

Impact of Westernization on an Individual in Chetan Bhagat's 'One Indian Girl'

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Abstract

Over the years, so many changes in civilization have been undergoing in the world. India has the oldest and richest cultures. Indian ethnicity has been changing over the precedent few years due to the intimidation of western culture. Westernization involves a transformation in conviction about the behavior of the material world where the society tries to innovate and operates its present and old knowledge, manners, and ideas. It affects the lifestyle of the people which brings several social, cultural, and emotional amends. This paper is an attempt to covenant with the issues faced by Indian youth which is catered as an impact of westernization, the result of cultural contact with the western culture for a long period. In the case of India, all the transformations are the by-products of westernization which is the effect of British rule in India for over 200 years. Indian culture is being faded due to it in various places. Especially in urban societies. This study is an endeavor to explore the impact of westernization on Indian youth presented in Chetan Bhagat's novel 'One Indian Girl'. It also gives an idea about the transformation of ideology and values of a non-western society and their effects upon an individual both socially and emotionally.

Keywords— westernization, youth, effects, individual; social; cultural; emotional changes, modern society

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Chetan Bhagat, an Indian author of twelve smash hit books, writes on the topics which attract modern Indian readers. These comprise 9 of fictions '*Five Point Someone*'(2004), '*One Night @ the Call Center*'(2005), '*2 States*'(2009), '*Revolution 2020*'(2011), '*Half Girlfriend*'(2014), '*One Indian Girl*'(2016), '*The Girl in Room 105*'(2018) and '*One Arranged Murder*'(2020). The other three are the non-fictions:- '*What Young India Wants*'(2012), '*Making India Awesome*'(2015), and '*India Positive*'(2019). In addition to being a novelist, he is also a columnist and one of the most influential people (time magazine's list of world's 100 most influential people in 2010). He mostly writes on contemporary issues and their impacts on Indian society. The blow of westernization is also one of those subjects.

Westernization is simply a simulation and following of the western lifestyle by a non-western society. It helps in analyzing the social-cultural changes taking a position in society. It not only affects the cultural order but also affects the individual as he is the one who brings and carries the modifications in the lifestyle in society. An individual is the hub of all the effects of the transformation whether it's positive or negative. Moreover, the concept of westernization doesn't imply good or bad. It leads to changes in mentality, moral behavior, values, culture, tradition, ideology, perception, food habits, clothing, language, philosophy, love, respect for each other, etc. Indians have embraced the way of life followed by the western populace which has affected them both in the social context and psychologically. Westernization has affected almost all the categories of India. Joel has aptly underscored the changes that occurred, in '*Westernization-Features and Impact on Indian society*'—

“Surely, the colonial rule brought with it exploitation and suppression of the masses of people both at the rural and urban levels. At the same time, it also brought certain radical changes in Indian society and culture.”

And in the book '*Social Changes in Modern India*', M.N. Srinivas has presented his view—

"A most important value, which in turn subsumes several other values, is what may be broadly characterized as humanitarianism, by which is meant an active concern for the welfare of all human beings irrespective of caste, economic position, religion, age or sex." (51)

Indian youth has jumped upon the ways of living of western culture. From dresses to houses; cosmetics to the ways of greeting each other have become a status symbol for them. Modernization has taken place even in the wedding system also.

The novel '*One Indian Girl*' begins with Radhika's wedding which has been arranged to be organized in Goa- which is termed as 'destination wedding'. Millennial is crazy about the destination wedding and they are changing the game and are fascinated by the modern trends of making their wedding a special day. In Bhagat's '*One Indian Girl*', it can be observed that Indian youth has been forgetting their culture and getting inspired and fascinated by western culture.

Nowadays people want freedom and they don't want any interference in their life. They don't want to bind themselves to customs and traditions. The thoughts of parents are being clashed with that of children. Earlier, in India, children hardly speak up to their parents but nowadays they argue with their parents. There is a generation gap among them and because of this their mind does not match. Although parents always speak up for their betterment; the children forget all the limits and argue. Radhika can be seen arguing with her mother at various stages of the novel to prove herself right. No doubt that Radhika puts her perspective about the things happening around but speaking to the parent in such a rude way has never been there in Indian culture. Nowadays, children do not understand the state of their parents. Radhika confronts her mother on the topic of two abortions that her mother had in order to have a son. Talking to the parent in this manner is the impact of Westernization. Moreover, female feticide is a serious issue and was not in practice earlier. The development of technology has led to the process of identification of the gender of the unborn and then its termination is another upshot of westernization.

Westernization has strongly influenced the status of women. Nowadays, women are excelling in each sphere. Radhika has been presented as a successful and independent girl working at Goldman Sachs in New York as Vice President. She stands out in her studies and gets the job on day zero. Moreover, she moves to New York which gives an idea about the brain drain which occurs due to the collision of Westernization. Fascinated by the Western lifestyle, the Indian youth moves to another country for a better standard of living. Instead of doing so, an individual can utilize their talent in India and can make it more efficient. Being independent is good but the individual must not forget his or her culture and must admire it. They must do something for the betterment of their own country. Instead of youngsters move to other countries, a place where there is no one to share their feelings with; not even family and friends.

Indian youth are getting intrigued by western fashionable trends. Radhika appears to be conscious of her appearance and tries to attract Debu by dressing up in Western dresses. She waxes herself to look attractive. Knowing the fact that being a girl she should not take the initiative in a relationship; she puts all her efforts to make Debu intimate with her. In India, sex before marriage was not in culture, but this impact of westernization has come up into the minds of Indian youth and they have heartily embraced this culture along with cohabitation, wherein two individuals live together without getting wedded and are often involved in a sexually intimate relationship for a long term or on a permanent basis. Such kinds of arrangements are common in Western countries and now getting popular in India also. Bhagat integrates pre-marriage sex, drinking, and different points in his novel which are unimaginable in socially moderate India. In this novel, Radhika shares a roof with Debu and sexually intimates him several times. Although the result of this relationship doesn't come out well. Debu makes use of Radhika for his sexual gratification and Radhika suffers emotionally. Her eagerness for the relationship ends with a dissatisfaction

Westernization has a great impact on society. Social changes modify the social construct and structure of society. It directly involves the social life and affects the value system of Indian families and society. It doesn't only obstruct the social life but

also has an emotional impact on an individual. An individual suffers emotionally when the social changes do not go well according to the desires of the individual and lead to psychological stress, tension, and worries hamper the physical health of the sufferer. When Debu deserts Radhika endures psychological stress and is not able to sleep properly and keeps on thinking about Debu. She moves to Hong Kong for solace but there again falls into an illegitimate relationship with his boss, Neel Gupta who is double her age and already married. She also has a sexual relationship with Neel. She shares her place with Neel many times.

Westernization involves various rights and empowerment of women but ignores the actual status of women. Radhika, being victimized by both Debu and Neel, could not get assurance for settlement in her life from any of them. Moreover, both times, Radhika gets an option to choose either 'to fly' or 'to nest'. None of them realized her state of feelings. In the article '*Impact of Westernization on Indian Society*', it is rightly stated that—

“Education, on the one hand, generated and encouraged liberal ideas among men while on the other hand, it prepared women to strive for the natural status of equality.” (Chakma)

The trend of ideology has also changed due to the blow of Westernization. Man has become artificial nowadays. They don't have an emotional connection. They have become work-oriented and have come closer to secondary relations which lead to zigzag relationships with meandered lifestyles.

People work to earn money for a better lifestyle or to fulfill his or her wants. But nowadays, the effect of over-burdened work and its stress has increased in such a way that it hampers personal relationships. Radhika's separation from Debu and Neel is the result of her work-oriented mindset. Debu and Neel did not consider her a woman who can ever be a good mother. Radhika's over-pressurized job results in the squabble with her mother who doesn't consider it good that a girl works so late at night. No doubt, westernization fascinates and attracts people for a better standard of living, but they

separate them from their dear ones. It leads to the degradation of family and society. Westernization has adverse effects on an individual's life.

Westernization has led to the use of technology in communication to its fullest. Radhika agrees to get married due to her ever-grumbling mother. Her mother assists Radhika in finding a suitable partner for her through the help of an online matrimonial site. Radhika chats with Brijesh on Skype. Earlier, the bride and groom were not having talks before the wedding. But now it can be seen as a positive point where both the persons can talk and understand each other for a perfect match. Radhika and Brijesh can be seen spending time together in Goa before the wedding which has gratified the practice of knowing each other before the wedding. Moreover, Radhika's problem increases when she receives messages from her ex-partners on her mobile. She can be observed as a distracted person while using her phone and chatting with her ex-partners.

Adolescents are fascinated by the drinking culture gifted by Western countries. Radhika and Brijesh are seen smoking weeds and having a beer in Goa. Radhika's mother categorized her saying that being a girl she should not indulge in it whereas Brijesh can do so as he is male. Radhika drinks before her dance performance which was served by Brijesh himself. In Indian culture, it is not proper for a girl to smoke or drink. Moreover, the time has come when the partner also encourages each other to take it. Bhagat has presented the scene where drinking and taking drugs have become common in India. Even if it's Radhika's wedding, she drinks along with Brijesh, her husband-to-be. Westernization's effect can be seen when Radhika arranges a Bachelorette party for females at her wedding and a bachelor's party for male members. The girls can be seen drinking even there. In the article '*Effects of Westernization on Indian Culture and Traditions*', K.B.S. Ramachandra has highlighted the change in Indian culture—

"A great deal has been said about the Pub culture fostered by the Western civilization and the devastating effect it has on Indian culture. The ease with and extent to which girls and boys mix together; the disco bars; drinking and merry making; the coffee joints with hookahs; are all frowned upon as being against Indian morality."(Chakma)

Radhika's independence makes her not get wedlock with any of the men. She is the one who chooses to live with Debu and Neel; and had physical intimacy with them, she got separated from each of them and agrees to marry and finally drops the idea of doing so. Her mindset shows the impact of Westernization which has to build a different outlook where she finds solace in fulfilling all her desires and does not care about her family, values, culture, and tradition. She doesn't bother about the reactions of society. She paves her path and emerges as a clear-headed person. Westernization's impact leads to changes in her mentality, ideology, perception, clothing, and philosophy. She attempts everything but cannot find peace in anything and when leaves everything, and then feels tranquil.

It's necessary to realize both the righteousness and destructive effects of both the Indian and Western ways of life. Only fine things should be accepted and adopted. One must get rid of the detrimental cultural practices which are degrading the qualities of human life.

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