



CANDID FRENZY SUPERSEDING TENACIOUS BARRIERS IN CHETANBHAGAT'S HALF GIRLFRIEND

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ABSTRACT

ChetanBhagat, one of the most popular Indo Anglican authors, is known as 'the biggest selling English language novelist in India's history'. Half Girlfriend presents the equidistant phase in a relationship, where two people are not thoroughly in a relationship though they are more than conjoint friends. Through this novel Bhagat peruses the chasm of mentality, personality and values of Indian people inside and outside India and the increasing curiosity of youngsters towards the dating culture. Social, cultural, educational, economic, and traditional values become various hurdles to disappoint the youth who try to unite in this modern society. The novel focuses on lust changing into allegiance; diluting relation due to more prosperity and the quest for authentic life far off the deception and snobbery.

The preeminent impulseto scribble this article is to analyze the importance of one's attempts and achievements. Veritably procurements depend on efforts. Endeavors, done enthusiastically and exuberantly but in the appropriate direction, never deteriorate and procure the excellent results. No terrain of protagonists' enthusiasm, fascination, stature, outlook, attitude, demeanor, culture or desideratum of life matches to each other but due to his candid frenzy Madhav overcomes all type of barriers. The plot of half girlfriend is like traditional story typically descried in the Bollywood movies. No doubt the script has been written for the same.

Moreover, the story being didactic, enthusiastic, and pathetic, shows the way to explore many things. If candid frenzy is the one side of the novel, sincere or legitimate love for each other (not initially) becomes the strong theme which explores several aspects in the novel.

Keywords- Equidistant, Tradition, Endeavors, Exuberantly, Fascination, candid, Frenzy, Legitimate, Procure, Stature.

Introduction

ChetanBhagat,“the biggest selling English language novelist in India’s history”¹enjoys as one of the most eminent Indian English writers in present age. Well known as a prominent columnist for various renowned newspapers ChetanBhagat’s main focus remains on education, youth and nation development. Adorned with several awards including Society Young Achiever’s Award in 2004 and Publisher’s Recognition Award in 2005,Bhagat has been ruling on the hearts of his readers nationally and internationally. It is his heart touching writing style that has made him reach to the crest of popularity. Time to time we read his appraisal in various popular newspapers or magazines. Time magazine named him as “one of the 100 Most Influential People in the world”²while A R Rahman states in TIME magazine, “Many writers are successful at expressing what’s in their hearts or articulating a particular point of view. ChetanBhagat’s books do both and more.”³

Born and brought up in a middle class prosperous family, Bhagat completed his education through Army school, IIT Delhi, and IIM Ahmedabad. Being a brilliant student Bhagat got a very lucrative job in banking but he left the job for his passion of writing. Like his blockbuster novels- *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the call center* (2005), *Three Mistakes of my Life* (2008), *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009), *Revolution 2020 Love, Corruption, Ambition* (2011), and *What Young India Wants* (2012), *Half Girlfriend* has got much popularity in his readers

Motive of Writing

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Intro of the novel

Half Girlfriend, the common happening in day to day life, focuses on all dimensions of Indian culture, living style and especially the effects of westernization on Indians. Bhagat aptly remarks by clearing the meaning of *Half Girlfriend* in his blog, “When I say that is what most men (in India) get, it is more a joke as we as a society do not have a culture of dating pan-India, even though there is a lot of curiosity about it.”⁴

In this novel Bhagat has highlighted the education level, political approach, different and changing mentality of the people especially of youngsters and overall the ups and downs of a love story. Like other novels of ChetanBhagat, *Half Girlfriend* also seems to be very suitable story to cast a movie. MohitSuri, the film maker has decided to shoot this film very soon. He is so inspired by the story that he writes,

“I liked it because of the simplicity and the identifiability with the story. The girl's character is that of a musician in the film. It's not a love story for perfect people, but it's about how normal people fall in love and how we hurt people whom we love the most. The story is so simple and yet I found myself crying in two places.”⁵

The novel, written in the simplest language, is thought to be a great contribution to the (poor English) readers and ChetanBhagat seems to be satisfied with his work. He writes,

“I am quite satisfied as I have achieved what I wanted to, which is to make non-readers read and make English books reach where they have never reached before ... I also have had a lot of recognition from publications and people who matter, both in India and abroad, so even critically, I am quite satisfied.”⁶

Behind the simplicity of his language Bhagat pontificates to the readers that the educated ones should cooperate the learners-

“To be denied English, or to be mocked at over not having elite class proficiency, is harmful to the individual as well as our society. We don’t need to dismiss English; we need to dismiss English snobs. We need more empathy and compassion towards our millions of English learners, who despite having scant resources are trying hard to learn the language for one reason — to make a better life.”⁷

Social barriers

Society moulds the man. A man’s personality, behaviour, mentality, culture, traditions and overall his standards depends on society where he dwells. There is an ample abyss between the social standards of Madhav’s and Riya’s family as Riya belongs to a high class family where people are open minded and closely related to western culture. Their relations in foreign, living standard, manner of celebration (even a small birth day party) indicate full westernization. Not only Riya or her family members, but all the guests and relatives belong to the same standards. When Madhav goes first time to Riya’s birthday, he feels much uncomfortable in the function as he belongs to a traditional and back ward family. Though Madhav also belongs to the royal family of Bihar, but Bihar is the most traditional and undeveloped state of India whereas Delhi, the native town of Riya, the capital of India, is the most developed state and full of modernity. Madhav’s mother, an eminent figure of that locality, runs a typical and traditional school without proper classrooms and even toilets. “There is no toilet. Kids go in the corner there. Or in the fields outside.”(*Half Girlfriend*-173)

In Madhav’s mother school the condition was too worse to be handled for a new person but Madhav, being familiar with the situation, tries to teach the students of three classes in the same room. “We did not have enough teachers or classrooms; we had come up with a new system. I divided the blackboard into three parts.”(*Half Girlfriend*-171)

Madhav’s town is a remote area without proper electricity, transportation and even the fundamental requirements of the inhabitants are not fulfilled. At the arrival of Bill Gates,

Madhav focuses on the pitiable condition of his state and especially his school. Sarcastically he describes-

“In my Bihar, which, even though we love it, is one of the most backward places on the planet. ... And in this backward Bihar is this extraordinary school. This school with seven hundred kids, three teachers, negligible fees, no proper classrooms, no toilets, no real government support and yet, a lot of riches.”(*Half Girlfriend*-182)

Madhav’s mother is a very conventional lady who follows all customs and traditions of the locality. Even the modern dress of Riya disturbs her much and she cannot help herself to taunt- “Why is she wearing such tight pants?” (*Half Girlfriend*-163)

Riya never anticipated even in her dream that she would go Dumraon, Madhav’s native town but man is the puppet in the hands of circumstance. When there was break up in her conjugal life, she returned to India and pursued a job nowhere but in Dumraon, Bihar. Actually she had a soft corner in her heart for Madhav as Madhav, in spite of being rustic, traditional, and low standard person was only the person to share her torments and she could get some empathy. She was trying to seek solace or happiness in Madhav as she had already recognized the truth of high class family whose relations are more formal and full of snobbery without having hearty sympathy, feelings or love. “I guess hiding things from one another is a Somani family tradition.” (*Half Girlfriend*-159) She could not have adjustment with her husband and in laws in England as these higher class people live a dual life.

A cultural clash is visualized in two country’s culture as they could not be the same. The Rohan family followed English culture completely while Riya, in spite of the same culture and standards, had a different outlook and was more practical so she could not be adjusted. They had dominancy over her and the relation was just status symbol and did not respect the sensations and emotions. Before marriage Rohan commits very sweet promises to Riya. Riya describes in her diary- “He said he loves to travel, and I would make his best travel and life partner ... He had bought a list of the top music schools in London with me.” (*Half Girlfriend*-198)

Rohan changed completely just after the marriage. The promises committed before marriage proved to be fake and the real Satan of Rohan’s soul is unmasked and he starts to

torture Riya and behaves as if Riya were his property. Suddenly he becomes hyper and yells- “Why didn’t you take my call?”...“I was in music class. ... I had messaged him right after. ... Shut the fuck up, bitch. What do you know about work?” (*Half Girlfriend*-199)

Riya tries to tell him about the interruption of her study for the marriage and reminds him his promises done before. He blames Riya-“You left it to live like a queen. ... what the fuck? ... He pushed me hard. I lost my balance and slipped. He bent over me.” ... “he slapped me in front of his mother, thrice. She didn’t stop him. She kind of liked it. He even pulled my hair.”(*Half Girlfriend*-200,201)

Recollecting all the incidents, happened in a short span of her life, Riya leaves Rohan’s home for ever and comes to India. Life has taught many lessons to Riya though “In college time I was an immature, over-protected, idiotic eighteen-year-old with no clue about life.” (*Half Girlfriend*-141) Full of self-respect Riya never thinks to be a burden on her parents, she decides to have a job in Bihar but her decision to have a job in Dumraon, Bihar also flopped as Madhav’s mother seemed to be too strict and traditional to be adjusted there. Due to these social barriers she left the town soon.

Language barriers

Friendship, relationship, marriage, and to choose boyfriend or girlfriend depends much more on community and language which is the first thing to decide any type of relation. It’s unity in diversity in India that we can find everything in single state/country. There is a Hindi saying about Indian culture that goes: *koskospebadlepani char kospebani*. (In India the taste of water changes after every 3 kilometers and the language changes after every 12 kilometer) In *Half Girlfriend* we find juxtaposed between the languages even the accent of Riya and Madhav. Riya is very fluent in English with proper English accent with a rich vocabulary due to the atmosphere and locality in which she is brought up. It is the locality and milieu that decides the language and etiquettes of a person. Riya, being Indian (mother tongue Hindi) has not proper command over Hindi. “I may not speak much Hindi, but I do understand it.” (*Half Girlfriend*-77)Madhav’s accent is too poor and awkward that it seems to be Bihari. Though he tries to speak English sometimes, it seems to be funny and rustic. He often thinks, “English is hard enough to decode, but when these Americans speak it, it is impossible.” (*Half Girlfriend*-133)

Riyais born and brought up in Delhi, the capital, and the city of modernity and most of her relatives are in abroad more than in India. That's why she is comfortable and inveterate to speak appropriate and decent English. Many times she instructs Madhav how to pronounce properly. "D.E.S.S.E.R.T. Different word, same sound."(*Half Girlfriend*-149)

Hindi, mother tongue, seems to be transparent, straightforward, and comfortable to both of them. Though Madhav's accent is too disparate and contrasting in Hindi also, but both of them feel more pride and amenity in the same. Riya also concedes and promulgates, "Hindi is incredible. We speak it like we write it. There's no need to learn pronunciation separately." (*Half Girlfriend*-149)

This section of the novel concentrates on diversified backward territory of India. Due to mother tongue or the poor accent many Indians are unable to learn this language properly. Not to speak of the people but many of the undeveloped or underdeveloped schools are unable to impart proper English or fail to make the students having mastery on the same. ChetanBhagat himself states in his blog 'We the Half educated People'

"Half of our school students, after spending six years in school, cannot read basic sentences or perform simple arithmetic. The same could have been learnt within two to three years in a good private urban school."⁸

"Adding more years of education to such students will be a waste. Data shows if basic skills are not learnt well early they won't be learnt later, nor would anything advanced. These students will be the laggards, counted in our enrollment but eventually not getting educated."⁹

Regional and cultural barriers

Regional and cultural rift paves a big hindrance in the integrity and consensus of person, family or community. Riya and Madhav are like opposite banks of a river that go parallel but never meet. Riya, inhabitant of the most developed metropolitan city while Madhav of Bihar, an undeveloped state in all fields so the people here are very orthodox, traditional and of reserved nature. Only one thing is common in Riya and Madhav- basketball. Both of them are good basketball players.

In Dumraon the school children have adapted according to the culture and status of the community so they never demand anything even the primary needs or rights like blackboard, toilet, or classrooms. Whereas in Delhi Madhav has seen every type of facility provided to the students. In America people get the best opportunities in life. Madhav associates it with fate and announces- “Where you are truly lucky is that you were born in America. To be born in a country where everyone gets a chance.”(*Half Girlfriend*-184)

“In Patna, you would be lucky to find one place that played live music. In Dumraon, the only way you could hear live music at a bar as if you yourself sang. In New York City, however, there is an endless number of places.” (*Half Girlfriend*-278)

Mentality barriers

Mentality decides the destinations and mentality is the result of upbringing, milieu, culture, traditions, rituals, and environment where one grows. In mentality both Riya and Madhav are two opposite points of a pole. Riya, a free thinker, wants to be a singer. Though she is born with a golden spoon in her mouth, she is not happy with materialism. She quests humanity, spirituality, sympathy, and emotional contentment in relations hidden in prosperity. This is the reason she tries to find it all in Madhav, a totally unmatched guy to her in all respect. Madhav has very low mentality. He tries to have only physical relations with Riya and proposes her for physical relation through a very vulgar Hindi sentence. It disturbs too much to Riya but she sees a simple, open hearted and honest man in the form of Madhav. “My friends were right. He is an idiot ganwar. I must have had a phase of insanity. Why else would I have been talked to him? ... He was not fake, that’s why.” (*Half Girlfriend*-198) Here it is clear that girls are always cautious for their integrity or character. The girls whether they are open minded or of reserved nature but “A girl knows she is being stared at even in her sleep.” (*Half Girlfriend*-73)

Madhav could never get admission in such a reputed college in Delhi, only he was selected through *Sports Kota* (reservation category of sport). Initially his mentality was too cheap and his vision was too mean but later while living in the same community he started to touch the mentality of Riya and his behaviour and feelings changed. Especially after Riya left Dumraon Patna forever, he realized her sacrifice, feelings and emotional role for him. Now

Madhav's mentality changed completely. His lust turned into emotional attachment and sacrifice. That's why he cares nothing except to find Riya anywhere and at any cost.

Economic barriers

Economic status does not matter much in love. We notice something like this in the relations of Riya and Madhav. Riya, a wealthy and high class girl, can find many richer and better boys for her. Madhav, though from a royal family of Bihar, is nothing in comparison of Riya.

“Glittering chandeliers hung from fifteen-foot high ceiling. Three sofa sets, upholstered in expensive silk, were arranged in U- shaped configuration. A teak and glass coffee table occupied the middle of the room. This is what a real palace would look like if royals actually had any money. I thought of my haveli with its peeling walls and cracked floors. Forget chandeliers, we felt lucky if we had less than five-hour power cuts ... in this lap of luxury I felt lonely.” (*Half Girlfriend-50*)

Madhav is very hesitated to see the standard of Riya in her birth day party. Even Madhav has no proper party wear apparels. To attend Riya's birthday he had to borrow his friend's coat. “I had worn Shailesh's best blazer and shirt, but it still didn't match the clothes of the other guests.” (*Half Girlfriend-54*)

In the party, being unaware with the culture and attitude of such a standard, Madhav felt so uneasiness that he could neither enjoy the party nor he could decide how to behave with those standard people. He was totally confused. “Rohan took a beer Riya picked up a glass of wine and MrSomani helped himself to a whisky. I didn't know what to take so I waved a no.” (*Half Girlfriend-54*)

Riya, in spite of being millionaire, never cares for the status and decides to go to Madhav's village not because she wants to see the standard of Madhav but because she was sympathetic for Madhav and she also wants to search the destination of her life. However getting Madhav's mother dissatisfied with Riya, she decides to leave the place at once but only after Madhav gets help from Bill Gates.

Conclusion

In nutshell we can conclude that it was candid frenzy that overcame all hurdles. It is clear that there was no chance or match between both of them which could serve their purpose but dramatically their mentality changed and they could understand each other's feelings and emotions. Actually both of them (not initially) were well-wishers and sympathetic to each other. The end of the novel proved their sacrifice to each other. Riya was fully determined to help madhav in any condition and she also felt good to help him. "To able to help you prepare for your speech was a wonderful and special time. The best part was that despite the challenge, you never quit." (*Half Girlfriend* 190) Ultimately Madhav also realizes her sacrifice and deep love and sympathy for her so now he was completely devoted to Riya. Though he had no idea where Riya went, but he had a burning desire and firm determination to find her out. Finally his candid frenzy worked and he overcame all complications and found Riya out and achieved her forever.

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