



The Portrayal of Resilient Indian Young Society in Chetan Bhagat's Novel 'Half Girlfriend'

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Abstract

The present research paper aims to bring out the problems of present day youth who crave for an identity in the society. In India, youth aspire to achieve greater and get an identity for themselves. In the twenty first century India, there is a remarkable writer who reflects the issues of contemporary young society by characterizing middle class youth as protagonists in all his novels. It is none other than the famous Indian English fiction writer Chetan Bhagat. Chetan Bhagat is not someone who just wants to reflect the Indian youth's love for modernity, but also someone who wants to analyze the problems that middle class Indian youth face. Chetan always gives priority to youngsters and motivates them to achieve greater. In the present society youngsters face a lot of problems like Identity Crisis, Problems of relationship etc. And the author Chetan Bhagat has an extraordinary ability in reflecting the problems of present day youth and discussing very sensitive aspects of human relationships. This research paper analyses how the protagonists of Chetan Bhagat's famous novel Half girlfriend, Madhav Jha and Roya Somani face numerous challenges in their life and finally achieve their goal. This research paper also attempts to cover the social issues that affect youth. This research paper also sheds light on how regional and socio - political inequalities across nation create cultural differences in the life of Indian youth. This paper also discusses how the negative shades of Traditional Indian society's hereditary customs affect the choices of youth and lead to "anxieties and Insecurities". While discussing insecurities, this paper tries to analyze the cultural milieu that subordinates women to men in the marriage life. In the sense, this paper delves into the situations of the heroine of this novel Riya, who marries the London Business man Rohan and soon gets divorce from him due to his male dominative attitude and his illicit affair with another lady. Finally this research paper examines how the resilient attitude helped both Madhav Jha and Riya to achieve their goal in their life and to get reunited.

Keywords: human relationships, indian society, identity crisis, common stressors, resilience, guidance and mentorship

Introduction

Literature is the mirror of society. It replicates human life with its various aspects. To make the society better is one of the functions of literature. So that literature echos the flaws of the society with the view to making society realize its mistakes and make amends. The writer in a literary piece designs the human life and actions in such a way that they give certain message to the society for its betterment. As a writer is the product of his age, his writing is

certainly affected by the attitudes, morale and the values of the society. Chetan Bhagat is such an author who wants to reflect the life of contemporary young Indian society in all his novels.

Chetan Bhagat the famous 21st century Indian novelist got world clean it is famous novels Five Points Someone, The Three Mistakes of My Life, One Night @ The Call Centre, One Indian girl etc. In all is novels Chetan Bhagat focuses on middle class Indian youth. All protagonists of his novels are



young urban middle class Indian youth. This shows his concern for the Welfare of Indian young society by depicting various problems faced by them in his novels. India is a rapidly developing country where a considerable population consists of young people. The modern developments in India enable Indian youth to have a lot of opportunities in education and employment. Recently Indian youth are getting excellent job offers in abroad with a handsome salary at the same time socio economic developments in India is not same in all its region. There are some reason which got poor exposure modernity. Youth belong to such regions suffer by the lack of proper educational and economic opportunities that creates an inferiority complex in them.

The present day youth are affected by various social issues. Interpersonal factors like relationship problems, feeling of loneliness or unexpected events create restlessness in their life. These kind of challenges are viewed by youth as impediments to achieve their goal in life. And what they need to come up in life is resilient attitude. In this research paper we are going to discuss Chetan Bhagat's famous Novel Half Girlfriend which exemplifies resilient character of two youngsters. One is a young Bihari boy Madhav Jha and another is Riya Somani the daughter of rich Delhi merchant Mr. Somani. Madhav Jha born and brought up in a backward state like Bihar comes to Delhi to get graduated in Sociology in the famous Stephen's college. In Stephen's college Madhav Jha meets Riya Somani, the story thus begins and touches the various aspects of youth life like love, friendship, etc.

The novel Half Girlfriend is a story of two youngsters Riya Somani and Madhav Jha. Madhav Jha a youngster from Bihar meets Riya Somani the daughter of a wealthy Merchant in St. Stephen's College. As both of them basketball players, they share common interest in sports and soon become good friends. In the college Madhav stumbles to speak in English due to his poor exposure to the language. Though he was hailed from a zamindari family he does not have any fortunes of being rich as all properties were sold and settled to his father's lenders. Madhav falls in love with Riya in his very first encounter with her. However he never reveals this to her for certain time. But Riya visualises him

only as a good friend and never has any love affair on him. In the course of time both become close friends. At one point of time he opens mind and proposes love to Riya. But Riya denies his proposal and tells him that she wants to be only his friend and not a girlfriend. After this She suggests Madhav to consider her as his 'half girlfriend' instead of 'a girl friend' And Madhav who has a sincere love on Riya, disagrees this. It causes misunderstanding between them and soon their relationship gets break-up.

After breakup Madhav diverts his focus on his personal growth and the development of his mother's school in his native village. And Riya marries her family friend and the rich Businessman and Rohan Chandak and moves to London. She still has a passion for travel and music. Riya starts her married life with a lot of dreams. But soon she realizes that her husband can never be supportive in achieving her dream of becoming a Singer. Her frustrated life with Rohan leads her to divorce him. After divorce she again tries to connect with Madhav but Madhav's mother was not ready to accept a divorcee as her son's partner. With the help of a false reason of lung cancer she moves to Newyork and succeeds in her venture of becoming a popular singer, her long term aspiration. At the end of the novel Madhav succeeds in attaining the heart of Riya and gives her a new life.

In this research paper we can see how the youngsters Madhav Jha and Riya Somani achieve thier goal facing many challenges with resilient attitude. Many youngsters like Riya and Madhav suffer in life by various factors. Both of them meet in the college at their adolescence. Adolescence can be a very happy and exciting developmental period. But it can also have its share of stress. The stress that youth experience, like the stress that individuals experience at any stage of development, is caused by the pressures (stressors) that are placed on them and it can come from many sources:

- typical events and life changes (e.g., taking a drivers exam or physical changes)
- unexpected events (e.g., parents divorcing or being in a car accident) individual factors (e.g., substance abuse or the youth's trauma history)
- interpersonal factors (e.g., bullying at school, relationship problems or feelings of loneliness and isolation)



- individual factors (e.g., substance abuse or the youth's trauma history)
- community, societal or environmental conditions (e.g., school violence, homophobia or being placed in foster care)

Numerous researchers have concluded that how youth respond to stressors is much more important than the stressor itself in determining their outcomes. Youth are more likely to achieve healthy, favorable outcomes and to thrive if they are resilient. Resilience is the process of managing stress and functioning well even when faced with adversity and trauma.

In this research paper we can explore how Madhav and Riya the protagonists of this novel face various problems and how their resilient attitude helped them to overcome those problems.

Madhav Jha young Bihari boy enters into St. Stephen's College Delhi to study sociology on sports quota. St. Stephen's College standard college in Delhi known for its considerable number of students from well settled families. All of them well versed in English too. When Madhav enters into Stephen's College for an interview for entrance he was astonished by the English speaking students. Madhav still poor in English, walks to the interview room with fear.

In the interview room he was interviewed by senior faculties professor Pereira, Prof. Gupta and prof. Fernandez. Since the institution prefers English as it's medium of instruction, all the professors in the interview panel expect Madhav to answer in English. Here is an excerpt from the interview...

'Basket ball?' prof. Fernandez asked, scanning through my file.

'Yes sir,' I said

'What level?'

'State'.

'Do you speak in full sentences?' Prof. Gupta said in a firm voice.

I didn't fully understand his question. I kept quiet.

'Do you?' he asked again.

'Yes, yes,' I said, my voice like a Convict's. (9)

.....

'Can you please answer in English?' Prof. Gupta said.

'Why? You don't know hindi? I said in reflex, and in Hindi. (10)

This type of situation makes Madhav to think about a return ticket to Bihar.

"Without English felt naked. I started thinking about my return trip to Bihar. I didn't belong here -----these English-speaking monsters would eat me alive" (10)

From the above interview in the novel it is clear since Madhav Jha was grown up in a backward state like Bihar and had education in his mother tongue, St Stephen's College appears to him as a strange place. Madhav Jha had a complexity in interacting with interviewers who speak only in English throughout interview. Like this the typical changes in life creates challenges in youth's life.

This type of challenges can be easily resolved with the help of proper guidance and mentorship. For Madhav there comes a sweet mentor Piyush Yadhav, the sports coach of St. Stephen's who also hails from Bihar. Unlike the professors he looks cool and friendly.

While other professors interacting with Madhav only in English Piyush Yadav the sports coach interviewed Madhav Jha in Hindi. Since Hindi is the mother tongue of Madhav Jha, it makes him happy and stress free.

Here Piyush interacts with Madhav

'Bihar se ho? Are you from Bihar?' he said.

The few words in Hindi felt like cold drops of rain on a scorching summer's day. I loved Piyush Yadav in the instant.

'Yes, sir. Dumraon.' (10)

After joining the college Madhav Ja meets Riya Somani in the basket ball sports quota trials. During the match Madhav gives her few tips which helped her to win the match. A good friendship blooms between them. Madhav gets attracted towards the breath taking beauty of Riya and falls in love with her at the first sight. However he does not reveal his love to her directly. In the course of time both become closer enough to share food and hang out together. Some times Madhav takes advantage of Riya's jovial nature and tries to have physical intercourse with her. Riya, although jovial denies to cooperate for his desire. At one point of time Madhav begins to question Riya about the nature of their relationship. Riya tells him that both of them are just friends and she likes to be so. Madhav asks



her why she can't be his girlfriend and insists her to get more closer with him physically. Riya refuses this and says she is his half girl friend and not a full fledged girl friend. Madhav gets upset by reply. This creates misunderstanding between them. But however both become reconciled soon and talk with each other usually.

One day Madhav and Riya practice basket ball at the college ground during which Riya gets stomach cramp. Madhav calls Riya to his hostel room to take rest and refresh. Riya goes with Madhav to his room to take rest. When Riya lies on bed Madhav gets seduced at the beauty of Riya. When Riya closes her eyes to sleep Madhav drops his hands over Riya and moves too closer to her. Thus he tries to have physical intercourse with her. Riya sensing his intention refuses to co operate for his desire.

At one point of time Madhav tells Riya "Deti hai to de, warna kat le" (75) which meant 'make love to me, or leave' (75). Madhav's this type of filthy speech annoys Riya so much and she immediately leaves his room. From that moment Riya stops meeting him and also begins to avoid him obviously. It signaled Madhav a complete break up of her friendship with him.

This type of problems or stressors youth face cannot be easily resolved. Youth cannot "fix" this type of problems like broken relationship, or be able to move out of the situations like this. Rather, youth are resilient when they are able to call forth their inner strength to positively meet challenges, manage adversities, heal the effects of trauma and thrive given their unique characteristics, goals and circumstances.

Now Madhav wants to repair the ruins of his friendship so that he tries to talk to her many times only to get ignored by her. Despite continuously ignored by Riya, Madhav never gives up and tries to talk to her one more time especially during college annual day to rescue his relationship with her. This time Riya agrees to talk to him. Madhav asks sorry to Riya for what he said at his hostel room. Riya says that she has forgiven him. She adds that It's past and she no longer worries about that. Madhav asks her to be friends once again. But Riya tells him she can't be his friend anymore because she leaves the college. On hearing this Madhav gets Shocked and asks her

why she decides to quit the college. Riya suddenly shows him her wedding invitation. She tells him that she would marry Rohan Chandak and move to London soon. Madhav couldn't believe this. When he read Rohan Chandhak her childhood friend to be her bride groom in the invitation, he totally collapsed. However he tries to persuade Riya to reconsider her decision.

He says,

"Have you gone mad Riya ? (87)

For which Riya replies...

'You've lost the right to talk to me like that' she said.

..... Madhav it is my choice. Nobody is forcing me. I want to leave'. (87)

Madhav tries further to convince Riya to resume her course in Stephen's

Here is their conversation

"Riya, nobody drops out of college like this'

'People inabroad do it all the time'.

'Not in India'

'Oh, come on. Most of India needs a degree to get a job and make a living. I don't need that, right?'. (88)

Now Madhav clearly understands what is truly his position in her life. He soliloquies...

She wasn't wrong. Losers like me need to study, else we have no future. People who are born at 100, Aurangzeb Road can do whatever they want in life. (Bhagat 88)

Madhav clearly understands Riya's partition from the relationship with him.

Now Madhav slowly turns his attention from Riya to his career. It takes him some time to get over the pain of Riya's partition from him. However Madhav resiliently gets over the pain and concentrates on his career and life. After completing his degree in St. Stephen's, Madhav returns to his hometown Dumraon to concentrate on the development of his mother's School. On seeing the poor condition of the school, he decides to collect some funds for the development the school. So that he approaches the local MLA Ohja to discharge some fund for the school. But MLA Ojha who indifferently listens the queries of Madhav, simply said he doesn't have any funds. Madhav who never expected this type of reply



from him returns home desperately. One day MLA Ohja calls Madhav to his house to speak something important. Madhav visits Ohja's house, where Ohja tells him about Microsoft owner Bill Gates' visit to India and his subsequent visits to various places in Bihar. He says to Madhav that he makes officials to include Dumraon in the list of places Bill Gates visits. So Ohja persuades Madhav to arrange an event in his school to welcome Mr. Gates so that he will whitewash the school building. On hearing MLA Ohja's offer of whitewash to his school, Madhav agrees to arrange the event. One day a delegate from Gates foundation named Samantha calls him through phone and informs her visit prior to the visit of Gates to inspect the condition of his school. After few days she visits his school and gets attracted towards his school. Though poor in condition, the school provides education to a large number of poor students in Dumraon. Madhav tells to Samantha that the school doesn't have toilets and other facilities by the lack of funds. Hearing this Samantha suggests Madhav to prepare a good speech to the Gates foundation delegates in the school event in which Gates will be the chief guest. Madhav agrees to this. After her visit she instructs him to meet few delegates from Gates foundation at Chanakya hotel in Patna. Madhav goes to the Chanakya hotel in Patna and meets the delegates. While he comes downstairs to the reception of the hotel surprisingly he spots Riya Somani at the hotel. After confirming it is Riya herself he decides to wait there at the reception till her return. Once she returned to the hotel at midnight Madhav meets her and both of them surprised meeting each other after years.

Madhav wonders why Riya who married Rohan and moved to London is here in Patna. So he enquires her about her married life. Now Riya reveals him her divorce with Rohan. Madhav gets shocked to hear this. She also tells him that after her divorce she decided to stand on her own leg so that she moved Patna to work in Nestle.

Madhav also tells her about his return to Bihar after completing his degree in St. Stephen's to develop his mother's school. He also tells her about Bill Gates' visit to his school soon for an event. Riya feels very happy to hear this. Madhav expresses his worry of preparing a good welcome speech for

Bill Gates' event in his school. Now Riya says she will help him to prepare the welcome speech for the occasion in which Mr. Gates is to be the chief guest. Madhav feels so happy on hearing this. Now both of Madhav and Riya become friends once again. This time both of them get more closer than ever.

Madhav invites Riya to his house. Riya also visits his house. Madhav introduces her to his mother Rani Sahiba. Madhav's mother suspects whether her son fell in love with Riya. As Madhav's mother has a strict adherence to her Princely traditions she does not like Madhav's relationship with Riya who is a modern girl. So she plans to separate Riya from her son as soon as possible. The occasion comes when Madhav brings Riya to his school. While Madhav went to take classes Riya was left in staff room with his mother. At the staff room Rani Sahiba reveals her true nature and questions Riya about her relationship with her son.

Here is their conversation in the staffroom.

'Are you the girl he was involved with in college?'

'We were good friends, yes,'

'stay out of his life', she said shortly. (203)

'It is so easy for your type. One man didn't work out, so get another'

'If it were not Madhav's mother, I would have snapped back. I controlled myself. (203)

'What you want me to do? Stop meeting him?'

'That won't be enough. He won't stop chasing you. You have done mayajal on him. (204)

Now Riya decides not only to leave Madhav but also to leave from Bihar itself. Without informing Madhav she leaves Bihar citing a false reason of lung cancer in her letter to Madhav.

Truly Riya doesn't have any lung cancer. It is a false reason for her to leave Madhav. But Madhav who believed the letter to be true comes to author Chetan Bhagat who is a favorite author of Riya to console himself by persuading Bhagat to read her journals. Bhagat reads Riya's journals carefully and finds out that Riya left Madhav faking her illness and lying him she had Lung cancer. Chetan Bhagat reveals this truth to Madhav. And Madhav gets shocked and surprised to know that Riya is still alive. Now he begins his journey to find out Riya. Madhav predicts that Riya could have gone to New York as



she told him about her dream of becoming a singer at a bar in Newyork.

Madhav reaches Newyork. He visits many live music venues all over the Newyork tirelessly to trace Riya. By his relentless effort he finds out Riya in a live music venue called Café Wha in Newyork. Riya after seeing Madhav broke into tears with love. Both of their eyes met. They shared love with each other and get reunited. In this novel Riya and Madhav face a lot of problems in their life. Riya who had a failure in her marriage life strives hard to get an identity in society and finally achieves her goal of becoming a popular singer in Newyork. And Madhav also achieves his dream of making his school one of the best schools in Bihar with the help of Gates foundation. Ultimately he reunites with his Riya and marries her.

Like Madhav and Riya the present day youth face many challenges and resiliently achieve their goal. Middle class Indian youth hailing from rural backgrounds like Madhav in this novel face a lot of problems like poor exposure to modernity, poverty, lack of infrastructure to improve their communicative skills. Youth like Riya though hail from rich

backgrounds face problems like male domination, identity crisis etc. But all these barriers never stop resilient youth like Riya and Madhav from achieving their goal. The Indian young society not only strives hard to achieve greater but also wants to contribute for the welfare of people like Madhav developed his school for poor students. Thus this novel stands as a perfect example for the resilient youngsters in India who make the country proud.

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