



Chetan Bhagat's *2 States*: A Study on Cultural Inconsistencies

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Abstract

This article discusses the cultural concerns in Chetan Bhagat's novel *2 States*, which expresses the story of my marriage. He is one of the most well-known modern Indian authors of English-language works. He has served as a spokesperson for contemporary, youthful Indian culture. The novel's various characters and happenings paint a vivid picture of the various cultures and traditions that are prevalent throughout India. In his book *2 States*, Chetan Bhagat focuses on the relationship between a specific phenomenon—the idea of love and marriage—and the concepts of culture and society, including its traditions. The book *2 States* explores various experiences and cross-cultural interactions.

Keywords: Contemporary, Modern, Incident, Culture, Issues

Chetan Bhagat spoke on several delicate topics about cultural differences. According to him, love has no bounds, regardless of caste, creed, religion, state, or nation. Language, concepts, norms, taboos, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies all fall under the category of culture. The study of two or more cultures is known as multiculturalism. This presents several opportunities for multiculturalism research. *2 States* is a love story of a Punjabi guy Krish Malhotra and a Tamil Brahmin girl Ananya. This circumstance affects several households in India. Contradictions across cultures are a theme in the book. It illustrates how cultural differences may cause issues in marriage partnerships and how difficult it is for a couple to change their union's course. Krish and Ananya must also put in a lot of effort to realise their goals. This demonstrates how love can shine through gloom and hopelessness. The focus is mostly on cultural inconsistencies.

In *2 States* cultural anthropology reveals about cultural differences between two states i.e north-Indian families and south-Indian families. The young couple seeking to persuade their parents to approve of marriage is simply one aspect of the narrative. The narrative opens in the mess hall of IIM Ahmedabad, when Krish, a Delhi-born Punjabi student, notices Ananya, a stunning Tamil woman from Chennai, fighting with the staff over the quality of the food. The "Best girl of the fresher batch" was described as Ananya. Within a few days, they grew

close and agreed to spend every evening studying together. Over time, they develop a love relationship. In addition to having significant arrangements for their wedding, they both land employment. Chetan Bhagat is wellknown 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 writer aimed to expose the truths of contemporary Indian culture. The challenges of intercommunity and interstate marriage are depicted in the book. The book by Chetan Bhagat is a social commentary on problems facing today's youth. The tale demonstrates how the cultural disparities between two states provide challenges to the union of two lovers. They struggle against the norms of a conservative and conventional culture. In the story, the dismal reality of the Indian marriage system is also shown. The novel's reverse side presents a realistic depiction of modern Indian culture with regard to love weddings.

Chetan Bhagat depicts an 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.

Their marriage is hindered by two opposing poles—one Punjabi and the other Tamilian. Ananya's mother is no longer willing to accept Krish. Hearing about his connection with a Tamilian girl makes her uneasy. Both Krish and Ananya make an effort to get their parents over to the idea of their marriage. The mother of Krish wants to choose the wife for her son based on her own preferences. It demonstrates how cultural differences between two people can cause difficulties in marriage relationships and how a pair must defy the odds in order to become legally wed. Here, we can see the obstacles to love, and Krish and Ananya's situation exemplifies this. Inter-caste marriage and cultural inconsistencies are the primary topics of discussion.

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.

Both parents praise their own culture while criticising that of another. Both hold the other in low regard for various reasons. They appreciate each other's cuisine yet are indifferent to one another for some reason. They differ in terms of their rituals, customs, and languages (like Tamil and Punjabi).

“Marriage’ is defined by The New Britannica Encyclopaedia (2007: 871) as, ‘a legally and socially sanctioned union, usually between a man and a woman, that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes that prescribe the rights and the duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring (if any)’”

Further, The New Britannica Encyclopaedia (2007: 872) underlines the importance of marriage rituals and ceremonies as, “ [they] surrounding marriage in most cultures are associated primarily with fecundity and

validate the importance of marriage for the continuation of a clan, people or society. They assert a familial or communal sanction of the mutual choice and the understanding of the difficulties and sacrifices involved in making what is considered, in most cases, to be a lifelong commitment to and responsibility for the welfare of spouse and children”

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Marriage is mainly associated with these superfluous terms. Bhagat gives his insightful dictum (See; back cover page of the novel) on marriages in India as, “Love marriages around the world are simple:

Boy loves girl. Girl loves boy. They get married. In India, there are few more steps:

Girl’s family has to love boy. Boy’s family has to love girl. Girl’s family has to love Boy’s family.

Boy’s family has to love girl’s family.

Girl and Boy still love each other. They get married”.

We can evaluate Bhagat's adage in the context of the encyclopaedic concepts of marriage and rites presented above. In comparison to other cultures, Indian culture is more complicated. The observations of Ananya and Krish's marriage are described in the paragraphs that follow. Bhagat outlines the intricate, deeply ingrained sociocultural issues facing heterogeneous India. Through his art, he seeks to expose flaws and provide an opportunity for them to be fixed in actual life. Racial prejudice is a sad truth that is still present in our culture. While on the outside we appear to be modern, on the inside we still adhere to traditional values. Krish made an effort to blend in with his traditional south Indian family, and Ananya made an effort to fit in with her Punjabi neighbours. exposes the common stereotypes we all are familiar with. 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.

To turn their relationships into marriages, they both had to fight and overcome many obstacles. The opening scene in the book, where Krish Malhotra meets Ananya and she initiates a conversation on the food, makes clear the glaring differences between South and North India: "She stood two spots 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 was" (2 States 2).

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:

“She laughed. ‘I didn’t say I am a practicing Tam Brahmin. But you should know that I am born into the purest of pure upper caste communities ever created. What about you, commoner?’ To this Krish replies about Punjab i 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”. (2 States 7)

Chetan Bhagat once more explains the cultural divide between the North and the South with a hint of comedy. He creates a humorous situation during convocation when Krish's mother refers to Ananya's family as

"Madrasis" in a racist and satirical manner. Chetan Bhagat seeks to expose the traditional mindset of Indians with this comment. In an effort to help his mother comprehend the delicate nature of the issue, the hero Krish advises that she refer to them as Tamilians. Because Ananya is allegedly attempting to trap her son, Krish's mother exhibits a rigid and demeaning mindset towards her. She says something racial:

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

Additionally, Chetan Bhagat emphasises the linguistic and cultural estrangement that Northern Indians experience when travelling to Southern India. Additionally, he draws attention to Krish's experience of cultural inconsistencies after being introduced to South India: "I saw the metropolis. It had the typical Indian characteristics, such as cars, crowded buses, irritated traffic police, and little stores selling food items, fruits, kitchenware, clothing, and novelty items. It did, however, feel different. First, every store had a Tamil sign. The Tamil typeface is similar to the brainteasers you get after staring at optical illusion problems for too long. All Tamil ladies have 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". (2 States 77-78)

When Krish arrived in Chennai, racial discrimination against North Indians was evident, as evidenced by the quarrel and argument started by a taxi driver who called other taxi drivers and had them converse in Tamil in order to steal money and valuables from Krish. A Sardar intervened to save Krish.

"No five hundred. Fifty," I said.

"Ai, another driver screamed. The four of them surrounded me like biddies from a low-budget Kollywood film.

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

"Illa luggage. Payment . . . make . . . you," the Shakespeare among them spoke to me.

They started moving around me slowly. I wondered why on earth didn't I choose to work in an air-conditioned office in Delhi when I had the chance. "Let's go to the police station," I said, mustering up my Punjabi blood to be defiant. "Illa police," screamed my driver, who had shaken hands with me just twenty minutes ago.

"This Chennai . . . here police is my police . . . this no North India . . . illapolice, ennoda poola oombuda," the English-speaking driver. One man came out of the next building. I saw him and couldn't believe it. He had a turban – a Sardar-ji in Chennai was akin to spotting a polar bear in Delhi.

He had come out to place a cover on his car. Tingles of relief ran down my spine.

Krishna had come to save Draupadi. . . .

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'Smerger with Alpha TV. (2 States 79)

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’”.

Another South Indian character in the novel shows his hatred towards North Indian by saying:

““Off course, sorry, this whisky... Anyway, Krish I had offers. Ten years back I had offers from multinational banks. But I stayed loyal to my bank. And I was patient to get my turn to be GM. Now, I have five years to retire and they send this rascal North-Indian” (2 States 79).

Chetan Bhagat honestly defends national integrity via these instances, echoes the problem of racism, and asserts that this poses a threat to national cohesion. Despite this, Chetan Bhagat continues to rail against and make fun of the ordinary Indians' lack of perspective, whether they are from the north or the south.

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). The novel's true lesson is to place greater value on interpersonal relationships built on human feelings and sentiments. The novel's major goal is to demonstrate how, in the age of globalisation, relationships between people matter more than caste, religion, or geography. The novelist's premise, "We kissed as Tamils and Punjabis danced around us," is based on the interaction between Krish and Ananya while dancing in their marriage. "Only for the sake of bringing the country together..." (Bhagat, 267).

Having grown up in a cosmopolitan and globalised environment, Krish and Ananya, two representatives of contemporary Indian youth, refuse to bear the old, traditional baggage of cultural differences and racial prejudice like their parents. A typical book, 2 States foreshadows the cultural tensions between two distinct Indian states. This contradiction can nearly always be found. Education has only marginally lessened the degree of arrogance.

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