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Cultural Issues in Chetan Bhagat's
2 States: The Story of My Marriage

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Abstract

The main aim of the paper is to provide a comprehensive survey of the growth, development and achievements of modern Indian fiction in English and to view the literature in critical perspective. Chetan is the mediator who reflects the core social and political problems and his writings have excelled in the global literary field to achieve much academic attention. Due to the spread of the western culture, the ideal Indian value system has broken considerably. In India, people do not adhere to the conventional ways of living. The western values appeal to them a lot and they are inspired by values and norms which are suitable to other civilizations but not to Indian civilization. It is observed in the contemporary Indian society that the degradation of social and moral values has been common way of life. Therefore, Chetan Bhagat has rightly portrayed change in his novel '2 States'

Keywords: Chetan Bhagat, *2 States*, Contemporary, Modern, Social, Culture, Issues.

Introduction

Chetan is one of the most popular contemporary Indian novelists in Indian English Literature. He has represented social, political, and cultural issues in his novels. Different characters and incidents portrayed in the novel gives us a vibrant picture about the different culture and tradition prevailing in India. Chetan Bhagat's novel *2 States* focusses on how a particular phenomenon, the notion of love and marriage related to the concept of culture and society with its customs. The novel *2 States* deals with the cross-cultural encounters and deals with different experiences.

The story is about a couple, Krish and Ananya, who hail from two different states of India, Punjab and Tamil Nadu respectively, are deeply in love and want to get married. The novelist explores the social issues like dowry in traditional marriages and the shifting paradigms of matrimonial alliances in multicultural society.

Chetan Bhagat has touched some of the sensitive issues of cultural differences He is of the view that love knows no boundaries whether it is of caste, creed, religion, state or country. Culture comprises of language, ideas, believes, customs, work of art, rituals and ceremonies. Multiculturalism is a study of two or more cultures. *2 States* is a love story of a Punjabi guy Krish Malhotra and a Tamil Brahmin girl Ananya. Several families go through this kind of situation in India.

The novel deals with cultural contradictions and it depicts how the multiculturalism can create problem in the matrimonial alliances and the hardness of the couple to fight against the destiny for the union. Krish and Ananya have to do work hard to make their dreams true. Through their true love we can find how love shines amidst darkness and despair. In *2 States* cultural anthropology reveals about cultural differences between two states i.e., north-Indian families and south-Indian families. The story is about the young couple who is trying to convince their parents to make them agree for the wed-lock.

The story starts in the IIM Ahmedabad mess hall, where Krrish, a Punjabi boy from Delhi sights a beautiful girl, Ananya, a Tamilian from Chennai, arguing with the mess staff about the food. Ananya was labelled as the "Best girl of the fresher batch". They become friends within a few days and decided to study together every night .Within the time, they become

romantically involved. They both get jobs, and have serious plans for their wedding. Chetan Bhagat is well known for his representation of reality in the contemporary society.

Chetan Bhagat's *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* creates the experiences of the social reality. In this novel, Chetan Bhagat mirrors on the issue of inter-racial, inter-state marriages. The novel is grounded on the novelist's personal experiences of his life. The portrayal of various characters and incidents in the novel gives the reader a perfect picture of the diverse culture and tradition existing in contemporary India. In *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*, The novelist has tried to reveals the realities of modern Indian society. The novel represents the difficulties involved in inter-community and inter-state marriage. Chetan Bhagat's novel is a social document of contemporary youth's issues and shows how the cultural differences of two states create obstacles in the wed-lock of two lovers. They fight against the customs of a traditional and conservative society. The novel also indicates the grim reality of Indian marriage system. The back side of the novel covers the realistic image of contemporary Indian society concerning the love marriages.

Chetan Bhagat depicts a realistic account of his own love affairs leading to marriage and all the difficulties that are faced by them in this whole procedure. Both Krish and Ananya represent two different cultures and two different states. Krish is a Punjabi boy, belongs to Delhi and Ananya Swaminathan is a Tamilian, and belongs to Chennai. Both fall in love with each other and also become romantically involved with each other. But their destiny does not seem in their favour as they faced a lot of barriers to convert their love story into marriage.

Krish's mother is no longer ready to accept Ananya. She finds herself uncomfortable after hearing his relationship with a Tamilian girl. Both Krish and Ananya try to persuade their parents in favour of their marriage. Krish's mother wants to select the bride for her son according to her own choice. It shows how the variations in two cultures create problem in the matrimonial alliances and how the couple has to fight against the fate to be in the wed-lock. The main focus is about cultural contradictions, Inter-caste marriage is still a taboo in India.

Chetan Bhagat's *2 States* is the author's personal experiences of the challenges that he and his wife faced in persuading their parents to make them agree for their marriage. He deals with the grim realities of life and the difficulties faced by the young generation for the love marriage. Krish tried his best to fit into a traditional south Indian family and Ananya also tried to adjust with her Punjabi counterparts. He exposes the common stereotypes which we all are familiar

that in the Punjabi household, for marrying a girl with a big dowry while in a south Indian household the importance is given to education and success.

Both of them have to struggle and faced a lot of problems in order to convert their love affairs into marriage. In the first scene of the novel reveals obvious distinctiveness between South and North India:

“She stood two places ahead of me in the lunch at IIMA mess. I checked out from the corner of my eye, wondering what the big fuss about this South Indian girl was”.

And when Krish offers her to go for the lunch, now the cultural clash becomes even more obvious from this conversation of Ananya and Krish:

“I am born into the purest of pure upper caste communities ever created. What about you, commoner?” To this Krish replies about Punjab cuisine ‘I am Punjabi, though I never lived in Punjab. I grew up in Delhi. And I have no idea of my caste, but we do eat chicken. And I can digest bad sambar better than Tamil Brahmins”.

The novelist discussed the multicultural nature of these two characters, he takes the dressing difference Chudidar of North India and Half Sari of South India. “I turned to look at her. I was seeing her after two months. She wore a cream-coloured cotton sari with a thin gold border. She seemed prettier than I last saw her” (P: 91). The characters stress on the importance of these two and confines strictly to themselves that their argument is correct. When the Protagonist observes the South Indian man in the picture that’s Ananya’s father he portrays like:

I looked carefully. A middle-aged man with neatly Combed hair rationed his gin. He wore a half sleeve shirt with a dhoti in most of the pictures. He looked like the neighbor who stops you from playing loud music. No, nothing cute about him. I scanned the remaining pictures taken on festivals, weddings and birthdays. (P: 13)

The protagonist would like to describe and narrate his mother’s dress etiquette representing the North Indian style, ornaments, clothing and culture. He himself introspects his mothers’ dress attire by imagining his close companion that is Ananya and her mother. When Krishna, the protagonist meets his mother at the railway station, he finds her with a complete pattern of North Indian style from top to toe.

After receiving their parents, both of them, Krish and Ananya wanted to convey the fact they were in love and they would like to get marry. Both are worried to convey this to their parents. So they thought to convey it after the convocation. They planned to arrange an introductory session with both the families. At the time of convocation, Krish’s mom and Ananya’s parents arrived. Hence, the protagonist narrates the dress appearance of them. “My mother takes forever to put on her sari. I came first to get

good seat. Ananya wore the same peacock blue sari that that she wore to her HCL interview.” (P: 45)
After the convocation during the discussions, Krish tried to convey their love matter to his mother. He wanted to say her gradually by conveying Ananya as her best friend. He was known that her mother would be reluctant to that upon that she was furious to discuss and wanted to show some girl’s photos to set a match with Krish.

She shows some photos at that situation, Krish narrates her mother’s dressing style:

Open this album. See the girl dancing in the baraath next to the horse. She is wearing a pink lehnga I saw a girl in pink Leanga her face barely visible under a lot of hair (P: 57)

After conveying his mother Krish decides to join in Citi Bank first and then convincing of his mother later after the settlement of his love and marriage. As he wanted to get familiar with Ananya’s parents he takes up his job in Chennai where he can mingle with Ananya’s family and make use of the time for convincing them for their marriage. He takes appointment and joins in Citi bank and takes an apartment with co-employees. At that time, he observes the way of dressing and casual wear of Tamilians and narrates in this way:

I nodded and reached my apartment. Ramanujan (his roommate) saw me place? he the bottles in the fridge. What’s that, he wore a Lungi and nothing on the top apart from a white thread on his shoulder? (P: 100)

The Protagonist faces a lot of problems after coming to Chennai with the ambience and language food habits but apart from all these Krish focuses on Ananya’s family so as to familiarize with them and get good name from them so as to become their son-in-law. He here and then meets Ananya and enjoys the romantic life with her. So he feels happy with that but in the meanwhile he is furious to observe that there is a match who comes to Ananya where her parents insist to make her sit and see the groom before checking the horoscope. Krish gets worried and annoyed with this. At the moment he goes to Ananya’s house to give tuition to Ananya’s brother Manju and observes Ananya and finds she is neatly dressed her up for the occasion. I, that situation he comments, “Why are you wearing this stunning sari?” (P: 125).

After the familiarization with the Ananya’s family with the help of tuitions to Manju, that is Ananya’s brother gradually Ananya’s father becomes close to Krish. It has been slowly recognized by Krish and he feels happy and conveys the same to Ananya too. During the times Ananya’s father and Krish meet together and like to talk each other about the Bank issues as they both are related to the sane profession. Sometimes, Krish and Ananya’s father meet and eat together. Once Krish and Ananya Plan to go Pondichery a long drive to Ananya’s office. There they want to talk to the office authorities. Now the author Chethan Bhagath shows how the youth like to go faraway places on bike drive with the example of these two lovers Krish and Ananya. Ananya herself covers her head and face and sits behind Krish on a two-wheeler. At that time Krish narrates her dressing, “Ananya sat pillion in a maroon salwaz kameez, using her white, dupatta to cover her head and face. She looked like a member of Veerappan

gang” (P:159).

Racial discrimination towards North Indian is clearly revealed when Krish reached Chennai and is grasped in the quarrel and argument that is raised by a taxi driver who called other taxi drivers and talk to each other in Tamil so as to snatch money and valuables from Krish, a Sardar came for his rescue:

“No five hundred. Fifty,’ I said.

‘Ai, another driver screamed. The four of them surrounded me like biddies

‘What? Just give me my luggage and let me go,’ I said.

‘Illa luggage. ayment . . . make . . . you,’ the Shakespeare among them spoke to me.

Uncle looked at me. . . . The drivers gave their version of the story to him. Uncle spoke to them in fluent Tamil. It is fascinating to see a Sardar-ji speak in Tamil. Like Sun TV’S merger with Alpha TV. (2 States79)

In this sequential series of cultural criticism, there is another episode in which a minor character mocks on North Indian

“Why do they send North-Indians here? (2 States 91).

While a North Indian officer comments on South-Indians:

“What do you mean waitlisted for business class? I am not coming back like I did this morning sitting cramped with these ‘Madrasis” sitting cramped with these ‘Madrasis”

Through these examples, Chetan Bhagat sincerely advocates national integrity, mirrors the issue of racism and submits that this is a threat to national unity. Despite all these Chetan Bhagat stand at every place to criticize and mock the narrow mindedness of typical Indian whether it is of South-Indians or North Indian.

The speech of Ananya’s father conveys the real message of the novel. He states,

“...Yes, the Tamilian in me is a little disappointed. But the Indian in me is quite happy. And more than anything, the human being in me is happy. After all, we’ve decided to use this opportunity to create more loved ones for ourselves” (Bhagat 266).

Conclusion

The observations on the protagonist of the novel and his companion lead to a keen observation on two things. One is on the culture of North and the rest is the South. These two are well represented by the novelist excellently portraying two major characters. One represents The

South Indian Tamil and the other North Indian Delhi. These two principal characters move throughout the novel throwing light on the cultural differences between these two cultures of the same nation. Now and then, the novelist glanced into the characters to discuss these differences in the form of a debate by introducing some minor characters.

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