

## ***Half Girlfriend : A Thematic Novel Motivating India's Youth To Strengthen Communication Skills In English***

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### **Abstract**

*This research is based on Chetan Bhagat's interview on Half Girlfriend broadcasted on NDTV, a prominent TV Channel in India. The book Half Girlfriend is dedicated to non English types rural Indian youth who suffer badly in social life for want of adequate skills of Communication in English. The book portrays hurt sentiments and day to day linguistic struggle of Madhav Jha, a backward rural Bhojpuri-laced Hindi-speaking boy from Bihar who enrolls himself at the prestigious English-medium St. Stephen's College, New Delhi, and falls in love with a high class English-speaking rich Delhi girl, Riya Somani. The girl issions to children of elitist families only. The novel portrays problems Madhav Jha comes across due to his poor communication skill in English and his love for his college-mate Riya Somani. Madhav's studies, love and social life suffer due to his poor communication skill. According to Chetan Bhagat, Half-Girlfriend represents a unique Indian phenomenon, where boys and girls are not clear about their relationship status with each other. A boy may think he is more than friends with the girl, but the girl is still not his girlfriend which justifies the title 'Half girlfriend' by the author.*

*Like other novels written by Chetan Bhagat, Half girlfriend is a thematic novel urging Indian youth to pay adequate attention on developing skills in English communication if they want to benefit from education, secure good employment and lead a complete life of unfettered love and promote social contacts by exploiting their communication skills in English. Strengthening skills of communication in English can help youngsters to develop career and lead a decent life. It is not anti-patriotic to develop skills in a foreign language as many unscrupulous politicians have the tendency to preach with ulterior motives. Acquiring skills in the mother tongue may be beneficial but not the perfect substitute for skills of communicating in English which essentially is the international language for global business and interaction with the elitist world.*

*The broad purpose of the research Paper is to analyze, interpret and understand the apparent and hidden objectives of the immortal work Half Girlfriend, and its message to youth of the country to help them to face rough and tumble of the environment in India.*

**Key Words:** *Simple English, Communication Skills, Non-English Types, Career Orientation, International Language, Confidence.*

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### **1. The Profile of the Novelist, Chetan Bhagat:**

Born on April 22, 1974 in Delhi, Chetan Bhagat comes from a middle class Punjabi family in New Delhi. He is the son of an army officer and his mother worked as a government employee in agriculture department. He had schooling in the Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi from 1978-1991. Chetan Bhagat completed undergraduate course in Mechanical Engineering in IIT, Delhi (1991-1995) and latter did his Management studies (Master of Business Administration-1997) at IIM, Ahmadabad. He married with his classmate Anusha Suryanarayan whom he met in IIM Ahmadabad in 1998. Chetan Bhagat worked for Goldman Sachs in Hong Kong Office as an investment banker for 11 years. But the passionate writer within him did not satiate his inner urge to write while continuing in the Banking profession. Consequently, he shifted in Mumbai to pursue his passion for writing which took him to the crest of popularity.

As of Today, Chetan Bhagat is reckoned amongst “the biggest selling English language novelist in India’s history”. His novels include, *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ Call Center*(2005 ), *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*.(2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *What Young India Wants* (2012) Speeches and columns, *Half Girlfriend* (2014), *Making India Awesome* (2015) and *One Indian Girl* (2016).” His novels have inspired Bolywood Films. Times Magazine named him as one of the most influential people. He is a columnist of Hindustan Times and Times of India He is renowned for delivering popular speeches on programmes organized by corporate, educational institutes and media houses like Dainak Bhaskar and Times of India etc. etc.,

### **2. Chetan Bhagat, The Guide And Philosopher For The Indian Youth:**

Chetan Bhagat’s writings focus on youth career, directing their ambitions and passion to make career and sensitising them on impediments and burning issues affecting their development. Chetan Bhagat articulates feelings of the country’s youth by dealing with harsh realities and problems in their life showing understanding and sympathy in his inimitable writing style in simple English reverberating their feelings that appeal to their heart. Chetan Bhagat’s writings have striking similarities with parable in offering moral messages as well as spiritual and technical guidance, all in one. His writings are philosophical, as if calling to strive for a modernized young India of his dreams. His thought provoking ideas and in depth analysis of the effect of globalization on Indian Society provide food for thought to young minds. It is simply this that his novels find greater acceptability making him the heartthrob of millions of youth in the country. Chetan Bhagat inspires youngsters to struggle for eradication of the evils inhibiting growth of Indian society and inspires youth for

dignified survival rather than accepting subhuman conditions as the *fate accompli* for themselves. More often than not, his novels and writings make clarion call to the youth to be bold and versatile instead of remaining timid and submissive to luck or circumstances. The amusing style and easy language in his novels are mesmerizing bringing charm to the young minds and persuading them to continue reading the novel till last sentence is reached. Chetan Bhagat is god gifted to make readers of his stories to identify themselves with characters of the novel he writes and even making the events of the novel to appear identical or similar to what happens in their daily life. The unique style of his presentation makes his stories effectively real as if describing occurrences faced by the readers. He has capability to blend social reflection and the concepts of modernity in the right proportion that attracts attention and interest of the readers of his novels, This makes his writings attractive before audience whom he tempts to identify important characters of the novel with themselves making one to reader to emulate whatever is urged by the writer.

### **3. Overview Of Chetan Bhagat's Literary Contributions:**

Chetan Bhagat's novels can create marvels for the young readers that perhaps no contemporary novel can. He is an epoch making writer motivating creativity and boldness and inculcating honesty, dignity and self respect among youth. He is the author of six blockbuster novels that are his immortal literary creations without a parallel, each one being equipped with the attributes of simplicity, clarity and transparency. The very fact of adaptation of his novels for Bollywood films stands testimony to the popularity and demand of the creations by Chetan Bhagat. His novels focus on career orientation and emancipation to the Indian youth. It would therefore be appropriate to have a glimpse of Chetan Bhagat's contributions in the contemporary English literature and its impact on Indian youth.

The story of *Five Point Someone* by Chetan Bhagat revolves around three students- Hari, Ryan and Alok, with each coming from different backgrounds. They get admission in Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi through competition which they somehow manage by cramming and rote learning. As was only to be expected, they find it cumbersome and difficult which makes them rebel against the system of academic competition which they find too difficult to cope with. The story features frustration and consequent habits of soft-drugs, binge- drinking, and an affair between a student and his professor's daughter. *Five Point someone* was very well received by the public and won acclaim, especially from youngsters It brought Bhagat a large following. Later on, the book was adapted into a play by the theatre groups, named, Madras Players and Evam. It was also adapted into a movie called '3 Idiots'.

‘One Night @ The Call Center’ is story about six friends selling home appliances to the US from a call centre. It is the comedy of romance and crossed lines with three main themes: - ex-girlfriend, bad-boss, and God at the Call Centre, bored young Indians who have been hired to resolve the mindless inquiries of Midwestern American Technophobes. As per prologue of the novel, the writer, Chetan Bhagat met a beautiful lady on a train-trip who narrated its story to him on the condition that the author will pen it down in the forthcoming book by him. The workplace, silliness on the part of workers (Shyam Mehra, Priyanka, Varun Malhotra, Esha Singh, Radhika Jha, Military Uncle etc.), customers and bosses have been vividly projected in the novel with graphical details. The story narrates events taking place in a single night shift and she warns him (as well as the readers) to expect at least one unusual occurrence: “it was the night when there was a phone call from God.” And this is how the novel came up according to the author. The novel depicts different faces of modernizing India, the cross cultural issues and family pressures dominating on traditional Indian women who opt for work to earn living for the family. The writer laments that in spite of being intelligent, Indians suffer due to rampant corruption in private and public life which we must get rid of to come at par with our counterparts in America and other developed countries. It was adapted into a movie called ‘Hello’ by the Bollywood later.

*The Three Mistakes Of My Life* by Chetan Bhagat is presented as a narrative by Govind, one of the prominent characters in the novel. It expresses sentiment, romance, social message, business, life, relations, religion and of course cricket. Overall, the book is about cricket, religious politics and rebellious love and about how the three friends get caught in a tangle to earn some money and fame, and how they sort it out. The novel teaches readers, how the dreams shatter by unexpected events in life and how with the support from people around, one can get back on track, focus and realize one’s dreams. As per the story, Govind, Omi and Ish are three friends. Govind is a true Gujarati boy aspiring to grow as businessman. He has aptitude and penchant for business and is a brilliant student of Mathematics. Omi comes from a family of priests but has no interest in becoming a priest. Ish is a failure in studies but a great cricketer (obviously great in the local school team), with a passion in playing, teaching and watching cricket. The Bollywood adaptation of *The Three Mistakes Of My Life* is underway after the purchase of its rights by Farhan Akhtar which it is heard shall be directed by Abhishek Kapoor of ‘ROCK ON!’ fame.

*2-States, The Story of My Marriage* is about Krish and Ananya belonging to two

different states, who are deeply in love and eventually tie the nuptial knot. This book is about the fate of love marriages in India and related issues. The narration of the story, including events in the love marriage is in the first person depicting female character of the story with lots of portions in the book having been dramatized to make contents of the story readable and attractive. Like *Five Point Someone*' the story of the novel is inspired by Chetan Bhagat's own life. According to Bhagat, howsoever independent one may be, love marriage without parents' consent is the root cause of many problems affecting internal relationships in the family and even outside relationships in the society. The traditional society in the country can make marriage outside one's own caste or religion a disaster due to the tension, risky situations and other social problems which may even result in the honour-killings or almost analogous situations. It will be wiser for youngsters to avoid practical problems and risk their own lives by avoiding adventures of this nature.

#### **4. *Half Girlfriend*-A Novel with Unique Objectives And The Theme:.**

The story of the novel *Half Girlfriend*, focuses on all dimensions of Indian culture, living style and more especially the effects of westernization on the youth of our country. The novel depicts occurrences, our youth often come across in their day to day life, exhibiting all relevant aspects of the Indian culture and living style with particular reference to the effects of westernization on the youth. *Half Girlfriend* reflects midway stage in a male female relationship where friendship is not yet ripe for sex relation in the traditional sense of our country contrary to the normal trend in love stories. In the particular story of the novel, *Half Girlfriend* the gap in understanding prevails due to inadequacy and hesitation of Madhav's skill in English communication. resulting in inferiority complex and poor communication abilities causing frustration and depression in the mindset. This discrepancy on the part of Madhav Jha prevents Riya Somani to have full friendship with him and makes her his *Half girlfriend* which is the title of the love story. Indian society does not have a culture of dating pan-India, even though there is a lot of curiosity about it. This is the situation which no other writer would normally pen down due to the social and psychological issues vis a vis traditional India.

The contents of the novel despite being juicy are didactic, enthusiastic and pathetic like a common happening. It shows the sincere and legitimate love and explores barriers to the genuine love. *Half Girlfriend* is not the love story for perfect people but it is about how normal people fall in love and how we hurt the people whom we love the most. The story is in very simple language and yet adequate to stir emotions and make one cry in the course of reading. The simple language used by Chetan Bhagat is aimed to impress upon readers that the educated class

must cooperate with the learners and encourage learning of English and communication amongst the disadvantaged class to promote communication skill amongst youth. The author suggests top ten tools for upgrading skills of communication in English as resources to the youth for acquisition which are as follows:

1. Youtube videos of famous speeches.
2. Watching English movies with subtitles.
3. English only days- no hindi conversation allowed
4. Working on speech content in hindi first
5. Recording an English voice diary on the phone through the day
6. Thinking in English
7. Watching television news debate in English
8. Calling call centers and choosing the English options
9. Reading out English advertisements on street hoardings
10. Reading simple English novel

He suggests improvement in the delivery to gain: Confidence, style, accent, flow, pauses, eye contact and improvement in the content to put rational points, emotional moments, call for aid etc. According to him, "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.

##### **5. Conclusion:**

Despite teething troubles in the skills of communication and wide gap in the monetary and social status the two friends Madhav and Riya join together due to their deep love, sympathy and spirit of sacrifice for each other. Madhav's burning desire and firm determination helps him to find out Riya and she overcomes all complications coming in the way to achieve her forever. The message of the novel is that strong affinity for each other overcomes all barriers, be it the language, regional, social, cultural, economic or those relating to the thought process.

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