

The Plight of Complicated Human Relationships in Selected Fictions of Chetan Bhagat

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Abstract

Traditionally, joint family system has been the backbone of Indian society containing a particular set of rules, and these rules are set by the head of the family or society. These particular set of outdated rules leads a human in a way that he should behave in particular way. When we study the two selected fictions by Chetan Bhagat Two States (Verman) and Half Girlfriend (Suri), we find that Bhagat has shown the complex relationships in today's Indian families. The relationships between two lovers, relationship between husband and wife, relationship between parents and children has changed its form over the period of time. Bhagat tries to highlight that in the 21st century we are in a relationship just for the sake of the name of a relationship and the true relationships trapped in the shackles of the boundaries of class differences, cultural differences, and the set rules of family system led by society. When one finds these relationships as burden, it gets suffocating and there is no way out, each member in the family feels frustrated and tormented. The true feelings in relationships are lost.

Keywords: marriage, complex relationships, family, class, societal norms, cultural conflict

India is among the few countries in the world to preserve the joint family system. Family is a unit where one lives together without looking for the profits or losses. Family tries to stand as a unit to protect each other from the external attacks and this is how the concept of family originated but, with the passage of time the very concept of family has changed. The human started to name the relations and instead of the union, the family has become a mandatory contract where certain roles are assigned to each member. Respect for each other is lost and just for the sake of the society; humans have started to dwell in the same structure. The pillars of a strong relation are respect, love, compassion, communication towards other members have turned into the conscious fear of what people will say and bring shame to them. This hypocritical behaviour of human to portray a false picture before others has made things complicated. Chetan Bhagat in his fictions has shown us several relationships. The most important relation which he highlights in his fictions, is the relation of love. When this relation is at the verge of

taking a step ahead and getting named into the institution called marriage, there are certain rituals in every community which are to be followed.

In the fictions Two States and Half Girlfriend, Bhagat portrays love story of Krish and Annanya and Madhav and Riya. Two States is a story about a romantic journey of a culturally opposite couple Krish Malhotra, a North Indian Punjabi boy from Delhi and Annanya Swaminathan, a new generation Tamilian Brahmin girl from Chennai. They meet at the IIM, Ahmedabad College and during the programme they fall in love. After the completion of MBA, Krish gets placement in Yes Bank, and Ananya in Sunsilk Company. Krish chooses to work in Chennai against his mother's wish, so that he can stay close to Ananya and also takes it as an opportunity to impress her parents. They both unanimously decide that they won't get married until their parents agree happily. So, it is basically the journey from love to marriage where we encounter many complexities as their parents oppose their wedding due to cultural differences, regional superiority, lack of understanding and mainly the conflicts in the relationships of father and son, husband and wife etc.

On the other hand, in the novel Half Girlfriend, there is not only cultural difference between the couple but also a huge class difference. Madhav Jha, a backward rural Bhojpuri-laced Hindi speaking boy gets admission at the distinguished English medium St. Stephen's College, New Delhi through sports quota and he falls crazy for a high class English speaking rich Delhi girl from Modern School, New Delhi, Riya Somani. As they both are basketball players they get along and become friends. Riya never talks about her father. She doesn't like to talk much about her parents so, a strained relationship between parents and child can be seen here. The girl doesn't admit the connection but agrees to be Madhav's half girlfriend when he shares his feeling for her and insists her to be his girlfriend. In this context Chetan Bhagat commented:

Half Girlfriend, to me, maybe a unique Indian phenomenon where boys and girls aren't clear about their relationship status with one another. A boy might imagine he's quite friend with the girl but the girl remains not his

girlfriend. Hence, I assume we would have liked a term like 'half girlfriend' because in India that's what most men get. (Half Girlfriend Novel Summary: Half Girlfriend)

From the above discussion we can infer that today's generation is unwilling to give their relationship a name and are afraid of giving commitments. A serious disagreement or argument between people in any relationship brings bitterness in it. All relationships are based on love, faith, understanding and support. We see many conflicts in different relationships in Chetan Baghat's fictions. In this research paper, researchers have shown the tangled relationships based on orthodox rules set by the society.

Conflict between Husband and Wife

In the fictions of Chetan Baghat, he has tried to explore the vulnerable side of a relationship between husband and wife, for example in *Two States*, Vikram Malhotra and Kavita Malhotra, the parents of Krish Malhotra, have a strained relationship. Though they had love marriage but as time passes by misunderstanding develops between them. Vikram Malhotra had problems in his military job and he got dismissed from there. This event made him alcoholic. His self-esteem and self-respect shattered. His in-laws never accepted him. His wife is uneducated and a blabber. Her attitude causes lots of trouble. All these things dig deep hole in their relationship. He started beating his wife when argument grew. Vikram Malhotra has impulsive behaviour. He is alcoholic, and abusive and doesn't seek psychiatric help. In Indian society, it is a taboo to seek help for mental health from psychiatrist.

The second fiction, *Half girlfriend* which is under study in this paper brings forward a hypocritical relation in Mr. and Mrs. Somani, Riya's parents, who show to outer world that they are like a perfect couple but they have many issues between them. Baghat tries to highlight, only sound economic structure cannot form a strong relationship unless there is a compatibility, respect for each other and a bond of understanding between both partners.

Conflict between Father and Son/ Daughter

Due to conflict between Krish's parents, father and son's relationship starts weakening. For Krish, it is unbearable to see his mother in constant pain. He asks his mother to leave his father. Once Krish hits his father because he was very much troubled to see his father beating his mother. At the same time Krish complains his father never devoted his time which a son deserves. As a result, father and son rarely speak to each other. There is a big

communication gap between them.

In *Half Girlfriend*, Riya's father wishes that she should get married to the son of his best friend but Riya considers that boy as one of her very close friends, a childhood buddy, not a life partner. Riya also finds her father's behaviour towards her mother is very rude and inappropriate. This develops an imaginary boundary between the father and daughter. With the passage of time the divide between them keeps on getting wider and Riya opts for an escape route. Chetan Baghat points at the conflicts between the two generations through these characters. A close reading makes the reader understand that Baghat tries to bridge the gap by showing the gesture from elderly people like Rani Sahiba, accepting Riya, a divorced girl from metro culture as her daughter-in-law.

Difference of Opinion on Inter-Cultural Marriage

In the fiction, *Two States* the mother-son duo loves each other beyond the skies. But when Krish introduces his girlfriend Ananya Swaminathan, his mother insults her and rejects her. Both, Krish and Ananya try to convince their parents. But Kavita Malhotra's illiteracy blinded her human touch. She always compares the regional customs of Punjab with Chennai. She thinks North Indian Punjabis are far superior than the South Indian Madrasis. She expects huge dowry from bride's end. She thinks dowry is their right. These things bring division between mother and son.

In the other fiction, *Half Girlfriend*, Baghat tries to highlight the difference between the class, status and the cultural gap between city and village. When Madhav first reaches Delhi he finds himself difficult to communicate with his peers as he is from village background. Also Riya faces similar problems when she goes to Madhav's village as her accent and clothing is far more different from the people over there. Madhav's mother finds her to be way too modern and unleashed. Baghat wants to show that in India, people check the class, status and background before building a relationship but a true relationship needs love, understanding and communication.

Conflict between Mother-in-Law and Daughter-in-Law

When Kavita Malhotra first sees Ananya at the airport, her heart does not accept her as her daughter-in-law. She feels that Ananya is nothing in front of her son. Krish is well educated, handsome MBA Punjabi boy. Ananya's qualifications, her personality is nothing comparative to Krish because she is Tamilian. Kavita still thinks in old, rigid and backward fashion. She has all expectations for a typical Punjabi daughter-in-law.

It is a prevailing fact that in India, the marriage doesn't take place between two individuals but two families. In case of Riya, this is very eminent because Madhav's mother doesn't accept her as she finds that she is too modern for her son. As Rani Sahiba believes that they are royal and Madhav will get a perfect girl as per her norms and wish, not an English speaking modern girl. Another factor that shows the rudimentary thinking of the older generation is that Rani Sahiba does not want her son to marry a divorcee. All these factors highlight conflicts between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Bhagat, in his fictions, tries to reconcile by showing an acceptance at mother-in-law's end.

In India, there is a popular saying from Bollywood, *filme samaaj ka aaina hotay hai*, which means movies hold mirror to society. One sees the reflection of society on the silver screen when he watches the movie. In the present research paper, entitled as *The Plight of Complicated Human Relationships in Selected Fictions of Chetan Bhagat* by analysing the film adaptation, an attempt is made to study how Chetan Bhagat has canvassed the different shades of human relationships in his works. Bhagat has brilliantly shown the complexities in human relationships and tried to romanticize the audiences by giving the background which is relatable to all. He has

criticized the rigid structure of family system and the suffering caused by it. The more we start to open ourselves and share our thoughts and feelings with our parents, friends or partner, the more the bond of understanding develops and this leads to lessen the complications in our relationships. This paper makes an attempt to show that viewers should look beyond the glamour, music and fashion in cinema and create a vogue to intellectual viewership.

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