

Hybridity in Chetan Bhagat's Half Girlfriend

Abstract

The revolution of informative technologies and the shift of people in this ever evolving and interconnected world have collapsed the national boundaries making it a place of various races, castes, religion and cultures to live in it. This gives a chance of mixing up different kinds of cultures to form new one. This kind of mixing is a tiny part of the loose and slippery meaning of hybridity. The term 'Hybridity' in its broader sense refers to mixture of ideas, philosophies, races and cultures. Hybridity as a noun 'Oxford English Dictionary' describes "a thing made by combining two different elements; a mixture. Hybrid can also be used as an adjective to describe something of 'mixed character.' The word hybrid originated in early 17th century and was first used regularly in the 19th century to describe the offspring of two plants or animals of different species. Hybridity was later deployed by postcolonial theorists to describe cultural forms that emerged from colonial encounters. It is used wide-spreadly in the field of migration, diaspora, transnationalism and globalization. My present research paper explores the hybridity in the fiction 'Half Girlfriend' by Chetan Bhagat. This paper also reveals the postcolonial perspectives scrutinizing the above said fiction.

Keywords: Hybridity, Colonisation, Caliban and Prospero.

Introduction

The term 'Hybridity' in its broader sense refers to mixture of ideas, philosophies races and cultures. It is made of Latin term hybrida or Ibrid signifying "the off spring of a tame sow and a wild boar" and by extension to the progeny of a Roman man and a non- Roman woman. Hybridity as a noun 'Oxford English Dictionary' describes "a thing made by combining two different elements; a mixture." It can also be used as an adjective to describe something of "mixed character." The word hybridity was in use in English since the early 17th century and gained popularity in the 19th century when Charles Darwin experimented cross fertilization in plants. Hybridity originating from biology, is employs in linguistic, Post-colonialism, identity, anti – racism and globalization. It is a cross / mixture of two races and culture forming a new cultural a racial phenomenon.

Aim of the Study

Half Girlfriend by Chetan Bhagat is a good fiction which is adapted into a movie by the same name. It consists of various themes to be explored by the aim of my study is to observe the native culture and the western one and both simultaneously. Both the cultures are blended into one and become the inseparable part of the Indian culture and tradition. Indians have adapted the western culture in their native one that it has been the part and parcel of Indianization. Therefore, the hybridity is the ultimate outcome of merging two cultures: Indian and Western.

Hybridity is an old cultured and historical phenomenon. Since the dawn of civilization, the Hybridity has been a prominent feature of all civilizations from the Sumerians through the Egyptians, Greeks and Roman to the present. Both ancient and modern civilizations have, through trade and conquests, borrowed foreign ideas, philosophies, and sciences, thus producing hybrid cultures and societies. The Greeks and Roman borrowed extensively from other civilizations, the Egyptians and Persians in particular, and creating hybridized cultures, but regarded unfavourably biological hybridity. Hybrids were seen as oberration, worse than the inferior races, a weak. Hybridity as a concern for racial purity responds clearly to colonialism. The social transformations that followed the ending of colonial mandales, rising immigration, and economic liberalization profoundly altered the use and understanding of the term hybridity.

Hybridity is fundamentally associated with the emergence post – colonial discourse and cultural imperialism. The literature and theory is

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characterized by the story of hybridity are Homi Bhabha, Nestor Garcia Canclini, Stuart Hall, GayatriSpivak, and Paul Gilroy. They respond to the multi – cultural awareness of early 1990's.

Homi Bhabha's 'The location of culture' (1994) presents Hybridity as a paradigm of colonial anxiety. It altered the authority of power and made the coloniser's culture 'ambivalence'. Hybridity demonstrate show cultures come to be represented by processes of iteration and translation through which their meanings are addressed to- through- an other. The colonial subject takes place its subaltern position through iteration. The colonial subject is located in a place of hybridity, its identity formed with the help of iteration and translation by the alien culture. Hybridity is doubling, dissembling image of being in two places at once. Thus the presence of colonist authority, being present no longer is visible immediately. It is a reversal of the process domination through disavowal.

Hybridity implies the narratives of cultural imperialism. Bhabha's work postulates the cultural politics which is the product of condition caused by the migration of the people to metropolitan cities. However, hybridity is no longer association solely with migrants and border towns. It has also connection with the flow of cultures and their interactions.

Mikhail Bakhtin, a pioneering linguist, discusses political effect of hybridity on the linguistic level. He views that language, within a single utterance, can be double accented i.e it can contain two styles, belief systems or social languages. He distinguishes two types of hybridity 'organic' or 'unconscious' hybridity and 'intentional' hybridity. The former is 'unintentional, unconscious hybridization' and plays the important role "in the historical life and evolution of all languages." The latter comprises juxtaposing deliberately different idioms, discourses and perspectives within the same semiotic space without merging them. Bakhtin points out that the language of the novel has such a system that combines these both types of hybridity- organic and intentional. In organic hybridity the centripetal forces are inherent so are the centrifugal forces both. He is particularly interested in 'intentional' hybridity which he describes as a politicized process whereby one voice is able to unmask another's authorial one through a language that is double-accented.

Arya came to India from Mid Asia. They settled here with other races of India and produced their literature like Vedas and Epics- the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by considering India their homeland. Islam invaders first invaded India to rob its fortunes off but few of them ruled over India and made their homeland by mixing up their culture with the Hindu culture. The language Urdu was the product of Hindi and Farsi languages. Both Arya and Muslims came to India and influenced its culture, get influenced by it as well, thus became hybrid. But Britishers stepped in India with a purpose of trade and business and milked its resources for their profits, controlled its economically and politically by establishing institutions which focused English education, ideas and culture superior to the Indian

education, ideas and culture. Thus Indian adopted The English way of living, English education and English language but they could wholly not change themselves and became hybrid.

ChetanBhagat's 'Half Girlfriend' imbibes the hybridity in it. The hybridity can be explored in the novel on the followings points.

1. Dress and wearing.
2. Corruption in politics.
3. Educational level.
4. Marriage-level.
5. Independent and dream materializing guys.
6. Family level.
7. Globalized world- India and America.
8. Languages- Hindi and English.

Having hybridity is not a sign of accepting subordinate of native culture but a mark of development being civilized. The hybridity has been the unavoidable part of Indian culture because the Prospero's mind has imparted the thinking that without following Prospero's culture, the Caliban can't be progressive and civilized. RiyaSomani is the product of modernity. Unlike traditional Indian girl, she not wearing Kurta & Pazami with Dupatta covering her breast, wears jeans and T-shirt, because she wants to put up clothes of her choice and to enjoy life according to her desires.

"She wore black, skin-tight Jeans and a black and white striped T-shirt ... her face glowed." P.N 21

Both RiyaSomani and Madhav are modern guys. They want to be independent creatures so that they can lead their lives as they aspire for. Riya aspires to be a bar singer in Newyork, for singing is a passion for her. She wants her own identity in her society. So that society knows her by her name not by her father's Madhavjha, after getting education wants to help his mother school run at Dumraon, instead of doing the job in private company that tempt to hire him with a handsome salary. "You belong to Dumraon in Bihar. That is who you are Madhavjha.

Shailesh and Jyoti are also post-modern guys who migrate from India to seek in New York after completing their education. Both work in private company and enjoy a luxurious life in hired apartment.

Hybridity can be observed on the point of friendship as in Indian culture a friendship between girl & boy; between male & female is not allowed. It is a borrowed practice from the Prospero mind to make a relation of friendship between the boy and the girl. Indian culture synthesizes it to be unseparated. It has been deep-rooted as being Indian one. Madhav and Riya befriend in the St. Stephen College and come too closer to be more than friend. Madhav falls in love with Riya. A maddening fascination he cherishes for Riya to kiss her. This madness of kissing in him for her brings the friendship to be ceased. He says:

" Detihai to de, varnakat le" page no. 75

Grahastra Ashram is one of the four Ashrams in Indian culture. After completion of Brahmacharya Ashram Grahashtra Ashram allows to be united in marriage to breed the kids and satisfy the sexual desire with only the better half. The colonised culture is subverted by the coloniser who believes

love and sex are primary and the marriage is the following step. Madhav touches Riya in a way to which Indian culture does not allow. His kissing to Riya is an act of hybridity imposed by the coloniser. Divorce is a new thing which is also an imposition from coloniser practice. It is a sign of hybridity when Madhav unites with divorcee Riya in Newyork before marrying her. He says:

" Every moment felt special as we made love. I entered her and our eyes met.

Both of us felt strong and vulnerable at the same time" page no. 258

Newyork, a city of hybridity, is a working place for the Postmodern guys and many immigrants who follow the coloniser-culture with open arms. Pre-marriage love and sex is in vogue there. To be with a girl is an opportunity of making love and having sex with her. Shailesh suggests Madhav, who is in a search for his love Riya in Newyork, to take enjoyment with Priya, a beautiful girl and perform sex. Shailesh says:

"I'm not asking you to marry her. Take her out, have fun." page no. 252

Live in relationship is hybridized in Indian culture. It is a modern trend in which a boy lives with a girl in an apartment at his will and establishes the sexual relationship. Shailesh, a college mate of Madhav, does the job of a banker in Newyork bank, lives with his girlfriend Jyoti in an apartment. They are free to do job and live at their will. Jyoti shows her love to Shailesh by flying kiss.

"She blew kiss" page no. 220

Modern guys like Madhav and Shailesh are not a man of principle. They do not hesitate to take wine in Newyork. They change themselves as the time and place require. Madhav who likes to take LittiChokha in Bihar- Dumraon, intoxicated himself so much that he is unable to move. Therefore, Priya, Jyoti and Shailesh leave him on the street in such a state. Madhav says:

"I am not drunk; I screamed, stumbling on the road and falling on all fours."

As far as language is concerned it is hybridized under the impact of colonization. Since the language of master is privileged and the language of subordinate gets subsidiary. The native speakers follow the master's language to speak, however they could not fully be away from the roots of their mother-tongue. Therefore, hybridity is its outcome. Madhav knows Hindi and Bhojpuri but he is not a fluent English speaker; he confesses that his English is poor. In front of interviewers in St. Stephen College for admission, he says:

"I really wanted to know why they had to interview me in English when I was more comfortable in Hindi."

Mother-tongue is inferior to master's language. To speak the master's language is the need of the hour for the native inhabitants. In an interview for admission in St. Stephen College, Madhav fails to answer all the questions because he is not a proficient in English. He speaks Hindi, his mother-tongue, which is dwarf before international

language i.e English. Owing to sport quota, he is admitted to St. Stephen College.

The grant that from the Bill Gates team Madhav has is by the magic of Prospero-language. With the help of RiyaSomani, Madhav learns how English is spoken. Within short time he learns to speak out his ideas before Bill Gates Company by practising English pronunciation drill and watching YouTube Videos of eminent English speakers. He expresses his school problems- lack of resources, in an impressive way. Dumraon kids are endowed with talents but they lack facilities in school which hinder them to move ahead. If the facilities are provided them, they would compete with rest of the world. Madhav says:

"The real riches here are the kids. I am supposed to teach them. However, they have taught me so much. We grownups complain about what is lacking in this school... they never complain." page no. 182

On the family level the hybridity is perceptible. There are two groups of females- older and younger. The older females represent the old Indian values system which reveals them to be sufferers only & devoted wives for their husbands. The younger females are independent humans being who raise a voice against such systems. They want to be free from the shackles of society. Riya's mother is a puppet in the hands of her father. She is dependent on her husband because all acts are determined by him. Riya says that her journal is a story of everywoman. Her mother is not an exception.

"I do not know why I did not tell mom... May be... what could she have done anyway"

Like Riya's mother the life of Rohan's mother tells the same. She was exploited by her husband. For a long time Indian tradition has kept female suppressed due to male dominance. Rohan says -

"She's suffered a lot in life. My father did not treat her well." 201

As far as dominance and supremacy in Indian system is concerned, it is carried out by Madhav's mother though she also has been victimized by such tradition. She is both the exploiter and the exploited. She utters ill-ideas to Riya that her son Madhav who is the prince in her eye can't be possessed by such a divorcee lady although she is well aware of the fact that both Madhav and Riya love extremely one another. Madhav's mother states Riya to be away from his life. She says:

"One man did not work out, so get another." page no. 203

" ... Then leave him. He is too weak for you." page no. 203

Before Independence Britishers were rulers and exploited the natural resources and human resources politically and economically. Independent political power came in the hands of Indians. But native people who are elected and voted to power are not interested in public services, but they are milking India economically because public funds are devoured by them without taking any belch. In order to lead a luxurious life they exploit the resources. No good education is procured for kids. If the backward

are educated, the white collar politics would not work. Therefore, the political leader like- M.L.A Jha feeds on such funds; Bihar is in a state of backwardness.

Indian people, who are olds, hold the view that education gives no immediate result, therefore, it is better to do work and earn money instead of sending kid school forgetting education. The Sarpanch of the near-by village of Dumraon believes not in getting education but in work. Because work gives immediate result whereas education seeds consume time to be sapling.

National boundaries are collapsed due to the revolution in information technologies. Today the world is a globalized place where race, ethnicity, class do not matter what matter that is the talent because a talented guy can do the job where he or she likes. No National boundaries obstruct them to materialize their dreams. Globalization invites different races , castes , colors and cultures to be merged in one place , and hybridity gets the chance to be flourished. Shailesh, Jyoti,Priya and Riya migrated from India to New York in search of jobs. They are Indian guys still they are hybridized there by following western values and culture. They are independent guys. There is no discrimination on gender level because girl and boy do the jobs and earn money. They are independent to spend their money they earn. Shailesh and Jyoti live in same apartment having live in relationship and go to pizza hut and take

wine ; enjoy the live according to their will. They are hybridized in their culture.

Conclusion

Thus it can be observed that Half Girlfriend comprises the elements of hybridity. It contains not only the Indian values system but western values also. The protagonists RiyaSomani and Madhav represent the Indian and western values as well. Riya's mother and Madhav's mother are the symbol of sufferers. Shailesh, Jyotiand Priya stand for westernized culture & hybridity.

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