

Cultural Contradictions in Chetan Bhagat's *2 States - The Story of My Marriage*

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 Vol. 13:9 September 2013

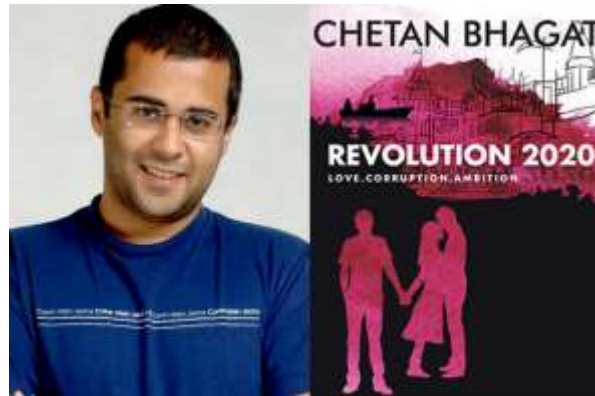


2 States – The story of my marriage is one of the successful works by Chetan Bhagat, a young Indian writer in English. His previous works like *One Night at the Call Centre*, *Five Point Someone* and *Three Mistakes of My Life* were best sellers. He was also popularized by the media for the “3 idiots” controversy, the film based on his novel *Five Point Someone*. *2 States* is the real life story of Chetan Bhagat. Though the characters portrayed in this novel are fictitious, the plot is his real life story.

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Courtesy: <http://franklyaman.wordpress.com/tag/chetan-bhagat/>

The Story

The one line of this story is the lovers who belong to North and Southern parts of India respectively, fight hard to turn their love to love marriage, and they face a lot of hurdles in the form of culture and their geographical location. This novel is a complete encounter of two different cultures and people's rejection of their "in-law" from a different culture due to various reasons. Since this novel is about marriage proposal, the exposure to the norms and customs of two different culture of a same nation could be seen.

Postcolonial Mindset, Diversity and Family Relations

Every culture has a set of customs and regulations. Especially India is a nation of diverse culture and Indian people are very much fond of their culture and preserving its purity. It is their fondness and attachment to their culture makes them reluctant to the intrusion of other culture. The only exception is their acceptance of English culture to a small extent because they colonized us nearly four centuries.

Even though we are independent now, our postcolonial minds still look western people as a higher race and we accept their customs and formalities. But we feel reluctant to accept our own fellow Indian's culture in any form. People never give up their community in one particular occasion. Marriage is that grand occasion where all their community people gather together. Marriage in India is purely a cultural ceremony irrespective of all the cultures. There is only one unity among diverse cultures of India. That is the system of marriage. Almost all the cultures follow the arranged marriage system and the way of conducting the marriage is the exhibition of

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their status symbol. *2 states* deal with the same theme where the characters undergo a tough ordeal to get accepted by the culturally different parents.

Diversity of the Nation

People from the western countries appreciate our diverse culture in a single nation. Unfortunately the people of India fail to appreciate their diverse cultures. Most of the foreign tourists are attracted to our nation because of many cultures and customs found in a same country. *2 States* is about two different cultured families get united in a marriage. The young broadminded characters of this novel did not bother much about their cultural variations when they were in love at IIM campus. They really start considering this as a serious problem when they start thinking about their marriage. They were quite aware of their family and their non acceptance of other culture. But they decide not to elope and convince their parents for their marriage.

North Indian-South Indian Contrast

The traditional North Indian - South Indian contrast is visible throughout the novel. Krish's mother, who wants him to marry a wealthy girl, dismisses Ananya as a "Madrasi with dark complexion". Later, when she sees that Ananya is fair, she doubts if the girl is really a South Indian. She thinks "Madrasi women" trap good Punjabi boys into marriage -- and even cites the examples of actors Hema Malini and Sridevi to justify her view. Meanwhile, Ananya's family hates those "non-vegetarian north Indians" who can't even appreciate Carnatic music.

Krish and Ananya are the protagonists of the novel *2 States*. Krish belongs to a Punjabi family and Ananya belongs to a Tamil Brahmin family. Both the families are different in their culture and customs. They try to convert their love into love marriage and so they decide to impress their in-laws to convince them to accept their marriage proposal. Krish and Ananya plan a family meet during their convocation and express their love towards each other to their parents. This idea doesn't work as well as they expected and their first attempt was a total failure. Then Krish selects Chennai as his choice of work place and placed in Chennai branch of Citi Bank Ltd. His initial steps to impress Ananya's family were a big failure. He struggles a lot to comprehend the culture of Ananya's family. The silence in their home even threatens him

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because he was not exposed to such silence even in the funerals of Punjabi families. He struggles to eat South Indian cuisines and he was startled in the beginning with the custom of using banana leaves as plates. Many of his behaviors irritate Ananya's parents. But slowly he wins the hearts of her parents. He begins his impression by coaching Ananya's brother for IIT entrance. He helps her father by preparing a power point presentation which gained her father a good reputation in his office. As a highlight attempt he gives a singing chance to her mother in his office clients meet. His actions delighted the family and finally he was accepted by Ananya's family.

Ananya then impresses Krish's mother by resolving her relative's marriage problem. Ananya couldn't tolerate the Punjabi marriage custom where the family of the groom dominates and demands a lot from bride's family. Krish's mother with a preconception about South Indian girls embraces her in certain time. They find her different among their preconception because of her fair complexion. Krish's mother being a typical Punjabi thinks her as dominant because she belongs to boy's side.

The Real Problem

The real problem begins when the families meet once again in Goa to plan about their children's marriage. The cultural difference takes a real form of its problem in this session. According to Punjabi tradition Krish's mother expect a lot of respect to the Boy's side from Girl's side. She becomes upset when Krish help Ananya's parents in taking their bags. She feels that her son was trapped by the South Indians. In the same way she expect some gifts from her parents and feels disappointed on seeing them empty handed. She expresses all her disappointments to Ananya's parents. Their cultural differences win the second meeting and this time not only the parents, but the lovers too depart.

The typical Punjabi mother who expects a lot from girl's side and the typical Tamil Brahmin family couldn't bear the domination and the demands of Boy's side. This cultural counters and encounters continue till the end when Krish and Ananya get married. The author somehow tried to conclude the novel with some understandings leaving apart their cultural difference. Even though we could find Krish's mother grins till the last moment. The novel has a

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dramatic end. The young couple begets twins and the couple feels happy to say that their children belong to a state called India.

A Typical Novel

2 states is a typical novel which predicts the cultural contradictions between two different states of India. This contradiction is found almost everywhere in India. This is in existence even before colonization and it continues even in Post Independence India. Only the degree of arrogance has been slightly reduced due to education. These cultural contradictions may take quite a longer time to get rid off from the minds of Indian people.

Reference

Bhagat, Chetan. “*2 States – The Story of My Marriage*”. Rupa. 2009. Print

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