

“THE CULTURES’ SEAMING OF COMPARTMENTS – INDIA AND WEST IN CHETAN BHAGAT’S HALF GIRLFRIEND”

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ABSTRACT

The comparative study of the Western and the Indian perspectives in an Indian, when considered, always aligns to the Indian cultural ties of nativity. For this study, the novel Half Girlfriend written by Chetan Bhagat is taken and the actual facts of the conflict within an Indian is tried to be approached.

KEYWORDS: Half Girlfriend, Nativity, Indianess, Hemming & Seaming

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INTRODUCTION

The Culture is the constitution of life. The West and East are the divisions made according to the practices followed by the individuals living in these respective environments. The culture is the day-to-day behavior of the individuals. This depends on the society set-up made and thus this becomes a part of the personalized life.

The rich ethnicity of Indian culture is somewhat idiosyncratic to the Western culture, but to an Indian the West is the modern aspect and is usually attracted to that culture. The reality exists in its actual acceptance and practice, which does not attain the complete salvation. The protocols do exist in the Indian terminology, which hinders the full-fledged acceptance. The hikes in globalization has made many changes in the lifestyle of people living in India as well as in the West, but some practices still remain the popular choices among the people.

The two cultures are antipodal to each other. They are the two faces of one coin. Indian culture is the most ancient of all the cultures of this world. The West is attracted towards the Indian culture and vice versa, but the Western following is just the curiosity developed regarding the most vivid practices. They just understand them but never accept them as a part of their life, but a contrast happens with Indians, where they become ardent followers of the western culture but superficially they remain scattered between the two cultures. This comparison is right from the attire to the food, which begins with the basics of life.

THE CULTURES – INDIAN AND WESTERN, A RHYTHM TUNED COERCIVELY

The comparison is the most important event in this present world. This brings together the vivid and varied perspectives standing forth on opposite plains. The comparison relates to create a level of perfection, most of the time it leads to competition, wherein each and every component urges the end products to reach a certain ultimatum with **revenue** of perfection. The word later travels to different anticipations, which further regulates the attitude of comparison in its various criteria as People, Culture, Customs, Places and so on.

Indian Culture is an assortment of customs, rituals, traditions and language, which is completely different from one region to another region.

Western Culture is taken as more advanced in the present scenario by all the countries. The European culture is the mother of inspiration for all the countries of the world.

The comparison when relates to literature plunges into a very regal circumference. The different arenas of study are taken and accordingly calculates the resonance of the various temperaments popping up, holding the different perspectives which sets up the definitions and enter into the thesaurus of the eligibility. The literatures here hold the disparate_circumferences of the Writer's serene sight.

The literatures are like the white color and in it the emotions emerge out as of a rainbow. The combination of the different Rasas develops into the different registers of life. It takes the preview of existentialism of life of any part of the world, but the emotions experienced and displayed are in union with their 'Feel' and 'Exhibition'. This indirectly is the influence of the culture of their origin.

The Indian and the Western feel and exhibition of emotions taken for study sum up for the conclusion that the feel is same, but the exhibition is under the influence of the cultures of their origin. No matter whichever culture they may adopt in their lifetime, but ultimately the nativity takes the plunge and attains the priority. This further can be explained taking the cultures in which the individuals live through their behavior and goes accordingly but at times of crises, the ultimatum is the native culture.

The study hence goes in this article that the West though does the Hemming and Seaming with the Indian Culture and projects its complete control but yet the nativity continues to exist throughout and muses its presence.

Taking a comparative study of the Indian and Western Cultures, the Indian perspective upholds the emotions and its mode of expressions more with the impact of the external influences that the individual lives with, whereas the Western view is exclusively individuality.

The confrontation of Love, which is the foundation of all the later emotions takes the stand - if chosen perfectly mingles like a blend but if not chosen appropriately messes as a heterogeneous content. The emotion 'Love' graces with multiple facets. The dependence is on the relations and relationships it is involved with.

The Indian scenario and oust of the Indian legacy 'Love' at International level is, acceptance heartily, but taken at the individual status it is nothing but the external

Influences, which contribute to the choice of life. The society plays a dominant role in the lives of the individual and its impact decides the living of the individual, which is not the fact in the West. In West, a complete contrast picture revolves wherein the individual lives for the self and not for the society. The West has a strong impact on the East and this is not an exception with India. This creates a rigorous rebel-like atmosphere for the individual and the individual succeeds in it also but ultimately the final decisions are only based on the nativity of the origin. However, the boasting of the Western attitude, an Indian can project, but always has at the base level the Indianess.

THE SUCCINCT OF THE NOVEL

The Protagonist, Madhav Jha belongs to a remote village, Dumraon, in Bihar. He comes to meet the author of this novel, Chetan Bhagat, and leaves behind a few journals from his half-girlfriend, whom he believes to be dead now. Chetan Bhagat calls Madhav Jha the next morning to hear his story.

Madhav begins his story with his entering in St. Stephens College, which was a very reputed College of Patna. The admission to this College for Madhav was almost a rejection for the lack of his proficiency of English language, but he being a good Basket Ball Player finally gets his admission through the Sports Quota. Madhav's insecurity was felt with his inefficiency to speak English fluently but he managed to acquire attention of the students with his skill, as the best Basket Ball player.

The rich and beautiful Riya Somani is a girl from Delhi, who is also selected through the sports quota. Madhav and Riya become close 'friends' due to their association with basketball. Madhav wants to make her his girlfriend, but she refuses. He demands that they get physical. Offended by his obscene ultimatum, Riya parts company with him and tells him not to talk to her anymore. Riya who does not believe in the family ties, as she grows up in an environment of the atrocities of her father on her mother. The modern Western lifestyle is led by her family, but again the Indian patriarchy is witnessed.

A year later, Riya marries her childhood friend Rohan and settles in London, where Rohan has a big business. Finding Delhi unbearable on grounds of losing Riya, Madhav decides to settle in his hometown, Dumraon, and helps his mother, Rani Sahiba, who runs her school. Seeing the condition of the school – no proper classes or toilets – Madhav decides to meet the local MLA, Ojha, for financial help, but the MLA refuses to help. An opportunity comes when Ojha informs Madhav about Bill Gates' visit to some schools in Bihar. Madhav tries his best to convince Gates to fund his school, but to do so he has to prepare a speech, preferably in English.

In the course of his struggle, he comes across Riya, who is now a divorcee. Riya helps him prepare the speech. They two are successful in their fundraising, but, after the speech, Riya leaves a letter for him, which states that she is in the last stage of lung cancer and has only three months left to survive. Riya's letter confesses her love for Madhav but states she has three months to live. When Madhav attempts to track her down, he finds that she has cut all ties in India and has disappeared.

After three years, it is revealed from Riya's journals that she is alive and that she had faked her cancer. Madhav goes in search of her in New York. After three months of extensive search, he finds her at Cafe Wha, and the two reconcile and finally consummate their relationship.

The book ends with the author visiting the rural school in Dumraon, three and a half years later, and seeing that both Madhav and Riya are successfully running the school, and have a son, Shyam.

THE CULTURES' SEAMING OF COMPARTMENTS – INDIA AND WEST – AN ANALYSIS

“**Half Girlfriend**”, is an Indian English coming of age and is a young adult romance novel dedicated to “non-English-types”, as Chetan Bhagat wrote. The book divulges the sentiments and linguistic struggles of a backward rural Bhojpuri-laced Hindi-speaking boy from Bihar, as he 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” " schooled at Modern School, New Delhi. The girl does not admit the relationship but agrees to be his "half girlfriend". Chetan Bhagat commented, "*Half-Girlfriend*, to him was 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. Hence, a term like 'Half girlfriend' is introduced here by the author which is an apt following of the Indian in this modernism. This aspect is the following of the youngsters in the name of modernism but again the past generation does not approve this new modernistic perspective.

This aspect is explained by taking the Novel of Chetan Bhagat, “Half Girlfriend”. Chetan Bhagat popularly known as the Youth Icon, though is living with Modernism, but the nativity actually influences his entire perspective. A tussle is witnessed in the writer, East or West.

The tussle witnessed in the Author is also the residing divergent views of all the readers of India or part of Indian culture living anywhere in the world. The outpour of the modernization is just our show off, but internally, we are so rooted to our Indian culture that unconsciously, the immediate procedure of our decisions, is always inclined towards Indian Culture.

The novel *Half Girlfriend* deals with the world of Western Modernism. The surprise begins for the Indian perspective with the title itself, ‘Half Girlfriend’. Girlfriend is the Girl who is a friend of a Boy and is sharing a step ahead of intimacy with him, but this was a quest with the word ‘Half Girlfriend’ which is not Indian. The writer begins with the note of Westernization in his thoughts, but ultimately lands with the Indianess.

The comparative study of Indian and Western thoughts is the actuality of this novel and shows the picture of it. The Protagonists, Riya and Madhav, are both from different backgrounds, who meet each other and enter into friendship cum relationship and name it as ‘Half Girlfriend’. The differences in their perspectives with Riya living a modern lifestyle is mistaken by Madhav as completely western and hence just takes her for granted and wants to have a physical relationship. Riya protests and thus is insulted by Madhav. Here, we find the didactic attitudes of two contrasts, Indian and Western, running parallel to each other.

The terminology of modernism in the life of Riya and her family is completely in the arena of dual perspectives. Again, we find Riya has certain tangles of Indian culture, the first being her rejection for physical involvement with Madhav, then her choice of not marrying Madhav, as she is a divorcee and also her respect for Madhav’s mother’s order to stay away from her son. This, again links with the Indian sentiments for Riya and she walks away from his life after confessing her love for him. The confession of Riya, though a divorcee, is a Western impact, but moving away from him for his mother’s prestige and sacrifices done by her, by giving the false news of her incurable disease and a very short span of life left for her.

The theme also shifts from the personal to the social. The social responsibilities of an Indian are highlighted, which transforms Madhav from a College Student to a responsible citizen of India. He, in the second part of the process, is seen fighting to bring about order in the rural scenario. He is trying to implement the importance of providing the most basic requirement of toilets in a Girl’s school. Providing a modern outlook for rural India is education for the girls. To implement this, a separate school for Girls was founded by Madhav’s father but after his death, his mother who with all initial difficulties, all alone, fights with the localities and successfully now runs this Girls School which has considerably very good strength in such a remote village.

The dual nature of Western and Indian can be witnessed in Mahav's mother, Rani Sahiba. She precedes the importance of the empowerment of women and for that she gives a vision to all the people of Dumraon, of the education for the girls, but the same individual is seen advising Riya to go away from her son's life, as she was a divorcee.

The real argument is not with East or West, but with the conflict within. Though one lives with complete West but still the roots continue to lay its hold back in its nativity. This feature is not shown but the writer only experiences it and the conflict ends with the note of gliding in the mirages of the created West by an Indian, but landing in again within the circumference of Indian culture.

Many instances are found, where the writer is held with the conflict. Riya belongs to a very rich family, which is fully westernized, but it is shown that Riya's father tortures her mother, who never rebels. Riya rebels in her marriage with the atrocities she has to put up with and comes out of them, but not approved by her mother. This gives the naïve picture of the dogmatism of westernization in Indians.

Riya, now a divorcee, meets Madhav after their breakup and finds Madhav still waiting for her and tries to go back to him but she hesitates by taking her present status. Again, here the conflict is found; Riya, the girl, who chose the Half Girlfriend concept, which is completely western, also chose to walk out of her married life to uphold her right. All of a sudden, she is facing the issues of incorporating it, for going back to Madhav's life. Madhav, who has displayed, the strong ties with the Indian Culture throughout continues to live with it and rebels with the system and just accepts Riya without giving a second thought.

The Girl Education in India related to the lack of toilets in schools is very nicely commended. The thought of schools without toilets in the West is unusual. The shift is examined with Madhav working for the empowerment of women and also the respect for women is noticed here. This is a changed attitude in Madhav, who otherwise was the one who saw Riya as an object of experiencing just physical thrill. Madhav wants to raise fund to build Toilets in his School. This issue is resolved with the West, as the Bill Gates Foundation helps, and Madhav succeeds in getting the Funds for his School in a remote Village of Bihar. This modern concept of Half Girlfriend plays a havoc in the lives of the Protagonists, but the true Love and Commitment of Madhav wins Riya for him.

The issue is suddenly connected to take further track into the blend. Madhav has to go to America and, there with his instinct, gets success in wooing Riya. The Western sentiments are loaded with Indian touch. The social issues are very well blended with the practicability of occurrences in India. The family sentiments and the social responsibilities are truly managed with the contrast of a live-in relationship, though the protagonists exhibit rhyming with the modern West, but again extends hypocrisy in certain stands.

The conflict of the ideas of the West and Indian co-exist within the Writer. Though he wants to place the Western ideology at the Pinnacle to prove modernization, but yet gets stuck with the prevalence of Indianess. The comparison of the compartmentalization of the West and the East when analyzed has completely contrast stands. The trend of the West, though attracts the Indian, still goes like the Half Girlfriend concept, as 'Half Western Perspective' is visualized.

CONCLUSIONS

The mélange of the Indian and the Western concepts has become the ritualistic diameter of the Indian Culture. The parameters of the western philosophy is completely submerged in the Indian ideology that it appears, as if everything is seaming with the West, but its sudden collapse brings to the forefront the reality and the instinct of Indian and Western as

an illusion. The family, which is the basic unit of the society in India, has a complete contrast picture with the West. The entire study of the novel builds in the seaming of both the cultures with the protagonists working in it. The reason of facing this turbulence is the partial acceptance of the different orders in India. Holding both the ends and trying to build connection is the pungent appeal to the extant utilities of Life, which is very next to impossible.

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