

## **A Critical Review of Cultural Aspects In Chetan Bhagat's 2 States**

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### **Abstract**

Indian literature is full of the glimpses of rich Indian culture. The cultural symbols are the inherent part of the literature. The authors love to imbibe them into their writing and the readers enjoy reading that stuff. Chetan Bhagat is one of the most popular Indian authors. He has been the bestselling authors and earned huge fame from his first book. The present study is focused on the cultural aspects in the Chetan Bhagat's 2 States which is actually the story of author's marriage. The study highlights the differences, negative and positive aspects of each one's culture. In addition to the above the analysis of some of the symbols constituting culture have also been done such as language, attire, way of talking and dealing with people, cultural rigidity etc.

Keywords: Indian culture, 2 States, Chetan Bhagat, Cultural diversity

### **About Chetan Bhagat:**

Chetan Bhagat was born on April 22, 1974, in New Delhi, India. Bhagat belongs to a white-collar Punjabi family. He pursued Mechanical Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology followed by Masters in Business Administration from Indian Institute of Management. He also is an author and a columnist and is popular among Indian youth for his Indian-English novels mostly concentrating urban middle-class youth that has earned him the status of youth icon (Arun kumar and Benazir, 2018). Bhagat's work is admired by Indian youth all over the world mainly because of the genres he selects, romance, and realistic fiction to name a few. He has introduced new trends and topics in modern English Literature. His novels have repetitively dealt with social concepts like poverty, unemployment,

corruption, violence against women, communal violence, religious fundamentalism, illiteracy.

Time Magazine included him in their list of World's 100 Most Influential People in 2010. The New York Times also cited him as the best-selling English language novelist in the history of India in the year 2008. Some of his notable works include *Five Point Someone*, *2 States: the story of my marriage*, *Half girlfriend*, and *One Indian Girl*, etc. Many of his literary work has been adapted into blockbuster movies. For example, *2 States*, *Half girlfriend*, *Kai Po Che* inspired from his work *The Three Mistakes of my life*.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The novel *2 States: the story of my marriage* is among one of the best-selling novels written by Chetan Bhagat in 2009. It revolves around the marriage of two people Krish, a Punjabi boy and Ananya, a Tamilian girl and the hardships faced by them to convince their families of their love. *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* is partly autobiographical and is based on Bhagat's personal life and his marriage with the girl he loved (Annapoorani, 2018). The novel portrays multi-culturalism and strong cross-culture conflict. It begins with Krish and Ananya's first meeting in the mess of IIM campus where they both study. They soon become good friends and fall for each other. They decide to get married and thus begins the journey of their hardships. Ananya is a Tamilian Brahman while Krish a typical Punjabi boy who has lived all his life in Delhi. They come from completely different backgrounds with absolutely no similarities and interests. When they finally convince them, a fallout happens between both the families and their relationship falls apart. However, in the end, the two families and they live happily ever after. The novel is a humorous and witty take on cross culture love marriage in India, citing the numerous awkward situations that both couple in love as well as

their families has to pass through before their wedding can be finalized (Kumar and Siwach, 2014).

India is a country of diverse religions, races and cultures. It stands tall among the world for the wonderful show of unity even after so much of diversity. However, this multiculturalism often becomes a reason for cross-cultural conflicts. Even in the contemporary world, conflicts arise because of differences in cultural aspects. Marriage in India portrays the perfect example of this, especially when the two individuals belong to two different ethnic groups. Cross-cultural marriages are not easily acceptable in Indian society. Indian marriages are a very big affair. They are bigger and more complex than the bride and groom but involve all the members of both the families. The story of 2 states depicts this difference in culture in an Indian marriage scenario. Difference in all aspects of lives beginning from language, food, clothing, festivals and likes and interests of people exist among the families of Ananya and Krish, the protagonists of the story who wanted to marry each other. Chetan Bhagat has touched the sensitive issue of cross cultural conflicts and inter-caste marriages in a very subtle manner and humorous manner.

All cultures have their own sets of beliefs and norms. The cultural divide in India is more than what meets the eye. Krish, a Punjabi boy fall for Ananya, a Tamilian girl. The intricacies of their relationship were revealed when both the families faced each other for the first time. Krish's mother calls Ananya's family as Madrasis, without any regard for them. Bhagat scrupulously manipulates the cultural confrontation in a funny manner mocking the North Indian mind-set of calling all South Indians as Madrasis. Krish's mother personates a typical Punjabi woman who shows a clear dislike for south Indian women. She commented, **“These South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From Hema Malini to**

**Sridevi, all of them trying to catch Punjabi men.”** She was of the belief that south Indian people use black power to trap North Indians. His mother repeatedly asked him to marry a rich and beautiful Punjabi girl, which depicted how she favoured the traditional system so much. She was strictly against the idea of her son marrying a South Indian girl.

Language is the biggest barrier that divides the people of India. The languages of South and North India vary enormously. **“The sign in every shop was in Tamil. The Tamil font resembles those optical illusion puzzles that give you a headache if you stare at them long enough”**. It depicted how Krish felt helpless in understanding Tamil language. Krish loved Ananya irrespective of the cultural differences that existed between them. However, he often contemplated whether their relationship would work past all the differences.

Both food and attire are parts of everybody’s daily stuff. Food and attire concern with the way of life and they are habits of daily life in every culture of the world (Gauswami and Pandya, 2013).

**“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. He looked like the neighbour who stops you from playing loud music. No, nothing cute about him. I scanned the remaining pictures taken on festivals, weddings and birthdays”**. Even though dressing was not a reason for conflict between his and Ananya’s families, he still wondered how South Indian men wore dhotis at all times and how the concept of shirts and pants was alien to them. While Punjabi women wore salwar kameez in the most vibrant of colors, Tamilian women preferred Kanjeevarams with plain golden borders. He found them extremely beautiful and appealing.

**“We had idlis for breakfast, and Ananya’s mother put fifty of them in front of us”.**

Krish was used to having Punjabi cuisine since childhood and he dreaded eating idlis at Ananya’s place. Food choices between South and North daily are also complete opposite. South Indian cuisine generally includes Rasam, Idli and other coconut preparations while Punjabis preferred the spiciest of foods.

The way south Indians and Punjabis address each other is also very different. For eg - Appa (father) & Amma (mother) in Tamil, Noo (Daughter-in-law) in Punjabi (Singh and Kumar, 2016).

Punjabis are very spirited, lively and haughty by nature while South Indians comparatively more quiet and disciplined. They are soft spoken and quiet. Krish realised this difference in natures on the breakfast table at Ananya’s house where everybody remained silent while having breakfast. **“We ate quietly. Ananya had told me they never spoke much anyway. The best way to fit in was to never talk.”**

South Indians believe in community and strength in unity. They are disciplined and private people. Tamil Brahmans love classical Carnatic music while Punjabis enjoy Bhangra. Punjabis love consuming alcohol while Tamilians did not consume liquor. Krish wanted to fit in with Ananya’s family desperately in spite of all those differences because he wanted to convince her parents of their marriage. However, he faced difficulties in every step of the way. Everything from language and food to beliefs and rituals differed completely from his Punjabi heritage. Cultural identity is very complex and Krish found himself as the odd one out in a huge number of situations. He felt helpless at not being able to understand Tamilian language, also at being served idli in breakfast and the strangely silent and secretive

atmosphere in Tamilian families. However, he was dedicated to his cause and successfully managed to convince Ananya's family of their relationship.

Krish's mother was an orthodox and traditional woman. He feared that even if he were successful in convincing Ananya's parents of their love, his mother would never agree.

**“Swear on me you will ask for a transfer. Don't be trapped in that city with horrible black people,”** When Krish got a job offered in Chennai, his mother made this comment. She disliked South Indians and their culture to the extent that she made these remarks on their skin colour.

When Ananya shifted to Delhi along with Krish, his mother put her through various tests in a hope that she would fail and Krish would finally marry the woman of her choice. Ananya too faced many hardships in adjusting to the highly exuberant and spirited Punjabi family. Ananya was a strong, independent, and a non-traditional woman who believed in feminism for women. However, Krish's mother was a pure orthodox who always pushed Ananya into the kitchen. The situation worsened when Krish's relatives got involved. Krish stood by Ananya at all times and at last, they were successful in their attempt of convincing the two families of their love. The couple married and the novel ended with Ananya giving birth to twin children calling them Indians with the belief to end regional prejudices.

## **CONCLUSION**

The novel by Bhagat was an excellent creation that successfully depicted cross-cultural conflicts and how love broke the barriers of stereotypes and prejudices. The novel, written in a light-hearted manner took a slight dig at societal prejudices and conflicts. Even in the contemporary world, cultural differences prevent people from full exercising their freedom. Bhagat depicted complex cultural diversities in a delicate manner and offered ways of

resolving the prejudices. His style of writing was such that it did not attack people directly but attempted to make them realize of their shortcomings and offered a chance to correct their mistakes in real life. Differences among culture would always exist, but to fight using those differences or to rise above the differences and look for similarities is an individual's choice. In the end, the novel suggested people to resolve conflicts in a harmonious manner and to learn to agree on disagreement.

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