

Unity of Cultural Dichotomy in 2 States – A Discussion

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Abstract

The word culture has become catchy due to post-colonial effect in every sphere of life. Responding to this, the creative writers have been making an earnest attempt to configure the cultures through their works of art. In this process, Chetan Bhagat is not exceptional but a writer with much difference. In all his works, it is found that the culture has been the core of his thematic concern. Especially, in *2 States: The story of My Marriage*, he deals with the dichotomy of cultures and gets them united signifying national integration. The present paper makes a modest attempt to glorify the concept of multi-culturalism duly discussing the major aspects of the novel selected for study.

Keywords: Culture, Post-colonial, thematic concern, dichotomy, unite, national integration, glorify, aspects.

About the Author

Chetan Bhagat is well-known among the most celebrated Indian novelists in English today. His forte lies in presenting a realistic picture of the modern youth on the campuses of reputed institutions. His themes mainly reflect on love, corruption and culture. In *2 States*, he depicts the love relationship between a North Indian Krish and South Indian Ananya who ultimately marry glorifying national integration, as well cultural unity. Chetan Bhagat's fiction has pleased many young readers because of his lucid style and realistic approach in presentation. Every novel he has attempted resulted in creating a sort of sensation. As a consequence, most of the youth are compelled to read his works of art with much angst and curiosity. According to S. N. Arun Kumar and A. Benazir, "Youth is his fundamental subject, since whatever he composes, he relates it with the worries of them"¹. Among the novels he has produced so far, *2 States* has received overwhelming appreciation and acclaim from all quarters across the world. Its main theme is how the protagonists belonging to North India and South India, representing two different cultures love each other and finally decide to be wed, signifying cultural culmination. Of course, their love may not run smoothly proving Shakespeare's perception that true lovers' love never did run smooth. Justifying this, the parents of the protagonists could not accept at first, but later they get convinced and compromised to conjoin the two young hearts despite cultural divergence. The proposed paper makes an endeavour to make clear how the cultural dichotomy eventually succumbs to unity through marriage of Krish and Ananya.

Introduction

Literature is basically a vehicle to reflect the vibrancy of human life. Though, Indian fiction writers in English have come under the impact of Western writers, they have created their own way of story-telling mirroring the lives of different cross sections of modern society. Whereas, earlier generation novelists have ventured to present the common life styles of the people, their attitudes, habits, likes and dislikes in their point of view with a didactic note, so that the readers can ensure recreation as well as enlightenment for leading a peaceful and serene life. As change is constant in Nature, the people's way of life has received a dynamic impetus under the sway of globalization which has remarkably brought forth a violent paradigm in the moods and temperaments of human beings. So to say, in the Indian context, it is particularly visible in all spheres of life without any doubt. Responding to this, the writers of postmodernism such as Chetan Bhagat, Ravinder Singh, Aravind Adiga and a host of other writers have made a bench mark in exposing the cultural variations and stark realities of modern society, primarily the youth. Of course, there may be difference in their perception, yet they have penetrated into the readers' mind with much effect and exuberance. Bhagat has carved a niche for himself of his personal identity by describing the tendencies of the youth in an enticing fashion to captivate the minds of the readers. In fact, he often confesses that he has produced not creative literature but a kind of realism in a journalistic exposit about the queer attitudes of the youth. In her article, A. Pavani observes, "Chetan Bhagat has always agreed that he is not literary. Striking a chord with masses, youngsters in particular has been his forte"². In his odyssey as a novelist, he has proliferated number of works and allured the reader with his fine sense of humour and luscious style. One among them is *2 States: The story of my marriage*, written after leaving his lucrative position as an investment banker. This has arrived after *Five Point Someone, One Night @ the Call Centre* and the *Three Mistakes of My Life*. It is a fascinating story of two lovers hailing from two different states of India with distinctive cultural variations who confront cultural barriers and surpass the limitations of dress, food, attitudes and manners. As story moves on, Krish the North Indian boy happens to meet Ananya, the South Indian girl in IIM, Ahmedabad mess hall, being engaged in quarreling with mess staff about the food. However, Ananya is declared as the "Best girl of the fresher batch". Gradually, they love each other and cultivate the habit of studying together. Occasionally, they involve themselves romantically. Soon, they get jobs and decide to convince their parents for their wedding. With an aim of winning the hearts of Ananya's parents, Krish lands at Chennai with a job purpose, keeping in view of persuading her parents. Anyhow, he forces himself into their family under the pretext of providing tuition to her brother. As well, he helps her father in preparing power point presentation and fulfilling her mother's long cherished desire to sign in a musical concert organized by Krish's City Bank. Then, they try to soften his parents. Though, at first, Krish's relatives have tried to dissuade them for their marriage by expressing their dislike towards marrying a Tamil girl, at last, Ananya helps one of the cousins of Krish in finding a suitable match. Consequent upon, either of them give their consent in joining the tender hearts in marriage. While narrating, the writer uses first person narrative in a humorous vein interspersing digs at both cultures now and then. Finally, with the birth of twin boys, the writer conveys a fitting concept of cultural communion surmounting several societal hurdles.

Conglomeration of Cultures

The heritage of any nation lies in its great culture. In this respect, India is known for its rich and dynamic culture. Indeed, the uniqueness of Indian Culture is traced in imbibing various cultures that have influenced the native culture and eventually tantamounting to a culture of phenomenon in every sphere of life. Chetan Bhagat demonstrates the multi-cultural concept through his fiction, *2 States*. Really, the content of the work is no doubt autobiographical. Even then, the writer glorifies the cultural dominance through the protagonists, Krish of Punjab and Ananya of Tamil Nadu. Thus, the work is fraught with poly-cultural traits connected to language, dress, food, personality, complexion etc. G. Annapoorani aptly says, “[Chetan Bhagat is gifted with an extraordinary ability to deal with various aspects of human life. His novels deal with different post-colonial perspectives from culture issues”³. While recounting the story, Bhagat takes liberty in reflecting the cultural variation with much dexterity. As the two characters, Krish and Ananya are poles apart in their cultural backdrop, he differentiates the wearing of Chudidhar 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 colour cotton sari with a thin gold border. She seemed prettier than I last saw her (P.91).

The protagonists, as and when chance arises involve in conversation about the dress naturally. Krish, after observing the picture of Ananya’s father, comments on his attire:

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 (P.13).

As story progresses, Krish and Ananya are absorbed very much in their courtship and decide to marry. But they wait for an opportunity to disclose their wish to their parents. For that, they want to utilize the occasion of convocation to convince their parents. When their parents arrive, Krish depicts:

My mother takes forever to put on her sari. I came first to get good seat. Ananya wore the same peacock blue sari that she wore to her HCL interview (P.45).

During their discussion, after the convocation, the protagonist introduces Ananya to his mother as his best friend. On hearing that, Krish’s mother becomes sulky and shows an album having photos of some young girls:

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

Nevertheless, before convincing his mother, Krish wants to take the consent of Ananya’s parents at Chennai. So, to accomplish his task, he resolves to join City Bank in Chennai. There, he

takes an apartment with other employees. Then, he observes the casual wear of his roommate, Ramanujan:

What's that, he wore a lungi and nothing on the top apart from a white thread on his shoulder? (P.100).

The protagonist has to encounter many hurdles during his stay in Chennai. Moreover, he finds difficult to get acclimatized to the ambience, language as well as food. Since the motto of his mission is to get access to Ananya's family, he makes an entry by giving tuitions to her brother and by and large becomes intimate to her parents to win over their hearts. So, whenever opportunity comes, he moves with Ananya making long drives to romantic escapade. In no time, his relationship turns positive and he establishes a strong bond with them. While recalling his experiences, the writer takes pleasure in exposing the cultural dichotomy in every situation with much ease and humour. He makes excursions in familiarizing the nature of corporate world and throws a dig at the deceptive attitudes and manners of the management and the ostensibly clever and intelligent behavior of the clerks. Above all, his vibrant account of city life, men and matters really appears fantastic and hilarious. His hair splitting emotions between the land of parathas and paneer and the land of idlis and dosas lend enchantment to his keen observation of society as a whole.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is obvious that Chetan Bhagat strikingly appeals to the youth by his animated style in ventilating his feelings and perceptions to create an island of his own to allure the readers. As the need of the hour is the concept of national integration, his presentation of multiculturalism in his work, *2 States*, has opened new avenues for the critical thinkers to admire Bhagat as a writer par excellence in spite of not reaching the heights of literary standards. As Annapoorani rightly points out, "The novel ends with Ananya giving birth to twin boys. She says that the babies belong to a state called India, with a thought to end regional prejudices"⁴. That's how the writer vindicates the mosaic of cultures in an artistic vein exalting multiculturalism in all walks of life.

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