

True Love as a Boundary Breaker of Culture in Chetan Bhagat's *2 States: The Story of My Life*

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Abstract- *This article tries to demonstrate the power of spiritual love in Chetan Bhagat's autobiographical novel 2 States: The Story of My Life. Love is universal. It is a force for making the unity among people. The eternal power of love assimilates different cultures, castes, classes and traditions, and creates a harmony among them. This novel recounts the experiences and emotions of people in different states of India. This is a story about a girl and a boy from different states with the different cultures and caste system. They fall in love but have to face hardships in convincing their parents to support their marriage. In Indian culture, they cannot defy their parents' consent. A boy and a girl named Krish and Ananya want to change their love into marriage but it is as a Herculean task for them because of the cultural differences between two societies. Finally, they get success to change their dream into reality only through the true love, as it is the facilitator of interpersonal relationships. Indeed, love keeps human beings together against threats, breaks the barriers and harmonizes their dissimilarities. Based on this line, this article discusses Bhagat's 2 States and proves the love as a boundary breaker of dissimilar cultures.*

Key Words- *Love; unshakable power; marriage; cross-cultural differences*

1. INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ABOUT LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Chetan Bhagat (b. 1974), an Indian intellectual, deals with a very serious theme in a light way in his famous novel *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009). This book is also adapted in film version and is released its movie on April, 2014. This novel definitely gives us cultural shocks. The writer is of the view that love knows no boundaries, whether it be of caste, creed, religion, states or countries. It is love that triumphs against all odds. It is a story of inter-state marriage in India. It is a love story of a Punjabi boy Krish, and a Tamil Brahmin girl Ananya in his own style. Chetan Bhagat conveys so well, what happens when two worlds meet. The customs may be uniquely Indian, but the story is universal. Love marriage in American or European context is simple. In that context, a boy loves a girl and a girl loves a boy then they get married. But in India, it is more complex because there are a few more steps. The boy and girl who love each other cannot get married without their family's permission. Furthermore, the girl's family has to love the boy's family and the boy's family has to love the girl's family. *2 States* is a story of Krish and Ananya. They are from two different states of India, deeply in love and want to get married. Of course, their parents do not agree. To convert their love story into a love marriage, the couple has a tough battle in front of them because it is easy to fight and rebel, but much harder to convince.

Human beings have an innate quality of giving and feeling love. Moreover, it is even related with our biological structure. It is this feeling of love, which is responsible for the existence and maintenance of the society. When a baby is born, parents forget about their hunger, sleep, as they are so much in love with their child. The sweet ecstasy of love enables the man to accomplish tasks that would not have been possible without its powers. The enigmatic emotion exceeds all boundaries and has great potential of changing lives of the people. In this connection, James Gilles (1994)[3] claims that love is a universal feeling:

Love is a universal feeling, which is felt by every living being on this earth. Do not be surprised when I say 'living beings' because it is not just an attribute of human beings. Plants and animals everyone is acquainted with this strange emotion . . . So strong is the feeling that it is said that it makes the world go around. If you are still wondering why is love so important in our lives, the answer is that it satisfies the emotional needs of human beings. (p. 344)

Around the world, people are concerned about solutions for many of social problems. The feeling of love can be the key for many of those problems. The most important reason why love helps the hungry problem around the world is the fact that love ties people together in a way to help each other.

Contemporary Indian society, particularly the rural one, is still a conservative society where marriages of boys and girls are arranged by their respective parents. In such arrangements, some boys are asked about their choices, but girls are not. They are handed over to the groom's families like cattle and they adjust themselves in the new environment without much fuss whatever be their suppression. However, with globalization, teenage boys and girls get a new awakening in the matter of love and marriage. Nowadays, teenagers are not ready to accept the social norms and values in front of their love relation. They are ready to break the cultural barrier. So, in the present days, arrange marriage is replaced by the love marriage. In this connection, Hector Esponda, (2001)[2] in his book *A Spiritual Primer* claims that love is the most complete and unshakable force in life, which dissolves all the boundaries:

Love itself is what dissolves all the boundaries and limits we impose in life. Love is the most powerful force in the creation. Without love, life is dry and worthless. Devoid of love a mansion will appear as dreadful as a graveyard. Filled with the light of love, an ill-furnished and dilapidated hut will vibrant with beauty. Love is the richest of all treatments. Without it, there is nothing and with it, there is everything. (p.70)

In this way, Hector Esponda valorizes love in terms of its importance and power. Love is above all the values and systems.

In the novel *2 States*, Chetan Bhagat explores the love relation between a boy and a girl from different caste in India. Some critics say that its story is inspired from a real story of Chetan Bhagat and his wife Anusha who are from Delhi and Tamilnadu respectively. Krish and Ananya, the characters of this novel are from Delhi and Chennai respectively. They fall in love in the college. However, their love is not allowed by their respective parents and the society too. It is the story about a couple coming from two different states of India, who face hardships in convincing their parents for approval of their marriage.

2. TRUE LOVE AS A BOUNDARY BREAKER OF INDIAN TRADITION AND CULTURE IN 2 STATES

Different societies have different cultures, languages, rules and regulations. So, a member of society is bound within the chain of social values. But in the present scenario, the growing sense of fraternity, brotherhood and love between the two societies blurs the boundary of social norms. In this regard, Rabindra Kumar (2009)[5] writes:

...the first aspect of Gandhian concept of love could be traced in its indivisible association with truth. In other words, truth unconditionally pervades in love; therefore, it becomes boundless. To quote Gandhi himself, 'True love is boundless

like the ocean and rising and swelling within one spreads itself out and crossing all boundaries and frontiers envelops the whole world. (p. 2)

In the novel, *2 States* Bhagat details about a couple from IIMA (*Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad*), Krish and Ananya, their falling in love and their desire to make it work into a blissful marriage. They want to change their love into marriage but it remains as a Titanic task for them because of the cultural differences between them. They try to convince their parents. They have to convince not only to their own hearts about their marriage but their respective families as well.

In India, cross-cultural marriage is still looked upon critically let alone an inter-state marriage. Added to that, Punjabis are markedly different from Tamilians; Punjabis are well known for their boisterousness, flamboyance and easy attitude while Tamilians for their discipline, decorum and reticence. However, the couples in question are exceptional and much in love. They choose the difficult path of winning over the hearts of their parents and seek their blessings instead of eloping. The novel tries to show the changes occurred in Indian periphery by the people of new generation. Old generation tries to follow the orders, rules and regulations by sitting under the umbrella of religion. But the present generation breaks those cultural barriers. They think that the cultural norms and values are only the barriers for progress for them. It especially focuses in the marriage system of India. The newer generation does not want to remain silent. Then the love marriage becomes popular in whole Indian territory. Sneha Jaiswal (2010)[4] places Bhagat as an Indian realistic writer who reveals the conflict between different generations in India:

The story is not just about the young couple trying to convince their parents to agree to the match, but also about convincing their own loves in times of doubt. The story captures the love story of a typical Punjab boy and a Tamil girl who not only convince each other about their marriage but their respective family as well (p. 5).

The author tries to show that even though India celebrates unity in diversity, people are quite skeptical to marry their sons and daughters to someone from a different state in their very own country. The book follows the story of the main protagonist Krish a Punjabi boy, who falls in love with Ananya, the most beautiful girl of his batch who happens to be a Tamilian.

The whole story is written in a narrative first person style, revolving around how Krish meets Ananya for the first time in his college and how from being just friends they eventually fall in love. There, Krish is a little shy and reserved; Ananya is confident, outspoken and peppy. Krish is the only son with a loud boisterous mother, whose only concern is to see her son well settled with a very nice rich Punjabi girl. Krish has major issues with his father, whereas Ananya comes from a calm harmonious traditional family, which includes a geeky brother, serious father, and a classical singer mother. Both

study in the same college named IIMA. They already know that their families are not ready to accept their love relation due to the difference in caste, geography and so on. Nevertheless, they want to take risk and fall in love. From the very first of the novel, these two college mates try to break the cultural barriers. Falling in love is the first step of this break. Indian society does not allow to inter-caste marriage. Even the inter-caste love is taken as a sin.

On the dinner of the first day of college, Ananya faces numerous difficulties being a Tamil Brahmin girl. She does not want to take Sambhar so she has needed two Rusgullas. But the warden revenges it and says “only one per student” (p. 5). At this condition, Krish helps her by giving her to his own part of Rusgulla. It creates the favorable environment for them to introduce each other. They leave for the dinner in the hotel where Ananya challenges own cultural system by taking the chicken which is not allowed in Tamil Brahmin family. Ananya defies it and says:

*‘How exactly Tamil Brahmin are different?’
‘Well, for one thing, no meat and no drinking.’
She said as she gestured a cross with the chicken leg.
‘Absolutely,’ I said
She laughed. ‘I did not say I am practicing Tam
Brahm. But you should know that I am born into
the purest of pure upper caste communities ever
created. (Bhagat, 2009: 7)[1]*

Here, Ananya breaks the cultural barriers; the Tamil culture assumes that eating meat and drinking are the bad habits. They take it as a sinful task. But Ananya does a crime in the eyes of Tamil system. She drinks beer and eats the chicken roast in her college life. Due to the cultural differences, Ananya and Krish face numerous difficulties to save their love relation. The society, parents and friends of them tease them. In the Indian society, the relation of beloved and lover is not allowed. So the society and parents are against their relationship.

The meeting of two families on the convocation day at the college sets the drama into motion. Rest of the story is about how *youngster* fights *oldster* to get the approval for marriage. Krish talks about his love with Ananya to mother when his mother comes in Ahmadabad to participate in a convocation programme organized by their college. Krish expects the positive answer from his mother but all his assumptions go wrong. She is ready to leave there by not attending in the convocation. On the other hand, at the convocation programme, Ananya has been called for awards. At that time, Ananya’s parents and Krish stand up and applaud. Moreover, Krish expects that his mother is also as happier as he is. But she gives him “a dirty look” (p. 47) and orders for seat.

In his hometown Delhi too, he tries to convince his parents. But they do not accept his proposal. The parents have negative attitude towards Anany’s parents. The people of north do not believe to the people of the south. In the novel, Krish’s parents do not believe in Ananya’s family. So they order their only son Krish to

“Stay away from her” (p. 56). In one response of Krish when he says that Ananya is one of the smartest girls of India, his mother says, “the fairs one are the most dangerous, Sridevi and Hema Malini” (p. 56). All go against their love relation. Not only the mother of Krish but also his father and friends along with the societies go against their love. In a conversation with the father, when Krish insists that he is in love with a girl and wants to marry her, the father says; “You will not choose a girl for marriage. I will choose for you” (p. 198). In response of his father’s statement, he replies not to take him as goods for sell. He says, “You want to sell me. And while you are out there negotiating me, what’s my going rate?” (p. 198). Same tradition is rooted in Ananya’s family. For breaking the love relation between Krish and Ananya, Ananya’s parents prepare for marriage of their daughter with the other person but she escapes from there with Krish, her beloved, by breaking the wedding ceremony.

Here, Chetan Bhagat tactfully plays the vital role to valorize love than any social norms and values. Its story is inspired from a real story of Chetan Bhagat and his wife Anusha who are from Delhi and Tamilnadu respectively. In this connection, we appreciate Bhagat as an author who has the power to transform India and Indian society into modern affairs. His novels have captivated a whole new genre of readers, who have the power to transform the nation and his novels always present the story frankly and reading novels about things of our own life truly stir our memories of both sweet and sad.

Bhagat raises the contemporary history of Indian society in humorous way. When Krish and Ananya fail to convince their respected parents, they make a strategy to exchange the visiting procedure in each other’s family. So Krish chooses Chennai for his job placement where his parents deny selecting. Even Ananya’s father threatens him no to come again their home. Finally, with hard efforts, Anany’s parents are ready to accept the love relation between Krish and Ananya. From their side, they are ready to marry their daughter to Krish:

*‘If you are promise to take care of my daughter,’ Ananya’s father said, ‘then it is a yes from me’. He bent forward and picked up his box. Ananya hugged her father. ‘Thanks dad,’ she said, ‘I love you.’
Ananya’s father blessed her with a hand on her head.
Ananya’s mother said, ‘it is not that we don’t like you. But our communities . . .’ (p. 184)*

On the other hand, Ananya meets Krish’s family in Delhi to convince them. Krish takes her his home where she has an opportunity to influence Krish’s parents. In this way, they convince their parents by visiting with each other’s family. Finally, love wins the race. The story ends with their happy conjugal life with new born twins as Krish holds his twin sons for the first time outside the Operation theatre, a nurse sidles up and asks him, “You and your wife are from different states right . . . so which state are these two (pointing to the infants) going to belong

to?" Krish answers emphatically, "They'll be Indians" (p. 268). Here, Bhagat significantly creates harmony and establishes a unity in diversity with the power of love. He intends to end inequality.

3. CONCLUSION: ASSIMILATION OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CONCEPTS IN TRUE LOVE

Chetan Bhagat's cinematic novel, *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* demonstrates the power of love. Love is invincible. True love crosses the boundary of culture, territory and disparity. The novel is all about an IIMA couple's struggle to marry over the cultural differences. Krish is a north Indian Punjabi boy in love with a Tamilian Brahmin girl Ananya. They do not want to elope or be estranged to their families, rather they take turns to win over each other's families and then try to make both the families like each other by convincing them. Here, the writer assimilates the traditional Indian thinking and the modern way of marriage, and conveys the young people that power of love and the strength of happy marriage lies in the meeting of eastern and western or traditional and modern cultures. Krish and Ananya are the representative characters of this concept.

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