



RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN CHETAN BHAGAT'S 2 STATES: THE STORY OF MY MARRIAGE

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ABSTRACT

Chetan Bhagat is the predominant writer who mainly spots light on the contemporary Indian society. He has sensibly taken the opportunity to critically expose the dominating issues of the Indian society such as elite education system, corruption, familial issues, love, marriage, ambition, and social issues etc., The novel 2 States: The Story of My Marriage is the story about the two young protagonists Ananya and Krish who are from different cultures of Tamil and Punjab respectively. This novel shows us how the two youngsters face the problems given to them by their family. They cross the entire obstacle in the family and they convince their family members for their marriage. In this course of marriage there come, lots of problematic issues such as dowry, inter-caste marriage, unity in diversity, parental possessiveness, etc. The present article focuses on racism which prevalently exists in the novel which portrays the contemporary Indian society.

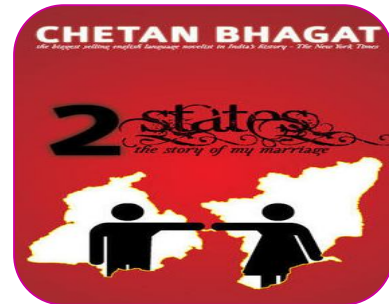
KEYWORDS: Racism, professional issues, socio-cultural issues.

INTRODUCTION :

Anti-Defamation League defines racism as the hatred of one person by another or the belief that another person is less than human because of skin colour, language, customs, place of birth or any factor that supposedly tells the basic nature of that person. The power of racism is less contrasted with the European nations. India is where people of various races and religions exist. Diverse people have different inherent biological and physiological characteristics of their life. The people of southern part are comparatively more intellectual and better in administration than the northern people who are more business minded. The racial discrimination between the Northern people and the Southern people is prevailing in Indian society for centuries together ever since the Aryan culture and the Dravidian culture.

The present fiction focuses on the pervasive racism in contemporary Indian society. The writer Chetan Bhagat in *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* has exposed the predominant racism in contemporary Indian society in the minds of Northern people for Southern people and vice versa. It is depicted in the novel that the people of Punjabi culture (North) have certain prejudices about the people of Tamil culture (South). This hatred can be shown in the novel through the old generation people.

For example Krish's mother Kavitha, has certain bias towards the South Indian people. When Kavitha comes to know that her son is in love with the Tamil girl Ananya, she did not like her even though she is fair, good looking and intellectual. Kavitha do not want her son to marry Ananya because she has plans to get a large sum of dowry for her son's marriage if he marries a girl in her community. But Krish was determined to marry Ananya only. This issue generates tension in the mother-son relationship and she keeps on passing racial commentaries on the family and culture of the Tamil people. According to her, all the people from south India know black magic. She believes that south Indian girls trap north Indian boys for marriage. Even the south Indian characters like Ananya's parents and Krish's boss Bala also have some



prejudices for the North Indian people. Bala thinks that the north Indian people are more generous and partial to the north Indian people in south Indian corporate lobbies. Ananya's parents take the north Indian people uneducated or manner less and very poor in general knowledge and the history of the India.

The following points extracted from the novel may justify the reality of the prevalent racism in the contemporary Indian society. When Kavitha comes to attend the convocation ceremony of her son Krish, he introduces Ananya to her and reveals his intention of marrying her. Kavitha comes to know that she is a south Indian girl and she remembers her prejudice for south Indian heroines who married the north Indian film stars by breaking their happy marriages with north Indian wives. She starts hating her and passes racial comments in the presence of Ananya's parents. The following conversation between Krish and Kavitha reveals it as: "Mom, control. I whispered to her as I turned to leave. I am under control. These South Indians don't know how to control their daughters. From HemaMalini to Sridevi, all of them trying to catch Punjabi men" (48).

When Krish and Ananya plan to take their parents to visit Gandhi Ashram so that they may have more time to know one another, Kavitha does not know the history of Dandi March promoted by Gandhi, she shows her poor knowledge in front of Ananya's parents that it is called Dandi March because Gandhi carried a stick. Ananya's mother chuckles and passes a racial comment on the poor knowledge of the Punjabi people as:

'Something something gilla knowledge Punjabi people something.'

'Seri seri', Ananya's father said in a courtesy manner, engrossed in the map. Ananya's mother continued. 'Intellectually, culturally zero. Something something crass uneducated something (51).

People of both the communities have certain prejudices against each other's culture and such clashes are reflected through racial comments on each other. After completing his studies, when Krish comes back to Delhi he tries to convince his mother to accept Ananya as her daughter-in-law, but his mother Kavitha is not ready to do so. When Ananya calls him, Kavitha keeps a sharp watch on their conversation. One can observe another example of racial prejudice when the mother and the son are talking about Ananya after the call ends:

'Madrasa Girl?'

'Ananya.' I said.

Stay away from her. They brainwash, these people.

Mom, I like her. In fact, I love her.

See, I told you. They trap you, my mom declared.

Nobody has trapped me, mom. (. . .) she is a nice girl. She is smart, intelligent, good looking. She has a good job. Why would she need to trap anyone?

They like North Indian men.

Why? What's so special about North Indian men?

North Indian are fairer. The Tamilians have a complex (56).

The same racial biases are there in the minds of the other minor characters like Shipra masi, Swaran aunty and Kamlamami who belong to Punjabi community. Kavita's sister Shipra has racial bias for the south Indian people. She thinks that south Indians are black and they practice black magic over the Punjabi boys to get their daughters married to them. Shipra masi comes to know from Pummi aunty that Krish would leave the job of Citibank to be a writer. She asks Krish to give her reason for that. She immediately realises her prejudices for the south Indian people who love books. She says:

'That south Indian girl must have told him. They love books. Shipra Masi said.

'Nobody has asked me to be a writer. Anyway, it is none of your business,

Shipra Masi. Nobody Look at him, these black people have done their black magic, Shipra masi said. Don't be foolish, Kavita, tell Pammi he will remain in Citibank and make a lot of money. Get his price properly (68).

One more incident of racial humiliation is depicted in the novel by the writer. When Krish takes Ananya to attend his cousin Minti's marriage, some Punjabi ladies gather around Ananya and pass racial comments on the south Indian people as:

'She is Madrasi? Swaran aunty said in a voice loud enough to believe her age.

'Tamilian,' Ananya said.

'But she is a fair complexioned?' Swaran aunty said, genuinely confused (. . .)

'Shipra, see this, a goriMadrasin,' Swaran aunty screamed.

(. . .)

'You are so fair. Are you hundred percent South Indian? Kamlamami asked.

'By South Indian standards, she is quite pretty,' Shipra mami added insight.

'I know, otherwise how black and ugly they are,' Kamlamami said. Everyone laughed, apart from Ananya (201).

As declared earlier, the writer also tries to reveals that the south Indian people also has certain racial prejudices for the north Indian people. When Krish visits Ananya's house for the first time, her father asks Krish about his job in Citibank in Chennai, there Ananya's father use a phrase 'Useless Buggers'() for the north Indian. Ananya's father has some racial prejudices because of his bad experiences in his professional life with some of the north Indian people like his General Manager Verma. He says:

'So, Citibank placed you in Chennai? Uncle said, initiating conversation with me for the first time.

'Yes sir, I said.

'Why do they send North Indians here?'

'I don't know sir.'

'Useless Buggers,' he mumbled and buried himself in his newspaper again (91).

Krish's boss Balahas a complex about Mr. Anil Mathur who is the country manager of the Citibank. When his idea of the internet stock sales turns into a failure and much of the money of his clients are drown into it, he asks Krish to take the blame on himso that his job cannot be suspended. He says: "The country manager, as it is, doesn't like me. He is North Indian. He will forgive you but not me" (114). One can observe certain racial prejudices for the Tamil people and the Tamil region in some of the hints of Mr Anil Mathur's inaugural speech of the music concert sponsored by Citibank in Chennai as follow:

'Hello everyone, who would have thought some of our biggest clients, will come from the land of dosas and idlis?'

The crowd fell so silent, you could hear the waves on the adjacent beach. Ananya looked at me shocked. I shrugged my shoulders. I had no control over this.

Anil realized his joke didn't work and attempted a rescue. 'You see in Bombay, idli and dosa are seen as simple snacks,' Anil said.

'He is digging himself in deeper,' Ananya said.

'Yes, luckily he has only five minutes.'

Anil realized his sense of humor only worked with people of who worked with him (. . .).

'So, you see, when we came to Chennai, we started with a tiny footsteps and now we are a giant. From a mini idli we have become a paper doas,' Anil said, gesturing with his hands to show the relative sizes of the two dishes (176).

Krish takes his mother to Goa to meet and compromise with Ananya's parents for all the past misunderstandings. When they reach Goa, they all come together at the lunch table. There is complete silence, so Krish doubts that something unusual had happened. Krish's mother Kavitha initiates a conversation and she sighs that time has changed and now children get their parents meet to approval for their marriage. Ananya's mother replied that her family was not ready to accept this marriage but they observed Krish's behaviour and they know him well and so now they are "OK" the their marriage. There Kavitha loses her temper and so do Ananya's parents to some extent and the meeting turn into a racial battle field as follow:

'What OK?' you may be jumping with joy inside. Where will you find such a qualified boy like him? My mother said. (. . .)

'Actually, we do get qualified boys. Tamils value education a lot. All her uncles are engineers and doctors. Ananya had many matches from the USA.

'Yeah, but they must be all dark boys. Where there any fair as Krish? Look-wise you cannot match Punjabis.' My mother said without any apparent viciousness inn her voice (. . .)

'You may have landed my son, but it doesn't mean he has no value.' (. . .)

'We haven't trapped anyone,' Ananya's mother said finally. 'He used to keep coming to our house. We are decent people so we couldn't say no.'

'Mom,' Ananya said.

'Why should I be quiet and get false accused? We haven't trapped anyone. Aren't we suffering? We all know Krish's father is against this. Our relatives will ask. Still we are accepting it.' Ananya's mother said.

'What are you accepting? You don't even deserve my boy,' my mother said.

'Please don't shout. We are educated people,' Ananya's father said.

'Are you saying we are not educated?' my mother challenged (226-27).

Even back at home, Kavitha keeps on passing racial comments on Ananya's parents and when Krish convinces her to apologise to them on phone. She says: "I was wrong. I hadn't met her parents then. I've never met such a dry breed of people. Look at how they eat dinner, like it is a punishment. Ananya's mother does she ever laugh? Dark from outside, dark from inside" (235).

The writer Chetan Bhagat seems to have very diplomatically and ingeniously revealed the common issue of racism prevailing in the minds and hearts of some of the people of contemporary Indian society. The established partialities keep on widening the gap among the people of different cultures or communities like some of the glimpses shown in the present fiction. The writer does not suggest any direct solution of such an issue in the novel but one can easily understand by the end of the novel, that the youth can play a crucial role to fill the gap between the two different cultures or communities. Along with that, people of different cultures and communities should keep on meeting, attend social ceremonies and they should try to understand and accept reciprocal potentials and limitations like the relatives of both Krish and Ananya who gather to attend their marriage. It can help create better mutual understanding that may further help to achieve national integration for the welfare of the society and the country as well.

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