even if it's not necessary. In a nation like India, alcohol is often not tolerated for either men or women because it severely damages a person's mind and life. Because it is not drunk in moderation, many young people develop an addiction to it. It cannot be justified under any circumstances. Given that men and women drink more wine than water, it is hard to see what kind of equality the author is aiming for. Here, he doesn't appear to be a moral person.

Conclusion

Chetan Bhagat's *Half Girlfriend* is replete with the sorrow of love, his search for a lady, the difficulties many young people experience when learning a foreign language, and his success in raising money for the improvement of Dumraon's rural school. Madhav, a Bihari guy, and Riya, a reluctant Delhi girl, fall in love. As stated at the start of the book, there are no gender barriers in a big metropolis like Delhi. Riya walks about with Madhav and assists him in his English language studies. Madhav adores Riya, but she ignores him until she marries her childhood buddy Rohan, a distant relative. Like Ananya and Priyanka's parents, Rohan was an NRI. Additionally, Riya's parents wed their daughter to a boy who lives in the United States and is significantly wealthier than they are. In actuality, this relationship is motivated by Riya's father's selfishness. She is also a victim of it. She is a 21st-century girl who chooses to divorce Rohan because she cannot stand the violence. In Chetan Bhagat's book, it is usual for young people to fall in love, split up, and experience significant life changes without feeling guilty. Like Shyam and Priyanka, Krish and Ananya's temporary separation, Esha's rejection of Vroom's proposal, Aarti's rejection of Gopal's selection of Raghav, and eventually her subsequent attachment to Gopal, neglecting Raghav but eventually marrying him, they saw love as a casual matter. While women are the chasers and men are the chased in all of his earlier works, Madhav truly loved Riya and pursued her love like a madman in *Half Girlfriend*.

Chetan Bhagat's writings make it clear to the reader that his characters, both male and female, have a strong sense of equality. Their level of freedom is only appropriate in industrialized, western nations. Traditional nations don't fully support it. Nevertheless, given that Chetan Bhagat primarily wrote about urban areas, it is reasonable to anticipate solely such content. The author offers an

alternative perspective on gender equality. He envisions a future in which men and women are treated equally. Five Point's hero Someone Hari is acquainted with his professor's daughter, Neha. They gradually begin dating, usually meeting at the ice cream shop. Neha doesn't back down in this developing situation either. In actuality, she is the one with a stronger desire for love than Hari. In order to avoid being noticed, they wander about outside of the college campus in addition to meeting at the ice cream shop. The intimacy that resulted from these encounters was more akin to a bodily need than love; it was a form of feeling unique to young people. "Other girls who have boyfriends tell me all boys are the same, want the same thing," she wrote in a letter to her brother. Can I tell you something, though? The same is what I desire (Bhagat, 2004: 134). It's typical for boys to drink wine, but it's quite hard to understand that a girl wants something more than just demands. However, Chetan Bhagat's heroines all drink wine as if she were requesting water.

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