

Dynamics of Love in Chetan Bhagat's half girlfriend.

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Abstract

Commenting on the ongoing debates on Chetan Bhagat's literary qualities is itself identifying him as the author who has to be studied and judged well and just cannot be ignored as demeaning. Author of ten novels, he made an open statement that he is not looking for Booker prize and said that he wants to reach as many people as he can, through books, films or other media of entertainment. His literary venture is for different reasons He aspires to reach the contemporary human realities. It is a misconception if anyone says that his books are written exclusively from the male point of view, however he sensitizes the delicate emotions of men and women in broader compass who in turn struggle for identity in achieving their goals. It is pathetic when reviewers call Chetan Bhagat's fiction as trash literature because of its simple English. Rightly pointed out by Ankit Dubey in *Quora* "Yes, his writing style is nothing compared to an Ayn Rand, a Rohinton Mistry or a Khad Hosseini, but someone who is selling so much must be doing something right"(Quora 2014). It is sympathetic that most of the reviewers stamp the literary quality of a novel without even reading it.

Key words: courtship, physical intimacy, predicaments, undaunted spirit and gender discrimination.

Chetan Bhagat is an Indian based technical graduate turned writer in modern writing in English. He is a youth icon rather than a writer because he unfolds the thoughts and emotions of the youth in a realistic manner. He is a Mechanical Engineer from IIT Delhi and did his Management course from IIM Ahmadabad. After working for 11 years as an investment banker in Hongkong, He shifted to Mumbai to pursue his writing career. He is an effective speaker who speaks very frequently at the programs organized by newspapers and media. He

is the author of the five best selling novels, *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *The 3 Mistakes of my Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020*. (2011). *Time Magazine* mentioned him as one of the 100 most influential people in the world. He writes op-ed columns for English and Hindi Newspapers. His main focus is on the youth, career and issues based on national development. *half girlfriend* is all about Riya Somani and Madhav Jha who struggle to understand each other to tie the knot of marriage. The journey of life since their first meeting in the Stephen's college till their marriage is symbolized with the game of basketball. He succeeds to gain her attention though he cannot speak good English and fails to become her husband in the first half of the novel because he tries to ascertain his manliness to win her heart and make her as his girl friend. She says that she can be his half girlfriend and rejects his proposal of love making. They break up after this incident. Madhav finds it difficult to lead the life and diverts his focus of attention towards the development of his mother's school. To fulfill her dream of travelling and music, Riya Somani prefers to marry Rohan and leaves for London but it does not take much time for her to understand that Rohan is uncultured and hypocritical. It is at this point of her life she thinks to re establish her relationship with Madhav and makes efforts to meet him. Once again she finds it difficult to connect with Madhav's family on account of her divorced status. She moves to New York with a fake reason of lung cancer, however succeeds to become a singer, a dream which she aspires for. The novel ends up in Madhav Jha winning Riya's heart and finally getting married to give her a beautiful life. Chetan Bhagat's extraordinary delineation of the sensitive emotions that break or make man woman relationship is highly realistic. Sabina K Musthafa & Mohamed N Suhail observe, "The author is of the opinion that the country is divided into two classes- the non-English types and the elite English speaking class. This class system according to Bhagat is a problem of profound gravity. A majority of population encounters problems of inferiority when they are in the middle of an elite community that speaks English well" (*The Galaxy International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 2015). The remarks made by Prof. Pereira and Prof. Fernandez, that Madhav Jha's English is bad with Bihari accent provokes him to start learning English. Simultaneously he gets attracted to Riya Somani "Five feet, nine inches is tall for an Indian girl. It is tall even for a girl in a basketball team. Her long neck, long legs held every guy's attention." (Bhagat:14) Since his first day in college, he becomes crazy as she is multi talented as an ace basketball player, English literature student, most beautiful girl on the planet, owner of

extraordinary eyebrows and speaker of wonderful lines, Madhav feels, “I wanted to take a snapshot of her sweaty face and store it in my mind’s camera for life(16). He tries desperately to speak to her, however, no boy from Dumraon has ever had the guts to approach a high-class girl from Delhi. He tries to gain her attention in the basket ball court. He understands, “There was nothing else I could impress her with. Coach”(18). Mere presence of her makes him play even better. Madhav asks Riya about her dream. She answers that she does not like to get married but wants to become a career woman. Bhagat focuses on the aspirations of a typical Indian girl who want to pursue her dreams: I have this dream. I want to play music and sing...in a bar in New York. ’ quite specific. famous singer or a rock star. I don’t want to marry billionaire. I just want to sing in peace, surrounded by passionate people. I want to own a house in Manhattan, my house, filled with books and music CDs. escapist fantasy. ‘Unreal, like?’ she said(32-33) There develops intimacy between Madhav and Riya as they spend time together sharing many views on the basket ball game. One day, she refuses him when he tries to kiss her. He apologizes for whatever had happened the previous day. One day Madhav visits Riya as she has fever. In this situation she says that she likes forehead kisses. He reminds that she is his girl friend, she affirms that they are ‘friends’ He questions whether friends can have affectionate hugs and spend time together, she says that the half boy friend is already becoming possessive. She says that she is not comfortable with physical intimacy and against getting physical. She accepts to be his “half girlfriend”. He is puzzled and fails to understand why she hugged him again and again or how she calls him home and she sits in her night clothes in front of him. He feels that even an army of intellectual men cannot solve the riddle created by an indecisive woman, girl friend, in private and in public. Perveen Aisha & Gupta Tanu remark” In *half girlfriend* Madhav Jha’s passion for Riya Somani reflects different shades of love in Bhagat’s novels. The passion of love has a universal appeal. This passion arouses emotions and stirs the imagination of every audience and every reader.” (*The Criterion* 2015) His friends advise him to do physical with Riya, indirectly. “Make Bihar proud” (71). On one day when Riya falls sick and takes rest in his room, he tries to make love. Riya gets aggressive and sits up and says “what is your problem?” Riya says “we can’t even be friends”. Madhav uses physical force on her. In frustration Madhav tells “make love to me or leave”(75). She refuses due to her unexplained predicaments and does not entertain a physical relationship. Madhav in turn believes that he can win her love by establishing physical intimacy. There develops a

great misunderstanding between them after this incident. Madhav reminds that she is only nineteen when she gives her wedding invitation. She says that life with Rohan is quite secured as he is well settled and nothing wrong in marrying him. He promises adventure, travel and excitement. Chetan Bhagat clearly focuses the psyche of girls in the present generation that they are opportunistic and use men as per their priorities. He finds it difficult to forget her and undergoes a lot of stress as she is the only girl he has played, walked, talked, studied and had fun with. He thinks, "Girlfriends come and go but, thank God, mothers don't break up(99)". After one year three months, Madhav comes to know that she has divorced Rohan. Her apology startles Madhav. Madhav's love is untainted. He is unmindful of her divorced status and extends his love and affection. Though he tries to establish physical relationship in college, one should understand that it is only to make her as his girl friend. Deception is never his choice. He extends his courtship at the most crucial stages of Riya's life.

Riya moves to New York as his mother does not like Riya's divorced status and dressing style, Riya leaves them stating that she is a victim of lung cancer. Under great difficulty he meets her and feels highly blessed to see Riya as a successful singer in New York. The relationship is not half but proves to be complete with their marriage. The title *half girl friend* reflects the themes like gender discrimination, domestic violence, poverty in India, deprived educational facilities with poor infra structure in rural schools and social service in the name of education. The word 'half' indicates that it is incomplete. It can be understood either ways as half filled or half empty. The writer makes the theme innovative by making the half to complete. Half girl friend becomes the full fledged life partner. She is no more a friend, half girl friend but his wife who becomes a mother to a son. It is Madhav Jha's undaunted spirit that paves way for his success in making his half girl friend his wife. Mukherjee Dipanjoy observes "For Chetan Bhagat temporary failure in life has also a meaning because it hides the secrets of success. Madhav's advice to his son, "Don't quit. It will happen one day (P260) bears the suggestion that failures are the pillars of success (IJELLH 2015). The novel also reflects that a girl has the right to chase and choose her life according to her wish. In a way the novel is also about women empowerment.

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