

Chapter 1

Major Characters and Their Relationships in *Half Girlfriend*

General Background

Chetan Bhagat's famous novel *Half Girlfriend* can be interpreted through various perspectives. One of the major issues is remarkable feminist move displayed by Riya Somani, one of the major characters in the novel. As a 21st century young lady, Riya strongly resists the patriarchal domination and any pressure imposed by males upon her. In the novel, there are a lot of instances about her visions and moves for female freedom, and the subversion of patriarchal system. She does not surrender to any traditionally constructed rules set by males. Therefore, the main argument of the thesis is that Riya is a radical feminist character because of her bold moves against patriarchal domination and conservative ideas.

Bhagat is one of the most realistic popular fiction writers in the contemporary postmodern era of Indian literature in English. He applies different techniques in his writings while writing about Indian society. One of the major themes of his writing is his attempts to free India from false myths and conservative attitudes of the people. Through his writings, he endeavors to dissolve boundaries between people of different backgrounds, cultures, communities and different spaces.

Half Girlfriend portrays a true picture of contemporary Indian society regarding young people and their social constructs. This research explores the struggles of the characters to overcome the boundaries set by patriarchy and tradition. Bhagat is such a novelist who expresses his profound love for his country and social reform through his writing. In his writing he portrays such issues that are very close to modern generation.

The story in the novel revolves round two major characters – Madhav, a Bihari

young man with low socioeconomic background and Riya, a sophisticated family member from New Delhi. They come in contact after they join college. They come in closer contact through their sportsmanship since both of them were basketball players. They experience a lot of ups and downs in their relationship, and undergo separations and reunions several times. To his proposal for physical contact with her, Riya rejects to become his complete girlfriend but be ready to be a half girlfriend. This gives her the impression that he focuses on sensual love which is against her intention, so she leaves him. This is the first time Riya tries to keep distance from Madhav.

In spite of being an aristocratic family member, Riya tries to have a different identity, being free from traditional patriarchal norms and rules which other members of her family follow. She likes to be quite different from her mother, father and her husband, Rohan Chandak and his mother, all of whom follow conservative ideas.

Bhagat's novels are filled with many funny characters representing his funny nature. Bhagat's latest novel, *Half Girlfriend* published in 2014 portrays romance between Madhav and Riya. Set in the rural Bihar, Delhi, Patna and New York, the novel represents the struggle of a Bihari boy, Madhav, who joins a college in Delhi where he comes in contact with Riya, from Delhi and falls in love with her. The novel reflects his struggle, helplessness and finally success to get the goals of his life. The title of the novel suggests that the girl is not the complete girlfriend of the protagonist but half girlfriend.

First the main characters Madhav and Riya became best friends. When Madhav demands sexual contact with Riya, she rejects it. Against her intention, Riya's family arranges her marriage to Rohan. After marriage, Riya faces a lot of domestic violence. She cannot tolerate it and divorces Rohan. When her parents advise her not to divorce Rohan, she leaves her parents and starts new job in Nestle Company in

Patana. When she meets Madhav second time, she helps him for the promotion of his school. This situation leads them to their friendship getting deeper. They try to renew their love affair. Meanwhile, she knows that his mother is not ready to accept a divorcee as her daughter-in-law. It diverts her mind; leaves Madhav and goes to New York, by informing him that she is suffering from terminal lungs cancer. It depresses him much but he continues his pursuit for her.

The novel is revolving around the mission of the main character Madhav to make Riya his life partner and their social service in addition to their love affairs. The school run by Madhav's mother was facing serious financial problem, and he was trying to collect some funds. There was some hope of assistance from Gates but he was to impress the guest with the need, and for this he needed to speak good English. If he was not able to deliver speech in English, they could not collect the funds for their school. Riya helps him with English and he got some financial support from the guest.

We can see lots of ups and downs in both characters' lives. Because of the social phenomena social customs and other social factors, they cannot adopt each other and at the end of the novel, because of the dedication of the main characters, there is their reunion and start their happy life.

The proposed thesis is an attempt to find the solutions to the following problematic.

- What circumstances brought Madhav and Riya together as close friends and made them separate later?
- Why does Riya display strong feminist activities?
- How does Riya become victorious?

In order to answer these research questions above, the researcher tries to

analyze the novel by using feminist theory to explore the reason of her rejection of Madhav first. At the same time the study will discuss Madhav's perseverance to get Riya and the dedication of Riya to fulfill her mission of her freedom from the patriarchy. These are the particular objectives of the study.

- To describe the circumstances that brought Madhav and the Riya together as a close friends.
- To explain the feminist activities Riya has displayed in Novel.
- To explicate how Riya fulfills her mission of her feminist moves.

Chetan Bhagat is one of the realistic popular fiction writers. He traces out the real picture of the society in his writing. In *Half Girlfriend*, he reflects real situation of Bihar, Delhi and New Work. He shows the gap between them in matters of education, religion, culture, economy and language. But the present research focuses on the explanation of Riya's bold reaction to patriarchal domination. No research has been done on the text in this line; therefore, this study will be one of the mile stone for them who want to do further study on this text.

Sportsmanship of both characters Madhav and Riya brought them together as close friends but they get separated because of Madhav forcefully demands of consummate love however, she finally accepts him for his perseverance to have her as his life partner.

Many scholars have analyzed this text in various perspectives like, colonialism, globalization, urbanization, postmodernisms and so one, but the present study is focused on feminist analysis of the text. This study will be limited only to the struggle and perseverance of the main characters both male and female with their failures and achievements, by specially focusing Riya's feminist move.

This is an intensive textual reading based on library research. The required

reference or sources for the research will be taken from secondary sources. To prove the set argument; critical works, including books, articles, journals, newspapers and many other sources will be consulted. Moreover, guidance from teachers, experts and seniors has been the sources of the inspiration for study.

Review of Literature

There are so many critical reviews about the novel *Half Girlfriend*. The novel has been interpreted through the perspectives of globalization, modernization and colonization. The novel clearly presents different life styles based on different geographical regions revealing identity of the people living in those regions. This aspect of the novel touches cultural aspects which Usha Sawhney Cleary points out:

In this novel, life style of two different states Delhi and Bihar is prominently visible. The heroine of the play Riya belongs to Delhi and the hero of the play Madhav belong to a rural area of Bihar. Both try to justify their identity and role in the society. Somehow silently the identity of themselves is hiding but surprisingly visible to each other. They are undoubtedly aware of each other's life style, way of carrying themselves, way of communication, way of understanding things in their own manner etc. which talks comprehensively about their identity. (59)

It is natural that both the characters try to correspond to each other in matters of life style hiding their real identity but in reality they unconsciously reveal to each others. We can clearly see the cultural, political and many other variations between two state Bihar and Delhi.

Chetan Bhagat breaks down the traditional style of presenting female as dependent and pathetic characters in his works. In this particular novel, we can see the

main female character display the strength and clarity of thoughts. J. Cecile Priya asserts:

The depiction of characters, women characters, in the novels of Indian writing in English is remarkably different to which Chetan Bhagat paints the picture of his female protagonists. Indian writers in English have been depicting in their novels, awful conditions of subjugation, desperate dependence and above all denial of domestic, social and economic freedom by men. But through Chetan's novels there is revolutionary breakthrough, or rather liberation of women of the 21st century where Chetan through his novels advises women to listen to their heart and life is short and has to be enjoyed. (3016)

In the novel, depiction of Riya Sonami's bold, revolutionary and smart character substantiates Priya's claim a novelist breaks through the traditional presentation style of female in Indian literature.

In the past, females were presented as a dependent, house wife and awful characters but this tradition is broken down by Chetan Bhagat. Riya speaks her mind and she expresses confident, clear vision and presents herself as a perfect female figure.

The novel also presents cultural variation of Indian and American females. American female has more freedom than Indian. Even a 24- year old American lady can make her own plan for her future but in the novel Riya's mother compels her to follow the patriarchal norms even if she has been a victim of domestic violence. Her mother silently accepts that without any question. Pointing out the traditional patriarchy and domination upon females in India, S. Subramainam remarks:

Independence is a new factor for Indian women. History has been

cruel towards them with suppression as a part of their day to day life. Priscilla Hart, the twenty-four years old American lady in India is a highly independent character. Her individualism stands parallel to that of Riya Somani, for both the characters love independence and takes decisions based on their whims and fancies. Priscilla visited India out of her volition, and her love for the poor nation overflows its brim and almost lives her life in the Zalilgarh all alone. Her abode is a simple one with minimal facilities like a table fan, a radio set and few books. He lives a contented happy life spending most of her time by riding her bicycle into the slums of the town. She admonishes the women about the importance of birth control and their liberty. (128)

Subramanian gives the example of a 24-year old American lady Priscilla Harts, who enjoys and takes her decision whatever she likes. But the same kind of female in India is not able to do so in the novel. In developed countries, females can enjoy their lives in their own way but this kind of tradition is not seen in underdeveloped area in India.

The novel traces out the worse condition of female in Indian society. Females are forced to work inside the house and they are dominated by males. In each and every situation they are suppressed by males. In the novel, the female character rebels against her husband, and is looking for a strong reason for divorce. When she comes to know about her husband's illicit relation with another woman, she finds it a most suitable reason for her intension. Dr. B.T. Lahane asserts:

When Riya comes to know about Rohan's illegal relationship with Kristin, she didn't feel bad but she felt light because she was free to take tough decision to leave him. Here Bhagat shows the feministic attitude. If her husband expects from her to be loyal to him, even she

can expect from him the same, but it didn't happen. She was his wife; she was equal with him in everything. When she came at her parents' home and told such things even they didn't react anything. Opposite, they told Rohan is right. He is a conqueror. She can't complain by fearing to the people. (5)

Riya expects support from her parents but they do not have any sympathy upon the cruelty she has undergone. Just contrary to her expectation, they opposed her moves and support Rohan.

Ultimately she decides to divorce Rohan. When Riya returns home after divorce, her parents do not accept her. They force her to go back and stay with Rohan again. Riya took a decision against her parents, too. She decides to stay alone. She leaves her parents' house and joins a job in Patana. She starts her own living and she does not take money which her father has deposited in her account.

The novel also presents the class system in Indian society. There is huge gap between urban and rural society. Rural society presents the haves-not and the urban society presents haves. The people of urban society take themselves as upper class people and they take the rural people to be uncivilized and uneducated. Karmakar Goutam mentions:

In his *Half Girlfriend*, he raises an issue and wants to show rural non-English type people who find it difficult to use English properly. He shows the division in the society between English and non-English type people. The snobbish, elitists and snooty English types will never try to understand the rural types. They just mock at them and here Bhagat gives a very controversial message to read his books which will teach one how to speak English because one dream to read Chetan will

able the person to fit into the world of English. Here through his protagonist Madhav Jha he shows how people find it difficult to speak English. When foreigners use it seems fantastic and romantic, but when the rural people try to use it then it is considered crude. And here lies the class conflict that also shown in this story between Madhav and Riya. (35)

Here the English type people are presented as the civilized and upper class people whereas, non-English type as the poor, uneducated and uncivilized. There is the division of society on the basis of linguistic, cultural and other social phenomena. In this way the main male character Madhav represents the rural and uncivilized and Riya represents the urban civilized and developed.

One-sided perspective can be noticed in this novel. The positive side of the male is totally ignored. Even the main male character Madhav gives positive support to Riya in many hardships, but this aspect has been shaded. In the text, it is seen that Riya also enjoys Madhav's innocent behaviors and treats him as backward characters. The writer is totally escaping this Riya's side and only focuses on male behaviors. Nusaiba, P. asserts:

Even though Chetan Bhagat claims to be more feministic in his attitudes through the pictures action of bold female characters, he fails to bring male protagonist with the same aspects. They can't keep themselves simply as a friend for long, they expects more. They are all harden admirers of external beauty and enchanted by it. (84)

The writer cannot make justice to male characters. He presents only negative sides of males but there are so many instances of male respecting and supporting women. So the writer is not able to make a justice for male characters.

Organization of the Study

This study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the research work. This chapter contains the general background of the study, problems, hypothesis, objectives, significances, delimitations and the methodology used for the study. The second chapter contains the introduction of various types of feminism. A detailed discussion is done on radical feminism. This chapter also deals with analysis and interpretation of the novel. The theory of radical feminism has been applied as a literary theory of analysis, and instances of radical feminism have been explained from the text in this chapter. The third chapter concludes how and why Riya is a radical feminist, by summing up the ideas derived from the analysis. Apart from this, works cited list is included in the last part of this research work.

Chapter 2

Riya's Radical Feministic Moves in *Half Girlfriend*

Concept of Feminism

The main focus of this thesis is to analysis Chetan Bhagat's *Half Girlfriend* through feminism in general and radical feminism in particular. The term 'feminism' has its origin from the Latin word *femina* meaning 'woman' (through French feminism'). It believes that women should be treated as potential intellectual equals and also social equals to men. They have the same rights and power economically as men do. The term gained popularity from the early twentieth century struggles for securing women's suffrage for voting rights.

Feminists have been raising their voices for their rights. In patriarchal society the power is held by males who always control females. This has caused a serious discrimination in a society. Vukoicic asserts:

Feminism is a contemporary social and political movement motivated by individual and collective experiences of women, which is based on the claim that a society is based on patriarchal principles, according to which men are privileged over women, which results in discrimination against women in public and private life. (33)

Vukoicic points out that in patriarchal society, the gender discrimination has privileged the males over women and it has caused problems to women's lives.

Many researchers and scholars have used the term 'Feminism' and have tried to define and explain it differently. Some of them use it to refer to some historical political movements in USA and Europe, whereas, others refer it to the belief that woman live a life under injustice with no rights and no equality.

The term Feminism has a long history. It echoes women's problems and

sufferings in addition to their dreams for equal opportunities in societies controlled by man. Faris comments: "Women have traditionally been dehumanized by a male dominated society, which they call patriarchy and that has been always better to be a man..." (6).

The term feminism has a history in English linked with women's activism from the late 19th century to the present. It is useful to distinguish feminist ideas or beliefs from feminist political movements, for even in periods where there has been no significant political activism around women's subordination. Individuals have been concerned with this issue and have raised voices about justice for women.

Because of the painful discrimination and harsh inequality, women were able to stand up each time, spoke out about their problems created by injustice and express their feelings and wishes. In addition, they were able to spread it all over the world, demanding equality, and making all people believe that men and women deserve equality in all opportunities, treatments, respect and social rights.

Origins of Feminism

The term Feminism appeared in France in the late 1880s. Hunburtine Auclert mentioned it in her Journal *La Citoyenne as La Feminite*, where she has tried to criticize male domination and to claim for women's rights in addition to the emancipation promised by the French revolution. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the term appeared in English first in Britain and then in 1910s in America and by 1920s in the Arab World as *Niswia*. Feminism originates from the Latin word 'femina' that describes women's issues. Feminism is concerned with females not just as a biological category, but the female gender as a social category, and therefore feminists have shared the view that women's oppression has been tied to their sexuality. This was so because women and men's biological differences reflect in the

organization of society, and is based on these differences, as women have been treated as inferior to men. Whether as a theory, or a social movement or a political movement, feminism specifically focuses on women's experiences and highlights various forms of oppression that the female gender has subjected to in the society.

Whether Feminism is considered as a social movement or a political movement, it specifically and mainly focuses on women's experiences in her daily life, which she is subjected to in the society. Since feminists are able to feel and experience the pain and suffering of being women, they are totally convinced of what it means to be "women" in patriarchal societies. Feminists, therefore, seek to remove all the barriers to equal social, political and economic opportunities for women and object to the notion that a women's worth is determined principally by her gender and that women are inherently inferior, subservient or less intelligent than men.

The root cause of female marginalization is the traditional concept of general discrimination. Connecting feminism and gender studies, Lois Tyson states:

Clearly, feminism and gender studies are intimately related. They share some of the same subject matter as well as a desire for justice and a belief in the power of education to change our society for the better. For centuries feminism has worked for gender roles that even today, continue to short-circuit efforts to achieve complete equality between women and men. (116)

Tyson's views make it clear that the concept of gender discrimination should come to an end for what the feminism focuses on, that is, equality between women and men in every respect.

In English literature, the concept of feminism is not a new issue and it started from the eighteenth century. The modern feminist movement is the renewal of the

same classic works of feminists. For example, Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of women" (1792) Olive Schreiner's "Women and Labour" (1911) and Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" (1929) raised voices against the unequal treatment given to women.

Types of Feminism

Feminism is both an intellectual commitment and a political movement that seeks justice for women and the end of sexism in all forms. Among various feminist movements, three types of feminism are more relevant for the present purpose. They are: Liberal feminism, Social feminism, and Radical feminism.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism is an approach that advocates for equality between men and women. It emphasizes on the movement to avoid discriminatory practices against women. It is considered to be one of the most important types of feminism, which works against the practices in the societies that marginalize females on the grounds of gender difference. The movement attempts to integrate women into all social work.

Liberal feminism aims at individuals to use their own abilities and the democratic process to help women and men to become equal in the eyes of the law and society. By organizing women into larger groups that can speak for women rights, and raise awareness about their miserable condition, it helps females change their condition. Liberal feminist approach will use the resources and tools available in our society to advocate for change.

Bimer, Eyayu Enyew, and Alemeneneh, Getanh Mihrete put their views as:

Liberal feminist's emphasis on rationality and public sphere is not well defined because women's oppression is not at the domestic level rather it is the denial of values accrued to domestic roles. In Ethiopia, women

play important and valuable domestic roles they should not be deprived to play public role since they can specialize in such activities and should be given due respect. Therefore, liberal feminist's conjecture that urges women to be involved in public sphere equally as men is not essential. This is because women can be equal with men by contributing their best to the economic development of the country domestically too if given due value and respect. (64)

In any society, males and females have their own roles. If we mobilize females in a rational way even for domestic work, the economic condition will gradually increase and the living style will improve. Even through the domestic work, females can contribute to economic development. Liberal feminists encourage females to join hands with males for the establishment of rights.

Liberal feminism witnessed several waves of changes that contributed in its development and its power throughout the history. By the beginning of the 1960s, a particular resurgence in energy followed the civil rights movement in the United States, which led to The Famous March on Washington. This march was able to move the ideas and principle of liberal feminists to another level. The spirit and the importance of their ideas were able to move to other civil rights movements who adopted it as a form of realization and awareness of the importance of speaking and expressing their problems and ideas.

Raising consciousness includes personal experiences and information passed from person to person about the issues of the day that affects the group. This helps people in the movement to stay conscious of the need for their individual contribution to the movement to improve conditions. The main thrust of liberal feminism is that an individual woman should be able to determine her social role with as great freedom as

does a man.

Feminism therefore has required removing the historic structure of patriarchal law that denied women's civil rights. The major emphasis is that equality of women before the law, in educational and professional opportunities, change in marriage laws, property rights, inequitable divorce, equal pay for equal work, protection from rape, wife battering in the home and liberation from all dehumanizing forces. In short, it aims at bringing equality between women and men in the framework of the existing social-economic systems

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a movement that believes sexism is so deeply rooted in society that the only cure is to eliminate the concept of gender. It started to emerge in the late 1960s by the famous leaders T. Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone. It denies the liberal claim that the lack of political or civil rights causes women's oppression.

Atkinson directs the cause of female oppression to gender discrimination. The male's view towards females regarding them as inferior and based on the ground of sex is the main fertile land to give rise to the radical feminism. She strongly puts:

The first dichotomous division of this mass[mankind]is said to have been on the grounds of sex: male and female.... It was because one half the human value bears the burden of the reproductive process and because man, the 'rational' animals had the wit to take advantage of that, that the child bearers or the 'beasts of burden' were corralled in a political class: equivocating the biologically contingent burden in to a political (or necessary) penalty thereby modifying their individuals' definitions from the human to the functional, or animal. (85)

Atkinson sees discrimination against females because of the patriarchal tradition of preferring boys to girls, that is, gender discrimination. It has established the notion that females are like the beasts of burden and having no value in social functioning.

Jelena Vukoicic asserts in sociological discourse:

The theoretical framework of radical feminism, for the most part, consists of three keys, interrelated concepts, or patriarchy, power, and oppression. In radical feminism, like in feminism in general, the patriarchal society occupies a central place where, and why, the fundamental power struggle between the sexes takes place. Patriarchy requires power, causes repression and maintains control systems without which its existence would lose purpose. (37)

In patriarchal society power is held by male. Males occupy the central power and they always rule over female unjustly, so females should struggle to gain their power.

There is no possibility of gaining rights through liberal feminism. Struggle with male is a must to gain rights.

The main perspective in feminism is that there is a complex relationship between males and females in a patriarchal society, where males are privileged over females and on the basis of this privilege; the males think that they can naturally dominate females. This supremacy of the males has been the strong weapon of suppression upon females. Radical feminism aims to challenge and overthrow norms of patriarchy by opposing standard gender roles and oppression upon women and calls for a radical reordering of society.

The reason behind the label “radical” is that it views the oppression of women as the most fundamental form of man's domination, one that cuts across boundaries of race, culture, and economic class, and it should be rooted out. In fact, this is a

movement strongly oriented to social change, change of rather revolutionary proportions. A radical feminist claims that the root of women's oppression is biological. They believe that the physical subordination of women by men is the primary form of oppression and others are secondary. Therefore, radical feminism believes that woman's liberation requires a biological revolution.

Radical feminists raise the demand for the destruction of patriarchy. There is a shift in emphasis from struggle for role and legal reforms to the demolition of patriarchy. The chief institution of patriarchy is the family structure and it promotes patriarchy in the society. Moreover, they believe that the whole system must be abolished even its biological aspects.

The principles of radical feminism contain many interesting claims such as pregnancy and child birth which are considered as the most painful and unpleasant experiences that a person pass through. They believe that the technology should be used to eliminate all kinds of pain particularly from the fundamental inequality of the bearing and rising of the children. This must be the basic achievement because they believe that the heart of women's oppression is their childbearing and childrearing roles. Radical feminists believe that the male psychology or biology is the source of women's oppression and pain. This is why they call for separatism and the independence from men.

By posing an all-inclusive sisterhood as the solution to patriarchy, radical feminists overlook the class differences that prevent women as a whole from having the same interests. They often minimize the importance of solidarity between women and men of color in the fight against racism. They tend to ignore issues that do not relate directly to a narrowly defined female experience.

Radical feminism questions why women must adopt certain roles based on

their biology, just as it questions why men adopt certain other roles based on gender. They attempt to draw lines between biologically determined behavior and culturally determined behavior in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles.

Voichita Nachescu puts her view in *Journal* for the study of Radicalism:

The sex/race analogy further enabled white women to re signify various concepts and arguments connected with the antiracist struggle, such as power, identity, and community. Engaged in the task of creating a political language that reflected their new sense of political subjectivity as both radicals and feminists, radical feminists used creatively a variety of influences from the landscape of their contemporary political movements. It is important to note here that not only white women borrowed arguments from Black Power, but that on the contrary, the black freedom struggle fueled the political imaginations of other social movements as well. (46)

There have been a lot of movements for women rights in history. Nachescu stresses on the unity of all women for their rights. Black women and white women should be united and make a power to overcome the patriarchal system. It assumes that there must be political struggle to establish the rights of female.

Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminism also known as Marxist feminism or Materialist feminism is an important movement of feminism. It calls for an end to capitalism through a socialist reformation of economy. Socialist feminists view gender inequalities as intrinsic to the capitalist system, which makes vast profits off women's unpaid labor in the home and underpaid labor in the workforce. Socialist feminism argues that

capitalism strengthens and supports the sexist status because men are the ones who currently have power and money. Muhammed Burak Zembat mentions:

Socialist feminists believe that there is a direct link between class struggle and gender inequality. Socialist feminism is a two-pronged theory that broadens Marxist feminism's argument for the role of capitalism in the oppression of women and radical feminism's theory of the role of gender and the patriarchy. Socialist feminists reject radical feminism's main claim that patriarchy is the only or primary source of oppression of women. Socialist feminism draws upon many concepts found in Marxism; such as a historical materials point of view, which means that they relate their ideas to the material and historical conditions of people's lives. Socialist feminists thus consider how the sexism and gendered division of labor of each historical era is determined by the economic system of the time. (6)

There is class in every society. There is class struggle and between haves and have-nots. Socialist feminists assume that female workers are paid less only because of sex. There is division of work only because of gender.

Those men are more willing to share their power and money with other man, which means that women have fewer opportunities and resources. Therefore, they tried to eliminate the capitalist system and replace it with socialism, which collectively shares the wealth created by human labor and has no economic stake in maintaining exploitation.

Sexism benefits the capitalism, by providing a supply of cheap labor for industry. Women are in low paid, low status or even no paid work. It means that, Socialist feminists reject the idea that liberation for women requires the abolition of

childbirth. They seek to analyze the subordination of women as linked with other forms of oppression, and attempt to unite the fights for socialism with that for women's liberation. Under the socialist conditions, Marxist feminism believes that the restoration of women to autonomy is possible. Modern industrialization was, in fact beginning this liberation of women by forcing working class women into wage labor. Having equal salary for both man and woman was in the top of Socialist feminist's aims and demands.

Of the three types of feminism discussed above, the radical feminism is used as the tool of analysis of the text *Half Girlfriend* by Chetan Bhagat in the present research because the major character Riya does not only struggle for equality, but for the abolition of patriarchy by empowering females in all sectors of life.

Intimacy Between Madhav and Riya

Bhagat's latest novel, *Half Girlfriend* portrays the contents of adult romance. Set in the rural Bihar, Delhi, Patna and New York, the novel represents the struggle of a Bihari boy, Madhav, who joins a college in Delhi where he comes in contact with Riya from Delhi, and falls in love with her. The novel starts with the interaction between Chetan Bhagat (the author) and Madhav Jha in a hotel. The latter tells the author how he came to Delhi and how he got admission to Saint Stephens College under sports quota.

At the college, after the interview he goes out for trial in basketball court and has his look on a pretty girl playing in the court. As an experienced hand in the same field, he gives some suggestions to Riya. In this way, he comes in contact with her. Their life style is completely different as one is from rural India and another from urban India. Their friendship is strange combination as their life; their background and thinking are completely dissimilar to each other. This way their friendship starts

and it is a surprise for everyone in the college.

The novel beautifully portrays how they spend time in the college and after that outside the college. Madhav, after meeting Riya, develops friendship with her. His behavior towards her is normal as it is thought in Indian culture. He believes that his friendship with her is of real boyfriend and girlfriend type, but Riya who has modern outlook towards life does not agree with his attitude towards her. She often admonishes him to be casual and be like common friends.

Once they go for a date and this date has dual meaning for both of them. Madhav takes her to have accepted it as a date of his love but she does not look at it like him:

'So, do I get a date?' I said.

'It's not a date. We just go for a movie. Like friends.'

'Isn't that what high-class people call a date?'

'No.'

'What's date then?'

'You want to see the movie with me or not?' she had said, her hands on her hips.

The hands- on-hips pose meant no further questions. In the three months I had known her, I knew she hated being pushed. I thought maybe that was how rich people were- somewhat private. We overdid the familiarity in our villages anyway. (Bhagat 29-30)

Here again helplessness of Madhav is evident before Riya. He tries to convince her to accept him as her lover and be with him the way he wishes her to be, but Riya chides him to be in his limit and stops him not to cross the boundaries beyond friendship.

Madahv takes his relationship with Riya seriously and he tries very hard to

convince her to accept his love and be his girlfriend but all goes in vain as she is in no mood to make him her boyfriend. Riya looks like a different type of female in the novel and looks at things in casual manner. She wants to have friendship with Madhav and does not want to move ahead beyond that.

At one point of time, when both of them are out of the classroom their thinking about each other comes to the fore:

'Yes, why? Why did you do it, Mr. Jha?'

'Because I... I love you.'

Riya burst out laughing. I didn't like her laughing this time.

'Can you please be serious? Your casual behavior hurts me,' I said.

She composed herself and sat cross-legged under the tree.

'Okay, fine, Madhav, I will be serious. I laughed because I don't think you are in love with me.'

'Oh, really? How do you know that?'

'Have you been in love before?'

'No.'

'So how do you know it's love?'

Her confusing words left me tongue-tied.

'How do you know it's not?' I said after half a minute.

'I know it is not. We are both too young, inexperienced but curious.

Sure, we like each other. But love? Please.' (Bhagat 62-63)

It is interesting that Riya does not comply with Madhav's proposal to be his beloved, but just a friend. One of the reasons of her rejection to be his beloved might be the lack of their experience about love. Perhaps she wants to be friends for some period of time before they really fall in love.

Madhav has already faced an admission interview at the St. Stephen's College, New Delhi in sports quota as he is a state level basketball player. He studied in the village school in his mother tongue and is poor in English, so he has a lot of hesitation in answering the interviewing panel. With the help of one of the panelists Prof. Pereira and the candidate Piyush, he manages to face the interview and he gets the admission.

Riya is the daughter of a wealthy Marwari family in Delhi. She has been an English medium student throughout and is very fluent in English. She is also a good basketball player. They frequently meet on the sports ground and in the canteen and gradually their friendship becomes closer. She takes Madhav as a very good friend but Madhav takes this friendship in a consummate way. He is more serious in his relationship with her. He wants to go further in this relationship, so he tries to be more physical with her. She permits him occasional kissing and hugging but she cleverly denies any further advances in their friendship. Many attempts of Madhav for physical advances are avoided dexterously by Riya, but still Madhav keeps on trying. His hostel-mates keep on inspiring him for physical relationship with her. In the middle of the novel, she plainly tells him that he may take her as half girlfriend so that he may not think of such physical intimacy.

Riya's Feminist Moves in *Half Girlfriend*

Normally, playing games outside the home is not allowed for the women in Indian society, but Riya, disobeying the social norms goes out and plays to her fullest satisfaction. She has been a good player and presents herself as a good team leader also. So this is the very first instance of feminist move in the Novel. Unlike the other Indian girls, Riya has displayed her macho behavior by being a good basketball player.

It is a challenge for a teenage girl in a strict patriarchal society to come out of the boundaries. She does it. Moreover, she presents herself as an assertive, strong young man by taking a command of the team. Here she clearly shows that female can act as efficiently as male in any arena if they get chance. Here she proves that the traditional concept towards females is wrong. It is her first radical move against traditional concept of marginalizing females.

When Riya starts playing, her catching, throwing, dribbling, and basketing are not less impressive and forceful than a male player. Her commitment, efficiency and determination are clearly noticed in the court:

R dribbled the ball and reached the opposition's basket. Three Opponents surrounded her. R passed the ball to her teammate, who missed the pass.

'What the...!' R screamed. Too late. The rival team took the ball, passed it to the other end and scored a basket.

R cursed herself, inaudible to anyone else. She then signaled to three of her teammates to cover specific opponents and jogged across the court.

(Bhagat 15)

Chetan Bhagat has presented her character very dexterously and carefully with preciseness with female whims and ambitious mind in his novel *Half Girlfriend*. One important thing about Riya is that she is different from other girls. She has some exceptional qualities such as strangeness, braveness and beauty.

Bhagat's most heroines are beautiful and capable to attract others especially boys and so is Riya. She is tall with long neck, long arms and long legs that would capture any boy's attention. She is a basketball player and a part of the sports- quota applicants' team.

Riya is from a rich family. Her father is a big business man and a wealthy person. She comes in BMW car in the college. She enjoys everything which rich girls can do, but she never gives the importance to it. She has not the value only for money. She thinks the richness of mind is more important than the richness of money. She feels emotional security is even more important:

'You are rich, right?' I said. Idiot Madhav. Couldn't think of anything better.

She laughed at my direct question. 'Rich in money, or rich in mind? Two different things.'

'Huh? Rich like wealthy?'

'Unfortunately, yes'.

What's unfortunate? Everyone wants to be rich'.

'Yeah, I guess. It just embarrasses me. Plus, all the obsession with money and how it defines you, I just don't get it'. (24-25)

Though she lives in modern era, in a sophisticated and high profile family, she feels uncomfortable in her own family. Her family is obsessed with money only. They have no concern with relations; they have no time to think about their members.

Riya thinks her brothers won't pay attention towards her after her parents. Even she has a doubt that one day her brothers would take over the business. So she wants to get married and leave. She thinks only aim of her life is not to bear kids and shopping. She is not interested in it only. She wants to live free life and make her own career, like a modern feminist girl:

"I don't know. Also, I don't matter. My brothers do, because they will take over the business one day. I'm supposed to shut up, get married and leave. The high point of my life is to have kids and shop'.

'And that's not what you want to do?'

'No!' She almost shouted. 'You know me better than that. Don't you?'

(Bhagat32)

Bhagat presents the issue of Indian marriage system. Girls have to marry sometimes without their consent. They have to obey their parents. They have no rights to choose their spouse on their own level or they are not asked about their wish.

Riya is obliged to leave her college in the middle for her marriage courses. No one thinks about her career. Her husband tells her that she will learn from any well reputed college in London. Riya sacrifices all her career for him but in front of richness and busy schedule, he forgets all what she has done. She suffers the domestic violence from her husband and her mother-in-law but her parents support Rohan's family not her; she comes to know the reality of the real world. Contrary to her expectations, she finds her husband and mother-in-law very cruel and conservative. She openly displays her husband's violence to her, "He slapped me in front of his mother thrice. She did not stop him. She kind of liked it. He even pulled my hair" (201). What can be more unendurable than this for a lady who wants to lead highly emancipated life.

The domestic violence becomes unbearable for her, so she divorces her husband in spite of her parents objection to it. She is confident that she can maintain desired life even if her parents, husband or mother-in-law do not support her. Here, she is more confident than a strong assertive young man. She wants to prove that female can maintain their lives comfortably on their own even without male's assistances. She tries to falsify the traditional concept that daughters are much weaker than sons. This is another radical feminist move taken by Riya.

Chetan Bhagat has not presented the feminism or advocated the rights of

women directly, but has presented the feministic attitude through Riya here. This young lady does not like the way people following traditional norms impose patriarchal views upon new generation. Even her mother-in-law expects her only to wear Indian clothes. As a modern girl it is unacceptable for her.

When Riya comes to know about Rohan's illegal relationship with Kristin, she does not feel bad but feels comfortable because she is now free to take tough decision to leave him as this situation can be a strong reason for her intention to divorce him. Here, Bhagat shows another of her feministic attitude. Her view is that if her husband expects her to be loyal to him, she can expect the same from him, but this view is totally opposite to the tradition of the patriarchal society.

Patriarchal society sees every act of the males positively. Extramarital affair of a married person is immoral and illegal and cannot be supported today, but patriarchal society still sees it as bravery. Bhagat presents the dominating nature of men over the women. The males always try to confine females to household drudgery by depriving them of any outside activities. They think women have no value but they are only useful commodities to satisfy the men's thirst of sex and produce children.

Bhagat presents Madhav's mother, Rani sahiba Durga Jha as a strong willed lady who pursues for her dreams even in a very inconvenient situation. She has been running Dumraon Royal School, which teaches seven hundred kids from nearby villages. Through this lady, Bhagat has tried to show that if a woman has a strong will to do anything, she can do it as well as a male can. She has same power and strength as a man has and she is equal to fight and struggle as a man is. She runs her business as she runs her family.

Chetan Bhagat successfully handles the individuality of his women characters. By a thorough study of his novels, we understand that every female character displays

strength and clarity of thought if she gets chances. In the novel, Bhagat has shown women characters ready to face challenges and risks. It clearly proves that he is a realist writer and a creator of new society which allows males and females to live freely.

The women protagonists of Chetan Bhagat show the element of Vitality. They boldly take initiation in the courtship. They speak their minds and believe in confidence, clear vision, a perfect and a noble freedom. Bhagat, through this novel, gives the message to youth to lead their lives according to their wish and inner-self but not to blindly follow the age old traditional concepts.

Madhav and Riya's Reunion

Madhav wants to get government funding for the school run by his mother for its renovation. So he starts visiting and requesting concerned government agencies for any possible help. Once, he meets Mr. Oza, an MLA of local constituency and asks him for financial help from his local fund, but he refuses to help. Madhav knows it very well that his does not encourage him to make effort for any help from Ojha, but with some hope of getting help, he moves ahead. But Mr. Ojha's reaction to Madhav's request is just opposite to what he had expected:

'If you join politics, my job is in danger,' he guffawed.

'Don't worry, I will not. Also, my school needs help.'

'I know. Your mother told me. It needs repairs worth lakhs.

Unfortunately, it is not a government-run school.'

'But it is the only option for our kids.'

'You want something to eat? My wife made pakoras.'

I shook my head.

'If you could help with the school,' I said, as he interrupted me.

'Rajkumarji...'

'Madhav. Please call me as a Madhav.'

'Okay, Madhavji, see, my MLA funds are limited. I have to repair roads, fix power and install hand pumps. In fact, I have already run out.'

'How about the state education ministry?'

Ojha laughed. His laugh gave away the answer.

'It's Bihar. You should know,' he said.

'So you cannot do anything?'

'You want a personal donation from me? I am a humble government servant,' he said.

'No, that is not what I came for. I felt the local government should support the only proper school in the area. Parents of these kids vote for you.'

'They do. However, they also have other more important issues they want me to focus on.'

I stood up to leave. (110)

Madhav's attempts to get financial aids for his mother's school from Mr. Ojha go in vain. It seems as if Mr. Ojha is quite indifferent to the request made by Madhav.

When Rani Sahiba comes to know about her son's visit to MLA, she becomes very angry with him for visiting such an arrogant and corrupt person for help.

MLA Ojha once invites Rani Sahiba and Madhav to his house for a discussion of world renowned entrepreneur and philanthropist Bill Gate's visit to various places of Bihar for charity purposes. The MLA wishes to organize Gate's visit to Dumraon and the Royal school so that he may come to make the public notice his party's high

command through the media and can make his way clear to get a ticket to contest in the coming parliamentary elections.

Rani Sahiba does not agree with the proposal as she even does not know who Bill Gates is but she is convinced by Madhav. OJha gives all possible help in the rural ministry office to schedule Gate's visit to Dumraon. The only issue was to deliver a speech in English when the Gates delegation visits the place. Madhav takes the responsibility of giving the speech by himself. For that, he wants to sharpen his English language skill. So he stays in Patna and joins English language classes along with being in touch with Samantha, who is a female representative of the Gates Foundation.

On a casual occasion, at a hotel reception counter, Madhav happens to see a girl looking like his past half girlfriend, Riya.

'Marwari, I'm Riya Somani.'

'Ah,' my mother said. 'They let you come to Bihar and work?'

'They don't let me do things. I wanted to. I can decide for myself,' Riya said, her feminist feathers beginning to flutter.

'You can?' my mother said. I sensed a tinge of sarcasm in her voice.

Riya did too.

'I mean, those decisions don't always work out so well. But I do like to make my own decisions,' she said.

'They have a big business in Delhi, Ma,' I said.

'Infrastructure.'

'Marwaris are a rich community,' my mother said.

'Why are you working?'

'I want to be independent,' Riya said. (161-162)

Even in this conversation Riya expresses her strong feminist views. She wants to be independent from patriarchal ideology.

In the evening, it is confirmed that she is Riya and she is on her professional stay in Patna as she works with Nestle and sells their brand of yogurt. When she comes to know that Madhav is learning English for a specific noble purpose, she also starts helping him to learn the language. In the meantime, they revive their old friendship.

Riya helps Madhav even to prepare and rehearse his speech. She also visits Dumraon and the ancestral Haveli of Madhav. She meets Rani Sahiba. She also visits the school and passes some time with the school children. Finally, the Gates delegation comes, and Madhav beautifully organizes the entire occasion. He gives the speech. Riya also attends the function. The program ends with a loud applause and appreciation, and the Gates foundation declares \$ 50,000 as donation, subject to inspection, a grant of \$10,000 a year for the following five years.

The function ends, people now disperse with a hope that the donation will do good to the school. Meanwhile, Riya disappears from there. Madhav searches for Riya, but she is not found anywhere. He asks his mother and some other people around, but he does not find her. At the end, a school girl named Sabnam gives him a letter written by Riya for him. He reads the letter, reaching home and is shocked to know that she has left the place for ever. In the letter she mentions that she has lung cancer and she is leaving the job and him forever. Madhav goes there to her apartment but he finds no clue as to where she has gone.

After reading the notes, which Riya left in her apartment, Madhav comes to know how Riya started writing these notes like a personal diary. He also comes to know about her friendship with him, and her concerns for him. The notes also

contains how Riya's parents put pressure on her to get married to Rohan and how difficult it was for her in adjusting with in-law's, a rigid family in London. She also mentions in the notes how Rohan tortured her as he had extra-marital affairs and how she immediately left the house and settled temporarily in Patna.

Madhav, through the notes, comes to know how his mother Rani Sahiba accused her of having cast a trap on his son and how she convinced Riya to keep distance from him as she is a divorcee. Through the last note, Riya comes to know how deeply she loves him and why she left Patna forever. However, Madhav is determined to search for her at any cost.

Madhav presumes if Riya is alive and has cut off from the world around her. She must try to fulfill her dream to be a singer in a bar in New York. With all the possible clues, he makes it sure that she must be in the city of New York. Finally, he decides to go to New York in search of her.

With the help of Samantha, he manages to take a job in Gates Foundation so that getting visa may not be a big issue. Reaching New York, he stays in his friend Sailesh's house. Sailesh and his wife Jyoti provide him with all necessary accommodation and conveyance for searching out Riya in various bar-houses in New York. Within three months, along with his job-responsibilities, he manages to visit hundreds of bar-houses with live music performances but still he is still far from success.

Madhav is moving like a mad person in search of Riya but he does not find any clue of her being in New York. At the very close of the novel, Sailesh and Jyoti arrange a farewell party for Madhav as his visa tenure is getting over. During the party, he looks at the brochure of 'Blue Man Comedy Show' at Café Wha, which a lady named Daisy gives him outside the Madison Square Garden. Madhav finds the

name Ray among the performers in the event. Now he is determined to find her at any cost.

In an extremely cold night of minus twenty-two degrees temperature, he walks out in the final hope for finding Riya. Due to heavy snow fall, he finds no train service possible for reaching the place called 'Café Wha', where he hopes to find Riya. As there is no other alternative left, he decides to go on foot in that heavily snowy night and starts his moves. The show is to be ended by midnight, so he runs in the chilled snowy-night to reach the venue of the show in time. Finally, with all the breathless rushing, he reaches the place by 12:01 pm. There, in the performance hall, he finds Riya singing a song with her eyes closed. Mean while, when she opens her eyes she also notices him:

Her voice vanished as her eyes met mine. The pianist looked at her surprised, wondering why she had missed her lines.

Riya stood up. The guitar looked unsteady in her hand.

The pianist filled the gaps with an instrumental interlude.

Riya put her guitar aside slowly. I continued to look at her.

We stood before each other, silent and frozen. The crowd began to murmur, wondering what was happening. (Bhagat 254)

When their eyes met, their souls departed them and they stood speechless, not finding anything to say. They did not know what they were doing. Perhaps this was the situation they had not expected to experience. Those all around them might have been surprised at their strange behavior. Anyway it was the time of their great ecstasy. Finally, they looked at each other and hugged and kissed.

I continued to hold her.

'Sorry, I left because I got scared...' She said.

'I know.'

'But how did you...?' she said.

'I said', no questions.'

'Just one last one.'

'What?'

'Why is your shirt so wet and cold?' she said.

I laughed.

'What?' she said.

'Nothing.' (Bhagat 255)

They became emotional. They found the lost hope with them; It was like a dream come true. Perhaps they enjoyed with limitless happiness at the moment.

They went to Riya's apartment and they changed their clothes, got fresh and they grew physical. It has been three and a half years since Madhav and Riya met and they got married. By now, they have got a two-year old son named Shyam. They have renovated and developed the village school with world class facilities. Rani Sahiba is now living a retired life with her grandson.

All the instruments and sports equipment have been purchased from the US. Madhav and Riya stay in the USA three months every year. There, Riya performs in various cafes and Madhav works with various assignments of the Gates Foundation. Madhav invites Chetan Bhagat as the chief guest of the annual function. Now Bhagat is happy to see the couple running the school of their dream and living a happy life. In the last few lines, it is shown that Shyam is playing with a Basketball and he is trying to throw the ball in the Basket but he is failing constantly. The novel ends with Madhav's sentence with a pun "Don't quit. It will happen one day". (Bhagat 260)

In this way Madhav and Riya start their new life. The bold female character

overcomes a lot of hardship and obstacles in her life. She has been a victim of domestic violence and mental torture from her past husband, mother-in-law and even from her own parents. But she never surrendered, but continued struggling with them and presented herself as a perfect female figure in her society.

She has been fighting with traditional rituals, norms and value. She has proved herself as radical feminist and gives message to all that we should fight for our rights and no one can discriminate against others on the basis of gender and sex. Females are not only the means of reproductions; they can do everything like males in the society. They can manage their lives by themselves. The novelist has presented Riya as a bold character who continuously tries to establish a society free from patriarchal domination, where females have freedom of choice and are loved, respected, and cared well.

Chapter 3

Riya as a Radical Feminist in *Half Girlfriend*

Chetan Bhagat's *Half Girlfriend* reads like a romantic novel with a love story between Madhav and Riya on the surface level, but in fact it is the novel that speaks out the voices and actions of feminists in general and of radical feminists in particular. Riya Somani, the major character in the novel appears as a radical feminist. She revolts against the patriarchal domination upon females to establish a society that allows females freedom of choice and keeps males and females on the equal footing.

The research started with the argument that Riya's rebellion against patriarchal system of gender discrimination and female exploitation is based on radical feminism. With this argument the main problem in course of the research was what activities Riya executed to attain her goals and how and why she acted that way. The study has found a lot of grounds to support the argument with the solutions to the problem. Therefore, the study has concluded that the activities done by Riya are all based on radical feminism as they are oriented towards the eradication of the patriarchal exploitation rather than just reformation of it.

Riya's revolts against patriarchy germinate from her parents' attempts to limit her to the conservative ideology of the traditional Indian society. From her childhood, she dreams of leading a life of freedom but her parents indirectly try to confine her to the traditional rules. Step by step, she moves ahead with her mission of revolting against the patriarchy and proves herself as a radical feminist. As a strong feminist, she becomes a basketball player against the norms imposed upon females by patriarchal society, in which females are not allowed to take part in outside activities in public.

Another of her moves against the patriarchal conservative ideas is her

rebellion against her forceful marriage and her parents' advice to obey her barbarous husband's order. She finds her husband's treatment violent and conservative aiming at exploiting her. She could not withstand the violence upon her by her husband, so she openly comes out against the issue of domestic violence. She gives up her relation with her husband, in-laws and even with her parents with definite boldness.

Riya knows it well that the males in the patriarchal society try to enjoy physical exploits upon females by means of sex. After she gets in touch with Madhav, their friendship gets closer and closer. Madhav takes this friendship in a traditional way and thinks that he can enjoy with her physically.

Madhav does not try to map on the level of her thinking in matters of friendship, so he tries to advance for physical relation, which she openly rejects. She does not hesitate even to break the friendly relation with Madhav because of his debasing behavior of demanding physical relation. Perhaps he attempted it thinking that a teenage girl easily surrenders to his demands but it is his erroneous judgment. She strongly reacts with the statement that she is his half girlfriend and would not like to get involved in over intimacy.

She has no qualms about abandoning all her relatives and friendships. Moreover, after she abandons her family, she maintains her life by doing a job in a company. A female doing outside work is not generally accepted by traditional society, but she enjoys it without any feeling of repentance. She rather feels proud of herself with her independent life. Likewise, her flight to New York to fulfill her desire of being a singer against her kins and in-laws again adds another brick to her feminist moves. She is successful there and enjoys her life with full satisfaction.

All these activities she has done provide the evidence for her revolt against traditional patriarchal society that marginalizes female on grounds of gender and sex.

She wants to prove that females are not weaker than males in any sector and she has done that. Her moves are oriented not only to reform the patriarchal society but to eradicate what is practiced in such society and to establish new system that allows females to enjoy freedom, rights and every opportunity available.

Riya does not only fight against males' ideology in patriarchy but also against females who try to dominate other females by supporting patriarchal ideology and submitting themselves to the barbarity. Her moves against Madhav's mother are the instances of this. Madhav's mother finds it unacceptable to make a divorcee her daughter-in-law. It badly hurts Riya and moves away from Madhav and his mother. Later Riya's consistent assistance for Madhav and his school in different aspects impresses this old lady who later surrenders to Riya, because it is Riya who satisfies Madhav's mother with her modern idea and steps. Riya does not show any type of uneasiness while moving ahead by fighting against the society that focuses on gender discrimination.

After reading this novel, one easily concludes that Riya's moves are all directed to put females and males on the same footing and establish new system in the society ruled by patriarchy. All of her activities have been successful. Other feminist advocates of female rights might get satisfied with freedom and equality. But Riya is not satisfied with that. She means to dismantle the traditional society and construct a new one. Therefore, she is a radical feminist.

Reading of *Half Girlfriend* by applying radical feminism is a new analysis on the text so far. Many other approaches can be applied to analyze it. Even within feminism a lot more approaches are possible to interpret the novel. Therefore, this thesis can open new horizons for aspiring researchers' further research.

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