

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Essentialist Notion of Gender in Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Masters of Arts in English**

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Janga Bahadur Thapa has completed his thesis entitled “**Essentialist Notion of Gender in Chetan Bhagat’s *Two States: The Story of My Marriage***” under my supervision. He carried out his research from July 12, 2011 to August 10, 2011. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of the Approval

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Abstract

The essentialist patriarchal ideology assumes the existence of natural differences between sexes and by reinforcing the same assumption it also justifies the female subordination and their lower position in the society. In Chetan Bhagat's *Two States: The Story of Marriage*, the essentialist notion of gender appears in a very subtle way. The novelist's treatment of female characters, the narrator's attitude towards women and their representation reinforce the patriarchal assumption of women as the polar opposites of men and inferior or subordinate members of the society. The way women are viewed in the novel represents the perspective of patriarchy which conceives men to be naturally superior to women, thereby undercutting the possibility of the equal status of male and female in the society.

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I. Contextualizing *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*

In *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, the novelist Chetan Bhagat embraces patriarchal ideology through the appropriation of essentialist attitude of gender. Though Bhagat ostensibly supports the equality and freedom of women in the novel, he has been unsuccessful in his attempt of generating a feminist novel because of his liaison with the dominant patriarchal ideology, from the influence of which he could not escape.

Bhagat has apparently created a revolutionary female character, Ananya, who attempts to transgress the limitation and boundary of the south Indian culture, but the way she is viewed by the narrator is not distinct from the way patriarchy conceives women to be. Later it becomes obvious that his consciousness is also programmed by the patriarchal ideology because of which, in the novel, he constructs women as naturally subordinate and inferior to men, assuming that women and men are naturally born as polar opposites. By bringing on surface the unnoticed domain of *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, this thesis provides a light to look upon the novelist's attitude towards women which is essentialist in nature. Furthermore the study analyzes the way in which male and female both characters have internalized the very traditional concept of gender difference as natural fact.

Two States: The Story of My Marriage is a romantic comedy (Ghosh 1), set in Indian location. It depicts the cultural conflict between two Indian cultures and ends in reconciliation. One of the protagonists Ananya hails from Tamilnadu and another protagonist Krish hails from Panjab. Because of the incompatibility between these two different cultures, these protagonists have to suffer very much to give their love a happy ending. However as in a happy ending love story, both characters get success in convincing their respective family for their marriage. While portraying Ananya,

Bhagat seems to have presented her as freedom loving girl, who wants to cross the boundary drawn by the culture, especially for the women. He endeavors to show Ananya as a progressive female character. However, he fails in his attempt. The present thesis explores the way in which the novel promotes the patriarchal ideology by inadvertently supporting the essentialist notion of gender and the way in which the novelist appropriates himself with the dominant patriarchal ideology.

Two States: The Story of My Marriage revolves around the obstacles the protagonists, Krish and Ananya have to endure in their attempt to make their inter-state marriage acceptable for both families. The novel begins from the moment they meet with each other and ends in their marriage. They both study in IIMA (Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad), they fall in love with each other, but have to make great effort to make it work into marriage. Because of the fact that they are not only from the different states but also from incompatible two cultures, they have to suffer a lot to make their relationship end into an acceptable marriage.

Diparati Ghosh takes the novel as a romantic comedy which attacks the traditional attitude of Indians to cross-cultural, inter-state marriage. As she puts it:

Chetan Bhagat has always tried saying something through his books and in *Two States*, under the camouflage of a sweet love story, he hits hard at Indian over their austere attitude to cross-cultural, inter-state love marriage. Bhagat's dig at racism though sarcastically and direct is humorous and witty. (2)

Ghosh opines that the novel satirizes the Indian's attitude towards cross-cultural marriage and racism in a very sarcastic and ironic way. The cross-cultural and inter-state marriages are still looked upon critically in India. This very reality of the Indian society, according to Ghosh, is taken as subject of satire in *Two States: The Story of*

My Marriage. The novelist, Bhagat himself agrees with her proposition. He says that “it is a social comment on homogeneity, told entertainingly” (Chakrawarti 2).

Ananya is not only a Tamil but she is also from Brahmin family. In comparison to Panjabi, Tamilians think themselves to be more disciplined (Ghosh 2). Ghosh notes the difference between these two Indian cultures as: “Panjabis are markedly different from Tamilians, they are well known for their boisterousness, flamboyance and easy attitude while Tamilians for their discipline, decorum and reticence” (2). As a member of Tamilian Brahmin culture, Ananya also has her own kind of restrictions which she should obey. As it is said in the novel *Tamil Brahmin* custom prohibits the members of its culture from drinking alcohol and eating meats. A Tamilian Brahmin should be vegetarian and should not touch any kind of alcohols (Bhagat 100). And as a female member of the patriarchal society, a girl definitely has more restrictions than other male members of the same society. Besides many other things, patriarchy controls and imposes restrictions over their sexuality (Tyson 89). But Ananya, though is a Tamilian Brahmin girl, does not obey these rules and restrictions imposed upon women by the orthodox society. The novelist attempts to present her as a character, guided by freedom seeking mentality.

Ananya’s attitude toward her orthodox society is progressive, in the sense that she wants some changes and modification in the traditional norms and values of her Tamilian Brahmin community through her audacious behaviors. The novelist’s intention of depicting her as a dynamic character influenced by feminist attitude becomes conspicuous through the simple observation of her behaviors. Though she is not a political leader or a feminist thinker advocating for the rights for women and criticizing patriarchal ideology, she demonstrates, by her behaviors that she is not the kind of woman who humbly obeys the rules and restrictions imposed upon women.

While staying in hostel, she spends many nights in Krish's room. After falling in love with him, she starts sharing his room for nearly two years, needless to say having premarital sexual relationship, the very act which in her community is strictly forbidden for women. She violates the custom of her culture not only by drinking alcohol heavily but also by eating meat while she is with Krish.

By violating the Tamilian Brahmin tradition, she exposes herself as a modern, uncompromising girl having liberal attitude, thereby supporting the concept of women's liberty. She chooses her husband on her own accord among the disapprovals of her parents. Not only has she chosen life partner on her own will, she also becomes successful in convincing the family that her choice is not wrong. She practically proves herself to be a freedom oriented person, who cannot remain silent within the boundary of domestic confinement drawn by the traditional and orthodox society. Unlike traditional girls of the orthodox society, she pursues her career on her own will in the marketing field. After having finished graduation in IIMA, she pursues her marketing career in HLL, a surf producing factory in Chennai. Ananya seems to have understood the importance of economic independence in a woman's life that is why after having finished the graduation, she starts working at HLL in Chennai.

Bhagat's endeavor to create a progressive character, if observed outwardly, seems to have been successful. However, if analyzed minutely, he himself is found to be trapped into the grip of patriarchal notion of gender, which sees a clear binary distinction between women and men, thereby undercutting the possibility of women's independence. He appropriates the essentialist notion of gender, though inadvertently.

The essentialist view of gender is the dominant perspective in patriarchy, which conceives women as naturally inferior to the men (Tyson 86). In her book *What is Gender?* Marry Holmes defines essentialism as:

Essentialism is the idea that there are identifiable necessary properties which define objects, for example it supposes that there is some essence (usually with a bodily basis) which is what makes a woman. This might be the potential to bear children, a more caring attitude, or having a female body. Things like caring attitude are defined as bodily in that they are thought to stem from women's childbearing capacities. (88)

As Holmes defines, essentialism is an idea which believes that there are some essential properties which define the objects. An object is different from another object because of the distinction between the defining properties of those different objects. To contextualize the idea within feminism, essentialism is a view which supposes that there are some properties, like child bearing capacity, a more caring attitude and so on which make women different from men. Things like caring attitude, emotionality, loving behavior, motherhood and so many things which are supposed to be the properties of women are thought to stem from their having female body. Holmes says that essentialism assume that we all have a true or natural identity which is either feminine of masculine. If someone is born female she will become feminine "as long as nothing goes wrong" (27).

In patriarchal society, certain traits and characteristics are assigned to male and female as if those characteristics are natural to them. Women are mostly associated with love, tenderness, motherhood, emotion, passion, sensuality, caring attitude and so on. On the other hand men are assigned with so called masculine qualities like strength, brevity, decisiveness, intellectuality etc. A hierarchy is created between men and women and they are seen as polar opposites. Patriarchy constructs the concept of femininity and masculinity and supposes that females are born

feminine and males are born masculine. This essentialist view ignores the constructed nature of the concept like femininity and masculinity and also plays a crucial ideological role in justifying women's confinement to the domestic sphere as natural and necessary (Stone 5). The adherence to such a view leads nowhere than to the subordination of women by men.

However, the essentialist feminists do not agree with the idea that woman is a construction of society. Rather they believe in the natural differences between sexes and want to celebrate the differences. Fiona Tolan says that essentialists want to describe the differences positively:

Essentialists believe that because women are biologically different from men, they are also psychologically and emotionally different. Difference, they argue, is not something to be overcome but to be celebrate . . . this identity is frequently described as being more empathetic and co-operative, more connected to others, and more accepting of multiple viewpoints, unlike male identity. (322)

Essentialist feminists suppose that women are psychologically and emotionally different as they are biologically different from men. But the difference should not be taken as something to be overcome but as something to be celebrated. They argue that women should be proud to be women and they should discover their own uniquely female identity. They posit that females are more emphatic, co-operative, more connected with others and more open with multiple perspectives in comparison to males. Therefore, the female identity is distinct from male identity which is, according to them, "monolithic, authoritarian and founded in a rationalist belief in one truth" (324).

But anti-essentialists, such as de Beauvoir, argue that sexual difference is a consequence of cultural conditioning. Referring to her idea Fiona Tolan writes: “society has created women as other, and the means by which this difference has been created must be exposed and discredited, so that women can achieve their full potential as the equals of men” (338). So, essentialism is a means of patriarchy which is used to justify the subordination of women.

In the novel, though ostensibly, Chetan Bhagat advocates for the freedom of women, further investigation into the attitude, the novel is producing to readers, exposes that he too, is not free from the essentialist perspective toward gender. He has not become successful in escaping from the influence of essentialism. In the novel, he is unaware of the fact that the way he characterizes Ananya and other female/male characters, is not free from the influence of essentialist view of gender. He too, as an essentialist, associates women and men respectively with femininity and masculinity as if those are the natural traits of males and females. This research exposes how Bhagat falls prey to this essentialist ideological trap.

Though Chetan Bhagat’s works are not taken as literary work worthy for literary criticism, his novels have been among the best-selling English fiction written by Indian authors (Rosenbaum 1). He also agrees that he is not literary but thinks that his novels can play a role for bringing the positive changes in the society (3). However, the present thesis analyzes this novel as one of the forms of cultural production. His novels are read by many youths of India. It is sure that as one of modes of cultural productions it also carries with it an ideology and disseminates to the readers through words. The thesis will dig out the patriarchal ideology of essentialism hidden under the novel. The main plot of the novel has nothing to do with the subject of the thesis. Rather this research is centered on the

characterization and the prejudiced use of language by the narrator and main characters.

Jyoti Thottam finds an honest depiction of contemporary reality of Indian society in the novels written by new generation of authors including Chetan Bhagat. While talking about Indian literature written in English, most of the readers think of Salman Rusdie, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh etc. But most recently the new generation of novel writers are overshadowing them on the basis of its sale (2). She argues that this generation is producing novels in new subject matters. Chetan Bhagat's novels are, she says:

. . . not about partition, or emergency, or three-generational family sagas written in Oxford English. Instead the topics are populist and contemporary (college, finding a job, looking for love) and the English is as unpretentious as a call-center cubicle. (2)

Thottam posits that the novels of the new generation of India, such as *Two State: The Story of My Marriage*, are not about the partition or emergency or any of such topics on which many fictions have been already written. They are on new topics which deal with the problem of young people in the contemporary society of India. Moreover, the language of these novels is very simple and unpretentious. She opines that these novels serve as guides in a confusing world. She makes an observation on the new generation's novels and finds them courageous for writing about the present.

According to her:

There is a sense of defiance in choosing to write about the present, an insistence that the stories of how Indians live now are just as worthy of being told as the more self-consciously literary sagas set in some

supposedly more romantic past . . . For them, it tells the stories of their own lives, and looks ahead to India's thrilling if uncertain future. (3)

The stories dealing with contemporary society are also as worthy telling as the stories of family sagas told in the fictions written by elder generation. Such stories are being told by many new novelists such as Chetan Bhagat. Thottam praises the new generation of Indian novelists for their depiction of innovative subject matters.

The basic perspective of this study is the feminist critical framework, but specifically the concept of social construction of gender is the main tool for the analysis. This concept stands totally in opposition with the concept of essentialism. Simone De Beauvoir, the eminent feminist in her book *The Second Sex* conceptualizes gender as the social construction rather than taking it as the biological compulsion. Her insistence that woman is not born as woman rather she is constructed or forced to be women by society, has been impetus for the advent of social constructionism (Fiaccadori 8). Though there are many disputes among the feminists circle, the concept of the social constructionism has been most influential theory regarding the gender. Regarding the seemingly natural differences between women and men Micheal Ryan also agrees with Beauvoir's proposition. He writes in his book *Cultural Studies on Context*:

The seemingly spontaneous and natural desires many young women feel in conservative social locations especially to become caretakers of man and children may not be spontaneously generated at all. It may be lesson learned from the surrounding cultures that was placed there by men because their own interests were served by it . . . Women seem to spontaneously want to engage in service labor for men – but in fact

those internal dispositions towards certain kinds of behaviors are learned. (23)

Ryan opines that though many women think that to have a desire for becoming caretakers of man and children is a natural thing, such desires are the lesson learned by them and such desires are also culturally generated in accordance with the convenience of men. Though women seem to spontaneously engage in the service of men, these behaviors are learned by them from the surrounding cultures.

The present thesis analyzes the entire novel in the light of this very concept of social constructionism. The very minute analysis of the portrayal of female characters reveals that narrator Krish, consciously or unconsciously reinforces the essentialist attitude of gender difference between women and men.

Alison Stone attempts to provide a philosophical sense of essentialism which forms the point of departure for feminist explorations and which I am to mean while using the term in the present thesis. In feminism according to her, essentialism refers to the view that supposes that there are properties essential to women. She also sees a relationship between essentialism and universalism. In her view:

Essentialism is the belief that things have essential properties, properties that are necessary to those things being what they are.

Recontextualised within feminism, essentialism becomes the view that there are properties essential to women, in that any women must necessarily have those properties to be a woman at all. So defined, essentialism entails a view . . . that there are some properties shared by, or common to, all women – since without those properties they could not be women in the first place. (4)

Stone says that biological essentialism supposes that all women are constituted as women by their possession of wombs, breasts and child bearing capacity and this view played a crucial ideological role in justifying women's confinement to the domestic sphere as natural and necessary (3).

In patriarchal society women are assigned with some qualities, which are considered to be feminine, so they are believed to have born emotional, fragile, and irrational and so on. Patriarchal society promotes the essentialist notion by creating traditional gender roles. Such traditional roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive. On the other hand they cast women as emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive. In this way patriarchy keeps on promoting the belief that women are naturally/innately inferior to men. In Lois Tyson's view, "This belief in the inborn inferiority of women is a form of what is called biological essentialism" (85).

Anti-essentialist feminists do not deny the biological differences between men and women, but they do not agree that such differences as physical size, shape and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women. It is necessary to distinguish between the words 'sex' and 'gender'. According to Tyson, the word 'sex' refers to our anatomical facts as male and female, and the word 'gender' refers to, "our cultural programming as feminine or masculine" (86). Because these are cultural production neither women are born feminine nor are men born masculine. Gender is a mere construction of society. This view of gender directly contradicts with the biological essentialism. Patriarchal society does not believe in the constructed nature of gender rather considers women as innately feminine.

John D. De Lamater & Janet Shibley Hyde remarks on the beginning of essentialist thought which is supposed to have been started since Plato:

Since at least Aristotle, philosophers have claimed that woman has an essence and that this essence is a material one. Woman is matter; she is defined by her unique physical property (reproduction). The identity of each individual, actually existing woman is ultimately and necessarily determined by this essence. (2)

De Lamater & Hyde claim that the essentialism in its modern sense had begun at least from the time of Aristotle. They further trace the history of essentialism and argue that the concept of essentialism actually was generated by Greek philosopher Plato, which is known as classical essentialism. As they put it:

For Plato, the phenomena of the natural world were simply a reflection of a finite number of fixed and unchanging forms, or *eide*, as he called them. The *eide* were renamed essences by the Thomists of the Middle Ages . . . an essence does not change and is categorically different from another essence. The essentialists attributed continuous variation to the imperfect manifestation of the essences. (4)

The essentialism, in its classical form was not concerned with the matters of gender but it was a philosophical thought which perceived the world as the manifestation of unchanging essence.

Simone de Beauvoir was first to argue that women are not born feminine rather conditioned to be feminine by patriarchy. De Beauvoir asserts that woman is made, not born, and disagrees with the recurrent attempts within Western culture to reduce woman to her biological essence (Tidd 51). One could argue that her idea that 'One is not born a women, one becomes one' is the beginning of the thought 'social constructionism' in feminist thinking. She in a radical way argues that women are even not born with a maternal instinct, which patriarchy believes as universal truth.

She says that not all women want to have children or feel comfortable being mothers. But patriarchal ideology makes them feel that motherhood is the natural instinct of female, that without having children they cannot become perfect women (Tyson 89). This is how gender is constructed by culture. A prominent sociologist, Margerate Mead also disagrees with the idea that some temperaments are naturally associated with male and female sex. She argues these traits, like motherhood and so many other things are only the products of historical evolution (286).

Similarly Sherry B. Ortner in her book *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotic of Culture*, claims that the subordination and devaluation of women is the universal condition of women. Though the biological determinists associate the female subordination with their biological differences, Ortner maintains, the universality of female subordination is not because of the biological determination. Rather it is the effect of superior/inferior structure within the framework of culturally defined value system (25).

It is clear that gender is not a natural fact rather it is a cultural production. Judith Lorber takes gender as a process, stratification and structure. She equates gender with an institution or “major ways that human beings organize their lives” (4). She posits that gendered practices of everyday life reproduce gender day by day. Individuals behave in a certain way, which are assigned to them to sustain the gender social arrangements. In her view, as a process gender creates the social differences that define women and men. “In social interaction throughout their lives”, Lorber says, “Individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected and react in expected ways, and thus simultaneously construct and maintain the gender” (5). Similarly as a structure gender creates hierarchy between sexes, devalues women and authorizes social domination of men, thereby maintaining social function. And as a part of

stratification system gender ranks men above women of the same race and class.

Further she writes: “There is no core of bedrock human nature below these endlessly looping processes of the social production of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, ‘self’ and other identity and psyche, each of which is a ‘complex cultural construction’” (4). Opposing the essentialist notion of gender she argues that gender has nothing to do with the biological differences between men and women rather it is intact with society. She says:

Gender cannot be equated with biological and physiological differences between human females and males. The building blocks of gender are socially constructed statuses. . . Genders, therefore, are not attached to a biological substratum. Gender boundaries are breachable, and individual and socially organized shifts from one gender to another call attention to ‘cultural, social, or aesthetic dissonances’. (6)

Because gender is the construction of society, it cannot be attached with the biological and physiological differences between males and females. The society creates statuses like ‘man’ and ‘woman’, and associates them with males and females. So these statuses are the foundation of gender. Therefore, gender should be perceived as a social institution, not as the accumulation of individual experiences. The process of gendering is legitimized by religion, law, science and society’s entire set of values.

Candace West & Don H. Zimmerman, give a new understanding of gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction. They posit that individuals while interacting with others ‘do gender’, thereby constituting gender through interaction (129). Their main argument is that gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor role but the product of social doings of some sort. They refer to Goffman’s formulation of gender as: “socially scripted dramatization of culture’s

idealization of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom” (West & Zimmerman 236). Contending with Goffman’s formulation of gender they have developed their own understanding, i.e. gender as accomplishment achieved through ‘doing gender’. They elaborate their opinion of doing gender by explaining how gender is done. Doing of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as member of society is hostage to its production. For them, “Doing gender entails complex socially guided interactional and micro political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’” (234). They conceive gender “as feature of social situations and as a means of legitimizing one of the most fundamental divisions of society” (238). Though it is individuals who ‘do’ gender, it is situated doing in the real presence of others. They formulate the concept as:

Doing gender involves making use of discrete, well-defined bundles of behavior that can simply be plugged into interactional situations to produce recognizable enactment of masculinity and femininity. The man ‘does’ being masculine by, for example, taking the woman’s arm to guide her across a street, and she ‘does’ being feminine by consenting to be guided and not initiating such behavior with man.
(135)

They associate the act of doing gender with the act of creating difference between women and men, differences which are not natural, essential and biological. Taking reference from Goffman, they observe the creation of a variety of frameworks by society through which our ‘natural normal sexedness’ can be enacted. The physical features of social setting, standardized social occasions and associative mating practice according them are some of the frameworks through the help of which gender

is enacted. Goffman says that "physical features of social settings provide an obvious resource for the expression of our 'essential' differences" (137). He gives an example of sex-segregation of public bathroom in North America, where public bathrooms distinguish 'ladies' from 'gentlemen' even though "both are somewhat similar in question of waste product and their elimination" (138). Citing Goffman in their paper *Doing Gender* West and Zimmerman explain that such social setting is one of the major institutionalized frameworks for gender enactment. Another resource, according to them, is standardized social occasion like sports, which provide stage for displaying 'essential male and female natures.' For example sport works as "framework for the expression of manliness" (138). In sports some qualities are associated with masculinity, such as endurance, strength, competitive spirit etc. and participants are expected to demonstrate such traits, and spectators applaud their demonstration. Another means to create and maintain differences between men and women, according to West & Zimmerman is the associative mating practices among heterosexual couples. They explain their argument as:

Selective pairing ensures couples, in which boys and men are visibly bigger, stronger, and older (if not "wiser") than girls and women with whom they are paired. So, should situations emerge in which greater size, strength, or experience is called for, boys and men will be ever ready to display it and girls and women, to appreciate its display. (138)

In this way West & Zimmerman explain the gendered social structures and settings which help to maintain the essentialist assumption of gender. The crux of their argument is that a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but fundamentally it is something that one does, and does recurrently, in interaction with others. Doing of gender happens in two levels: interactional and institutional level,

and contributes significantly in the subordination of women by men. They say that because of its pervasiveness people are unable to realize the constructedness of gender. They remark on people's inability to realize the constructedness of gender as:

Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. Most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and the order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender". (146)

Though gender is a human production, most people do not believe it to be so. Because gender is so pervasive and deep rooted in people's mind, they perceive it to be natural phenomena.

Another popular sociologist Margaret Mead in his book *Sex and Temperament* claims that the history of sex – difference is filled with the arbitrary arrangements. In this book he announces the findings of his research conducted in three New Guinea cultures. In this Mead suggest that many so-called masculine and feminine characteristics are not based on fundamental sex difference but reflect the cultural conditioning of different societies. To support her theory, Mead introduces us to the three primitive tribes of New Guinea: the mountain dwelling Arapesh, the cannibalistic Mundugumor and the headhunters of Tchambuli. As Mead's study on these three tribes has discovered:

. . . Both men and women act as we expect men to act-in a mild, parental, responsive way; in the second both act as we expect men to act-in a fierce, initiating fashion; and in the third, the men act according to our stereotype for women-are 'catty', wear curls and go

shopping, while the women are energetic, managerial, unadorned partners. (265)

This finding suggests that there is no any natural connection between what we call feminine and masculine behavior with women and men respectively. The feminist thinkers and sociologists have proved by their researches and logics that the sex-difference cannot be basis for the gender difference.

The present thesis also, believing in the constructed nature of the gender difference draws heavily on the ideas of social constructionist theorist for the purpose of deciphering the hidden essentialist assumption of novel.

II. Deciphering Women's Position in *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*

i. The Novelist's Feminist Character

By attributing Ananya with some revolutionary and resistant characteristics Chetan Bhagat endeavors in the novel to create a little bit feminist type of picture of the female protagonist, Ananya. Nevertheless, his own involuntary essentialist treatment of other female characters and his expressed attitude towards women, keeps his attempt under the shadow of essentialism. Yet it is necessary for the present thesis, to observe the way Bhagat has attempted to give a feministic frame for the character, Ananya, in order to demonstrate the failure of his attempt. Bhagat also attempts to cast Ananya as freedom loving young girl. Ananya is a south Indian girl; to be precise she is a Tamil Brahmin. To be a Tamil Brahmin in India is to impose extra restrictions upon oneself because of their social custom, like if someone sincerely follows the norms, s/he do not drink alcohol and eat meat. But Ananya does not feel herself obliged to obey such custom. From the very beginning of the novel she begins to demonstrate her liberal attitude towards such cultural customs and values. Her conversation with Krish, the male protagonist or her classmates in IIMA, in the beginning of the novel, displays her objection to her own culture. As Krish puts it:

‘But Gandhi won us ‘freedom’, she said playing with the little onions.

‘What’s the point of getting people free only to put restriction on them?’

‘Point’, I said, ‘Are you South Indian?’

‘Tamilian, please be precise. In fact Tamil Brahmin, which is way different from Tamilians.’

‘And how exactly are Tamil Brahmins different?’

‘Well, for one thing, no meat and no drinking.’ She said as she gestured a cross with the chicken leg. (6)

In this conversation with Krish, Ananya is talking about the restriction that her belongingness to a particular racial group, Tamil Brahmin, has exerted upon her, but at the same time she is violating the custom by eating chicken.

As she cannot resist appetite for meat and drink, she violates the traditional norms of her society. In Krish’s room in Chennai where there is no possibility of interference by anyone in her fulfillment of desire, she gets Krish to bring some wine and meat for her: “I’ll try,” she says to Krish, “You will feed me chicken? I’m dying to have non-veg. And get beer, too” (98). As it is impossible to drink alcohol and meat in her home, she must repress her cravings for these items, but whenever the right opportunity emerges she grabs it with the great intensity. Once in Chennai, her violation of Tamilian Brahmin norms becomes conspicuous to other Tamilian friends of Krish, and then they become suspicious of the real origin of Ananya. They start questioning whether she is really a Tamilian Brahmin or not:

‘Tamilian?’ Ramanujan asked.

‘Yes’, I said, ‘Tamil Brahmin,’ I added the last two words to let them observe the sock at once.

‘Wow!’ all of them said in unison.

‘She drinks beer?’ Ramanujan said.

‘Yes’, I said and upturned the kitchen into bowl.

‘And chicken? What a kind of Brahmin is this?’ Sendil said. ‘And dude, don’t get non-veg. in this house.’ (100)

The house where Krish lives for some months in Chennai, is very strict on the matter of violation of rules of ‘no drink and no meat,’ but for Ananya such rules become

ineffective. So other inhabitants of the house are scandalized by her action and they do not take her as a decent girl.

On another occasion she expresses her desire to drink even in front of her both parents. Even, her father, Mr. Swaminathan does not drink alcohol freely in public places. Because of the fear of the stern comment from the neighbors and objection from his wife, he does not express his desire for the drinking. But his daughter does not hesitate to show her cravings for meat and drink, the food items which is strictly restricted in Tamil Brahmin society. Though it is the deviation of Tamil Brahmin codes of conduct she expresses her fearlessness even in the presence of her parents, when they are having lunch in a restaurant:

‘Sir, for cocktails, I’d recommend Kothamalli Mary,’ the waiter said.

‘Kotha-what?’ I asked.

‘It is like bloody Mary, sir, tomato juice and vodka, but with chettinad spices.’ I looked at uncle. He looked reluctant to nod for alcohol in front of his wife.

‘I want one’, Ananya said. Ananya's mother gave her a sharp look.

‘C’mon, just one cocktail,’ Ananya said. (181)

This very conversation shows that Ananya does not want to be prisoner of the cultural prohibitions.

Bhagat at many events tries to shape Ananya as different type of girl who is not like other traditional Indian girls. She has completed her MBA from IIT, staying in dormitory of the same college. After having finished MBA, she starts her career in marketing field in HLL, a surf producing company in Chennai. Earlier while studying in IIMA, she does not approve the idea that women should be able to handle the household chores by themselves. That is why she does not know how to prepare food

or delicious items for the family. The patriarchy believes in the natural differences between men and women, and on the basis of the same concept women are thought to be capable only of the household works. So women are confined to the four walls of their own house. But during her college time Ananya does not conform to such attitude. She does not involve herself in such minor household works. Krish narrates her inability to prepare meal as:

One weekend Ananya's mother feels ill and Ananya had to cook for the family courtesy a guilt trip from her mother. The food did not come out right, as Ananya's culinary experience is limited to making Maggi in my room and papads with clothes iron (yes, it works). This led to another guilt trip from Shobha aunty to Ananya's mother who blamed her for not bringing up her daughter right. (99)

Here, Ananya is unable to cook when her mother is ill because of which her mother is blamed for not bringing up her right by her relative, Shobha aunty.

Ananya believes in freedom of choice. So she does not want to be deprived of the right to choose the way of life she is going to live and the boy friend with whom she is going to spend her entire life. In Indian Hindu cultures girls are deprived of the right for choosing their life partner by their own accord. Parents often exert their parental authority and they get their daughters to marry with the boy they have selected. In *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, also there are many girls who do not dare to challenge their parents' decisions concerning their marriage. Minti, the cousin sister of Krish, and Dolly, to whom Krish is supposed to marry by her mother and maternal parents are among the girls who do not choose their life partner in their own accord rather they accept whatever decision is made by their parents. They are certainly the traditional type of characters. But in comparison to these characters,

Ananya stands out from the row of common girls. She does not show such loyalty and obedience for her parent, when the matters have much to do with her future. During her MBA study in IIMA, Ananya happens to meet Krish, they befriend with each other within few days, they become intimate within few weeks and they fall in love within few months. Then Ananya chooses Krish as her future husband, neglecting another boy with whom her parents want her to marry. She, along with Krish manages a meeting between Krish's mother and her both parents in order to introduce them with each other. And at that very event, to the consternation of her parents, she enthusiastically declares her emotional attachment with Krish even in front of her would-be-mother-in-law. She displays the audacity of her liberal characteristics. She wants to prove that she is not the kind of traditional girls, but a modern and liberal one. Krish, the narrator of the novel or the male protagonist, recounts the event as:

We sat down for lunch under a tree the ashram complex, looking like we were on death row. Everyone ate in silence as Ananya dropped the news. 'We like each other.' Everyone looked at each other in confusion. Most people did not like each other in this group. 'Krish and I, we like each other,' Ananya smiled. 'I told you. I smelt something fishy...' My mother tore her chapatti. 'There's nothing fishy. There's nothing to be worried about. We just wanted to share our happiness. We are just two people in love,' Ananya said as her mother interrupted her. (51-52)

Ananya displays that she is not an orthodox kind of girl who cannot express her choices in front of her parents. She openly declares that she is in an affair with Krish and most probably will marry with him. The above mentioned account of the event shows her courage to take decision by herself in the matters of marriage. Her parents

do not approve her choice earlier as they were persuading to marry her with a Tamilian boy Harish. But Ananya's perpetual resistance does not yield in front of her parents' will, thereby eventually obliging them to approve her irrevocable decision.

When Ananya was studying MBA in IIMA, there also she defied the rules of a Hindu culture by being sexually engaged with Krish before marriage. By doing so she also challenges the control over women's sexuality by society. She starts going in Krish's room at the college's hostel at night on pretext of combine study. After the period of one month they start having physical relationship frequently. They continue the activity in her room also. This would be an unforgivable sin for the traditional society of the country like India or any of the South Asian countries where premarital sex is still looked upon very critically. But society's norms and values could not impede the liberal steps of Ananya.

On some occasions Ananya's activities scandalize the members of former generation. Krish's mother or Ananya's would be mother-in-law, sometimes get scandalized by Ananya's defiant activities. Krish's mother sees, in her future daughter-in-law's behaviors, the lack of proper respect for in laws. She does not like the way she talked and behaved with her. Krish narrates:

‘You saw Ananya? Have you seen any girl talk to her mother-in-law like that?’ my mother demanded.

‘She is a little feminist type, I admit,’ I said.

‘She is telling me to apologize. Can you imagine Minti talking to Duke's mother like that?’

‘She is different. She is confident, independent and intelligent. . .’

(229)

Here, Krish himself is admitting the fact that Ananya is a little feminist type of girl.

Before marrying Ananya, Krish has the responsibility to convince his mother. To achieve this objective he arranges a situation, in which Ananya comes to his home in Delhi on pretext of attending the marriage ceremony of Krish's cousin sister, Minti. Ananya has to prove herself as a right daughter-in-law in the eyes of Krish's mother. But from the perspective of Krish's mother she lacked the qualities that a good daughter-in-law should possess. Krish's mother's disagreement is concerning Ananya's lack of respect for her, Ananya's incapability of preparing nice meal for the family and so on.

These events show that Krish's mother being a member of elder generation demands a traditional type of daughter-in-law. But on the contrary to her expectation, Ananya does not conform to the requirements of being a traditional house wife. Through these events the novelist, Bhagat has attempted to shape a modernist and feminist type of portrait of Ananya.

She not only violates the cultural norms and values, but she also shows her courage to defy the orthodox custom of dowry system in marriage, which has been a negative feature of Hindu culture since many years. The dowry system is traditional custom pertaining to the marriage, in which bride's parents have to provide money or other expensive household or other goods to the side of bridegroom. From the side of bride, they give very expensive goods also which is beyond their economic capacity, in an expectation that their daughter would get chance to be daughter-in-law of a wealthy family. Such tradition has being carried out by society even in Nepali society for many years ago.

In the novel, the context is of the same traditional society of Panjab, where Minti, Krish's cousin sister is going to marry with Duke, the son of a supposedly

wealthy family. On the wedding ceremony, the wedding abruptly comes to an unexpected stop. The main cause behind the halt, as it later becomes clear, is inability of Minti's father to provide a car to bridegroom. The knowledge of this very fact gives mental trouble to Ananya, who personally has nothing to do with the marriage of Minti. And she manages to negotiate with bridegroom along with other younger cousins of Krish. At last she successfully persuades the bridegroom to withdraw the demand for the expensive car. Then the wedding ceremony resumes its pace. This event also shows Ananya's level of understanding, intellectuality and capacity to influence the society. She personally does not support the dowry system in marriage. This very act not only supports for gaining approval of her marriage with Krish, but also indicates her reservation to the wrong conservative attitude of the society. In this way the novelist, Chetan Bhagat has given his full energy for the creation of a modern, liberal and feminist type of character, Ananya.

If observed outwardly, *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* can successfully mislead readers to a conclusion that the novel advocates for the feminist causes. Because one can easily misunderstand that by the means of character, Ananya the novel tends to protest the subordination of women in the patriarchal society. But if one delves in to the depth of the novel, this conclusion turns out to be only partially right but not right in entirety. The thesis provides the elaboration and explanation of how Bhagat's use of sexist language, his hidden attitude towards women and representation of other female characters undermine his own attempt to write a feminist novel. It will demonstrate that how Ananya from a feminist type of character gradually gets altered into a usual and normal kind of housewife, though not as traditional as the other conservative girls.

ii. Failure of the Novelist's Attempt

Besides Ananya, many of the female characters are casted in stereotypical way. Among them the most pathetic victim of oppressive patriarchy is Krish's mother, who has been suffering and living in an isolated world in her own home. She is a typical type of traditional woman, who is always occupied by the thought of well beings of family. She is living in Delhi with her husband but not in a position that can be of a wife but in such a condition that could be of a housemaid. She does care about the well beings of her husband every time but cannot get reciprocation. Since many years she has been living like this. They have been sharing the same house but she never got time to share her happiness, love and emotions with her husband, let alone the pains and sufferings. They have been living in the same house but as two strangers. On the other hand her husband, Krish's father is a cruel and emotionless man, who does not know the meaning of love. He is retired army personnel, now venturing into many professions, but unsuccessful in all of them. The relationship of this couple is bitter and very much similar to the relationship of ruler and ruled. Her status in the house has been of a non-paid worker. She has to take care of all of the household chores, like preparing meal, doing the dishes, washing all of the clothes, cleaning the house and so much works which women are supposed to do in patriarchal societies. She always does her best to make nice meal for her husband to keep him happy. But on the contrary to her maximum effort to handle the household, she never gets the good response from her husband. Krish's father is never seen acknowledging her efforts. Her husband never gives the equal status to her rather seeks the pretexts to comment on her work.

After having completed his study of MBA in IIMA in Ahmedabad, Krish returns home to Delhi for some times. Then once again he feels the plight of his

mother, in which she is enduring the chauvinistic oppression from his father. He narrates an event as:

‘Lunch?’ my mother asked.

My father did not answer. He came to the dining table and examined the food. ‘You call this food?’ he said.

I glared at him. ‘It took mom three hours to make it,’ I said.

My mother took out a plate for him.

‘I don’t want to eat this,’ my father said. (59)

On this event Krish's mother has prepared meal for Krish and his father as delicious as she can, spending whole three hours for the task. But Krish's father does not show a slightest display of thankfulness, rather behaves very stupidly. He dumps the food carelessly which Krish’s mother had prepared with her full effort.

This is a habit of boastful husbands in a patriarchy to keep their wives in a subordinated position. But the staggering fact in such events is that the wife does not raise a single action of resistance to her husbands’ oppression and violence upon them. In the novel, Krish's mother never utters a word of opposition and reservation for the unsatisfactory activities of her husband. In the mentioned event, she does not oppose her husband when he dumps the food she had prepared with full efforts. She does not object the stupid act of her husband rather remains silent. But it is Krish, who cannot tolerate the oppressive behavior of his father. He suddenly answers his action with the same manner. This fact is very significant that in the novel women are helpless creatures on the hands of their husbands. Krish's mother cannot resist the violence of husband means she has no power and vigor to raise voice against him. She has been casted as a helpless woman having no power to alter the situation in which she has been living. But on the contrary males are able to resist the evil and

oppression. She cannot speak against her husband but Krish can. He not only speaks against his father but also acts accordingly. He beats his father muscularly when he cannot bear the pain of seeing his mother being beaten by his father stupidly.

By casting Krish as powerful, protective and capable of resistance, the novel is indirectly promoting the ideology of patriarchy which assumes that women are naturally inferior to the men, that women have no courage, that they cannot speak by themselves and that they need another man to speak on their behalf. Here, Krish speaks or acts on the behalf of his mother when she is unable to do so. She is a helpless creature in front of her husband, so needs another man (Krish) to oppose the cruel man (her husband). In such situation Krish comes to protect her. In this subtle way the novel is reinforcing the idea that men are protective and women lack something. Sherry B Ortner, in her book *Making Gender*, talks about the way men and women are perceived by biological essentialists. She writes:

[Biological determinists would argue that] there is something, genetically inherent in the male of the species, that makes them the naturally dominant sex; that “something” is lacking in females, and as a result women are not only naturally subordinate but in general quite satisfied with their position, since it affords them protection and the opportunity to maximize maternal pleasures, which to them are the most satisfying experience of life. (25)

Essentialists believe that biologically there is ‘something’ lacking in females that is why they are naturally subordinate to males. On the other hand there is ‘something’ in males which make them dominant and protective. Women feel happy to live in an inferior position because they are protected by males.

The essentialist view, such as described by Ortner is circulated in *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* also. The protective behavior of Krish and helplessness of his mother suggests that woman cannot speak by herself against the oppressions because they have internalized their generally lower position in the society. Society is made in such a line of thought that it presupposes that because of the physical difference women and men are naturally polar opposites, where men are powerful and women are weak, men are intelligent and women are emotional and so many things which tend to inferiorize women. Women are thought to be physically weaker than their male counterparts.

In this regard the social constructionists have challenged ideas such as those which suggest that men's social dominance is justified because they are physically stronger. But, they argue, differences between women and men are largely social. Because women are thought to be less strong than men, they are generally given easier and lighter tasks. But Margerate Mead discovers that different cultures have different ideas about what tasks women and men should do. For example in many African cultures women do most of the heavy carrying and other hard labor, but this is thought less important than the lighter tasks men typically perform (23). She opines that ideas about what sort of physical tasks women and men are suited for differ from one culture to another. It is not the physical differences themselves but the social significance attached to them that determines what women and men do. This is an evidence of the fact that women are not necessarily less strong than men. But their task is considered less valuable. Marry Holmes describes Mead's idea as:

How different tasks are valued is important in determining how resources are allocated. Therefore if men's tasks are thought more valuable, then men are more likely to get what they need to grow big

and strong. Women's lack of power and prestige has often meant they get, or are expected to take, less food than men. Perhaps if over the last several centuries, sex differences in stature and strength would be all but non-existent. Also, the differences that do exist vary. Some women are stronger than some men; and there are different kinds of strength.

(28)

Mead proposes that physical differences are also developed throughout the history of human beings and are not certain and stable as it appears to be. She observes the history of the development of physical differences between women and men and discovers that culture has significant and essential role in the development of not only physical but all sorts of differences between male and female.

Holmes argues that among the other differences physical differences between women and men are also the product of society and outcome of the way society has been developing from its beginning. But still the problem is that the members of the patriarchy cannot acknowledge the constructed nature of the differences, rather they believe that the differences are natural and essential. Holmes shows the condition of the society as:

Other physical differences between the sexes are also open to interpretation, and there may be as many differences between two individual men as between a man and a woman. Nevertheless, social life continues to be organized along very gendered lines and the idea that physical differences between the sexes are significant is used to justify many injustices, especially injustices to women. Assumptions that women are also somehow or are psychologically, as well as

physically, 'lacking' have also been used to justify women's generally lower social position. (39)

Holmes argues that though women do strong works than men in some cultures, the works of women are not considered as important as men's. And women are perceived as psychologically as well as physically 'lacking' something in comparison to men. That is why women are considered to be inferior and subordinate to men.

In *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* also the idea that physical differences between sexes are significant is used to justify the lower social position of women. As Holmes argues, the tasks of women are considered less important in Indian cultures too. Krish's mother takes care of everything of household works, but is not given the respect that she deserves. Her tasks are considered to be valueless by her husband. Still she does not oppose him. When she is physically abused, she does not show courage to reciprocate. This powerlessness to resist her husband's any wrong doings is because of the feeling of inferiority in her mind, which emanated from the idea that physically she is less strong than her husband. The physical difference between sexes has been projected in the novel as natural and essential fact. The novelist seems not to be aware of the fact that the differences are not natural but cultural and constructed, that is why he takes help of Krish, to rescue his mother from the painful plight, for he supposes that men only are capable of revolting against brutal authority, and that women are not able to act as bravely as men do. Krish describes her mother's acceptance of her inferior status and his resistance to the brutality of his father as:

Slap . . . slap . . . my father interrupted my mother. I banged the door open as I heard a few more slaps. I saw my mother's hand covering her face. A piece of glass had cut her forearm. My father turned to me. 'Don't you have any manners? Can't you knock?' 'You don't teach me

manner,' I said. 'Go away,' he said. My father lifted his hand to hit me. Automatically, I grabbed his wrist tight. 'Oh, now you are going to raise your hand against your own father,' he said. I twisted his arm. 'Leave him, he won't change,' my mother panted. I shook my head at her, my eyes staring right into his. I slapped his face twice, then my hand into a fist and punched his face. (166-167)

Here, Krish's mother is presented as a helpless creature who surrenders to her husband's physical violence with resignation and who is unable to react strongly. On the other hand, because Krish is a man, he has to display his aggression and physical vigor in order to prove himself a 'proper man'.

The very concept of the behavioral difference between men and women is embedded in the novel that is why not only Krish but also his father can be seen in contrast with his mother. In contrast to her feminine demureness and vulnerability, the men characters possess the qualities that society conceives to be masculine, like aggressiveness, activeness, protective etc. Ervine Goffman regarding the process of maintaining gender difference talks about the concept of 'display' of gender. He elaborates how gender is produced as an unequal relation between men and women but made to seem natural because of the people 'display' their gender. The concept of 'display' is conceived by him as events indicating the identity, intent, expectations and relations of members of particular gender. He assumes that all of the members of society display their respective gender through their interaction with others. His approach to gender assumes that people are all actors, trying to perform their best role of femininity and masculinity. People know how to play the part of man and women. This approach is called dramaturgical approach to gender (Holmes 120). Referring to his idea, Holmes writes:

We keep seeing men displaying themselves as strong and superior, and women displaying themselves as delicate and childlike. We come to believe that this is natural. Gender is an illusion we create when we interact with each other. (53)

She says that “we follow script which lay down the gender norms about what our ‘nature’ as women and men should be” (54). By the means of gender display, men always want to establish their superiority upon women. They always keep on displaying themselves as superior where as women keep on displaying themselves as inferior by accepting to be delicate and childlike.

In *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* Krish's mother's acts of not opposing her husband's physical violence or accepting the stupidity very calmly can be perceived as the display of her feminine delicacy. On the other hand either Krish's father's behavior of taming her as a mere slave or Krish's protecting her mother from his father's stupidity, both are the display of the masculinity. This event not only demonstrates the unequal status of women and men in society, but also shows the way men and women become accustomed to their parts of acting while displaying gender. In this way it becomes clear that individuals themselves reinforce the differential relationship among sexes, thereby strengthening the essentialist concept of gender distinction.

On an occasion, Krish's father again shows his masculine aggressiveness, while his wife maintains the femininity intact. When Krish was in affair with Ananya, he wanted her to be the daughter-in-law of his parents. He expressed his wish to his mother but his father was in oblivion to all these matters. Krish's mother persuades Krish to marry with Dolly rather than Ananya. Though Krish is reluctant to see Dolly, his mother arranges a meeting between them. When Krish's father knows all these

matters happening without his being informed, he suddenly comes to temper. His temper is not because of the fact that Krish is going to marry but because no one of the family has informed or beg consent from him. His superiority in the family is being challenged. He does not want anything in the family happen without his approval. He even does not give permission to Krish's mother to watch television and bring her relatives home. He arrogantly declares: "In this house, I make the decisions" (70). Krish narrates the event as:

He picked up a crystal glass and smashed it on the floor. The violence intended at my mother had to come out somehow. 'You sure seem mature enough to take them,' I said and moved towards kitchen. 'Don't walk bare foot,' my mother called out. She bent to pick up the splintered shards. Anger seethed within me. Not only at my father, but also my mother; how could she get away this and starts cleaning up calmly? (70)

To display his masculine rancor Krish's father smashes the crystal glass on the floor. By this ferocity, which is caused by the challenge to his authority, he wants indirectly to threaten Krish and his mother. But on the very occasion, Krish's mother does not show any anger rather she calmly acts as pacifier. As a human being, she also has the similar kinds of humanly feelings of pain, anger, ferocity or so on. But here she is not as equally angry as her husband because she is a woman. And if we believe in the essential differences between sexes, she has to be calm, tender, delicate, loving, nurturing and caring that is why even in such a critical condition she acts very calmly. As Krish puts it:

My mother came to my room after cleaning up the glass in the living area. ‘You let him do this, so he does it. Why did you have to start cleaning up?’ I sulked.

‘Because he’ll break the other glasses, too. . . Don't worry. I can manage him.’ (71)

So, Krish’s mother is conforming to the idea about the femininity or natural differences between sexes. She is strengthening the idea that women are naturally, loving, caring, nurturing and delicate, which qualities are clearly in opposition with masculine qualities. This shows how women conform to the concept of femininity and men act to be masculine.

Though the femininity and masculinity seems to be natural and essential traits of respectively women and men, it has been argued or proved by social science that the differences are social construct, that gender has nothing to do with the genetic, physiological and hormonal differences. Judith Lorber sees gender as process, stratification and structure. She maintains that as a social institution gender is a process of creating distinguishable social statuses. As a part of stratification system, such structure ranks those statuses unequally. Therefore gender is a major building block of the social structures built on those unequal statuses. To answer the question how does society creates and maintains gender, she takes gender as a process. She writes:

As a process, gender creates the social differences that define “woman” and “man.” In social interaction throughout their lives, individuals learn what is expected, act and react in expected ways, and simultaneously construct and maintain the gender order. (6)

In Lorber's view the task of gendering starts from the birth of the child. Parents assign the child in certain sex category by acknowledging the child's sexual organs. Then the process of gendering goes on until the death of the person. Talking about the way gender is produced by the society she posits:

Parenting is also gendered, with different expectations for mothers and for fathers, and people of different genders work at different kinds of jobs. The work adult do as mothers and fathers and low-level workers and high-level bosses, shapes women's and men's life experiences, skills – ways of being that we call feminine or masculine. All of these processes constitute the social construction of gender. (2)

Lorber argues that every society classifies people as “girl and boy children”, “girls and boys ready to get married” and “fully adult men and women”. Society constructs similarity among them and differences between them, and assigns them to different roles and responsibilities. And personality, characteristics, feelings, motives and ambitions flow from these different life experiences that is why the members of these different groups become different kinds of people. The things that legitimize this very process of gendering and its outcome are religion, law, science and the society's entire set of values.

After observing Krish's mother's behaviors on the light of Lorber's arguments it becomes clear that her personality, characteristics and feelings are different than the personality, characteristics and feelings of her husband due to the distinct gendered situations in which they had been brought up. As society has great role in the production of gender, Krish's mother also cannot escape from the patriarchal programming of the society. The gender upbringing of her has molded her as a

nurturing and loving mother, caring wife and tender, vulnerable, delicate and emotional woman.

Likewise in shaping Krish's father's personality and characteristics the patriarchy has played an important role. His aggression, carelessness and commanding nature has much to do with the structure of society that is built on the basis of hierarchy, in which men are always in upper position than women. Such characteristics which are possessed by Krish's father are enough for our society to declare him a 'proper man' as society associates masculinity with men as their natural trait. Krish displays himself as protective being when he sees his mother being slapped by his father. This protective nature is always associated with masculinity. When he feels his mother's helpless plight, he becomes protector. He persuades his mother to leave his father's house and live with him in another place, so that she would not suffer more physical and mental violence from her husband. But she does not accept the offer, as she is accustomed to that violence as the necessary and inevitable part of her life. Though her husband neglects her existence in the house, she still wants to live in the same house with the same person. The following conversation shows how easily she ignores her son's suggestion to leave her husband. As Krish puts it:

‘You have to leave him,’ I said after we composed ourselves.

‘It’s not that simple,’ she said.

‘I will earn now,’ I said.

‘I and fine. . . I can handle him. It is you, who gets angry and fights with him,’ my mother said. (71)

In the instance Krish's mother is reluctant to the idea of abandoning her husband in spite of her son's request to live with him. It displays that she has internalized the

lower and inferior position in society and house. She has been programmed by patriarchy to consider it natural that men are the doer and leader of everything and that they are superior to women in every aspects of life. So that instead of thinking about leaving her husband she suggests Krish not to be angry with his father. It takes great effort to alter the inferiority complex of his mother for Krish for society shapes every person's mind in accordance with its prevalent ideology.

Besides Krish's mother the most women of *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* accepts the natural subordination of women to the men. All of them are filled with the essentialist thinking. Shipra masi, Pammi aunty, Dolly and Radha aunty are some of the women who had appropriated themselves with patriarchal ideology. Shipra masi, a middle aged woman, is Krish's mother's sister who wants Krish to marry with a Panjabi girl, Dolly. She is married with a wealthy man, so she is satisfied with her life. But she time and again comments on the poor conditioning of her sister, Krish's mother. She opines that because Krish mother chose education, virtue and the nature of profession over wealth, she has been suffering throughout the life. She says to Krish's mother: "You are making the mistake again. You chose an army person for your own marriage. You said they are sacrificing people. We have seen how much you have spent your life in misery and poverty" (67). Krish further narrates his auntie's attitude as:

My mother nodded as she accepted her elder sister's observation.

Shipra masi had married rich. Her husband, a sanitary-fittings businessman, had struck gold building toilets. My mother had valued stupid things like virtue, education and nature of profession, and suffered. (68)

Here, the conclusion of both women is that a girl should choose, a rich husband. They do not consider the other aspects of an unhappy marriage but only focus on the wealth. This is also an acceptance of their inferior mentality.

Shipra masi do not see the possibility of a girl being independent and living on her own income. Rather, in her view girl should make a right choice for her future husband in terms of wealth so that her future would be secure. She is not the only woman who thinks in such traditional way. There is another woman, Pammy aunty, who is more conventional than others.

Pammy aunty thinks that her future son-in-law should be rich enough to keep her daughter, Dolly happy. Dolly also follows the same line of thought. She has not studied well, does not go to college for study and is learning the basic skill of computer now. The mother and daughter both do not give value to education. Pammy aunty's only worry is concerned to the problem of getting a rich son-in-law. These women do not want to give girl the proper education and make them self-dependent. They have not understood the fact that the main cause behind the oppression of husbands is the lack of self-dependency of women. If women become self-dependent then it will be the first step of their liberation from their oppressive husbands. But Pammy aunty, Shipra masi and even Dolly do not understand the actual cause behind women's suffering rather they just focus on finding a rich bridegroom. Pammy aunty does not give proper education to Dolly, and Dolly also does not show interest in acquiring education means she does not want to be independent, thereby letting herself to be a plaything into the hands of her rich husband. These women do not think about giving education to girl and having good job and being independent. Their reluctance to the idea of getting job and being independent assures their dependence upon their husbands' inherited wealth or income and their lower position in the house.

There are many evidences within *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* which shows that Bhagat unintentionally conforms to the essentialist notion of gender. From its first page to the end of the novel there are abundances of instances which indicate the novelist's inability to escape from the traditional and orthodox perspective towards women, which after all helps to reinforce the very idea into the mind of the readers.

In *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* the voice of the narrator, who himself is one of the protagonists, plays a significant role in establishing the attitude of the entire novel. Krish has very conservative type of attitude towards women. Though apparently he seems to hold a progressive attitude, actually he is not progressive regarding the issue of gender differences. As the society has significant role in shaping his attitude, he cannot get rid of the grip of patriarchal ideology. In shaping one's thought, personality and attitude society has a great deal to do with individuals (Tyson 118). If we go thoroughly into the novel, the influence of patriarchal ideology can be traced in *Two State: The Story of My Marriage*. On some occasion it expresses its prejudice obviously and on another occasion it needs minute observation to decipher the patriarchy's influence in the novel. The overall evaluation of the novel makes it apparent that the novel bears an essentialist notion, thereby disseminating the very notion to the readers.

In most of the places, the narrator Krish has been standing in the novel as the promoter of the very attitude. Time and again he keeps on expressing his patriarchal view towards women throughout the novel. As he puts it: "I learnt three facts about women: a) they never lose track of how they look, b) they help each other out by giving instructions in any way possible; and c) they can multi task" (204). Here, the context is that Krish is in a wedding ceremony of his cousin sister Minti and

observing the behaviors of the girls in the wedding. As a loyal member of patriarchy, he is expressing his attitude regarding the nature of women.

He sees his other cousins and Ananya also spending time in talking and commenting upon the appearance of each other. They also instruct each other if the costume is not worn properly. Then they adjust the clothes according to the suggestions. These activities of girls, Krish thinks, are not exclusive to his cousin sisters but these are the common trait of entire women race. In the mentioned description, it is apparent that he believes that women always get involved into the petty matters, like they keep on concentrating on the appearance of themselves. This is the evaluation of Krish about women which he keeps in three clear points. This very evaluation, which Krish makes about women, is based on the patriarchal notion of women. Patriarchy always places men at the higher position than women in the hierarchy of the social system. So it is the patriarchal ideology which makes us to think that it is natural for women to be engaged into trivial matters, that is why women are more concerned to the clothes, decoration of room, appearance of themselves and such many things which men think they are reluctant to. Men are not made to do such insignificant matters, they are to be leaders. Men are intelligent than women. So they have much serious things to be worried about. This very idea has been circulated throughout the society by patriarchy. Krish's cousin sisters Tinki and Nikki are shown to be conforming to this male ideology whole-heartedly. For the purpose of displaying girls less intelligent human beings, Krish narrates their interest in trivial matters:

‘You are blushing,’ Tinki said and turned to Ananya. ‘I love your earrings. Where did you get them from?’

‘Combicora,’ Ananya said.

‘Where is that?’ Tinki said. . . Nikki scolded her sister and turned to me, ‘Your girlfriend is so pretty. And her sari is also so beautiful. (202-203)

It also shows that girls lack the quality of right judgment. Because they tend to judge people by looking at their outer appearance, they are likely to be deceived by wrong people.

By providing such picture of women’s lack of proper judgment, the novel wants to establish a constructed fact that women are naturally less intelligent than men. In the novel not only the young girls like Nikki and Tinki are shown to be involving in very trivial and insignificant matters but old women also are shown to be behaving in the same way. Such indulgence into trivial matters is perceived as feminine by society. In the novel a seventy year old woman also shows her interest in judging clothes in spite of her diminishing eyesight. As Krish narrates it:

I came inside my compartment, which the ladies had turned into a sari shop. The entire lower berths were filled with the dresses everyone planned to wear for each of the functions.

‘This is beautiful,’ my seventy-year-old distant aunt said as she fondled a magenta sari with real gold-work. Women never get too old for admiring saris. (248)

The old woman also has not changed her behavior of involving in the task of appreciation of good saris. These kinds of behaviors are associated with the concept of femininity. Another example of how girls are interested in shallow and surface things. And how men do not want to involve in such trivial things can be found in the following description of his room by Krish comparing it with Ananyas’s:

Unlike her room, there was no aesthetic appeal to mine. I had left the red bricks bare, and they looked like prison walls . . . My desk only had books, unlike Ananya's who always had cut flowers from campus lawn or arty incense holders or other objects that men never put on their shopping lists. (23)

By comparing the decoration of his room with Ananya's, the narrator presumes a natural difference between the behaviors of women and men. His assumption is that, to decorate and manage things properly is the feminine quality which women get naturally and which men lack because they think it is the only the task of the women.

Tyson notes that the concept of femininity has great role in keeping women in inferior position. The concept of femininity, in Tyson's view, disempowers women and stops them from being like men. The femininity hinders on way of women's development in every sphere of life. It works as the unseen bridle on their eyes of mind. This very concept of femininity is constructed by patriarchy for the purpose of maintaining the male dominance in the society. As Tyson argues:

Whenever patriarchy wants to undermine a behavior, it portrays that behavior as feminine. It is important to note, too. That the patriarchal concept of femininity – which is linked to frailty, modesty, and timidity – disempowers women in the real world: it is not feminine to succeed in business, to be extremely intelligent, to earn big bucks, to have strong opinions, to have a healthy appetite (for anything), or to assert one's rights. (88)

Tyson argues that one behaves in the 'feminine' or 'masculine' way, not because of the natural necessity but because one is taught to behave in those certain ways.

Female characters Nikki, Pinty and even the 'seventy-year-old distant aunt' are

behaving in feminine way, because they have learned to do so from the patriarchal society. In the novel they are never seen doing hard or intelligent works supposed to be suited for men. Tyson believes that women behave in the so-called feminine way not because it is natural for them to do so but because they have learned to do so and because they are 'programmed' by patriarchy to act in the certain ways.

The character, Nikki is of the opinion that girls are less intelligent than boys. She becomes surprised when she knows that Ananya has been in IIMA for the study of MBA. She has internalized the idea that girls cannot study in IIMA because it is too hard and almost impossible for them. Being surprised by the fact that Ananya went to IIMA she asks Ananya: "You went to IIMA, no? You must be so intelligent. Can girls get into IIMA?" "Of course, why not? What's got to do with being a girl?" (203), Ananya said. Nikki seems to have internalized women's inferiority that is why she is surprised by the fact that Ananya has went to IIMA. She holds the typical essentialist idea about women and men. For her women cannot be as intelligent as men are.

By Nikki's attitude we become certain that she believes that the differences between women and men are natural. The fact that women think themselves to be less intelligent than men suggests that men only are not the agents of the patriarchal ideology, but men and women both contribute to sustain the patriarchal ideology. Lois Tyson offers an example of the way little girls are programmed to think that they are less logical/intelligent than boys. Taking reference of American society she says that little girls are told early in their educational careers that they cannot do math. Though they are not told directly in words they are indirectly told so by parents, teachers or friends through "body language, tone of voice, and facial expression of adults and peers" (87). Tyson further argues that girls are often rewarded for failing math. Their

parents do not worry when they fail in math; rather the girls “receive ready sympathy and other debilitating though enticing payoffs for being feminine” (87). This shows that being less logical or being failed in math is considered to be special trait or the proof of femininity. If girls managed to do well in math, they are considered exceptions to the rule. Though this very example is of the context of American society, every patriarchal society programs women’s sense of inferiority in the similar ways. In Tyson’s view:

Girls are programmed to fail. Then the patriarchal mind-set points to girls’ lower test scores in math and their failure to become math majors as proof that they are biologically ill-suited to mathematical studies, which, given the close relationship between math and logic, suggests that females are less logical than males. In other words, patriarchy creates the failure that it then used to justify its assumptions about women. (87)

As Nikki presupposes that women are less intelligent and less logical than men; Krish’s father also believes that women are less tolerant than men. Nikki and Krish’s father are two characters of different gender, but similarity among them is that their assumption of women is same. Krish’s father’s attitude can be clearly seen in the following description narrated by Krish:

‘Don’t beg mom,’ I said, following a lump in my throat. My father had made fun of me earlier for crying. To him, only weak men cried.
‘Look at his voice, like a girl’s,’ my father mocked. He gave me a disgusted glance and went to the bathroom to change. (166)

Here is the clear view of Krish’s father’s assumptions about difference between women and men. This is not only his personal assumption but it also represents the

perspective of whole society. There are certain roles to be performed by women and men differently. According to this traditional gender assumption men are supposed to be physically powerful and emotionally stoic, where as it is supposed natural for women to be emotionally as well as physically weak. To cite Tyson again regarding the subject:

Because traditional gender roles dictate that men are supposed to be strong . . . they are not supposed to cry because crying is considered a sign of weakness, a sign that one has been overpowered by one's emotions. For similar reasons, it is considered unmanly for men to show fear or pain or to express their sympathy for other men. (87)

Tyson argues that in patriarchy, men and women are perceived as two opposite beings. In patriarchy everything that is connected with men implies something negative about women. The anger and violent emotions are supposed to be the property of men. And the behaviors forbidden to men are considered womanish, inferior and "beneath the dignity of manhood." Tyson says: "clearly, one of the most devastating verbal attacks to which a man can be subjected is to be compared to a woman" (88). In the mentioned abstract *Two States: The Story of My Marriage*, Krish's father is comparing Krish with a woman. So he is giving him the bitterest insult imaginable to a patriarchal man.

The narrator is one of the main actors, who contribute to sustain patriarchal ideology. His traditional assumption of women is apparent in his dialogues. On one occasion he relates women with tears as:

My mother did not answer in words. She responded in nuclear weapons. Tears rolled down her cheek.

‘Oh please,’ I said.

My mother did not respond. She switched to her favorite soap where a son was throwing his old parents out of his house. She cried along with the TV parents, correlating their situation to hers. (227)

Here, the novelist portrays Krish's mother as a very weak and emotional human being. Not only he displays Krish's mother as a feminine women, but he also sees a natural bond between tears and women.

In Krish's mother's case we can see how easily she identifies herself with the pathetic characters of a TV serial and begins weeping. Krish associated Ananya also with the tears. His attitude is that tear is the inseparable parts of women. This is their ultimate weapon to attack others. As Krish puts it: “. . . both women stared at me with tear-ready eyes, ready to shoot their ultimate emotional laser weapon” (229). In these both examples he uses the words ‘weapon (nuclear/laser)’ with women's ‘tears’. It means that women are physically and emotionally so weak that the only means they can resort to for attacking is the ‘tears’. There is an irony in bringing the two exclusive terms ‘tear’ and ‘weapon’ together. Tear cannot be used as weapon in its literal sense. The tears often suggest the weakness and helplessness. The narrator is satirizing the nature of women of being unnecessarily emotional on the wrong occasions and their nature of being easily overpowered by little matters. He believes that they are not stronger and stoic in comparison to men. So their only weapon is the tears. This is how he holds a traditional assumption about women throughout the novel.

The narrator not only sees women as the opposite beings of the men, he takes them to be a kind of commodity. For him, women are things to have fun with. He declares openly “chicken, beers, ladies friends . . . these three things are what men live for anyway” (104). He equals girls with commodity which have it value as long

as it is useful for people. In the upper mentioned dialogues he has compared ladies with beer and chicken. This is an example of his humiliating altitude. Similarly he compares girls with 'a chocolate cake.' When Ananya asks him if a boy could be just friend with a girl, he answers her like this: "Absolutely not, I thought. Why would any guy want to be only friends with a girl? It's like agreeing to be near a chocolate cake and never eat it. It's like sitting in a racing car but not driving it" (9). The narrator in these instances is comparing women with some food items which are especially related with entertainment and relaxation such as beer, chicken, chocolate cake, and car. This obviously shows his attitude towards women. By comparing women with such stuffs he is lessening their status from human being to the object of entertainment.

This is an instance of how women are commodified in patriarchy. There is a tendency of taking women as mere commodity in the patriarchy. Moreover men have an attitude that women are objects to be looked at. Though women also can have the same talents as men, men often give priority to their body. They are gazed by male - eyes and thought to be appropriate objects to be gazed upon. Not only in this novel but in every cultural production like comics, film, TV programs, and many other products there can be seen the influence of the male point of view (Tyson 85). Tyson argues that even today in the Hollywood films, scenes are photographed from the male point of view as if the movie goers are only males. In the novel, male characters hold the very traditional assumption about women. The character, Bala, who is manager of City bank or is Krish's boss, expresses the idea as:

'Is she good? Have you heard her sing?'

'Sort of '

'Sort of ?' Bala stood up and walked towards his window.

‘Is she hot?’ Bala said, ‘like good looking?’ (152)

In the conversation Bala and Krish are talking about Ananya’s mother. They are going to present her as a new singer in their music concert. But what is noticeable here is Bala gives more priority on her looks than in her on her singing talent.

The conversation shows that Bala takes women as appropriate things to be looked at. And women need not have talent if they have good looks for succeeding in professions. This very idea is confirmed by a female character Smitha also at the same event. In the music concert she comes on stage in a provocative dress conforming to the idea that women are objects to be looked at and have fun with.

The crowd applauded as the extra busty Smitha came on stage. She wore a low-cut blouse, a tad too deep for Citibank sensibilities . . .

‘What is she wearing?’ Ananya said.

Krish says:

‘It is a little provocative, I admit.’

‘Her cleavage is so big; she can use it to hold the mike. Hands-free.’

Ananya whispered . . . (177)

In this instance Smitha is conforming to the idea that women are the objects to be looked at by wearing provocative dress and by attracting males' attention not by her performance but by her provocative appearance.

The narrator’s traditional assumption about women expresses itself also when he forces dress code for Ananya. After they become intimate in IIMA, he does not want Ananya to wear short shirts. He comments her as: “your shorts are too short” (18). In reply she says that she does not want anyone telling her what to wear or do. She says to Krish, “. . . intelligent people don’t like to be told what to wear or do, especially when they are adults . . . Don’t patronize me” (20). But Krish thinks that

girls wear fewer clothes just to attract the attention of the people. In spite of her opposition, Ananya is obliged to follow his dress code. It means she is defeated by the power of Krish's patriarchal mentality that women should be kept under the control of men and that men should decide for their wives or girlfriends what to do or wear. The following extract displays how Ananya agreed to follow the dress code imposed by her boyfriend: "She had changed into black track pants and an oversized full-sleeve black T-shirt. She was covered up enough to go for a walk in Afghanistan" (19). Though formerly Ananya opposes Krish's control over the matter of what to wear or not, she eventually follows his rules of the dress code. It demonstrates that she also cannot revolt against the pervasive patriarchal ideology.

Ananya also conforms to the assumption that women cannot protect themselves in the face of difficulty and that she needs someone "safe-zone-guy" (8) who can protect her. She says that she had befriended with Krish, because she needed some "safe-zone-guy". To cite her own words: "I need some friends here. And you seemed like a safe-zone-guy. Like the kind of guy who could just be friend with girl, right?" (8). Ananya also needs some 'safe-zone-guy' means she is unable to protect herself. So a 'man' is needed. This attitude eventually leads to the conclusion that men are naturally strong and protective and women are naturally vulnerable and weak. The novelist casts Krish as protective, strong and courageous and Ananya as caring and loving girl which reinforces the patriarchal attitude.

On an occasion when Krish and Ananya was about to marry, they discuss about the way to be undertaken. Both accept the fact they do not want to elope. But the interesting fact is that they have their own reasons for not choosing the way of elopement. As Krish puts it:

‘ . . . What if I did ask you to elope?’

‘I would not know what to do. I don’t want to hurt them. I already have by choosing a Punjabi mate . . . I want them to smile on my marriage since I was a child. What about you?’ I thought for a minute. ‘I don’t want to elope,’ I said.

‘Why?’

‘It’s too easy . . .’ (102)

Ananya does not want to elope because she does not want to hurt her parents. She wants them to smile on her wedding. She thinks that she has already hurt them by choosing Krish as her future husband. That is why she does not want to elope. On the other hand, Krish does not want to elope not because of the fear that his parents would be hurt, but because he thinks it is too easy for him. This is an example of how the novelist has casted women and men in different ways.

Ananya worries about her parents’ happiness along with her own. She does not want to hurt them, means she cares and loves them as equally as she does to Krish. It proves that she is caring, emotional and loving. But Krish does not care, in this regard, of his parents. Rather he is concerned about the easiness of the task of elopement. He displays here, the attitude that man should display his courage by choosing the difficult path of the life. Men are not similar to women in regard to the courage and strength, so it is compulsory for men to show their masculinity on the right occasion. This very assumption is reflected in the above mentioned abstract from the novel, when Krish opines that he does not want to elope because it is too easy. Tyson notes that “such care giving and nurturing traits are not a role biologically linked to [female] sex although many people long have believed it to be.” (110)

Though Ananya shows reluctance for the household works later she gradually learns cooking and other household things in Krish’s home. This means she comes to

the point of accepting the fact that though women do job outside home they are also responsible for the management of household stuffs. This kind of realization can be taken as the signal of her conformation to the traditional gender roles. He also has negative attitude about the girls who roams around with someone at night. Though Krish concedes that Ananya is a little bit feminist type of girl, he accepts that a girl who roams around someone at night cannot be a nice girl. While Mr. Punnu asked him, “How is she [Ananya] a nice girl, if she is roaming around you?” He thinks that “he [Mr. Punnu] had a valid point” (105). It means he thinks from the male point of view regarding the control over women’s sexuality. He had accepted Ananya’s violation of rules only because it was in his convenience.

The narrator’s selection of words also displays his prejudice upon women which indicates that he has a concept about femininity in his mind. He recounts his first meeting with Ananya as:

Most of IIM girls are above of shallow things like make-up, fitting clothes, contact lenses, removal of facial hair, body odor and feminine charm. Girls like Ananya, if and when they arrive by freak chance, become instant pin-ups in our testosterone-charged, estrogen-starved campus. (1)

Two things are noticeable here, one is his concept of femininity and other is his concept of the relationship between some hormones and male/female bodies. He relates things like make-up, fitting clothes, contact lenses, removal of facial hair and body odor with feminine charm. But this is a very false concept that these things are related only to females. There are many males who do make-up, wear fitting clothes use body odor, remove facial hair and so on. To associate these things with femininity is very conventional attitude. Another thing in the extract is he implies that the

hormone testosterone is linked with masculinity and estrogen is related with femininity. It becomes clearer when he obviously links estrogen with femininity: “. . . Ananya stood there, her face equally wreathed in tears. When estrogen attacks you on all sides, there is not much you can do” (227).

Krish, the narrator presupposes that it is all due to the hormones called estrogen that women are unnecessarily emotional and men are arrogant because of their possession of the testosterone hormones in their body. Testosterone is considered to be male hormone as estrogen is considered as female hormone. This is physical fact that the amount of testosterone is more in male body than in female body. Likewise in female body there is estrogen hormone more than in male body (Holmes 24). But this physiological fact has been distorted and fictional truth is produced that men are naturally aggressive because of their excessive possession of testosterone. If a male exhibits an inappropriately aggressive behavior he is said to ‘have too much testosterone’ (Tyson109). It means aggressive behavior in male is an instinct rather than a product of “social factors like, upbringing, psychological dynamics in the home, exposure to the dangerous environment outside the home, and the like” (109). Referring to Robert M. Sapolsky, a researcher Tyson argues that there is no research indicating that increased testosterone levels cause aggression. Research indicates that testosterone does not elevate aggression. Sapolsky argues:

Rather, aggression elevates testosterone secretion . . . excessive amounts of testosterone, can *exaggerate* the aggression that’s already there but it does not *cause* aggression. In other words, testosterone permits aggression to occur only if that aggression is elicited by the social factors and environment in which [aggression] occurs. (qtd. In Tyson 109)

According to the finding of Sapolsky's research testosterone is not the cause of the aggression but it can only increase the aggression which is already there in male body, because of the several social factors and environment. These facts undercut the narrator's assumption about the men and women as former naturally aggressive and the latter naturally emotional being.

On another occasion the narrator is seen conforming to the patriarchal gender attitude about female sexuality. The language can be means for the maintenance of the repressive attitude towards women's sexuality in our society. As Tyson notes:

The persistence of repressive attitude towards women's sexuality is still visible in our language today. . . For example, we use the negative word *slut* to describe a woman who sleeps with a number of men while we use the positive word *stud* to describe a man who sleeps with a number of women. (91)

The control over women's sexuality is a fact of the society, which does not control over men's sexuality as strictly as it does over women's. In this process language plays significant role to reinforce the same regressive attitude.

The attitude such as described by Tyson can be seen in *Two States: The Story of My Marriage* also. As Ananya says: "My, my, my! We have a stud here . . . Pretty? Prettier than me?" (27). And on another occasion Krish says: "Like it always happen, I earned the tag of a stud. And she earned tags ranging from stupidly-in-love to slut" (29). In the context of the novel the narrator by accepting and using the same prejudiced language is accepting the patriarchal attitude about women's sexuality. If women do not conform to the society's norms of sexuality they are discarded by the whole society but men are not restricted by those norms. That is why society uses word like 'stud' for men, which has positive connotation and 'slut' for women, which

has very negative connotation. This is how the language shapes and influences our perception towards things.

We can also find the cultural habit of seeing male experience as universal in the novel, when Bhagat, the novelist uses the word 'man' to refer to 'human being'. In this stance also language plays significant role for maintaining the habit of seeing male experience as universal as if male experience is only and all inclusive experience of the human beings. For an instance the novelist writes such types of expressions like "every stuffing imaginable to man was available in dosa form" (86), and on another occasion he narrates as: "I could bet one month of my after tax . . . that Manju would crack IIT medical or any draconian entrance exam known to man" (120). Here, the narrator describes things only from the point of view of male. In the phrases like 'imaginable to man' and 'known to man' he uses 'man' actually to mean the entire human being. But because he has cultivated the habit of seeing everything from the male perspective he uses the word 'man'.

The novelist's prejudiced perspective towards women is also apparent when he associates some particular temperament exclusively with men. As he narrates an event: "I asked with an idiotic, confused expression exclusive to men when they have to get all meaningful with women" (31). This sentence assumes an instinctual difference between women and men. "Expression exclusive to men" disregards the fact that women also can have the same expression as men have. Furthermore the hidden assumption is that the women have different kinds of feelings, emotions and expression exclusive to them, which are totally dissimilar to men's. The same attitude is also expressed in Krish's dialogues also. He assumes that girls are not capable of understanding the experience of boys. Krish says: ". . . I am not being funny. You girls don't know what it is like to be a guy" (25).

Beside these evidences, the most striking evidence of the novelist's hidden assumption about women can be traced in his stereotypical representation of women. Throughout the novel men cannot be seen crying by being overwhelmed by emotions. On the contrary to them, women are seen weeping many times. On the most emotional moments for women Krish only "gets a lump in his throat" but never weeps openly. Besides Krish's 'getting a lump in his throat', no men are overpowered by emotional feelings. On the other hand women can be seen crying and 'having moist eyes' (127) either at the moment of happiness or at the moment of sadness.

This suggests that women do not need the greater amount of pain or extreme feeling of happiness to cry. The little pain or happiness is sufficient for them to be overpowered by emotions. But at the moments when women weep by being overwhelmed by emotions men do not display the slightest sign of being influenced by such matters. They pretend nothing has happened. As Krish narrates an event:

What, Radha?' Suruchi aunty said as she put a hand on Amma's shoulder.

'Nothing, I am so happy. I am crying for that,' she said . . . all the other aunts had moist eyes. (127)

On this occasion Ananya's parents and other relatives are talking about Ananya's marriage. They are going to fix the dates and talking about other arrangement for the engagement. At the very moment, being over emotional by the happiness Ananya's mother starts crying then abruptly she is accompanied by all of the females present there. But at the moment the men pretend as if nothing had happened.

This is the one of the occasions among many where the novelist's essential attitude is visible. Throughout the novel, men can be seen crying nowhere. Among the main female characters: Ananya, Krish's mother and Ananya's mother Radha aunty

each is seen crying frequently. To count the events when they are displayed crying, the sum reaches more than nineteen. But there is no any single occasion throughout the novel where men can be seen crying openly except for the Krish's 'getting a lump in his throat' some times and his crying once.

The novelist not only portrays women as emotionally vulnerable being but he also encourages them to be so by saying such things: "despite her tears, she looked pretty" (12). This is the clear evidence of the fact that the novelist Chetan Bhagat is guided by patriarchal essentialist assumption about women. He is clearly seen failing to capture the feminist spirit when he subtly associates women with emotion, weakness and tears.

III. *Two State: The Story of My Marriage* as a conveyer of essentialism

After the thorough analysis of the novel *Two States: The Story My Marriage* the present thesis reaches to the conclusion that the novelist Chetan Bhagat inadvertently conforms to the essentialist notion of gender. Though his attempt to create a feminist novel is obvious, the way all female and male characters have been portrayed is influenced by the stereotypical and traditional way of portrayal. If the readers focus on the surface representation of character Ananya, they may reach to a wrong conclusion, but the minute observation of her representation and her attitude makes it clear that she also is not far from the essential assumption about men and women despite some of her bold and audacious actions. If we underestimate the fact that all of the female characters except Ananya are stereotypically represented, most probably we laud the novel as feminist novel by appreciating Ananya outwardly. But the fact that almost all of the characters either male or female hold the traditional view towards the difference between women and men undercuts the novel's possibility of being a feminist project. Not only have the characters held the essential attitude of gender but the novelist also is in the same line of thought. The way language has been employed by the novelist demonstrates his attitude towards the sexuality of women that is as a member of patriarchy he also reinforces the concept of men's control over women's sexuality. The evidences found in the novel prove that he sees a clear and natural difference between women and men that is why his use of language and his attitude towards women is full of prejudice in the novel. His tendency to associate tear, emotionality and vulnerability to women is the influence of patriarchal ideology. As patriarchal ideology justifies women's inferior position in society on the basis of their possession of such supposedly inferior characteristics, Bhagat's stereotypical representation reinforces the same patriarchal ideology in more subtle way.

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