

The Cultural and Marital Issues in 2 States : The Story of my Marriage

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ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat has changed the taste of book lovers through his novels. He has discovered almost all aspects relating to the youth showing from romance, adventure, social issue, education system and nature of work done in multinational companies. In the novel *2 States* he has raised a single but the most affective issue that is intercaste marriage. Through this one can get easily an idea that modern generation is ready to accept the changes but because of generation gap, the youth has to suffer the most. The story revolves around two characters Krish and Ananya. Since both of them belong to cultural boundaries, so the whole novel is woven in the textile of cultural extremities and what follows in a continuum throughout the novel unless it culminates in their happy marriage and cultural digestion, is full of tensions. The title of the novel is suggestive of the peculiar ethnic uniqueness of North and South Indian culture.

Keywords : Cultural Differences, Intercaste Marriage, Suffering, Sentiments of Young Generation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The experimental and inventive literary canon put forwarded by Chetan Bhagat has almost changed the taste budding book lovers since the publication of his first novel. In almost all his novels, be it *Five Point Someone*, *Three Mistakes of My Life*, *One Night @ Call Centre*, *Revolution 2020* and *2 States: The Story of My Marriage*. He has discovered almost all aspects relating to young generation showing from romance, adventure, social issues, education system, and nature of work done in multinational companies affecting their life along with their extensive solutions. Chetan Bhagat has taken the creative appropriateness of novels writing in English like his ancestors such as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, but this liking of Chetan Bhagat to portray Indian reality can be considered even an extension and partially extermination of his immediate predecessors like Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie, Arundhti Roy who changed the face of Indian novel in English with their continue practice of shattering the standard of westernized looking as 'other' and 'substandard' discussed in Edward Said's famed treatise *Orientalism* as he seems to be adopting cosmopolitan standard of writing, eliminating all the linguistic and geographical barricade. The present novel *2 States* also, is one of the best sellers of Chetan Bhagat, firstly, because the writer admits that this is the imaginative

reconstruction of his own life and secondly it touches the sentiments of young generation. Both the factors make this work even more genuine and magnify his own popularity among his fans; however, he also maintains the superiority of creativity over biographical exposure. He himself has generously dedicated these novels to his in-laws and also claims in the Acknowledgement to *2 States* that it is a result of his personally lived experiences: I also want to make a couple of disclaimers. One, this story is stirred by my own family experiences. However, this book should be seen as a work of fiction. Also, for accuracy, have used names of some real places, people and institutions as they represent cultural pictures of today and aid in storytelling. There is no intention to involve anything else; the theme around which this novel rotates is the love story of a Punjabi boy and his South Indian beloved Ananya. Both of them have to struggle a lot in order to shifts their love affairs into marriage. This is because Krish is a Punjabi boy and Ananya hails from a typical Tamil Brahmin family. Both of them belong to two contrary regions and this is what makes the matter even more complicated and risky because both the halves of the couple love each other and want to marry. The novel begins in IIM Ahmadabad where Krish Malhotra- a Punjabi boy- meets Ananya Swaminathan in the college mess. It so happen that Ananya gets into an argument with the mess worker, but Krish comes in between to mend the matter and to win

the heart of Miss Popular of the college. Quite certain, they come close to each other and what the novel deals with is the steady struggle of both of them to convince their parents to have their approval for marriage. What is the most interesting part of the novel is the choice of the couple not to escape to get married and be estranged from their respective families but to choose a new way of convincing them to be ready for marriage with their happiness. Both Krish and Ananya take their turn at their own end to win the love of each other's families and in turn to make them like each other because they know that in Indian society wedding ties are not bound between bride and groom but between families. Chetan Bhagat writes on the back cover of the book that love marriages are simpler and less complex all over the world but such is not the case with Indian civilization. Love marriages around the world are simple: Boy loves girl. Girl feels affection for boy. They get married. But in India, there are a few added steps: Boy loves girl. Girl loves boy. Girl's family has to love boy's family unit. Boy's family has to love girl's family unit. Still Girl and boy love each other. They get wedded. First of all Krish gets a posting in City Bank of Chennai so that he may remain in close proximity of Ananya and her parents as Ananya and her family are based in Chennai, though he has to suffer a lot because of working in a new background. Moreover, Krish tries to win her parent's heart first by organizing a concert of her mother with his own bank and also by helping Ananya's father to prepare his PPT and finally arranging a dinner party to propose Ananya's family members with gold rings. Thus, he convinces Ananya's parents to accept him as their son-in-law. Krish utters:

I, Krish Malhotra, would like to propose to all of you. Will you marry me?' I said and held the four boxes in my palm¹ (Bhagat: 2009, 183)

Then it is Ananya's turn to win the favor of Krish's family. The main problem is the attitude of Krish's mother and her relatives who suggest that Krish should not marry any Madras girl. When she comes with Krish and remains present in the marriage party of Krish's cousin Minti with Duke, no one likes her at all but when she solves the problem of offering that occurs from groom's side as they demand a bigger car in marriage, everyone starts appreciating her. Thus, Krish's mother gets ready to accept her as her daughter-in-law and after

lots of frictions; they finally succeed to achieve the task of family reunion and finally get married in the end. The very story of the novel reveals an important factor regarding Chetan Bhagat's writing and selection of theme is that he has raised the crucial issue of love-affair of middle class Indian youth. Though it is a fabricated work yet it realistically snapshots the life and problem of Indian youth who fall in love with someone hailing from different religious and cultural background and more specifically from different caste system and want to marry each other because they have to face various mental and physical violence if they take step against the willingness of their parents. Since the novel as Chetan Bhagat himself admits in the 'Prologue' of the novel is based on his real life story of marrying a south Indian girl, it certifies its authenticity and credits onto this the realistic tinge of sentimentality and that this must have enabled him to describe the real life condition. The novel rotates round two main characters named Krish and Ananya. Krish belongs to a Punjabi family based in New Delhi while Ananya is a Tamilian. Both of them fall in love in IIMA. Since both of them belong to cultural boundaries, so the whole novel is woven in the textile of cultural extremities and what follows in a continuum throughout the novel unless it culminates in their happy marriage and cultural digestion, is full of tensions. This is a play of frictions and counter-friction but it attaches an element of surprise and curiosity to this work and maintains its fascinated impact on the mind of the reader and he is swayed by what the writer evokes in his mind. The lovers do not elope to get separated from their parents but receives their blessings. They are not conservative and orthodox in their perspective rather product of cosmopolitanism and set model for young generation that they should try to convince their guardians and thus circulate new models of ethics and family values. In closeness of this very issue of love-affair, Chetan Bhagat has raised a parallel issue which infuses throughout the novel is of generation gap by writing about inter-caste love marriage and hence he has touched upon such a topic which is considered a taboo in India. The generation break is distinguished from the fact that Krish and his father are poles apart from each other as regards their relationship and frequently do not chat with each other; the reason being his father is very strict and irritated and sometimes goes beyond limits even to hammer Krish's mother like a typical husband in Indian families. On the other hand, Krish loves his

mother and shatters the taboo that man is dominant in relationship as he falls in love with Ananya and gives equal respect to her as her better half and notwithstanding knowing the fact that to get married outside his own caste is very difficult, he determines to deconstruct the orthodox image of pseudo son in conservative family and goes ahead to convince his in-law to conquer their heart. He does not accept the marriage proposal of a girl belonging to high level of society due to greed for money, rather marries a well-mannered and educated girl of his choice. He sets up model for modern generation that dowry is a social evil and be pulled up from the society. In this novel, Chetan Bhagat has emerged as writer having his axe to mold the society full of the weeds of evils. He has tried to fill the gap of generations by revealing the fact as to how evils in society work out their painstaking and hidden impact on the behavioral pattern of people of the society. He displays that inter-caste marriage in this twenty first century is not acceptable by Indian parents and they do not accept a boy or a girl hailing from different communities as their son-in-law and daughter-in-law. In rural areas, this mentality takes it's most strange and basic form of honor killing where girls are harshly killed by their own brothers and parents. Sometimes, boys and girls undergo massive mental and psychological shock and take step to commit suicide. In this novel, Chetan Bhagat has given love-marriage as a prospective solution to various social evils like dowry, honor-killing and suicides. The episode of Minti's marriage with Duke is a living instance of dowry but Ananya solves this problem by handling the matter circumspectly. In this novel, Chetan Bhagat gives a message to Indian society that love marriage is not to be considered as a forbidden; rather it should be practiced as better solutions to eliminate various social problems. The cultural confrontation is the key issue which lies fixed in the very fabric of the love story of Krish and Ananya. This cultural difference emerges with the very blurb on the selection of the title of the novel *2 States*. The title of the novel is suggestive of the peculiar ethnic uniqueness of North and South Indian culture. On the first hand, the matrimony of Krish and Ananya is not acceptable by their respective families because of cultural distinction. This cultural confrontation is exemplified from the beginning till the very end of the novel. The very first scene in the novel reveals obvious uniqueness between

South and North India in the mess where Krish Malhotra sees Ananya and she starts a tiff about the cuisine:

She stood two places ahead of me in the lunch at IIMA mess. I checked her out from the corner of my eye, wondering what the big fuss about this South Indian girl was² (Bhagat: 2009, 2)

And when Krish offers her to go out for lunch, this cultural clash becomes even more obvious from the conversation of Ananya and Krish: She laughed. 'I did not say I am a practicing Tam Brahmin. But you should know that I am born into the purest of pure upper caste communities ever shaped. What about you, commoner?' To this Krish replies about Punjabi 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. This cultural quarrel between North and South is further illustrated by Chetan Bhagat with a touch of humor. He stirs up a comic situation at the time of convocation when Krish's mother makes racial and sarcastic remark on Ananya's family by addressing them as 'Madrasis.' Through this remark, Bhagat tries to expose the conventional mentality of Indian people who do not come out of regionalism and do not vacillate to criticize one another. The hero Krish tries to make his mother understand the sensitivity of the matter and suggests her to call them Tamilian, but this attempt of his is completely avoided by his own mother. Moreover, throughout the very gamut of this very novel, she has such a conservative and low mentality of contempt for Krish girlfriend Ananya as according to her, she is trying to trap her son. She makes a racist comment:

These South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From Hema Malini to Sridevi, all of them trying to catch Punjabi men³ (Bhagat: 2009, 48)

Moreover, Chetan Bhagat also points out the linguistic and cultural difficulty which North Indians feel when they go to southern region of India. He also underlines the feeling of cultural alienation which Krish Malhotra feels when he is opened to South India: I saw the city. It had the usual Indian elements like autos, packed public buses, hassled traffic cops and tiny shops that sold groceries, fruits, utensils, clothes or novelty. However, it did feel different. First, the sign in every shop was in

Tamil. The Tamil font matches with those optical fantasy puzzles that give you a headache if you stare at them long enough. Tamil women, all of them, wear flowers in their hair. Tamil men don't believe in pants and wear lungis even in shopping districts. The city is filled with film posters. The heroes' pictures make you feel even your uncle can be movie stars. The heroes are fat, balding, have thick moustaches and the heroine next to them is a ravishing beauty. Maybe my mother has a point in saying that Tamil women have a thing for North Indian men. Moreover, the cultural bias towards North Indian is revealed when Krish Malhotra reached Chennai and is entwined in the argument and dispute raised by taxi driver who called other taxi drivers and talk to each other in Tamil so as to snatch money from Krish and a Sardar came for his rescue. In this sequential series of cultural criticism, there is another episode in which a minor character satirizes on North Indian. Through the examples given in the texts, Chetan Bhagat, as a sincere and keen supporter of national integrity, reflects on the issue of racism and suggests that this is an overt threat to national unity. In spite of all these divisive forces working meticulously in the novel, Chetan Bhagat's Krish and Ananya stand at every place to criticize and mock narrow mindedness of typical Indian mentality whether it is the contempt of South-Indians and that of North Indian. Both of them are cosmopolitan and have modern viewpoint and are exceptions to their respective North and South Indian cultural clan. What makes this novel a work of par brilliance is the objective attitude of Chetan Bhagat who has portrayed a true and realistic picture of South and North and delved deep into the cleavage between the two. He also offers solution of this cultural confrontation in inter-state-cross-cultural marriages. The novel ends with the marriage of Krish and Ananya and this is how he renovates the national integrity. As regards the technique of writing novel, *2 States* draws attention of a large readership not only in India but also from all over the world. The very title of the novel has been aptly and sensibly chosen so as to maintain the rhythm in the novel because both the main characters keep on moving from one state to another. This technique of shifting location, dislocation and transfer gives an impression that the novel is having kinetic element and this does not let the novel have dullness in its accent. As regards the setting of the novel, it keeps on shifting its location from Ahmadabad, Delhi, and Chennai with its short stay in

Goa. These snapshots of different cities of India give this novel a move and display different phases of the life of hero and maintain fascinated impact on the readers mind as to what will happen next. This technique of shifting the locations reveals how minutely Chetan Bhagat has observed the cultural differences of North and South because he does not simply give the glimpse of these cities but reflects the pulse of the nation by describing them as full of energy and zeal. The characters and episodes portrayed by Chetan are common middle class fellows who can be easily found in Indian middle class families. If Krish's mom and aunt are the same with stereotypical aunts in North Indian society, so are Ananya's conventional Tamilian parents. The best part of this portrayal of northern and southern culture is that the writer is impartial in vivid depiction of both the cultures and nowhere seems to lionize one culture and condemning its counterpart rather a tinge of realism is sensed because he brings out both the good and bad aspects of these cultures. Chetan Bhagat's fiction encloses cinematographic elements such as theme, context, characters, and dialogues. It seems that almost all scenes in this novel are meant for Bollywood. We are directly transported to Bollywood movie where students are seen moving around a university campus. The plot of the novel begins in the campus of IIMA with a typical cinematographic scene which begins with the entry of Krish and Ananya when Krish starts to end up the tiff between Ananya and the mess in-charge. This is a typical cinematographic scene. Then again the main theme of the novel is the love story and the twists which are seen in Bollywood movie are very much there when two lovers from different communities fall in love and they have to face a variety of problems to marry each other both at familial stage and at societal plain too. It also shows a fact how love remains at the mercy of societal and ethical plain and how a man has to take up with the situation when he has to make a patch up between his girlfriend, wife and mother. M. Aarthi in her article titled *Multiculturalism in Chetan Bhagat's 2 States* has rightly verified the cinematographic element in this novel:

Much like a formula film, it got emotions, sex, friendship, music, betrayal, exploitation, Indian families on the verge of break-up and then reuniting, elaborate weddings, tearful mother, nosy relatives, spiritually,

office politics, just for laugh lines and a predictable ending⁴(Bhagat: 2009, 556)

Like Bollywood movie, both the characters have so much familiarity with each other that they start sharing single room which is considered banned in Indian society.

Then what follows throughout the novel are various twists which are seen in Hindi Cinema where lovers wishing for of getting married in interstate and inter-caste have to face and finally after a lot of fight they succeed to win the heart of their parents and at the end the movie ends with a happy message. This novel with its theme and setting is quite suitable for film making and with this end in view a movie with the same name *2 States* based on Chetan Bhagat's novel was made and it earned great success on Box-Office. As regards linguistic insight of Chetan Bhagat in this novel, he uses simple and direct sentences as are seen in day to day life. Though he is criticized for using non-literary language, but Chetan Bhagat has crushed such kind of criticism on the ground that language has its cultural relationship and meanings are contextual; so he does not bother about wordiness rather uses those words which can be easily understood. He has kept himself away from verbosity and metaphorical language and what is but overt in his most of the novels is that he uses the language as it is used by people all around us. His style of writing is dressed with Desi -- Indianess. At a close textual study of this novel, it gets revealed that Chetan Bhagat makes his book a fun reading for his fans by using the language of the young generation. See a general conversation from the novel between Krish's mother and Masi:

I say, meet Pammi once again and close it,' Shipara masi suggested 'What are you thinking?' She said after a minute. 'Did you know Pammi bought that phone, the one you can walk around with everyone?' 'Cordless . . .' my mother said⁵ (Bhagat: 2009, 68)

II. REFERENCES

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