

**Parent – Adolescent Interconnection in Modern India:
A Critical Study on Chetan Bhagat's
*2 States: The Story of My Marriage***

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Whether you love him or hate him, chances are that you have read him. He might not be a literary purist, he has India sit up and notice him: Bhagat has made India read.' (The Hindu Magazine, November 20, 2011) says Swathi Daftuar on Chetan Bhagat in an interview shows the popularity he gains. Bhagat's novels are based on popular themes with importance given to the youngsters. He is one such an author who writes for the masses and this is the reason for the change he brought about in Indian Literature and as well as in the publishing world Tapan K. Ghosh rightly calls him "the voice of generation" and he knows what the young India wants. (Tapan – 21)

Chetan Bhagat is undoubtedly responsible for setting off new trends. Amish Tripathy identified this new trend as

'India is rich again, and people want to hear stories about themselves – about call centre generation, or a Punjabi marrying a Tamilian or our myths told in a modern way. A few of us have just been lucky to be blessed with stories that connect with the mood.' (Tripathy – 32)

2 States – The story of my marriage (2009) is his fourth novel, in which he conveys brilliantly what happens when people from two different states, two different cultures meet. The author acknowledged that this story is inspired, and this book should be seen as a work of fiction. Krish Malhotra, the Punjabi guy reflects Chetan Bhagat and Ananya Swaminathan resembles Anusha, Bhagat's wife. The novel is full of emotions, romances, quarrels, cultural diversities and explains finally how the lovers succeeds their love life with the consent of their parents.

Parent – adolescent interconnection in the modern India is the most important thing to run a family. Teenage is a crucial period in a child's life, in which lot of changes occur. Adults need emotional love and support from their parents. Sharing responsibilities, celebrating teen's accomplishments, outings, meals and so on, tends to build a positive relationship between parents and adults.

The novel opens with Krish's meeting with Ananya at the IIM-A mess, where she was in quarrelling with the mess worker. On the first meeting itself, they became friends and he got a chance to date with the prettiest girl in the campus. They began to study together and later Krish senses a sign of love with Ananya. The classmates bond them together and in a matter

of weeks the duo are sleeping together in rooms. Love blossoms and by the time they pass out of college, Krish was placed in a Citi Bank at Chennai and Ananya finds a job in HLL Company. They discussed about their future plans of getting married where Krish humorously says the word future and 'female' is a dangerous combination. The differences between their culture, language and parents brings insurmountable odds to their marriage. They do not think of eloping; rather they choose to see their parent's happy face at the time of their marriage, which they know for certain as not easy to attain. Krish says rightly,

'because they are parents from biscuits to brides, if there is anything their children really want, parents have a problem.' (2 States – 39)

Krish and his mother maintains a close bond but his father a diligent man. Because of this Krish's mother always grumbles about him to Krish. His father never attends Krish's convocation because of his oppressive attitude. Krish maintains a discreet relationship with his father and he avoids talking with him is clearly seen in the following utterances,

'I hope you leave home soon; my father said. I hope you leave this world soon, I responded mentally as I took my plate and left the room.' (2 States – 59)

Krish's mother Kavitha resembles a typical Punjabi woman, who loves to eat food and carry sweet boxes with her wherever she goes. In the post-modern society, the teens are in ease to discuss some issues like love, sex with their parents without any hesitation. When Kavitha knows about her son's love affair she says,

'you have a girl friend? Girl friend? She said as if I had contracted AIDS' (2 States – 42)

It shows a typical Indian mother who wants to choose a bride for her own son. And her memories about Tamilians especially Madrasis is seen as,

'these South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From Hema Malini to Sridevi, all of them trying to catch Punjabi men.' (2 States – 48)

As Krish is the only son, his mother took utmost care for him. She consoles him whenever there arises quarrels between father and son. She takes the responsibility of bringing her son neglecting the reproaches of her husband. Even though Krish wants to talk to his father, he hesitates and mocks him as,

'look at his voice, like a girl's, my father mocked. He gave me a distinguished glance and went... to him, only weak men cried.' (2 States – 166)

The quarrels among the teens and the parents are sounded in the novel in a particular way, so that it affects their bond in the family. Terri Apter, a senior tutor at Newham College says in her *Difficult Mothers* (2012) it as,

'teens get so heated in arguments with parents because so much is at stake: they are fighting to change their relationship with a parent, to make a parent see that they are not the child the parent thinks.' (chapter – 52)

Bhagat depicts both the protagonists as quarrelling with their parents for the only reason to get their confidence and prove their self-identity. They are aiming for, after all, is to gain recognition and have respect for the parents they still love. Krish's mother wanted her son to marry a Punjabi girl, but he always pacifies that Ananya is the best match for him. When she understands the love between Krish and Ananya, she finally accepts the Madarasi girl as her daughter-in-law neglecting her husband as,

'he won't let us watch TV, forget Krish choosing his bride. It's fine, my siblings are enough. Otherwise, it will never happen.' (2 States – 217)

Parents are ready to accept the needs of their children neglecting the traditional customs and values. This creates a healthy bond between parents and children for their development as Richard M Lerner says,

'The content and quality of relationships rather than the actions of either parent or adolescent alone, determine the nature and extent of parental influences on development in and beyond adolescence.' (Richard M Lerner – 331)

The final chapters turn a twist that when Ananya's father rejects the proposal, it was Krish father who went to Chennai, talks to the bride's side and convinced them. Ananya informed this to Krish and he was excited about the love of his own father. The emotional bond between the father and the son is seen as,

'I'm not perfect. But don't deprive me of my son in my final years. I hugged him back. Tears slipped out as I let go any self-control. The world celebrates children and their mothers, but we need fathers too.' (2 States – 246)

To everyone's surprise, Krish father finally attended the wedding, shows his concern for his son and family.

The next set of parents in the novel were Ananya's mother Radha and father Swaminathan. Ananya and her brother Manjunath were the only hope of their Tamilian – Brahmin family. Radha reminds as the strictest teachers Ananya ever had in school. Ananya says that she was close to her mother, but not hugely close. Ananya's brother Manjunath is around fourteen years old and he is strenuously preparing for the IIT exams. Krish comically pointed out him as,

'the oiled hair, geeky face and spectacles made him look like an IITian embryo. His lack of interest in the world expression told me he would make it.' (2 States – 14)

Radha is a trained Carnatic singer but never gets a platform to show her talents. When Krish made a chance for Radha to sing in a musical evening with reputed maestros like S.P. Balasubramanian and Hariharan, everyone in Ananya's family was shocked and surprised. The musical evening ended with enthusiastic applause to Radha, the new talent. To all of them, that was the happiest day in their life. Radha resembles a typical mother, who cares for the values and disciplines much. When Chitra Auntie complains about Krish and Ananya's behaviour in a public spot, she advises her daughter as,

'you are my daughter. You are spoiling our name in the community, do you understand? I brought you up, educated you, made sacrifices to you.' (2 States – 151)

After many insurmountable odds, Krish finally wins the heart of Ananya's family. He promised them that their love for the parents remains, but still they should agree their marriage. Swaminathan accepts the proposal but Radha hesitates a while thinking about the communities. Radha wants her daughter to be treated with dignity as seen,

'it is not that we don't like you. But our communities... I know he will take care of you. But will Krish's parents treat my daughter with respect?' (2 States – 184)

To maintain a strong interpersonal relationship with someone new to us, George Casper Hormans proposed a theory,

'social-exchange theory (1958) – give and take forms the basis of almost all relationship through their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationship. Feelings and emotions are ought to be reciprocated for a successful and long lasting relationship.' (Hormans – 212)

As it works in such a way, that Krish helps Ananya's father to make his powerpoint presentation a successful one and wins his heart.

Mr. Swaminathan refuses because he hates limelight. He stays loyal to his bank and knowledge is not for showing off. Krish conveys his talent as,

'you have done your work, let the world know. We made this, right? You'll be fine. Tell Verma you will present this – Don't give him a copy.' (2 States – 145)

To everyone's surprise, Mr. Swaminathan presented it excellently well and he was highly appreciated by the Zonal Officers in Delhi.

Throughout the novel Krish maintains a cordial interpersonal relationship with women characters. His conversations with Kavitha, Radha, Shipra Masi and Ananya reveals his respect for women in the society. Bhagat in his non-fiction work says,

'As mothers, sisters, daughter, colleagues, wives and girlfriends, we love them. Can you imagine life without these ladies? It would be a universe full of messy, aggressive and egomaniacal males running the world, trying to outdo each other for no particular reason.' (young India – 52)

One cannot witness an Indian wedding without dowry. The parents of bride's side offer something whatever they can afford. When Krish and Ananya went to Minti's wedding ceremony, there arises a quarrel that Duke's parents were asking for Hyundai Accent car rejecting Hyundai Santro. Duke's parents decided to cancel the wedding and Minti's father Rajji Mama was helpless. It was Ananya, who works intelligently, tells the value of money and also the painful efforts of Rajji Mama to arrange such an opulent wedding. Duke finally convinces his arrogant parents saying,

'daddy, I have kept quiet for so long, no? everything you have decided. Now whatever it is, don't spoil my marriage. Mummy enough! And why this drama of keeping their jewellery? What do you think? I can't buy my own cars?' (2 States – 215)

neglecting the dowries offered by Minti's relatives. The adults succeed in such a way and maintains a rapport with the elders.

The next set of parent-adult mentioned in the novel is Pamny aunty and her daughter Dolly. Pamny aunty is Krish's relative living in Pitampura, is a matronly woman. She had a bombarding speech of showing off her wealth as part of an innocent conversation. She talks about the cars, petrol pumps, rich food, sofas and clothing. Pamny Aunty brought up Dolly in a luxurious way as,

'don't stop our daughter from looking beautiful. No ji, we don't make our daughters works.' (2 States – 63)

Pamny aunty asks Dolly to take Krish to the expensive coffee shop in the district, so that they find a space for match-making. The conversation between Krish and Dolly ends in such a way, that, "Kirsh was too hi-fi for me" says Dolly. The parents find a girl or a boy for marriage without asking the consent of their children. They neglect their values, dreams and wishes. This leads to the failure in their children's marriage life.

The final chapter tells us about the wedding plans. Though they belong to different cultures, the wedding was arranged in Chennai, as typical Tamil-Brahmin wedding. It's a different new experience to the Punjabis. In the Punjabi term, the bride's side should offer valuable gifts to the groom and to his relatives. When Radha offers gifts to Kavitha, she says,

'you will never understand how much I love you. I sent my son to do one MBA, I am getting two MBA's in return. Ananya is the best gift.' (2 States – 250)

as valuing the dignity of Krish and Punjabi culture. The story ends with the happy ending, by the speech of Mr. Swaminathan about Krish and Ananya. Children and their bond with parents are necessary in our community. The kids of today do whatever they want to do, but if the parents ignore them, it leads to frustration. He continues,

'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.' (2 States – 266)

The novel *2 States: The story of my marriage* clearly picturised the interconnection between parent-adults, their emotions, sacrifices and encouragement. India is a multicultural country, families are the basic unit of our system. Bhagat in an interview rightly points out that he takes this novel a chance to forgive his father because forgiving doesn't make the person who hurts you feel better, it makes you feel better. It is their compatibility with others, which happens their marriage life, despite the difference in culture or state. Bhagat rightly pointed out it as,

'India is opening up parents are learning to accept love marriages despite prejudice about caste or religion.' (Sablock – 144)

The novel focused on the issues of dowry, egos and eagerness, inter relationship predicaments and the crisis of individual identity. Bhagat clearly depicts the importance of interconnection between human minds and, this positive connection will surely lead modern India in a successful path.

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