

VOICE OF NEW GENERATION OF WOMAN AGAINST DOWRY SYSTEM IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S '*ONE NIGHT AT THE CALL CENTRE'S AND 2 STATES: THE STORY OF MY MARRIAGE*

Suraj Murlidhar Keche
Research Scholar
Dist. Wardha (Maharashtra).

Chetan Bhagat has been acclaimed as one of the best selling novelist of the Indian English literature. In 2008 'The New York Time' called Chetan Bhagat the biggest selling English language novelist in Indian History. 'The Time Magazine' named him 'as one of the hundred most influential people in the world' and East company U.S.A. listed him 'as one of the 100 most creative people in Business'.

Being an Indian Chetan Bhagat is a true representative of Indian life and society. He touches every sensitive issue of society in his novels. The present study is an attempt to focus on the dowry, the burning social issue of recent time, its consequences on contemporary Indian society and voice of the new generation of woman against dowry system.

Chetan Bhagat deals with the issue of dowry and shows the deep concern for the victims of the devilish curse of dowry, still prevailing in the modern India. The dowry refers to cash or gift that the bride's family is forced to offer to the groom's family at the time of marriage. It creates a great financial burden on bride's family. In some cases the dowry system leads crime against women, gives birth to domestic violence to the extent of burning the bride alive or mental, physical and emotional torture that led to the suicides of brides. The constitution of India prohibited dowry system under the 'Dowry Prohibition Act 1961' and subsequently by section 304 (B) and 498 (A) of the Indian Penal Code.

Bhagat's fictions seem to be more fully awakened feminine sensibility in contemporary Indian society. The female characters he portrayed, trying to overcome social opinion, orthodoxy and reluctance. They are the young generation of new women who appose such menace of the dowry system and slaps on the face of the Indian tradition and patriarchy who consider the dowry as their privilege.

In 'One Night at the Call Center' Chetan Bhagat brings out the issue of dowry in chapter 10 title 'My Past Dates With Priyanka' and brings out the grim reality of dowry. In chapter 10 Priyanka the female protagonist of the novel and Shyam, the hero and the narrator of the novel are on their date at Havmore restaurant. They have a very good time there and have food together and when they are about to leave place Priyanka hears the loud voice of an older woman who is cursing her daughter-in-law in abusive words because she couldn't bring enough dowry from her parents. She is cursing her daughter in law in words as:

Since the day this woman came to our house, our family's fortunes have been ruined', ... The Agra girl's side were offering to set up a full clinic. I don't know where our brains were then (77-78).

Mother-in-law is abusing her daughter for not bringing the dowry. Here, Chetan Bhagat slaps the dowry system prevalent in Indian society and shows how girls are exploited physically, mentally and emotionally under the name of the dowry system. Mother-in-law torturing her daughter-in-law in abusive words as:

Look, at her now, sitting there with a stiff face. Go, go to help now. Not only did you not bring anything, now you have dumped these two girls like tow curses on me. (----) say something now, you, silent statue', (-----) who will pay for these tow curses? Say something now, you silent statue; the mother-in-law said and shake the daughter-in-law's shoulders (78).

The daughter-in-law has tears in her eyes. She is helpless. She has not even touched the food. Her husband is a doctor, an educated young man, a greedy person and has a hunger for dowry. So she cannot seek any help to him. The mother-in-law is not only scolding her daughter-in-law, but her daughters also. By looking at this, being new girl it is impossible for Priyanka to bear such humiliation of that woman. For Priyanka, it is difficult to tolerate

this condition and she jumps in this matter to teach the lesson to mother-in-law. She interferes in this matter by saying,

‘I will say something’, Priyanka shouted, facing the mother-in-law..... Who are you? The husband asked, ----- we’ll worry about that latter’, Priyanka said, but who the hell are you? (78)

The situation becomes very serious. Priyanka loses her temper and wants to teach a lesson to mother-in-law and her son for exploiting an innocent woman for dowry. So she introduces herself as:

I will tell you who I am; Priyanka said and fumbled in her handbag. She took out her call center Id card and flashed it for a nanosecond’, PriyankaSinha, CBI, Woman’s Cell (78).

Priyanka introduces herself Priyanka Sinha CBI, women’s cell and immediately mother and son shocked and both mother and son start convincing Priyanka to forgive them. Priyanka is very confident and says that you will be punished for three years for harassing an innocent woman for dowry. She asserts, ‘Three years, harassing woman is punishable for three years Quick trials, no appeal; Priyanka said and stare at mother-in-law’ (87). Priyanka teaches them lesson in very apt manners for their guilt. They realized their mistake and ask Priyanka to pardon them with folded hands and left the place immediately.

Priyanka bravely fights against the monstrous issue of dowry and advocates herself new and strong woman of the present era. Through this incident Bhagat presents the pathetic condition of the innocent women who are still suffering physically and mentally because of the issue like dowry still prevailing in Indian society and at the same time he presents the empowerment of new women who raises a voice against the cruel system of dowry.

‘2 States: The Story of My Marriage’ is an autobiographical novel by Chetan Bhagat. It is a love story of Ananya, the female protagonist of the novel held from Tamilian traditional family falls in love with Krish, the protagonist and the narrator of the novel while they are studying in the IIM Ahmadabad. Through this love story Chetan Bhagat brings out cultural clashes and traditional mindset of contemporary Indian society. Through the marriage of Krish’s cousin Minti Chetan Bhagat touches the sensitive issue of dowry in the

present work. It is a tendency of the writer to bring out the issue of dowry in some of his works directly or indirectly. It seems that the system of dowry has made a deep impact on the writer's mind. Although there are laws against dowry in India, despite the practice of dowry deaths, suicides and murders take place in large amount in India. Krish's maternal uncle Rajji mama expenses a lot of for his daughter's marriage. He takes place the engagement of his daughter Miti with a boy named Duke of his community in Taj hotel. He has taken loan from bank for wedding expenses. He makes the lavish arrangement of his daughter's marriage. He offers a Hyundai Santro car to the bridegroom in the form of dowry, but groom's family rejects to accept the Hyundai Santro car as they want now Hyundai Accent car which is more expensive than first one. Rajji mama is already in debt and not in condition to arrange for any more cash for a new car. Condition of girl's side becomes too humiliating. Krish asserts it as:

Mother and her two brother folded their hands in front of Duke's parents like a landless farmer, they waited for the feudal lords to respond. (----) Duke's Family had already announced the Accent to their relatives. They are feeling insulted and cheated We come back to the drama venue. Rajji mama had placed his pink turban at Duke's parents feet. They ignored him. He offered a cheque, Duke's parents refused it. Rajji Mama called his friends for cash. No one could come up with such a large amount at such' short notice. Meanwhile, new guest were arriving at the party. With them, Rajji mama hid his stress and smiled and hugged all of them (210-211).

Chetan Bhagat represents the realistic picture of dowry in contemporary Indian society and how this system is exploiting the life of the bride as well bride's family. Here Rajji mama is facing the humiliating condition due to this system, but Ananya, being a modern and educated girl, it is impossible for her to bear such humiliation of Rajji mama's family. She takes strong objection and asks Krish, 'Why don't they call the police? (-----) I want to

sent some criminals to jail' (210). Ananya steps forward in this matter by saying 'we should be with the family at this time' (210). She takes command in her hand and says:

Uncle wait Ananya said. (-----) May I suggest something', Ananya said (-----) Aunty, you elders have had so many meetings to resolve this. Can the younger cousins talk to Duke? Ananya said (211)

She comes forward immediately to sort out this issue and gathers young cousins to circle around Minti and Duke. She goes to Duke and says,

Do you know what Minti's parents had to go through to do this wedding for you? That car cost two and half years of your salary, Mr. Duck! These two parties have thrown him in to debt. Now, you want an Accent?

It won't be your Accent, it will be what you managed to wrench out of a helpless father who didn't want a drama at his daughter's wedding to turn into scandal.

(213-14).

Ananya's confident and her revolutionary fluent English makes Duke stunned and speechless. She forces young as well as the older generation to think about this serious issue of dowry. By her words she opens the mind of all people, present in the marriage ceremony. Duke now comes to know that what he and his family are doing with his in-law's family is not good and decides to sort out the issue and gives his final decision that he wants to marry with Minti without any compromise. Finally the issue is sorted out and Duke and Minti marriage happily.

By her presence of mind Ananya sorts out this issue and raises her voice against the dowry. Ananya is a girl who is free from every Indian traditional chain. She is a daring and courageous girl. She is an individualistic and intelligent girl, has enough self confidence and sometimes becomes hypersensitive as she gives immediate reaction to the situation. The writer skillfully depicts that through the female protagonist of Priyanka in 'One Night at the Call Center' and Ananya in '2 States: The story of My Marriage' that new generation of women can arise voice against such menacing issue of dowry and can bring the positive changes in the contemporary Indian society.

Work Cited

Bhagat, Chetan. *One Night at the Call Centre*. New Delhi: Rupa& Co, 2005. Print.

..... *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*. New Delhi: Rupa& Co, 2009. Print.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dowry_system_in_India

