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Dissolve barricade and determine conflict: A composite critique of regional rigours in Chetan Bhagat's "Two States"

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Abstract

Chetan Bhagat is not one of the mainly decisively celebrated writers of modern India. He is not the blue-eyed boy of the principally high-brow academia. His illusory works are often considered to be pulp novel. However, it is not for nothing that he has been one of the best-selling writers - a trend among readers for quite some time now. The masala elements of his novels recognized, we would perhaps do well not to argument off his writing as trifle. His works of fiction always address in a most uncomplicated way pretty a few plaguing issues of present-day India. First published in 2009, Bhagat's fourth novel "Two States" is no exception. This novel is an emotional grilling of the provincial and regional divisions - social, civilizing, and above all, psychological. It is a novel that demands suspension of out-dated obstructions of race, caste and traditions. It is a novel of entrance, delineating the impasse of a young age group that is disinclined to accept - let alone cling on to the socio-cultural mores of the elder age group and yet, finding it hard to acclimatize fully to the westernized values of an increasingly capitalist culture. However, it does not throw to the winds the age-old Indian family values, the convention of taking parents on board in matters of decisive family decisions. In negotiating the conflicting demands of a widening progressive mind-set and traditional ancestral rootedness, Bhagat's novel lays out an excellent blue-print for an efficiently competent hatchling generation of a globalized India.

Keywords: Dissolve barricade, determine conflict, Chetan Bhagat's, Two States.

1. Introduction

Chetan Bhagat has been time and again moving the chords of millions of readers since his first novel Five Point Someone was in print in 2004. The New York Times called Bhagat 'the leading selling English language novelist in India's history'. His petition lies mainly to the younger age group; his novel speaks for them. What Hari Menon writes in his editorial "How the Supermarket Racks Were Won" in the periodical Outlook rings true? In this re-examine of Bhagat's second novel "The 3 Mistakes of my Life", Menon examine that Bhagat's novels 'annoy critics and please informal readers in generally equivalent calculate. In Menon's assessment,

"...his [Bhagat's] is a proposition of relevance and attractiveness in a large market of his choosing. It is why Dan Brown or Paulo Coelho are so successful. If their entire oeuvres put together can't match the literary merits of a single Don De Lillo chapter (they don't) it makes not a whit of a difference to the larger reading public."

Menon's concluding observation in the said article is also worth-quoting in full:

"Bhagat only lacks literary skills the way the Da Vinci Code's Dan Brown, thriller writer Alistair MacLean or horror/crime writer Dean Koontz lack literary skills. Clunky writers all, they are nonetheless engaging in their varied styles, have sold in the millions, and have plots that tend to translate very easily into film scripts."

Two States was also consequently completed into a flourishing movie. However, it is the novel, and not the movie, that is the object of analyses here.

Bhagat's novel Two States is professedly auto-biographical. However, like most other auto-biographical novels, it is a combine of facts and fiction. The novel is befittingly set in IIM-A, conceivably the most important B-School in the country. Starting at this opening

organization institute of the country is a love-affair between two youthful graduates. So far there is not anything distinctive in it. The connection between Krish and Ananya presumes a special implication when we know their surnames. After all, in India names do not substance; but surnames do. Krish's is Malhotra; Ananya's is Swami Nathan. The previous comes from a conventional Punjabi family; the latter from a conventional Tamil and Brahmin family. Here in lies the challenging feature of this boy-meet-girl story. The title of the novel apparently refers to these two states of India: Punjab and Tamil Nadu. Perhaps it could also downgrade to the two states of two generations -- the implementation outlook of a younger age group that is truly Indian and the scarcely Punjabi or conventionally Tamil mind-set which is characteristic of Krish's and Ananya's parents. The novel pinpoints how even sixty-odd years after India's freedom, even after long-lasting free mixing and inter-action among people from an assortment of parts of the country, unalterable socio-cultural barriers exist amongst people from two different regions of the same nation. Some of these barriers can truly be attributed to cultural gaps; as one reviewer writes". It draws your concentration to civilizing differences in miscellaneous India. Some of them are as simple as energetic, loud Punjabi music versus quiet, mellifluous Tamil or Carnatic music." However, most other hostility are based on profoundly rooted cultural intolerance which come in the way of a knowledgeable understanding. These cultural intolerance are further exasperated by indistinct but powerful cultural and parochial chauvinism. Answerability to one's community seems to rule the mind of the elder age group. Marital ties with a family from a dissimilar regional and cultural background become so intimidating and become visible to contaminate the holiness of a family.

Unwilling as they are to build up family ties, Krish's Punjabi family and Ananya's Tamil family have attraction in their prejudiced agreement and middle of influence. The two families from two parts of India distribute the same patriarchal bias. Krish's father let loses aggression on Krish's mother. Krish's mother never dares to stand up alongside her husband's massacre. She noiselessly bears it. As for Ananya's mother, while she is not tortured by her husband, limitations on her flourish. She has been habituated so systematically into women's conventional conjugal role, coming out of her house and singing in front of a sizeable consultation seems terrifying to her. In this respect, Ananya presents a pointed distinction to her mother. Unlike her mother who is frightened to make a public presentation, Ananya has pursued and shine in a vocation which is highly reasonable and monetarily pleasing. However, this does not mean that Ananya has the emancipation to decide her partner for marriage. Her Tamil Brahmin parents keep on persisting on her having a Tamil Brahmin spruce.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the Ayemenem House has "Love Laws [that] lay downwards who should be loved. And how. And how much." The circumstances is no dissimilar either for the Malhotra family or the Swami Nathan family in Bhagat's novel. Krish's mother has a very inflexible idea concerning who can be married. Krish's mother, regardless of being a woman herself, values a probable bride in terms of the offering she fetches. An erudite and highly earning girl like Ananya never seems to her to be a good sufficient bride. An extravagant observance and a fat grant are what make the potential bride

profitable to her. This is a sarcasm of even present-day India that a marriage with an associate of a different community is such a prohibited, but demanding offering from another family of the same community is a matter of brilliance to a section of the populace. Interestingly, the novel contains within itself an incident where conflict is chronicled against the evil convention of dowry as disseminated with impunity by conventional orderly marriages. This confrontation, not astonishingly, comes from educated Ananya. At the marriage ceremonial of Krish's cousin, Ananya takes a tough stand alongside the boy's family. However, the novel is not so thorough that it would reprimand the dowry organization in its entirety. Even Ananya in her tough position only convinces the boy's family to surrender the stipulate for an expensive car and agree to be satisfied with a not-so-expensive car. And it is from a position of practical restriction rather than from a position of ideological resilience that Ananya organize her intercession. The boy's family should be contented with a not-so-expensive car because the girl's family cannot have enough money anything costlier and because that reasonably priced car is good enough for preparing of only a decent income! Possibly, Indian society is yet to appear at a point where it can think of eliminating the practice of dowry in general in their actual lives.

The novel is exclusive also in describing scenes of familial aggression; and that too throughout the eyes of the son of the combating couple. Bhagat deserves recognition in tearing open the concealment of the happy family that is so often courageously put up even by a backbiting couple. The Indian myth of the sacred affiliation between husband and wife is burst open by the massacre persistently inflicted by Krish's father on Krish's mother right in front of Krish and also in his deficiency. This senseless male chauvinist violence is a sad reality of many a marriage. This feature also serves to intensify the central subject of the novel. The actuality of the married life of Krish's parents concisely shows that marriage within one's community does not assurance a happy marriage. Nevertheless, Krish's mother continues to believe that only a Punjabi girl can make a good wife to Krish. The sarcasm is apparent.

The affiliation of Krish with his father is uniformly sour. This derailed relationship between Krish and his father is also one of the tourist attractions of the novel. However, this is not unrivalled in Bhagat's fiction. Bhagat himself recounts in an interview how a French journalist once told him:

"In all three books of yours, the association between the central character and the father is dysfunctional. In *Five Point Someone*, one guy doesn't like his parents, the other guy has a paralysed father and the third guy has a strict father, in *One Night @ The Call Center*, Shyam is under confident and his parents are always fighting. In *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*, the father has deserted him and even Ishan's father slaps him and he has a bad relationship with his father."

It is rather an inconsistency that although portraying so many stressed relationships within a family, the novel is after all an arbitration with and not an outright refutation of the underlying basic suppositions of an Indian family.

It is motivating to note that socio-cultural prejudices, though declining, are not entirely things of the past to the competently qualified and open-minded Generation Y. Ananya is not altogether free from the community structures and casteist hierarchies she grew in. She retains a suggestion

of the age old divisions. On the very first day of their convention, Ananya reminds Krish: "You should know that I am born into the purest of pure upper caste communities ever created." However, she is concurrently critical of this uniqueness of hers. She is quick to clarify: "I didn't say I am a practising Tamil Brahmin." She not only delights chicken, but also gulps beer. Furthermore, she is obstinate about her drinking routine, and is even annoyed that drinking is forbidden in Gujarat, the state where Gandhi Ji was born. She even questions this exclusion. Her quarrel is simple -- possibly crude but the point is driven home well: "But Gandhiji won us autonomy. What's the point of getting people free only to put restrictions on them?" Freedom means something else to the current day production. However, such a questioning of the way Gandhiji's inheritance is carried on is not exceptional to Bhagat. In his Man Booker Prize-winning novel "The White Tiger", Arvind Adiga makes his character Balram Halawien countenance a "school where you won't be allowed to corrupt anyone's head with prayers and stories about God or Gandhi." perhaps, a re-appraisal and a redefined submission of the ideals of the Father of the Nation are required to fit the contemporary Indian context. Even on a visit to Sabarmati Ashram, Krish' mother and Ananya's parents bicker, unconscious of the message of Gandhiji and the implication of the Sabarmati Ashram. Probably, the elder age group, too, is not often heedful to the magnificent inheritance of Gandhiji.

The novel is relentless also in underscoring the materialistic predilection of the citizens of the country cutting across cultures despite so much of thrust on cultural pride and cultural 'purities'. With a piercing sense of humour, the narrator describes a super-rich South Indian lady: "A fifty-year-old lady with gold bangles thicker than handcuffs came to my cubicle." The fascination of Krish's mother, an out-and-out North Indian woman, with the wealth of the prospective bride-groom's family cannot be over-exaggerated either. Commenting on Binti's marriage, Krish' mother says: "Rajji mama is spending five lakh on the parties alone", and goes on to tell Krish: "...if Duke's budget is five lakhs, yours should be ten lakhs." Around two centuries back, Jane Austen had clinically shown the material basis of so much of social and cultural pretensions in an English context. This piece of reality is equally applicable to the present Indian context, though the show of materiality is more blatant than nuanced.

The novel is, however, not free from ethnic over generalizations from a point of view, particularly given the information that the novel is chiefly auto biographical. The South Indian women have been constantly described as 'dusky'. Early in the novel, Krish says: "I looked at a wedding picture of her relatives. Given the dusky features, everyone's teeth shown extra white." Ananya is, however, fair skinned. At Binti's marriage-ceremony, Shipramasi explanations: "By South Indian standards, she is quite pretty." One might dispute this is just a depiction and not a rationalization of established attitudes. However, one would not be off the point to wonder whether the equality of South Indian Ananya makes her more satisfactory as the heroine of the novel to a wide breadth of North Indian readers.

The novel is no less decisive of the commercial world, the way it functions, and the approach in which it exacts revenue. After speaking highly of a commercial individual in a job-interview, Krish thinks: 'I've not said one true thing in that consultation today, and an influence within him answers:

'They don't want to hear the certainty.' On joining a profitable supervision position, Krish says of his duty: 'I readied my arena about which loss making company to buy.' Later, when the consumer has certainly incurred the loss, he clarifies: 'Actually madam, the market went into self-correction mode', and thinks in his mind: 'I now unstated the principle of composite research terms. They prevent uncomfortable questions that have no answer.' All this criticism sounds more genuine as it comes from an author who has significant experience in investment banking. Hence, this is insider denigration on the part of Bhagat.

Conclusion

May be, we, the readers previously knew what we are told by Bhagat in this narrative. But perhaps it was not superfluous to be reminded once again of our own divisions and divisiveness, how little we work just before the abolition of these 'given' barriers, how 'racist' we the good hearted Indians can potentially be. The concluding dictum of the novel is conventional, though not unsuccessful by any means. Krish speaks of his children: 'They'll be from a state called India'. The many India's within India should to move forward in tandem. The message is simple, but worth repeating.

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