

**PORTRAYAL OF SUCCESSFUL TENACIOUS EFFORTS IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S
"HALF GIRLFRIEND"**

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat has become a distinctive writer with his novels on the youngsters in India. So, he is a popular writer among the lovers of Indian English novels. His recent novel "Half Friend" is about the successful love affair between a Bihari boy and a rich girl in Delhi. Both the characters show their tenacity to overcome various obstacles. The article throws light on the triumphant efforts of the protagonist as well as his lady love who faces various hindrances and makes their love affair successful

"Half Girlfriend" is a typical novel of Chetan Bhagat because it has the common features such as romantic, political and social problems which one can find distinctively in Chetan Bhagat's novels. Those who have read his novels usually find a few elements of cinematographic narration. In a film, the hero, who tries to overcome his struggles, is successful through a few incredible events at the end of the film to gladden the lovers of the film. The unexpected twists are tangible in films to arouse more curiosity among the lovers of film. Such twists are conspicuous in Chetan Bhagat's novel "Half Girlfriend" too. This novel seems to be 'a novel of incident' and 'a novel of character'. Because M.H.Abrams has correctly stated in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, "The distinction between the novel of incident and the novel of character cannot be drawn sharply; but in the novel of incident, the greater interest is in what the protagonist will do next and on how the story will turn out; in the novel of character, it is on the protagonist's motives for what he or she does, and on how the protagonist will turn out.

In his maiden novel "Five Point Someone", the major characters reach the better status after experiencing a few ordeals. "One Night @ the Call Center" is Chetan Bhagat's second novel in which the characters overcome the exploitation from the boorish manager. Generally, his novels depict how the characters come out of the struggles triumphantly through constant efforts to justify a well known adage- our efforts may fail but we should not fail to make efforts. "Half Girlfriend" is about the successful love affair of a Bihari boy with a rich girl in Delhi after a few obstacles. Besides the romantic problems, the political, the academic and the domestic problems have their crucial contribution to the construction of the main plot. The novel starts with the prologue in which the protagonist meets the novelist to share his memorable experience. Chetan Bhagat's common narrative technique- flashback is obvious. Madhav hails from a town called Dumraon in Bihar. He has gone to study at St.Stephen's college in New Delhi. Being a state level basketball player, he receives admission on sports quota. He struggles to converse in English with the professors

who interview him. He is allured to fall in love with a girl called Riya who happens to be a basketball player.

There is a perception among a few people that the rich usually live happily, on account of their wealth which is considered the root cause of many problems but, in the novel, one can find that the difference in economic status in terms of possession of wealth among the gentry is felt which leads to domestic problems. The novelist has highlighted this problem through a sub-plot in which Madhav's love affair is broken by Riya's unexpected marriage with an opulent person called Rohan Chandak. The utterance made by Riya's husband and her mother-in-law is a clear example of difference among the quantity of wealth: Rohan was at least twenty times richer than my dad. Riya's married life has come to an abrupt end with the divorce because Riya has to face not only the humiliation from her domineering mother-in-law but also the betrayal from her infidel husband. The whatsapp message from a lady called Kristin has shocked Riya: "Miss ur body honey. Wish I had u with me tonight". This divorce expresses a typical attitude of an Indian woman to her husband that she can tolerate anything but infidelity.

Madhav is too sulk to play basketball and to live in Delhi after Riya's marriage. His readiness to deny a golden opportunity to earn more money shows his chagrin. He finds a twist in his life, when he gets an opportunity to work at his mother's school in his home town. Here, the novelist has depicted the pathetic conditions in Bihar which is one of the under-developed states with little progress in every field. The following reply from an M.L.A to Madhav about building toilets in school is a clear example of the iniquity meted out to the school children in Bihar: "That's a big project. The school doesn't have plumbing. Everything needs to be done from scratch. Too expensive and little time to do that." Lack of even road facility in Madhav's home town is revealed:

It was the bumpiest ride ever. A cloud of dust surrounded us as we drove through the city.

'What happened to the road?' I asked the auto driver.

'There are no roads,' he said and laughed.

The deplorable condition of the villagers to get even a little bit of electricity is a lucid example of denying even the basic facility: The man wanted three hours of power in twenty-four hours. And even for that he had to wait to meet his leaders with folded hands. The arrival of the richest man on earth to Bihar is a great ignominy to the government which seems to malafide on several occasions to supersede democracy with cakistocracy. Abraham Lincoln's famous definition of democracy as 'the government of the people, by the people and for the people' has become the government off the people, to buy the people and far the people in a few so-called democratic nations. Madhav has impressed Bill Gates with his fantabulous eloquence which has resulted in a massive financial aid to the school run by Madhav's mother. For the efforts to attain eloquence, the novelist has suggested the views through Madhav's new way of acquiring speaking skill. Generally, the students who learn English as the second language in a hostile ambience usually speak

English without fluency and accuracy. This is due to various factors such as poor exposure to language learning, artificial situation, use of mother tongue and the educational system that lays emphasis on rote learning. In the novel, Madhav is not able to converse in English. He worries a lot to speak English during Bill Gates' visit to his school. The novelist highlights the significance of systematic learning to speak English by which Madhav has enhanced his speaking skill in English.

Meanwhile, Riya's endeavour to live with Madhav even after her bitter married life has ended in a fiasco to make her crestfallen, as she is forced to desert Madhav by Madhav's mother. Madhav's mother is a typical traditional mother. She does not like Riya to stay with Madhav. Her candid views to Riya express her conventional thoughts which can be justified from her perspective: "You are divorced. You must be desperate for another man. My son is handsome and a prince here. Of course, I can sense your plans. ...He is all I have. If you stay here, he will never move on. You may be a big shot in Delhi. However, the Prince of Dumraon won't be with a Marwari divorcee. Respect in society is also worth something.' So, Riya under the pretext of suffering from lung carcinoma, has left Madhav with a letter. This departure by Riya has made Madhav surmise perfectly that Riya could have gone to her most favourite place- New York. In a dramatic manner, after a few abortive attempts, Madhav runs 6.4 kilometres to reach the concert area braving the avalanche. Finally, he is on cloud nine to find his lady love much to her astonishment too.

The novel ends with an epilogue in which the novelist plays the role of the chief guest to the annual day celebration of Madhav's school which is run by both Madhav and Riya to become 'one of the best schools'. True to the general magnanimity from the mother, Madhav's mother has accepted Madhav's yearning to lead a more meaningful and enjoyable life with Riya. Riya symbolises various principles. She is the best example of blending the traditional views with the modern views. While accepting to marry a rich man-Rohan, she follows the traditional Indian girl's attitude of marrying a person of her parents' choice. She is ready to desert her passionate lover and she tries to be a laidback girl. While marrying Madhav after divorce, Riya symbolises the occidental thoughts in which marriage, divorce and remarriage with a new person may not be viewed despicably. Madhav's willingness to marry his ladylove after divorce shows his radical philosophy of marriage. He does not worry about Riya's married life with Rohtak. Because he seems to be besotted with his love for Riya. Hence, it is lucid that Madhav's tenacity to lead a life with the girl whom she has liked, is laudable. Because he could have thought about forgetting Riya's betrayal and marrying a girl like Riya. When Madhav comes to understand the sorrowful condition of Riya, he could have felt that marrying Riya was the hobson's choice. Thus, many factors would have been responsible for Madhav to marry Riya. In the novel, the electra-complex between Riya and her father is a matter of great astonishment. This element has not found place in any of Chetan Bhagat's previous novels. Riya's melancholic status evokes sympathy. She has stated in her legible journal entry:

All I want to say, if you crush a flower before it blooms, will it ever bloom as bright later?

I was not quiet as a child. I became this way. Dad knows I changed. Dad knows I remember everything. Still, he pretends nothing happened. I do the same.

He hasn't touched me for the last three years. He dare not.Dad gave me a gold necklace today. I returned it. I find it difficult to talk to him.

Riya has more determination to come away from a series of problems. The proverb- "misfortune never comes in single" seems to be applicable to Riya. Living with mental turbulence at home, trying to avoid the perversity in Madhav during her amity with him, experiencing bitter married life, facing lack of nous from her mother and receiving the wrath from Madhav's mother could have created more angst in Riya. But her passion for music has provided her the much needed solace to justify the words of Paul Karlneck, Director of Boston Conservatory: "Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, a way for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds." But Madhav has faced only the chagrin after Riya's marriage. He finds comfort only in the form of diverting his attention towards dedicating his life for the upliftment of the children at his mother's school. It may be stated that Riya's tenacity to overcome various problems is more laudable than Madhav's determination to overcome a few obstacles. Generally, there is a common view that woman is very vulnerable and sensitive to be affected by a few problems. But Riya is sue generic with the blend of Indian and Western thoughts. Employing tenacity to get over the hindrances justifies an adage: "Hard work never fails."

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