



DETERMINATION OF WOMAN CHARACTER IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S HALF GIRL FRIEND

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat an Indian English author is known for his simple language and is a significant writer in fiction. Of many successful writers in India writing Chetan Bhagat stands apart for conveying his views or ideas through his novels in a realistic manner which are very appealing to the reader. His novels are all based on today's youth, depicting their emotions, likes and dislikes through his characters. He is an exemplar of Indian youth and considered as youth Icon.

Chetan Bhagath in an indirect manner supported feminism in his novels and pushed for their rights to live as a respectful and honourable person. As George Eliot says, "It will never rain roses: When we want to have more roses, we must plant more roses", so Chetan Bhagath shows the determination of the female protagonist in novel Half Girl Friend. My paper is going to show the areas where the heroine was determined in her character.

Key Words: *Determination, feminism, Passionate, Physical Relationship and Domestic Violence*

Introduction:

Indian writing in English is in four forms - Poetry, Drama, Prose and Fiction. Indian English novel is the result of the encounter of colonial rule in India. After independence Indian novelists started writing on new themes and adopted new techniques in their writings.

Chetan Bhagat is a great writer and he is considered as youth icon. He was born on 22nd April 1974. He is an Indian author, columnist, screen writer, television personality and motivational speaker. Chetan Bhagat has changed the Indian writing and has stormed into the literary landscape of Indian English literature. He has written seven block buster books, these include six novels – Five Point Someone (2004), One Night @ The Call Centre (2005), The 3 Mistakes of My Life 2008, 2 States 2009, Revolution 2020 (2011), Half Girl Friend 2014, a non fiction titled, What Young India wants (2012) and One Indian Girl(2016) is the Seventh fictional novel and the ninth overall book. Some of his novels have been made into successful Bollywood films.

Chetan Bhagat is a fiction writer. He shows in his writings, India as a globalized and westernised country. His novels also deal with dreams and desires of the Indian youth and their great efforts in globalisation.

Chetan Bhagat's language is very simple and easy to understand. In his novels the characters are found in crises but they overcome all through their education, language, etc.



His heroines are sensitive to their feelings and determined in their careers. They live in the modern world and are independent in taking their decisions like -in '2 States', the heroine Ananya a Tamil girl, was able to convince her parents to marry a Punjabi boy and in 'One Indian Girl', Radhika seeks authenticity from her boy friend, actually who earns less than her, because gender discrimination was clearly seen in Indian families where they always wanted a boy baby to be born. Radhika changed from an under confident person to a positive character living on her own terms.

Half Girl Friend is an Indian romantic drama made into a film, (Directed by Mohit Suri) and it was a commercial success. Chetan Bhagat has perfectly shown the quality of a 'woman' through his female character.

So the female character in the novel Half Girl Friend, Riya Somani is also of the same character, who is determined to accomplish her dreams and desires.

The definition of determination is : "Determination is a positive emotional feeling that involves persevering towards a difficult goal in spite of obstacles. Determination is the ability to continue trying to do something, although it is very difficult".

Riya Somani (the female protagonist in Half Girl Friend) is five feet and nine inches tall girl with long neck, long arms and long legs which held every guy's attention (Page 14)

Determination in Getting into the Prestigious College:

Riya gets admission into very prestigious college, St. Stephen's college in Delhi through sports quota. She is a very good basketball player. Riya's family members are money minded people but for her the family status and money are not important. She never wanted to use them to settle in life. Her brothers are obsessed with money and status because they know that they are going to take over their business one day. (Page 32)

But Riya is a different girl in her family, who is determined to study. So it was with her mere efforts she gets into the college.

Madhav Jha from Damroam, Bihar was also admitted through sports quota in the same college. When he saw her for the first time on the ground playing basketball, falls in love with her.

Determination in her Career:

Riya is an ambitious girl. She is not for traditional life i.e, to marry and to have children. She is a modern girl who wants to be different from others and wants to make her own carrier.

Riya's dream is to become a singer, she says, I don't want to be a famous singer or a rock star. I don't want to marry a billionaire I just want to sing in peace surrounded by passionate people. (Page 33)



Riya's other dream is to play basketball. She says, in fact I took up basketball because I saw an NBA game live at Madison square garden In New York.(Page 33)

Riya's parents want to get her married, so she discontinues her studies and marries Rohan her Rakhi brother, a rich and handsome guy son of her father's friend from London. Though she was not interested in marriage she obeys her parents.

Here Chetan Bhagath shows the Indian marriage system where girls have no choice of their own.

So Riya sacrifices her career and all her dreams for parents' sake but it was so unfortunate that Rohan turns out to be a mean husband torturing her for simple things like asking her to wear only Indian clothes and even her mother in law was expecting the same from her. Rohan did not care for her or showed any interest in her and was busy in his regular work.

“Wear only Indian clothes” can you believe this? This is what Rohan’s mom said to me today. (Page 201).He slapped me in front of his mother thrice she did not stop him, she liked it. He even pulled my hair.(Page 201). Here Chetan Bhagath showed the domestic violence faced by Indian girls.

Then Riya comes to know about the illegal relationship of Rohan with Kristen. She was not depressed or discouraged but took it light and divorced Rohan. Here chetan advocated the rights of women. So Riya comes back to India but her parents did not support her so she leaves her home and finds a job in Nestle Company in Patna and starts living alone. She meets Madhav there and helps him to give speech in English to get fund from Bill gates foundation for his school in Dumraom.

When the relationship of Madhav and Riya was revealed to Madhav’s mother and when she came to know that Riya is a divorcee, she asks Riya to leave her son and be out of his life. So Riya leaves Madhav and goes in search of her career. Riya goes to New York and fulfils her dream of becoming a singer. Here Chetan Bhagath shows the determination of Riya in fulfilling her dream.

3) Determination in Saying no to Physical Relationship:

Madhav Jha was attracted to Riya since the time he has seen her in the Basketball court. "Perhaps I should have waited to fall in love with her. However, I knew it was pointless. I had little control over my feelings. So from my first day in the college, I was in love. Riya Somani, a basketball player, English literature student, the most beautiful girl on the planet, owner of extraordinary eyebrows and speaker of wonderful lines, had yanked my heart out of its hiding place." Pg 22

Madhav and Riya have become good friends. Madhav was interested in Riya but for Riya he was just a friend.

"Do you love me? I said(Madhav)." She had heard this too many times.



"Not again, Madhav, please" Pg 36

Madhav was interested in physical contact but Riya was not interested. Pg 37

"Riya said - Madhav, please understand, I'm not comfortable with all this"

Then Madhav says that he likes her so much and she is the reason for staying in the college. However Madhav's friends tell him that he must put a test to his friendship with Riya by getting intimate with her and see how she reacts.

One day when Riya was taking rest in Madhav's hostel room, he tries to get close to her but Riya was firm in saying no to Madhav. She warns him saying that she is not looking for such intimacy in this relationship and to behave properly. Pg42

Once Riya and Madhav were practising, then after ten minutes Riya gets stomach cramps. Madhav asks Riya to come and take rest in his hostel room. Then, again Madhav forces her for a kiss. Then Riya gets angry and says no to him.

"Madhav, I haven't seen this side of you. You are using physical force on me" Pg 75

I said no, she said, her voice firm. Pg 75

Riya leaves his room and goes to her house. She never wanted to talk to him after this.

This is how Riya shows her determination as a young girl to keep herself away from physical abuse.

But when we compare to other women in Chetan Bhagat's novels, they are willing for pre-marital sex with no sense of guilt.

In Five Point Someone(2004), Neha says, "thanks, I like it too" Pg 169

In One Night @ Call Centre(2005), Shyam says, amazing, that is simply amazing, Ms. Priyanka. Pg 104. Her reply also is remarkable like Neha's "My pleasure sir" Pg 104

In The Three Mistakes of My Life(2008), the heroine Vidhya is so anxious to lose her virginity, that she chooses to do it on her birthday, to celebrate it. Pg 201

In Two States : The Story of My Marriage(2009), the heroine Ananya says, "This is my first time" Pg 26. She is not anxious to lose her virginity, but she is satisfied to begin it.

So when we compare with other heroines of Chetan's novels, Riya out stands them, in proving her determination.

4) Determination in helping Madhav to give speech in English before Bill Gates :

Madhav settles down in his home town and wanted to help his mother in her School. Rani Sahiba(Seema Biswas) mother of Madhav runs school in Bihar. She is a dedicated worker but



feels sad for the girls in the state because they cannot come to school because of lack of basic amenities like toilets, etc.

When he sees the condition of the school he decides to do something for the school. Madhav goes to local MLA Ojha and requests him to help financially to build proper toilets and to colour their school.

MLA Ojha rejects to help Madhav but informs him about the coming of Bill Gates to visit some schools in Bihar.

To convince Bill Gates, Madhav has to give a speech in front of Bill Gates so he started practising to speak in English. He asks his mother to listen to him as is speaking, but his mother said that she cannot understand anything. As he starts to speak, his mother laughs at him even though she could not understand English. She said that she could hear only one word children. She asks him "Who are all these children?" Pg 126

All the time he was speaking in continuous tense which is grammatically incorrect. "Anyway, I continued, 'my school needing toilet as nobody able to toileting when toilet is coming'. Again Madhav's mother laughs at him and says now I could hear only toilet. With this we can understand how bad Madhav was in speaking English.

So Madhav wanted to join English classes to speak English fluently because his main target isto give speech before Bill Gates.

Unexpectedly Madhav sees Riya in a hotel where he had an appointment with Samantha and her colleagues. Samantha Myers is from Bill Gates Foundation, who co-ordinates with Madhav for Bill Gates visit and fund to his school.

Madhav waits for Riya in the hotel till she returns and meets her. Then both of them talk about their lives and careers as they are meeting after three years. However, Madhav tells about the visit of Bill Gates to his school and the speech he has to give to get the fund sanctioned by Bill Gates Foundation.

On hearing all these, Riya wanted to help Madhav in giving speech. She gives him an action plan and 'Top Ten Tools' to follow to speak good English. Pg 148 & 149.

So Riya helps Madhav a lot to prepare for the speech, and boots confidence in him that he can do it. During his preparation, once Madhav scribbled on the paper whatever he had in his mind. He wrote everything like a list of items which he wanted for school.

Then Riya tells Madhav, that, 'He is Bill Gates. People ask him for things wherever he goes. The idea is not to ask for anything and yet earn grant.' Pg 151

Riya helps Madhav in preparing the speech and asks him to practise.



Finally, the big day has come where Madhav has to give the speech. When he started his speech, he was so nervous and felt anxious that he could not utter a single word. Then Riya helps him to start his speech.

“Okay, I can do this, I told myself. Just like at the rehearsals with Riya. Just imagine only she is here. I gazed at Riya. She gave me a nod and smiled. Encouraged, I continued”Pg 182

Riya Somani determined to help Madhav to give speech in English and she was successful in doing so. Madhav also worked hard for the same.

So here Riya comes into picture in helping Madhav to prepare a speech in English. Madhav gives a wonderful speech before Bill Gates and gets the fund granted to his School.

Conclusion:

In the novel Half Girlfriend we see the strong determination of Riya Somani in getting into the college through sports quota. For her the family status and money was not important. She never used them to settle in her life.

Another thing what we can see is, her determination in saying no to Madhav when he wanted to get in physical relationship with her.

Then we see how she was determined to help Madhav in preparing the speech to give in front of Bill Gates to get the fund for the school. She helps him to conquer one of the biggest demons.

At the end we can see her determination to fulfil her dream of becoming a singer and her struggles in her life to achieve it.

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