

HALF GIRLFRIEND: DEPICTION OF MADHAV JHA'S STRUGGLE IN ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Language is not merely a vehicle serving principally for the expression and transmission of thoughts but a great apparatus for bridging the gap, building camaraderie and economic ties between different cultures. It is nothing but Language only that empowers humans to ascertain what they think and feel, to share their attitudes and schemes, to anticipate the future and to learn from the past. Among all the contemporary languages, English, after crossing many barriers and controversies, has, ultimately, established its prominence as the lingua franca of the global trade, technology, aviation, banking, computing, medicines, engineering and tourism. It has turned out as the dialect of choice by 1.8 billion people across the world and the number has been increasing by leaps and bounds. Needless to say, English, as a language, enlightens and empowers the individuals to secure a better life by transferring individuality into a personality. It lends hand to young mind not only in passing the exams but in demonstrating their acumen before the world since it unlocks a plethora of opportunities in all existing fields. The global echelon of the lingo has contributed to its wide growth in popular culture as well as in literature. The present paper sheds light on the magnitude of English with special reference to Chetan Bhagat's Novel- Half Girl Friend which through the portrayal of Madhav Jha's character delineates how language is vital in shaping one's future and to what extent it impacts relationships.

Keywords: Language, English, Global, Vital, Literature, Youth Icon

INTRODUCTION

English lingo, the contemporary lingua franca of the global trade, technology, aviation, banking, computing, medicines, engineering and tourism is spoken by 1.8 billion people all over the globe and the number is still increasing by leaps and bounds.

English has turned out to be the dialect of choice for communication from one corner to the other corner of the world. People are so acquainted with words of high rate of recurrence from the spoken lingo that these words have even been embraced by other languages

Since English is not the first language of majority of Indians, the standard of English has not sprung up to the extent, to that radius, it should effectuate. Due to the less attention paid by the education ministers, it has not come out with the marvelous results. Teaching English which is the 'language of development', 'the language of modernization', 'the language of science and technology', 'the language of opportunity', has become herculean task here and now and incontrovertibly, the reason of this is that students apprentice English alike other subjects, not as language. Communicating in English is something that is not less than a bug bear

Literature, an apparatus to limn human élan vital in perspicacious way, ordains the writer to allay human race from despondency and to satisfy with untarnished fulfillment as literature which owns the credential of excellence, comprises the power that proffers an opportunity to earn wings of real aspiration of life in the idyllic cosmos of literature. Since time memorial the authors have been depicting the ills, sacraments, traditions and costumes of life through the different genres of literature.

Chetan Bhagat, a torch bearer for a gutsy generation, a man who is ruling over the hearts of trillion, the one who jots down the present world ambiance with great expertise, known for his exposition of reality in contemporary society, is seen more as the voice of a creation than just an author. What makes him popular among the youth is his language in which he unveils limitless possibilities of words and this adds the feather of being 'The Best Seller' to his cap. His style of writing is simple with short and crisp sentences, however owns the excellence to grab the readers' attention. His thoughts are set forth in such a way that the youngsters see echoes of their lives in his fables of campus life, call centers, communal violence, marriage, and love. Bhagat elects his protagonists and second fiddles aged chiefly 13 to 30 from the real-life megalopolis and writes about each facet of India be it culture, its problems, and its language.

Half Girlfriend, seventh novel of Bhagat, recognizes the young generation in general and the Delhians in particular. The story revolves around some of the societal tribulations, to be precise, the class discrepancy of Indian society, provincial idiosyncrasy, false pride of high society, difference between English and Non English type people.

DISCUSSION

Half girlfriend exhibits the division of the society between two groups in which one, a bevy of pompous, highbrow people, is competent to have English as cup of tea but another, a cluster of downtrodden, underprivileged, is phobic of conversing in English as for them talking in English is something that is next to unfeasible. Without having any idea of obscurities faced by the non English type people, these called father of English lingo mock at them. Although the problem of not conversing in English does not seem so serious but it works as a termite in an individual's life since it results in their social isolation.

The novel, very realistically, showcases how language is vital in shaping one's future and to what extent it impacts relationships and this crucial aspect of the novel lifts it beyond a typical love story. Through the delineation of Madhav Jha, the protagonist of the novel, Chetan Bhagat, very pragmatically, brings to light how people who can't communicate in English find it far-fetched when they come across to those who are silver tongued in English speaking but the moment the rustic people strive to make use of it they just become laughing stock and this situation gives birth to class conflict which is one of the key themes of Half Girlfriend.

Madhav Jha, a Hindi speaker, a Bihari boy, with descent and good personality, hails from royal family of Dumraon, a small place, which lags behind in numerous urban amenities that enables a man to get exposed to many urban cultures. Like other people of Dumraon, Madhav too is not competent in spoken English that fetches him in troublesome situation over and over.

The very starting of the novel smokes out how edgy he is at the time of his interview at St. Stephen's college, a college famed for its English mores and rituals!

At the time of his interview for admission, he greets the interviewer,

'Good morning, sir, sir, sir'(9)

Hearing this interviewer laughs as his greeting shows as there are three persons. The way hereverts shows the high class-to-low-class-smile.

“The smile of superiority, the smile of delight that they knew English and I didn’t” (9)

Conversing in English, at this time, is no less than herculean task for him as he is struggling a lot in constructing the sentences in his mind.

‘Do you speak in full sentence? Prof. Gupta said in firm voice.

I didn’t fully understand his question. I kept quiet.

‘Do you?’ he asked again

‘Yes,yes,’ I said, my voice like a convict’s

‘So...why do you want to study at Stephen’s?

‘I want good college,’ I said after constructing the sentence in my head.”(10)

Responding in English with countless pauses was projecting his image as incompetent, so Madhav decides to switch to Hindi. When Prof. Gupta asks him to speak in English only, he replies,

“Why? You don’t know Hindi?’I said in reflex and in Hindi”. (10)

All the time long at his interview, he is feeling himself failure in getting the answer of ***“why they had to interview me in English when I was more comfortable in Hindi”(10)***

His failure, on the ground of spoken English, is, for sure, not his flaw, as a man like him has not got any exposure to that sort of institute which unlike St. Stephen has Hindi as medium of instruction where students and faculty both don’t bother to think so earnestly about learning the expertise of English language. At his interview, he makes his heart clear by sharing the real fact about Dumraon, Bihar, the impecunious and the most reviled of Indian states.

“People don’t have any exposure to modernity and hold on to backward values. There is poor education. Nobody invests in my state.” (12)

At the end of interview, Prof. Fernandez recommends him to learn English which is, beyond the shadow of doubt, is of utmost importance in present scenario.

“English is no longer a foreign language, Mr Jha.It’s global Language. I suggest you should learn it.”(13).

Madhav, too, concedes that speaking English accurately is a least trait anticipated from every student pursuing Bachelor degree from St Stephen College and his survival solely depends on it. ***Madhav’s thought, “Without English, I felt naked” and “if I would stay here – these English –speaking monsters would eat me alive”. (10)***

Alike many HMTs (Hindi Medium Types according to Chetan Bhagat),Madhav thinks in Hindi, the language he speaks most often in.

You see, we think in Hindi first and simply translate our thoughts, word for word (18)

The novel also highlights the disparity in English spoken by elites and non native speakers. The way non English type speak is considered unpolished by the elite class for whom only their language is eclectic and refined.

Madhav admits, ***“My English was Bihari... It’s embarrassing. It wasn’t English. It was 90 per cent Bihari Hindi mixed with 10 per cent really bad English.”***

Another instance that sheds light on his vulnerability on account of poor speaking skills is when he wants to tell Riya some tips of winning football match but he scares,

“How would I go beyond five words of English?”(16)

He introduces himself to Riya and says ***“Myself Madhav Jha,”(18)*** . This expression of protagonist will surely be thought out unpolished by high class English people. He wants to ask Riya her introduction but he again feels himself tongue-tied ***“I wanted to continue talking to her. I wanted to know her full name and her native place... I didn’t know how to ask her in English, the language one needed to impress girls.”(19)***

Feeling so many obstacles in sentence construction, Madhav makes his mind up to switch to Hindi, the lingo he finds comfort in.

“My English isn’t good... ‘Can I talk to you in Hindi?’”(25)

His crush on Riya Somani, a girl born and brought up in aristocratic family of Delhi, makes him realize the importance of English in relationship as this is the only tool with which he can win the heart of Riya.

For him, now learning English is as important as winning the heart of his lady love. He does not lose his hope rather he puts his paramount efforts to grasp English language by reading English books and listening English songs. Subsequent to his Graduation, he acquires a job offer from a distinguished Multinational Bank –HSBC with a package of six lacs a year which exhibits the pains, the efforts he has gone through on ground of English speaking to get interviewed and selected for the Job.

Since he wants to lend a hand to his mother in her school, he makes a decision to go back to his village Sumraon. He aspires to raise fund for his school but that is possible only when he will deliver a speech in front of Mr. Bill Gates who will be gracing the school function as chief guest. Madhav wants to leave no stone unturned in getting the fund hence joins a weekend classes at Patna’s Pride English Learning Centre. Riya, too, helps out him by giving tips on effective delivery of speech. His speech exposes his hard work and unyielding will for Spoken English with which he achieves flying colour in receipt of necessary funds needed for the school.

The novel also highlights the reason due to which students like protagonist come across difficulties while speaking English. Incompetency among the students of remote areas is the result of poor infrastructure, up to date teaching pedagogies. Bhagat advocates effective measure in this novel which can be fruitful in acquiring the language. The appearance of sequences i.e. Madhav’s preference of English while having a telephonic conversation with customer care executive, watching English music with subtitles, listening speeches on You Tube are extremely realistic strategies to get better language skills.

CONCLUSION

The significance of English language, in today's scenario, has been depicted evidently in Half Girlfriend through struggle of Madhav Jha with whom any rurally brought up boy can relate. Throughout the novel, the protagonist suffers due to his inability of speaking good English. The novel also outlines his zeal, his unbending will of learning English. The novel is story of youth like Madhav as the author quotes, "*In a sense it is a book by Madhav written for the Madhavs. As the Varna system collapsed, a new class of English-speaking elite emerged.*"

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